



FOSNA

FRIENDS of SABEL NORTH AMERICA

The Voice
bi-annual
newsletter

September 2015

Report from the Executive Director



John Erickson

Our two new national organizers – Tory Smith on the East Coast and Rochelle Gause on the West – are hard at work implementing the strategic plan directive from our board of trustees to “increase the effectiveness of our programs.” We have spent the last few months build-

ing nationwide infrastructure for local advocacy campaigns focused on G4S. Group 4 Securicor is a Dutch and British company that profits from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, in particular from its prison system, where Palestinian children are illegally and routinely detained and abused. It also runs security facilities and provides security services throughout the United States. By publicly urging municipal U.S. governments to divest from this company, we educate the public about Israeli abuse of Palestinian children and put pressure on G4S to abandon its work within Israel-Palestine. Our team has completed the research, created FOSNA’s *Municipal Divestment Organizing Guide* (available as a pdf download on our website), and is working with local activists.

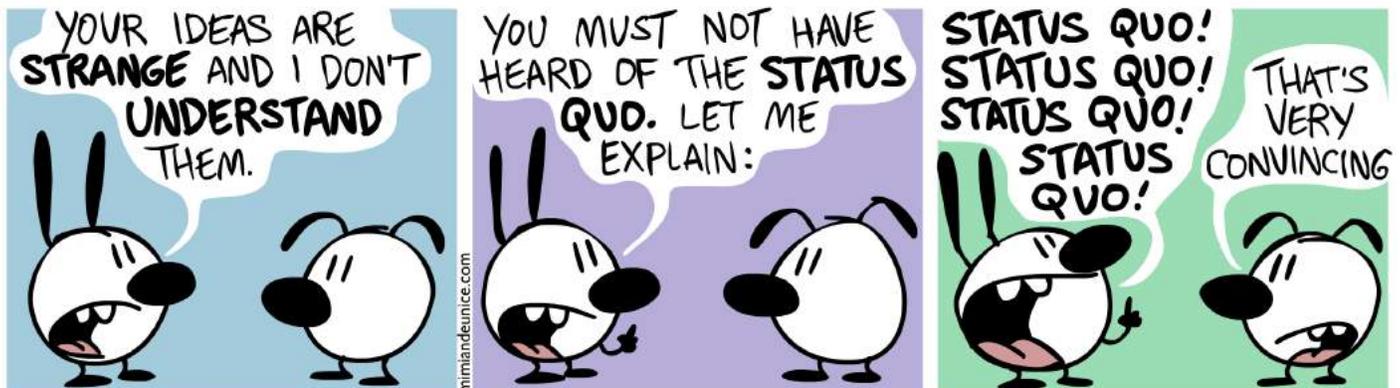
The failure of North American governments, and much of our church leaders, to push for justice in

Israel-Palestine is the main roadblock to ending the occupation. Many of you have seen Naim Ateek’s open letter to the new archbishop of the Episcopal Church, Michael Curry: “I write today to say that I was heartbroken when I heard the news and discovered that the House of Bishops in General Convention, held in Salt Lake City, yet again, failed to take a stand for justice on behalf of the oppressed in Palestine. . . . From the perspective of the victims of injustice the Bishops’ empty words on our conflict is perceived as betrayal. **The Bishops in essence took a stand to support the status quo**, which always benefits the oppressor. They refused to see or were unwilling to respond to the dire situation on the ground.”

But people of faith know that the bishops’ betrayal will not prevail. The words of Martin Luther King, Jr., cited by Naim Ateek in his letter to the archbishop, are pertinent: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” The AIPAC hold on Congress is cracking. More and more church organizations and academic institutions are voting for divestment. But we at FOSNA know the arc does not bend on its own. It takes action, and I’m proud to say that FOSNA is in the forefront of the struggle.

