



Citizens for **Justice** in the Middle East

For Immediate Release

Contact: Andrea Whitmore with CJME, 913-236-9825 or write info@kcsabeelconference.org

Kansas City Peace Conference Focuses on Palestinian-Israeli Conflict - Twelve U.S. and international Mideast experts will address conference for 300 area residents

August 30 – Kansas City, MO - A regional peace conference will be held October 20-21, 2006 at Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, Kansas. The Kansas City Sabeel Conference is a two-day educational and advocacy conference on the conflict in Palestine-Israel. The conference titled "Ending the Silence: Voices from the Holy Land" will draw on a remarkable list of speakers, all experts in Palestine-Israel matters, who will address a range of topics on current Mideast politics. Conference organizers expect 300 people to attend.

After the latest crisis between Israel and Hezbollah, Republican Senator Chuck Hagel from Nebraska urged the Bush administration to revive the Beirut Declaration of 2002, which promised peace with Arab nations in exchange for an Israeli return to 1967 borders. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor during the Carter administration, argued in August 2006 on National Public Radio that a fair, even-handed resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to long-term Mideast stability. Former President Jimmy Carter has repeatedly said that the root cause of the crisis in the Middle East is the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These prominent US officials all claim that a negotiated solution to the conflict is the best means to solve the problems in the Middle East.

Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu Akel, one of the conference speakers and moderator of the 214th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church USA, stated the purpose of the conference is to seek "a just peace based on a two-state solution as defined by international law and United Nations resolutions. Sabeel promotes theological, moral, ethical and legal principles for peace." The conference will include major presentations from invited speakers, as well as workshop sessions on history, theology, politics and advocacy. In the area of conflict resolution and human rights, for example, noted experts include:

- Dr. Mubarak Awad, a psychologist in Washington, D.C., is the founder of Nonviolence International, which advocates for peaceful solutions to the Palestine-Israel conflict.
- Cindy and Craig Corrie are parents of Rachel Corrie, a young American woman who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in the Gaza Strip on March 16, 2003. The Corries continue their daughter's work through the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice.
- Mohammed Zeidan is Executive Director of International Advocacy for the Arab Association for Human Rights in Nazareth. He has a BA in geography from Hebrew University and interned at Amnesty International's General Secretariat Middle East Research Department, and at the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights at the United Nations.
- Jonathan Kuttab, a leading human rights lawyer in Israel and Palestine. Mr. Kuttab was born in West Jerusalem and co-founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, Al-Haq (lawyers and others who assist with human rights issues), and the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners. He is licensed to practice law in Palestine, Israel, and New York.

Other speakers will address the religious aspects of the conflict, including the impact of the occupation on the lives of Palestinian Christians. These speakers will discuss ways for churches to work for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Ginger Kenney, a KC Sabeel conference organizer, who attended a Sabeel peace conference in Iowa in 2005, said this year's conference will present "the facts not demonization of any of the parties involved, more importantly, give concrete steps all people can do to address the situation."

- Rev. Sandra Olewine was appointed as the United Methodist Liaison to Jerusalem in 1996 and served in that capacity for 9 1/2 years. Having returned to the US last spring, she continues to write and speak with authority about life under occupation and its effects on both Palestinians and Israelis.

- Rev. Don Wagner, a cofounder of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, is professor of religion and Middle Eastern studies at North Park University, Chicago. His most recent books include *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost 2000*, and *Anxious for Armageddon*.
- Rev. James M. Wall is the senior contributing editor for *The Christian Century* magazine. From 1972-1999, he was the editor of the magazine. He writes and speaks frequently on Palestinian and Israeli relations.

A range of Israeli Jews or Jewish Americans will address the costs of the occupation on the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, as well as talk about ways to advocate for peace in the region.

- Phyllis Bennis, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, helped found the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation and wrote the widely-distributed booklet "Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer." Her most recent book is *Challenging Empire: How People, Governments and the UN Defy U.S. Power*.
- Dr. Jeff Halper is Coordinating Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and a 2006 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is an Israeli-American peace activist, professor of anthropology and internationally acclaimed speaker. He wrote *Obstacles to Peace: A Reframing of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (third edition, released 2005).
- Refuser Solidarity Network supports young people in Israel whose consciences will not allow them to do their obligatory military service in the occupied territories. A speaker from this group will address the growing number of Refusers at all levels of the Israeli military, many who have faced imprisonment.
- Anna Baltzer, is a Jewish-American, granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, Columbia University graduate, Fulbright scholar and volunteer with the International Women's Peace Service. Anna's presentation covers checkpoints, settlements, demonstrations, Israeli activism, environmental issues, the Separation Wall, and more. She is author of *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*. Anna was in Kansas City in May 2006.

