

DC Youth Inspire Grassroots Advocacy Training

by Emily Siegel, IFPB Delegations Coordinator

Living and growing up in Washington DC has always meant two things to me when it comes to congress: I understand the importance of expressing my views on political issues, but also know that - as a DC resident - my own representative has no vote and little influence. As a result, until earlier this month, I had never actually set foot in DC Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton's office. This year's training was different for me and I, along with eight other DC residents, met with a legislative aide at the representative's office on Capitol Hill.

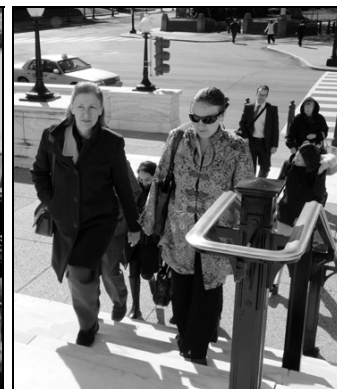
The inspiration for doing so came from two sources. First, **the overall energy and determination of everyone at the Grassroots Advocacy Training was infectious.** Participants and presenters alike focused on the issues, developed new skills, perfected old ones, and absorbed as much information as possible, before meetings on Capitol Hill the next day. With nearly 200 people from more than 26 states (and DC!) attending, and the entire event streaming live online to countries around the world, it was impossible to not feel like our movement is growing and that we will have an impact! The event helped us each understand our role in the pursuit of peace with justice in Israel/Palestine.

My second inspiration came from six high school students from Cesar Chavez High School who attended the training. The students - all from Washington DC - worked tirelessly to advance their knowledge of Israel/Palestine. They spent time after normal school hours discussing the conflict, the role of the US, and preparing themselves to speak on the need to shift our government's priorities. At the training, they were highly engaged, asked questions that stumped presenters, and even began to organize their own flash mob!

I met with the students to help them plan their meeting with Representative Norton's office. Our strategy session was similar to others occurring over lunch: we chose who would introduce each of our talking points and covered the details of each policy ask. Watching and listening to these youth speak about how cutting US Military Aid to Israel could affect DC schools, their reaction to learning that some money given to charities in the US goes directly to Israeli Settlements, and seeing their eagerness to express their concerns to Congress, inspired me to do the same!

Our meeting the next day went very much like many others that occurred in more than fifty congressional offices that day. The aide listened politely to our policy asks, shared some of our concerns, but also expressed her own inability to act. The students quickly realized that US policy in the region is still linked to the arms trade and the maintenance of Israeli interests, but instead of leaving defeated they remain determined to make an impact. **Just as nearly 200 other participants at the Grassroots Advocacy Day, the students and I came away understanding the importance of ordinary people engaging their representatives on these issues.** We know that there is a strong and growing movement committed to a future of peace with justice in Israel/Palestine.

You can still join the Grassroots Advocacy Training by visiting:
ifpb.org/education/grassroots/2011/action_oneweek.html



Photos from the Grassroots Advocacy Training and Lobby Day. Clockwise from top left: (1) DC student Elmu Sadalah speaks with an aide at his representative's office, supported by his teacher Maimuna Ahmad and IFPB's Emily Siegel; (2) Virginia participants on the way to their senators' offices; (3) On location at Cesar Chavez School for Public Policy in DC; (4) Participants network and strategize; (5) Keynote speaker Nadia Hijab (photos: Amy Joseph and Joshua Hough).

Education & Advocacy: Measuring our Impact

One IFPB delegation reaches millions through media work, organizing, and more

Every non-profit organization inevitably needs to quantify impact and achievements. Interfaith Peace-Builders is no different. So what do we look to as examples of our success?

For one, we point to the hundreds of IFPB delegates who have turned into lead organizers in their local communities and especially in national and regional organizations. Our delegates have helped lead national coalitions such as *United for Peace and Justice* and the *US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation*; they have published books; and have keynoted major conferences on Israeli-Palestinian peace. These are major contributions to the movement, but they are only individual cases. That is why we meticulously record the contributions of each delegation we dispatch.

The average IFPB delegation reaches millions through media advocacy, speaking events and grassroots organizing initiatives. This work critically affects public discourse around the country, strengthens those working for justice in Israel/Palestine and brings new advocates into the work.

To better measure this impact, we have released a revealing new *Case Study* analyzing the impact of IFPB's 2007 Olive Harvest Delegation. The 23 people who traveled on this delegation returned to the US days before US President George Bush convened a large-scale Middle East peace conference in Annapolis, Maryland. Returning to communities across North America, delegates brought their eyewitness experience and the voices of Palestinians and Israelis committed to nonviolence, human rights and peace with justice to the debate. **In doing so, the delegation reached nearly 3.5 million people.**

In many ways, IFPB's 2007 Olive Harvest Delegation is illustrative of our broader work. Members of every IFPB delegation return from their on-the-ground experience with a variety of skills and greatly enhanced understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Every delegation records successes in media advocacy, presentations and congressional engagement (among other accomplishments). This delegation, however, was uniquely situated to impact public discourse and policy regarding the Annapolis Conference.