During my two years as volunteer executive director, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with a truly exceptional man, Rev. Don Wagner. There are few in our movement with such a clear voice for justice in Palestine. His dedication to the

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Fall Events

Pittsburgh, PA

October 16 & 17, 2015

"We Refuse to be Enemies— Struggle for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel." Speakers include: Dr. Mads Gilbert, giving a first-hand account of Israeli assault on Gaza during the summer of 2014; Anna Baltzer and Prof. Bob Ross on BDS; Rev. Naim Ateek on Palestinian Liberation Theology; and Daoud Nassar of the Tent of Nations on the daily struggle for survival in the West Bank.

Tree of Life Conferences

September, October, November

Minneapolis, MN

November 20 & 21, 2015

"Advocacy and Action for Palestinian Justice". Speakers include Ali Abunimah (Electronic Intifada), JVP Deputy Director Cecilie Sursky on the media, and Rev. Graylan Hagler on combating racism. Also, skill-building and advocacy workshops.

Santa Cruz, CA

April 29 & 30, 2016

"BDS: Why and How" at the UCC Church in Santa Cruz. Learn about Palestinian Liberation Theology and the call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions and engage in a public action in the community.

Witness Trips

In the Footsteps of Jesus:

October 16—27, 2015

January 29—February 9, 2016

Sabeel Witness Visit

November 3—11, 2015

Volunteers in Mission Trip

February 15—27, 2016

Faith in the Face of Empire: Leadership Program/Witness Trip

April 11—23, 2016

More info at:

FOSNA.org

No Child Behind Bars: Drop G4S

Campaign Update by Kali Rubaii

In his book *The Lucifer Effect*, Phillip Zimbardo describes his controversial Stanford Prison Experiment, concluding that psychological and physical confinement of human beings creates conditions by which human cruelty is naturalized, augmented, and distorted.

Confinement requires the active contribution of companies and people: surveillance cameras, motion detectors, Tasers, and tear gas; metal gates, concrete slabs, and intercom systems; labor, expertise, tax breaks, and legislation; our willful ignorance, our paralysis, our words.

It is no wonder that the confined – those who have been sentenced to live behind concrete walls and razor wire, or in high-density camps with restricted rations – have called to those of us on the outside to *refuse* to be a part of their confinement through *boycotts*, to *refuse* their physical and physiological abuse through *divestment*, to *refuse* deadly systematic racial discrimination through *sanctions*.

Recently, we have been asked by disenfranchised communities to boycott and divest from leading security companies. Palestinian prisoners, many of whom participate in ongoing hunger strikes, have called for us to intensify the boycott against the Israeli prison-industrial complex, while the Palestinian BDS National Committee is targeting six top companies for boycott and divestment¹:

G4S: provides protection and security systems for Israeli prisons and detention centers; **Hewlett-Packard**: develops electronic equipment and hardware maintenance services to the Israeli prison authority; **Volvo**: owns 26% of **Merkavim**, which provides buses to transfer prisoners (ill treatment is rife during transfers); **Siemens**: creates security and fire-extinguishing systems for Israeli prisons; **Ashtrom**: builds pre-fabricated units for prisons **Shamrad**: develops security devices for prisons. **continued next page** →



Photo: Protest outside G4S headquarters in London.



Black activists and community members echoed this call, naming G4S as the primary target for those engaged in anti-oppression work from North America to the Middle East. In their *2015 Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine*, they write:

*"As the BDS movement grows, we offer G4S, the world's largest private security company, as a target for further joint struggle. G4S harms thousands of Palestinian political prisoners illegally held in Israel and hundreds of Black and brown youth held in its privatized juvenile prisons in the US. The corporation profits from incarceration and deportation from the US and Palestine, to the UK, South Africa, and Australia. We reject notions of 'security' that make any of our groups unsafe and insist no one is free until all of us are free."*²

The call for liberation through refusal is clear. So, we respond. We refuse to contribute to the confinement of other human beings. FOSNA local groups are working with our national organizers, Tory Smith and Rochelle Gauss, to target G4S or similar companies.

