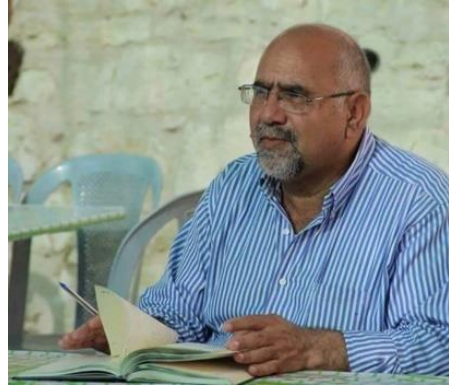


A word from the director:

2015 has been a very challenging year, especially in the Middle East. War, extremism, violence, terrorism, and fear have swept the area. For us at Wi'am, we find ourselves at the center place in which kids and youth try to bring change by challenging the occupation with stones. It is as if they are echoing the voice that says: "if people are silent, the stone's will cry out". The stones have cried out, but no creative or innovative solutions have been enacted. The Israeli occupation has been more oppressive. Our perfume has been tear gas and our shower has been skunk water. Despite all of this, Wi'am staff and volunteers continue to work diligently, equipped with steadfastness, perseverance, and resilience. We light candles instead of cursing darkness. This is why Wi'am staff works on Kairos time and not Kronos time. We have responded to the delay in income with more commitment. The lack of resources and funding has been met with more in-kind donations and volunteerism. The harshness of the occupation has reinforced and strengthened our commitment to nonviolence, popular struggle, and our pursuit of justice. Anger is transformed to creative and beautiful resistance through taking care of Wi'am, the children's playground, and the garden. We are grateful to all of you who have been with us through your visit of solidarity and support, whether it has been spiritual, social, or financial.



**“Let us be grateful to the people who
make us happy; they are the charming
gardeners who make our souls blossom.”**

-Marcel Proust

With Agape,

Zoughbi Zoughbi

Wi'am Yearly Report,2015

Wi'am Center has been going through uphill challenges and cross-roads during the past year. Nevertheless, we have been and are still facing three main interrelated challenges in our work: the financial crisis which has been biting hard; the current political turmoil which has been greatly impacting our work as we are in the epicenter of events which are causing us to double our efforts; and the diverse and increasing needs of the community for our services in areas of Sulha, Civic Education Trainings, Advocacy, Women Empowerment, Mediations, Youth Accompaniment, Hosting International Groups, Counseling, and Children Activities.

Our work in the community is immense and very demanding. However, our belief in our sublime message of peace and justice is not wavering as we believe in the inevitability of the triumph of light over darkens. For this reason, Wi'am staff and administration are doubling their efforts to meet the needs of the community and be a beacon for a more peaceful future and the belief that humans are the instrument of change when given the space for creativity away from coercion and fear.

In that context, Wi'am center is dedicated to building peace and fostering justice through innovative education, training, research and practice worldwide; it is dedicated to empower women, youth, children and families to be agents of change and be creative in their thinking and daily action. Wi'am works with educators, youth, universities, schools, families, community and religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, and other social networks to transform social conflicts and empower community members to be active agents in social spheres, political change and community peaceful change.

Wi'am has been fulfilling its message through the following activities:

Sulha: Community- Based Mediation:

The current socio-economic and political turmoil in our Palestine is causing havoc in the community with high unemployment, lack of economic prospects, and the shrinking of already meager resources which all exacerbate dormant social conflicts and feuds between families and individuals. We believe that addressing conflicts



effectively and responding to community needs innovatively can lead to peaceful and positive change. Sulha can help people transform destructive conflicts to positive and constructive relationship by addressing underlying needs and concerns, building sustainable relationships, and changing the contexts and conditions that foster violence. Wi'am works in the community and among families to change conflicts into opportunities for peaceful change. We also contribute to conflict transformation through our published literature on "Sulha" and the development of 'best practices,' through assessing and analyzing complex conflict situations and providing consultations/advice on conflict intervention and transformation to different groups and educational institutions, such as schools and universities.

We are proud of being able to transform around 260 cases of conflicts in the past year with around 25 cases pending further deliberations and further work. Let me share with you this case that we dealt with successfully:

Real-life Case Study of a mediation case:

Years of enmity between two couples on the one hand, and the family of the wife, on the other, has caused a wide fissure in the family and deep-rooted enmity that was translated into preventing the wife from visiting her parents or talking to them. This prolonged situation has caused deep psychological problems to the wife, the husband, their children and the extended family at large.

During Christmas season, the family sought the intervention of Wi'am mediators to bring an end to this ordeal that divided the two families and had broken their trust in the possibility of a peaceful end to the problem. After many shuttle visits to the two

families and attentive listening to each version of the story from the two sides, the mediators came to a conclusion that both families should meet half-way and take trust-building measures to heal the wound of the past. The reconciliation started with the wife visiting her family with the children and building the foundations for more visits by the other family (the husband's). Later on, the family of the wife paid a visit to the other family which had a great impact on the mood of the two sides and made a ripple effect that helped in thawing the ice and reaching an all-out reconciliation between the two families.

Wi'am mediators are proud that their shuttle mediation helped the two families go back to normality and helped restore broken bridges that caused lots of havoc on both sides. Reaching such historical transformation of conflicts hasn't been possible without the patience and diligence of the mediators and their belief that a third party intervention is a trigger for a more peaceful community that cherishes nonviolence as a way of live.

Youth Empowerment Program:

Youth are the greatest victims of violent conflict, poverty, exclusion and other social problems. Youth are also often perpetrators of violence, whether forced or voluntary. Yet, youth also have the greatest desire, and potential to work for peaceful change for a better future. Wi'am's policy in working with youth and building their life capacities is to



enable them to increasingly become key actors for conflict resolution, social transformation, community dialogue, and peace-building in their societies.

