



A voice of conscience for peace, justice, human rights, and intercultural encounter

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Indiana Center for Middle East Peace (ICMEP) is “a voice of conscience for peace, justice, human rights, and intercultural encounter.”

2023 was a consequential year in the life of ICMEP. Three 75 year anniversaries that we marked – The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Prevention of Genocide, and of course, the tragic 75th anniversary of the Nakba.

In addition to our regular programming and interviews, we commemorated the Nakba’s 75th anniversary with a “Nakba @ 75” series, three Zoom interviews/webinars with 20 national organizations co-sponsoring the series and an in-person program. And in the last three months of the year, still as of this writing, in the midst of the Israeli genocide of the people of Gaza, a change of emphasis for our annual Gala, a series of Zoom interviews, and weekly “Protest Tuesdays.” And ICMEP was invited to consult with churches and other organizations about their own strategizing around Palestine solidarity.

A heartfelt “thank you” to our hardworking board: **Terry Dougherty (Chair), John Detraz (Vice-Chair), Patricia Pendleton (Secretary), Ahnee Conner (Treasurer), Ron Caldwell, Pam Etheridge, Sam Jarjour, Linda Kerr, Amar Masri, Barbara O’Connor, Loren Woody.** Advisory Board members: **Ahmed Abdelmageed, Jay Niederman, Todd Stephenson, Andrew Spath.**

It is because of you, each and every one of you, that we are able to do what we do.

Thank you!

Michael

NEW WEBSITE

Thanks to **Dannie Conner**, web-designer extraordinaire, and the technical expertise of our own Board Chair, **Terry Dougherty**, we have a new updated, engaging website. We’re still at indianacmep.org. And we’re still updating it, but you’ll find there all you need to know about coming programs, actions, news, all things ICMEP. Also on the website, you’ll find Michael’s regular Blog, sharing his thoughts and insights on issues of justice, human rights, and more.

IN-PERSON PROGRAMS



January 12

Dr. Michael Spath, Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* @ 100

February 9

Baktash Ahadi, Welcoming Our New Afghan Neighbors

March 9

Dr. Shawki Harb, A Surgeon Under Israeli Occupation

March 28

Dr. Edward Curtis, *Arab Indianapolis: A Hidden History*, film and lecture
With a grant from *Indiana Humanities*

April 20

Sam Jarjour, Israel is an Apartheid Regime: Human Rights Organizations Say So

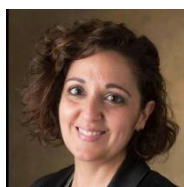
July 11

Dr. Abdelfattah Abusrour, Beautiful Resistance: *Al-Rowwad Cultural and Arts Center*, Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem



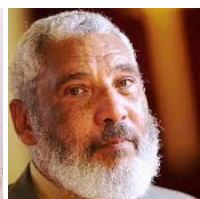
- August 11 **TaybehFest** – Thanks to Fr. John Newbauer, St. Mary Magdala Spiritual Center
- August 24 **Mazin and Jessie Qumsiyeh**, Biodiversity, Cultural Heritage, and Justice
Work in Palestine
- September 28 **Phil Weiss**, The Downfall of the US Special Relationship with Israel is
Happening in Slow Motion
- November 4 **Huwaida Arraf**, An Evening of Lament and Solidarity with the Palestinian People
- December 10 **Krystal Two Bulls, Tareq Abuhailima**
75th Anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights

NAKBA @ 75 SERIES (with 20 national co-sponsors)



- May 4 Interview: **Sandra Tamari**, Adalah Justice Project: Intersectional Solidarity with Palestine
- May 11 In-Person: **Philip Farah**, One Palestinian Christian Family's Story
- May 13 Webinar: **Dr. Ghada Hashem Talhami, Hassan Muhammad Ismail Jaber, Sam Bahour**
The Ongoing Nakba and Responsibilities for Justice
Thanks to the *Chicago Faith Coalition*
- May 18 Interview: **Phil Weiss**, *Mondoweiss*: Jewish American Journalism for Palestinian Justice

OTHER INTERVIEWS



- In addition to the regular interviews with our guests and our "Nakba @ 75" interview/webinar series:
- October 25 **Ayman al-Shaka'a**, *Community Development Resource Center*, Nablus
 - November 8 **Diana Buttu**, Palestinian-Canadian lawyer and spokesperson, Haifa
 - November 15 **Philip Farah**, *Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace*
 - November 29 **Rev. Graylan Hagler**, "Black Lives Matter, Palestinian Lives Matter"
 - December 3 **Zoughbi Zoughbi**, *Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution and Transformation Center*, Bethlehem

GAZA RELIEF



Because of the Israeli assault on Gaza beginning in October, and the tremendous humanitarian need, ICMEP changed the focus of our Annual Gala to **"An Evening of Lament and Solidarity for the People of Gaza,"** featuring Palestinian-American activist, **Huwaida Arraf**. We raised **\$12,000 for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund**, with a pediatric cancer clinic in Gaza, as well as providing care for families, mothers, and children there and throughout the West Bank.

