

## **Foreword**

The history of our movements has been closely linked with the history of Palestine, and has been affected by the tumultuous events of the whole region.

1948 was a turning point in the history of Palestine and of the YMCA and YWCA of Palestine that had to assume new responsibilities as a result of the tragedy that befell the Palestinian people. The YMCA and the YWCA realized that there was an immediate need to come to the rescue of the many uprooted Palestinians who overnight became dispossessed, deprived of their homes and land and many condemned to live in refugee camps. The YMCA and the YWCA were among the first organizations with the support of the World Movements to provide services in vocational training and many other services that were needed then, realizing that the leadership of the YMCA and YWCA became refugee.

Directed by their mission in support of issues of Justice and Peace, the World YWCA/YMCA Movements have adopted positions and resolutions that called for the achievement of Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

The publication states a brief history of the YMCA and YWCA in Palestine, World Alliance of YMCA's and World YWCA resolutions and responses to the injustice of the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

It is worth mentioning here that the involvement of both Movements was and still is beyond responses, documentation and implementation of resolutions. We appreciate the continued solidarity, involvement, visibility and moral and material support of regional, national and local Movements. This strengthened our willpower to maximize our efforts with our Palestinian sisters and brothers to achieve our aspirations in establishing a free and viable Palestinian State.

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Joint Advocacy Initiative team who exerted their utmost efforts to bring this publication to the attention of our sisters and brothers in the YWCA and YMCA Movements, our Partners and Friends all over the world.

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## **I. Historical Background**

### **A. The Beginnings of the YMCA in Palestine, Jordan, and Israel**

The YMCA Movement and its programs have had an active presence in the Holy Land since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first YMCA in Jerusalem was established as far back as in 1878: For the first ten years it remained a small group that met in the bookshop of the Christian Missionary Society. In 1890 the YMCA's work expanded, with twin centers operating in Jerusalem (one for Arab-speaking and one for Hebrew-speaking members) and a new association in Jaffa.

The YMCA ceased to function during World War I, but was re-established in 1920 with the assistance of the International Committee of YMCAs in the USA and Canada. A new YMCA building was opened in Jerusalem in 1933, constructed with financial assistance from the USA, enabling the YMCA to offer a wide variety of cultural, religious and recreational programs. The turbulent years of 1947/48 disrupted the YMCA's work once again. With the creation of the State of Israel, the composition of the YMCA's membership changed, 75% of its former leaders and members, being Arab Christians and Muslims, were dispersed throughout the neighboring Arab countries. In 1949 an Advisory Council of Christians was appointed, responsible to the General Secretary and International Committee of YMCAs of the United States and Canada, later augmented with a Community Council which included representatives of the Jewish faith. The Jerusalem YMCA continued to operate under the International Division of the US National Council of YMCAs. Activities included Christian Religious Services, evening classes, physical educational programs, summer camps, and recreational and educational activities.

In 1950 an association was opened in Nazareth where the majority of the population was Arab, more than 50% of whom were Christians. A new building was financed as a Building for the Brotherhood project of the International Committee and support from the YMCAs of Canada, was dedicated in 1965. It has become a major cultural, educational and religious centre of the city.

In 1948, the partitioning of Palestine and resulting Arab-Israeli conflict caused the inflow of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees into Jordan. In that year the YMCA started its work by carrying out a census of the refugee camps distributing food and clothing provided by the United Nations and the government of Jordan. Later that same year a

tent was pitched near the largest refugee camp close to Jericho; this was the beginning of the Jordan YMCA. This YMCA operation concentrated on work with boys: within two weeks, 1,500 boys participated in YMCA programs. Later the YMCA started a formal school, and in 1950 a Vocational Training Program for such trades as blacksmithery, carpentry, upholstery, electricity installation, tiling and leatherwork. In 1949 the YMCA began work in Jerusalem. In 1958 a plot of land was bought near the green line between West Bank and Israel on what was then called the Mandelbaum Gate. With financial help from the Building for Brotherhood program, a new building was constructed to suit the needs of the YMCA programs and to be of service to visitors through its hotel. Most of the interior construction work and furnishing was done by trainees of the Jericho YMCA Vocational Training School. In 1965 the YMCA built a retreat and conference centre at Shepherd's Field in Beit Sahour which has also been used for international camps.

## **B. History of the YWCA in Palestine**

The history of the YWCA of Palestine has been closely linked to the history of Palestine, and has been affected by the tumultuous events of the whole region.

Like a solid rock, the YWCA has withstood all political storms by shaping and molding itself to comply with the needs of the people, always at the service of women and the community.

Since 1893, informal groups of Christian women were meeting in Jaffa and Jerusalem as YWCA groups. In 1918, the YWCA of Palestine was established in Jerusalem, and from 1918 to 1928, the work was under the auspices of the World affiliated National Council of the YWCA in Egypt. Starting in 1930 until 1948, the YWCA of Palestine took an active role as an affiliated national association in the World YWCA, with nine branches throughout the country.

1948 was a turning point in the history of Palestine, its people and the YWCA. This was as a result of the creation of the State of Israel, and the subsequent uprooting of the Palestinians. The activities of the YWCA came to a complete halt until former members living in Amman-Jordan and in East Jerusalem decided to resume YWCA activities in order to meet the arising needs of their communities. With the support of the World YWCA, which was one of the first NGOs (Non Governmental Organization) to provide services for the Palestinian refugees, and before

UNRWA services were established, the YWCA created the Women's Training Centre and Pre-school in Aqabet Jabber Refugee Camp.

To further consolidate and extend this work, the YWCA of Jordan was formed in 1951, with branches and centers in the Refugee Camps on both the East Bank and West Bank of the River Jordan. It was affiliated to the World YWCA in 1959 as the YWCA of Jordan.

With the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the YWCA faced new challenges. Its programs reached out to more women and children in the Refugee Camps. UNRWA then provided premises for the YWCA to establish pre-schools in the Kalandia and Jalazone Refugee Camps, which were later expanded to accommodate women's activities.

As a women's movement it shared responsibility with other women's organizations to provide services, which are normally the responsibility of a National Government. Special committees like the Human Rights Committee were formed to meet some of the new challenges, and a variety of youth clubs were established to help in the process of building a new generation that were living under occupation. The vocational school developed its programs, and through the years became one of the most prominent and credible secretarial schools serving the Palestinian community.

