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Palestinian Delegation joins in "Wall-to-Wall Solidarity" at US-Mexico Border to call for demilitarization of communities

**Saturday, March 3, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.
St. Cyril's Catholic Church
4725 East Pima, at Swan, Tucson, Arizona, USA**

(Tucson, Arizona) Local human rights organizations, Coalición de Derechos Humanos and Middle East Justice Now, will join a Palestinian delegation of activists from the West Bank on Saturday, March 3, 2007 at 5:30 p.m. for an evening of solidarity to call for the dismantling of all walls between peoples and the demilitarization of communities everywhere. Feryal Abu Haikal and Mohammed Khatib, now on a U.S. speaking tour with the International Solidarity Movement, will speak at St. Cyril's Church in Tucson about how Palestinians are challenging the construction of the massive 20-foot-tall concrete wall between Israel and the Occupied West Bank in Palestine. Since 2002, Israel has been building a 400-mile-long Wall that is preventing tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching their places of work, school, health services, land for farming and sometimes even family members and illegally taking large tracts of land from the Occupied West Bank that belong to Palestine. Coalición de Derechos Humanos organizers will speak about their local and national efforts to challenge the proliferation of walls, surveillance, policing, military troops and prisons along the U.S.-Mexico border, a policy which shatters families, directly resulting in the deaths of thousands of migrants and a deepening human rights crisis in the border region.

PALESTINIAN DELEGATION

Mohammed Khatib is a leading member of Bil'in's Popular Committee Against the Wall and the Secretary of Bil'in's Village Council. He has been a principle organizer of Bil'in's two-year-long, creative, nonviolent struggle to prevent the construction of Israel's Wall on Bil'in's land and to block the expansion of neighboring illegal Israeli settlements. Mr. Khatib has frequently been arrested and injured by the Israeli military for participating in nonviolent protests. He is quoted frequently in the Palestinian, Israeli and international media.

Feryal Abu Haikal, an educator and 60-year-old mother of 11 children, recently retired after 11 years as the headmistress at the Qurtuba School in the heart of Hebron's old city. The Qurtuba school serves 100 Palestinian children in grades 1- 10. By continuing to function despite Israeli attacks on students and staff, the Qurtuba School has served as a model of nonviolent resistance. Feryal Abu Haikal and her family also remain in their home in nearby Tel Rumeida despite continual Israeli attacks.

"Migrants and people of color in Arizona share more and more in common with Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. Every day, both communities are resisting the expansion of massive walls, constant policing, raids, harassment, unjustified shootings by border agents and violations of our human dignity," said Mohyeddin Abdulaziz of Middle East Justice Now and one of the speakers for Saturday's event. "This is not the kind of border we want."

"Whether we're living in Douglas or Ramallah, it is our government's militarized policies of border control themselves that are causing the violence, death, divisions, racism and suffering along the border," said Isabel García, co-chair of the Derechos Humanos Coalition and one of the speakers for Saturday's event. "We are coming together to demand an end to these policies that only perpetuate injustice and reward the private security corporations, which have the most abysmal human rights records in the world."

On Saturday, at St. Cyril's church in Tucson, panelists will address the privatization of border control and national security operations. A number of the U.S. and Israeli military contractors which are militarizing the U.S.-Mexico border, including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Haliburton, Raytheon, and Elbit Systems Ltd., are also being awarded billions of dollars in contracts to build the wall in Israel-Palestine and militarize the region.

The Palestinian delegation to the U.S.-Mexico border is part of the "National Dialogue on Immigration Control and Border Militarization," a national campaign by Derechos Humanos Coalition and the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, based in Oakland, CA, to break the national and international silence on the militarization and impunity of immigration control at the U.S.-Mexico border. The National Dialogue aims to develop and promote shared solutions and alternatives to end the humanitarian crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border that has claimed more than 4,000 lives and inflicted systematic, widespread human rights violations on border communities.

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