

Jerusalem Programme Update

Search for Common Ground

November 2009

Since 1991, Search for Common Ground's (SFCG) Jerusalem office has been conducting multi-track activities to promote positive relationships amongst Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East through programmes and tools that advance mutual respect and reconciliation. Its vision is that the people of the Middle East region live together in equality, mutual respect and cooperation. Activities focus on:

- I. Developing an independent media capable of addressing critical issues in a constructive manner.
- II. Building regional cooperation in the fields of interfaith, health and leadership development.

UPDATE:

- 2009 Eliav-Sartawi Journalism Awardees are announced. The award ceremony takes place 16th November in Jerusalem
- We have begun a new project funded by the US State Department that promotes common ground print and broadcast news in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.



I. MEDIA ACTIVITIES

We initiate activities with media professionals to improve communication across borders, increase regional understanding and encourage journalists to challenge their own biases and stereotypes. We believe the media can and should be used as a tool that builds peace and educates the public on core issues.

Partnership with Palestinian TV Stations

Our partnerships with Palestinian T.V. stations are strengthening and expanding, with grants from the US State Department. We are supporting the production of much needed local news for Palestinians and are also deepening our relationship with the Ma'an Network of independent Palestinian TV stations, covering the West Bank and Gaza, and supervising the production of a variety of local drama series and documentaries that promote common ground. Strengthening independent media is crucial for stimulating open debate and creating space for alternative voices in today's political environment.

· *Palestinian TV Programmes*

In partnership with the independent Palestinian network, Ma'an, we are co-producing 4 programmes to be broadcast on Wattan TV and the 10 local Ma'an TV stations around the West Bank. These include the second season of a weekly TV talk show, *The Hard Questions*, developed by Ma'an productions, Bethlehem, which includes open discussion panels, live international uplinks, and a live participating audience discussing issues that are highly relevant to Palestinian daily life. This is the first Palestinian programme to include a representative of the Israeli government as a guest. Other programmes include a doctors' panel series by Al Quds TV with high quality graphics and animation, an economics and financial discussion series by Nablus TV, and a community related series by Gaza TV. All strive to provide useful day to day information that affects the lives of local Palestinians and offer opportunities for the public to air its views.

Football Series | *The Team*

As part of an SFCG project to produce TV and radio drama series in over 10 countries, focusing on the theme of football and the benefits to the individual and society of being a team player, SFCG's Jerusalem office is helping to produce T.V. drama series in both Palestine and Israel

Palestine

In the presence of the Palestinian Minister of Tourism in June, Ma'an productions, Bethlehem, launched its filming of *The Team*, a 26 episode drama series. With a cast of 112, and enthusiastic voluntary extras, there has been great local and international interest in the production. Shooting has ended and final editing is taking place before planned screening in early 2010.

Israel

The script of Israel's pilot episode of *The Team*, an 8 episode drama series set in the Arab/Jewish city of Ramla, is almost ready for production. We plan to broadcast the series in 2010.



Eliav-Sartawi Awards for Middle East Journalism



Isam Sartawi and Arach Eliav

Since 2000, the Eliav-Sartawi Awards for Middle Eastern Journalism have recognised and encouraged journalism that contributes to better understanding between people and to maintaining political dialogue in the Middle East. Our 2009 winners are as follows:

- Aziz Abu Sarah in the Palestinian category for his article, “A Palestinian remembers the Holocaust”
- Yizhar Be’er in the Israeli category for his article, “Human tragedy as a catalyst for change”
- Mona Eltahawy in the international category for her article, “The loneliest man in the world”

This year’s winners will be honoured at a ceremony in Jerusalem on November 16th. Please visit

www.commongroundnews.org to read the articles.

Common Ground Journalism

The Common Ground News Service (CGNews) www.commongroundnews.org

seeks to promote mutual understanding and offer opportunities for dialogue and constructive suggestions that facilitate peaceful resolution of conflict. The Middle East edition accomplishes this goal by providing constructive and solution-oriented news, op-eds, features and analyses to hundreds of news outlets worldwide on a broad range of issues affecting the region. Our selected weekly articles of free copyrighted originals and sourced pieces are translated into Arabic, English and Hebrew. CGNews—Middle East is produced by a diverse group of Palestinian, Israeli and international editors.



* CGNews-ME has expanded its group of editors to accommodate the growing number of commissioned and unsolicited original articles it receives for publication. One main aim is to encourage and educate towards a new style of writing and reading – one that offers common ground and provides hope. Please do check out our recent series on *Nationalism in the Israeli Education System* and our new one on *Religious Freedom*. We have also received a two-year grant to develop series on issues around *Religious Freedom and Tolerance*.

* Today, CGNews has 35,000 subscribers and an active network of contributing authors and major media partners around the world.

II. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Our regional initiatives are aimed at improving dialogue and cooperation amongst specialists and leaders in the Middle East, particularly in the fields of interfaith, health and leadership development.

Cooperative Disease Monitoring System

The Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS) was galvanised into immediate joint action to control impending outbreaks of swine flu in the region. This is an example of the continuing success of MECIDS - a mechanism for joint action by public health and academic experts from Israel, Jordan and Palestine. They have established national laboratory-based surveillance networks for food-borne and influenza diseases in their countries and maintain them according to a harmonised methodology which includes a common platform of communication, data sharing and analysis. With extensive financial support from the Global Health and Security Initiative, NTI, over the past five years, MECIDS has been a resounding success and we anticipate that the continuing upgrade in the methods of surveillance will play an important role in the prevention and control of occurrence and transmission of disease. Plans are afoot to use the MECIDS model to develop further health cooperation in the fields of nutrition and chronic diseases.



Interfaith Activities



*We are part of a project to develop a universal *Code on Holy Sites*, together with the Oslo Centre for Peace and One World in Dialogue, which for the first time ever is mapping out a detailed code of conduct in relation to sacred places world-wide. The intention is for the code to be recognised by a world body and to set up a monitoring mechanism to assess progress in individual countries.

*Plans are progressing towards the creation of a *Jerusalem Abrahamic Experience Centre*, a place dedicated to learning about Christianity, Islam and Judaism, within a framework that will be open, mutually respectful and home to the three Abrahamic faiths equally. A feasibility study is planned as a next step.

*The secretariat of the Council of Religious Institutions continues to work out of SFCG's Jerusalem office enabling close working relationships.

Social Entrepreneurs Project

The *Palestinian-Israeli Young Social Entrepreneurs Programme* concluded its first year with amazing success. It provided 12 carefully selected social entrepreneurs with leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills and has resulted in profound relationships as well as the beginnings of a leadership network. This is a joint project of SFCG's Leadership Wisdom Initiative (LWI), Outward Bound, and our Jerusalem office.

Funding has been granted for 2009-2010 to expand this project to incorporate Palestinian and Israeli political emerging leaders. Recruiting has begun and the first joint expedition is planned for March 2010.

FUNDERS

The activities of Search for Ground's Jerusalem office are funded by the Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish, UK, and US Governments. Support is also received from the Nuclear Threat Initiative, The Clinton Global Initiatives, The Jerusalem Foundation, and other friends of Search for Common Ground. We would like to take this opportunity to express warm thanks to all our donors.

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