Find more details and read the full Case Study at: ifpb.org/education/activities/casestudy

Delegation 25 Activities	2007	2008	2009 (January - July)	DELEGATION TOTALS	Circulation, Listeners, Attendance
All Media:	30	14	5	49	3,485,401
Newspaper	23	11	3	37	1,499,211
Radio	5	3	2	10	1,386,190
Television	2	-	-	2	600,000
Presentations:	28	34	9	71	3,000 (estimated)
Congress:	-	3	8	11	-
Organizing:	1	13	9	23	-
YEAR TOTALS:	59	64	30	153	3,488,401

The chart at right illustrates the impact of delegates' work. In all, education and advocacy activities originating from the group reached **nearly 3.5 million** before July 2009 (and that number has since grown). This includes: 37 articles, letters to the editor and/or opinion pieces reaching a circulation of nearly **1.5 million**; 10 radio broadcasts reaching nearly **1.4 million**; 2 television interviews reaching **600,000** viewers; and at least 71 presentations with an estimated audience of **3,000** people.

The immediate success of delegate-led media advocacy demonstrates that Interfaith Peace-Builders delegations can, and do, have an impact on the production of public discourse. Insofar as the policy debate in Washington DC is informed by such discourse, the media advocacy of IFPB delegates also resonates in the policy arena.

Three years after the Annapolis Conference, conditions on the ground in Israel and Palestine continue to decline, while international efforts for a just resolution to the conflict flounder on unfulfilled promises and dashed hopes. The need for a meaningful peace process has grown more desperate, yet the Israelis and Palestinians working for peace on a daily basis are still denied access to the US-led process.

In this context, the efforts of US citizens at the grassroots level have become ever more important. **Interfaith Peace-Builders' delegates are leading the way in their efforts to impact the policy debate on this crucial issue.**



Youth Delegates Benefit from IFPB Scholarship Competition

12 young people to receive financial aid this summer

Youth participation in our delegations has always been important to Interfaith Peace-Builders. Through our scholarships and outreach, we have always looked to cultivate young leadership and expand our work with youth. **In 2010, nearly 40% of our delegates were under 30 years of age.**

This year, because of generous donations from several past delegates, IFPB is able to do even more to attract and support future leaders. As a start, we invited youth to apply for two \$1000 scholarships for 2011 summer delegations and we received 30 applications from young people around the country. Overwhelmed by the quality and commitment of the applicants, we found it very difficult to choose two winners! **After hours of deliberation, we decided not only to award two \$1000 scholarships, but also offer ten additional scholarships ranging from \$250 to \$500 each to enable more youth to join us!**

We asked the two \$1000 scholarship recipients to share a little about themselves and their upcoming journey for this newsletter. We hope you are as impressed as we are with these emerging young leaders:



Salmaa Elshanshory: *"I graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, where I was active on campus, studied abroad in Spain and interned with the United Nations in DC. Upon graduating, I researched nuclear non-proliferation, worked with refugees and volunteered in Ecuador. I am currently a fellow with U.S. PIRG, learning to advocate for the public interest. I see where I have been as an indicator of where I have yet to go. I hope to work on conflict resolution, economic development and efficient foreign aid. **As an Arab, an American, a Muslim, and a world citizen, I have an invested interest in the peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine.** This delegation is my opportunity to gain firsthand experience in understanding this conflict. By experiencing the trip with a diverse group of individuals, who are dedicated to this issue, we can all transform our experience into progressive and collective action. In my lifetime there will be peace between Palestine and Israel! **I am part of a generation who sees the world as a place where all people can coexist through reasonability and practicality.** I plan to work to educate this generation about the realities on ground and their role in the path to peace."*

Lucas Koerner: *"Coming of age in a Jewish activist family in Philadelphia's Mt. Airy neighborhood during the Bush era, **I could do little, in retrospect, to escape a life of intimate political engagement in social justice movements.** After witnessing the horrors of the Gaza massacre during "Operation Cast Lead", I founded a Palestine solidarity group at my high school and joined American Jews for a Just Peace. I then helped found the Students for Justice in Palestine chapter at Tufts University where, in addition to Palestine solidarity work, I am currently involved in labor activism on behalf of the janitors and other on-campus workers. I am incredibly excited to participate in the IFPB delegation to Israel/Palestine this May. To travel to the region and experience firsthand the occupation which I have studied and struggled against for so long is an immense privilege. **I hope that, upon my return, I will become not only a better activist, but, in standing in solidarity with the oppressed, a more authentic human being.** It is absolutely essential that young people involve themselves in the struggle for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine, for we are the principal victims in this conflict."*



Salmaa and Lucas are but two of the twelve young people for whom scholarships will make the difference and allow participation on an IFPB delegation this summer. Other scholarship recipients are students and young activists from communities across the country, including Ohio, Washington State, Boston and the Washington, DC area.

