PALESTINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY:

LIMITS AND POTENTIAL IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS

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Jerusalem. It is at the center of many things. Perhaps most of all, it is at the center of conflict. As I prepared for this paper I had the opportunity to speak to people many in Jerusalem, including NGOs, academics, and the average Jerusalemite as well as Palestinians outside of the city who are watching the developments closely. Further, during the course of this research and writing, I watched as the Shepherd Hotel was demolished. The fall of this historic monument is a fitting reminder of the acute threat facing the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

This paper is an overview of efforts by civil society. Those of us who study social and transnational movements know that grappling with civil society is both theoretically and empirically challenging due to its amorphous nature. For this reason it is imperative to begin by defining civil society as it relates to the issue at hand. Interestingly, civil society can be thought of metaphorically like the Palestinian population in Jerusalem. Those Palestinians living inside what Israel unilaterally and illegally declared the municipality of Jerusalem hold a different status than other Palestinians living in occupied territory. As residents but not citizens of the state of Israel, Palestinians living in Jerusalem are not quite here and not quite there. They exist somewhere in between what is Israel and what is the Palestinian Authority.

Civil society has a similar quality. It is a collection of sometimes connected and other times not connected organizations, individuals and unions which are not quite governmental but also not quite pedestrian. By this I mean that civil society exists between the general public on the popular level and governments on the state level. Its unique nature defines both its strengths and weaknesses. Yet, because of its position it is also well suited to play an increasingly important role in supporting the Palestinian population in Jerusalem and everywhere they exist in their quest for liberation and the guarantee of their rights.
Challenges Facing the People of Jerusalem

While others at this conference will surely provide a robust description of the various Israeli violations of international law in Jerusalem and against the Palestinian population in general, I will provide a brief overview for the purposes of this paper.

Political Challenges

Settlements- Perhaps there is no greater political challenge facing Jerusalem than the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. In areas across the green line Israel continues to expand settlements like Pisgat Ze'ev, Atarot, Ramot, Har Homa, Gilo and others which include a security infrastructure around them that prevent Palestinians in neighboring Ramallah, or even Kufar Aqab which is in the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem, from reaching each other. The settlements have been part of a long standing Israeli policy of encircling the old city and other parts of the area so as to create facts on the ground that would prevent the division of the city. The abundance of maps available detailing this process still cannot convey the extent of the geographic noose tightening around Jerusalem in the way a short trip through the city does. My most recent visit, concluded only days ago, left me astonished with the extent of development in the settler areas and de-development in the Palestinian ones. While the immediate cause for this disparity is economic, and these difference will be discussed below, the strategy behind them is political and it has very acute aims.

Judaization- Another challenge facing Palestinians in Jerusalem is the ongoing Israeli strategy of Judaization. While the Judaization of Palestinian land is part of the Zionist project since prior to the Nakba, it is particularly evident in Jerusalem today and has been accelerated in recent years through the combination of direct state policies, state sanctioned private endeavors, and economic realities as well.

Through home eviction, home demolition, and residency revocation Israel is actively and aggressively Judaizing occupied Jerusalem. Below I briefly discuss each one of these particular challenges and how some elements of civil society have reacted in response.
Home Eviction- Here we must begin by first noting that elements of civil society are not only working to help Palestinians but some are working quite aggressively against them. Settler movements, which are well organized and well funded movements often having the full cooperation of the state are acting to lay claim to Palestinian houses in Jerusalem's many Arab Palestinian neighborhoods and in particular Silwan, Shiekh Jarrah and Al-Bustan. For analytical clarity and accuracy it is perhaps more fitting to call these movements uncivil society.

It is only through my conversations with victims of home eviction and the various members of civil society which represent them directly that I was able to truly understand the problem they face. In many of these cases Palestinian families receive eviction notices and begin legal battles in a prejudicial Israeli legal system which they often to not have the experience or the means to succeed in.

