

FIRST OF THE MONTH

MONTHLY IN-DEPTH ESSAYS

FROM AMOS TRUST

A CIRCLE WE CANNOT SQUARE

As we re-launch Amos' travel programme,
how can we fly *and* protect the climate?

amos  trust



EDITORIAL

FIRST OF THE MONTH

Amos' Travel programme has been at the heart of our work. We have long believed that the most important task we do is to take people to meet our partners.

It's this face-to-face experience that opens up the understanding of the situation our partners face, why they do what they do and what we can do in the UK in response. As we begin to re-emerge from the pandemic and think about re-launching our travel programme, we felt that this is a vital moment to look again at how we reconcile our trips with the environmental impacts of flying. In particular, how does it sit with our campaign for CLIMATE JUSTICE when our travel programme burns 400 tonnes of carbon each year?

Are we trying to dance on the top of a pin? To justify the impossible? Is it like re-framing the question: "Which brand of cigarette will do me the least harm?" We all know the answer is none of them. Alternatively, are we right to continue in the belief that the impact of our travel programme goes beyond its environmental footprint? We hope you enjoy this edition. Thanks for reading.

NICK WELSH

DIGITAL, DESIGN AND COMMUNICATIONS
AMOS TRUST

JULY 2021



THE CIRCLE WE CANNOT SQUARE

CHRIS ROSE

MY STORY

My involvement with Amos started in 2004 when I was asked by the church I was involved with, to go, on their behalf, on a fact-finding trip to Palestine with Amos. It changed my life, and even if I had not gone on to work for Amos, its impact would still have been seismic.



TV TIMES

Amos Trust's Director Chris Rose speaking to journalists in Palestine during the Just Walk To Jerusalem in 2017.

Photograph: Mark Kensett

I can still see a dozen snapshots from that first trip:

- The Guides and Scouts processing through Beit Sahour as the whole community came out for what was my first, and I think, only, annual Cucumber Festival



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- Watching at Abu Dis, as they lifted the Separation Wall panels into place to cut off the Palestinian Parliament from Jerusalem
- The road closures surrounding Bethlehem
- Seeing Amos Founder Garth's friendships with Naim at Sabeel, Wisam our guide and Zouhgbi at Wi'am
- Looking out from Nazareth over the plains of Armageddon
- Hearing the Beatitudes beside Galilee and understanding for the first time, that what motivated me most was a hatred of injustice.

I went back inspired, fired-up and deeply challenged, but also unclear as to what I could do. I had a young family and a more-than full time job.

So I decided to do what the Palestinians I had met suggested — to tell their stories and to make sure that I tried to honour their commitment to justice through the work I was involved in with young people in the UK, safeguarding the rights and opportunities that they were denied as Palestinians.



**“ WE DON'T HAVE TIME
TO SIT ON OUR HANDS AS
OUR PLANET BURNS.
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, CLIMATE
CHANGE IS BIGGER THAN
ELECTION OR RE-ELECTION.
IT'S LIFE OR DEATH.**

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ

US POLITICIAN & ACTIVIST



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CHRIS ROSE

IMPACT

I could talk of a dozen other places that I have visited with Amos that have inspired, informed, deepened and changed how I view my life and the world in which we live. This is not just my experience — it is a refrain that I hear time and again from the people who travel with us.

Jane Walker is an Amos Trustee. She joined our Board following her first visit to Palestine with us in 2016



VALUE

“I cannot underestimate the value of our initial and subsequent visits to Palestine as a family.”

Photograph: Mark Kensett

“In the summer of 2016, my family (me, my husband, my daughter aged 18 and my son age 16), travelled to Palestine with Amos.”



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This visit was a life-changing experience for us all. My husband is Arabic — he left Iraq when he was 3 and had never returned. It was like a home coming for him. For myself and the children, the people and culture felt familiar and warm.