Our hope is to continue to offer these types of scholarships in the future. **We could not have granted so many scholarships this year without the generous support of individuals within the IFPB family** and that is why your continued support for IFPB is so important!

Please donate and help IFPB and the movement for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine grow today!

ifpb.org/donation

Offset Tax Dollars Funding War and Occupation with Your Donation to Interfaith Peace-Builders

Only your support can help us make a nonviolent future possible

The chart at right shows where your income tax money *really* goes. The *War Resisters League* has collected this data for many years, giving us a more accurate picture of the US federal budget and the amount of taxpayer funding going directly to our nation's wars and occupations. According to their research, the last budget passed by congress (2009) included **\$1,449 billion in military funding** (54% of the total)!

Want to know something even more frightening? That number doesn't even include all the money we send to foreign governments in the form of military aid and weapons programs. So you can add on another \$3 billion in military aid for Israel alone, and billions more for other US allies and client states!

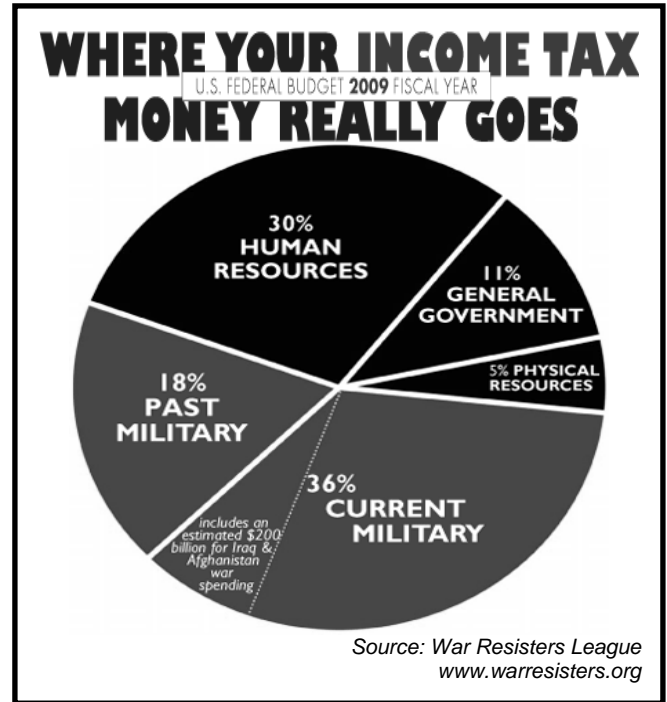
As taxpayers, we have a choice. If we choose to pay these war taxes then we can also choose to offset them by making a similar contribution to an organization that works for a nonviolent future and a de-militarized foreign policy.

Interfaith Peace-Builders is one such organization. **Our work with Palestinian and Israeli peace-builders has taught us that real change can never come from the barrel of a gun.**

Our work has also taught us that one person can make a difference. **This year, we need you to be that person.** We have set ambitious goals for the organization and we need to reach those goals if we are to meet the challenge of the historical moment in the Middle East and succeed in the long run!

Put your shoulder behind us and push IFPB into our next decade of success.

Please give generously. It is greatly needed and very much appreciated.



IFPB Board Sets Sights on Ambitious Goals

The board and staff of Interfaith Peace-Builders met this February at the William Penn House in Washington, DC. Over the course of an intensive weekend, we etched out a concrete plan to consolidate growth and achieve responsible goals for the coming year.

The plan is an ambitious one, and to succeed we will need the participation of everyone in the IFPB family. That is why we are asking IFPB delegates and supporters to join us.

Donate today or let us know if you can hold a house party, living room discussion, or public event where you can raise funds for Interfaith Peace-Builders and educate your friends and neighbors about our work and all the efforts for peace in Palestine/Israel! Or if you know of another way you could help, just let us know. **Thank you for all your support!**

The Board and Staff of Interfaith Peace-Builders. From left to right: (front) Jacob Pace, Richard Moss, Barbara Wien; (middle) Allie Perry, Doug Kerr, Rev. Sandra Mackie, Ilise Cohen, Rami Natshah; (back) Emily Siegel, Joe Groves, Shakeel Syed, and Mary Ann Kerr. (Not pictured: Mara Kronenfeld, Scott Kennedy, Gerald Lenoir, and Mike Daly)

Don't forget: Interfaith Peace-Builders is sending *four delegations* to Israel/Palestine in 2011
Get the latest on upcoming delegations at ifpb.org/delegations/upcoming.html