

Jerusalem Center for Women
Annual Report 2002

The Jerusalem Center for Women

Based on previous development in the field of political dialogue, in 1989, prominent Israeli and Palestinian women peace activists met in Brussels. This first official meeting led to an on-going dialogue that in 1994 resulted in the establishment of The Jerusalem Link-- comprised of two women's organizations-- the Jerusalem Center for Women on the Palestinian side and Bat Shalom on the Israeli side. Linked through their coordinating body, the two centers operate independently, maintaining executive and organizational integrity. This arrangement is in effect the first time that Palestinian and Israeli organizations have worked so closely together for the advancement of women and human rights in the region, as well as towards a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

JCW is committed to advancing joint peace work, despite the consideration of changing political realities. We believe that crises are opportunities for positive change that should not be missed. In addition, JCW is committed to developing relationships with other Israeli peace groups with whom we share a vision of just peace.

The underlying context for JCW's work is the dual nature of the struggle in which Palestinians are currently engaged: the national political struggle for independence and the right to self-determination and the struggle to create a democratic civil society based on a respect for the law, equality, social justice, and for political, ideological and religious pluralism.

The Jerusalem Center for Women envisions Palestinian women empowered and involved in the process of nation and state building and all aspects of Palestinian civil society developments. We provide women with venues for training in democracy, human rights, advocacy and life skills in order to advance women's status and role in the decision-making process, as well as to protect human rights and democratic principles and build a just peace and constantly designing and developing strategies to promote women status.

JWC's goals are:

Women's empowerment in community and political activism.
Protection and advancement of Palestinian women's rights and status.
Women's involvement in realizing peace based on justice.

Establishment of local and international networks supporting JCW in achieving its goals.

2. The year 2002

After a difficult year 2001, due to the structured violence used by Israel against the Palestinian people, the new year started with new energy and plans to go on and revive the Bi-national dialogue. September 11th introduced new agendas in world politics. An increasing threat of war and the end to a diplomatic, peaceful resolution of the US's conflict with Iraq. The eminent tension in the region in conjunction with preparation for war caused an atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty. Israel, strengthened through its alliance with the US, given the green light not only to continue its occupation but to oppress Palestinians much more. The distraction of the media's attention on the

Afghanistan/Iraq conflict shifted the focus away from the occupation of the Palestinian people and their land. Palestinians felt even more targeted and vulnerable, facing an escalation in the implementation of insufferable acts by the Israeli Military Forces, as destruction of homes and of agricultural land, prolonged curfews, absolute closure, mass arrests, humiliation at checkpoints, and killing of innocent civilians.

At the same time Palestinians saw their International reputation more injured, being justified in the global 'war against terrorism' were blamed of advocating for violence, while the entry of eye witness e.g. journalists and human rights activists became much more difficult.

The Israeli damage inflicted on Palestinians effected women's livelihoods in various levels. Women experienced pain, anger, poverty .While living under harsh circumstances, they are expected to carry out their obligations as mothers, wives and they find themselves forced by the political and economic situations not only to take care of the physical and psychological health of their family members but also provide them economically, in case their loved ones had been killed, injured or imprisoned. Current realities prove that women are the most in need to defend themselves legally, politically, socially and economically.

As a politically oriented organization JCW goes on promoting the empowerment of women for political participation, with the primary goal of raising their status in the Palestinian society. Despite the political turmoil we continued our work with Palestinian young and adult women, , to empower them into becoming participants of the public sphere in their community and politics, coping with all changes in the political reality and address new needs of Palestinian women. We believe individual and collective rights are very much connected and women are the most in need to defend both legally and politically during all periods.

The Center's work is mainly in the Jerusalem area, addressing the special needs of women there. By concentrating on a small and rather isolated area, the resources could most effectively be used.

Despite all obstacles throughout the year, significant achievements were made. The major programs continued on going, some programs were successfully resumed and new ones were initiated. JCW succeeded to revive the political dialogue, and enlarged the scope of new initiatives, especially its work on International levels.