In July 1988, Jordan severed its ties with the West Bank, and the Palestine National Council in its meeting on November 15th 1988, and offered its historic peace initiative and proclaimed the rebirth of the State of Palestine along side the State of Israel. It became imperative for the YWCA in the West Bank to re-establish itself and apply for re-affiliation to the World YWCA as the YWCA of Palestine. Elections in the West Bank branches took place, and the first National Council of the YWCA of Palestine was elected in January 1991. A delegation was chosen to attend the World Council Meeting in Norway in July 1991, where the affiliation was endorsed.

Throughout the years the YWCA has developed a wide range of programs and projects aimed at empowering women and providing them with educational, cultural, and training opportunities. The aim was to develop their skills and personalities, and to support them in actively participating in developing themselves, their families and their communities.

## **II. World Alliance of YMCA's and World YWCA resolutions:**

### **I. Y's resolutions about the situation in the Middle East**

#### **1. World YWCA resolutions approved by World Council 1983**

In 1975 the World YWCA Council meeting adopted a statement on Middle East tensions. This statement read in part: The explosive situation in the Middle East is increasing in gravity as every day goes by. It is the most serious threat to world peace facing us today and has gone beyond the control of the region. It affects not only the people who live there but people throughout the world. At the heart of this explosive situation is the question of Palestine, which has become a major concern on the agenda of the United Nations. It is a question of a people uprooted from their homeland, living under occupation, living in camps and scattered throughout the world. The United Nations has recognized that the problem of Palestinian refugees has arisen from the denial of their inalienable rights as a people under the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The implementation of these rights is crucial to the establishment of a lasting peace...

"[We recognize that] the longer a people are forced to live in these conditions, the more bitterness inevitably increases, and the more difficult finding any solution becomes. Despite the mounting number of United Nations Resolutions, no progress has been made. We urge national associations to make the widest possible use of this statement."

Since 1975 the crisis in the Middle East has become more critical. Not only has there been no solution to the fate of the Palestinian refugees and to the whole question of Palestine, but the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the continued presence there of all occupying foreign forces has brought great loss of life and has displaced half a million Lebanese citizens. Action by the YWCA World Movement in support of the resolve of the Lebanese people to retain their national sovereignty is vital and urgent.

Furthermore the continuous threat to the security of refugees in the camps and vulnerability of all refugees and displaced people, demands special action by the world movement.

Be it, therefore, resolved that the World YWCA Council meeting in Singapore urges the adoption of the following first steps to a just peace recognizing that no solution can be found for one people at the expense of another:

### For the Lebanese people

- the withdrawal of all occupying foreign forces from Lebanon
- the assurance of the sovereignty of Lebanon.

### For the Palestinian people

- the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people
- the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as their legitimate representative
- a halt to the building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank
- the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967

### For the Israeli people

- The recognition of the State of Israel by the Arab states and the PLO
- The recognition of the rights of the Israeli people.
- For the peace of the world, and not only for the Middle East countries involved, we, as a women's world movement, urge all national associations to take whatever action may be possible in their situation and report their actions to each other through the World Executive Committee.

## **2. Resolutions approved by the YWCA World Council 1987**

The 1987 World YWCA Council meeting in Phoenix, Arizona Concerned about the continuing state of war, violence, military expansionism, occupation and violations of human rights in the Middle East; Concerned that this situation if unresolved poses a very serious threat to world peace, Reaffirms the 1983 World YWCA Council resolution on the Middle East and renews its commitment to a just solution to this conflict.

### It therefore resolves that:

Local and national associations, in cooperation with other NGOs press their respective governments to intensify their efforts for peace with justice in the Middle East.

Furthermore it urges governments to:

- Stop the world-wide arms race and the sale of arms to the area;
- Promote the convening of the proposed international peace conference on the Middle East as called for by the United Nations and the World YWCA,
- Work for a nuclear free Middle East;
- Bring an end to the war in Lebanon and press for the withdrawal of Israeli and all other intervening armed forces from the country;
- Press for the withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967;
- Support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of the Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

Bearing in mind the Christian commitment of the YWCA to peace with justice and the right of all peoples to self-determination, freedom and dignity, the 1987 World YWCA Council further urges:

- National associations to continue to educate their membership and their communities about the root causes of the conflict in the Middle East:
- The World YWCA to promote and organize further “Middle East Encounters” in support of peace and justice and in order to build awareness and understanding contributing towards bringing peace and healing to this troubled area.

## **B. Y's responses to first Intifada:**

### **1. World YMCA Workshop on Migrant Workers and Human Rights, Venezuela, 26-31 January, 1988**

A Resolution on the Middle East was brought up at the closing session of the World YMCA Workshop on Migrant Workers and Human Rights, held in Caracas, Venezuela, 26-31 January, 1988.

After listening to reports from different parts of the world, several participants at the workshop expressed the feeling that the situation of the Palestinians was becoming not only severe but one that it needed global attention and involvement. It was noted further that just as the World YMCA Action on Apartheid had succeeded in mobilizing

worldwide YMCA attention against apartheid, there was also a need to initiate similar steps around the situation in the Middle East.

The following is the text of the resolution:

"We the participants of the World YMCA Workshop on Migrant Workers and Human Rights held in Venezuela from 26-31 January, 1988, wish to express our deep concern about the situation in the Middle East.

We learnt of the deteriorating situation and the growing human rights violations of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories including Jerusalem. We were dismayed by the recent events in these places, where young people have come to the forefront of the efforts for change. We understand that in the last month alone 39 people were killed, over 200 injured and many more detained without access to the due processes of law.

This is the time for a deepening and strengthening of YMCA involvement. While we recognize that the YMCA has played an important role over the last 11 years, this involvement needs review, study, and planning for intensified action in the light of the changing situations.

We therefore urge the World Alliance of YMCAs to adopt the following steps:

- The World Alliance of YMCAs should mobilize increased solidarity and support to efforts of YMCAs in the Middle East that deal with immediate relief programs and long-term plans to address the situations of those who are suffering and victimized.
- The World Alliance should mobilize international public opinion about the causes and manifestations of the Palestinians' problems including their claims for their legitimate rights.
- The World Alliance of YMCAs should adopt a position on this issue at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Council taking into account all relevant UN resolutions on the issue in consultation with YMCAs in the Middle East.

The World Alliance should work along with other peace forces in the region to help find a just and durable peace."

## **2. 11th YMCA World Council (1988) resolution and statement of the youth meeting**

Based on the resolution and recommendations of the participants of the World YMCA Workshop on Migrant Workers and Human Rights, held in Venezuela from 27-31 January 1988, the 11th World Council expresses its deep concern about the situation in the Middle East.

