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Palestinian Conflict Resolution & Transformation Center welcomes the New Year with high hopes and expectations.

With this letter we want to share with your our Newsletter for the period January 1st-March 31, 2016 and hope that we can count on your solidarity and support!

“We love Life”



ONGOING PROGRAMS

Sulha “Mediation”

Wi'am's commitment to the Sulha, conflict mediation process continues to be a foundation for cultivating a culture of restorative justice and collective responsibility. Sixty cases were dealt with in the last three months. The majority of these disagreements originated in the West Bank in general and in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala and in the nearby villages. The cases that were dealt with represent a wide variety of civil and domestic demands. Debt, inheritance and traffic accident disputes were managed as well as family and youth problems. The staff and volunteers at the Wi'am Center are available throughout the day and even late into the night to facilitate the resolution of all kinds of conflicts.



Mediation is not an easy process; it requires patience, resilience, perseverance and down to earth attitudes. Wi'am's staff work on Kairos and not Chronos time where we share ourselves, our minds, our hearts and our resources with others based on unconditional love.

“Leaders approach conflict with an eye for resolution. When handled effectively, successful confrontations raise team performance. To manage conflict effectively, you must begin by recognizing there are three sides to every story:

Yours / Theirs / The Truth”

— Angie Morgan

Citizen Diplomacy:

Wi'am hosted around 600 people as part of our Citizen Diplomacy and Advocacy. twenty groups visited and learned more about the work of the center, its place in the community, and what the greater conflict in the region means for Palestinians in the West Bank. The goals of this project are to increase the number of visitors to Palestine and encourage each of them to bring the Palestinian narrative back



to their home communities. We do this by providing opportunities for international citizens to feel at home in Bethlehem and learn about Palestine in the context of their own experiences in the world community. Visitors journeyed to Wi'am from all across the world in the past three months. We hosted guests from across USA, Sweden, Latin America, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, Britain, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Brazil and South Africa.

The participants in these groups were members of partner organizations, high school students, university students, political and religious leaders, teachers and interfaith members. We provide them with a home stay, Palestinian meals, the opportunity to assist in meal preparation, visit the refugee camps, and to participate in a non- violence action.

Wi'am's is ready to host and to do workshops, for students, or groups that they are interested in different topics related to social-political and culture differences. This will include: conflict mediation, women empowerment, advocacy, volunteerism, and training in areas of peace building, peer-mediation, non-violence, human rights and gender mainstreaming.



Advocacy and Human Rights Training Course on Monitoring:

Advocacy remains one of Wi'am Center's most important priorities. Community struggles are a reflection of the occupation, since the effects of Israeli military presence weigh on their condition economically, socially, and psychologically through restrictions of movement and demonstrations of force. Mustering a nonviolent answer and a voice of accountability is critical to enacting restorative justice in the future.



Staff and allies shared in collective action at locations such as Al-Waleja, where the Apartheid Annexation Expansion Wall is further isolating a community already displaced. At Cremisan, near Beit Jala, the vigils and demonstrations of Holy Mass has continued on Fridays, among the olive trees and grape vines. Wi'am and friends are disappointed that

this practice of nonviolent, community presence went unheeded by the Israeli high court and the wall is still slated to sever the fertile valley from the monastery, convent, and school that compose Cremisan as well as from over fifty families who are still rooted to that land.

Devotions:

On March 23rd, 2016 Wi'am staff and director welcomed Jennifer from Sweden. She's doing her doctorate in Contextual New Testament studies focusing on how clergy as well as laity, in Israel and Palestine engaged in different kinds of interfaith as well as reconciliation work. That morning we spent reading and discussing the eleventh chapter of Romans of the New Testament as viewed from a Palestinian perspective regarding how to understand parts such as the olive tree metaphor. Is it as a tool for peace, transformation and reconciliation? Does it pose challenges, create difficulties? Does it stretch our mind? Is it painful or part of our understanding to our roots and faith?

On another day Rev. Diane Dulin (United Church of Christ) and Sr. Marcia Sims (Sisters of Social Service) led us in Bible readings and reflection. Participants studied the story of "Prodigal Son" a Palestinian family experiencing trauma among its children ... both the one who leaves and then returns, and the one who remains and hopes for a happy future. Both long to find a new life. Rooted beneath all and holding them together for renewal are God's love, family bonds and the traditions of celebration which allow a new beginning.



Women's programs

Women embrace the opportunity to equip themselves for the future through Wi'am Center programming. Weekly meetings continued on Thursdays throughout the three months not only providing time for socialization but also the environment for education and growth. Women have the opportunity to express and discuss their perspectives on different topics such as women's participation on political life, health, social and economic issues.



On the eve of World Water Day celebrated on March 22, Wi'am Centre, hosted a local community event attend by members of the community. The meeting was run by, 'Awni Jubran, a member of the Water Department in Bethlehem. The speaker used the World Water Day as a time to focus attention of the participants from the local community on the critical issues of our area related to the lack of water that many neighborhoods endure particularly during summer time. He also explained in details the situation of water supply in the Bethlehem area and the Governorate. He explained that the reasons behind the shortage of water in the area is due to the control over water reservoirs by the Israeli Authority that eventually sells us our water. For this reason the local water company is obliged to ration water supply and pump specific quantities of water once or twice every week or even two weeks.