Palestinian-Israeli Peace Work

The crisis, joint peace work between JCW and the Israeli women's Center Bat Shalom suffered from, was gradually overcome. Activities were resumed, clearer positions were adopted and the BI-National dialogue was successfully resumed.

As the occupation continued and the intensive assault by the Israeli occupying army worsened and An increased climate of fear regarding a war in Middle East was felt. It became even more important to make efforts toward an opening in the bi-national dialogue with Bat Shalom and to develop an alternative voice promoting sound

approaches for a just peace, It was urgent to make a message : there is a partner on the other side.

Political Dialogue between JCW and Bat Shalom:

By issuing it's 'Call for peace' on the International Women's day in March, in Al Ha'aretz newspaper, JCW started The Public Correspondence Campaign, an initiative of Bat Shalom and JCW, to publish public letters on alternating basis. This open letter called for "a true and just peace achieved only between equals" and "a new women's vision and politics based on respect for human rights and mutual trust"

On April 15 JCW issued together with Bat Shalom a joint declaration entitled "Palestinian and Israeli Women demand Immediate End to Occupation", which was published in English, Arabic and Hebrew newspapers and released via internet. Bat Shalom then published a letter in Al Quds in June, marking 35 years of Israeli occupation. On June 5 Bat Shalom published a letter in Al Ha'aretz newspaper; followed by JCW's response to Bat Shalom's positions on occupation. In October 2002 JCW published another letter where it presented a Palestinian Women's perspective on the security problem.

The campaign will be continued, even more frequently in the coming year.

International

The idea of WIPAN -Women's International Peace Activist Network- as an initiative to establish a global network of women, from grassroots activists to policy makers, committed to ending the occupation was worked out.

The intention is, to create a network of pressure groups that will advocate for the Jerusalem Link joint vision, and lobby for women's leadership roles in the peacemaking, peacekeeping processes. Develop an international solidarity movement to share resources and support each other. This year we were recruiting International contacts and supporters, and seeking funding.

Women advocating for just peace Initiative: An initiative that began in April 2002 that to date has included joint delegations to Brussels, Berlin and Copenhagen, Hanan Ashrawi's visit to Brussels and Anna Diaman to poulou's visit to Palestine and Israel. An advocacy program that will continue during next year.

Cooperation with V-Day: V-Day is a global movement to stop the violence against women and girls.

The Jerusalem Link as an initiative, working for an end of violence, an end of the occupation and seeking for a just peace, started a relationship with V-Day.

The highlight of this cooperation was the visit of Eve Ensler, V-Day founder, and Jane Fonda, V-Counsel Member, to Palestine and Israel in December and their meeting with a diverse group of Israeli and Palestinian women, among others the JCW's board. The visit featured frank discussions, shared dialogue and experiences amongst the women and follow-up ideas were presented and discussed, how V-Day can support to amplify the women's voices in the international community and media. Those were:

- Host Palestinian women's cultural events to tour different parts of the United States.
- Host joint Palestinian- Israeli women delegations in the US, using their contacts and media access to promote our political positions.
- organize a global conference in solidarity with Israeli and Palestinian women peace and justice activists

Palestinian-Palestinian Dialogue

As joint Palestinian-Israeli projects and International projects were increased in 2002, those addressing the Palestinian community continued in different forms. .

Relations and cooperation with different organizations in the central area of Palestine and Palestinian organizations on the other side of the green line got fostered in different occasions.

Conflict Management Course

"Leadership promotion –Introduction on how to Manage Conflicts". Ten young Palestinian women out of a group of activists took part in the program which concentrated on the dynamics of conflicts and how to deal with them in a creative and constructive way. During the seven meetings ;the three hour sessions of the training provided some theoretical knowledge but focused more on a practical approach based on experiences of self reflection, self – experience and group work. Results of the action: ten young women were trained and are potential candidates for future Training of Trainers programs working with Palestinian young activists. A manual was developed to guide the training for the future use of JCW.

Women's Empowerment for Political Participation

This major area of JCW's work addresses Palestinian Women, who are living in a situation where they are deprived of their civil rights, to be given education about their collective as well as their individual rights. The intention is to activate, mobilize, empower them to participate in the nation building processes, incorporating values and principles of democracy and human rights.

