

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

Reprinted here are a selection of excerpts from the diary of a British activist in Palestine, who has spent the past two months working with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and other groups, to monitor the conditions of life for Palestinians living under the occupation and to offer physical and moral support.

I've been in Askar refugee camp, Nablus for the past eleven days now. Four of us internationals (our numbers here are TINY now, we really need more people) travelled up here after completing our training as 'official' ISM volunteers. Official in that you have to sign a contract committing yourself to no drugs, alcohol, violence - that includes NO stone throwing at the soldiers. Even if the kids are all bang on it and you're standing in - literally - piles of stones: hand-sized, hard, easily reached stones.

Our main co-ordinator for the training was a small, earnest Japanese woman named Maki. As we are going to be staying in the houses of local Palestinians - mainly the homes of the families of suicide bombers and martyrs which are under threat of revenge attacks - usually a total bulldozing, we were taken through the do's and don'ts of Palestinian culture: don't sit with your leg up at a right angle, crossed over your knee - showing the bottom of your foot is considered very disrespectful. If you bring a gift to the family - make sure it's never bread - they will think you think they haven't even got enough cash for bread and are destitute - better to make it chocolates and coffee and then give it very matter-of-fact, don't make a song and dance about it, otherwise you might embarrass the family; give the gift to the father of the house; no low-cut tops, vests or shorts; and do not kiss or touch men in public.

We also get an introduction to the politics and roots of ISM. The first ever ISM action, December 2000 saw locals and internationals march up to an Israeli Military base, walk straight past the soldiers guarding it, march raucously through, banners and Palestinian flags aloft, and up to the top where they took down the Israeli flag and raised the Green, White, Black and Red. That's quite an achievement in an occupied police state. The Israeli media have tried to discredit the ISM by saying it's full of anarchists and communists. Everyone from Anarchist Youth Network UK people, Wombs, huge Ya Basta! Italy contingents, comedian Jeremy Hardy, and McDonald's smashing, GM crop-torching farmer Jose Bove have come out on ISM missions. The most interesting part of the training is handling the various projectiles the Israeli Army is likely to shoot at us... After passing round some weighty sound bomb shells, tear gas canisters, rubber bullets (rubber-coated steel balls), sharp pointed M16 bullets, Uzi bullets, and tank shells, Maki adopts a very stern, serious voice. We pay attention. 'What you will see here is very, very depressing. Many people feel very upset by what they see. You may get beaten or shot. You may see your friends get shot and Palestinian people shot or beaten very, very badly. You may need counselling after this [nods up and down]. Yes. And the counselling, it might work. [nod, nod] It might work'.

Since the curfew was imposed, Nablus residents (numbering around 150,000 - making it the largest city in the West Bank outside of Jerusalem) have been allowed to leave their

homes for an average of four hours a week. The lifting of the curfew is erratic and unpredictable. It was lifted for the first day of school just last week (Aug 31) but then re-imposed again, and hasn't been lifted since. Children are unable to get to school. It's a problem for them and their parents. A similar tactic of intellectually impoverishing whole generations was adopted by the South African apartheid regime. Demonising those living under an internal colonialism as inherently backward, retarded, and unmanageable, the state attempts to make this image a reality through the routine prevention and denial of education.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has also occupied the homes of those unlucky enough to live on the outskirts of camps, who are positioned at good vantage points for snipers and provide key locations for military operation launches. One such family is the Alar Samfeh family, living on the edge of Askar. The house was forcibly occupied by soldiers in June to be used as a makeshift base for terrestrial operations in the area. The 19 people living in the home were prevented from leaving and as a result lost their livelihoods - builders, land surveyors - for the past three months. During the occupation, if the father of the family wanted to move from one part of the house to another he was forcibly blindfolded. Soldiers destroyed chairs, tables and a music system, and towels and linen were regularly used to clean oily guns.

