



American Friends Service Committee

1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102-1479

Phone: 215/241-7000 • www.afsc.org

March 10, 2001

Ramallah, Palestine

PRESS RELEASE

Donald S. Gann
Chairperson

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary

American Friends Service Committee staff to assess situation; to announce Hanna Mikhail Fellowship

The staff of the American Friends Service Committee's Middle East Programs - in the Middle East and in the United States - are currently in Ramallah. The staff has been meeting with leaders and activists in order to assess the situation here and to plan its programs in the Middle East and in the United States that will respond to the current crisis. From here we will travel to Jordan and Iraq.

The AFSC has worked in the Middle East since 1949, when it first responded to a call from the United Nations to provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians uprooted from their homes as the result of al-Nakbah. Since that time, AFSC has maintained a presence in the Palestinian community in Palestine.

The AFSC Middle East Peace Education Program is based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with staff around the country implementing programs locally. Realizing the imbalance in U.S. Middle East policy, the AFSC representative in Washington, DC, monitors the changing scene on Capitol Hill and advises AFSC staff of opportunities to educate policymakers about the realities in the Middle East and the U.S. role in this part of the world. We also believe that the media bias in the United States is against Palestinians and the Arab world in general. As Middle East staff, we believe that the US public must first know about the situation in the Middle East in order to lobby their own elected representatives and media. It is through speaking tours, campaigns, and various information work that we bring the realities of the situation here to the people of the United States.

The Quakers have had a presence in Palestine for more than one hundred years. Over the years, Palestinian Quakers have contributed to the building of Palestinian society in many ways. Many have been involved in justice and peace efforts at home and abroad for many years. To honor the efforts of these Quakers in Palestine and abroad, the American Friends Service Committee wishes to announce a Fellowship named in honor of one such person - Hanna Mikhail. The Hanna Mikhail Fellowship has been set up in order to recognize the contributions Quakers from Palestine have made towards peacemaking around the world and in the Middle East. Hanna Mikhail, a Palestinian Quaker was born in Ramallah, Palestine. After graduating from the Friends School here, he studied in Haverford College in Pennsylvania, where he received a degree in chemical engineering. After receiving his PhD in Political Science from Harvard he taught in Princeton, Harvard, and Washington University. He left his academic career as a scholar of Arabic Islamic thought to join the struggle for human liberation, social and economic justice, equality between men and women, and freedom for his own people. His doctoral dissertation was updated and published after his death. Hanna was one of the twelve Palestinian PLO leaders who disappeared while traveling from Beirut to Tripoli in June 1976. Edward Said, a close friend of Hanna says: For all Palestinians today he represents a distinguished role model who did not debase himself or his people. From what we know about him, and the contributions he made were not only in the struggle to free his people. Why? Because he lived his ideas and died for them.

The young person chosen to receive this Fellowship will have the opportunity to work in the national Middle East Peace Education program based in Philadelphia and AFSC will benefit from the skills, talents, and energy of him/her.

Kathy Bergen (National Coordinator, Middle East Programs, Peacebuilding Unit, Philadelphia)
E-mail: kbergen@afsc.org Tel: (215) 241-7019

AFSC Focus Prize Co-Recipient 1997
1997-1998