Unfortunately, aid in this fashion has been extremely limited and the families facing home eviction in Jerusalem have often been left to fend for themselves. There are a few Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel who are attorneys and work to represent numerous families facing the same challenge. Yet, despite this assistance it is still an uphill battle.

Let us take for example the cases of the Hanoun and Ghami family in Sheikh Jarrah. Decades ago a settler movement clandestinely registered the land that the houses of the Hanoun and Ghami family were on. However, the families which lived in the houses where never notified and the claimants did not immediately demand the property. Instead, they waited for a period of approximately 25 years after which the statute of limitations to challenge a claim to property registration expires. When the families ultimately find out about the eviction orders it is often too late to win a legal battle. In the hopes of keeping their property, the families attempted to halt the eviction orders through court but ran up against the bias of the Israeli legal system. In some of these cases, the Palestinian families contesting eviction orders were able to win the acknowledgement of the court that the settler’s claim was false and despite this the court refused to act because the legal deadline had expired. Several cases like this exist and just as we talk about civil
society which serves Palestinians which must also be aware that there is an uncivil society working for the opposite.

**Home Demolition** - Prejudicial treatment of the Palestinian Arab population in Jerusalem extends far beyond home evictions but also includes home demolition. As part of a long-established plan to tighten the grip on the city and limit its Arab population, the Israelis make obtaining building permits in the Arab neighborhoods impossible. While settlements continue to expand beyond the green line Palestinian Arabs are unable to obtain building permits and hence are faced with the choice to build illegally or move out of the city where they can have space for their expanding families. Those who chose the path of remaining in Jerusalem and building without a permit are targeted by home demolition. In recent years, the numbers of home demolition have spiked on several occasions.

Several human rights groups have reacted to the policy of home demolition by organizing protests, documenting the demolitions and carrying out educational campaigns about the issue. Many of these organizations are active not only in Jerusalem but other parts of Palestine, particularly in the area designated as Area C in the West Bank where home demolitions also occur. Protests often include Israelis, Palestinians and internationals that regularly use their bodies as human shields before bulldozers to prevent the demolition of homes. Ultimately these activists may be forcibly removed and arrested but they continue to play a role in raising awareness about the issue through attracting media attention.

**Residency Revocation** - The third policy of Judaization is residency revocation. Palestinians living in Jerusalem hold Jerusalem residency status. This allows them to remain in the city and travel with much greater ease than Palestinians in the rest of the occupied territories. However, in the past 15 years, new Israeli policies have made it much more difficult for Palestinians to maintain residency status in Jerusalem. The State of Israel demands that residents in Jerusalem maintain a constant residence in the city. With other demographic policies in place, this becomes increasingly difficult. Coupled with the economic problems discussed below, the incentives to move out of the city, or rather the disincentives of
remaining inside the city, are great. Many Palestinians in Jerusalem are in a constant struggle over residency. In many cases, they flee the poor economic situation in Jerusalem to work in Ramallah but have to travel daily through the security apparatus. Many have houses or flats in both cities and reside most of the week in Ramallah but often run back to Jerusalem fearing municipal inspectors might find their house unoccupied. This struggle in particular is only becoming more difficult as the incentives to leave the city increase. Aside from a few human rights organizations which raise awareness about this complicated issue there is little aid from civil society, that I have found, which addresses this method of Judaization. Economically, the cost of maintaining two residences, particularly in Jerusalem, is very expensive and many are unable to maintain this for an extended period. Financial assistance in these cases is imperative for prolonging the struggle against the Judaization of the city however few if any civil society organizations have the means or plans to support Jerusalem’s Palestinians in this way.

Economic Challenges

The former Palestinian Minister of National Economy put it best when he stated “Israel has isolated Jerusalem from its natural surroundings and separated it from its strategic depth while ensuring that it does not develop into the same levels as on the Israeli side. Thereby creating a ghetto that is tied on an economy it is not compatible with and separated from the Palestinian economy which is its natural extension of.”