The training programs focusing on democracy, human rights, advocacy, grassroots mobilization continued. JCW's programs were emphasized different aspects, considering the individual needs of each group's structure and its participant's background. Being part of all training programs, the trains of communication skills, became this year the foundation of a whole new program.

All programs are aligned to the practical aspect, including field tours, campaigns, meetings with people from organizations, not only to train women but enable them to move towards positions of leadership in community, and participation in political processes.

The overall number of women that participated in those programs in the year 2002: over 200.

The trainings objectives were to raise awareness of rights; empower women by giving necessary life skills; emphasize the need for social and political participation; introduce gender awareness into discussions of democracy and human rights and influence the level of debate in the Palestinian Society.

The projects were run in cooperation with YWCA, Shu'fat Women's Center, Qalandia Women's Center and Al Quds University in Abu Dis Village, and Biddo Women's Center.

In the area of Civic Education and Democracy 66 women finished the training program, that was carried out at four different locations of the Jerusalem area, in the Shu'fat Refugee Camp, at Al-Quds University in Abu-Dis Village, at Qalandia Refugee Camp and the old city.

Similar to former training groups, the program aimed at giving a general foundation in Civil and Political rights, supplementing communication skills and emphasized women's interests in dealing with topics as History and Development of Women's movement, Women in Development and Special impacts of Israeli Violations on women's lives. To give an insight in practical work, meetings with representatives of Community organizations, such as Human Rights activists, Palestinian Parliamentarians, and women activists were organized.

JCW has facilitated the establishment of contacts for the women, to take active part in lobbying, campaigning for Rights, regarding current events i.e. upcoming elections.

Young women's Democracy and Human Rights training program:

Twenty one young women, all from 18 to 24 years old took part in the training for the project "Democracy and Human rights" at the YMCA, East/Jerusalem. The project aimed at educating a number of young Jerusalemite women to a number of issues that affect their daily lives as individuals, women and Jerusalemites. The project covered a range of topics relating to Human Rights, Gender, Democracy and women and legislation. Through training and discussions the young women became aware of the current challenges that face them and mechanisms to change current realities. The training program included tours and visits to human rights and women organizations, for example, one field tour through the Old City enabled the women to compare what they had learned about human, social, cultural and economic rights during the training sessions with reality on the ground.

The Public Presentation and Communication Skills program was first implemented this year. Due to the imposed closure on major Palestinian cities and villages, a number of interested women were prevented to reach the training.

The training course has targeted a group of young women activists in order to empower their capability of becoming better communicators. 18 participants from NGO's,

international Development projects, students as well as graduates in the fields of developmental studies, social work, law and media, either from Jerusalem or near by villages are trained in public presentation and communication skills in the JCW office. There was a reiterated request for such training by participants of former programs, who as activists realized a lack in their ability to make use of the media. Regarding its influence on the public. The media's role as an important organ of presentation made it more than necessary to implement a training focusing on this area, to open this venue for women and let their personal and public voices be heard and seen as part of a process for social change.

The program intends to strengthen and enable women to address the media and present themselves and their organizations properly through written and visual media, but also help them to overcome fears to become good public speakers. With eagerness the participants took the opportunity to develop their writing skills, press release writing, news writing and interview techniques and acting in front of camera.

Women's Training Program for participation in Public Forums and International Peace Conferences: This is a unique project that aims at preparing young Palestinian women for attending local and international conferences. Preparations for the project started at the end of 2002. The first part of the project's aim is to give the participants the chance to gain theoretical background on a number of issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, historical background, international diplomacy, theory and practice of conflict resolution, international conflicts and anti-occupation activism with particular focus on women activism. The second part involves inviting local and international activist and peace activists to speak about their experiences in attending international conferences focusing on women's experiences in presenting themselves and their organizations in those activities. The guests are also asked to advise the participants on presentation techniques, voice, appearance and dress, movement....etc. The third part of the project involves training the participants on how to deal with visual media, how to prepare for a short and long interview, how to look, dress and act in front of the camera. The project is concluded after the participants carry out a press conference simulation. The target group of this project is mainly Non- governmental organizations employees and women activists of the age group from 23 to 35.