Recognizing the deteriorating situation of the Palestinian people and the growing human rights violations in the occupied territories including Jerusalem, and dismayed by the recent events in these places where young people have come to the forefront of efforts for change, we believe that this is the time for a deepening and strengthening of YMCA involvement. While the YMCA has already played an important role, this involvement needs review, study, and planning for intensified action in the light of the changing situations.

We therefore resolve that the World Alliance of YMCAs adopt the following steps:

1. The World Alliance of YMCAs should mobilize increased solidarity and support for efforts of YMCAs in the Middle East which deal with immediate relief programs and long-term plans to address the situations of those who are suffering and victimized.
2. The World Alliance should implement a program designed to deepen understanding of the causes and manifestations of the Palestinian problem.
3. The World Alliance of YMCAs should work with other peace forces in the region to help find a just and durable peace, taking into account all relevant UN resolutions on the issue.

In the Report "Rage, Resistance and Reconciliation", the World YMCA Youth Conference to the 11<sup>th</sup> World Council, moved that "the world YMCA Movement should take a stand in support of the Palestinian youth for self-determination by organizing inter-area exchange programs and other international events in the Middle East to promote international solidarity and understanding to solve the problems and issues affecting youth in the region"

### **3. International Delegation and International YMCA Meeting on Palestinian Issues - Cairo - October 1989**

As a follow up on the 11<sup>th</sup> World Council Resolution on Palestine and part of the awareness effort to deepen understanding and involvement in the problems affecting the Palestinians, the World Alliance published the book "The Palestinian Situation", by Sarah G. Brown, which was widely distributed.

Following the publication of the book, the World Alliance of YMCAs set up a delegation to visit the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Israel and the Occupied Territories in September 1989. The visit of representatives from partner YMCAs of those in the Middle East was seeking to gain a first-hand understanding of the situation in the region. The visit of the delegation was followed by an International meeting in Cairo, in which members of the delegation were joined by other YMCA representatives.

#### The delegation made the following recommendations:

The eleven recommendations which follow should be understood and acted on in the light of what has been stated above.

1. The World Alliance should recognize the right of Palestinians to self-determination and to an independent state in their own land, and the right to return to a region where both peoples - Israelis and Palestinians - can live in peaceful coexistence on an equal basis. The world Alliance should also recognize the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, which can best express their hopes and understand their aspirations.
2. The World Alliance should recognize the right of Israel to exist as an independent state in defined and secure borders.
3. The World Alliance should urge the Government of Israel to respect and apply the Fourth Geneva Convention, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the UN Conventions on Human Rights, which have been accepted by most nations.
4. The World Alliance should condemn all forms of terrorism within and outside the region.
5. The World Alliance should encourage the dialogue between Israel on the one hand and the PLO, including local Palestinians, on the other, through an international conference to be held under the auspices of the

United Nations, which would lead to peace and the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel.

6. The World YMCA should play an influential role in drawing attention to the increasing and excessive violations of human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, which include shooting, beating, harassment, deportation, house demolition, imprisonment, curfew, and confiscation of land and property. The world YMCA, through the world community, should exert pressure on the Israeli Government to stop hindering and destroying Palestinian economic and social development.

7. The World Alliance of YMCAs should draw the attention of the world to the serious conditions and implications of the interrupted education process of children and young people, who, because of the closure of schools, universities and other educational institutions, have been deprived of basic education for nearly two years.

8. The World Alliance of YMCAs should encourage the involvement of YMCAs around the world to support, strengthen and facilitate the work of YMCAs in the region (who have been diverted from regular activities), in extending relief programs and services to refugees and affected Palestinian communities in the following areas:

- Financial contributions.
- Study visits, exchanges, and placement of YMCA staff and volunteers in Palestine to increase understanding.
- Provision of training opportunities for YMCA staff and volunteers from the region in other parts of the world.
- Education of all YMCA constituencies (local, national, international) to promote understanding and support for the Palestinian-people as a nation.
- Advocate on their behalf to their governments.
- Encourage the mass media in their respective countries/communities to introduce information about the current situation in the occupied territories.

9. The world YMCA should support programs that will create appreciation and understanding of Palestinian culture.

10. The World Alliance should encourage national movements to support local YMCAs in the occupied territories to carry out programs which will deal with social, psychological and physical rehabilitation for youth, women and men affected since the Intifada.

11. The World Alliance should set up a special task force with an office in Jerusalem for the purpose of a) monitoring the situation, b) representing the world community of YMCAs, and c) following-up recommendations as well as informing the world YMCA of new ideas and projects to support the Palestinian community.

The 1990 Executive Committee approved the recommendations of action and the Action Plan.

#### **4. World Alliance of YMCAs International Task Force 1990:**

In the 32<sup>nd</sup> World Alliance Executive Committee, a Task Force on Palestinian Issues was set up, with the Secretariat in the East Jerusalem YMCA, to "assist YMCAs in East Jerusalem and Gaza as they carry out and interpret actions in pursuing recommendations from the International Meeting on Palestinian issues, held in Cairo; to work directly with communities where there is no YMCA presence, this work will include emergency responses to human rights situations as well as activities related to economic development, youth and women's concerns and other fields of work that are identified by the Task Force and; promote visits and assist in the programs of groups from overseas in the Occupied Territories."

#### **5. World Alliance of YMCAs Council Resolution 1991:**

In 1991, the 12<sup>th</sup> World Council unanimously accepted the following Statement and Resolution on Palestinian Issues:

##### Preamble

The World Alliance of YMCA's acknowledging the work achieved by the Task Force on Palestinian Issues since its establishment in 1989; recognizing the emergence of fresh factors in an ever changing situation; commends the following statement and resolutions as a summary of work already done, as an assessment of the current position and as an indication of what remains to be achieved.

##### Statements and resolution

The World Alliance of YMCAs recognizes and affirms the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis to statehood, in compliance with the two-state solution approved by the United Nations in 1947 in Resolution 181; reaffirming the principle of the exchange of occupied territories for peace and justice as expressed in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

### Urges

1. That all parties concerned to be invited, in the pursuit of justice and peace, and to avoid the promotion of exclusive religious claims by any one party, to join as equal partners, each allowed the choice of its own representatives, in the Conference proposed by the USA and USSR.
2. That promoters and sponsors of this Conference show consistency in their application of the Charter of Human Rights and demonstrate equal concern, including equity of economic support, for Palestinians and Israelis.