Tank Dust Lunch - September 2nd

All us Internationals staying with families in Balata, Askar, New Askar and Old Nablus join local Palestinian activists organising a demonstration with women and children to deliver food to the Alar Samfeh family. The idea is to march from the Askar Mosque, out to the house (only a 20 minute walk) and have a picnic outside the house/military base, and try if possible to deliver food to the family. We bring 100 falafel, houmous and salad pittas for the kids. The women from the Askar community women's centre come too - they control the megaphone, and the kids who are yip yipping around, all excited and carrying the placards we made last night: 'Zolnierze WON, Dzieci do Szkoly' - Soldiers OUT, Children Back to School (Polish), Japanese peace symbols, the word peace in Arabic and many others. There are about 200 of us. We manage to get as far as the first intersection before the house when the sound of a tank begins to grind against our ears. All of us internationals (about 10) are at the front

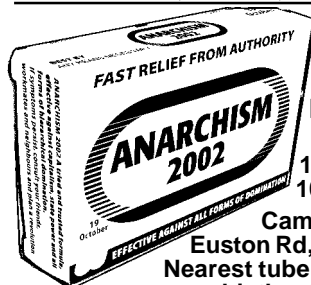
holding hands, to act as a barrier between the soldiers and the kids. We brace ourselves for the tank. It comes roaring up to us, stops, spins its barrel round and round and then points it squarely at us. It then begins to rotate its entire body in circles churning up dust and spewing out bilious clouds of carbon monoxide. It disappears in its own thick grey exhaust. People cover their mouths with their t-shirts, turn away, cover their eyes, cough and splutter, but all stand firm. It eventually stops, gradually reappearing as the noxious fumes clear. The military plod turn up in a jeep. Negotiators, an international and a Palestinian, step straight up. We can't go to the occupied house. We end up staying where we are and eating the falafel's while kids take turns on the megaphone - singing freedom songs, shouting out demands, slinging the odd stone. We chant along to. 'Mur-der-ers!' 'Mur-der-ers!' 'Let the child-ren go to school!'

We don't retreat, we just all take the decision that we'll go. Although we didn't make it to the house, the kids are jubilant. We weren't even supposed to stay at the intersection, let alone sit down and have a picnic. Everybody agrees that the demo was a great success. People have barely left their houses for months, let alone taken back their streets collectively and had the chance to give the soldiers a piece of their minds.

Checkpoint Demonstration

A military checkpoint has been in operation opposite Mukhata - the Palestinian Authority prison in Nablus that was destroyed by the IDF - for nine days now. A tank and Armoured Personnel stand at the dust-bowl junction between Old Nablus and the Ballata refugee camp. Directly behind the checkpoint are three blocks of flats and a number of homes nestled into Askar Mountain. Checkpoints are crucial to IDF (Israeli Defence Force - Israeli Army) operations in the Palestinian territories. They are the lynchpins of the occupation.

Checkpoints curtail all movement. Daily tasks and activities are criminalised or made nearly impossible by endless checks and searches. According to the IDF, the searches are necessary to prevent terrorists moving weapons around. One suicide bomb-belt was found - in front of much media, this year. No other armaments have been reported since. Meanwhile, over 80 people have died since the second intifada began, after being held up at checkpoints and prevented from accessing essential medical attention: cancer patients, dialysis patients, women giving birth, those injured by Israeli fire, etc. Likewise, children have been able to go to school for only one day since the new term started: August 31. Normally, during the occupation, they have had nowhere to go, and no education, although work is being done to set up schooling spaces in the refugee camps. The economy in Nablus has ground to a halt. Once the industrial heartland of the Palestinian territories it is now a daily ghost-town. Many people cannot go to work, cannot earn money, cannot obtain medicine or groceries, and can barely feed their families. This applies more stringently to the people forced to actually live amongst Israeli soldiers who've set up camp, inside



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their homes, using them as look-out points, human shields and operations bases, plus the people who have the soldiers on their doorstep, such as those living above the checkpoint at Mukhata.