During the year we have built the capacities of 70 young people and trained them as multipliers in areas of conflict transformation, advocacy, mediation, gender mainstreaming, leadership, human rights, intercultural dialogue, volunteerism and democracy. The training and knowledge that young people gained paved the way for them to be active actors in their communities and actively participate in resolving peer conflicts, engage in advocacy and non-violence activities and wisely planning for their future and that of their communities. Consequently, training and education are a key component of capacity building for youth to help them to be active agents of change in their communities, and contribute to building peace.

It is worth noting that Wi'am customizes its training and education programs to meet the specific needs of youth, utilizing our long-term experience in civic education, peace-building and training materials. We are blessed with a broad spectrum of experiences in SULHA, case-studies and other topics used to address various stages of conflict and peace-building that are helpful in training youth.



Youth Intercultural Exchange: educational project about dialogue, citizenship and nonviolent transformation of conflict.

Wi'am's youth have participated in 10 activities locally and around the world that include exchange programs and joint activities. For example, in August, 13 Wiam youngsters participated in a dialogue camp of the 'Peace School of Monte Sole', in Italy. The exchange was devoted to youngsters between 16 and 25 year's old coming from different countries, Europe and the Middle East. The aim of the exchange was to foster relationships, establish contacts, and to share experiences between them, especially those who are living in political conflict zones and those not living in conflict zone.

Thus intercultural exchanges allow young people to believe that they are living in a global village and realize that they are all on the same side of human struggle. The exchange was a mixture of open workshops, inter-cultural activities and small group discussions that focus on exchanging ideas about youth needs, ways of dealing with conflicts, prejudices, stereotyping and over generalization. Youth are able to bring with them their daily experiences, their memories, and their points of views about different issues.

It is a way of an active participation of all, in discussions and the productions of creative thoughts about ways of dealing with youth issues. The exchange was an effort towards future creative cooperation between young people as an indispensable tool for a real

understanding between nations and an actual settlement between disparaging opinions and points of views within working groups.



Youth Meeting in Taybeh Village: “Interfaith Dialogue”

There has been a lot of seminars, workshops, lectures in inter-disciplinary method that include different topics: conflict transformation, human security, art of dialogue and interfaith activities.

To give an example, 60 young leaders (18-23 years old) spent two days at Taybeh, discussing topics of trust, reconciliation, and collaboration through the story of Joseph, as told in the Bible and the Quran. There were many questions raised:



1. How would you describe Joseph’s relationship with his brothers? How would you describe your relationship with others?
2. Could Joseph have prevented the jealousy of his brothers? Why or why not? How can we in today’s world overcome deadly jealousy?
3. How would you describe his relationship with his father Jacob? How would you describe your relationship with your parents and peers? How do you deal with differences and encourage positive relationships?
4. Why would we always search for a win-win situation in our relationships and conflicts?

5. Do you think that Joseph's reconciliation initiative was right towards his brothers? Do you condone such action even if you are more powerful?

6-Who are the main parties in the conflict? What are their interests and their positions?

7-What are the themes of the story?

8-If you were Joseph, would you consider retaliation or forgiveness and reconciliation?

There were many preliminary meetings before the conference for students from different faiths. They have made a comparison between the story of Joseph in the Bible and the Quran. The meetings were an opportunity for students to learn about acceptance of the "other" and the fact that Joseph could have had a vengeful reaction to those who wronged him, but he chose to reconcile with his adversaries (brothers). The participants learned how adversity is an integral part of our life experience. In the story, Joseph, the son of Jacob, provides an excellent example of how to face and challenge adversity and seek forgiveness. Despised by his own brothers, sold into slavery by them and then wrongfully cast into prison by one who originally trusted him explicitly, Joseph could have grown angry, resentful and sought revenge. Instead, he developed positive character traits that enabled him to come out of his trials a better person. This is the lesson that we want our young people to learn, that is, we should reconcile with the other and seek a peaceful path that guarantees justice and equality to all.

Just Sharing Fellowship Awareness Session For young Female Students:

As part of Wi'am's activities for young women, Wi'am initiated a program in partnership with the Just Sharing Fellowship to raise the awareness of young women in the fields of interfaith dialogue, women empowerment, gender issues and cultural differences. Palestinian local young students were able to connect with their counterparts from the USA



through our colleague, the Methodist Intern, Grace Killian. Grace had been energetic in building their language capabilities and bridging the different cultures by celebrating their differences and accepting the other as they are regardless of faith, race, nationality, color or religion. They also marked the Women International Day by organizing a meeting that hosted 12 young women from Bethlehem (16-18 years old).

During the meeting, the participants discussed the history and background of International Women's Day and its significance for Palestinian young women who struggle for justice and independence.

The meetings according to Gina who is 17 years old, "were very interactive in that we asked questions and learned about problems that women are facing in the community with suggestions on ways of improving women's status through education, awareness raising, changing unjust laws and combating traditional thinking".

During the meeting the girls highlighted the significance of the Women International Day -#Make it Happen, which calls for change and transformation of old and obsolete practices. The motto itself is a motivating factor for girls and women to keep calling for a change in the negative realities around them, and to keep calling decision-makers and politicians to amend laws and practices that discriminate against women rights.

Our colleague, Grace Killian, A United Methodist intern at Wi'am. Published an article on Just Sharing in Response, the magazine of women in mission December, 2015 page 39.

"At the Wi'am Center, I worked primarily with a group of young women in the Just Sharing Fellowship, a narrative sharing project hosted by Wi'am in conjunction with Unstoppable, a young women's movement within the United Methodist Women of Western Pennsylvania. This project created space for young women to share their stories personal experiences across cultural devised and chasms of misunderstanding. Through a series of workshops, development of a blog and pen pal partnerships, these young women empowered one another's voices and stories, discussed shared humanity and joined struggle and ultimately used story telling as advocacy and listening as an act of love".