### Calls on

1. The United Nations Security Council to implement its long-standing resolutions about Palestine and Israel and to go beyond its relief services to the Palestinian people.
2. The State of Israel to refrain from arbitrary individual and collective punishment, and the establishment of settlements in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip until the Conference has been able to investigate these matters; and
3. All parties concerned to refrain from all forms of violence.

The World Alliance of YMCAs further calls on the religious leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to exert every effort to support current moves for peace and to encourage the fullest dialogue between them.

The World Alliance of YMCAs, having supported the YMCAs of the Middle East in their service to refugees and all displaced persons by:

- Financial contribution.
- Study visits, exchanges and placements of YMCA staff and volunteers in Palestine to increase understanding.

- Provision of training opportunities in other parts of the world, for YMCA staff and volunteers from the region.
- The education of YMCAs at all levels - local, national, regional and international - to promote understanding and support for the Palestinian people as a nation.
- Asking member movements to make representation to their governments on behalf of the Palestinian people.
- Asking member movements to encourage the media of their communities to promote more objective information about the situation in the Occupied Territories.
- Sustaining programs which promote Palestinian culture.
- Promoting the social, psychological and physical rehabilitation of the victims of the Intifada; pledges the continuation and development of that support through appropriate mechanisms, such as a Task Force or a Commission.

The World Council of YMCAs, in commending this Statement and Resolutions to the World Alliance of YMCAs urges each of its member movements to act on them and to bring them to the attention of its own government; requests the World Alliance of YMCAs to present them to the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, and the leadership of the parties most immediately concerned.

## **6. Resolutions approved by the World YWCA Council 1991**

Whereas, affirming the urgent need for peace and justice in the Middle East.

Whereas, recognizing that the 24-year old Israeli occupation and the increasing violations of human rights and the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources are in contradiction to the Fourth Geneva Convention and International Law, and are an obstacle to peace.

Whereas, recalling past Council resolutions on the Middle East and the recognition of the YWCA of Palestine and its affiliation to the

World movement at the 1991 World YWCA Council meeting in Stavanger, Norway.

Whereas, recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, to return and establish their own State on Palestinian soil in accordance with the UN Charter.

Therefore, be it resolved that all national associations, in cooperation with other NGOs, press their governments to mobilize an alliance to ensure implementation of all UN resolutions regarding the Palestine question, to put an end to the Israeli occupation and a halt to the illegal settlements in the occupied territories, in order to guarantee justice and peace for all peoples in the region.

### **7. World YWCA Council, Seoul Korea 1995: Peace in the Middle East**

Whereas, the YWCA based on a resolution passed at World Council, Stavanger, Norway 1991, which called for peace in the Middle East, reiterates its support for all peace efforts based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the implementation of UN resolutions calling for the following:

1. an end to military occupation of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine
2. the preservation of the territorial integrity of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine
3. the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return to their land and to self-determination and sovereignty on their land
4. An end to confiscation of land and illegal settlements.

Be it *resolved*, that all affiliated associations bring pressure on their governments to implement all United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Middle East and furthermore call for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Israeli jails.

### **8. 14th World Alliance of YMCAs Council Resolution 1998**

The 14th World Council approved the following Resolution on World Alliance Involvement in the Arab-Palestinian Issue:

The World Alliance of YMCAs, 10 years ago put a strong focus on the Arab-Palestinian situation in the period of Intifada, organized fact-finding visits and published study material on the issue. The last two years the World Alliance of YMCAs has embarked on a process of Conflict Resolution.

The Oslo-agreement and the peace process between the Palestinian authorities (PA) and the Israeli government is now in a very serious state of uncertainty.

United Nations resolutions on withdrawal from occupied territories have not been implemented.

Many local and national YMCAs have been in close partnership with the YMCAs in the area for many years, and through this experience have gained new understanding of the meaning of partnership and solidarity. The human suffering and injustice on the Palestinian people is not only a matter that can be addressed through financial support to social programs in the area. It also includes a challenge to theological reflection, political and ideological analysis, advocacy and action for the protection of human rights. This involvement is in line with peace efforts and negotiations, and is motivated by the challenge given to us by YMCAs in the area.

### Recommendation

With this background we ask the 14th World Council of YMCAs to adopt the following recommendation:

"The 14th World Council of YMCAs recommends that the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of YMCAs gives a high priority to studies, analysis, advocacy and action on justice and human rights violations related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Reports on the implementation of this recommendation should be submitted to the next World Council."

### **9. World Alliance of YMCAs Round Table Conference in East Jerusalem - International Partners Co-ordinate action**

Subsequent to the adoption of the 14th World Council resolution, all partners of the East Jerusalem YMCA met for a Round Table Conference from 18th to 20th October, 1998 in Jerusalem to work on partnership-related issues. They discussed the World Council

resolution and suggested ways forward for its active implementation. Noting that the resolution provides indications for its pursuance (challenge to theological reflection, political and ideological analysis, advocacy and action for the protection of human rights violations), the group addressed itself to the Executive Committee with the suggestion that the following be focused explicitly as a starting point for World Alliance involvement:

1. "To initiate a process of clarifying the formal and legal status of the YMCA in Palestine and Israel (East Jerusalem, Gaza, and Nazareth) within the Constitution of the World Alliance. It is a major issue of concern that YMCAs in the area do not have full membership status within the World Alliance. This is, as far as we understand, basically due to the fact that these YMCAs do not have any national structure. The consequence of this is that they do not have a formal influence in the world movement through democratic participation. As part of international solidarity with the YMCAs in the area, these YMCAs should have the international recognition of full democratic participation in our international structures. To achieve this goal, the YMCAs involved may seek guidance from the World Alliance and partners to strengthen their leadership structure and profile in local communities. This process might be facilitated through the formation of a Task Force of the Board(s) and representation from international structures and partners.

2. The World Alliance should develop close contact and communication with other networks focusing on the Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict. Through these networking efforts the YMCA should develop a higher profile in its advocacy role in the struggle for justice and peace in the area."

The World Alliance has retained its connections with international networks on the Palestinian issue. The East Jerusalem YMCA represented the World Alliance at a UN sponsored conference on Palestine in Rome, Italy in February, 1999. The YMCA of South Africa, also represented the World Alliance at a UN Conference for governmental and NGO representatives in Namibia in April 1999.

## **10. World Alliance of YMCAs Operation Plan 1999**

The members of the Youth Leadership Forum held in Geneva in April 1999, issued the following statement: "we strongly believe that the Palestinians have the right to independence and statehood. We will create a lasting network and expand leadership development internally and externally in the form of education, advocacy and solidarity. We see this as our common work and our duty which will achieve peace, justice and equality in the new millennium."