Our ***Municipal Divestment Organizing Guide*** helps local groups identify contract renewal dates, map local power structures, form coalitions, and win. Tory and Rochelle will be hosting monthly webinar trainings this fall to prepare interested parties for success. The momentum is building on this campaign, and we are excited to see local "Drop G4S" campaigns sprouting up all over the United States.

We – the unconfined, those able and obliged – have been asked to *refuse* our contribution to the confinement of other human beings. It takes little knots of energy all over the world to tackle this momentous challenge. Together, we are making it harder for G4S, and so many similar companies, to ignore the call for liberation, a call that echoes from Gaza City to Ferguson, and in child detention centers from Israel to Florida.

To answer the call, visit fosna.org/LocalActionResources.

¹ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2015/bds-movement-echoes-appeal-from-palestinian-prisoners-to-intensify-boycott-against-israeli-prison-industrial-complex-13259>

² <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/1000-black-activists-artists-and-scholars-demand-justice-for-palestine-403#axzz3jVpF70QL>

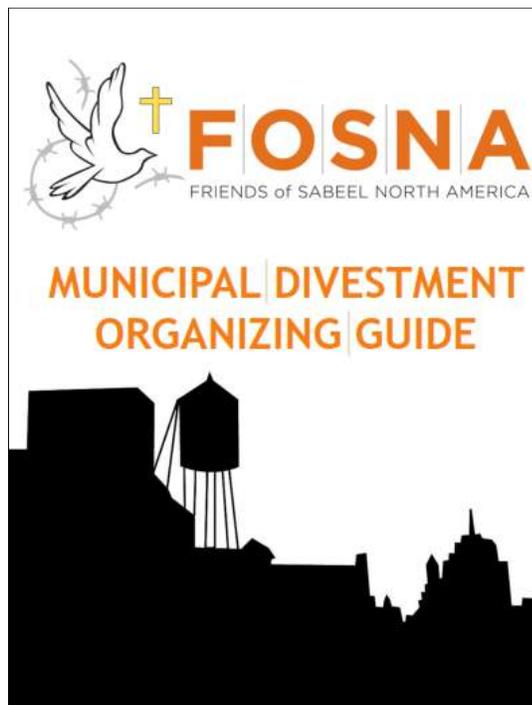
Continued from page 1 (John Erickson, ED Report):

cause has been unwavering for a lifetime, and his commitment to, and understanding of, Palestinian liberation theology is truly amazing. Along with Naim, Don has been my guide and my good friend for the last few years. FOSNA will miss him as national program director, but we will make him keep his promise to continue his work with FOSNA in a scaled-back capacity.

At the end of the year, I too will be leaving my post. My goal, as temporary executive director, has been to move FOSNA from a purely voluntary movement to a more effective, professionally staffed organization. We're not there yet, but we are well on our way, and the momentum is growing. We have modernized the website, significantly improved the database and, most importantly, added young, energetic, committed staff to carry FOSNA forward. We have developed a significant nationwide advocacy campaign, as well as spread a better understanding of liberation theology both within FOSNA and beyond. It's time to turn the operations of this movement and organization over to a full-time, paid professional. I want to thank you all for the wonderful support you have given me and FOSNA over the last two years.

And last but not least, your generous contributions will enable FOSNA to become even more effective in North America as well as continue our substantial financial assistance to Sabeel Jerusalem.

We can't do it without you! Your increased gift of any amount is greatly appreciated, and gifts received by November 15 will be matched dollar for dollar. See more about the campaign in the following pages. Thank you so much!



Announcing our Fall 2015 Matching Gift Challenge

Thanks to generous anonymous donors, your gift will be matched if received before Thanksgiving. Last year's matching gift promo raised over \$50,000 and made it possible to increase our staff and expand programs and advocacy campaigns.