Peer-Mediation Training in Schools:

Wi'am center organized several Peer Mediation trainings/meetings for students from different public, UNRWA and private schools: i.e. the Shepherd's school in Beit-Sahour and Terra Sancta in Bethlehem, Talitha school Beit-jala (reaching around 400 students). The goal of the

peer mediation trainings is to help schools become a healthier, positive, and safe learning environment by empowering students to manage conflict, transform



relationships and enhance school climate. We succeeded in building the capacities of students with lifelong skills in areas of conflict resolution and mediation who in turn use these skills in the classroom to mediate peer conflicts successfully. The feedback that we received from the targeted schools clearly indicates that the school climate has improved with a significant decrease in the level of conflicts among students and better levels of student's achievement as a result of our intervention.

Above all, our intervention helped students gain perspective and understanding of themselves; improving school atmosphere by building relationships and building a strong sense of cooperation within the school community, including their parents, in order to address disputes that interfere with learning and create obstacles that challenge students' performances .



Workshop on Gender Roles for Students:

Wi'am organized workshops on "Gender Roles" for students, young men and women groups from different schools and universities in the West Bank. In the training, the students were engaged in role-playing that helped them understand and define gender roles in the behaviors and attitudes expected of male and female members of the society. The students are

more aware of how conflicts arise when a girl or a boy doesn't feel that his or her gender role is respected by others. Students also have discussed gender expectations that they might encounter in their lives/families/peers/societies. These expectations consider roles differently: It considers girl's role as a housewife in the kitchen, while, it expects a boy to have the upper hand in the family.



The participants also discussed the prevailing social thinking about the roles of boys and girls in terms of the dress code, work, manner of speech, and social status and the fact that these roles are developed inside our culture. So, the students reached a conclusion that these negative practices can be changed. The students agree that the first and one of the strongest influences on a person's perceived gender role is his or her parents. Parents are our first teachers--not only of such basic skills as talking and walking, but also of attitudes and behavior. Some parents still hold traditional definitions of maleness and femaleness which is different from what their sons and daughters believe.



Gender Activities and Justice for Men and Women:

Wi'am has trained more than two hundred women and men from all over the West Bank ranging from 18 years old to 70 years old on issues of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and justice in addition to CEDAW and UN1325. Participants have enhanced capacities and skills in areas of Gender Mainstreaming, Advocacy, CEDAW, UN 1325 and Gender Justice. Um Elie has been part of Wi'am's activities, "The training has giving me personal empowerment and enhanced gender relation in the family in which my husband and I are more appreciative of the roles that both male and female play in building better society and working together as one unit."

Children Activities:

Wi'am continues its tradition of welcoming and mentoring children all year long. During the year, we provided children with a safe space to air out their feelings of anxiety, learn new life skills, empower their critical thinking, encourage their voluntary spirit, and



provide them with a space to play and interact with nature in the garden. Workshops and extra curricula activities have been conducted to provide kids with the safe environment to air out their frustration, and stress. Drama, Dabka (local folk dance) learning, theater and art therapy have been used to help kids and their parents to eliminate trauma or at least to cope with it.

Local trips have been organized to ease their anxiety and to enhance their skills and learning about cultures, religious and historical places. Children's programs were an opportunity for parents and their children to meet together and enjoy the tranquility of the place. Wi'am has upgraded and modernized the playground where new playing items have been installed. Many birthdays and celebrations took place in our playground and in the gardens under the shade when checkpoints and Israeli Occupational Barricades didn't allow our children to travel freely around the area. We have also organized trips to the local pools for the families to swim at the time when our children and their parents were not allowed to go to the beaches because of the lack of permits.

Summer Camp for Children:

This summer, we continued our focus on providing children with a safe place to spend their days, a desperately needed chance to have some fun, and an important opportunity to pick up vital life skills to cope with the daily challenges they face. During the camp, children were better able to cope with stress, anxiety and gained skills in peer-mediation, problem-solving and decision-making skills. The



camps provided them with an opportunity to speak openly and discuss traumatic events they have witnessed especially those living under the shadow of the Wall. Children learn how to cope with stress and anxiety. Wi'am also provides an opportunity for children to engage in voluntary work and environmental activities that build their character and widen their perspectives and appreciation of the world around them.

During the summer camp children were also able to enjoy singing, theatre, folk dancing, swimming, drawing, drama, and poetry recitation as well as excursions to historical and theme parks in the area. Allow me to share with you the feedback of Samira, 12 years old:

“My favorite moment was joining Wi’am summer camp and making the most of the safe-space and learning opportunities that Wi’am provided.....I have learned new life skills, gained better knowledge that helped me cope with conflicts, and opened my perspective to new ideas and initiatives. The camp was an opportunity to enjoy extra-curricular activities that we lack in our schools...”



Women Empowerment Program:

Wi’am continues its relentless efforts to empower women’s rights on all levels for the sake of advancing women participation in decision-making and helping in changing discriminatory laws and practices. Wi’am’s staff and volunteers work tirelessly to combat all kinds of violence, defend the marginalized, advocate for the disempowered, mediate and transform conflict in a holistic approach. We work with women on the following levels: economically, psychologically, socially, politically and on all levels of human rights.



