

Yearly Report 2023

The Event of the year

Wi'am Received the Carnall Peace Award for 2023

"Peace & Justice @PeaceJusticeSco

This year's Carnall #Peace Award winner is Wi'am- the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre, Bethlehem. Hear founder Zoughbi Al zoughbi next Wednesday in Edinburgh with a panel of Scottish conflict resolution practitioners.

Join online or in person <https://bit.ly/3EpbLtz>"



Wi'am the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, has the privilege of receiving the Carnall Peace Award for 2023 for "Working within the Palestinian community to spread the values of peace and justice through conflict mediation and transformation and restorative justice since 1994".

This is the third international award that Wi'am has received for our work, following the International Peacemaker Award from the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, part of the IPPNW, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and World Vision's International Peacebuilding prize in 2010.

Wi'am is pleased to continue its service to the Palestinian community and hopes to realize justice and a positive peace for all through our collective initiatives and commitment to justice.

Background:

While we celebrate the successes of the year 2023, we also look to the future, and the strength of the community will be one of our greatest assets, thanks in significant part to our staff, donors, partners, communities, allies and friends. The future is promising despite all odds, and we are ready to tackle the many challenges impacting our communities. We continue to push the line to inspire our target groups/communities and spark action to bring about positive change in the community.

At Wi'am, we have bold aspirations: to empower community members, promote hope, accelerate social transformation, reducing violence and cultivate just and peaceful societies. In short, we want to be a catalyst for positive change in our communities and the world. Since 1994, we have been tireless in our commitment to the needs of vulnerable people in the community by responding to their needs and empowering young people and children to take a leading role in community transformation.

At Wi'am, the communities we prioritize those are economically under-resourced, marginalized and shut out from a wide range of opportunities, including access to services and active engagement in community change. We also seek to partner with schools, community centers and Scouts to create safe and inclusive learning spaces for students, children, young people and women who might have otherwise not had access to them.

In recent months, we have witnessed the intense suffering of people in Palestine. We can humbly say that during the year, we were able to respond to community needs in the wake of the suffering in Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the lack of economic and political horizon that could give us a glimmer of hope for a better future. We are shocked and deeply grieved by the horrific loss of life in Palestine. Many innocent people in Gaza have now endured countless days of tragedy with no water, food, or medical supplies. There appears to be no safe place to go.



There are many challenges in the world; we see daily the transformation of individuals, families and communities. We are looking towards the horizon, we see injustice, degradation, and a loss of community integration, but we also see people of goodwill joining together, to save, protect, and transform lives and restore hope on the ground. We strengthen our resolve by living our faith in our actions and deeds, and we recognize that alone we cannot be successful; we are stronger when we join our hands with good-loving people who tirelessly support our work.

This report shares highlights of our collective accomplishments, groundbreaking work, the achievements of our work with different age groups in the West Bank. With each annual report, we are happy for sharing what our center has been doing creatively and how unique it is in its way of educating generations of peacemakers and undertaking direct action on the ground for conflict prevention, empowerment, advocacy, trauma coping, youth activism, mediation, counseling, advocacy and peacebuilding.

Wi'am continues to be an award-winning organization, and in 2023, Wi'am was honored to receive the ***Carnall Peace Award for 2023***. The award recognized Wi'am's work addressing the root causes of violence and conflict by bringing together cross-sectoral partnerships to accelerate collective action and forge innovative, real-world solutions to build sustainable peace. But as we always say, Wi'am is only as strong as its community, and this award belongs to all of us.

One of the report's key themes this year is the importance of giving hope to our beneficiaries and empowering people to better address and respond to violence, advocate for their rights and engage in active community change. Meaningfully engagement is our ultimate goal to reach a pluralistic society and active citizens who induce change and work for a better society.

There has been a tremendous amount achieved in 2023, and this report highlights our activities and work.