On our return, my son announced that ‘he no longer had anything to complain about as he wasn’t living under Occupation like the Palestinians’. His perspective on life changed — both he and his sister also felt more connected to their Arabic heritage. They both became more interested in human rights and climate justice.

Now five years later, they are both working for charities and my daughter is also learning Arabic and hosting a radio show showcasing electronic music by women and non-binary artists from North Africa and the Middle East. As for me, I became a trustee at Amos. I returned to Palestine and friends and family have been on Amos trips and have also become Amos supporters.

I cannot underestimate the value of our initial and subsequent visits to Palestine as a family. The ‘very complicated situation’ in Israel and Palestine did not seem so complicated once we were there — the injustices and inequalities were evident, irrefutable and visceral.



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We learnt so much and since that visit, we have all been inspired to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians and to encourage others to visit to learn more as we did.”

As we enable people to spend time with those who inspire us through their hospitality, dignity and commitment, we so often allow people the space to gain a much deeper understanding of the lives behind the stories and stereotypes of news headlines.

It is the depth of this experience that is central to our travel programme. And it is fuelled by our commitment to relationships — with our supporters and with our partners — and to narrowing the distance between them. The impact and importance of this has never been more obvious to us than over the last 18 months.

It has been acutely felt by our partners in Nicaragua, where both tourism and CEPAD’s visitor programme came to a crashing halt. And even more so in Palestine as Bethlehem’s economy, where three of our partners are based, collapsed due to the loss of tourists, leaving many families with no income.



**“ CLIMATE CHANGE
IS THE GREATEST THREAT
TO OUR EXISTENCE IN
OUR SHORT HISTORY ON THIS
PLANET. NOBODY’S GOING
TO BUY THEIR WAY OUT
OF ITS EFFECTS.**

MARK RUFFALO

ACTOR & ENVIRONMENTALIST



THE CIRCLE WE CANNOT SQUARE

CHRIS ROSE

It has also been felt in Palestine through the lack of International Observers to monitor breaches in international law and human rights by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and settler groups, leading to yet more home demolitions, more people displaced and made homeless at a time of acute crisis.

Elias Deis, Director of Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem



BUILDING BACK

“Palestinians have succeeded in developing unique travel programs for Internationals to come and enjoy Palestine.”
— — — — —

Photograph: Nick Welsh

“For us Palestinians, who are living under the Israeli Military Occupation, we see the importance of tourism as a method of communicating our voice to the international community, sharing the reality on the ground and raising awareness about the injustice that we are facing on a daily basis.”



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CHRIS ROSE

Tourism is not only contributing to the Palestinian GDP but it is serving the Palestinian cause by allowing international visitors to meet the Palestinians, explore our culture, get introduced to our food, hear our stories, see the challenges on the ground, learn about our history, encounter different religious communities and immerse themselves in our traditions.

Despite the lack of resources to develop and accommodate more tourists in the Palestinian areas due to the Israeli Military control over the borders, water, electricity, movement and the land, Palestinians have succeeded in developing unique travel programs for Internationals to come and enjoy Palestine.”

We hope that each trip we run combines some, or all, of the elements Elias and Jane have described. We often sum these up as:

- We COME and SEE
- We STAND with and LEARN from
- We have space to STOP and REFLECT

Whether it's our Taste of Palestine, Indian Experience, Nicaraguan Adventure, women-only trips, walking tours or home rebuilds — to be effective, the trips must inspire, build solidarity and, we hope, change us.



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They must encourage us to tell the stories we have heard, to get involved in advocacy work or to give or raise funds in response to what we have experienced. They must also provide the space to stop and engage.

I always consider each trip to Palestine to be a pilgrimage regardless of whether we visit any of the Holy sights, as I am going with a mindset that I want to have a meaningful encounter.

Ayla Lepine is an Amos Trustee. She joined our Board following a trip to Nicaragua



EYE-OPENING

“The paradox of travelling to do this work is a challenge to explore.”