We'd been doing checkpoint-watch every day there for the past nine days, monitoring the soldier's activities. Children from the surrounding area regularly gather by the wrecked prison to throw rocks (Plenty of them around - the IDF regularly makes roadblocks using Caterpillar and local Palestinian bulldozers. Roads are simply cracked open, dug up, and rock and cement piled up into mini mountains.) It's a depressing ritual. The kids detest the occupation, they are oppressed daily by Israeli soldiers. The soldiers regularly shoot at children. I got a taste of this last week, whilst I was hanging out with the stone-throwing streetfighter kids. An Israeli commander and his colleague were using the exhaust fumes of an advancing tank as cover to get closer to the kids, all young raggedy boys aged 10-17. As the tank pulled back up to its position in front of the flats, the kids pointed wildly to a white square building in between the Mukhata and the checkpoint. 'Soldiers, soldiers' they shouted, pointing at the white building. 'I know I know', I said, pointing up at the checkpoint. 'No No No!' (cue sound of machinegun fire and more manic pointing at the white building). It was only then that I realised what they were doing. They opened fire, and we ducked behind a trench of rubble. The kids ran to hide behind some broken rocks. I got up and ran over to them. They were taking aim. I direct my question at the commander - a young, good-looking Israeli. 'You're not really going to shoot those....' 'FUCK OFF'. It's a curt acid command. 'Oh right, so, tell me, how many kids have you killed in your service?' His response was a round of ear-searing rapid fire at the scattering kids. He put the gun down, keeping his gaze trained straight ahead, and said '27'.

A demonstration is organised by ISM volunteers and local block residents against the checkpoint. The idea is to reclaim the area in front of the flats and have children play games, draw posters and generally have a laugh as an act of resistance to the occupation. It's a way of showing kids that there are alternative forms of resistance to the usual stone-chucking ritual, and it's good to flummox the soldiers. The ones on shift today are the same lot which policed our last kids' demo to the occupied house. As kids tried to gather for the demo outside before we all came up they were shooting at them. Only yesterday they were firing intimidation shots at us. Before we even start the tank's barrel is trained squarely at us. Around 100 kids turn up, tentatively at first, holding the placards we drew together yesterday. They chant at the soldiers. They are all over the shop but they're enjoying their chance to vent their frustration, as are the adults present. Demonstrations here are pretty much non-existent - how do you collectively protest against a military curfew? The presence of internationals is one of the only ways collective acts of civil disobedience can take place. The soldiers have orders not to shoot us. Palestinian civilians, yes. Internationals, no. Bad PR.

Following a bout of shouting and general fist-shaking, we have a drawing and painting session and a plastic sack race. The kids hop, leap and wriggle in white plastic sacks, whipping up dust and getting

breathless with exertion. We join in too. Everybody is clapping and laughing and the atmosphere is festive. Neighbours bring us out trays laden with tiny china cups of Arabic coffee and glasses of sweet tea - it's surreal, sipping tea at an impromptu kids' sports day amidst swirling clouds of grey dust, under the gun barrel gaze of a forbidding Israeli tank, and soldiers standing around armed to the hilt. But we're having a laugh...

Baha

"Baha is an energetic, vibrant local kid, 14 years-old, with twinkly green eyes, all 'mush mushkele - No Problems', and as capable as an adult, looking after international activists staying in the old city by doubling up as guide and mediator between hostile kids and us. He takes time out to explain who we are and why we're in their town when our governments are funding the occupation.

We go out on the tank-hunt. Baha in tow. It's the usual. The APC and tank out on curfew patrol. We stay back at a street corner on our way into the old city, a warren of sandy big-rocked houses, archways, and piles of rubble (bulldozed ex-homes, factories, workshops). The April attack saw 25,000 soldiers, approx. 400 tanks, and multiple apache rocket-fire hit the city and surrounding camps. The 4th strongest army on the planet doesn't fuck about when it goes in for the kill. 87 Nablus residents were slaughtered within 4 days. Over 200 people were used as human shields.

Back to the present...The APC soldier gets on his phone. Nablus was declared a closed military zone about an hour ago. We could be nicked and dumped in Tel Aviv or deported. Whatever. We stay put. Kids pelt the APC with stones, a couple, chucked over from behind the safety of a wall, clop the soldier on the top. He responds with a round of live ammo. A family wants to cross the road, right in front of the tank's line of fire. They're in a hurry and looking fraught, mother father, and four kids. Baha helps them across. We rush up to be in front of him and them at once. Baha's brave, just goes straight across, head-on, by their sides, defiant. Baha knows the city like the back of his hand. In the aftermath of the April incursion he was one of the most plucky volunteers, clearing rubble, helping the sick.