A third project JCW started implementing this year is "From grassroots to decision making". This project started late 2002. The training program was geared towards increasing the awareness of especially young women, 18-30 years-old, in the Jerusalem district. Over 60 participants, all from local organizations and institutions were recruited to be trained in a three phase's program, starting with a general training on subjects as gender, Communication skills, democracy, human rights and advocacy. In the second phase workshops will be executed, focusing on group dialogues to put a depth in subjects as participation in legislation policies, violence, economy, women emancipation and culture. In the final phase the learned skills will be developed, by lobbying and advocating through developing their own socio-political campaign.

Additional Remarks:

JCW aims with all programs to encourage women taking initiative and so welcomes and supports suggestions of the participants, i.e. the wish of Al-Quds students to organize a training in mixed groups, so to exchange their views with male participants, and also the idea of women in the Qalandia Refugee Camp to start a campaign and work on prisoners issues.

At the end of the last years Program 2001 Training in Civil Education and Advocacy, students from Al Quds University organized a campaign against Israeli settlement activities in the Old City of Jerusalem. They produced a color booklet on settler attacks in the Old City that was published by JCW. This booklet, entitled "Settler Attacks through the eyes of Palestinian Jerusalemite Women" It is a documentation of women's experiences with provocations by Jewish settlers, telling their stories and strategies of survival, supplemented with photographs and statistics.

Voice Therapy project

The continued oppression and occupation did not leave anyone in the Palestinian society without being affected directly or indirectly. The situations of insecurity, constant danger, impotency and despair have created agonies, pains, trauma to many Palestinian individuals especially women.

The Voice Therapy program aims to support and empower women, who are experiencing crisis, caused by the aggression and harassment they are facing, the eviction and/or destruction of their homes, the loss of beloved persons through death or imprisonment. Sixty women participated in the "Sharing and dealing with loss" project.

Working in groups, makes it possible for the women to share similarities and to find ways of reducing their pain in a protecting and enabling surrounding. Those women, who are taught not to reveal their private hardships and deepest pain, learn to share their feelings without worrying about social ridicule. The program enables them to express their sense of helplessness, while they are bearing a great responsibility, and empower them to master their own lives and that of their families.

Three groups were formed under the project "Sharing and dealing with loss"- 'Female relatives of Political Prisoners'.

The fact of numerous politically imprisoned Palestinians caused the need for a program that deals with the hardships women connected to political prisoners are suffering. The project aim was meeting women and trying to hear their narratives and experiences regarding the imprisonment of one of their family members, and learn about the effect of such imprisonment on them and their families. Enable those women's voices to be heard and find strategies to ease the pains of oppressions and move forward in their lives in a constructive manner.

Target groups were mothers and wives of imprisoned men, a total of almost 60 women, between the age of 25-40 of men and women met in 12-14 sessions in Shu'fat Refugee

Camp Women's Center and opposite to Damascus Gate Schmidt School in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Those women and their families have unexpected changes that the imprisonment of beloved persons causes and the difficult consequences, the fear about loss, the unknown destiny, often the possible outcomes are sickness or death.

Again women face not only their own hardship, but find themselves responsible for the whole family, the children (often traumatized) who have to adjust a hard to situation. The stories were all documented, follow-up meetings were planned to be held with participants in the 2003 program.

4. Coalitions/ Conferences (national/international)

JCW Involvement in Palestinian coalitions:

- Civil Society coalition for changing the election law
- Women's movement coalition for changing the family law

Participation in International gatherings

JCW is committed to promote its vision for peace, and raise the needs and issues of women impacted by the Israel-Palestine conflict in the international level; as well as promote a global women's perspective and struggle for equality, social justice and human security.

With such intentions members of the Center traveled to several countries to participate in a number of meetings and events in 2002.

For the Jerusalem Day, Amneh Badran, traveled to Stockholm, Sweden from 7th-13th March, and delivered a speech " Palestinian-Israeli Women's Peace Initiatives and Power Relations" at the invitation of the Ecumenical Council of Churches. She was also the guest of the Swedish NGO Kvinna Till Kvinna, a donor of JCW, and additionally met with representatives of the Swedish International Development Authority.