Economic Indicators

*Per capita in Jerusalem* - *Per capita* income for an Arab is around six thousand shekels compared to a Jews which is around 14,500. This means that the *per capita* income differential is almost 2.5 times. Unemployment in Jerusalem for the Arab population is 25 percent. It’s much higher than the rate in Ramallah or Bethlehem which is closer to 12 percent.
**Infant mortality** - For an Arab versus a Jew; 7.2 per thousand for Arabs while it is 4.2 per thousand for the Jews. Of course, all healthcare is supposed to be under one system but the reality is Palestinian children in Jerusalem face much greater health challenges.

**Population** - Of the 250,000 Arab population of Jerusalem 106,000 are children while the Jewish population of 495,000 has 158,000 children. So 42 percent of the child population of the greater Jerusalem is Palestinian. However, this 40 percent of the Jerusalem child population receives only 15 percent of the education budget while the Jewish sector, the 60 percent, has 85 percent of the education budgets. So per capita, on the Jewish side, they’re spending 3.87 times what they’re spending on the Palestinian side.

**Poverty** - Jerusalem is the most impoverished city in Israel when you compare it to other Israeli controlled cities like Tel Aviv or Haifa. Of the approximately 251,000 Arab population you have 125,000, almost 50 percent, living below the poverty line. On the Israeli side you have 495,000, with only 123,000 living below the poverty line. So in absolute terms, we have more Palestinians living in poverty in Jerusalem than Israelis.

**Welfare budgets** - The 125,000 Arab population below the poverty line receive only 12 percent of the welfare budgets. However, the 123,000 Jewish population below the poverty line receive 88 percent of the welfare budget. So the differentials there are 7.45 times.

**Municipal budgets**: The Arab population, 34%, receives only 8 percent of municipal budgets, as compared to 92 percent of the budgets received by the other 66 %, the Jewish population, so the differential there is 5.93. When it comes to sewage, Arabs receive 11 percent of the budget while the Israeli side has 89 percent —so the differential is 4.17. For garbage collection; Arabs receive 7 percent and the Jews 93 percent. For road networks; Arabs get 13 percent, Jews get 87 percent. Sidewalks; Arabs receive 9 percent, Jews 91 percent. Public
gardens; Arabs get only 3 percent, they get 97 percent. The cultural budget is 1.2 percent for the Arab sector versus the 98.8 percent for the Jewish sector. One needs not a map to tell the difference between an Arab neighborhood and a Jewish one in Jerusalem. The discrimination in the distribution of resources across the municipality makes the contrast stark.

Social Challenges

Beyond political and economic challenges there are also many social challenges facing Jerusalem’s Palestinian population. Perhaps chief among these challenges are family related issues. Due to the discriminatory nature of the occupation, families where one Palestinian parent holds a certain status and another holds the opposite leads to an impossible lifestyle of stress and hardship. A Palestinian from Kufr Aqab, which is in the municipality of Jerusalem and flows almost seamlessly into Ramallah today, cannot marry a Palestinian from just down the road without having to confront the choice of losing their Jerusalem residency of living in separation.

Along with the harsh Israeli policies of Judaization and economic challenges, this social challenge has become an added incentive for the Palestinian youth in Jerusalem to leave the city. Also, many who are struggling to maintain their residency in Jerusalem do not consider marrying anyone from the rest of the occupied West Bank. This creates a situation where marriage-aged youth in Jerusalem are wedding much later than most other Palestinians in their generation.

The economic hardships facing the population also lead to social problems within the community particularly with young children who can not envision a bright future. There are NGOs working to combat this and one in particularly which my organization, the Jerusalem Fund has been happy to support is the Burj Al-Luq Luq Center in the Old City which maintains a variety of programs aimed at providing services for the Palestinian children of Jerusalem.