SULHA-Mediation:

In 2023, the total number of cases that Wi'am reconciled was 390 cases. This last quarter of the year showed a steep increase in the number of cases that reached our center because of the current situation that we are facing in the West Bank and Gaza. This situation puts immense pressure on the family as more and more people lost their jobs and suffer from psychological problems that finds its translation in more domestic violence, family disputes, interpersonal issues, husband-wife problems, cyberbullying, landlord-tenant problems, debt, school violence and youth conflicts. Our figures, however, showed that the number of cases under the categories: domestic violence, cyberbullying, youth violence, harassment rose 13% in comparison to last year's figures. However, we witnessed a decrease in school violence in comparison to last year by 13% as the result of Wi'am's trainings in peer-mediation and awareness raising.



Impact:

A total of 50 participants were interviewed sporadically prior to and immediately after the Mediation sessions are over. Of these, 30% were successfully reached for a follow-up interview approximately three months after the intervention. The analysis included data from our records that show whether parties returned to conflict or completely reconciled. The findings suggest that mediation had significant positive, long-term and immediate impacts on the parties involved in the mediation process. The parties reported that the issues between them had been completely resolved, rather than partially resolved, and normal relationship has been restored with complete satisfaction expressed by them.

-Parties valued the process of reaching an agreement through mediation more than simply reaching a settlement. In the long term, parties who went through mediation reported long-term relational benefits.



Case Study

Hadi and Mai had a contentious relationship since their divorce and had been to court several times over the past years regarding inheritance. They were separated eighteen months ago and things had gone from bad to worse. The two were unable to work together to handle the devastating situation even though they have a 16-year-old daughter as the husband is denying any legal rights of the women involved. The parties each live in different locations and the situation had escalated due to the lack of communication and disagreements between them. Even, the wife claims that she was stalked by the husband in many occasions in which she felt threatened and watched by him. It worth mentioning that the daughter lives with her mother.

Given the sensitive nature of the case and that time was of the essence, we quickly scheduled a shuttle mediation between the parties involved until we reached a face-to-face mediation. During the mediation, their goal was to be able to communicate with each other about the situation, come up with an agreement and work with each other to foster a positive relationship. The parties came to mediation and had difficult but necessary conversations with the help of Wi'am mediators.

By the end of the day, the parents were able to put their differences aside, listen to each other, and reach an agreement with respect to the distribution of the inheritance among the three. Mai's needs were also met in which she was able to meet her daughter more often without limitations and even giving their daughter the freedom to move to stay with her mom anytime she wants.



Peer-Mediation

The project develops an integrated educational program for students and schools to understand and identify peer violence, acquire skills to deal with it and rethink procedures and mechanisms of prevention and management within and outside the school.

Participants:

The participants in the program were the 120 students from 3 schools in Bethlehem areas and students who were part of Wi'am's yearly summer camp. The students were from the fifth, sixth, seventh grade, and eighth grade form the age of 9 yr. to 12 yr.'s).



What skills students learned in the training?

- 6 Steps of Mediation to resolve student's conflicts
- Communication skills:
 - *How to listen without taking sides
 - *How to express feelings and needs
- Problem solving, how to improve school environment
- How to take responsibility for their own actions.

Impact:

- Enhanced conflict management and prevention skills, such as ground rule setting, active listening, issue identification, brainstorming, and evaluation of options. These skills help young people make better choices when confronted with disagreements, peer pressure, violence.

- Greater improvement with regards to empathy and to see conflict in a more positive manner, to think of different ways to resolve it.
- Fostering alternative thinking, mediation helps them better communicate with others most highly, identify any negative emotions
- Improved change in the mindsets and attitudes of students to violence with adoption of alternatives to the cycle of violence and revenge.
- There is anecdotal evidence of students using the skills from the program to intervene in situations of tension and conflict in their schools and home and looking for alternatives to conflict and violence.

"The school community as a whole have benefited from the implementation of this program in that students have gained vital skills in the form of problem-solving skills, confidence, leadership and increased levels of self-esteem."
Classroom Teacher



Summer Camp

Wi'am organized its yearly summer camp in which 80 students (6-15 years old) and 12 volunteers from Bethlehem areas participated in the camp.

