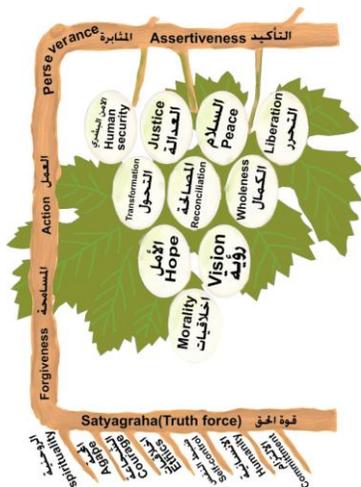


Wi'am Projects for Non-Violence and Civil Society

Wi'am Celebration of Non-Violence September 11 – 21, 2006



'You must be the change you wish to see in the world.'
- Gandhi

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of Gandhi's Non-Violence movement and the 10-year anniversary of the opening of the Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center a 10-day celebration was planned from September 11 – 21, 2006.

During this 10-day celebration we initiated opportunities for the community to participate in educational, cultural, and peace-building activities. By targeting groups from diverse sectors of society we were able to reach a large number of people with the messages of Non-Violence, Peace, and Justice.



Wi'am Celebration of Non-Violence

We opened our week by viewing a documentary on *Gandhi and his life of Non-Violence*. After watching the film we enjoyed a lively discussion on how we can best use Non-Violent strategies in our daily lives. We reflected on the Non-Violence movements in Palestine over the past decades.

“We as Christians of the Middle East have to be the light of the world – those who show the rest of the world that we believe in the power of Non-Violence. By shining this light of Non-Violence we will reveal the light of the Middle East to the rest of the world.” – Usama Zoughbi



Discussion on Gandhi and Non-Violence

Later on in the week we were joined by our friends Christine and Shar from the Christian Peacemaker Teams in *Hebron*, as well as our co-worker, Thomas from *Germany*. We were able to hear from Christine and Shar many stories of the direct non-violent action with which CPT is involved. Simply by physically placing themselves in between Israeli soldiers or Israeli settlers and local Palestinians (predominantly farmers and school children), the CPT activists are able to address an extremely violent situation with non-violence and solidarity. We heard from Thomas about some of the history and realities that accompanied the establishment of the Berlin Wall. We also learned of the Non-Violence movements that were involved in bringing that wall down. Through discussion and time for questions and answers, we identified similarities and differences in these situations, and we generated ideas about the effective Non-Violence strategies in Palestine.

“I know that if I can get in between the soldiers then they will be less likely to use brutal violence. I may be little and they might choose to laugh at me, but I don’t care. I want them to know that I see and am recording everything they do. Maybe then, they will think twice about abusing Palestinians.” - Shar



Zoughbi, Christine and Shar



Zoughbi

Each Friday during the year we have trauma coping programs for *children and teenagers*. During our 10-day celebration of Non-Violence, we decided to engage the children and youth on issues of Non-Violence, Justice and Peace. We used English, Art, Drama, games and discussions to motivate the kids to explore Non-Violence. In one exercise we all came together in a circle. While there we used our new vocabulary to express our emotions – the emotions that accompany such issues as injustice, peace, and non-violence. Following this verbal expression, the person to the right then performed a physical expression of the emotion. We had lots of laughs and made connections between the effects of non-violence and justice on our emotions.

“Justice is when there is balance. But right now there is no balance.” - One of the youth commenting on the wall, and life in Bethlehem; how it feels to be a young person here.



*Beautiful children, creative minds –
the Art of Non-Violence*

In addition to our weekly programs with children, we have a weekly *women's* outreach program. During this time of reflection on Peace and Non-Violence we held a successful workshop on *Peace Relationships in the Family*. Joined by Atidal Muamar and Menerva Kasis, the women were led through a discussion of their varying roles in this society. As they considered these different roles, Atidal and Menerva helped them to see their potential as activists for change. Whether in the home, the market place, the office, the university or the community, there is always an opportunity to cultivate peace. This program by Atidal and Menerva was a welcome addition to our weekly trainings that take place with women and youth groups in the villages surrounding us. Through all of these programs we are able to tackle the issues of Non-Violence in different settings.