Here's how it works:

Did you give in 2014 but not yet in 2015? The increased amount over your 2014 gift will be matched dollar for dollar. **Have you already made a gift in 2015?** Make an additional gift or pledge now. The amount of your additional gift will be matched dollar for dollar! **Are you a new donor?** Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar! **Are you a "returning" donor who did not give in 2014 or 2015?** Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar!

The challengers will contribute an additional \$500 for each new member of FOSNA's Circle of Friends (donations of \$500 and above). Join now!

"The harvest is plentiful . . ."

The Gospel parables on plowing, sowing, and harvesting teach us that a little wisdom and a lot of hard work bear good results. We know that the Palestinian cause is a just one, that nonviolent resistance as taught by Jesus Christ is the wise way, the only way, to justice, peace, and reconciliation, and in our day-to-day work during this year we have harrowed the soil for a new planting: hiring more staff; developing and training leaders; raising more funds; evaluating and strengthening programs; and implementing the core strategies, goals, and objectives of our 2014–2017 strategic plan. The reports in this newsletter describe the growth and improvements implemented so far this year.

Your investment in Friends of Sabeel through your generous donations and participation in local efforts and national advocacy campaigns are crucial to our capacity to make real change. Please make a generous donation before Thanksgiving.



Thank you!



**You can donate
online at
FOSNA.org**

*"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to prisoners . . .
and to set the oppressed free ."* — Luke 4:18

100% of your increased gift and matching funds will enable FOSNA's:

National Advocacy Campaigns:

Help support our No Child Behind Bars/Drop G4S campaign! We have the infrastructure to support local campaigns demanding that local governments divest from G4S, but our organizers are already overwhelmed. To be effective, we need additional staff and funds for travel to locations such as South Florida, Portland, Los Angeles, and Denver.



Scholarships for Witness Trips:

Help us build the scholarship fund! FOSNA is recruiting seminary students, influential pastors, social justice advocates, and others of diverse backgrounds for witness trips to Palestine-Israel. Most need substantial financial support for the trip, but in return we require (and willingly receive) a commitment to our work for Palestine.

Theology Seminars:

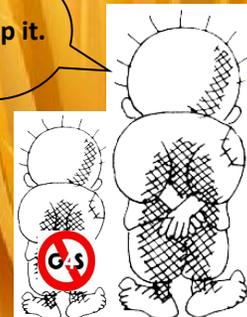
Help us spread the word by building a seminar fund! FOSNA is working hard to spread awareness and understanding of Palestinian liberation theology throughout North America. We are hosting seminars with leading theologians, academics, influential pastors, and others, and we are planning more.

Our goal is to raise \$130,000. It is the amount we need to continue FOSNA's support of Sabeel in Jerusalem this fall and to maintain excellence in our programs across North America. **Remember, 100% of your increased gift and matching funds will enable the above funds.**

Send your pledge or gift today in the enclosed envelope or go to fosna.org and click on "Donate." Your gift will be used to its maximum potential.

That is our pledge to you.

Drop it.



Friends of Sabeel North America
PO Box 9186, Portland, OR 97207 • FOSNA.org



Thinking Theologically about Stopping G4S

Don Wagner, National Program Director

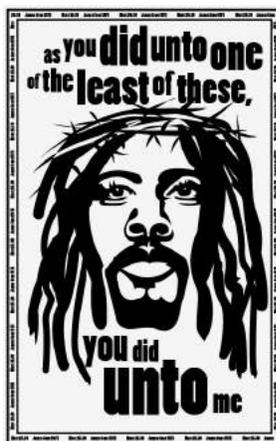
Palestinian liberation theology (PLT), like other liberation theology movements (Latin American, South African, etc.), applies faith-based values and methods of resistance to situations of political, economic, and military oppression. Like these other movements, PLT's roots are in the prophetic tradition of Jesus, the Hebrew prophets, and the Prophet Muhammad. Its emphasis is on justice, including the equality of every human being, rejecting business practices that thrive on greed and profit at the expense of people, using non-violent resistance for social change, and confronting racism in all its forms.