Civil Society and Jerusalem
Civil society has responded to the Palestinian struggle on a number of levels. Interestingly, Jerusalem can be thought of as a microcosm of every core issue important to Palestinians. As we watch coverage of Palestinians forcibly evicted from their homes in East Jerusalem and Israeli settlers moving in, one cannot help but remember the Nakba of 1948 and the depopulation of Palestine. Many of those evicted have become refugees for a second or third time. The closures and economic hardships remind us of the besieged population of Gaza. The home demolitions remind us of the numerous villages in ‘Area C’ which have been demolished time and time again. The residency revocations remind us of the countless lands usurped by the Israelis in Palestine after forcibly removing its native inhabitants and invoking a dated absentee law. What is happening today in Jerusalem is a compact version of a process which has been ongoing for well over 60 years.

While there are numerous human rights organizations, local charities and international aid agencies that have a hand in Jerusalem itself, the greatest responses from civil society have come as solidarity with Palestinians wherever they may exist as well as Jerusalem. Today civil society in Palestine and what may be called global civil society has risen into action to advance the legitimate objectives of Palestinians. Below, I will discuss what this global civil society is with particular focus on its activities in the United States and the challenges it faces there, what potential it has to create real change and how it can be supported.

**Civil Society & Palestine in America**

**The American Political Landscape**—To better understand civil society’s efforts on Palestine in the United States it is critical to understand the context in which they operate. The United States continues to be the main supporter of the state of Israel and its occupation of Palestine. Relations between Israel and the United States are strong and there is a very strong pro-Israel bias in government and in the media. After the events of September 11th, 2001, which coincided with the Al-Aqsa intifada in Palestine, the American-Israeli relationship grew even stronger as the Bush Administration embarked on its “War on Terror”. It is in this context that civil society is attempting to address the
broader Palestinian issue in the United States. Civil Society in the United States can be divided into three rough groups:

**Organizations**— These can be national or local organization with different orientations. Some of them, like my organization, The Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development, are based in Washington, DC. Others are also in Washington like the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and other pan-Arab organizations. The work of these organizations is varied but advocacy for the Palestinian cause remains an important part of what they do. Another group of organizations are localized groups which do not have national agendas. Trade unions or local collections of concerned citizens in different parts of the United States have worked on the Palestinian cause.

**The Academy**— The academy continues to be a forum for free discussion on the Palestinian issue in the United States. Unlike the mainstream, at the University the discussion on the question of Palestine is often far more informed and vibrant. Academics and professors who also sympathizes with the Palestinian cause have worked to create and keep this space and have done so at time at a severe and direct personal cost. Just as the aforementioned uncivil society works to remove Palestinians from their homes in the United States, similar forces are at work in the United States and many professors have been intimidated by right-wing organizations which police the discourse on Palestine in the academy and ultimately complain to or threaten the University if the academics in question are not censored or removed.

**Individuals and Activism**— Independent of organizations and outside of the academy, individuals and activists play an important role in civil society’s efforts for the Palestinian cause. As part of an ongoing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign individuals and activists have found ways to effectively participate in social change and at the same time raise awareness about the Palestinian plight. Flash mob demonstrations, sit ins, educational campaigns and have been illustrative methods activists successfully use and this continues to grow. The availability of new media has created an amplifying effect for individual efforts and YouTube videos created by individuals and activists reach thousands of viewers.
Where Civil Society Fits—Due to civil society’s structure and nature and the pro-Israel American context, civil society on the Palestinian cause has been most active and successful in areas of education. American politics remains largely off limits to pro-Palestinian perspectives, and while the American media has begun to open up as a result the varying perspectives available on the internet, there is still a significant pro-Israel bias among American journalists. Perhaps this is why civil society has tended to reach out to the American public more directly.

Critics will point out that civil society is incapable of making real change and the reality is that significant policy changes are rarely brought about by civil society alone. However, civil society continues to play the critical role of educating audiences about important issues. While the American Congress is likely to continue playing an unhelpful role in American led negotiations, the constantly developing and opening debate about the Palestinian plight is undoubtedly going to catch up with the elected representatives. Today, the debate about Palestine, including Jerusalem, in American newspapers and electronic media is noticeably different than previous years. Those of us who monitor the writings on editorial pages and have been doing so for years are all aware of this change for the better. The number of Palestinian perspectives and voices critical of Israel’s policies are steadily on the rise. While there is clearly still a pro-Israel bias the American public is far more educated today about the issues of settlements and occupation than before.

