

The Palestinian Centre For Rapprochement Between People (PCR)



PCR

**ANNUAL REPORT
2005**

***The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People (PCR)
Annual Report For the year 2005***

Following is the annual report of the main activities and projects organized by the center through the year 2005. PCR has decided to stay on the advocacy track that has been the focus of PCR's work since established.

Therefore, PCR decided to direct its effort to promote and develop its media project and the youth project, as two main tools for advocacy.

Proudly enough, Co-founder and former director of PCR, Mr. Ghassan Andoni has been nominated by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) for the Noble Peace Prize for the Year 2006.

The nomination is based on Andoni's long walk in the resistance of the occupation and more for his peace work done through Rapprochement since its establishment in 1988.

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Annual Report For the year 2005

1- PCR's Administration & Staff

In September of 2005, Mr. Ghassan Andoni, director and co-founder of PCR has resigned from his post as a part time director for the center and George Rishmawi was appointed director to replace Mr. Andoni.

PCR had its first General assembly meeting and held elections on June 26, 2005. PCR was officially registered as a Non-Governmental Organization at the Ministry of Interior of the Palestinian National Authority on June 2004.

Seven members of the General Assembly have been elected as an administration board for PCR who will serve the organization for two years.

Most of the board members are pretty young, which complies with the new vision for PCR to give a chance for the younger generation to lead the organization. Six out of seven are younger the 35 years old. Additionally, PCR president is a Female and three of the board members are Muslims and four are Christians.

Below is a list of the names of the Administration Board of PCR

Name	Profession	Sex	Position
Uraib Jaber	PR Officer	F	President
Tarek Marajdeh	Employee	M	Vice President
Eyad Joma	Dental Technician	M	Treasurer
Hussam Qassis	Student	M	Secretary
Fayyad Jibrin	Retired teacher	M	Member
Raed Rishmawi	Webmaster	M	Member
Mousa Yousef	Student	M	Member

Current PCR staff:

George Rishmawi – Director

Saed Bannoura – News Editor

Ghassan Bannoura – Executive Assistant

Manar Jibrin – IMEMC Audio section (Volunteer)

PCR had several international volunteers through the year. They mostly worked as language editors for IMEMC reports. Dina Awwad, a PCR activist volunteered to read the Weekly Audio report. Terrina Aguilar an American volunteer has also gave time to co-read the report, in addition to many others who came through the year for short periods.

PCR highly depends on volunteers to keep its spending as low as possible. Volunteers are mostly internationals, but there are few Palestinian volunteers as well.

Voluntary work is an integral part of PCR's philosophy.

2- PCR Projects:

2.1 The International Middle East Media Centre (IMEMC):

IMEMC is a media center developed in collaboration between Palestinian and International journalists to provide an English language media coverage of Israel-Palestine. IMEMC provides an objective and comprehensive coverage of events and developments in Israel-Palestine.

Being a joint Palestinian-International effort, IMEMC combines Palestinian journalists' deep understanding of the context, history, and the socio-political environment with International journalists' skills in non-partisan reporting.

IMEMC provides a timely comprehensive coverage of news, political developments and daily incidents combined with feature stories, political analysis, interviews and selected opinion pieces.

Additionally, IMEMC provides a weekly audio summary of socio-political developments in Israel-Palestine to keep you updated. In addition IMEMC provides field reports on main issues of interest to its targeted audience.

During the year, IMEMC has produced 51 weekly reports including 2 feature stories, and many headline news, average of 60 seconds each.

The IMEMC weekly report, "This Week in Palestine" is aired by a number of American and Canadian radio stations.

In addition, the 60-second headlines and the feature stories are aired by the Free Speech Radio News in the United States.

Technical wise, IMEMC has developed a data-base-driven website to allow contributors from different part of the world to help writing and editing news reports.

IMEMC had produced some 3000 articles during the year in addition to a number of Feature Stories, Analysis pieces, and published Op-Eds and Interviews with some politicians and public figures including the Israeli Nuclear Whistle Blower Mordechai Vanunu.

By the end of 2005 IMEMC has received more than One Million unique visitors. Several advocacy groups in the U.S.A and Europe use IMEMC news as their source of information about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

At the beginning of the year, IMEMC built its first audio studio. This raised the quality of the produced reports and headlines.