Thank you to Board Treasurer Ahnee Conner, Chair of our Evening of Lament and Solidarity.

PROTEST TUESDAYS

Beginning immediately after Israel's assault on Gaza, we began our weekly "**Protest Tuesdays**," continuing to this day. The protests saw many young people joining familiar faces in front of the Allen County Courthouse, with signs and chants, supporting the people of Palestine, of Gaza, and critical of the US government's support of Israeli genocide.

ICMEP co-hosted a number of weekend Protests, too, with members of the Muslim community in Fort Wayne. Thanks to Board member, **Sam Jarjour**, for his important role in organizing many of the rallies with the Muslim community.



TOURS

In June, Michael led his **16th "Solidarity Tour to Palestine and Israel"** meeting with Jewish, Christian, Muslim political, religious, and NGO leaders in Palestine and Israel working for justice and human rights. Michael's **17th Solidarity Tour will take place June 23 – July 6, 2024**. Email Michael for the details.

In September, Michael co-led, with 2022 Gala speaker, Rev. Edwin Arrison and *Embrace South Africa* Tours, Deon Kitching, a tour of South Africa, "***In the Footsteps of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela.***"

The next "*In the Footsteps of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela*" tour takes place in May 2024. Email Michael for the dates and details.

peacequilts



peacequilts began its second year in 2023. Women gather weekly to **make quilts for organizations in Palestine or here in our Fort Wayne and Allen County community**. In June 2023, we took 45 quilts to the Holy Family Children's Home, known as the Creche, in Bethlehem, serving abandoned babies and toddlers and orphaned children under age 6.

Plans are underway for the quilts the women are making for 2024.

Thanks to Board member, **Pam Etheridge**, *peacequilts* coordinator.

LOCAL PARTNERS

ICMEP consulted and partnered with churches and other organizations seeking Palestine solidarity. **Thanks to Plymouth Congregational Church UCC**, Fort Wayne, Benevolence Committee for a \$2000 grant for programming.

Plymouth Congregational Church UCC, Fort Wayne, and **Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship**, Berne, IN, both began Palestine solidarity initiatives and established partnerships with the Wi'am Conflict Resolution and Transformation Center in Bethlehem.

The **Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ**, a "just peace" conference. **Michiana Voices for Middle East Peace** is reviving its presence in Goshen and Elkhart, IN, and once again wants to become a "chapter" of ICMEP. Thank you to Rev. Peter Martin.

David Janzen, Don Blosser, and Mark and Janet Rosenbury reside at **Greencroft Retirement Community Center**, Goshen, IN. They hosted Michael twice, as well as Al-Rowwad Center's Abdelfattah Abusrou and Palestine Natural History Museum's Mazin Qumsiyeh. Each program had 150-250 attendees.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Michael continues to be called upon to consult as well as to preach and give public presentations about the situation in Gaza, the rest of Palestine, and Israel. Board member, **Ron Caldwell**, gave a stirring four-part presentation, "Apartheid South Africa, Apartheid Israel" and Board member, **Sam Jarjour**, gave a presentation, "Israel is an Apartheid Regime: Human Rights Organizations Say So." Other board members, too, have given interviews, presentations, and public sharing about Gaza, Palestine, and Israel.

COMMUNICATIONS

ICMEPower continues its regular sharing of our upcoming programs, important news and actions. And because of the pro-Israel bias of the corporate-owned media and therefore, the need for accurate reporting, beginning in October, ICMEP upped the frequency of its twice-monthly ICMEPower newsletter to twice-weekly. Beginning in December, it became a weekly. Let us know if you have friends you would like to include in our email list.

ICMEP is increasing our social media presence.

All of our presentations, webinars, and interviews are archived in our **ICMEP YouTube Channel** (thank you, **John Detraz**). With over 455 subscribers, we continuously receive a number of "hits."

We have a growing number of Facebook, Instagram, and X followers.

A 2024 goal is to vastly expand our social media presence, including TikTok and other platforms. Thanks to Board member, **Pam Etheridge**, for coordinating our Communications.

LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN AND PETITIONS

With *Jewish Voice for Peace-Indianapolis* and *Indiana's Friends* (Quakers), ICMEP participated in a **letter-writing campaign throughout the state of Indiana calling for a Gaza ceasefire**.