Palestinian liberation theology must be seen in a global perspective as it is part of a larger movement calling for freedom from military occupation, land expropriation, and the denial of basic human and political rights for indigenous peoples. Liberation theologians call these systems the "empire," which is not limited to a single country but comprised of global forces and networks of political, economic, and military domination. In Jesus' day it was the Roman Empire that occupied Palestine. Today the "empire" includes global multinational corporations, the military-industrial mega-businesses, and the nations that promote and profit from them. In the Palestinian case, the instruments of "empire" facilitate and sustain Israel's occupation and war machine, which includes the United States, much of Europe, and corporations like G4S.

In his Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mt. 25), Jesus asked: "Did you visit me while in prison? – even as you do it unto the least of these my sisters and brothers, you do it unto me." The parable challenges us to extend our compassion to prisoners and demand that they be treated as human beings with human rights. It is said that one moral criterion by which a nation is judged lies in the number of its prisons and how the prisoners are treated. Israel and the United States rank at the bottom of this moral criterion on both counts. With the disproportionate number of black and brown prisoners in U.S. prisons, our nation has the added ethical burden of how we treat our minorities and the poor, a matter that also plagues Israel. G4S plays a significant role in both the U.S. and Israeli prisons, which should give us pause to ask, "What can we do to change this situation?"

A personal note:

After several months of prayer and reflection I have decided to step down as the national program director of FOSNA, effective December 31, 2015. This has been a very difficult decision, as I have felt called and energized by the past three years of growth and good work with such quality people as Naim Ateek, John Erickson, Wini Wolff and the FOSNA board, Sr. Elaine Kelley, Kali Rubaii, and the young interns, plus a host of volunteers across the country. FOSNA has grown in wonderful ways through the years but now it is time for FOSNA to rise to the next level of organizational, developmental, and advocacy challenges. It has been a great pleasure to work side by side with the remarkable John, whose tireless efforts have helped us build a stronger team with new visions for our future. I will continue to be part of FOSNA but in a reduced capacity as a consultant. After our August 15 wedding, I look forward to spending more time with my wonderful wife, Linda Kateeb, traveling to new destinations, spending time with my children and grandchildren, and finding time for personal spiritual growth and writing. Thank you for the privilege to share these three years with all of you. I'll continue to be committed to the ministry of Sabeel and FOSNA.



Jesus called on people in his day to become part of an alternative reality called "the Kingdom of God." It is not a place, political kingdom, or a religion. Rather, it is an alternative consciousness, a radically different lifestyle, and a movement that rejects the dominant culture's values of greed and injustice in favor of compassion, peace-making, and justice (the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:2-11). It is a call to take courageous stands for justice on behalf of those with no voice in the corridors of power. One practical way for you to get started is to become informed about G4S by reading the resources FOSNA researchers have prepared, as found on our website. Another is to help your local government to drop G4S by organizing an action group on your campus, church, or in your local community. Let's help G4S make up their corporate mind to exit Israel/Palestine in 2016.

Report from the Chair of the Board

Wini Wolff

The most energizing moment of the year for FOSNA's board of trustees is when we gather for our face-to-face annual meeting. After 11 months of meeting by conference call, it is a joy to see the wonderful faces that accompany those voices. This year, we met in Chicago in July. We cherish this time together to reconnect with our dedicated friends and to address important issues facing FOSNA.

There is a critical shift going on within FOSNA at the national level among board and staff members. From its founding and until quite recently, FOSNA had little or no paid staff and relied on the efforts of a "working board" to do the programmatic work of FOSNA. Lately, with our growing staff, this approach has changed significantly. Under John Erickson's leadership, paid staff is now responsible for all day-to-day operations and most program work. This enables the board to focus on vital governance responsibilities, such as nurturing and promoting FOSNA's mission, setting strategic direction, safeguarding long-term financial viability, and recruiting qualified leaders.