We make our way down the street to where we expect the APC and Tank to be but it seems like they've rumbled off. Just curfew enforcement we think. No big deal. Later we'll find out that it's illegal for the Israel Army to use anything stronger than teargas to enforce curfew. Definitely not live ammo. They do what they want anyway though. The entire occupation is illegal under the Oslo Accords, The Geneva Convention, multiple United Nations directives etc

We get a call... the tank and APC are outside. We decide to just check out what they're doing. As we make our way down the road we hear the sound of the two vehicles whurring towards us. It's blazing hot. The street is clear at this point. Nothing is being thrown. I see the soldier in the APC take aim. I think it's with his M16 but it could be the mounted gun. I'm not afraid. Guns are constantly being pointed at Palestinians in the territories - at their backs, in their faces, up at their windows, from the middle of the street, from the mountains. A shot rings out, whizzes straight past me. I feel the air rush and duck down instinctively. 'FUCK that was so close', I say, turning round. 'is...Oh my God.' Baha is lying on

his back in the porchway of a closed shop. Blood is blooming from the right side of his chest. His eyes are bulged back in shock. A Palestinian man is instantly above him, pumping his chest with short sharp thrusts of his crossed hands. Blood is welling up in Baha's mouth, flowing freely, it streams fast from his nose, his ear. 'Turn his head, turn his head, he's going to choke' I yell. It's too late though. We all know...

The examining doctor at El Ethad Hospital said that the massive internal damage caused by the "dumdum" bullet was consistent with an intentional kill. Dumdum's explode and fragment on impact causing maximum multiple injuries.

The Israeli army initially stated that Baha was carrying a bomb at the time of his assassination. This is not true. The statement then changed to accuse Baha of carrying a molotov cocktail. This was supposed to have exploded in his hand. Setting him on fire and killing him. 'It was his fault'. This is what the IDF said about the 17 year old boy they shot in the head in Balata the night before. He died when the ambulance carrying him was refused entry through a checkpoint to the hospital. They said he killed himself, shot himself. This a common statement released after the Army murders people here. All armies and police do it. Blame and demonise the victim. Here, it's because 'they're terrorists'. 328 children have been murdered by the Israeli army or armed settlers since September 2000."

This (very edited) version was sent by an activist working for the International SM in Palestine. More people are desperately needed

Since the beginning of the second Intifada, people having been going to Palestine under the banner of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). The ISM provide human shields against Israeli military crimes, break curfews to provide food and medical supplies, protest against Israeli tank blockades, and dismantle checkpoints and roadblocks - and this October they are looking for people to help pick olives.

In the past two years hundreds of thousands of Palestinian trees have been bulldozed, uprooted or set ablaze by Israeli soldiers and settlers - 200,000 of these olive trees. As the ISM point out "Olive trees are a symbol of the life of the Palestinian, and their destruction by Israeli forces is an attempt to de-root the Palestinians from their land. The economic impact of Israeli policies on the olive sector has been massive - over 10 million dollars lost to damage in the past two years, and millions more due to Israel's barring farmers from their land. And these policies are designed to have impact not just now, but for years to come - olive trees produce for generations. This year we are calling on you to join us for the olive harvest in Palestine."

To get involved 07817 554 814 www.ism-london.org/



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Anti-War Actions

Saturday 28th **Stop the War, Don't Attack Iraq Demo.** Huge anti-war demonstration meeting at the Embankment @ 1pm then going to Hyde Park. www.stopwar.org.uk Buses from Brighton 01273 502241. Join the **Anti-capitalist Bloc:** Meet at Cleopatra's needle on the Embankment 1pm. anticapbloc@mail.com Or join the **SchNEWS Bloc** Meet 11am Brighton Station – and help us hand out these bloody newsletters. ** **A Peace Camp** has been set up outside the Imperial museum in London. 07986 465552. ** Sunday 6 Oct, **No Nukes, No War action** at USAF Lakenheath 11am - 3pm, A1065, near Thetford. Lakenheath is the main American tactical airbase in Europe, armed with nuclear weapons and hosting the 48th Fighter Wing of the U.S.A.F. This wing has been heavily involved in attacks on Iraq in the past, including campaigns from 1991 to 1994 and 1999. There are around 30 tactical nuclear weapons deployed at Lakenheath, the last remaining American nuclear weapons in Britain. These bombs each have a maximum explosive yield of 80 kilotons. The Hiroshima bomb had a 13 kiloton yield. 01508-550446 www.lakenheathaction.org ** 6th October **Protest against war with Iraq.** Southsea Common, Portsmouth 3pm 023 9229 3673 ** **Scrap Trident Demo,** 12th October, 12 noon Plymouth Hoe www.cnduk.org ** For other anti war events check the **SchNEWS party and protest** bit on our website.