“It’s really hard for us as women in our society to break down the social barriers both in our families and in our communities. But what is good is that we are trying to change things. And we are starting with our own families.” - Local participant



Atidal generating ideas



Women discuss Peace in the Family

Our celebration culminated with a Prayer Service for Peace and Justice, followed by a reception to commemorate the 10-Year Anniversary of the Wi'am Center. Mr. Jiries Khoury, the head of the Liqa Center, reflected for a few moments on the necessity for dialogue as the best alternative to the growing tension experienced worldwide. And Ashley Wilkinson discussed the implications of the Biblical call for Justice and Peace. We also welcomed the mayor, Dr. Victor Bitarsey, as well as Abuna Jacov from the Melkite Church and Abuna Samour from the Orthodox Church.

“The objective of Wi'am is to help Palestinian people to resolve their problems peacefully. With the language of dialogue, reason will be dominant in resolving our differences.” - Zoughbi Zoughbi, Founder and Director of Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center

“For the last 10 years, Wi'am has contributed greatly to Bethlehem. Through empowering young people and spreading the message of peace and dialogue, they continue to serve a powerful role in the community.” - Mayor Dr. Victor Bitarsey



Thank you from Mayor Bitarsey



Abu Bishara, Abuna Jacov, Dr. Gerjes Khoury and Abuna Samour

Continuing Programs, Future Plans, Upcoming Events

Continuing Programs

We continue each week with our **Trauma Coping Program for children and teenagers**. The children arrive each Friday to find opportunities for education, creativity, exercise and fun. We offer programs for learning and improving language skills in English and German. Through painting and drawing we encourage the kids to use a creative outlet with which they can express their emotions. As we take time each week for games and drama, we are also helping to establish a greater sense of self esteem and worth in our youngest members of society. Through dance and yoga we engage not only their minds, but also their bodies in self care and physical health. We provide activities in and out of the Center as well, during which these young people can perform services to their community. These children and teenagers humble us often as they strive to serve each other and their community. Their spirit of volunteerism is an amazing example for the young children as well. They teach us about commitment and selflessness in the time they spend here, and we are so glad that Wi'am can provide them with a safe environment for both education and fun.



Concentrating on Teamwork



Educational Games



Time for Yoga!

Through our **Youth Program** we provide the opportunity for weekly workshops and activities to young people in our community. Meeting on a consistent basis provides these youth with a peer community that they can trust and invest in. As we offer trainings on such topics as Human Rights, Democracy, Non-Violence, and Personal Development, the youth are not only actively engaging important current world issues, but they are also growing together and learning what it means to be committed to one another and to their community. We have lively discussions and creative activities on a weekly basis. But Wi'am also provides youth with connections to their peers throughout the world with opportunities for international and regional cultural youth exchanges. The youth have learned about and participated in Advocacy and Non-Violent Direct Action. Such experiences give them the chance to learn from their community and to educate their community. We are so proud of all the hard work they do, and we look forward to the continued growth of this youth program.



Preparation for Jericho Training



Youth Exchange in Germany



Training on Non-Violence

Our **Women's Program** continues to develop and grow as we reach out to women in the local and regional areas. Offering workshops, trainings and weekly meetings to women of all ages and from various backgrounds, we feel strongly that women ought to be empowered to work for change within their society. We have seen a growth in the number of women interested in workshops on Communication, Human Rights, Gender Issues and Democracy. Responding to this interest, we are able to provide women in villages, refugee camps, and cities with the skills necessary for developing a greater capacity for themselves in their local context. We provide both opportunities for education and for action as we initiate advocacy and non-violent direct action with regards to women's issues.



*Communication Workshop in
Am Salamona Village*



International Women's Day March



Direct Civil Action calling for Non-Violence

We continue our emphasis on **Non-Violence** not only through our direct work with children, youth and women, but also through Advocacy, Awareness, Spirituality and Education. Through our consistent work with Conflict Resolution, the Sulha process in which we lead and participate in the community is one of the most pure forms of Non-Violence. By ‘embracing the arms of dialogue instead of the dialogue of arms,’ our case mediators daily and assertively show the strength of Non-Violence in resolving potentially violent conflicts.

We are thrilled to report that women are now participating in our Sulha process as well. This is a welcome and exciting indicator of the progression of the woman’s role in the community. We are so glad to be a part of welcoming women into the Sulha environment and we hope this ministry of reconciliation will extend to even greater numbers of women and men in the community.

