

Notes of August 4, 2009 NYC meeting

Attending: about 60 people

Agenda:

Report on national organizing
Discussion of statement and structure
Report on liaison with Palestinians in Gaza
Reports of other working committees

National organizing:

Mtgs. have been organized in DC and San Francisco so far. LA is also planned. The idea is for the working committees to work both locally and nationally, and for geographic areas to organize informational meetings and get volunteers involved in the committees. Organizations are encouraged to plan their own delegations to the march, and CODEPINK will provide logistical advice and information. CODEPINK will also organize its own delegation. Organizing among different geographies will be coordinated via open conference calls.

Very important not only to focus on going to the march but also on building a movement and using the march as a tool to educate and organize- Efforts are needed to lobby and plan events before and after as well. Not everyone will be able to go on the march, and events/actions in the US are just as important. There was discussion about the possibility of a simultaneous march in DC versus local actions.

Know this is a process in the works and if people have concerns, we will work on them-

Logistical questions:

Cost? CodePink's estimated land cost is \$250 to camp and \$450 for hotel accommodations to attend the march. Airfares are currently about \$900 but the CODEPINK logistics group is working on getting group discounts.

Length of stay? 3-4 days in Gaza. Some had mentioned staying longer. Recently some have found it hard to get out when trying to leave after their large group.

Suggestion was made that everyone signing up to attend the march sign a pledge of non-violence-

Discussion of Statement and Structure:

Statement of Purposes and Principles has been revised based on feedback - Statement and

Endorsement list handed out at meeting.

Important that the initiative has both support and direction from Palestinian civil society. How will this work?

Questions about why some Gaza endorsers named say they have not endorsed. We can't answer this but point to the Palestine Liaison Committee as responsible to insure clear communication, in Arabic, with civil society organizations.

Palestine Liaison and Outreach Committee

Talked to 12 people at NGOs in Gaza so far surveying for feedback on their interest in the initiative, the statement of principles and what they thought of the specific idea of a march on Erez crossing. There hundreds of NGOs in Gaza, many of which have political alignments. This was an effort mainly to reach some that are politically active but not specifically tied to either Hamas or Fatah. The discussion was in Arabic to avoid misunderstandings.

Some of the people contacted were supportive of the initiative, and some were concerned that it would take away focus and resources from lobbying governments to end the siege. It is fair to say all but one organization said they wanted to hear more about it.

Some of the concerns were about the project: Some felt it should be led by Palestinians- Some felt it took away resources from lobbying to break the siege from the US- Also a concern the march would take place around elections (if they are actually held) and become too politically charged-

Concerns about marching to/through Erez:

Some felt Erez is not enough- Palestine needs open borders, so Rafah should be included in the effort.

Wanted reassurance that intent was NOT to take over control of the crossing or march through the crossing. This, they felt, was too dangerous and they would advise their members not to participate

Want the march to be in the context of ending military attacks and the occupation.

They also felt the participation of celebrities and prominent leaders was KEY! That media coverage is essential.

There was also a lot of feedback regarding the wording of the statement (some of which has been addressed in the revisions) . Issues were too much about Gandhi, not enough about Palestinian non-violent resistance and no recognition of Palestinians right to resist by any means. All wanted to be sure it was set within the context of the illegality of the occupation and of the human rights abuses. Concerns that BDS, the most effective non-violent resistance is not referenced. Do not want the statement to refer to people of Gaza – falls into Israel's trap of separating Gaza and West Bank

Overall, the organizations contacted took our questions very seriously and made the effort to

consult before responding.

Of the 12 organizations mentioned, 7 met together to discuss the initiative.

Fluent arabic speakers are needed to discuss project with Palestinian NGOs effectively. The survey described above was done by Lubna Hammad who is no longer working on the project.

Student Outreach Committee Update

Drafted letter of introduction

Contacting student organizations

Suggested fundraising goal: for each 150 \$10 tickets sold (or \$1500 raised), the group can nominate one representative to attend the March

Proposed small events in each university to build up to a main fundraising event in larger cities ie. Boston, NY, LA, Chicago-

Want a prototype main event in New York in October/November with several prominent speakers and will form a new committee solely for event planning.

Oruba and Ted to go on NY/NY/CT college speaking tour

Please contact Ted Auerbach to organize tauerbach@aol.com

Peace and Justice Outreach Committee Update

Drafted letter to solicit endorsements and have organizations promote through their member bases- Peace Action War Resisters League, Veterans for Peace, Jewish Voice for Peace, US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation-

Let Pam Rasmussen know if you have contacts in National organizations that will collaborate- peacenut57@yahoo.com

Electronic Outreach Update

Website is up! GazaFreedomMarch.org

Regional and local groups setting up individual Facebook accounts to network together-List of facebook groups can be found on the website's home page

Youtube channel in the works

Send your active committee member list to Pam Rasmussen so she can add them to Google listserv for easy communication- peacenut57@yahoo.com

Media Committee Update

Wants more info on authorship of the project-

Investigating media cooperation in Palestine

Working on press lists + contacts for translations

Doug Tarnopol:

drafted press release

Flyer

Has lined up several translators for many languages

Fundraising Committee Update

Flyer template is being worked on which all organizations will be able to add their own contact and event information-

Discussed fundraising parties

House parties – NYC event in the planning stages

Campus fundraising events

Send off rally or large 'main event' fundraiser-

General Discussion:

Questions about international involvement in project-

Portugal, Finland, Canada and others are involved-

There will be organizing on the Israeli side- ICAHD is an endorser-

FreeGaza ship is planned around the same time as well as

Viva Palestina convoy through Rafah

Should work in collaboration with them

Many suggested simultaneous marches across the US and abroad as well as a march on Washington DC-

Question whether a march falling over holiday season was bad timing for media coverage-

December 27th being the anniversary of the attack on Gaza, it can be leveraged and be a time to reflect on those events- Holidays also slow for media-

Timing of the events in Gaza - people will arrive in Egypt Dec 27th and plan to be in Gaza Dec 29th-

No guarantee we will get in- Need to work on contingency plans if refused entry-