* **For those of you wanting to take direct action against the war,** here's a few resources we thought you might find useful: ** For the addresses of all 123 Army and Navy Recruitment Offices in the UK visit: www.army.mod.uk/careers/recruit_office/a_z_results.htm#a ** For addresses of the MoD Bases in the UK, listed by area: www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/ukufobas.htm ** Addresses and maps of US Military Bases world-wide: www.globemaster.de/regbases.html ** The Defence Procurement Agency proclaim, "Our mission: To Equip the Armed Forces". Their website lists their 'projects' to design and build equipment for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Follow the links to find out which company is building what: www.mod.uk/dpa/projects/index.htm

* **Stuff to get you going:** ** Get hold of the CD **'The Fire This Time'** "Deconstructing the Gulf War and revealing the devastating effect of sanctions on Iraq" www.firethistime.org ** **'Hidden Wars of Desert Storm'** Essential viewing for anyone wanting to understand issues such as Oil, weapons inspectors, depleted uranium, Gulf War Syndrome and why America is now including Iraq in its so called 'War on Terrorism.' www.Cultureshop.org ** A new tune **"The Evil Plans of George W Bush IIIrd"** has just been released under Copyleft license so people can copy it, give it out, play it out and remix it as long as they give credit. www.twisted.co.nz/djdb/viewdj.php?dj_id=18

SKIN-UP!

Patients at Salisbury hospital are being asked to do their bit for the war effort by consenting to donate their "surplus skin" after surgery, to the notorious Porton Down "defence" research establishment in Wiltshire. Early last year the hospital was forced to stop supplying skin to Porton Down after it was revealed that it was being sold without patients knowledge. The Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) has now requested that the supplies are reinstated for their essential research into "defences against chemical warfare agents", the patients consent though will now be required.

The highly secretive Porton Down establishment has carried out the world's longest-running programme of chemical and biological experiments on humans and animals. Officials have always claimed that the tests are for purely defensive purposes - cos we is the nice guys - honest!

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SchNEWS in brief

Imagine an area bigger than Brighton and Hove closed to traffic; Brussels managed it last Sunday and shut 160 square kilometres to traffic during **International Car Free Day.** 1,400 cities around Europe also took part. www.carbusters.ecn.cz ** Speaking of cars (and the climate change they cause), **Rising Tide** are holding a gathering in Manchester next weekend (4-6th Oct) looking at global warming, oil, pipelines, corruption, water privatisation and other dodgy practices. 01865-241097 www.risingtide.org ** Last Saturday, angry residents tore down fences in **Crystal Palace park.** The barriers were erected by Bromley Council who want to sell off some of the historic parkland for re-development. savecrystalpalacepark@yahoo.co.uk ** Authorities estimate 20,000 people will welcome the ringleaders of globalisation, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to Washington next week. www.infoshop.org have organised a spoof **"anarchist scavenger hunt"** to amuse protesters: 300 points for smashing the window of a McDonald's or 400 points for a pie in the face of a corporate executive or World Bank delegate! Follow the protests at www.dc.indymedia.org ** **"About Anarchism"** by Nicholas Walter has just been reprinted and is well worth reading. Copies from Freedom Press for £3.50, 020-7247-9249 www.ecn.org/freedom