To learn more about the conference, visit the Kansas City Sabeel Conference web site at www.kcsabeelconference.org or call one of the conference organizers: Andrea Whitmore at 913-236-9825 or Janet Baker at 913-649-9439. For interviews with conference speakers either before or during the conference, call Andrea at 913 236-9825 for arrangements.

The conference schedule is Friday, October 20, 12 noon to 9:00 pm and Saturday, October 21, 8:00 am to 5:00 p.m. The cost for the two-day conference is \$75, which includes three meals, snacks and attendance at all talks and workshops. A limited number of student and clergy scholarships are available. Reduced cost conference registration is also available.

The conference hosts are Justice, Peace and the Environment Committee of Village Presbyterian Church; Citizens for Justice in the Middle East (Kansas City); and Friends of Sabeel--North America. Several area churches, peace groups and businesses are sponsoring the conference.

Information about Citizens for Justice in the Middle East – <http://www.cjme.org>

Kansas City-based Citizens for Justice in the Middle East seeks to educate the American public about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group believes U.S. policy should recognize the rights and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, only by respecting the need to provide both parties in the conflict with security and self-determination can a viable and just peace be assured.

Information about Friends of Sabeel-North America – <http://www.fosna.org>

Friends of Sabeel-North America works in the U.S. and Canada to support the vision of Sabeel, cultivating the support of American churches through co-sponsored regional educational conference, alternative pilgrimage, witness trips, and international gatherings in the Holy Land. Sabeel is an international peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land who seek a just peace based on two states-Palestine and Israel-as defined by international law and existing United Nations resolutions. Sabeel promotes theological, moral, and legal principles for peace.



MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE

The Kansas City Sabeel Conference is a two-day educational and advocacy conference on the conflict in Palestine-Israel.

Ending the Silence: Voices from the Holy Land

October 20-21, 2006

Village Presbyterian Church

6641 Mission Road

Prairie Village, Kansas

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel**, Palestinian-American and moderator of the 214th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
- **Dr. Mubarak Awad**, a psychologist and director of **Nonviolence International**, advocating peaceful solutions to the Palestine-Israel conflict.
- **Anna Baltzer**, Jewish-American and volunteer with the **International Women's Peace Service** and author of *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*.
- **Phyllis Bennis**, a fellow at the **Institute for Policy Studies** and author of *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer*.
- **Cindy and Craig Corrie** are parents of Rachel Corrie, a young American woman who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in the Gaza Strip on March 16, 2003.
- **Dr. Jeff Halper** is Director of the **Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions** and a 2006 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- **Jonathan Kuttab** is a leading human rights lawyer in Israel and Palestine and co-founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence.
- **Rev. Sandra Olewine** served as the **United Methodist Liaison** to Jerusalem between 1996 and 2005
- **Refuser Solidarity Network speaker**, who supports young people in Israel whose consciences will not allow them to do their obligatory military service in the occupied territories.
- **Rev. Don Wagner**, a cofounder of **Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding** and author of *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000*
- **Rev. James M. Wall** is the senior contributing editor for *The Christian Century* magazine, who has made numerous visits to the Middle East since 1973.
- **Mohammed Zeidan** is Executive Director of **International Advocacy for the Arab Association for Human Rights** in Nazareth.

Conference Hosts: Justice, Peace and Environment Committee of Village Presbyterian Church; Citizens for Justice in the Middle East; and Friends of Sabeel—North America

For more information, call (913) 649-9439 or (913) 236-9825 | www.kcsabeelconference.org

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WEBSITE: December 2003/January 2004

POINTING THE WAY TO PEACE



To **Mubarak Awad**, the inside of an Israeli jail cell was nothing new. He'd been in many. What was new in 1988 was that outside that jail an Israeli man had joined him in his hunger strike.

He found it baffling. Awad, who was (and is) by no means thin, says he feared for the health of the 'skinny' Israeli. Though at first angry, he gave up his strike so this stranger could give up his.

Once free, Awad, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Jerusalem, met the Israeli, Edward (Edy) Kaufman. They've been warm friends ever since, working non-violently for peace. For many years Kaufman has been Executive Director of the Harry S Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace in Israel (although he took leave from 1991-96 to head the University of Maryland's Center for Development and Conflict Management). Awad, now an American citizen, is national director of the Washington DC-based National Youth Advocate Program and teaches the theory and practice of non-violence at the American University. At a recent event organized by the Nonviolent Peaceforce in Washington, he described how his friendship with Kaufman began.