The studio was partially funded by the Canadian Friends service Committee, including most of the equipment and needed installations, whereas the Indy Media group donated some equipment.

IMEMC moved its website from ThinkHost, who provided IMEMC with a free hosting service for almost a year and helped designing the website and convert it into

a database-driven site. IMEMC bought a dedicated server at a Canadian company, NetNation and moved the website there. The new server has a bigger space, and bigger bandwidth with allows more users to be online at the same time.

2-2 PCR Youth Group

2-2-1 The Young Advocates Program

PCR decided to revive the youth group activities and to develop the youth work in PCR. Lack of funding has been a great obstacle in realizing this. However, PCR managed to attract some new young Palestinians to be part of its activities.

Youth are in the focus of PCR attention. Therefore, PCR is fund raising for a long term training program for young Palestinians to become young advocates for the Palestinian cause as a way to give them a chance to take part in the resistance away from violence. The project is called, "*The Young Advocates*" and it aims to strengthen the youth understanding of their role in their community to prepare them for taking a leading role in the future.

Graduates of this program will be good advocates for Palestine and will be well bonded with their society.

PCR has a group of 20 young boys and girls, between the age of 16 up to 26, both Christians and Muslims.

2-2-2 Romans-Beit Sahour Exchange on Environment

PCR activists are involved in an exchanged program with the Municipality of Romans in France. The project is an initiative of the Beit Sahour-Romans twin ship. It involves, the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), the Arab Orthodox Club and the Cultural Club in addition to PCR are involved in the project.

The project is basically a youth camp in Italy where some 60 young people from Euro-Mediterranean countries will meet to discuss issues related to the environment.

The Palestinian delegation will present the environmental problems Palestinians face, especially in water in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as a result of the construction of the Apartheid Wall, and settlements, in addition to other issues.

A program has been designed to prepare the participants to the meeting so that they can present the problems to the rest of the Participants. The program contains workshops on Advocacy, communication, environment, the Apartheid Waal, water and a historical background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The exchange will be held in June, yet it is awaiting approval of the European Union Euro-Med program for funding.

3- Direct Nonviolent Actions

3-1 Palm Sunday Protest at the Bethlehem Checkpoint

On Palm Sunday, March 20, PCR and Holy Land Trust organized a nonviolent march at the main checkpoint separating Bethlehem from Jerusalem.

The march looked created a carnival atmosphere in Bethlehem's 'Manger Square' on Palm Sunday.

A colorful crowd had gathered to mark the occasion; some American Pilgrims started singing gospel songs, identifying themselves from the "Every church a peace church" movement. They mingled with a wide cross-section of the Bethlehem community: young and old Palestinians, men and women, Christian and Muslim and a good mix of other internationals from various countries.

But drawing the most attention were the robed shepherds wearing their scarves on their donkeys. Wearing no costumes, but just their every day clothes, the shepherds looked as if they had stepped straight from the pages of the New Testament. I reckoned they all looked a bit like Jesus, and they weren't even trying.

The crowd had plans to do what any Christian would do if they were so close to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – they would do as Jesus did: walk into the holy city with Palms to commemorate the occasion some 2000 years ago.

The gospel singing merged with middle-eastern music as the crowd weaved through the streets of Bethlehem. They marched holding banners and balloons, waving palm leaves to the beat of the music with flags flapping in the breeze.

The signs conveyed various messages: "American Christians for Palestinian Justice", "God's truth: Justice for Palestine", "Keep Hope Alive – Free Palestine" and "Set all God's children free".

Despite the threat of tear gas, which is often used by the Israeli soldiers at demonstrations, the crowd continued the last leg with the chanting growing louder: "we demand freedom", "no justice no peace", "the wall must fall," "we come in peace".

The crowd got very close to the soldiers who, were apparently taken by surprise. They called for reinforcement although the action was purely nonviolent.

The crowd delivered message to the soldiers at the checkpoint expressing their rejection to the closure imposed by the Israeli military on the Palestinians by preventing them to move freely in their own country.

The goal of the action was not to confront with the soldiers, but rather to try to enter Jerusalem for worship. Only Palestinians are not allowed to worship in Jerusalem and the march aimed at challenging this unjust order.