In the first nine months of the year, we were co-signers of **16 petitions**, including: Stop Funding Israel's Atrocities in Jenin; the release of Palestinians' bodies killed by Israeli forces; opposing the suppression of Palestinian advocacy on campuses; attacks on Palestinian organizing in Germany; supporting Rep. Betty McCollum's resolution "Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act"; supporting American Anthropological Association's vote to support cultural boycott of Israel; and more.

In October-December, we signed **18 petitions** criticizing the US government response to Israel's atrocities in Gaza; urging President Biden to take action to hold Israel accountable AND for its atrocities, to not sell weapons to Israel; calling for a permanent ceasefire; and more.

ICMEP was a co-signatory on petitions with national organizations, including *Kairos Palestine*, *Jewish Voice for Peace*, *American Muslims for Palestine*, *CodePink*, *Friends of Sabeel North America*, *Adalah Justic Project*, *Samidoun*, *US Campaign for Palestinian Rights*, *Not in Our Name*, and *IfNotNow*.

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL PARTNERS

Michael is the Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for ICAHD-USA (*Israel Committee Against House Demolitions-USA*); a member of the *United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network* (UCC-PIN); and a member of the *Global Kairos for Justice Coalition* (Communications Committee).

In 2023, ICMEP partnered with the following organizations in programs, webinars, and actions: *United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network*, *Friends of Sabeel-North America*, *Kairos South Africa*, *Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace*, *Jewish Voice for Peace*, *US Campaign for Palestinian Rights*, *Defense for Children International-Palestine*, *Voices From the Holy Land*, ICAHD-USA (*Israel Committee Against House Demolitions-USA*), and the *Poor People's Campaign*.

ICMEP is a member of and/or supports the Apartheid Free Communities, BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement), No Way To Treat A Child, and Defund Racism Campaign.

Board members **Amar Masri**, **Sam Jarjour**, and **Ahmed Abdelmageed** represented ICMEP at the Palestine Writes Festival in September.

2023 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ICMEP provided financial support in 2023 for the following organizations in Palestine and in the US (ICMEP Mission Partners with an asterisk):

- * *Al-Rowwad Cultural Arts Center*, Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem (Dr. Abdelfattah Abusrour)
ArabFest, Fort Wayne, IN
- * *Bil'in Resistance*, Bil'in, Occupied West Bank (Iyad Burnat)
- * *Community Resource Development Center*, Nablus, Occupied West Bank (Ayman Shaka'a, Aroub Jamleh)
Palestine Children's Relief Fund, Palestine and Gaza (Steve Sosebee)
Palestine Natural History Museum and Biodiversity and Sustainability Institute, Bethlehem (Mazin Qumsiyeh)
Palestine Writes, USA (Susan Abulhawa)
- * *Playgrounds for Palestine, USA* (Susan Abulhawa)
- * *Tent of Nations Peace Farm*, outside Bethlehem (Daoud Nassar)
- * *Wi'am Conflict Resolution and Transformation Center*, Bethlehem (Zoughbi Zoughbi)

OUR NEW AFGHAN NEIGHBORS

Thanks to Board Chair, **Terry Dougherty** and Board member, **Linda Kerr**, **ICMEP continues to serve our new Afghan neighbors**, assisting them in finding employment, learning English, providing transportation, helping with the kids at their schools, shopping, working their way through the immigration process, and much more. Terry and Linda work with many others in our community to serve our new Afghan neighbors. Again this year, we received and disbursed financial support for this community effort.

DR. ELIZABETH BARLOW COLLECTION

ICMEP was the recipient of the collection of books, papers, and films from Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Barlow (housed in our ICMEP Office, Amistad Cristiana Presbyterian Church). From our friend, Dr. Don Wagner, a long-time friend of Betsy:

Betsy Barlow has been a long-term supporter of Palestinian rights, an educator, and organizer. Betsy was the Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan where she established Middle East educational programs in public schools across Michigan. In 1998 Betsy became the first Chair of the Steering Committee for Friends of Sabeel--North America, and helped facilitate the new organization's growth until she stepped down in 2001. Under her leadership, FOSNA became a leading voice in U.S. churches calling for a fresh look at the Palestinian narrative and adopting resolutions at the local and national levels.

As an active Episcopalian, Betsy worked with Bishop Ed Browning at the national level and inspired others to do the same in their respective denominations. Betsy worked with a variety of local Palestinian and peace organizations throughout southern Michigan during and after her retirement from the University of Michigan, and has continued her advocacy. Her decades of service to the Palestinian cause have served as a model for others to "go and do likewise."

AS 2023 DRAWS TO AN END ...