The event celebrated the departure of eight women and six men for Sri Lanka, where an uneasy ceasefire exists after many years of civil war between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority. This 'peace force' has undergone intensive training in Thailand and will be led by William Knox, a British national with eight years' experience of peace work in Sri Lanka. Between them, the team members, who come from 11 countries, speak 21 languages. They are to be a model for similar groups Peaceforce will send to other parts of the world. They won't take sides. They won't try to negotiate or advise any side what to do. They will be there to aid and comfort civilians, often war's greatest casualties, and model peace in any way they can. Peaceforce's own model is Mahatma Gandhi.

'The dream of a large-scale international force to enable peaceful solutions to conflict, held by so many people over so many years, is becoming reality,' enthused Mel Duncan, Peaceforce's Executive Director, in their newsletter. Sri Lanka was chosen over the Middle East for the first experiment because peace seemed nearer there. But barring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a team may one day be in the Middle East.

One of the best-kept secrets is the extent to which many strong friendships between Jew and Arab continue despite the area's violence. I'll never forget the young hitch-hiker our press bus picked up in 1980. A corporal in the Israeli Defense Force, she told me: 'I grew up in Tel Aviv and never knew any Arabs until I joined the

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army. Now something has happened to me that I thought could never be possible: I've come to love the Arabs.'

Clearly attitudes can change when people get to know each other. They dump stereotypes and regard each other simply as members of the human family. For example, a *Washington Post* photographer recalls how she had a Muslim interpreter accompanying her in Afghanistan. At one point, she put her camera down and went to help several Afghans in need. The astonished interpreter confessed after-wards that he never knew an American could be humane.

Awad says most Palestinians and Israelis want peace. But he feels they need to become a lot more active. Many observers may say peace there is impossible. But if it can happen between individuals on opposite sides, why not between peoples? Awad cites his and Kaufman's example, noting his Israeli friend 'was even a Zionist!' But that Zionist was willing to risk his health, maybe his life, to move peace forward.

*This is the last in this series of columns by **Robert Webb**, a former columnist and editorial writer with the 'Cincinnati Enquirer'. Look out for a new writer in our next issue!*

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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Washington Report, July 2006, pages 66-67

Waging Peace

Author-activist Anna Baltzer's Book Tour Arrives in Ames

AUTHOR, Fulbright Scholar, Columbia University grad, and International Women's Peace Service (IWPS) volunteer **Anna Baltzer** brought her book tour to Iowa's Ames Public Library's Farwell Brown Auditorium on May 2.

Discussing her experience in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2003 and 2005, Baltzer explained, "I was working with IWPS documenting human rights abuses in the region as well as supporting non-violent resistance to the occupation."

Baltzer's presentation highlights the events she has written about in her book, *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, 2006.



Author Anna Baltzer ponders a friendly question from Samil Sermet, a Turkish-American resident of Ames, during her presentation (Photo M. Gillespie).

"I talk about the structures of the occupation, restricted movement, settlements and outposts, the wall, imprisonment," she said, "and after [audiences] have a general understanding of the system itself, I talk about how the people are reacting to it, nonviolent resistance, demonstrations, and Israeli activism."

The nonviolent resistance movement naturally is led by Palestinians who are living under occupation, she elaborated, but it enjoys the active support and participation of both Israeli and international activists.

"Many people don't realize that there are a lot of Jewish Americans and Jewish Israelis who are against what the Israeli government is doing," said Baltzer, citing Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Rabbi Arik Ascherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, as well as IWPS colleagues including Hannah Mermelstein and Kate Raphael.

Baltzer is an intelligent, articulate, and credible advocate for peace and social justice in Palestine, and her book, *Witness in Palestine*, is a compelling record of her work there for IWPS. Its 228 pages contain dozens of high-quality photographs, three maps, a glossary, and a resource guide, which provides a wealth of information activists here in the States and abroad will find useful.

One measure of the Jewish American activist's credibility is the attention she and her book are receiving from friend and foe alike as she crosses the country on the nearly 100 presentation book tour. The *Ames Tribune*, like newspapers in several other cities on Baltzer's itinerary, published an informative article announcing her presentation. During a sometimes tense question-and-answer session following her presentation, feelings ran high in the crowded auditorium as

several pro-Israel activists vehemently defended Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and sought to challenge Baltzer's narrative and analysis.

A clear majority of the Ames audience supported Baltzer and their own right to hear her presentation. Baltzer surprised Ames resident Samil Sermet when he introduced his question by saying he was from Turkey. She responded in his native language.

Library interim co-director Lynn Carey, who moderated the question-and-answer period, invited Baltzer's opponents to meet with her to plan their own events to inform library patrons about their views on the crisis in Israel and Palestine.

The Ames Public Library regularly sponsors presentations by local and touring authors as part of its public information mission, but does not endorse partisan political views.