The soldiers quickly tried to organize themselves into a rough human barrier in front

of the demonstrators who kept walking forward forcing them to step back.

The demo was very polite. The group stopped and a leader in the Bethlehem community, Mr. Ghassan Andoni, an elderly and stately, grey-haired man spoke to the commander quietly.

“We are just taking a walk to Jerusalem to pray for Palm Sunday, as is our right,” he told the commander. “We want to go to Jerusalem to pray. We have a right to go to pray in Jerusalem.”

The reinforcements arrived. They copied the demonstrators' tactic and linked arms and pushed and shoved a little. Cries of “Please: no violence” came from the crowd.

Andoni, then, director of PCR, addressed the soldiers: “You give Israeli Jews the right to go and pray at Rachel’s tomb in Bethlehem. I think we have the same right to go to pray in Jerusalem. These are peaceful people demanding a human right – the right to pray in their mosques and churches. Do you ask Jews who come to pray in Rachel’s tomb if they have a permit? This is illegal and the world is watching.”

The crowd decided to leave before the soldiers get violent. The action ended in peace, without anyone gets hurt, leaving a message to the soldiers that they will be back.

PCR trained the group in nonviolence techniques needed to ensure a nonviolent protest.

3-2 Land Day Action

PCR in a coordinated effort with the Land Defense Committee had organized an anti-wall demonstration in Bethlehem, on March 30, 2005, known to be the "Land Day".

Dozens of Palestinians, and International Peace Activists marched towards the houses affected by the construction of the separation wall.

Upon arrival near the segment of the wall, Israeli soldiers attempted to stop the marchers, who nonviolently managed to go through the line of soldiers. However, a group of the demonstrators managed to reach those houses encircled by the wall to show solidarity with them despite the soldiers orders not go there.

These houses are going to be encircled by the wall. The families, who live there, said they are facing daily problems with the Israeli army. The action ended without any usage of violence.

3-3 Candle Procession (Light a Candle to Stop Land Confiscation)

"Light a Candle to Stop Land Confiscation", that was the title which the 15th candle procession carried for the year 2005. Hundreds of Palestinians and international marched in the town of the Shepherds, Beit Sahour, east of Bethlehem, raising their voice against the ongoing Israeli policy of confiscating Palestinian land.

Despite the heavy rain on Christmas Day, December 25, marchers carried their candles, joined hands through the town starting from the shepherds field site.

Throughout the march, Christmas carols mixed with some national songs were played and the churches tolled their bells.

Palestinian youth distributed a fact sheet to the demonstrators showing the danger of land confiscation with numbers and figures about the effect of the apartheid wall on the Palestinian population.

The fact sheet was prepared by the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, (ARIJ) which part of its specialty to monitor Israeli settlement activities and land confiscation.

The march ended at the new location of the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People (PCR), the organizer of the march. The marchers were invited for a simple reception at the PCR premises for some cookies and Arabic coffee.

Among the figures who joined the march, the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Mr. Hani El-Hayek, the Governor of Bethlehem, Mr. Salah Ta'amari and Dr. Mubarak Awad who was deported from Palestine in the late 80s for his nonviolent activities and founder of several organizations that promote nonviolence as a strategy to end the Israeli occupation.

International peace activists from the International Solidarity Movement and others who came to join the International Conference on nonviolence which held in Bethlehem, also joined the march.

4- Conferences

4-1 Conference on Nonviolence in Sweden

PCR participated in a conference on Nonviolence organized by the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR), hosted by The Church of Sweden, Diocese of Uppsala hosted the conference in Uppsala, December 12 – 20, 2005. The conference was based on the book by one of the most prominent scholars in nonviolence Gene Sharp, "Waging Nonviolent Struggle".

PCR's Director, George Rishmawi, participated in the conference and presented PCR's philosophy in nonviolent struggle. The conference joined experiences of Palestinians, Israelis and Sudanese nonviolent peace activists.

The Sudanese were from an organization in Southern Sudan called, Sudanese Organization for Nonviolence and Development, (SONAD). Israelis represented three groups, The Anarchists Against the Wall, The Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHAD) and New Profile. The three organizations are active in joint resistance with the Palestinians.

The conference helped establish and reactivate ties with Swedish organizations, especially that there were some meetings held with different Swedish NGOs who has projects in the Middle East.