As of this writing (December 26), the Israeli genocidal assault on Gaza continues: more than 20,000 Gazans murdered (including two women recently inside the grounds of Gaza's Holy Family Catholic Church, and with reports of Israeli bulldozers burying hospital patients alive), over 60% of them civilians, 70% of them women and children, more than 53,000 wounded, over 100 Palestinian journalists killed; and more than 300 killed, almost 5000 wounded in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Mass deportations, ethnic cleansing, the genocide of Palestine, the "Second Nakba" continues.

Only 9 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza are partially functional, services and supplies are limited, and the two major hospitals in southern Gaza are operating at three times their bed capacity, while also sheltering thousands of internally displaced persons. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reports Gaza is "virtually unlivable," the World Health Organization Director General said "it will be all but impossible to improve the 'catastrophic' health situation in Gaza," and Human Rights Watch declares the Israeli government is using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the Gaza Strip, which is a war crime."

Out of the 2.2 Palestinians living in Gaza, 1.9 million of them have been displaced, and three-fourths of them are living under destitute conditions at the Rafah Crossing into Egypt, while Israel continues its bombing.

This is not a "war on Hamas," nor is it even a "war on Gaza." This is part of Israel's 100+-year agenda to eliminate Palestinian history, tradition, culture, to eliminate the Palestinian people, to eliminate from memory the very idea of Palestine itself. Israel's plan all along just revealed in an uncovered Israel document, a second Nakba, to resettle Palestinians in the Sinai. Genocide.

All the while, charges of antisemitism abound on campuses, in workplaces, in the halls of government, and other venues, many of which are simply criticisms of Israel, while the US Congress ignorantly equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism. As our friend, Rev. Graylan Hagler, says, "If everything is antisemitism, nothing is antisemitism." And the complicit Biden administration vetoes a UN resolution for a ceasefire and approves additional billions of dollars of weapons for Israel.

The result of their criminal actions – scores of millions of people of conscience around the world taking to the streets, demonstrating their frustration, their anger, their condemnation of Israel and the United States, and support for a ceasefire and the self-determination of the Palestinian people.



And for the first time in memory, Christmas celebrations are cancelled in Bethlehem. Christmas hasn't been cancelled, the hope for liberation that Christmas brings, but this year, people are celebrating quietly in their churches, in their homes, in their hearts. The mood is subdued but with commitment re-doubled to resist, to remain resilient, to remain steadfast. We at ICMEP are committed to working and walking through their journey of justice with them hand in hand. ***Christ under the Rubble, Manger Square, Bethlehem***

JOHN DETRAZ

ICMEP thanks its Vice-Chair John Detraz for 19 years of service. John is retiring from the Board as of December 31. Along with Patricia Pendleton and Michael, John was one of the founders of ICMEP in 2004. John has provided invaluable service during his 19 years of service on our board – John drafted our founding documents and 501c3 application, created our ICMEP YouTube Channel, purchased the camera and other recording equipment used for our in-person programs and interviews, as well as advised us in our planning. John continues to translate our interviews, webinars, and programs to YouTube. We will miss John's presence, good humor, and sage advice.

We welcome to our board, beginning on January 1, long-time Fort Wayne activist, Solidarity Tour traveler, and Palestine justice advocate, **Bill Lambert**.

2024

2024 marks ICMEP's 20th anniversary (our first program, September 2004, with Mar Elias Education Institution's Headmaster, Dr. Raed Mualem). We will be rolling out a series of strong programming, a 20th anniversary celebration, as well as a forward-looking strategic plan that will place us in a strong position for the next 20 years as "a voice of conscience for peace, justice, human rights, and intercultural encounter."

THANK YOU!

ICMEP has office space thanks to **Rev. Martin and Sandy Garcia**, at Amistad Presbyterian Church, 1701 Capitol Avenue, Fort Wayne, IN, 46806.

Thanks to **Margie Dougherty** and Board members, **Ahnee Conner, Patty Pendleton, Barbara O'Connor, Linda Kerr, Pam Etheridge, Bill Lambert**, we were able to offer **hospitality** at each of our receptions and in-person programs.

Thanks to Board member, **Loren Woody**, program photographer and videographer.

Most especially, **we at ICMEP are grateful to you, grateful for the many ways you stand on the side of justice, and for your solidarity with our Palestinian friends and other voices of conscience.** We are also very grateful for the many and various ways you support our work. **Without your financial support, we could not continue to do all the above.**

A heartfelt **"THANK YOU!"** with prayers for all things good for you and your loved ones in 2024, a revolution of conscience in our country, and a just peace in Palestine and Israel.

Michael Spath, ICMEP Executive Director
December 26, 2023