—*Michael Gillespie*

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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Washington Report, May/June 2006, page 61

Waging Peace

Sabeel DC Conference Calls for Nonviolent Actions

SABEEL, THE ECUMENICAL Liberation Theology Center based in Jerusalem, held a conference March 3 and 4 at Washington, DC's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. In her opening keynote address to the conference, the theme of which was "Pursue Justice, Seek Peace," Sabeel Vice President Jean Zaru noted that times were very hard in Palestine, as Israel continues to build more settlements and its wall, U.N. resolutions and international law gather dust, and humanitarian aid is used like a playing card without regard for ordinary Palestinian families just trying to earn their daily bread.

Some Palestinians have opted to withdraw from society, Zaru said, others have chosen to comply with or manipulate the system, but most have chosen to resist as the only way to transform the structure of oppression. Focusing on nonviolent resisters, Zaru said Palestinians need to engage more of the world community in the struggle, and urged building a global movement for peace and justice with a vision including diversity and excluding exclusivity. The only possible peace, she emphasized, was one based on justice.

Interestingly, when asked how she—as a woman and a Quaker—felt about the recent Hamas electoral victory, Zaru answered that she did not see a problem for either women or Christians based on prior experience and the fact that Palestinians form a pluralistic society.

In an afternoon plenary address, Jeff Halper, coordinating director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, emphasized the need to globalize the movement to resolve the Palestine/Israel issue, because of its impact on the world. The issue can be seen, Halper said, as a battleground for human rights and international law involving Muslim and Jewish communities, the U.S. and, in fact, the entire global community. Discussing the foreign policy ramifications of the role played by Israeli-centric neocons in the U.S., Halper said he regretted U.S./Israel's policy effects: a "Crusader Empire," massive power vs. ordinary people, and the erosion of Jewish life due to policy toward Israel.

Halper described Israeli strategy as based on controlling the entire land area in three stages: creating facts on the ground for a matrix of control, securing U.S. approval for annexation of said facts, and unilaterally declaring permanent borders and the "end of occupation." With the first two points accomplished, Halper noted that the "element of Zionism that ruined everything was the doctrine of exclusivity."

A just peace was possible, according to Halper, if civil society mobilized in an urgent and effective campaign, calling for the use of boycott, divestment and sanctions. He concluded with a brief outline of his vision of a broad federation of Middle East states, including Israel and Palestine.

A number of workshops and open plenaries followed on topics ranging from Plymouth Congregational Church's Rev. Graylan Hagler's talk on "The Black Church, Liberation and Palestine" to Boston University School of Law Prof. Susan Akram's presentation on "The Right of Return: A Framework of International Law." -- Sara Powell



Sabeel Vice President Jean Zaru (Staff Photo M. Horton).



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Waging Peace

Speaking the Truth

At the March 3 **Sabeel** plenary panel entitled "Speaking the Truth, the Challenges Before Us," Susan Akram discussed maintaining a human rights framework for the Palestinian refugees.

Pointing out that "Palestinian refugees are one in four refugees," she noted that "the Palestinian proposal for the right of return reflects international law definitions for the refugees and it is consistent with the U.N. principles and practices of refugee rights." However, she added, "the Israeli proposal doesn't have a refugee definition."

Next to speak was Bill Fletcher Jr., president of the TransAfrica Forum, who talked about the "Apartheid South African Divestment" experience. There are two major ways in which the South African Divestment experience would be different from an Israeli one, he explained: "First, there was no Afrikaans population within the U.S. to push for policy," and "there was never a comparable situation to the Holocaust."

"In South Africa, blacks were faceless," he pointed out, "while Palestinians (like Arabs) are demonized." An important question to ponder, he said, is "What could 'we' do in the U.S. to go against the apartheid government [of Israel]?"

Rev. Dr. Don Wagner, professor and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University, discussed morally responsible investment among the churches.

"Moral economic engagement or phase selective divestment is not a blanket boycott," Wagner said. "It just targets U.S. corporations that are targeted at the occupation." He wants to know he "is not profiting from some one else's suffering," Wagner added, and feels that is how everyone should feel.

Wagner termed it "moral blackmail" to call this plan of action anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic. Quoting Martin Luther King, he said, "A time comes when silence is betrayal."

Rounding out the speakers was Liat Weingart, director of campaigns and programs for Jewish Voice for Peace, who discussed the Divestment movement and how JVP was working to show that not all Jews are against a divestment movement.

"If you want to be the bearers of peace, you also have to be the bearers of justice," Weingart stated. Acknowledging that there are difficulties because of differences between some American Jews and the Jewish establishments themselves, she pointed out that "Half of American Jews opposed the Iraq war, yet not a single Jewish organization opposed the war in Iraq."

One of the most important challenges, she concluded, was for people to get educated and begin letter-writing campaigns to their congressmen.

—*Banafsheh Saifollahi*