There are also interesting opportunities developing in the United States for coalition formation. For years, those members of civil society advocating for Palestinian rights have been dominated by Arab, Palestinian or Muslim groups. More than ever before likeminded Americans are participating in these efforts and new divisions in the American Jewish community, the likes of which have not been present since the 1950s, are becoming more prevalent.

Civil Society in the United States has been able to capitalize on several inhumane Israeli actions which have created space in the United States for reflection. The heinous Israeli war on Gaza which left nearly 1,500 mostly civilians dead in the besieged strip came only two years after a similarly devastating war on Lebanon. Many Americans who had been
accustomed to the Israeli-underdog narrative could no longer consciously accept it. With the election of a right-wing government in Israel, American Jewish liberals became even more critical of the Israeli state and the long standoff between Netanyahu and Obama over illegal Israeli settlements also contributed to a change in the discourse. Another important moment came when a group of transnational activists took to the seas to deliver aid to Gaza. By murdering 9 civilians, Israeli forces raised more awareness about the crisis in Gaza than any of the transnational activists could have imagined. At the same time, Gaza, which had long been forgotten, became the center of discussion around the world and in the United States.

The failure of State level efforts- The stalemate in peace process has been a catalyst for civil society working on the Palestine issue in the United States. As the major players involved failed to secure a Palestinian state, more and more members of civil society are participating in efforts for Palestine. After 20 years of peace process, it has become clear that the current paradigm of US-led negotiations between the occupier and the occupied are never going to yield the desired outcome. In the same way that members of civil society took to the seas refusing to sit idle in the hopes that states would end the siege of Gaza, civil society is also not waiting for states to bring a resolution to the broader Palestine question to act. Never before have American-led negotiations seemed so futile and likewise never before has there been as determined and as broad an effort among members of civil society to seek alternative methods of resolution to the Palestinian plight.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)- Perhaps the most important achievement of civil society working on Palestine has been the launching and developing of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. By learning from the campaign led by anti-Apartheid activists, Palestinian civil society has called for a BDS campaign that will create opportunities for education and at the same time empower individuals by allowing them to make educated choices regarding how they spend their money. Certainly, these efforts will not bring down the occupation regime or its economy, nor is that the precise aim. Rather, as the past 5 years since the Palestinian civil society’s call for BDS demonstrate, the goal of BDS at this stage is to educate, empower and widen the
campaign. Further, the campaign is global in nature and is perceived as a serious threat by the occupation regime which has dedicated significant resources to combating these campaigns.

But while this campaign is strong in its global reach, particularly in the USA and Europe, it has yet to significantly permeate the Middle East and other parts of the world. Surely, the campaign has supporters throughout the Middle East and elsewhere but its biggest success have come in Europe and the US. In turn, the occupation regime has concentrated its efforts against the BDS campaign in these arenas as well. The question that remains is about Civil Society and what activities it has engaged in within Palestine.

**Palestinian Civil Society Efforts**

In Palestine Civil Society has been active on many fronts including attempting to influence government level decision makers to enforce laws and ensure equality in their application, to engage local and grass roots organizations in the debate about development, democratic governance and liberation, to involve local communities in the planning, implementation and execution of development programs, and to strengthen consultation and coordination between communities and international bodies. Compared with neighboring Arab countries – Palestinian civil society has been remarkably vibrant, decentralized, pluralistic, and secular.

From human rights organizations which document the abuses of the Israelis, and sometimes other Palestinians, to community organizations establishing programs for children or the elderly, to research groups which study the effects of Israeli policies, Palestinian civil society has been active throughout Palestine for the sake of Palestinians.

