
11th International Political Field Seminar Bridges Instead of Walls! 28th December 2011 to the 2nd of January 2012

Organized by the Alternative Information Center

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, it is often the case that quantity of information is privileged over quality. We often deal with cultures without knowing their histories or the things that we have in common with them. We generalize about "East" and "West" forgetting that we have several traditions, experiences, and values to share. Talking about a cultural conflict, or a "clash of civilizations", is an overly simplistic way of characterizing differences, leaving historical facts, experiences, and common desires for interaction far from consideration. Mutual understanding is the basis on which relationships have to be built, because all "sides" share values such as respect, tolerance and peace. Stereotypes should therefore not prevent people from approaching the "other" world, nor limit a constructive dialogue about values, ideals and our common future on this planet.

The idea to organize these international field seminars under the slogan "Building Bridges Instead of Walls" came from these firm beliefs. The seminar program proved its political, social, and practical importance through the action of the participants, who collectively described it as a very rich experience.

We at the Alternative Information Center will make the necessary efforts to continue developing the seminar experience. In this context the ideas, suggestions and encouragement of the participants and their commitment play an essential role. Let us unite our social, cultural, humanitarian, and political efforts as peoples from many nations in order to end the walls of occupation, aggression, discrimination and racism. Let us build the bridge of justice, peace, equality, human justice and respect.

HOSTING ORGANIZATION: The AIC

The Alternative Information Center (AIC) is an internationally oriented, progressive, joint Palestinian-Israeli activist organization. It is engaged in dissemination of information, political advocacy, grassroots activism and critical analysis of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. The AIC strives to promote full individual and collective social, economic, political and gender equality. Freedom and democracy, as well as rejection of the philosophy and practice of separation, are aims that the AIC pursues.

GOALS

The goal of this field seminar is to provide participants with elements crucial to deeply understanding the context and society of Palestine and Israel, thus enabling them to better advocate on behalf of a just peace in the region.

Directly experiencing the effects of the conflict, as well as the living and political conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, will provide a unique, on the ground experience, as opposed to an understanding based on media, propaganda or rumors. This is a necessary step in the process of understanding the factors that have led to the present situation. Comprehensive knowledge is the necessary starting point for building bridges.

The Palestinian voice is often ignored or accused of extremism. As a joint Palestinian-Israeli organisation founded in 1984, the AIC aims to create spaces in which the Palestinian people themselves explain their struggle and give direct witness to their life under occupation.

During the seminar we will also conduct interactive meetings and workshops with Israeli experts and associations that share the same values of the AIC and are deeply engaged in promoting a just peace and social justice for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The networking of individuals, associations, political parties, information and media workers is fundamental in building a pressure group able to encourage governments and economic groups to act responsibly, without ignoring the consequences of their actions or *non-actions*.

TOOLS

The tools that will be used to achieve the aims described above include:

- Tours throughout the West Bank, Jerusalem and Jaffa to view first-hand the living conditions of Palestinians under occupation
- Meetings with progressive Israeli social and political groups
- Lectures by Palestinian and Israeli experts about topics including economics, human rights, politics, social issues, international law, history and gender
- Meetings with politicians, social institutions and grassroots associations
- Cultural events (concerts, meeting with Palestinian families, etc)
- Open discussions
- Reflection moments

PROGRAM

The main guidelines adopted throughout the 6 day field seminar follow a logical path: providing elements for deeper, reflective understandings, having direct experiences, developing a critical approach and giving suggestions for effective advocacy.

The first step consists in presenting the general framework of Palestine and Israel with historical and political elements.

We will present the AIC vision, policies and activities in the field, and also a more comprehensive global perspective related to the attitude of western and Arab countries toward the conflict.

- The first on the ground experience will be a visit to the Apartheid Wall and refugee camps in the Bethlehem area.
- During a visit to Hebron, where human rights violations occur on a daily basis, participants will meet an association for the monitoring of settlements in Hebron
- During our weekly event at the AICafé, participants will meet different representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli civil society
- A visit to Jerusalem is scheduled to see the reality of the Israeli settlements, both in and surrounding the Old City
- A tour of Ramlah and/or Lod and then Jaffa (in Israel) will highlight the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian population there, and will include meetings with Palestinian and Israeli social activists
- In Ramallah we will explore the topic of detention and political prisoners with an association of specialized lawyers and activists, and will have meetings with Palestinian politicians
- Together we will explore the economic dimensions of the Israeli occupation, in addition to women and gender issues within both Palestinian and Israeli societies
- A lecture about Israeli society will offer elements for understanding critical dynamics; the participants, moreover, will meet Israeli women and men who refuse to serve in the Israeli military



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The participants will be hosted in double or triple-rooms in a guesthouse in Beit Sahour(Bethlehem) right next to the AIC-Center. All the tours will be one-day tour. The local transportation will be guaranteed by bus. **All lectures will be in English.**

The draft program is attached. Some changes are possible, although the aforementioned structure and topics will be maintained.

You can find more info, pictures of the previous editions and past participant experiences at:

www.alternativenews.org

Registration deadline: 13th December 2011

Minimum participants for the seminar to take place: 10

For more information please contact:

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THE
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**The
cost is**

EUR 400 (2000 NIS) - EURO 100 deposit and EURO 300 upon arrival

It includes all meals, accomodation, transportation, workshops, visits and lectures. This cost does not include transportation to the region or health insurance for the period of the field seminar.

The AIC cannot accept any responsibility for any injury or damage that you may cause to yourself, others, or property during the field seminar.

Glad to see you soon here!