The following chart illustrates our work:

OVERALL OBJECTIVE:		
ACTIVITY: Psycho-social and medical counseling,	Results	Outcome
1. Provide psycho-social counseling and mediation/reconciliation support to women who are victims of violence and conflict. Counseling is offered to both victims and families.	A. 100 Women and their families have received immediate care and counseling support after instances of domestic violence. B. 4 sexual harassment cases have been treated. C. 6 women have been treated after being affected by violence of the occupation and military harassment	A-There has been a significant improvement of the psychological well-being of the women we treated... B-The intervention helped in regaining and putting in order broken relationship between women, their spouses and their families (at least 10 persons).
2. A-Conduct assessments in different locations to identify the needs of women and families and identify cases of Domestic violence. B-Monitor and document cases of domestic violence and human Rights abuses.	A- We have compiled a database of women victims of domestic violence in three different areas of the West Bank (Hebron, Bethlehem and Jericho) B- We have created an accountable action plan that responds to the needs of the targeted communities.	A-Wi'am's interventions in the targeted communities have been enhanced through the use and completion of database. B- Enhanced intervention and monitoring in dealing with cases of domestic violence as a result of the availability of the data record.
3. Organize discussion groups with social workers for abused women and men.	A-Wi'am organized fifteen discussion groups hosting 50 women and men led by social workers and a psychologist discussing issues of domestic violence and its repercussions on the families.	A- Women have more awareness on issues related to domestic violence and its implications on the family. B- A clear mechanism is established for women to seek Wi'am's counseling and help.
4. Economically empower	A. Wiam has been able to	A- We have noticed an

women victims of domestic violence through job training, and volunteer positions to gain work experience.	support 30 women breadwinners, purchasing their products and encouraging them to be independent. B.Wi'am has organized five vocational training, workshops and facilitated the placement of four women as volunteers in civic society organizations.	improvement in the economic situation of 30 women which heavily impacted the social fabrics of the families. B-Enhanced women's participation in Wi'am's and the society activities and campaigns.
5.		

ACTIVITY: legal accompaniment and services	Results	Outcome
1. Provide legal accompaniment, consultations and services for women seeking justice and reparations for human rights violations and violence.	Wi'am has helped 20 women with legal advice and consultations related to inheritance and domestic violence.	Ten women have been able to regain their inheritance rights from their families as a result of our legal advice services and accompaniment.
2. Lobby decision-makers to change laws and aspects of the penal code that discriminate against women, such as lenient punishments for perpetrators of honor killing.	Wi'am has been lobbying with 18 women and development organizations calling for the ratifications of CEDAW and UN1325.	A petition was submitted to relevant ministries calling upon decision makers to change laws and protecting women's rights.

ACTIVITY : education and training		
1. Provide training and organize a national advocacy campaign marking International Women's Day on March 8 with the theme <i>Stop violence against women</i> .	A-One advocacy campaign on the 8th of March marking International Women's Day calling upon decision making to amend discriminatory laws that violate women's rights.	A-More than 100 women took part in the campaign in Ramallah City alongside other men and women all over the West Bank. B- Women have an improved understanding of the laws and human rights instruments and

	<p>B-Women have been trained on interrelated topics: CEDAW, UN1325 and mediation.</p> <p>C-A platform has been established to address decision - makers and the freedom to speak without coercion.</p> <p>D- Highlight the plight of women facing discrimination and gender-based violence.</p>	can act to defend their human rights.
2. Produce and broadcast TV and Radio spots on domestic violence awareness and prevention.	<p>A-Wi'am has showed "Duma "documentary about women 's abuse to 150 male and female at Bethlehem University where Mrs. Abeer Haddad had meeting with the young students, elder women and teachers.</p> <p>B- We are planning to have all the rest in 2016 on the eve of Women Intl. Day and on other occasions.</p>	Wi'am created more networking with students raising their awareness and campaign to find more creative mechanism to fight against women's violence.
3. Provide education and training to women to increase their capacity and leadership as human rights defenders in their communities.	Organized 8 training sessions to 50 women on issues of advocacy, leadership, human rights and mediation.	Improved capacities and skills of 50-trained women in areas of leadership, HR and advocacy.
4. Create an active network of women and men engaging in education and advocacy initiatives for change in political and civil society opinion on gender-based violence and impunity.	Wi'am is a member of two networks in Palestine to generate action to end impunity, especially for raped and murdered women. Best	A-The networks are taking leading role in advocating women rights and mobilizing the masses in vigils, conferences, demonstrations and

	practices learned through regional and international organizations advance joint efforts to combat domestic violence and establish joint networks on human rights issues.	meeting with decision makers. B-Wi'am's representative has been the coordinators of one of the meetings and thus has conducted bi-weekly meetings.
5. Provide training for women and men/ girls and men/ boys in gender issues such as women's rights, CEDAW, gender justice, and gender mainstreaming.	Wi'am has trained more than two hundred students ranging from 15 years old to thirty years old on issues of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and justice in addition to CEDAW and UN1325.	Participants have enhanced capacities and skills in areas of Gender Mainstreaming, justice, CEDAW, UN 1325 Gender justice.
6. Organize international and regional exchanges and solidarity partnerships to enhance networks and collaboration on human rights issues.	We have received 15 intl. groups from Sweden, UK, Ireland Denmark, USA, Canada, Latin America in which we discuss issues related to women and areas of cooperation on HR, and advocacy.	A vibrant intl., regional and local networking groups have been established e.g. Operation 1325, CEDAW, ICAN and IFOR_ with best exchanges of best practices and joint learning through workshops and conferences.

Wi'am Weekly Meetings of Women Club:

Part of Wi'am's continuous efforts to empower women in the community and activate their participation in civic and political life, Wi'am organized weekly workshop, trainings and activities in areas of gender mainstreaming, CEDAW, UNR1325, health issues, domestic violence, democratic principles, advocacy, conflict transformation, and volunteerism.



These activities helped women gain more insights about their civic and political rights, advocate for a drastic change in laws that discriminate against women and helped in

raising women's voices at different levels. Our work in promoting women's rights helped in highlighting women's problems and opening the eyes of decision-makers and the larger community on the need to give women more freedom of choice and participation.

