

# Media Alert

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## Sunnyvale conference highlights Arab Spring and Palestinian development

*Nobel laureate Alice Walker endorses event*

Scholars and activists from Palestine, Israel and the U.S. will come together next month in a two-day conference exploring ways to achieve justice and peace in Israel/Palestine. The event will give particular focus to technological development, including Palestinian ties with Silicon Valley.

“Breaking the Barriers to a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine,” is sponsored by Friends of Sabeel-North America, which works to support the international peace movement Sabeel, initiated by Palestinian Christians. The ecumenical organization links with peace activists of all persuasions to promote a non-violent solution to the conflict.

The event has won the endorsement of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Alice Walker. “Sabeel,” she wrote, “is a special effort, a loving and proactive one. Jesus, the Palestinian everybody knows, would have welcomed it.” Walker tied the Palestinian struggle to the Civil Rights Movement, saying that in both cases, “when the church is fully aroused to an injustice, it can act with integrity and speed.”

A special session on “Palestine and the Arab Spring,” with Omar Dajani, professor of law at University of the Pacific, Leila Hilal, Director Of Middle East Task Force at the New America Foundation, moderated by Khalil Barhoum, Stanford professor of Middle Eastern Languages, will round off the first day’s program. Dinner that evening will feature poetry by Remi Kanazi and music by the Georges Lammam group.

Plenary speakers and workshop facilitators come from a range of backgrounds and faith traditions – Muslim, Jewish and Christian. They will address issues concerning the existing barriers to a just peace, media bias, Islamophobia, technological development as an avenue to peace, Christian Zionism, apartheid, nonviolent resistance and other topics.

The conference will explore economic and technological development in Palestine. Economist Salem Ajluni, a United Nations consultant with experience in Gaza, will facilitate a workshop on the Palestinian economy under occupation. Two Palestinian entrepreneurs, Joseph Barkawi of Infinite Tiers Group, Inc. and Rasha Hussein, Birzeit University student and Google student ambassador, will present a workshop on building bridges between Silicon Valley and Palestine.

Other speakers include the Rev. Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel; Dalit Baum, founder of the Israeli organization Who Profits from the Occupation?; Mark Ellis, professor of Jewish Studies and History at Baylor University; Hatem Bazian of UC-Berkeley's Department of Near Eastern and Ethnic Studies; and Cecilie Surasky, Deputy Director of Jewish Voice for Peace.

The conference will take place from noon, Friday, March 23 to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 24, at Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church, 728 West Fremont Ave., Sunnyvale, Calif., 94087. The cost, which includes meals, is \$90 for early registration and \$100 on site.

To register and for more information, visit the conference website at [www.barriers-conference.org](http://www.barriers-conference.org) or Friends of Sabeel-North America website at [www.fosna.org](http://www.fosna.org).