We continue to generate Awareness and Advocacy opportunities through our demonstrations and public meetings in the community. As we call for resolution of the internal disputes in Palestine, we encourage the community to focus efforts on the source of so many our struggles – the Occupation. We hold opportunities for people in the community to be trained in Non-Violence and Community Action. Through trainings in Democracy, Human Rights and Human Security, people are learning that they have the right to so much more in their lives. We are excited to mobilize efforts to make those rights a reality.

We are expanding our programs to include Spirituality as a vehicle for personal renewal, development and change. We have identified a need in the community for more spiritual elements to be integrated into daily life. Through the Yoga training we do with women and children, we offer exercises and disciplines that enable participants to decrease their stress levels. By helping them to become more aware of the things that cause them stress, we give them the tools to relax and open them up to hopeful and new possibilities. Similarly through workshops on breathing, we have helped the kids to identify new ways to channel their nervous energy into positive energy. We participate in staff devotions and discussions during which time we connect our faith with our present realities. We seek to integrate our faith into our daily lives.

Finally, we recently concluded work on a Training Manual for the Non-Violent efforts we undertake here at the Wi’am Center. Compiled from resources and local case studies over the past few years, this resource is a wealth of information and guidance for those interested in what Non-Violence looks like on a practical, everyday level. The manual includes simulations, information and case studies that will serve to further educate the community.

Future Plans

As the Wi’am Center continues to respond to the changing needs of our community, we try always to adapt effective and efficient methods for addressing current struggles, issues, and interests. Because of the continuing violence and oppression wrought by the Occupation, we have seen a growing need for **expansion of our Trauma Coping Program**. We plan to establish a unit for counseling as well as to continue and enhance our community approach in a more creative way by responding to the needs wholistically and holistically. We will continue our work with the children of this Bethlehem area, but we would also like to extend our services to those in villages and

areas just outside of Bethlehem. There is a great need for individual counseling. Children and youth alike are constantly bombarded with fear and violence, having grown up behind a wall and under constant threat of Israeli Army incursions. Therefore the Wi'am Center would like to provide our community with formal counselors to help young people process the many hardships they must face each day.

As for our youth and young adults, we would like to develop a **Youth Network** for creating connections, partnerships, and activities for youth in the West Bank. Though travel is often difficult within the West Bank (due to Israeli military closures, checkpoints and roadblocks), we have seen an increasing need for the young people of this generation to come together. We see the need for them to establish a trusting community with one another. And we see that they have much to offer each other and the Palestinian society at large. Through such a Network, we would continue to encourage them to work for Non-Violence, Democracy and an active civil society.

In recent years, there have been records of increased health risks for members of Palestinian society. Occupation and Economic Starvation have left their marks not only on the physical situation of the people, but also on their social and emotional status. With Social Workers and volunteers focused on meeting the social, emotional and physical needs of people living under such pressure, Wi'am will be able to improve multiple aspects of the **health in Palestinian Society**.

Finally, we are witnessing a growing desperation for employment. Employment has been on the decline for many years now because of limited access to Jerusalem (thanks to checkpoints and the wall), and in recent months because of an economically battered government (thanks to economic sanctions on the PA – most government employees have not been paid for nine months). Wi'am's response is to generate and invigorate local workers through our continued **Apprenticeship Program**.

Though this program was initiated a few years ago, we have realized a need to expand it. With this in mind, we seek to identify the interests of those who need work. As we identify these people, we aim to place them in offices and workshops where they will be able to improve their qualifications and skills. There are many skilled laborers working in the fields of Carpentry, Olive Wood work, Embroidery, and Mother of Pearl handcrafts. We seek to connect the younger generation with those experienced in these fields. We are able to help young families by giving them experience and opportunities for future employment.

Upcoming Events

As we celebrate the month of **Ramadan**, we are eager to provide some time for relaxation and entertainment to children, youth and families. Through numerous activities we have enjoyed celebrating this exciting occasion.

We are also gearing up for our **Annual Christmas Celebration**. During this time, we desire to offer hope and joy to children, youth, families and elders. People who are impoverished and marginalized view Christmas activities as an opportunity for new beginnings. This time of hope can be a great catalyst for change. We will be offering entertainment and education to our community this Christmas. Our two-day celebration will consist of one day for entertainment, including Musical Performances by local bands, Christmas Carols, Clowns and Puppet Shows; this will be followed by a day for education and gifts: creative arts such as drawing, clay shaping, balloon sculpting, face-painting, story-telling and mural painting about the meanings of Christmas, of Justice and

of Peace, followed by the distribution of symbolic gifts to children according to their ages and needs.