

# **Wi'am Newsletter**

## **Jan-May, 2014**

*I love you, my brother (my sister), whoever you are -- whether you worship in your church, kneel in your temple, or pray in your mosque. You and I are all children of one faith, for the diverse paths of religion are fingers of the loving hand of one Supreme Being, a hand extended to all, offering completeness of spirit to all, and eager to receive all.*

Arab poet and philosopher Khalil Gibran (1883-1931):

Wi'am continues working on the ground responding to societal needs which ranges from lack of awareness about gender rights, to the sharp rise in the level of violence at the family and peer-levels. Our focus is centered on ministry of reconciliation, advocating women rights, youth and children empowerment activities, and trainings in schools and community centers in areas of peer mediation, conflict transformation, leadership and advocacy.

### **Sulha( Ministry of Reconciliation)**

Wi'am continues mediating cases of conflict that arise between different members of the community. The mediation is very essential to attenuate the rising trend to resolve problems with force. Our work entails two intertwined stages: a mediation stage that seeks to reconcile conflicting parties; and a complementing phase that involves a counseling if the case involves a socio-psychological dimension involving the softer elements in the community: women and children.

It is worth noting that mediation is an inherent response to a situation in which the community is feeling the brunt of the general political and economic situation which exerts extra pressures on the family.

We have witnessed that our people are living in more pressured environment where the conflict has increased at an alarming rate coupled with more deterioration and

demoralization. Our people feel they are living in a big prison with more difficulties and terrible challenges posing on the socio-economic and political levels.

Wi'am has tackled around 140 cases from Jan-May 1914 ranging from domestic violence, peer- conflicts, employee employer, landlord tenant to conflict over land. Therefore, Wi'am has been using Sulha coupled with different techniques and skills from other schools locally and abroad.



### **Non Violent activities:**

**As you know, Wi'am has been at the front line emphasizing the Popular Struggle through practical participation of Non Violence. The site of Wi'am in the shadow of the Apartheid / Separation wall is a witness for the beautiful Resistance that this CRO is practicing and a constant incentive for us to serve the entire community. Our staff, volunteers and affiliates call or join other nonviolent demonstrations, protests, vigils and marches in all the areas: Old City- Hebron, Cremisan Beit Jala, Nabi Salih, Ramallah Al Masra, Bethlehem, Hajla Village, Jericho and other place..**



***"We build too many walls and not enough bridges."***

~ Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

English Mathematician, Physicist, Theologian - "Father of Modern Science"

### **Women program: Gender empowerment and Trainings:**

Wi'am continues promoting women in the community to be active citizens at home and at the socio-political levels. We continue our training for women in areas of advocacy, leadership, UNR 135, CEDAW, human rights and problem solving to equip women with the necessary knowledge to be active participants with men in building a modern society based on equal rights and participation.

We are also contributing in the activities of women Coalition in Bethlehem area that works towards promoting women rights and gender equality.



### **Speaking Engagement Abroad:**

The Staff and Volunteers of Wi'am have been reaching the four corners of the World. Let us share with you one travel experience.

Zoughbi has been invited to the Christians Aware Conference which took place in Swanwick, Derbyshire from January 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2014. Zoughbi has also been touring parts of England hosted by Living Stones, [The Leicester Diocese](#) and Christian Aware speaking in different places, universities, colleges and centres.. [Zoughbi gave a talk at the 'Centre of Religions for Reconciliation and Peace' at Winchester University.](#) [There was a talk with Living Stones Group at Heythrop College, London](#) "Palestinian Christian perspective on [Conflict Transformation and Justice](#). There was another talk [at the Inter-faith Centre in Leicester](#). There was also an interview with- BBC Radio Leicester.

Zoughbi visited also Leicester Cathedral and met with people at St Philips Interfaith Centre. He also travelled to Cambridge where he met with Miriam Lorie of Cambridge Interfaith Programme. He also visited the Woolf Institute and Sughra Ahmed, Programmes Manager of the Islamic Society of Britain. There was also different visits and talks at Oxford University and other place. There was also a talk by Zoughbi followed by open discussion/Q&A at St Philips Church, Evington Road, Leicester. The talk is being jointly hosted by the St Philips Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi-faith Society and by Christians.

Thanks a lot to all who have hosted Marcelle, Rafiq and me a: Barbara Butler, Amanda, Andrew Ashdown, Mary Grey, The Arthurs, Duncan.....and many others.