At the 1999 World Alliance Executive Committee, the World Alliance Operation Plan outlined proposals to continue working on the 14th World Council Resolution on the Palestinian/Arab-Israeli Conflict, which included a later visit by the Secretary General of the World Alliance, to the region.

In February 2000, the Secretary General of the World Alliance made a one-week visit to Palestine, going to both the International Jerusalem YMCA in West Jerusalem and all the West Bank YMCAs, together with the Nazareth and Jordan associations. The objective was to explore how to facilitate a stronger Middle East Committee, gather a first hand understanding of the situation and to become familiar with the leaders of the YMCAs and the communities that they work in. The Secretary General met with Yasser Arafat and on his return, went to see the Israeli Ambassador in Bern to collect a Foreign Service perspective.

### **11. World YWCA Council, Cairo, Egypt, 1999**

Recognizing that the front line Arab States have all suffered grievous losses, both human and economic, in their continued struggle against war and injustice, and in striving for peace in the Middle East, and

Further recognizing that continuing military aggression is detrimental to the full development of people of all faiths in the area and is a threat to world peace; and

Reaffirming previous World YWCA Council Resolutions of 1967, 1975, 1983, 1987, 1991 and 1995 referring to the Middle East,

#### The World YWCA calls for:

1. The implementation of all United Nations resolutions on the Middle East especially those referring to the sovereignty of Palestine and aggression against Lebanon;
2. An immediate end to all aggression in the region;

3. An immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from all occupied countries in the region and the preservation of their territorial integrity;
4. An immediate end to confiscation and misuse of water resources by Israel;
5. An immediate end to the confiscation of land and the establishment of settlements on confiscated land;
6. The affirmation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians in Jerusalem.
7. The right of return of Palestinian refugees and Palestinians in exile;
8. The release of all Palestinian, Jordanian and Lebanese and all political prisoners in the region, men, women and children.

The World YWCA further calls on:

All national associations and through them, civil society to continue to raise awareness regarding the violations of human rights in the region, support the peace efforts in the region and urge their respective governments and the United Nations to promote peace with justice.

**12. World Alliance of YMCAs Resolution on the right to return**

In May 2000, the World Alliance Executive Committee endorsed the NGO Statement on the Right of Return of Palestine Refugees to their homes. "We NGOs recall that the question of Palestinian refugees - today's longest-running humanitarian problem - remained unresolved. We noted that, on the threshold of the new millennium, more than 3.6 million Palestine refugees, registered with UNRWA, scattered around the Middle East and beyond, continue to live in camps and elsewhere, many away from their homeland, denied their right of return and self-determination, with bleak economic prospects, their freedom of movement restricted, families separated, their hopes and aspirations for the future dependent on the outside world. We stressed that the social and economic conditions of the refugees remain very difficult and require urgent intervention on the part of the international community."

**C. Responses to Second Intifada; Crisis in Palestine Deepens and Solidarity from World Alliance, World YWCA and National Movements Grows**

## **1. Affect of Intifada on the East Jerusalem YMCA**

In September 2000, the second Intifada began. From the first day, the World Alliance of YMCAs began receiving reports of the situation from the East Jerusalem YMCA. YMCA staff and students had difficulties in commuting to Jericho and carrying out their normal activities and training. On October 2, there were severe exchanges of fire between the Palestinian and the Israeli Occupations Forces in the premises of the YMCA Vocational Training Centre. This exposed the lives of the students and the three employees to tremendous danger as they were trapped in the administration building. The situation created a state of fear among the students who had to stay in the corners of the corridors as the bullets were shot heavily towards the dormitory. The next day, the students were transported safely to their homes.

On October 4, bullets fired by Israeli soldiers hit the YMCA Rehabilitation Centre in Beit Sahour in the building where persons with disabilities reside. One of the high velocity bullets penetrated a window where 17 beneficiaries gathered and burst into small fragments. It caused no physical injuries but created a state of fear and anxiety among innocent beneficiaries living in a civil organization. Consequently, the YMCA evacuated the building and sent the beneficiaries home.

This act was repeated the next day and more bullets hit the building. Numerous bullets were gathered from the surrounding area, which became one of the hottest areas in the Bethlehem district. The YMCA which is located close to the zone C that is still fully under Israeli control became a target for the Israeli soldiers.

The East Jerusalem YMCA Rehabilitation Program responded to this situation by developing an emergency plan to pay visits to the injured at the hospitals and help those who have developed trauma and psychological disturbances and assess their needs for further rehabilitation.

The East Jerusalem YMCA in Beit Sahour then urged "the human rights organizations and all the peace loving groups all over the world to assert pressure on the Israeli Government, to respect international law and the Geneva conventions and to immediately stop these acts of aggression. We think that the whole world community must feel responsible for taking measure against Israel

who is violating all the international conventions and killing innocent people in cold blood."

Two students of the East Jerusalem YMCA Vocational Training Centre were killed: Ramzi Adnan Musa Naser Bayatneh, a 15 year old student, after attending a training and Mohammed Amin Al Sajadi (19 years old), a graduate of the same Centre in 1999.

In view of the deteriorating situation, the East Jerusalem YMCA expressed in a letter to its partners that it believes that "the government of Israel is responsible for the bloody circle of violence, having allowed Mr. Sharon to visit the Al Aqsa Mosque, guarded by some two thousand well-equipped members of the armed forces.

The East Jerusalem YMCA strongly condemns the systematic killing and injury of our Palestinian people, be they in the Liberated Palestinian Territories, in the Holy City of Jerusalem or inside Israel. These events appear designed to target and defeat the very cause for which all peace loving people in the world, including Palestinians, have endeavored to accomplish since the Oslo Accords.

The East Jerusalem YMCA strongly believes that a just and lasting peace cannot be established on the dead bodies of their people, or the demolished homes of their refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. Peace must be established on the principles of truth and justice.

The East Jerusalem YMCA believes that peace comes with the implementation of all the United Nations resolutions related to the Palestinian cause.

## **2. The East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI)**

In response to the current severe situation, several YWCA and YMCA delegations visited Palestine and assigned an international observer to be located in Palestine and to report about the situation for both, the World YWCA and the World Alliance of YMCAs in Geneva.

Parallel to the appointment of the international observers, the YWCA Palestine and the East Jerusalem YMCA decided to implement a joint advocacy initiative to reveal truth to our partners and friends being a reliable source of facts and information. Two part-time coordinators

were appointed to jointly carry out the work plan. A number of joint meetings were held to discuss the structure and the content of the work mechanism and a document was approved to that effect.