Between 16th -18th of April, Salwa Hudeib-Qannan, JCW Board Chair, accepted the invitation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable rights of the Palestinian People to participate in meetings in Nicosia, Cyprus. She attended the UN International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace. At the NGO Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People she gave a presentation as part of plenary session entitled "The Role of Civil Society in Time of Crisis.

Early in May, Maha Shamas, a JCW board member and Terry Greenblatt from Bat Shalom, were addressing the UN Security Council in N.Y.C "about the importance of women's involvement in the Middle East Peace Process, and the urgent need to implement UN Resolution 1325, which states that women should be present at the negotiating table."

From 12th-18th May, Amneh Badran, invited as part of a delegation of Palestinians and Israelis, participated in three different events in Italy, associated with peace in the Middle

East. She participated and made the opening speech at the Perugia-Assisi March for Peace in Middle East, joined the Italian women deputies, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, gave a speech before the Italian Parliament, and spoke in group sessions at a national peace convention "Per la Pace" in Riccione.

Huda Imam took part in the "Seminar on the situation of Women in the World-the case of Palestinian Women" on the 5th June by the Isonomia Foundation in Spain.

Amneh Badran also took part in a Regional Meeting 'Women Waging Peace' in Austria from 30th June-4th July. Women Waging Peace was launched in 1999 to connect women in conflict areas to one another and to policy shapers worldwide. Members of the Waging network, all demonstrated leaders among women peace builders, are elected and appointed government officials; directors of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); lawyers, scholars, and educators; business, military, and religious leaders; representatives of multilateral organizations, and journalists. With varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, these women bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process.

In the time between 14th and 21st September Salwa H. Qannam travelled to Berlin Germany, where she participated in a meeting on "Women and Security Policy", initiated by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, and then attended a gathering by the Fulbright foundation about "Women in the Global Community" in Istanbul, Turkey.

On 27th October - 9th November Fadwa Labadi went for a speaking tour in Italy, part of which was the 'Meeting with the Mayor of di Suvereto', who gave her an honorary citizenship.

Huda Imam participated in a "Speaking Tour in Switzerland", in the middle of November, It was organized by Women for Peace and Women in Black.

Ms. Amneh Badran and Mrs. Maha Shammam went to Brussels, Berlin and Copenhagen from November 9th to November 16th November in an advocacy campaign for a Just peace. The inviting parties were the EU presidency and Heinrich Boll Foundation.

It has to be mentioned, that Amal Khriesheh, another JCW member, was provided to take part in a meeting in Greece on "Compatible human rights solutions to international – regional conflicts", and she couldn't leave because of the curfew. This is nothing exceptional, but part of Palestinians life under occupation, that affects the Centers work.

Invitations to attend Training Programs:

On "People's diplomacy, Non-Violence and Global Civil Society After 11th" a training Program by IUPP was run in Italy, in which Carol Najarian took part from 29th Sep- 20th Oct.

In September Youth Action for Peace and Association for Arab Youth Baladna Training Program in Nazareth. Ratiba Ala' Edin participated in this "Inter Cultural Youth Dialogue Post September 11".

Peace Award

On the 26th November JCW and Bat Shalom of the Jerusalem Link were awarded the 19th International Alfonso Comin Award.

This award is assigned by the Alfonso Comin Foundation, Spain, a private foundation that works to serve those who are struggling to build a fairer, freer world and for greater solidarity.

The Jerusalem Link was awarded for its honorable struggle for justice, freedom, peace and human rights.

The award, with a badge of 6000 Euro was presented in the public ceremony City Hall in Barcelona, which was widely reported by the media. Amneh Badran, Director of JCW and Shulamit Aloni, member of Bat Shalom received the award.