The summer programs allow the children to get engaged in various extracurricular activities such as drama, arts, music, drama, voluntary work, education, pairing, environmental awareness, voluntary work, peer-mediation trainings, sports, paintball game competitions between teams. This Summer Camp provided children with a platform to explore and express their creativity and air out their feelings through art, folk dancing and painting. They not only made memories while having fun but they were able to face their fears, try new things, develop life skills, learn critical thinking, pushed their boundaries. The camp was an opportunity for children to experience and discover new hobbies, interests and that may be set aside or even neglected during the academic year. Campers were taken for road trips to visit museums and Churches in Bethlehem and learn more about the history/religious significance and how their heritage/history is connected.



In accordance with our pursuit to provide educational enrichment to our campers, we opted to take our campers to a nature walk around the Natural Heritage and participate in activities that increased their knowledge of the local plant and animal species.

At the summer camp, special trainers trained children basic methods and skills to handle conflict in a non-violent way using peer-mediation as a method to reach win-win situation. Becoming a peer mediator gives children vital communication and life skills, helping them at home and at school. Activities include role-play, forum theatre, games, problem solving and film clips.

Exposing children to folk dancing, theatre, painting and drama gives children increased competences to express themselves and reflect their reality in a better way.



Impact:

- »Improved resilience, confidence and problem-solving skills of children
- »Improved peer-mediation, problem-solving and social skills,
- »Improved children confidence in their personality with improved self-esteem
- »Empowerment of children's mental and physical motor and their critical thinking
- »Enhanced learning by doing they explore and experience the world around them



Youth Program

Our work at Wi'am is giving Youth adequate spaces and platforms to interact, learn and are sufficiently involved in local and national decision-making processes. As a result, their feeling of social and political agency and leadership on the national level and in their local communities increases. Furthermore, our work aims to provide "safe spaces" for youth and children in our existing premises in which youth can exchange ideas freely and implement their own activities and initiatives without discrimination.

Highlights of activities & results

In 2023, Wi'am engaged a total of 90 young people (45 females and 25 males) in various holistic programming activities including.



Youth Leadership Workshops:

Wi'am organized 12 Leadership workshops bringing together a total of 55 youth leaders from areas of Hebron and Bethlehem. Young people are trained to initiate and implement projects to address issues that are important to them in their communities. They learn to overcome obstacles that limit their involvement in social, political, cultural, and community life. Youth act as multipliers; they apply and pass on the knowledge they have gained in the training and through their experiences.

Training of trainers in peacebuilding and mediation. Through our work, 60 young people (18-25 years old) from Hebron and Bethlehem were trained in areas conflict-transformation, Sulha, decision-making skills, peace-building, social initiatives, and leadership skills, communication skills and dialogue. The participants mentioned that the trainings taught them:

- ✓ How to organize a training on youth leadership and peacebuilding
- ✓ How to organize youths and how youths can lead the society for peace and harmony
- ✓ How to avoid violence among youths and how to transform conflict into peace
- ✓ How to analyze conflict, find its causes and address them locally via mediation
- ✓ Realization that the youths are connectors and not dividers

Those who participated in the Tot confirmed that the training made them capable of organizing youth leadership and conflict transformation training at the local level with minimal support from other trainers. The trainings came as "eye opener" to identify their constructive role in the community and support local level peacebuilding endeavors.



Youth deliver 10 multiplications trainings in mediation to 120 students (10-15 years old)

20 active participations deliver 10 multiplication trainings to 120 students during the summer camp in areas of peer-mediation and problem solving.

Youth organize 6 community meetings hosting 60 key actors. During the year, a group of 20 young people organized 6 community meetings that hosted 60 key actors. The meetings helped youth air out their feelings and express their attitudes towards many social issues, particularly, the inclusion of youth in reducing violence, mediation. and young people in a round-table discussion

debating issues related to ways of enhancing youth participation in social/political change and means of promoting civic peace.

