

PRESS RELEASE

Palestine Awareness Week in Pittsburgh to Educate on Middle East Conflict

For more information contact:
Salma Zahr (412) 352-7330

Pittsburgh PA (April 7, 2002) The Carnegie Mellon University Arab Students Organization (ASO) and the Palestinian Solidarity Committee (PSC) of Pittsburgh have organized a series of events over the next week to show solidarity with the Palestinian people and to bring attention to the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Similar events are being organized on campuses nationwide as part of National Palestine Week.

Amer Zahr, a national columnist, and guest on ABC's *Politically Incorrect*, will be appearing on Saturday night at Carnegie Mellon University as the keynote speaker. Mr. Zahr has written frequently about the right of Palestinian self-determination and on U.S foreign policy in the Middle East. He will be re-appearing on Bill Maher's *Politically Incorrect* TV show this Thursday.

In order to increase understanding and awareness within the larger Pittsburgh community of the issues surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a major focus of the National Palestine Week is on education. This has become all the more important due to the recent events both in the United States and the Middle East. According to Mr. Zahr, "It has become the strategy of our current American administration to lump the Palestinian question into the greater war on terror, much to the delight of Israel and its supporters. But this strategy, unfortunately, will only create more barriers to truly understanding the conflict."

According to Mr. Zahr, in order to understand the current conflict it is necessary to understand the nature of the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis. "What we are talking about when referring to the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis is not the relationship of one nation with another, but rather of a military occupying power with a civilian occupied populace," says Mr. Zahr.

In order to further that understanding of the current conflict, other events for the week include an information session on Monday night that will also feature a display of Palestinian posters and books on Palestine. On Wednesday night, a group of Christian peacemakers will present pictures and provide a description of their trip to Israel and Palestine. Joe and Joan Heckel and Vivian Lovingood are members of a Presbyterian group that was hosted by the Christian Peacemaker Team, an organization that has organized a number of visits of Americans to the Holy Land in support of peace and justice. A vigil in support of the Palestinian right to self-determination and a peaceful end to the occupation, as well as in memory of those who have been killed during the occupation and intifada, will be held on Friday afternoon at noon.