** As part of the regular **international day of action against McDonalds** on October 16th, McDonald's workers have organised the first ever international industrial day of action. Burger flippers the world over are being encouraged to check out the website - <http://mwr.org.uk> ** **Zut Alors!** Millions of French teenagers are in for a shock if they swear at their teachers. New legislation means pupils could face fines of up to 7,500 euros and even custodial sentences for such serious misdemeanours as unruly behaviour and that most heinous of crimes – swearing at rail guards. ** This Sunday there's an **Earth First Strategy and Action Discussion Group** meeting, near Norwich Which will discuss the direct action and anti-capitalist movement in present form and where it's going. For a copy of the agenda and to book, call 01986 781 789. ** A new road construction project that is being proposed near **Stonehenge** in Wiltshire could pose a real threat to the World Heritage site. At the moment they can't decide whether to go overland or underground, but either way, if the road-building goes ahead, the land surrounding the stone circle which also has World Heritage status and includes important archaeological remains will be destroyed to make room for a new four lane highway. www.savestonehenge.org.uk ** There's a **benefit gig** at the Concorde 2, Brighton, for the street kids of Cape Town, South Africa next Tuesday (1 October) 9pm Tickets £4 ** The following day (2) there's another **Fun raiser** at the Volks, Maderia Drive, Brighton supporting Zapatista communities in Mexico.

TRIP OUT!

There's a day of action against immigration detention and deportation and racist border controls at 10am, 19th October outside Dover Immigration detention centre, The Citadel, Western Heights, Dover. Following on from the demo some of the protesters are crossing over the channel to the Sangatte detention centre to show solidarity with refugees there. Bring yer passport if you want to go. "The closure of Sangatte and the widespread incarceration of innocent people, men, women and children in prisons are actions of politicians that do not have respect for human life. It is up to us to ensure that refugees are given a voice until they have a chance to recover enough to tell us their stories themselves and to attempt to ensure they are treated with as much respect or dignity as we would hope for." noborder.org/07789-961744

DROP OUTS

Seems like while Bush and his cronies are foaming at the mouth waiting to create new wars they were unwilling to go down that road and put their own precious lives at risk. An independent newspaper in the US has published a list of 'Chickenhawks', high ranking politicians and other public figures who trumpet on about war and 'fighting for freedom' but were unwilling to get their own hands dirty. Their excuses to avoid service range from bad knees, to skin problems and our personal favourite 'anal cysts'. Does that mean that when he's trying to give the world a whole new war 'Dubya' is just talking out of his arse? See the whole list at www.nhgazette.com/chickenhawks.html

ON THE CASE

Oil giant Unocal *could* be sued for forced labour, rape, and murder committed by Burmese soldiers who guarded a Unocal gas pipeline project. Because according to a US federal appeals court. "Unocal knew the acts of violence would probably be committed, it became liable as an aider and abettor". Cases are also pending against Royal Dutch Shell, Texaco and ExxonMobil for various abuses by security forces "defending" their installations. www.burmadaily.com

*Burma Campaign UK has forced Premier Oil UK out of Burma after producing evidence that investors in the company were breaking UK and US sanctions. For more info 020 7272 3559 www.burmacampaign.org.uk.

...and finally...

Having given up on the ability of fast food, Mickey Mouse, and countless CIA-sponsored dictatorships to win them global love, the US has now decided to try and win world popularity the good old-fashioned way—by launching a multi-million dollar public relations campaign. According to senior white-house officials, the propaganda, er, public relations effort will be supervised by the newly formed, "Office of Global Communications," yet another shadowy Washington organisation set to ram the stars and stripes down everyone's throat. Among the many pet projects the Office of GC will oversee—various pro-American radio stations throughout the Arab world, as well as the "American Room" concept, "corners of Americana established in existing local libraries or other cultural sites worldwide." Yippee!! Just what the world needs, more American cultural imperialism!! Inspired by the events of 9/11, the Office of GC will attempt to get to the bottom of the mystifying question posed by George Dub'ya after the attacks, "Why do they hate us?" Well gee George, let's think about it for half a second... Could waging maniacal world war on anyone who doesn't bow down to you have anything to do with it?? Or could it be the last 60 years of terrorism and atrocity known as American foreign policy*....hmmm.... In a quote too good for us to have made up, Charlotte Beers, the advertising agency executive Bush appointed last year to the State Department's top public diplomacy job, said that America needed to "influence the attitudes of foreign audiences toward our country." Beers has pledged that all U.S. diplomats will receive more extensive training in the American "message" of democracy, personal freedom and free markets and learn how to spread it through local societies. Guess those bombs just don't speak loudly enough...

* see the last issue of SchNEWS for a variety of examples

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