What JCW expects to do in 2003

Peace Building program

- Women International Peace Activist Network: JCW is working jointly with Bat Shalom on building this network as a continuation of the joint effort the two organizations are working on for a just and lasting peace. During the establishment phase, 4 months, both organizations will collect information about different women peace coalitions, identify who could join the network and contact them. This network will work on affirming the values of peace, justice, human dignity, democracy and human rights as a fundamental milestones to a just resolution to the Middle East conflict. The international network will advocate the Jerusalem Link's joint vision for just peace on grassroots level and policy making.
- Public Political Correspondence will be executed by voicing and posting letters from Bat Shalom to the Palestinians in the newspapers, and the same from the Jerusalem Center for Women to the Israeli public. These will be topics around the ongoing conflict and needs of both sides, a call for dialogue and for a just peace.
- Internal political dialogue within the Jerusalem link will continue towards developing our model of partnership and building joint strategies to achieve our goals taking in consideration the present political realities
- Participation in different local peace networks and advocacy campaigns in Europe and elsewhere. New partnerships are under establishment and JCW is involved in different international initiatives for peace.
- At least one training program on Conflict Resolution: With this program we will train 25 young women on methods of "conflict – resolution", definitions of "peace", democracy values and practices. The main idea is to introduce to young women activist that there are alternatives to facing conflicts. The project will focus on two main aspects of conflict: **Social and political**.

Training Program in women's rights, human rights, democracy and public participation.

- *Three groups of participants already under implementation.*
- *Advocacy campaign*
- From Grassroots to Decision Making : This is a twelve month project which aims at raising Jerusalemite women's awareness on democracy human rights, gender ,women's rights ,humanitarian law, communication skills and advocacy .The target group is Jerusalemite women from the age of 18 to 30 . The project is divided into three phases; each phase is around four months.

Female youth leadership program

Two groups of participants

- One:" Public Presentation and Communication skills ": This project targets young Palestinian women ages twenty to twenty five years old in order to empower them to become better communicators as well as successful leaders for the future. These participants will be recruited from different NGO's in the Jerusalem district as well as young activists and university activist students.
- Two "Women's Training Program for Participation in Public Forums and International Peace Conferences": During this eight month project the Jerusalem Center for women will recruit Palestinian women from local women's NGO's from the Jerusalem district and hopefully from Ramallah. The main objective behind this project is to involve Palestinian women in international and local conferences. This project will provide them with public presentation skills and expose these young women to a number of political issues , historical perspectives ,international law ,political analysis ,theory an practice of conflict resolution ,history and development of the feminist movement .

Responding to women's ad hoc needs: Palestinian Activists Support

Women Empowerment for participation in the coming Elections: This is a six month project aimed at raising Jerusalemite women's awareness of the importance of their participation in the democratization process and public life. It is also aimed at supporting potential women candidates for the coming election. Public meetings will be held over the period of six months in five different areas of the Jerusalem areas. Women of different age groups will be invited to attend these public meeting where women activists and potential candidates will be invited to speak.

Palestinian Women Detainees

- Transformation towards Empowerment: Women with Political Prisoners in the family:
The aim of this project is to provide support and knowledge to the families of mainly the women political detainees regarding their legal rights and services they are entitled to get from the PNA and the Israeli government, as well as the rights of their loved ones in Israeli prisons. Added to that recruit as much local and international solidarity and support with the rights of political prisoners of the occupation

Intra Palestinian Dialogue

- Continue with Iltiqa (encounter) using different methods such as the internet, creating dialogue groups on the internet so as to go around the obstacle of closures and checkpoints which obstruct physical meetings. Joint activities will also be planned and executed.
 - ***Empowerment through volunteering***
Participants at the JCW training programs especially the projects “from Grassroots to decision making” and the “Public Presentation and Communication skills” will be encouraged and helped to volunteer in Human rights and Women’s NGO’s and other activities .

Other Activities related to ad-hoc needs

1. Activities around the coming Palestinian election
2. Initiatives around the threat of transfer which is gaining legitimacy among the Israeli society.
3. Other different activities as needs arise during 2003.

Funding/ 2002

The main donors have been:

Kvinna Till Kvinna
National Endowment for Democracy
Tamkeen
KAIROS – Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Women for Peace
Women in Black, Switzerland
Others