Wi'am Involvement in 16 Days of Activism Campaign to End Gender-Based Violence:

Part of Wi'am's long history in raising the awareness of the community on issues of domestic violence and battered women, we showed a documentary film called "Duma", produced by Abeer Hadad, on the phenomena of women abuse and sexual assault that women face in the Arab community. This activity was in cooperation with the Department of Social Science at Bethlehem University. The film was attended by around



Women at Wi'am conducting Prayers for "Peace & Justice":

Wi'am center organized a joint prayer for "Peace and Justice" in Palestine that hosted around 50 women, internationals, and members of the larger community. The prayers were led by Father Jacob Au-Sa'da, Melkite Church, Fr. Issa Thaljieh from the Orthodox Church and Kristen Brown from the Methodist Church. In



their talk, the priests reiterated the urgency for reaching a just peace in the areas that can restore justice and preserve the dignity of Palestinians away from oppression and injustices. There was also a strong emphasis on the pivotal role of the family as a coherent structure that promotes peace and justice among their children.

In that respect, the participants praised the work of Wi'am as a corner stone for restoring peace within the family and enhancing the already shaken intergenerational unity.

Rev. Kristen had led one of the prayers wisely quoting Micah 6:8, "what does the Lord require of us, to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God..." and Matthew 5:1-12. The participants, on the other hand, emphasized the urgent need for peace, justice and security as a guarantee of unity in the family. They emphasized the need to live in dignity and get rid of the occupation, and, at the same time, cling to hope and constructive education and leaning.

At the end of the meeting, the participants collectively prayed that peace will prevail in the Holy Land, asking God's help in bridging the divides and resolve the differences that have shrouded the community.

Wi'am Yearly Tradition of Christmas Festival:

Wi'am organized its Annual Christmas event that hosted 200 children, families and elderly living in different Bethlehem areas. The Christmas-themed event was opened with a word from the director, Zoughbi Zoughbi, who talked about the sublime meaning of Christmas and sincerely expressed the sentiments of the public who are yearning for peace and justice to prevail in the Holy Land.



The event included Christmas traditional songs sung by the committed singer, Jacob Shahin that portrayed the essence of Christmas message. After that, Wi'am's women group sung different choral songs on the spirit of Christmas followed by songs from a group of children. The kids performed another expressive play that depicts the Christmas event and the new dawn of light represented in the birth of Christ and the

demise of evil. The kids acted the story of David and Goliath with new lenses and new cast with different history version where Goliath is the Israeli Army and David is the Palestinian land. George Talgieh, a promising child played the zither and amused the audience with vivacious songs and very powerful poems. He said: "I am very strong despite that I lost my eye sight completely, the spirit of Christmas has always granted me serenity, serendipity far sightedness and vision".

In addition, the clowns from EAPPI were moving around doing face-painting which brought more smiles on the children's faces.

During the event, the participants (elderly, families and children) have been interacting very nicely with the carols and the enjoyable event. They were full of praise for this opportunity that brought happiness to them and their children. At the very end of the festivities, Wi'am's staff distributed meaningful gifts to the children, women and the elderly, and invited the guests to enjoy traditional hospitality.

I don't know if we can say that we are lucky in Bethlehem that we celebrate Christmas on three different dates. This means Santa Clause continue to spread the blessings and gifts at homes, in different centers and on the streets. We are so proud that we distributed around 1000 gifts ranging from blankets for families and children, hygiene kits, Christmas chocolate and social handouts.

Tamer, a nine years old said: "This time I am warm despite the chillness of the weather not only because of the blankets but also because of the warm atmosphere and the family environment that Wi'am staff provides. I need not to forget the hospitality and especially the chocolate that keeps me and my brothers happy."

At the end, we are so grateful to the many, many people, groups, churches and organizations that kindly made this event a reality this year and participated in the blessed giving and gifts. They haven't only shared their gifts with us but their love, heart and empathy. Cindy Lew says, "Remember, the greatest gift is not found in a store nor under a tree but in the hearts of true friends."



Citizen Diplomacy: Welcoming Internationals in Palestine and Wi'am

As part of Wi'am's advocacy program, Wi'am continues its open-arms of welcoming visitors from all corners of the earth. We can proudly say that Wi'am center had welcomed more than 750 visitors during this year. The program that Wi'am devised for visitors is focusing around orienting groups on the current socio-political and economic situation in Palestine, and the



outreach work that Wi'am is doing to respond to community needs through our outreach activism, mediation, non-violence and advocacy campaigns. Individuals are debriefed on the situation; enjoy our exquisite traditional meals done at the hand of a Wi'am's "Chef" (Maqluba, Hummus and Falafel to name the least). Visitors enjoyed our field trips and awareness raising tours in different West Bank Area such as Hebron and refugee camps to see the plight of Palestinians incarcerated by the occupation measures, settlements, by-pass roads, and refugee camps. They had the chance to meet people on the ground and to witness first-hand the experiences of those who suffer most.

In brief, our citizen diplomacy program is an opportunity to focus on the general socio-political situation and the injustices that Palestinians are enduring from the occupation. It is also a medium to highlight Wi'am's civic interventions that actively respond to this situation and lead to better community building and coping mechanisms.

In his words, Usama Nicola
“Alternative tourism is our window to the outside world that allow us to tell our stories and yearnings for justice and peace, and , at the same time , help visitors learn about Wi’am’s outreach work and different cultural, political and social aspects of our life.”



Local Tourism has been activated and encouraged by Wi’am:

Wi’am Center hosted a good number of local delegations across the West Bank, Gaza Strip and from Galilee area. Wi’am welcomed a delegation from “Al-Rameh Women Senior Center”. The delegation was debriefed by Wia’m director, Zoughbi Zoughbi, about our work in the community. He also expressed his appreciation and support for such visits that help in building solid networks and cooperation between our people living on both sides of the divide, the occupied territories and inside the 48 borders.



Al Rameh (which literally means high ground) is the birth place of Samih al-Qasim, the renowned Palestinian Poet revered for his committed nationalistic writings and Archbishop Attalah Hana, an ardent outspoken advocate of the Palestinian cause.

The delegation also had the chance to visit archeological sites in Bethlehem such as Solomon’s Pools and Herodium.