Youth run weekly “Wi’am Youth Café”. It hosted 120 young people during the year from different backgrounds and areas. Wi’am café provided young people with a safe place to come together, discuss issues of concern, formulate their own opinions about social affairs and the conflicts they experience. Youth Clubs created a gateway to moments when differences are celebrated, friendships are created, and we see what connects young people rather than what divides them.

Let me quote one of the female participants in the youth program:

“Before joining the youth program, my life was very dull and I always felt unconfident and insecure about myself. After joining the program my life has changed dramatically. Now I am way happier, have better relationships and I am way more confident. Not only that, I feel more secure about myself. I now also have the ability to handle problems.” Hiyam, 20 years old girl.



Women program:

Activities Implemented:

Training of Service Care Providers of GBV

The topics covered consisted of the following: stress management, counselling and Gender Based Violence. An estimated 50 participant attended the workshops (social workers and health workers). The training helped strengthen service providers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to the provision of quality services to GBV survivors. Participants demonstrated measurable improvements in their knowledge of the care of GBV Survivors and increased providers' readiness to respond to SV and to offer referral services.

Training workshops on CEDAW/UNR1325- Peace and Security.

The training workshops targeted 15 communities in Hebron and Bethlehem areas reaching 180 women, and 3 youth group (25 women and men). The training was about human rights in which women were empowered to work as human rights defenders, to promote women rights and to monitor human rights violations, their duties to hold the duty bearers accountable. The training also included aspects of CEDAW articles and how it is connected with the Palestinian laws and with UNR1325.



Generating Discussions about GBV

The weekly women Club at Wi'am that hosted around 120 women, youth and men (local key actors, religious leaders) sought to initiate the first steps of a longer process to empower the family and prevent GBV. The participants commented that the project had generated discussion about a previously taboo subject, and they saw this as the beginning of change. They said: "It is difficult to clearly observe changes, but what is important is that people are talking about it. I believe that this is the start of change."

Local leaders and the participants in general who attended the activities reported that their own attitudes and behaviors had changed considerably as a result of the discussions. One Shiekh indicated that his own attitude and behavior has changed towards accepting women as partners and not as passive.

Conducting GBV Prevention Activities

We have conducted 18 awareness-raising sessions per month reaching participants (120 men and 450 women). During awareness-raising sessions, our staff engaged community members in participatory discussions of gender roles and women's rights, the causes and consequences of GBV, and the need to end impunity for GBV perpetrators. Often, our staff shared information about where to seek help after a GBV incident. We also chose to focus on a different theme or topic during each session, such as early marriage and laws that discriminate against women and children.



Providing psychosocial care and Counseling. Psychosocial care included therapy with a female psychiatrist who has training and experience working with GBV survivors. By the end of March 2023, we 240 cases of GBV received diagnosis and therapy. The main types of GBV disclosed by survivors include psychosocial/ emotional abuse (32%), physical assault (24%), and denial of resources (24%). Forced marriage/cyber bullying, early marriage remains a concern particularly among rural areas in Bethlehem/Hebron.

Several survivors expressed deep gratitude for the psychosocial care they received. A mother who received therapy the psychiatrist said: “I wish to thank the project and tell the providers of the project that they changed our lives after that violence, because I even wanted to commit suicide after what happened to me, but it's they who gave me the courage to continue to live.”



Conducting extensive community orientation sessions which addressed GBV, causes and symptoms of psychosocial problems. During the year we sensitized 520 community members (women and men) on the GBV, its causes and how to report cases.

Income generation for 50 women. The project have supported women's economic resilience in crisis settings by strengthening their income generation potential and diversifying their incomes in order to not only contribute to their households but enhancing their role and agency in the community.

