

## **Sahara journey diary**

March 2006

### **Day 4**

#### **Israeli-Jordanian border, The Dead Sea**

**Written by Yahya Wardak (Afghani Team Member)**

When I opened my eyes this morning, I was not sure if what I saw was true or if it was a dream:

Beside my bed was sitting a Tibetan Monk in silence (internalizing)...

I suddenly become aware that a Tibetan Monk and I, a Muslim from Afghanistan, slept in one Kibbutz in Israel.

We are on the way to the Jordanian border. I am sitting in the front seat of the truck, overhearing conversations behind me; "I understand Mohamed more than the Americans and Europeans," says Gil, our Israeli teammate. I am very astonished by this news. I thought that Israelis are always closer to a western way of life, than to the Arabic World.

Our first stop at the petrol station:

I see Latif with the manager of the station smoking together beside the gas pump. Latif holds out the gaz nozzle like a pistol in one hand and in the other hand, holds a cigarette. Back in the truck, Gil says the Manager is Jewish and his parents are from Baghdad. The manager and Latif spoke some Iraqi words. Gil adds, of course, that the Manager understands someone from his place of birth more than others.

Our three trucks passed the Israeli-Jordanian border. We got our passports back and are now waiting for transit papers for the trucks. But now nervous customs officer is yelling; "all the cars must return to the customs area".

I first felt happiness that we crossed the border and were about to disappear. But now we are stuck between the two countries. I do not know what is going on. Maybe we have to stay here or must go back to Israel.

After three hours and a lot of busy phone calls, we are informed that we cannot take our satellite equipment. But without such equipment, we are lost in the Sahara. The office in Berlin and organizations in Amman are getting involved in helping us. After another two hours, the equipment was packed, boxed and sealed and put under the supervision of Essa Salim, the Jordanian Tourist Police that would accompany us for the rest of the Jordan trip. The box would be given back to us by Essa, only after we leave Jordan and enter Egypt.

The deeper we get into Jordan, the more I feel familiar with nature and the more I feel near Afghanistan - the people, the landscape, the mountains and the streets. I get the feeling that I am in my home country of Afghanistan, however, as I can read the language. But I cannot understand any of the signs or their meanings and soon realize that I am thousands of kilometers away from my homeland.

We stopped for a dinner of shishlik, hummus, tahini and other local delicacies. Galit gave some of the members of the group some writings on small pieces of paper and she asked us to read them in numerical order. They were statistics on facts about women, that span the world. Everybody was surprised. On behalf of all the men, I congratulate all our women on their day and gave them traditional Jordanian sweet "Knafe".