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CHRIS ROSE

“When I travelled to Nicaragua with Amos and CEPAD in 2017 it opened my eyes to climate injustice more than any other experience I’ve ever had. This trip motivated me to become a trustee and to have a lifelong commitment to learning about how communities are adapting and even thriving in times of urgent need.

The paradox of travelling to do this work is a challenge to explore. The trip was invaluable and was also a spur to my understanding of personal accountability for climate justice locally and globally.”

NEXT STEPS

We could easily double the number of trips we run each year to Palestine. They would make a massive difference on the ground — to an economy in pieces, to changing perceptions, promoting the need for full equal rights for Palestinians, showing that people are not alone and making sure that the rampant violations that have occurred by the IDF since the pandemic began, cannot happen in the dark.



**“ ADULTS KEEP SAYING
WE OWE IT TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE,
TO GIVE THEM HOPE,
BUT I DON'T WANT YOUR HOPE.
I DON'T WANT
YOU TO BE HOPEFUL.
I WANT YOU TO PANIC.**

GRETA THUNBERG

17 YEAR-OLD SWEDISH ACTIVIST



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CHRIS ROSE

However, it only takes a cursory visit to the Dead Sea to observe the innate problems with this approach. It gives one of the clearest pictures of people's environmental impact.

The Dead Sea is shrinking by 1.4 metres a year. The aquifers that run into it have been syphoned off and the Jordan river is now merely a muddy stream. The salinity of the Dead Sea is approaching toxic levels as temperatures rise year-on-year.

Experts forecast that it will not exist in 2050 with pipe dreams such as one to pump sea water from the Red Sea finally having the plug pulled on them by Jordan. It's one story among many, and our impact on our natural world is all too evident wherever we turn.

What is also clear, as we open-up again and long to get on a plane and head off anywhere, is that we cannot avoid these uncomfortable truths. Choosing and booking flights (particularly long-haul flights), can't simply be governed by what we can afford or what stop-overs we'd like to choose, like sweets from the Pick & Mix counter — the impacts on our planet are simply too great.



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We are not saying that flights are the biggest cause of global warming. Nor are we failing to spot that only 5% of people are using 95% of flights and are responsible for an even higher percentage of emissions. But we cannot continue to burn more and more non-renewable fossil fuels and not experience the consequences.

So what do we do about it?

We could stop flying (and we may have no choice about this) — but if we believe that we need to take people to visit places to really understand the impact, to act in solidarity and to create change, then this doesn't work.

Dennis, Climate Lead at CEPAD, our partner in Nicaragua



VERY IMPORTANT
“These are the flights you must take. It’s very important, brothers and sisters, that you keep coming to our country.”
—————

Photograph: Mark Kensett



THE CIRCLE WE CANNOT SQUARE

CHRIS ROSE

“These are the flights you must take. It’s very important, brothers and sisters, that you keep coming to our country. Because even though, yes, there is contamination by flying, your support and presence allows us to work hand-in-hand to solve our problems with all of you.

We hope you keep coming. So that you from Amos Trust and Nicaragua can work hand-in-hand, to confront the problems on this earth and here in Nicaragua.”

OUR RESPONSE

We have had policies in place for several years now to reduce our carbon footprint. These include:

- We do not take flights within the UK and whenever possible we look for alternative means of transport
- We have limited the number of partner visits we take, making use of technology such as WhatsApp and Zoom
- We seek to ensure that we can combine activities, for example, a monitoring visit to Gaza can combine with a supporter trip to the West Bank



**“ CLIMATE CHANGE
IS REAL. IT IS HAPPENING
RIGHT NOW, IT IS THE MOST
URGENT THREAT FACING
OUR ENTIRE SPECIES
AND WE NEED TO WORK
COLLECTIVELY TOGETHER
AND STOP
PROCRASTINATING.**

LEONARDO DI CAPRIO

ACTOR & ENVIRONMENTALIST



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CHRIS ROSE

- We seek whenever possible to extend the length of our monitoring trips to ensure that the relationship building and learning from them are maximised
- We offset our flights to a replanting programme in Nicaragua — although we are mindful that offsetting schemes are often abused and while carbon capture is desperately important, it does not prevent the carbon from being burnt in the first place.