This joint operation, which was the first in the history of the two organizations in their current structures, was perceived positively amongst the NGO community in Palestine and abroad since both organizations enjoy a very good reputation on the national and international levels.

Advocacy is the dynamic and tangible effort to promote peace and justice as the basis for stability, tolerance, and equality in the Holy Land. Advocacy work aims to bring about change at the local level through involving Palestinian organizations and individuals to work to gain their basic rights and to engage in processes to effect social change. At the international level, advocacy work aims to raise awareness among organizations and individuals concerning the injustice and oppression to which Palestinians are subjected, as a first step in mobilizing them to participate actively in the struggle for justice and peace in Palestine.

### **3. World Alliance of YMCAs Letter to National Movements and Executive Committee**

The World Alliance contacted national movements in a letter dated October 13, 2000, describing the situation for the YMCAs in the region:

"We have been in close touch with the YMCAs in Palestine and Gaza. Many of their programs have been hard hit by the actions of the Israeli armed forces. There have been instances of shooting into the premises and into rooms occupied by young people who participate in YMCA programs. This is a matter of serious concern for us not only because it affects our sisters and brothers directly, but also because it seeks to disrupt normal civilian activity. Our centers have had to be closed or have their activities suspended or diminished because of the threat of Israeli intervention and interference."

The World Alliance affirmed the actions called for by Rt. Rev. Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal, East Jerusalem YMCA Chairperson and General Secretary Judeh Majaj, which urged YMCAs to:

- Ask their respective governments to support the investigation of the causes and agendas behind the current situation by a neutral party such as the United Nations
- Call for the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from liberated Palestinian territories as well as those in dispute since the occupation in 1967 including East Jerusalem
- Ensure that the UN compel Israel to comply with all resolutions related to the Palestinian people
- Commit YMCA Peace Day (18th November 2000) to pray for, advocate and engage in acts of symbolic and concrete solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The World Alliance also called the YMCA to show its solidarity with the Palestinian people. "It is our opportunity to demonstrate that the issue of justice and peace are non-negotiable and indivisible wherever they may be. We call on each of our National movements to intervene with their Governments and the Israeli Embassies."

Many YMCA National Movements expressed their solidarity with the Palestinians and expressed their aspirations for peace, security and justice for all.

#### **4. World Alliance of YMCAs Letter to UN Human Rights Commission**

The World Alliance requested that the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Special Reporters for Human Rights in Palestinian Territories carry out an investigation of these attacks on YMCA centers.

The Secretary General of the World Alliance also addressed the Ambassador of Israel in Switzerland, to demand an explanation for the "appalling attack on a centre that is recognized around the world as a centre for the care and concern of young people, physically and psychologically damaged by violence. It is so hard for us in the YMCA Movement to understand the motives of the Israel Army in launching such an attack, especially given [that] there has been no provocation."

#### **5. World Alliance of YMCAs Statement of NGOs**

The World Alliance signed a statement on the Current Confrontations on Israel/Palestine, with NGOs.

This statement called for:

- An immediate and total cease-fire followed by peace negotiations under international auspices
- A full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian areas
- An end to Israel's ongoing and systematic violations of Palestinian human rights and respect by Israel for international law and human rights treaties, including the Geneva Conventions
- Implementation of all relevant UN resolutions and Geneva Conventions particularly provisions on occupied territories, as well as all other international treaties and conventions

That the international community provides the Palestinian people with immediate protection and humanitarian assistance including medical aid.

#### **6. Visit and Report of the World Alliance of YMCAs International Delegation, November 2000**

An international team of YMCA people, coordinated and sponsored by the World Alliance of YMCAs were in Palestine for five days from the 12th to 16th November 2000. The visit was prompted by serious concern over a deteriorating situation for the Palestinians in the wake of recent aggression by the Israeli Government, its army and settlers in the Occupied Territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

#### **7. World Alliance of YMCAs Peace with Justice program, Theological Reflections, February 2001**

A YMCA meeting for theological reflection entitled "Peace with Justice" was held in Jerusalem in February 2001, based on the recommendation made by the YMCA delegation visit in November 2000. 16 international YMCA participants, representing 8 national movements, 2 area organizations and the World Alliance of YMCAs attended the conference. A significant contribution was made by representatives from the YWCA of Palestine and the World YWCA, who participated in parts of the program. In addition to a large number of staff and volunteers from both the YMCA and YWCA locally, some other participants, including Dan Church Aid, attended parts of the conference.

The conference included exposure visits to Jericho, Jerusalem, Beit Sahour and Gaza, to Israeli organizations and to an Israeli settlement. All international participants also visited Jerusalem International YMCA.

## **8. World Alliance of YMCAs Executive Committee Resolutions, April 2001**

At the World Alliance Executive Committee held in Dakar in April 2001, there were further decisions on the implementation of the 1998 World Council Resolution on the Palestinian-Israel conflict.

The proposals represent a YMCA contribution to the peace process and enable the international YMCA community to be advocates for peace, justice and security for Israelis and Palestinians, tolerance, equality and respect for the rights and dignity of people in the Palestinian territories and Israel. Responses to humanitarian needs, displaced peoples, traumatized youth and children, youth development and exchanges, networking with other NGOs in Palestine, Israel and around the world will continue to be strengthened.

The following specific decisions were adopted by the Executive Committee and will provide space for a comprehensive and coordinated global approach to implementation of the 1998 Resolution:

1. All actions by the World Alliance of YMCAs in implementing the resolution are to be focused on serving those, whether Palestinians or Israelis, with particular emphasis upon youth, who have been denied peace, justice and security, and not upon serving any political or government agenda.
2. The World Alliance endorses the establishment, already underway, of an international YMCA-YWCA observer for at least 6 months. The observer is to investigate conditions in Palestine and Israel and report back via staff. She or he will form an optimal interface between the YMCAs and YWCAs in Palestine and Israel and the World YWCA and World Alliance of YMCAs.
3. That the World Alliance establishes a Task Force on Palestine and Israel under the Christian Mission and Ecumenical Concerns

Committee to process responses on the recommendations contained in the 1998 Resolution and reports of the various international teams who have visited the area. The Task Force will facilitate the implementation of the recommendations by presenting to the World Alliance Executive Committee recommended actions via the Christian Mission and Ecumenical Concerns Committee.

