

Gaza Visit

A solidarity visit to Gaza

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ACT Palestine forum organized a solidarity visit to the Gaza strip after the last war on Gaza which ranged from May 10 through May 21, this was the fourth war after 2008, 2012 and 2014. The latest war in 2021 caused by Israeli actions in Jerusalem around the Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah and the planning to evict residents from that area. The period between 10-21 May 2021 has seen the gravest escalation in hostilities between Palestinian and Israel since 2014 and This has worsened the already poor humanitarian situation and affected severely the disruption of the supply of the basic services, with the destruction or damage of homes and infrastructure leaving thousands of Palestinians in Gaza with no shelter or homes. According to colleagues in Gaza, this was one of the most intense wars in Gaza leaving more than 253 casualties on the Palestinian side and 2000 injured and 12 casualties on the Israeli side.



The forum visit to Gaza was a solidarity visit mainly to ACT Member organization and people in the Gaza strip and to be updated on the emergency intervention and response in that regard. We hoped that our presence in Gaza would demonstrate our commitment to helping the people of Gaza where many continue to feel abandoned and are losing hope.

Three forum member organization was able to make it to Gaza: DSPR, DCA/NCA and YMCA. Dr. Audeh Quawas Chairperson of DSPR Central Committee, Mads Frilander, Country Director DCA/NCA and Mai Jarrar, Program Manager of the Women Development at YMCA and George Stephan Forum Coordinator. In the Gaza Strip we were received and accompanied by DKH local representative Dr. Ahmad Safi, and Dr. Issa Tarazi, Executive Director, from DSPR NECC who helped in visit logistics throughout.



After the Erez clearance, we made a quick visit to DSPR -NECC offices, with warm welcome by Dr. Issa and The Area Committee Chairperson Dr. Maher Ayyad, Dr. Sohail El Madbak Delegate to DSPR Central Committee and Mr. Samer Saba , Treasurer along with DSPR/NECC administrative team .

The street where DSPR/NECC headquarter are called Al Wehdah street which sustained large scale destruction, the scenes were beyond imagination and as we have been informed the same street witnessed the worst and most intense hits by the Israeli war machine. We heard terrible stories about people and families who lost their loved ones or lost their homes and are now homeless and moved to live with their family members or during the war moved to school shelters. We heard stories of whole families who had been wiped out during the last war. As we paid homage to the fallen I felt it was amazing to see and hear about the resilience of the families and people affected by enormous loss. The Gaza population has proven yet once again that they want to lead normal lives like other people in the world and from talking to people and colleagues, they wanted us to carry their message and pain to the entire world.

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Colleagues informed us about DSPR/NECC Gaza effort and progress about current Emergency Appeal PSE 211, in the fields of cash assistance, job creation, health and minor home damages rehabilitation, the preparation for which involved selection criteria such as identification of

damage and the process of implementation with supervision. Dr Issa said that people appreciate all the supports extended and are thankful to ACT Alliance and members.

Next on our itinerary was the visit to the Arab Orthodox cultural and social Center, the center land was donated by the late president Yasser Arafat to local Christian community in Gaza. It took more than 20 years of planning to work out a beautiful center that will serve all the Gaza community. We were impressed by the center with its theater, multipurpose halls, GYM and beautiful playground.

Over the dinner, we met with colleagues, and friends and have heard from them about their daily life and the challenges and prospects for the future. The thing that hurts us was hearing that many of the youth and children of colleagues had opted to leave, to migrate, because they don't see a future in Gaza . Colleagues have stressed on the role played by us as ACT Alliance and the different Members, individually and in concert, how important it is to keep the hope alive amidst all the hardships facing Gaza and its different communities.

On the second day, we met with Ms. Suhaila Tarazi, Director of the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, an Anglican health institution, together with Dr. Maher Ayyad Medical Director They addressed the challenges facing the health sector in Gaza in general and about the difficulties that are facing the hospital in terms of finance with ever growing demands. Both Drs. asked us to carry a message to international partners not to forget about the local organizations and to stand in solidarity with them. We could feel the pain and the need for shared priorities between partners, international donors and the local organizations.



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Before heading back home, we visited with the Orthodox church in Gaza, which is one of the oldest churches in the world built in the fifth century. We heard from Archbishop Alexios about the last war in Gaza and he told us that the Christian community in Gaza are now less than a thousand inhabitant among a population of two millions in Gaza, but they see themselves as equal members in the society facing the same destiny.

As we concluded our visit to Gaza, we felt very blessed to have the chance to meet with colleagues, friends, and Rights Stakeholders. Words cannot express our deepest appreciation for the work and witness they are doing and their resilience. This puts on our shoulder a big load to always stand in solidarity and work hand in hand to keep the hope alive for a better future.