Hosting women Delegation from Jerusalem

On April 2nd 2015, Wia'm Centre hosted 32 female teachers from Issawiyya school in Jerusalem. The delegation was welcomed by the director, Zoughbi Zoughbi, who debriefed them on the goals of the center and its outreach activities in the community which focus on empowering youth, women, children and the larger family.



The delegation was debriefed about Wi'am's work to empower women by strengthening and enhancing women rights, and to encourage their participation in social, political and economic aspects of life.

After that, the participants engaged in a discussion about the reality of Palestinian women and the problems they encounter and ways of dealing with it. In that respect, Wi'am director and staff highlighted the role Wi'am plays in empowering women rights and providing women with opportunities to enhance their skills through different activities that reach marginalized women. The participants also discussed the social roles that women play in the community and the need for more robust equality with men.



Wi'am's Advocacy & Non-Violence Activism:

Let me quote the inspiring words of Wi'am director, Zoughbi Z.: *"Nonviolence is not passiveness, weakness or surrender. It is an empowerment and an ongoing*



struggle requiring inner strength and perseverance: "We are looking for a new spirituality, one which deals with the etiology of hate and finds a suitable remedy for it: a spirituality of transformation on the personal level, community level and cross-cultural level. Such spirituality satisfies the needs of all concerned. Arms of Dialogue should replace Dialogue of Arms. This kind of spirituality requires us to shift from blame, guilt and victimhood to collective responsibility."

Wi'am works at different levels and fronts to promote non-violence activism in Palestine:

First, during the past year we regularly participated in different non-violent activism protesting against the Wall and the confiscation of Palestinian land in the area for the sake of building the Apartheid Separation Annexing Wall that dissects the land and seizes the fertile land of the Palestinians.



We regularly participated in the communal effort to protest against the confiscation of land in different areas, particularly, in Biet Jala City (near Cremisan Monastery and Bier Uneh).

By the same token, On September, 20th, 2015, Wi'am's staff actively participated in the demonstrations and vigils marking World Week for Prayers Sept 20.2015. The non-violent and peaceful demonstrations were an outcry against the occupation measure and the uprooting of olive-tree in the Biblical areas of Bir Uneh and the continuation of building the Israeli Separation Wall. The participants in the non-violent events included lay people, clergy, political groups, activists, civil society members, and different grassroots and land owners.

Bishop William Shomali led the prayers and offered a sermon on 1 Kings 21. It was a meaningful and peaceful time of prayer and reflection calling for peace and an end to the occupation based on a just peace. Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre reports: "Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala , and Beit Sahour churches and communities, together with Christian movements within the National Coalition in Palestine , launched the WCC World Week for Peace in Beir Ouna, the area where Israel insists on continuing its separation wall cutting these communities from each other, cutting trees from its mother earth. With an ecumenical service they prayed so that the Wall will fall, not only in this area but in all Palestine and even in Al-Aqsa Mosque where time and space walls divide Muslims from their holiest places.

We are not alone in more than 42 countries, churches, civil society groups, the human rights community, and others have all joined together to assert the conviction that the "The WALL WILL FALL". Their common assertion is that "God has broken down the dividing walls.#WallWillFall

Wi'am's staff, Imad Nassar , "our belief in Non Violence is incarnated in our daily activism that send a peaceful message to the World and an outcry against the injustices of the Israeli Occupation."

Secondly, Wi'am continues its training-for-trainers program for young people in areas of peace-building, advocacy, human rights, conflict transformation and non-violence. During the past year, Wi'am trained around 150 young people from different areas on issues related to non-violence and conflict transformation. The trainees are currently acting as peace-builder's volunteers at Wi'am and the larger community, contributing greatly in the efforts of advancing the message of nonviolence in the community.

It is worth saying that non-violence is the path that Wi'am, as part of the larger Palestinian community, is adopting on the ground to reach a just political everlasting resolution to the conflict.

Wael, the youth coordinator, "We are new young people who are exposed to creative thinking and empowerment through Wiam's trainings. Such trainings help us to build our capacities to face challenges on all levels of life using innovative non-violent and assertive transformational techniques."

We can summaries the strategy of Wi'am advocacy in three spheres:

- Locally: we advocate the national struggle against injustices of the Israeli occupation through protesting against land confiscation, apartheid wall.....and all kinds, forms and practices of Human Rights Violations.
- Regionally: we network with regional organization to promote human rights, and citizenship and for the enhancement and empowerment of the civil society.
- Globally: we activate ourselves throughout speaking engagement and taking participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, writing articles, media interviews and joint international campaigns.

Interns and Volunteers:

Wiam has a revolving policy of welcoming volunteers and Interns from different parts of the world who learn from the work of Wi'am, on the one hand, and contribute their knowledge to the work of Wi'am and its outreach work. We are blessed with many volunteers from Europe and USA.

International Conferences, workshops and seminars:

Zoughbi and Marcelle, from Wi'am, were invited by Living stones and Christian Aware to visit England in April, where they talked in different churches, conferences, and colleges on the following interdisciplinary themes: religious dialogue, political situation, Palestinian Christian presence, peace process, the Apartheid Wall, water issues, settlements, restorative justice, Jerusalem, religious extremism, living conditions of the Palestinian people, and the political prisoner's situation.

Zoughbi represented Wi'am in joining the regional forum of facilitators that took place in August, 2015. The Workshop gathered RFF members, members of USIP supported local networks of facilitators in Tunisia, Iraq, and Libya, members of the Generation Change and finally other partner organizations and guests from the Middle East and North Africa region (Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine). The purpose of the workshop was to present the progress made MICROAWARDS projects and to present other guests work and intervention in the region. Therefore, Zoughbi introduced the story of Joseph as an example of peace building based on forgiveness, restorative justice, and reconciliation. This literary act will be a crucial part of the resource book based on collective contribution of its contents by RFF members.

Wi'am Palestine Conflict Resolution Transformation Center represented by the Women's Coordinator, attended ICAN's 4th Annual MENA/Asia Regional: "Challenging Extremism & Militarism" in Istanbul, Turkey, on November, 2015.