Robin Message became an Amos Trustee after he and his wife Naomi walked from London to Jerusalem with Amos back in 2017



ARRESTED

“Personally, I’ve stopped flying and started getting arrested with Extinction Rebellion (XR). I don’t know if that’s the right moral choice.”

— — — — —
Photograph: Mark Kensett



THE CIRCLE WE CANNOT SQUARE

CHRIS ROSE

“There’s an interesting idea in Netflix’s ‘The Good Place’: Spoiler alert — the world is too complicated to make moral choices anymore. One character, Chidi, lives a life paralysed by indecision, but his choices are still not perfect.

As it is with travel as a justice-focussed charity. If we visit our partners, and bring others to visit, we can help them more. But to do that, each flight brings a little more climate change, and helps continue to normalise flying as an ethical choice.

Personally, I’ve stopped flying and started getting arrested with Extinction Rebellion (XR). I don’t know if that’s the right moral choice. What I do know is that “courage calls out to courage” and that “an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”, and that if I hadn’t flown with Amos to Palestine in 2015, I wouldn’t have walked across Europe for Palestinian rights in 2017, gone to support refugees in Calais in 2018, or become involved in XR in 2019.

Yes, we need to be considerate in the carbon we burn, but we also need to be inspired, so that hunger for justice can burn in us.”



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CHRIS ROSE

HOW CAN WE TAKE THIS FURTHER?

As we have said, we could have followed Robin's decision (which we greatly respect), but we've decided, for the time being, to take this in a slightly different direction — to ask two simple questions before every flight.

- How are we going to maximise the impact of this flight?
- What are we going to do differently if we take this flight?

This could be a recipe for taking the excitement out of our trips, over-burdening them with a narrow purpose. But that is certainly not the intention. I hope that, if anything, it means that we become even more committed to developing all the different strands that make them so important and enjoyable.

I believe that we need to invest more in our trips, as opposed to less, so that we are able to maximise the impact of each flight.

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PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN WROE

AMOS DAY 2021 – LONG TIME COMING
SATURDAY 9TH OCTOBER 10:00 – 4:00PM
CITY OF LONDON

Join us for a very special Amos Day on the 9th October — the first time we will have all been together since 2019. Here about all of our upcoming projects including our new Gazan art project ‘On Location’ and ‘Street Born’, a project with Cheka Sana, our partner in Tanzania.

For those unable to get to London, the entire event will be live-streamed for free.

FULL DETAILS

To find out more, please visit amostrust.org/amos-day-2021

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CHRIS ROSE

I have travelled a great deal with Amos — sometimes it becomes easy to just hop on a plane. However, we need to challenge the mindset which comes with this, to make sure that we are not casually taking flights but really engaging with the benefit of each journey and how we are going to use the experiences that plane travel offers to have the best impacts.

Some of the ways we hope to do this are:

1. Providing information about the carbon footprint our flights will leave and practical ways to respond. We can do this by:
 - replacing rather than adding to flights people planned to take
 - extending visits so as to make the most use of flights
 - helping to identify where else people can cut their carbon footprint
 - enabling people to capture carbon through our Nicaraguan Tree planting programme.



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2. Keeping in touch with trip participants once they arrive back in the UK and linking them to resources to help them respond to what they have learned and experienced.
3. We are privileged to have many supporters who become passionately involved with our work and are able to go on multiple trips to visit our partners and we recognise that there are very strong reasons for going multiple times.

It can be to feed and equip people to be involved in advocacy work, it can be a visit to support friends we have made, it is also crucial that we tease out why we are going in the light of the climate crisis we now face.