### **9. 15<sup>th</sup> World Council of YMCAs, July, 2002**

In July 2002, the 15<sup>th</sup> World Council of YMCAs was held in Oaxtepec, Mexico from the 14<sup>th</sup> till the 20<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was presented by the YMCA and YWCA in Denmark and seconded by the YMCAs in Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Lebanon, Netherlands Norway, Portugal, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, Trinidad, Uruguay, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It was supported by the YMCA in Jordan (as member) and the YMCAs in East Jerusalem, Gaza and Nazareth.

#### Motivation:

The World Alliance of YMCAs has been involved in the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli conflict since 1948. The continuing tragedy that has expanded ever since, with varying degrees of intensity, has caused human suffering for generations of people living in the land of the Holy One, and for those who have been expelled from their home country. In a wider context it has caused instability and animosity between major religions and civilizations on a global level, and thereby threatened, and continues to threaten international security. The 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, which has now lasted for 35 years, needs to be ended. During the last two years the conflict has deteriorated significantly and caused civilian casualties on both sides. The World Alliance of YMCAs has documented this in the reports of the YMCA fact-finding mission in November 2000 and of the YMCA/YWCA observers in Palestine and Israel in the year 2001. In solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel, the Churches and all people in the region who are suffering, we, the World Alliance of YMCAs, commit ourselves to continue our involvement in creating peace with justice in the area.

Basis:

Consistent with our values contained in Challenge 21, we commit:

- To defend God's creation against all that would destroy it;
- To work towards justice, peace and reconciliation;
- To stand against violence and human degradation in any form;
- To work in solidarity with the poor, dispossessed, uprooted people and oppressed racial, religious and ethnic minorities.

We reaffirm the rights of all people, especially children and young people, to live in conditions of dignity, peace and safety, ensuring hope for the future and fostering the development of human potential.

We affirm that we are:

- Building on the resolutions on Palestine adopted at the 11th, the 12th and the 14th World Councils;
- Confirming our support for the UN-resolutions.
- Emphasizing the importance of the 4th Geneva Convention, and the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We declare that:

- The Palestinians have the right to a viable sovereign state based on the 4th of June 1967 borders, as well as the Israelis who have already had their sovereign state since 1948 within the territory granted to them by the UN. Both people have the right to complete self-determination within internationally recognized borders, to full sovereignty, to international recognition of their elected leadership and to security for their civilian population;
- Since the establishment of the State of Israel, Palestinians, who in large numbers lost their land and property and became refugees, and who were denied the rights promised to them in UN-resolution 194, have experienced tremendous suffering;
- The experience of violence resulting from the current crisis is causing suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians;

- No oppression of one people legitimizes their oppression of another people. Palestinians had no part in the historic suffering of the Jews, yet the Palestinians are suffering severe political and economic discrimination and humiliation;
- No violent acts directed against civilians can be legitimized, either the ones carried out by the Israeli army or the ones carried out by the Palestinian resistance movements;
- In keeping with UN Security Council Resolution 242, the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem should be ended without delay;
- Until the occupation ends, the Israeli closures, curfews and checkpoints must end, as it is collective punishment according to the 4th Geneva Convention and creates daily suffering and poverty among the Palestinians;
- The extensive expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories is a violation of the 4th Geneva Convention, and should be dismantled without delay;
- The two-state solution with Palestine and Israel living side by side, within secure and recognized borders, as stated in UN resolution 1397, is an urgent priority. The Palestinian State must be viable, sovereign, and based on the 4th of June 1967 borders. There must be unrestricted access between Gaza and the West Bank, and unrestricted access to the sea. This is the outset for future justice and the prerequisite for future peace.

We commit ourselves to:

*As World Alliance of YMCAs*

- To work for the full implementation of International Law related to Israel/Palestine, as it is outlined above;
- To continue the co-operation with the World YWCA and to strengthen our common objective of working for Peace with Justice in Palestine and Israel, by supporting joint advocacy initiatives;

- To request the Secretary General and the Executive Committee, when organizing themselves, to give consideration to creating the working capacity to co-ordinate such international actions;
- To conduct a meeting of the YMCAs in the Middle East for dialogue on the role of YMCAs in the conflict area and for co-operation amongst them. This meeting should be convened and facilitated by the World Alliance of YMCAs;
- This process should be documented in order to use it as learning tool in conflict situations in other parts of the world;
- To support and be advocates for appropriate initiatives with churches, ecumenical organizations, UN and others, which promote peace, justice and inter-faith dialogue.

#### *As National Movements*

- To promote education, understanding and dialogue within our national movements and our constituencies on the issues related to the root causes of the conflict and its effects on the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel;
- To carry out educational and solidarity exchanges between National Movements and YMCAs in the conflict area during the coming 4 years;
- To involve our National Movements in actions that emerge from the YWCA-YMCA joint advocacy initiatives, such as "the Olive Tree Campaign";
- To act on the request of the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel to advocate towards our own Governments, and regional inter-governmental bodies, where appropriate;
- To support the World Alliance in their initiatives related to the conflict.

#### *As World Movement*

- To listen, monitor and respond to the realities as expressed by our brothers and sisters in the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel;

- To conduct national and international campaigns to mobilize financial and technical assistance to strengthen the capacity and programs of the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel;
- To support the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel to be rallying points within their own constituencies in developing viable civil societies and democratic states.

### **10. World YWCA Council, Brisbane, Australia: Freedom & Dignity in the Middle East, 2003**

Whereas the explosive situation in the Middle East is increasing in gravity as every day goes by and it is the most serious threat to world peace facing us today and has gone beyond the control of the region. It affects not only the people who live there but people throughout the world, and

Whereas the World YWCA reaffirms its commitment to peace in the Middle East and reaffirms the 1999 World Council Resolution.

#### Be it resolved that:

The World YWCA calls for and will continue to actively advocate for:

1. An end to Israeli military aggression, and occupation of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria;
2. The immediate withdrawal of occupation forces from Iraq, and the recognition and restoration of the right of the Iraqi people to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity;
3. A halt to the ongoing illegal actions of Israeli forces in the Palestinian territories in: erecting the separation wall, infringing on and appropriating water and land resources, and imposing restrictions on access and movement which threaten the civil liberties of the people;
4. Urgent measures to halt the forced settlement of Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon;
5. The immediate provision of international protection through *UN Peace Keeping Forces*, to defend the people of Palestine against the violations of their human and civil rights;

6. Implementation of all UN resolutions pertaining to the Middle East.

Be it further resolved that:

The World YWCA Council of 2003 further calls on its member national associations to:

- Educate their memberships about the root causes of the conflict in the Middle East.
- Endorse the “Free Palestine Campaign” initiated by the Palestinian YWCA/YMCA.
- Demonstrate its support to Peace in Palestine by celebrating 29 November, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinians, and hosting special events to promote Peace and Justice in Palestine.