The theme of the conference focused on women's innovative responses and strategies for addressing and preventing extremism and militarism. The participants, who came from different parts of the world, discussed ways of promoting pluralism and dialogue of cultures. From our side, Wi'am contributed many lessons learned from its long term experience in areas of reconciliation, interfaith dialogue and youth exchanges. Our effort at Wi'am is utilized to promote dialogue of cultures and to influence policies and practices that fight militarism and racism.

We also explored how the continued rise in extremism, militarism, repressive regimes and the occupation in our case is impacting civil society and peace building. The outcome of the conference focused on sending messages to communities that “unity in diversity” is one of the answers to extremism. Besides, the conference was an opportunity for people to explore areas of working collectively/collaboratively to address and contribute towards preventing the rise of violence and extremism, militarism and the securitization of our civil society space.

At the end, the conference reached collective and alternative strategies, progressive narratives and innovative responses that can fight conflict in communities. In that field, Wi’am had presented its experience and approaches in addressing violence through collective and alternative strategies in mediation, advocacy, and training of trainers program that targets both men and women. We also presented our plan of action that we will implement in promoting the International 16 days campaign to fight violence against women. The Synod of the covenant/mission to the US program of the Presbyterian Church USA invited Zoughbi to participate in the Synod 2015 as well as to be in the special program between October 16 to November 8, 2015 to visit and have fellowship with churches in Ohio and Michigan. Zoughbi has educated Christians in the US about the country, culture, and socio-economic political conditions. He shared with different congregations the context, challenges, and difficulties facing the living stones. He joined many Bible studies and provided a fresh perspective on the gospel and presented the local Christian witness with the struggle for Justice and Peace. In November, Zoughbi toured and gave lectures and workshops in universities, peace centers, and churches in the US in Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois.

Local conferences/Meetings:

Wi’am has a policy of enhancing the staff capacity by attending local meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences hosted by local or international **partners**.

The following are some examples:

A. Round Table Discussion on the Experience of Civic Society Organizations in areas of peace-building and Conflict Transformation:

On November, 2015, members of Wi’am staff, attended a Round Table discussion hosted by WV, and the participation of many civic organizations, at Bethlehem Hotel, to discuss lessons learned from our work in areas of mediation and peace-building in the community. In the meeting, we presented Wi’am’s experiences and approaches in Conflict transformation, Advocacy, non-

Violence, peer-mediation as a way to reduce violence and promote the message of peace and justice.

B. Sixth National Meeting of Women Leaders organized by Muftah

On April 8th 2015 Wi'am women coordinators participated in the Sixth National Meeting of Women Leaders organized by Muftah Organization, on 7/4/2015 in Al-Leaders' Hall in Ramallah. The goal of the meeting is to discuss the challenges and obstacles and future prospects for activating the leadership roles of Palestinian women in decision-making positions.

During the meeting, the participants were divided into small groups in which each group was composed of a number of leading Palestinian women figures at the decision-making level and the grassroots level.

At the end, the meeting came out with recommendations that focus around developing and putting forth mechanisms for networking between grassroots organizations and decision-makers, and the formation of a higher council for women.

C. Workshop on the Integration of faith in Wi'am's work:

On Wednesday, 18th of November, Wi'am Centre, delivered a workshop to a group of Norwegian Theologians and book writing leaders from Caspari Centre in Jerusalem, on the "Intersection and Integration of Faith and Peace building in Wi'am's Outreach Work". The workshop focused on the ways that Wi'am integrates faith and moral principles in our peace-building, mediation and non-violence activities in the community. We also focused on orienting the group on our model of peace building and how mediation [Sulha] is empowering the civic society as a whole and impacting youth and children as peace activist. The participants agree with Wi'am that the integration of moral values such Agape, justice, hope, reconciliation constitute a very important pillar for reaching a just civic society and gaining freedoms.

D. Participation in al-Liqa' local conference on "Theology and the Local Church" :

Wi'am staff and director participated in al-Liqa' theological conference on December 18-20th, 2015: "The Church of the Arab East Facing the Takfiri Ideology". The Conference opened with welcoming remarks by H. E. Bishop

Atallah Hanna, Fr. Dr. Fawzi Khoury and Dr. Geris S. Khoury who focused on the challenges which are facing the inhabitants of the Arab east in general and the Christians in particular. The conference was attended by tens of leading personalities, educators, community leaders and distinguished leaders from Galilee, and all West Bank Governorates.

In the conference, Wi'am director, Zoughbi, contributed in the second day through moderating the first lecture of the day which bi focused on "Takfiri ideology in Christianity: Christian Zionism and the likes." H. E. Bishop Maroun Lahham lectured on this topic.

E. Wi'am staff Attending Kairos Palestine 6th Anniversary: "The Truth will set you free":

Wi'am staff and director participated in the Kairos Palestine celebrations of its 6th anniversary on Friday 4th of December in Dar Annadwa International Center Bethlehem. The conference discussed four important issues which have not yet been addressed in the document: Jerusalem as the City of peace; Muslims and Christians together: Present and future; Jewish nature of the State and Inequality and Discrimination against Palestinian Citizens in Israel.

Wi'am's contribution was both sharing in the discussions with our experience in the field and also the director, Zoughbi, moderating the session on the Arabs living in Israel which talks about the systematic discrimination against Arabs and its implication on the Arabs living in Israel.



Partner Meetings

Wia'm had the pleasure to meet with Wendy Gichuru & Kaitlin Bardswich, representing our partners from the Church of Canada. The meeting was an opportunity to debrief the guest on the sensitive geographical location of Wi'am and the connotations of working in an areas surrounded by the Wall, the Refugee camp and the Settlements which incarnates the Palestinian Catastrophe and the quest for peace and justice.

