

CHICAGO HEARING

Does U.S. Policy on Israel and Palestine Uphold Our Values? An Initiative of the American Friends Service Committee, Chicago

Sunday, April 18, 2010 from 1:30 PM to 5:30 PM
University of Chicago, Ida Noyes Hall

The Chicago Hearing was modeled after a Congressional Committee fact-finding meeting. It brought together witnesses to tell seldom-heard stories from Israel-Palestine that raised critical questions about the effects of U.S. policies in the region.

The Hearing highlighted voices of those on the other end of the pipeline of U.S. aid to Israel. Israeli, Palestinian and American witnesses testified to lives lost, freedoms denied and property destroyed by Israeli policies buttressed by U.S. aid and support.

Witnesses include:

- **Jeff Halper**, Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
- **Jad Isaac**, Environmental expert and Director General of the Applied Research Institute--Jerusalem
- **Cindy Corrie**, mother of Rachel Corrie, an American volunteer who was killed by a Caterpillar bulldozer during an Israeli government house demolition in Gaza
- **Amer Shurrab**, a Palestinian from Gaza studying in the U.S. whose two brothers were killed in Operation Cast Lead

These witnesses testified to the collateral effects of U.S. policies toward Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

A **Listener Panel** of academics and religious leaders asked questions and made comments following the testimonies. Invited members or staffs from the offices of Senator Burris, Representative Rush and Representative Jackson did not participate. Senator Durbin sent a staff member who listened to the entire program. Other panelists included:

- **Yali Amit**, Professor, Departments of Computer Science and Statistics, University of Chicago
- **Cantor Michael Davis**, Member of the Jewish Fast for Gaza and congregational cantor at the Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism
- **Cotton Fite**, Clinical Psychologist and Associate Priest at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Evanston
- **John J. Mearsheimer**, the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago
- **Barbara Ransby**, Associate Professor, Gender and Women's Studies, African American Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Chicago
- **Zaher Sahloul, M.D.**, Physician at Advocate Christ Medical Center and Chairman of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago
- **Ghada Talhami**, the D. K. Pearsons Professor of Politics, emerita at Lake Forest College

Helena Cobban of *Just World News* moderated the witness and listener panel discussions.

The Hearing centered on three topics. A speaker provided the context for each topic and introduced the witnesses. The topics with introducers and witnesses are as follows:

1. **Property rights:** Israeli government policies on settlements, house demolitions and property expropriation. **Mezna Qato**, a Palestinian-American PhD candidate at Oxford University and human rights activist set the context and introduced witness **Jeff Halper**.
2. **Freedom of movement, association and speech:** the impact of Israeli government practices and policies on these fundamental human rights. **Lisa Kosowski**, daughter of a Holocaust survivor and Board Member of the Arab Jewish Partnership, set the context and introduced witness **Jad Isaac**.
3. **Military aid and armaments:** explored whether Israel's use of U.S. military aid and armaments complies with U.S. and international law, and its impact on civilians. **Josh Ruebner**, National Advocacy Director of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, set the context and introduced witnesses **Cindy Corrie** and **Amer Shurrab**.

This Hearing examined U.S. foreign policy, Israeli treatment of Palestinians, and their relationships to fundamental American values and interests. The Chicago Hearing's Organizing Committee will publish a report by early June that states our findings, conclusions and recommendations. During the balance of 2010, we will discuss our findings, conclusions and recommendations with the media and elected officials at all levels of government. for follow-up by public officials and the media.

For more information, contact the American Friends Service Committee, Jennifer Bing-Canar at contact@chicagohearing.org or 312.427.2533 x19.