

MIFTAH

Amplifies the Voice of Jerusalemites

Courtesy of MIFTAH



In 1998, the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, MIFTAH was “born” in Jerusalem. Since then, it has carried its message within and beyond the city through its activities with the various sectors in Jerusalem, particularly women and youth, the effects of which are tangible to date.

From the day of its inception, MIFTAH has always raised the banner of democracy and dialogue, taking this message to every corner of the homeland, including Jerusalem. It espouses the principles of democracy and good governance in all of Palestinian society, with Jerusalem as a major demographic and geographic prominence. The organization has always sought to develop its strategy of empowering young leaders to participate in promoting principles of democracy and good governance and to raise social awareness towards the rights and duties of good citizenry. Moreover, MIFTAH has always encouraged participation in influencing policies and legislation insofar as they guarantee the protection of civil, social, and political rights.

In this regard, its role has been manifold in Jerusalem where MIFTAH has worked towards promoting the national identity of young men and women in the city through engaging them in activities, programs, and projects. For example, Jerusalemites were part of the formation of the Palestinian National Coalition for Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and are active members in MIFTAH’s Social and Political Active Palestinian Youth Network. Grounded in the vision that economic empowerment can provide the impetus for women to be empowered politically, they have also been involved in areas that focus on women’s economic empowerment through modest income-generating activities in towns and villages northwest and south of Jerusalem.



Palestinian women in Jerusalem suffer from the same legal, health, and social issues as other Palestinian women and are the victims of dual violence: violence from the society and violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation. The violence against women in Jerusalem takes several forms, including arrest, assault, and harassment of women and their families and the obstacles to women’s free movement and travel across checkpoints, especially in areas located outside of Israel’s Separation Wall. Thus, MIFTAH involves Jerusalemite women in its awareness

activities in conjunction with the General Union of Palestinian Women, while purposely promoting the role of women’s organizations from Jerusalem in advocacy efforts applied to amplify the voices of women for peace and security at the national, regional, and international levels, as steps toward holding Israel accountable for its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied state of Palestine, more specifically in Jerusalem.

MIFTAH’s programs have impacted the moral, psychological, and economic empowerment of youth and women’s segments in Jerusalem and have strengthened their steadfastness and sense of belonging to the city in spite of Israel’s avid targeting of their national identity and attempts to Judaize and “Israelize” the city and its inhabitants. Interventions have helped disseminate the Palestinian narrative



Photo courtesy of MIFTAH.

in Jerusalem, reflecting the everyday suffering of Jerusalemites and monitoring Israeli violations against them and their institutions, the latter of which are constantly being shut down or their work impeded.

Most recently, MIFTAH conducted several awareness meetings on the importance of the role of youth in political participation. Dozens of youth between the ages of 17 and 37 – including activists from organizations in the old city of Jerusalem – participated and offered their ideas on the political participation of youth and youth initiatives. The Jerusalem participants were offered the opportunity to express their issues through skits, which addressed such topics as the major drug problem and sexual harassment. This year, MIFTAH joined local coalitions to contribute to combatting these problems which are considered forms of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, MIFTAH conducted a survey of youth institutions in Jerusalem, one output of the “Active Youth for Social Change” program. The survey aimed to support the youth sector and NGOs in promoting their role in developing youth leaders active at the grassroots level in the Jerusalem area. The youth have become more aware and better informed of the problems they face and of their own needs and interests, and are more confident in dealing with these problems. MIFTAH has given youth a platform from which to express themselves in light of the critical challenges they face as Palestinian youth in Jerusalem. Cooperation was strengthened among the Jerusalem organizations in terms of empowering and supporting youth in Jerusalem.

This has always been our role and strategy at MIFTAH in working with all Palestinian sectors, including Jerusalemites who have, over the years, received support from MIFTAH and who will continue to get support

“We are the only people on Earth asked to guarantee the security of our occupier ... while Israel is the only country that calls for defense from its victims.”

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi



in the years to come. We want to make their voices heard and bridge the gap between Jerusalem citizens and PA officials. The support that MIFTAH can give them in this regard is through promoting social and political accountability among Jerusalemites and decision-makers and through raising the awareness of official bodies about their needs through direct meetings or the media.

MIFTAH includes Jerusalem in its programs in order to address the issues of citizens there. Hence, the series of awareness-raising meetings and workshops held by MIFTAH in the city have succeeded in delivering the voices of Jerusalem’s residents to Palestinian decision-makers. They have also helped to convey Jerusalem’s male and female youth as citizens committed to their social, national, and educational role whether at the level of youth or individual initiatives on the ground, including the embodiment of the concepts of citizenry, social participation, good governance, and participation in decision-making.

MIFTAH will always work according to this broad-based vision and is determined to continuously develop it in order to achieve the goals it has sought to achieve since its establishment in Jerusalem.