(A good visit with [Zoughbi E. A. Zoughbi](#) and family to Coventry Cathedral...here in front of the font which is carved out of a boulder from the hills around Bethlehem. Also depicted scultures of reconciliation in the remains of the original Cathedral which was destroyed in World War 2....) Courtesy of Andrew Ashdown



### **Youth Activities:**

**Since Wi'am's foundation, the youth program has been very essential in Wi'am. Our youth has meetings frequently to discuss different interdisciplinary topics; We have training for trainers in Conflict Transformation, Non Violence, Leaderships Skills, Gender Issues and Justice... All of this training has equipped the young people with different skills and knowledge which help them to be transformed as well as to mitigate violence and be active agents for change. Some of them have been helping and volunteering at Wi'am in Mediation and different activities of the center.**

**One of the highlights of the youth program is the intercultural exchange program in which Wi'am host youth from the four corners of the World as well Wi'am has sent delegations and individuals to make the counterpart.**

**Dialogue of culture helps to diffuse stereotypes and prejudices and overgeneralization. Wi'am works for a culture of acceptance and understanding. Youth will be enhancing their demeanors, personalities, critical thinking and confidence.**

**Let me mention some of these exchanges: Washington Forest Ridge School, Bluffton University, Belmont University , Hamline University, Covenant Presbyterian-Charlotte in NC, Canadian Mennonite Students, Swedish Groups...etc..."Yes for Volunteerism"**



We are proceeding with the Volunteerism project that target unemployed-university graduated from Hebron and Bethlehem areas including remote villages. The project aims to achieve two objectives: enhance the spirit of volunteerism among young people and the community in general; and provide unemployed grad's with a rare opportunity to volunteer in civic organizations to gain on-the job knowledge and at the same time share their knowledge in the daily work of the organization.

After training the volunteers, they did a 3-and-half month placement in different organizations gaining on-the-job experience, sharing their knowledge and involved in the daily activities of the organization. After that, the volunteers' will deliver social initiatives that respond to social need in Hebron and Bethlehem area. In addition, the community awareness on the values of voluntarism has been enhanced through media awareness, public hall-meeting and a conference on that topic.

In the final analysis, we can surely affirm that providing unemployed youth with placement opportunities' have been very rewarding in improving the psychological demeanor of these volunteers and at the same time introducing them to the real-world of the job market with at least two volunteers finding permanent jobs.



### **Children Activities:**

\_Wi'am has been opening its doors for children to play in its playground. March and April were the months to prepare the garden, the playground and to put the canopies for the summer activities .Some activities took place in the last four months: playing and training. The peak of its activities will be in Summer Camp. Wi'am has added some items to the playground. The Children would like to send their appreciation and thanks to all of those who support their activities



### **Peer-Mediation in schools**

*Wi'am targeted scores of schools reaching around 200 students from grades 8 and 9 about peer mediation techniques to prevent school violence and peer- conflicts. Students learned conflict resolution, communication and mediation skills. Instructors gave them opportunities to use these skills to mediate conflict among their peers, encouraging them to take leadership roles in their school communities and to contribute to a positive, non-violent atmosphere in these communities.*

*Wi'am 's staff also have trained teachers and parents in a holistic approach to bring about change and violence reduction*





**Citizen Diplomacy: Orientation on the history and the political situation of the land:**

Wi'am continues welcoming visiting groups from all over the world orienting them on the political situation, culture and the history of the land. The visiting groups not only learn about the conflict but have the chance to meet peace activists and human rights advocates to deepen their knowledge of the Palestinian context. They are also exposed to the local people through field visits to areas affected by the Wall. Visitors have the chance to leave their mark on the Separation Wall adjacent to Wi'am center in which they do drawings or other graffiti that encapsulates their feelings and marks a solemn moment in their life.



### **Plans for Future activities:**

Wi'am is in the process to plan for summer activities for all, especially Summer Camp for Children. International volunteers have been recruited and other local staff and volunteers will be selected soon.

Wi'am is also preparing itself for the 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Wi'am. More meetings will be held to plan for the activities and celebrations. There has been some brainstorming sessions among the staff which suggest forming committees, dates and times.

**"The greatest challenge of the day is: how do we bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?"  
--Dorothy Day**