Conducting advocacy campaign marking women international Day. We contributed towards the effort to reverse socio-cultural beliefs that GBV is a normal matter towards advocating women rights and aspiration as partners with men and calling for the endorsement of the long awaited “Family Protection Bill”.

-Training workshops for 27 Women leaders from 16 local areas organized. The women participants have been identified based on various selection criteria with the aim to have their capacities developed for mainstreaming gender equality in community development and for advocating about women rights through outreach session that are taking place through women groups/NGOs in the community respectively. The topics covered during the training consisted of the following: Communication, facilitation skills, leading discussions, gender concepts and women rights from an international perspective, participation in decision making, women empowerment, protection, access to services and designing outreach sessions



Organize monthly discussion groups with men as allies that hosted 70 individual in 2023 (women activists, young people, key actors, religious figures, traditional leaders, academics, etc.). We placed particular focus on men as allies to use their influence and positions of power to help prevent and promote women's rights and gender equality.

Providing active and supportive mediation/hotline services to 80 cases of GBV with success in providing protection and prevention mechanisms for women facing violence and the dissolution of women's isolation and encouragement of women victims to venture out and seek help to solve their problems.

Women Weekly Club Meetings

The woman's club at Wi'am Center brings together 70 women coming from wide areas around Bethlehem in a safe and beautiful environment to share ideas and learn. They feel that they had moral duty and responsibility to transform, refine and shape their communities. Women's clubs are also "training schools" for women who wanted to get involved in their communities and the public sphere. In sum, women learn about social issues, identify civic problems, and devise solutions through volunteer power.



Activities:

- Organizing 6 airing-out sessions during the year on “psychological healing” and ventilation techniques” for 120 women, men and girls. It helped the beneficiaries gain insights, coping strategies that helped them to regulate emotions, ventilate feelings and calming their fears. In the meeting, participants learned ways of releasing stress and pressure through some of the exercises.
- Organizing a meeting marking the “International Day of Peace” on 21 September hosting 45 individuals with guest speakers focusing on the current situation in Palestine and aspiration for peace and justice.
- Organize a round-table discussions also focused on Climate change, women rights and protection.
- Celebrating the 4 weeks of Advent at the Catholic Action in Bethlehem with the participation of 55 women and men from different Bethlehem areas.
- Celebrating the 16-day campaign against GBV with a series of different meetings calling for an end to injustice against women in Gaza and the West Bank.
- Organizing 2 field trips to the City of Qalqilya and the city of Nablus to learn about the history of the place and participate in a local agricultural festival.
- Organize monthly Bible studies to 120 women and men in the Club run by different priests from ecumenical backgrounds. The meetings centered around several topics related to hope, peace and justice. The meetings discussed the significance and lessons learned from the story of “the Good Samaritan” and the story of raising Lazarus.
- Organizing Weekly Wi’am Café in which the participants discussed and put recommendations on ways of tackling social issues: family relationships, family violence, intergenerational relations, the challenges of the current situation, negative phenomenon in the community, values and morals.



Citizen Diplomacy Project: Come, See, Observe, Reflect and Act:

In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see
 You will
 know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike. At
 the same
 time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with
 regard
 to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. pilgrims and visitors seeking an
 authentic,
 face-to-face human encounters in the Holy Land, who wish to connect with
 the Palestinian.



During the year 2023, Wi'am welcomed ----- visitors, study tours and Pilgrims coming from different continents. At Wi'am, we expose visitors to our reality, the civic work we are doing in the community, and the myriad of religious, historical, and archaeological sites. Beyond the historical, Palestine offers walks and hikes in its extensive valleys, as well as desert hills, towns, and ancient marketplaces at the hearts of cities and villages nestled in the heart of breath-taking landscapes. Visitors will also enjoy Palestine's sumptuous cuisine and, most importantly feel the warmth and hospitality of the Palestinian people who will share with them the hopes and aspirations of a nation that is in the process of rebuilding.

We offer hiking to Palestine's natural attractions ideal for walking, hiking and exploring religious sites and tasting exquisite tradition food.