The closure regime, however, complicates the activities of civil society regarding Jerusalem. Many Palestinian civil society organizations maintain P.O. Box addresses in Jerusalem for symbolic significance however the actual offices and locations maybe outside the municipality. This is a reality created by the circumstances which make travel in and out of the city for most Palestinians practically impossible. For this reason, Palestinian Civil Society has been handicapped in its efforts in Jerusalem and it is often more active and effective elsewhere.
Outside of Jerusalem and elsewhere in occupied Palestinian territory, Palestinians civil society has been, as mentioned above, vibrant. Prominent examples include popular committees like those in Bi'lin and Ni'lin who have made weekly non-violent protest against the Apartheid Wall a Palestinian institution. Other examples include democratic and human rights advocacy groups like Al-Haq, Al-Dameer and MIFTAH as well as many more.

It is important to note that the most common complaint I heard from members of civil society during my interviews in Palestine is that funding for civil society organizations almost always comes with strings attached, is limited to specific projects that are often unsustainable, and do not meet the direct needs of the people. Palestinian Civil Society is in a better position to evaluate the needs of Palestinian society but their works is often catered to fit the requirements of the larger foundations or agencies which fund them.

Still, despite the difficulties of working in and for Jerusalem created by the occupation, civil society has been active in Jerusalem but it has not been exclusively Palestinian. The heinous home demolitions and evictions often draw huge crowds at protests, many of whom are internationals and Israeli Jews who oppose the policies of the state. In an ironic way perhaps, the closure regime in and around Jerusalem and the Judaization of the Arab parts of the city has provided opportunities for likeminded Israelis and Palestinians and internationals to form coalitions. The appearance of internationals has become routine in the activities of civil society throughout the area. Cooperation between leftist Israelis and Palestinians has also become common and many believe that these connections can serve the creation or a broader united front against Israeli occupation.

Conclusions

1. While Jerusalem is a core issue in the Palestinian struggle, global civil society has responded to all aspects of the Palestinian issue.
2. The closure regime in and around Jerusalem has complicated the work of Palestinian civil society but created opportunities for coalition building with likeminded internationals and Israelis.
3. Palestinian Civil Society has been most successful globally in its BDS campaign and efforts to raise awareness about Israeli violations.

4. The closure regime around Jerusalem has raised demand for assistance from civil society because of Israeli economic policies which discriminate against Palestinians and political policies which prevent the Palestinian Authority from addressing Jerusalem.

5. The role of civil society in the United States working on Palestine is particularly geared toward raising awareness in an otherwise pro-Israel country.

Recommendations for this Conference

1. Recognize the important role of civil society in supporting the people of Palestine, particularly those in limbo in Jerusalem.

2. Affirm support for the activities of global Palestinian civil society which includes calls to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and implement policies which will ensure effective cooperation with this call in the various Arab countries.

3. Provide diplomatic support for global Palestinian civil society in various states around the world through embassies by creating and expanding joint networking programs.

4. Provide non-politicized monetary support for Palestinian civil society organizations in and around Jerusalem working to counter the Judaization of the city.
About the Jerusalem Fund for Education And Community Development

The Jerusalem Fund for Education & Community Development is an independent, non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian organization based in Washington, D.C. Funding for operational expenses is derived from investment income. This, together with donations from private individuals throughout the U.S., supports our humanitarian grants.

The Jerusalem Fund is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States. Donations to The Jerusalem Fund are deductible from U.S. federal income taxes to the extent allowed under the law.

In order to fulfill its mission, The Jerusalem Fund is comprised of three programs: the Palestine Center, the Humanitarian Link and The Gallery.

The Palestine Center, the educational program of the Jerusalem Fund, gives voice to the Palestinian narrative through policy briefings, lecture series, conferences, symposia, scholarly research publications and an extensive research library. The Center's analysis emphasizes a Palestinian perspective on the peace process, the Right of Return and final status negotiations, elections, international law, media coverage of Israel and Palestine and U.S. foreign policy in the region.