**11. Report of the Secretary General to the Executive Committee, Palestine/Israel Issue section: Peace with Justice, April 2003 – March 2004**

The continuing tragedy in the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a concern for the World Alliance of YMCAs for decades because of the large network of local YMCAs in the Middle East. It is sad that during the reporting period, on both sides of the conflict, the deadly spiral of provocation, massive retaliation and bloody-minded revenge has continued on a high and destructive level. The subsequent internal destabilization results in gross human rights violations, displacement, degradation, and dehumanization of people which increases their pain and suffering, especially among the youth, who lack hope for a positive future. Another alarming development, and violation of international humanitarian law, is Israel’s construction of the Wall, since it winds in many parts far beyond the 1967 border and falls well inside the West Bank, trapping thousands of Palestinians in enclaves.

The YMCAs in the Middle East are well-rooted in the community. An impressive number of children, youth and families are involved in innumerable programmes, reflecting the large capacity of the YMCA in the region. There is deep commitment to the vision and mission of the YMCA Movement and to solidarity with the people in achieving justice and peace in the region. Neither the many restrictions and

obstacles for work in various communities nor the minority position of the Christian community is preventing the YMCA from pursuing its mission.

The 15th World Council in Oaxtepec in July 2002 approved the Resolution: “Peace with Justice in Palestine and Israel”, committing the world Movement to continue the involvement in creating peace with justice in the area, in solidarity with the sisters and brothers of the YMCAs in Palestine and Israel, the Churches and all people in the region who are suffering. Through the Resolution, the world YMCA committed itself, at World Alliance, national and international levels, to a variety of actions.

To implement this mandate from the 15th World Council, the World Alliance secretariat developed a plan that concentrates on pursuing the following objectives which emerge from the Resolution:

- To advocate for initiatives that promote peace, justice and inter-faith dialogue, cooperation with the World YWCA and which create working capacities;
- To encourage a continuous dialogue on the role of the YMCA in the region among the YMCAs in the Middle East, but also world-wide;
- To network for the full implementation of International Law.

In line with these objectives, a variety of steps and activities have been carried out during the reporting period as given below:

- The World Alliance Secretariat started to collect information from national movements about the activities they conducted in relation to the Resolution, and to share this through an e-mail circular, focusing on national movements that introduced the Resolution at the World Council.
- The World Alliance circulated the appeal from the East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA of Palestine to join their campaign to stop the Wall in the Beit Jala area.
- With regard to enhancing the capacity to co-ordinate international actions, a proposal for an International Coordination Desk in Geneva was developed, as a joint initiative with the World YWCA. The aim

is to encourage, facilitate and mobilize national YWCA/YMCA associations around the world to act on the resolution and to coordinate advocacy efforts. The proposal was sent to Executive Committee Members, and based on some of the responses received, the matter has been included in the Agenda of this Executive Committee Meeting.

- The World Alliance staff facilitated and provided logistic support for the periodic conference calls to co-ordinate the solidarity action and programme support for Palestine by the various international YMCA partners.
- The World Alliance invited key volunteers and staff leaders of the YMCAs in the Middle East to a meeting which was held from 6-8 February 2004 in Cairo and which was attended by the President and Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs. The aim of the meeting was to foster a dialogue and information sharing on the role of the YMCA in the region, to strengthen the YMCAs and to find useful ways of networking. The meeting concluded with a joint statement of the YMCA in the Middle East and the agreement to hold an initial GOP Consultation of the Middle East YMCAs in Egypt in June 2004.
- The World Alliance engaged in research about YMCA summer camping activities in the Middle East and published several other articles about YMCA work in the Middle East in “YMCA World” or “YMCA Info”.
- The World Alliance Secretariat endeavored to organize a visit of the Secretary General to Palestine and Israel, but this is yet to be realized upon processing of required visas.
- At different occasions during the reporting period, the World Alliance welcomed in its office in Geneva volunteers and staff leaders from the YMCAs in East and West Jerusalem, Gaza and Lebanon.
- The World Alliance staff participated in the UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People (July 2003) and at the WCC Central Committee Hearing on Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (August 2003).

- The World Alliance of YMCAs and the World YWCA submitted a written statement expressing concern on the construction of the Wall to the meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in March 2004.

So far, the World Alliance has received information on implementation of the World Alliance Resolution from the national movements of Argentina, Denmark, Ecuador, England, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, and also East Jerusalem. These YMCAs were involved in:

- Peace education through seminars, producing materials, promoting the Olive Tree Campaign, the setting up of a “Palestine café” or public conferences to raise awareness on specific issues like the Wall, the rights of children in the Occupied Territories or the campaign against products made in the illegal Israeli settlements;
- Organizing an event for the International Day of Palestine ( 29 November);
- Advocating through meetings with Israeli Ambassadors, members of parliament or Church leaders;
- Organizing international youth events and solidarity visits to Palestine and Israel or sending volunteers to Palestine through the YMCA or the World Council of Churches programme;
- Inviting members of Middle East YMCAs to raise awareness in these countries;
- Mobilizing financial support to YMCA programmes in the Middle East;
- Joining coalitions of organizations to promote Peace with Justice;

## **12. 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee, Hong Kong 31<sup>st</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2004**

With regard to initiatives taken on the 15<sup>th</sup> World Council Resolution on Peace with Justice in Palestine/Israel, the Secretary General noted that the World Alliance secretariat developed a plan that concentrates on pursuing the following objectives:

- To advocate for initiatives that promote peace, justice and inter-faith dialogue, cooperation with the World YWCA and which create working capacities;
- To encourage a continuous dialogue on the role of the YMCA in the region among the YMCAs in the Middle East, but also worldwide;
- To network for the full implementation of International Law.

In line with these objectives, a variety of steps and activities have been carried out. With regard to enhancing the capacity to co-ordinate international actions, a proposal for an International Coordination Desk in Geneva was developed, as a joint initiative with the World YWCA. The aim is to encourage, facilitate and mobilize national YWCA/YMCA associations around the world to act on the resolution and to co-ordinate advocacy efforts. The proposal was sent to Executive Committee Members, and based on some of the responses received, the matter has been included in the Agenda of this Executive Committee Meeting.

***Resolution 4: The Executive Committee unanimously adopted the Report of the Secretary General.***