Wendy and Kaitlin conducted a video interview with the staff to learn about the different aspects of our outreach work and learn about our experience in areas of women empowerment, non-violence, reconciliation, peace-building and youth empowerment. The message that we conveyed in the interview is an optimistic one despite the despair around us, a message of hope and moving forward to avoid yielding to despair.

The interview dealt also with the current political situation that we are facing; what caused this current sharp crisis and how we are coping and responding as a center to such situation through our communal work.

Meeting with KAIROS Canada Board Member

Wia'm staff had the pleasure to meet with Rev. Desmond Jagger-Parsons, the chair of the KAIROS board. Kairos is a continuous supporter of Wi'am's effort to empower community members. The meeting with the staff, centered on befriending Desmond on our outreach work and the activities that we undertake to promote justice, peace, conflict transformation, non-violence, gender issues. Rev. Desmond was debriefed about the challenges that we face in our work with women, children and young people, and the holistic activities that we are implementing to empower community change and cope with the increasing needs for our mediation services, trainings, capacity building intervention, advocacy, gender mainstreaming work and nonviolence.

Let us really appreciate the meetings that regularly occur with our partners like the Methodist Church , Dan Church , Amos Trust , Pilgrims of Ibillin , Swedish Church , Institute, Bilda SCSC ,Church of Canada , Nordic ACT Alliance, World Council of Churches, Scottish Episcopal Church, The Mennonites, The Presbyterians , The Lutherans, Church of Scotland , IFOR , Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, Living Stones... and the many individuals who have given us more hope, deepen our faith in the world and enhances our commitment to struggle for peace, Justice and steadfastness .

Literature and Publishing

Part of "Jabra Ibrahim Jabra" book Fair, Wi'am Centre in cooperation with Terra Sancta School for Boys in Bethlehem, organized on Wednesday, March 25, 2015, a ceremony on the inauguration of the first poetry book "The Hope Remains" by Albert Hani. The book was presented by Dr. Said Ayyad, Professor at Bethlehem University, who introduced the different aspects of the book, commenting on its interrelated themes, its significant imagery, its poetic significance and deep connotations which focused on the Palestinian steadfastness, historical roots, hope, and the role of Palestinian women as cradle for the homeland.



After that, Albert presented certificates of appreciation to all who contributed to the successful launch of ceremony, particularly, praising the role of Wi'am in supporting and embracing youth innovations and cultural contributions.

The training manuals and other books have been more in demand locally, regionally and internationally especially the book on Sulha.

Final words:

Despite the heavy toll of 2015 on the community and the sheer injustices that Palestinians are still facing on daily basis, Wi'am continues to hold the mantle of peace and justice for a better future. Wi'am's staff are working relentlessly day-in day-out to empower community members and in promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts in the community. With our solid conviction that change/human development comes from the grassroots, we continue our less troubled road in helping community members be the change that they aspire in their communities.

Interns and Volunteers:

Wi'am's director and staff are very appreciative of the work and the dedication of volunteers and interns who contributed greatly to the work of Wi'am and at the same time benefited from the experiences and the learnings they acquired from different activities. Wi'am has always been a hospitable



center welcoming volunteers and interns who leave a visible marks on the local community as well as on their home organizations.

To all the names and heroes who become an integral part of Wiam's family we send you bouquets of gorgeous, splendid and scented flowers.

1-Rev.Jonathan and Dr.Helene MacNeaney from Christians Abroad England.

2-Grace Killian, Methodist intern, USA.

3-Alexandra Saliba, 4- FridaLundgren, 5-Sophia Persson from Jonkoping University, Sweden!

6-Nadia Abraibesh M.A. student 2016, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies .University of Notre Dame USA.

Let us share with all our supporters the following tips and insights that we have gained, concluded and summarized throughout our experiences with volunteers in the last few years.

Tips and Insights for a Successful Volunteer Experience/Internship at Wi'am

1. Palestinian culture is a collective one, this means that your participation in activities and work responsibilities is not only welcome but also expected. Participation encompasses many areas such as: Wi'am Center maintenance and clean up, clerical responsibilities, meal time exchanges, attending meetings (whether in Arabic or English), all the while being conscious that you are a representative of Wi'am as well as an "ambassador" of your country.

2. Wi'am is a community center and thus is a very busy place with multiple activities/programs taking place simultaneously. Flexibility is a must; adherence to time, schedules, or deadlines should be interpreted as subject to change (often). Expressing frustration or complaining would be inappropriate as well as ill mannered.
3. Regardless of your expertise, skill set, experience, or education, Palestine is unique. Your presence alone indicates your interest/concern. Palestinians have stories to tell and experiences to share, often times they are painful and traumatic, so keep in mind that we DON'T know how they feel because we haven't lived under chronic occupation/segregation/oppression nor do we possess the solution.
4. Refrain from judging or imposing what you think should be done (this is an unfortunate thing that tends to happen with volunteers from the West). If you are invited and do share your point of view remember that it is up to those dealing with the situation every day to decide whether they take this on board or not.
5. People in the Bethlehem community, permanent Wi'am staff, and family/extended family members require time of the staff. It is not unusual for them to be called upon in the middle of the night to settle a dispute. Keep this in mind and recognize that your wants/needs/desires/questions will be addressed when time permits.
6. Take Initiative- be a self-starter, look around at what needs to be done and do it. Remember you are here to be of help as well as to learn.
7. Be cognizant that everything is expensive here especially gasoline, it's almost three times what it costs in the United States and elsewhere. Do your part to contribute to the gas fund.
8. Recognize that the Wi'am staff have personal lives and family responsibilities, be respectful of their time and express gratitude often.
9. You may bring valuable skills with you which can be of benefit to Wi'am. See yourself as part of the team rather than just a spare pair of hands and after spending some time listening at the start of your placement you may want to share some thoughts with Zoughbi initially and then the team. Zoughbi is very open to sharing equally and sometimes the outsider's view is valuable.