As part of The Coalition of Development, organizations in Bethlehem organized a demonstration with women on the occasion of the World Women International Day, on the 8th of March. . The event was attended by a large audience representing different segments of society and areas. During the solidarity demonstration, there were slogans demanding more equality between men and women. The participants demanded the abolishment of unfair laws that discriminate against women.



Wia'm participated with a group of women in the "One thousand Women Chain" that called for an end to the National Division between Fateh & Hamas.

Radio Talks:

As part of empowering the women rights, we are using the media to highlight women issues. Wi'am Center produced four radio talks to raise the awareness of the community on different issues that impact women rights and give women a free platform to voice their opinion. Each radio talk hosted two guests (man and woman) with wide experience specializing on women issues with creditable tracking records on the topics. We hosted women activist, lawyers, decision - makers, Human Rights defenders and others.

Vocational training

Wi'am is cooperating with volunteers from the U.S.A to start a project that will combine the traditional cross stitch of the Palestinian culture with products that will be of interest to Americans. They include: (Christmas stocking, Tissue box holders, place-Mats, Table runners and fabrics bowls).The volunteers worked for three days teaching basic sewing and how to make the projects individual .We anticipate the volunteers will return soon to work with the ladies.





Children's activity

The fondest wish of the West Bank community and Wi'am, on its behalf, is to provide a place where future generations can mature without hardships and enjoy living with others. The next generation is already here but their childhood is often depleted and the current pressures of living in Palestine are discouraging to young people beginning their careers and families. Wi'am continues its campaign to reverse the tides of despair in the lives of youth and, so far, the youth themselves provide plenty of reason to be hopeful.

Easter Egg Hunting

Wi'am wishes you a blessed Easter. JESUS IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED. Yusef and Elia, Yacoub and George celebrate and sang for Easter. All the kids then have been involved in singing and egg hunting where my colleagues Saliba, Tarek and Arij placed the Chocolate, biscuits and eggs in the gardens of Wiam.



Youth & Peer Mediation

The peer mediation program targeted 200 students from different schools such as the Lutheran Schools, Terra Sancta College, Seminarians, in conflict resolution and peer-mediation skills and then gives them opportunities to use these skills to mediate conflict among their peers and in the school. The program encourages students to take leadership roles in their school communities and to contribute to a positive, non-violent atmosphere in these communities. The teachers facilitated the peer-mediation work of the students and supervised the mediation done in their classes by helping the students to establish peer-mediation groups in each school ready to mediate peer-problems. In this way, peer mediation not only reduces violence in schools, relieves teachers of constant disciplinary problems, and also creates a cadre of student leaders who are well equipped to participate constructively in their communities. The project is helping parents of children take an active role in dealing with school violence and helping schools to be a better environment for learning.



Wi'am hosted students from Terra Sancta School, and Seminarians. After the director and staff welcome the student's, the director, Zoughbi debriefed them on the work of Wi'am projects. Also, he oriented them about the geography of the place and the history of the plight of the Palestinian people which incarnates in the Nekbah 1948 (the Catastrophe), The Neksah of 1967, the settlements and the Apartheid Annexation Wall.



Training Bethlehem students from the social science

As part of Wi'am's ongoing trainings and capacity building for students in conflict resolution in Universities, Wi'am implemented three workshops on conflict resolution/transformation for students from Bethlehem University. Zoughbi started with an Ice breaker and debriefed them on ways of conflict resolution based on analyses and mapping of the conflict. Groups of eight were formed to discuss and solve problems. They were supervised by Imad, Wael



and Zoughbi. Each group chose a representative to talk in the plenary and conclude with lessons learned from all the cases.



Christmas Smile

“Sometimes even the smallest things we do can mean so much to another person”.

Wi'am Centre organized its Annual Christmas event with the participation of children and elderly people from 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 expressed how much people are yearning for peace and justice to prevail in the Holy Land. This was followed by Christmas Traditional songs sung by a committed singer, Jakob Shahin that portrayed the essence of the Christmas message. After that, Wi'am's women group sang different Chorales on the spirit of Christmas, which were 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. In addition, clown face-painting which brought more smiles on the children's faces was done by International volunteers (EAPPI) who were helping in the event.



All through the festival 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 festival, Wi'am's staff distributed meaningful gifts to the children, women and the elderly, and invited the guests to enjoy traditional hospitality.



Quotation from visitors

I would like to share with you some of the quotations that we got from different visitors.

Janet Molloy: Zoughbi, one day your faith, wisdom & patience will be rewarded with Freedom for Palestine.

Dan Rieke: One of the best places in the world to see people living principles that promote enduring love, compassion and hope all the while encircled in a crucible of oppression.

Jan 12, 2016.
 was great to be here & to hear of your engagement
 are in solidarity with you & will always say to pray
 your strength as you continue the great work
 hope & light in this and the wider community.
 Phyllis Smith, Seymour, Denise Baker
 January 12, 2016 Continue to be the beacon you
 others will be greatly helped. God's work
 not be done a you truly are God's people
 Joan Fay Smith a joan.fay5@gmail.com
 Jan 12, 2016 - what a blessing you guys are, so
 Continue to be the light in the darkness for

January 3, 2016
 Thank you for your time, compassion and
 witness here. I hope to stand in solidarity
 with you!
 Rev. Abby King Kaiser
 Xavier University
 Cincinnati, OH USA

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