One year ago, FOSNA's board introduced our 2014–2017 strategic plan. The plan focuses on three key goals: 1) strengthening FOSNA's infrastructure, 2) increasing the effectiveness of FOSNA's programs, and 3) broadening FOSNA's outreach to North American Christians. We are now one year into our three-year strategic plan, and I am happy to report we have made healthy strides. We are on track and on schedule. Many thanks to staff and local volunteers who devoted time and talent to implement our plan and enrich the quality of FOSNA's work.

Another major task the board is addressing is the leadership transition taking place within FOSNA. Two years ago, John Erickson volunteered to be our first executive director on a part-time, temporary, pro-bono basis. Through John's direction and coordination this has been a time of significant operational and programmatic growth. John's term officially ended in the summer, but he has generously offered to stay on through the end of the year. Don Wagner, our national program director, is also retiring at the end of the year. We have benefitted greatly from Don's 40 years of commitment to the Palestine-Israel issue as well as his vast knowledge, boundless enthusiasm, and amazing stamina.

Thank you, John and Don, for sharing your passion and dedication with FOSNA. We will miss your seasoned leadership.



Don't forget. You can donate online at FOSNA.org



After careful consideration and thoughtful discussion, the board has decided to hire a full-time, paid executive director. We are ready. This is a significant step for FOSNA, and we are excited to be entering

this phase of organizational growth. A search committee has been formed, the job has been posted, and we hope to have our new director in place by the end of 2015, *inshallah* (Arabic for "God willing").

There are also changes at the board level to report. During this past year, four trustees have stepped down, some after many years of dedicated service: Darrel Meyers, 13 years; Ann Hafften, 9 years; Joy Lapp, 8 years; Andrea Whitmore, 3 years. As these faithful friends settle into other roles within the movement, we are most appreciative of their years of guidance. And picking up the reins are our two newest members: Monica Burnett, a theologian, writer, and editor from Silver Spring, Maryland, who administers *WRITE!*, a media monitoring service; and David Hosey, a recently ordained Methodist minister from Washington, DC, who brings skills in media, PR, and youth outreach and advocacy. We warmly welcome these new trustees and are grateful for the skills and experience they bring. In addition, Doug Thorpe was elected to the newly created position of vice chair to share the leadership responsibilities of the board.

We all know this is an extraordinarily difficult time in Palestine, and there is mounting pressure on activists in North America. Yet we can feel the winds shifting, especially as the BDS movement continues to gain momentum. The American Christian community can play a significant role in sustaining and encouraging these developments. FOSNA in particular has both the on-the-ground experience and theological perspective to play a central role in this work. As the leading ecumenical Christian organization in North America working for a just peace in Palestine and Israel, FOSNA continues to expand its work and amplify the voice of Palestinian Christians.

There is a great deal of energy and focus within FOSNA these days, and your support – as volunteers and donors – has been wonderful. Thank you! And please don't stop. Your continued financial support enables all of us in the FOSNA and Sabeel family to be more effective participants in this growing worldwide movement for justice.

Thank you all.



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We Welcome Our New Board Members

Monica Burnett is editor of the Fathers of the Church series, published by the Catholic University of America Press. She also has edited and contributed her own chapter to the book *Zionism through Christian Lenses*, in addition to writing a chapter in *Zionism and the Quest for Justice in the Holy Land*. Monica earned the Ph.D. in Early Christian Studies at the Catholic University of America and the Master of Theological Studies at Wesley Theological Seminary. She is a member of the Antiochian Orthodox Church.



David Hosey is associate chaplain for the American University United Methodist-Protestant Community. From 2007-2010 he was a Mission Intern with Global Ministries UMC, serving with Sabeel in Jerusalem and the US Campaign in DC. He holds a B.A. in International Studies from Washington College and an M.Div from Wesley Theological Seminary, where he received the 2015 Maryland Bible Society Award for Proficiency in Biblical Preaching. You can follow David's blog at foolish-hosey.blogspot.com.