



Center for Religious *Tolerance*

Religion as a Force for Peace

August 2011

Women Reborn Begins Phase II

Women Reborn will soon expand to three additional Palestinian villages in northern Israel. Under the leadership of Ibtisam Mahameed and a devoted interfaith team, the project that has transformed the village of Fureidis will be available to thousands of women throughout the region.

When *Women Reborn* began, many doubted that traditional Muslim Palestinian women would be interested in “empowerment,” or that their families would allow them to participate.

Three years later, dozens of graduates from the program have gotten jobs, gone back to school, or opened small businesses. Fureidis now has a Women’s Division within municipal government and an entire floor of a new community center has been designated for women’s activities. Spin-off projects have addressed significant social problems within the community, and “women’s empowerment” is seen throughout the region as a social and economic development strategy that benefits everyone.



Women Reborn Participants at Israeli Women’s Conference

Mayors of the three new villages saw the difference *Women Reborn* made in Fureidis. They have agreed to provide space to hold classes, support for events, assistance with transportation costs, and opportunities for the women to become involved in municipal affairs. Program coordinators have already been hired to oversee activities in the new villages, and recruitment of participants has begun. The basic empowerment course will start in the fall, along with Hebrew, computer skills, and other classes. In Fureidis, program graduates will focus on leadership development, community projects, and marketing for new small businesses.

Both Ibtisam and *Women Reborn* have received national and international attention (see News from the Peacemakers). The first phase of the project directly affected hundreds of women, touched the lives of thousands, and has started to impact the larger women’s movement within Israel. Phase II is designed to begin bringing the effort “to scale.” At least one member of the Knesset and a senior representative from the Israeli Department of Labor are following the program’s progress carefully, with an eye to possible national replication.

Phase II of the project is made possible by a grant from the Clark Charitable Trust and other contributions. CRT will continue to oversee documentation and evaluation efforts.

Mini-grants Funded

CRT has launched a new “mini-grant” program. The following projects have been funded:

Jerusalem Peacemakers will bring 50 Palestinians from the Jenin area to participate in an educational encounter with yeshiva students in Maale Gilboa.

Women’s Parliament will bring together young women from the Jewish and Arab sectors to study the legislative process and the history of women’s rights, and to work for laws to address their common needs.

TRUST-Emun will hold an interfaith opening ceremony for the Garden of the Mothers, a commemorative site honoring people who perished in the Carmel Forest fire last year.

Mpanzi will conduct inter-tribal forums in four Kenyan villages to educate communities about sexual and domestic violence against girls and women.

Beyond Words will publish a book of stories about healing collected from women in an ongoing interfaith group. The book will be published in Arabic, Hebrew and English.

Reiki for Peace will establish a free reiki clinic for peacemakers in East Jerusalem, staffed by an interfaith team of volunteers and practitioners.

Wasatia will lead a two-day workshop for 25 young leaders in Palestine. Topics will include religious tolerance, volunteerism, leadership, communications, gender equality and interfaith dialogue.

Women Reborn Trauma Healing will train social workers from *Women Reborn* in identifying and responding to trauma.

NEW! CRT Facebook Page

“Like us” at [Facebook.com/crt4peace!](https://www.facebook.com/crt4peace/)

Sarasota Interfaith Activities Expand

Women's Interfaith Network (WIN).

Entering its 5th year, WIN now has over 90 active members representing Judaism, several forms of Christianity, Islam, Quakerism, Buddhism, Humanism, and indigenous/spiritual traditions. WIN's schedule for 2012 includes quarterly meetings, book and film clubs, community lectures, an interfaith holiday celebration, a women's retreat, and an annual service project. The first community lecture will be given by Samar Jarrah, a Palestinian-American woman who teaches at USF and lectures widely on Islam. See the CRT calendar for upcoming events.



WIN Women - Photo by Sandy Cadman

New Interfaith Coalition. CRT is joining with other local religious groups to form a new interfaith coalition. The *Sarasota-Manatee Interfaith Partnership* will be open to any organization that seeks to "promote understanding, respect and friendship among people of many faiths, and to work together to build a just and peaceful community." The steering committee includes Rabbi Geoffrey Hunting from Temple Sinai; Rabbi Joel Mishkin from Temple Beth Shalom; Samir Khatib and Hassan Hares from the Islamic Society of Sarasota-Bradenton; Rev. Clay Thomas from First Presbyterian Church; Rev. Jay Rock from Saint Boniface; and CRT Director Andrea Blanch. The first event being planned is an interfaith service for peace and tolerance on September 11, 2011.

NEW! CRT Blogs

Follow Tara at http://www.c-r-t.org/action-blog_tara.php. If you would like to blog about your own interfaith or peacebuilding experiences, contact us at info@c-r-t.org.

News from the Peacemakers

Ibtisam Mahameed was named 2011 Palestinian Woman of the Year - the first Israeli Palestinian woman to receive this honor. A short documentary on *Women Reborn* won an Israeli film award, and two women from the program were honored as "Volunteers of the Year" by the Israeli government.



Ibtisam with Woman of the Year Award

Izzedin Bukhari, son of the late **Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari**, will soon return to Jerusalem to carry on his father's work as Director of the Uzbeki cultural and interfaith peace center. Sheikh Bukhari was recently featured along with the Dalai Lama, Sister Joan Chittister, Rabbi Michael Lerner and others in a documentary film, *Globalized Soul*, to be shown at the UN on World Peace Day. See <http://www.heavenspace.net/index.html>. One of the last scenes in the film shows an interfaith Ramadan Iftar in Nazareth, organized by Jerusalem Peacemakers and funded by CRT.

Eliyahu McLean and **Ibrahim Abu El-Hawa** of *Jerusalem Peacemakers* were instrumental in organizing the fifth annual Jerusalem Hug, held on July 3, 2011. This year, the Hug included a family picnic, healing and prayer services, and drumming for peace. For more information, go to <http://jerusalemhug.org/>

The work of **Pat Westwater-Jong**, CRT photographer, was featured at the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem this spring and summer. The opening event was attended by many CRT peacemakers and other notables, including the Mayor of Jerusalem.



CRT Peacemakers at Austrian Hospice Exhibit

Deri Ronis, CRT Training Coordinator, published an online article about the CRT program *Teens Make a Difference: Study Circles in Action* <http://cpnn-world.org/cgi-bin/read/articlepage.cgi?ViewArticle=48>. In addition, a training curriculum authored by Dr. Ronis, *Choices and Self-Esteem: Learning to Respect Yourself* has been translated into Hindi and Urdu, and was recently used in youth peace camps in India and Pakistan.



Boys' Peace Camp in India