4. We want to create opportunities, such as the one I had, for people who cannot afford to travel with us without some financial support. We are particularly keen to help young people from the UK to visit our partners and connect and learn with other young activists.



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CHRIS ROSE

Jane Walker, Amos Trustee — here with her daughter and Palestine activist, Luma, in the West Bank



PERSONAL & PURPOSEFUL

“I have now made a personal pledge to be more purposeful and mindful in my travel decisions.”

— — — — —
Photograph: Mark Kensett

“The conversations we have been having as Trustees at Amos and the development of our Travel Policy have helped me to think about my personal responsibilities with regard to air travel.

I have now made a personal pledge to be more purposeful and mindful in my travel decisions. I am also going to take time to understand the carbon emissions that will be associated with any trips (something I had never considered in the past), and offset the carbon emissions wherever possible.



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A PODCAST FROM **AMOS TRUST**

WE DO HOPE **A PODCAST FROM AMOS TRUST**

Join us each week as we take an entertaining, informative and sometimes irreverent look at the ‘H-Word’ with very special guests from around the world.

We’ll be asking artists and chefs, priests and politicians, doctors and journalists — how do they ‘do’ hope and where can we get some? Coming this autumn.

FULL DETAILS COMING SOON
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The travel benefits versus climate losses conversation has gone round and round my head for some time and I was skilfully able to ignore it.

With my resolution to be more mindful and discerning regarding travel (and probably travel by plane less), I feel I am joining with a wider community of others striving to do the same. Together we will make an impact.”

CONCLUSION

Does any of this square the circle — of course not. But it starts to ensure that we do not take travel for granted as a right afforded to only a few of us at the expense of everyone else.

Let’s finish with these words from our Chair of Trustees, Robert Cohen:

“Climate justice has been a central part of our work for many years. But we know that climate must now inform everything we do and relate to all of our partners and the projects we are supporting.



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CHRIS ROSE

Robert Cohen, Chair of Amos Trustees



COMMUNICATION

“Covid helped us to become even more creative in our communications and conversations. But we know that cannot be the whole story.”

— — — — —

Photograph: Mark Kensett

Issues of injustice are interconnected. Climate change is the clearest example of that interconnectivity. We know that travelling to meet our partners and seeing their work first-hand creates many years of powerful advocacy back home. And our partners want to see us!

They value the friendships, which are deep and lasting. So balancing the impact of air travel with the impact of justice advocacy is vital but far from straightforward.



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CHRIS ROSE

The experience of the pandemic has shown us how we can lift up the voices of our partners and give them access to new audiences without anyone needing to get on a plane. Covid helped us to become even more creative in our communications and conversations. But we know that cannot be the whole story.

Meeting our partners face-to-face will remain central to our work. But we must do it in a way that enables our supporters and Amos as a whole to be mindful, responsible and active in how we integrate our climate concerns into everything we are doing.

For us it means doing all we can to help our supporters make their personal advocacy really count for something. Air travel has to be justified as part of a bigger global effort to make the world a fairer place. And there are lots of ways that we can do this.”



ABOUT AMOS TRUST

A SMALL CREATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION

AMOS TRUST works to challenge injustice, restore rights and create hope. We work with grassroots partners, listening to their needs and acting on their concerns. We set out to build local, creative solutions to global issues.

Today, we're working in three areas where justice is threatened and rights are ignored. We are:

- transforming the lives of girls and young women on the streets, so they can live free from abuse,
- equipping local communities to develop sustainable responses to the impact of climate change,
- campaigning for a just peace and full equal rights for all who call Palestine and Israel home.

Our second book of creative writing and poetry, 'SEEDS OF HOPE: MORE THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM AMOS TRUST', is also available. Please visit amostrust.org/seeds-of-hope-book for details.

It reflects our commitment to developing resources that equip and sustain us on the long road to justice. For further information, please visit amostrust.org



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Amos Trust

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WE DO HOPE

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