The Humanitarian Link program extends grants to hospitals, orphanages, clinics, schools, universities and civil society organizations in the Occupied Territory and surrounding refugee camps in an effort to sustain the basic conditions of life in Palestine and to overcome the burdens of occupation.

The Gallery, the cultural program of the Jerusalem Fund, showcases the rich culture and national heritage of the Palestinian people, as well as that of surrounding Arab societies. The Gallery hosts bi-monthly exhibits of fine art and/or photography, an annual juried art competition, a summer film screening series.

History

The Jerusalem Fund was founded in 1977. It originally provided scholarships to Palestinian university students for study in Israel, the West Bank and abroad. Between 1978 and 1992, nearly 8,000 scholarships were awarded totaling over $4 million in aid.

The Fund first carried the name the American Palestine Educational Foundation. This was changed in 1981 to better communicate its expanded focus on direct assistance for the educational, cultural, health and community service institutions of Palestinian society.
When Israeli measures to suppress the first intifada in the Palestinian Occupied Territories in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to new suffering by the Palestinian people, The Jerusalem Fund initiated its Emergency Relief Assistance Program to provide Palestinian victims with emergency relief, medical care, rehabilitation, food, and shelter. Hospitals, clinics, schools, orphanages, charitable societies, human rights groups and numerous other non-profit civil society organizations have received Jerusalem Fund emergency grants. This program is now called the Humanitarian Link.

In 1991, the Fund established the Palestine Center, a think tank and resource for objective information and analysis on Palestine. The Center is dedicated to the study of the relationship between the United States and the Middle East, with particular emphasis on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Center focuses on the implications of specific U.S. policies with regard to Palestine, providing a much-needed Palestinian/Arab perspective to the political, academic and media establishments of Washington, D.C. and the Arab world. It sponsors symposia, conferences, lectures and other events, and invites recognized experts to publish on specific subjects. The Center was initially known as the Center for Policy Analysis in Palestine (CPAP) but was changed to the Palestine Center in 2002.

In 1998, the offices of The Jerusalem Fund were expanded and extensively renovated. A large conference facility, with seating for 150 people and state-of-the-art multimedia equipment, was inaugurated in September 1998. The renovation made possible the establishment of a 3,700-volume library and a gallery for art exhibits.

At the turn of the Millennium, the Fund began to organize cultural events and to sow the seeds of a cultural program. The avid response to the shows and cultural activities called for new investment in this area. Today, The Gallery reaches out beyond its physical space through the Fund's website and unique curricula designed for students throughout the U.S.

Over the past three decades, The Jerusalem Fund has evolved to meet changing needs. From making grants for education and community development it has grown to include an active educational and cultural program in The Jerusalem Fund and at The Gallery. Yet, the Fund continues to pay special attention to emergency relief assistance, education, and community development even as grant funding and public support for these activities shifts elsewhere. Now is not the time to turn away. The Fund remains committed to supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, and to helping them tell their story through words and pictures until a just and comprehensive peace is achieved.

About Yousef Munayyer
Yousef Munayyer is Executive Director of The Jerusalem Fund and its educational program, The Palestine Center. Prior to joining the Palestine Center Munayyer served as a Policy Analyst for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the nation’s largest Arab American membership organization.

His doctoral research focuses on political conflict, interstate and domestic conflict as well as the microfoundations of ethnic cleansing and political repression. He received his BA in Political Science and History from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and MA in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland.

He frequently writes on matters of foreign policy in the Arab and Muslim world and civil rights and civil liberties issues in the United States. His Op-Eds have appeared regularly in numerous national newspapers such as the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Boston Globe, the San Francisco Chronicle, The Detroit Free Press, The Miami Herald, Minneapolis Star-Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer, ForeignPolicy.com, AlQuds Newspaper and others. He has been asked to comment on national and international media outlets including CNN, MSNBC, CBS, Al-Jazeera English, C-Span, Air America Radio, CBS Radio and others.

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