4-2 Celebrating Nonviolent Struggle – Bethlehem

Celebrating Nonviolent Struggle was an international conference held in Bethlehem December 27 – 30 called for and organized by the Bethlehem-based Holy Land Trust and the DC-based Nonviolence International.

At least 400 participants from all over the world joined the conference which consisted of several workshops that discussed nonviolence in many different ways.

Mr. Ghassan Andoni, founder and former director of PCR presented a paper about shaping nonviolent resistance in conflict regions on the opening of the international day of the conference.

The paper discussed the feasibility of nonviolent struggle in regions where conflict is shaping the way of resistance.

PCR participated in the conference and held a workshop on Nonviolence and Media on December 28. Around 25 participants were in the workshop which was co-lead by Palestine News Network.

The workshop tackled the issue of the biased coverage of the main stream media and the intended marginalization of the nonviolent initiatives by media.

Participants in the workshop suggested a networking among the different progressive media outlets to advance efforts to cover nonviolent actions to allow a wider audience to be informed about nonviolent initiatives in conflicting areas.

5- Moving to New Quarters (DED-Office Supplies Project)

In December PCR has moved its quarters to a new premise, but remained in Beit Sahour. The moving was funded by the German House for Development Cooperation (DED).

The new premise is almost double the size of the old one and the rent is lower. Moving the office was an important step to make the work environment more appropriate.

In the new office, a Phone System and Local Area Network, and new administration and secretary room furniture, were installed.

The new facility consists of two apartments. One is used mainly as offices for the staff and a studio for recording news and a reception desk for visitors.

The other section is used for workshops, as it has a big hall. The hall is good for projecting documentary films and for presentations. In addition to the hall, the other section has two other rooms that can be used as offices.

The facility is also equipped with Air Conditioning, (Cooling and Heating). A central cooling/heating unit is installed in one section of the premises and three split units are installed in the other section, one in each room.

It was planned to have a small living quarter in PCR, however, it was very difficult to make room for a kitchen in the second section of the facility. However, there is a room designated to host volunteers, which has a Bed, small table and closet, equipped with cooling/heating system. It can be used for short-term volunteers only.

6- Budget

For the third year in a row, PCR's spending exceeds its revenues, which indicates draining of the organizations financial resources.

PCR paid around **\$89,500.00** during its fiscal year of 2005. The total expenditure for the year was where as total revenue is **\$18,366.39**. This shows an excess of expenditure over income as deficit of **\$46,885.34**.

PCR spent \$14,091.00 for moving the office, (Fund received from DED was \$13,804.00) and paid \$10,500.00 for Mr. Ghassan Andoni as termination compensation for 15 years of service in PCR.

Below is the Statement of Income and Expenses for PCR for the year ending December 31, 2005.

Statement of Income and Expenses for PCR as for the year ending 12/31/2005			
Income	USD	Expenditures	USD
<u>Revenues</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
DED – Office Supplies Project	\$13,804.00	IMEMC Project	\$9,343.20
Internet Revenue (Refunding)	\$1325.41	Salaries	\$26,341.91
FSRN	\$1312.00	Termination Compensation	\$2,100.00
Interest Revenue	\$1009.98	Internet Fees	\$6,182.00
General Donations	<u>\$915.00</u>	Office Rent	\$6,000.00
Total Income		Phones	\$3,558.79
		Candle Procession	\$2,465.96
		Equipment Maintenance	\$1,117.12
		Office Cleaning	\$1,103.88
		Audit Fees	\$1,000.00
		Entertainment-PR	\$837.30
		Electricity	\$814.78
		Transportation	\$531.04
		Bank Charges	\$284.76
		Tax	\$200.00
		Computer Expenses	\$199.10
		Different in Exchange	\$187.23
		Gas Expense	\$169.88
		Stationary	\$156.74
		Repair & Maintenance	\$114.78
		Water & Sewer	\$115.22
		Miscellaneous Expenses	\$90.41
		Donations	\$66.52
		Post Office fees	\$44.53
		Depreciation Expense	<u>\$2,226.58</u>
		Total Expenses	
		Excess of Expenses over Income	<u>(\$46,885.34)</u>
TOTAL	<u>18,366.39</u>	TOTAL	<u>18,366.39</u>

[END]