



# American Friends Service Committee

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## INTERNATIONAL DIVISION Middle East Program

### QUAKER SERVICE INFORMATION AND LEGAL AID CENTER IN EAST JERUSALEM

#### History of the Project

Since the annexation of East Jerusalem by the Israeli Government after the June, 1967 war, the Arab residents have lived in uneasy relationship with Israeli authorities. While the laws of Israel have been applied to the annexed territory of the municipality, Israeli citizenship has not been granted to the residents of East Jerusalem. Voting privileges are confined to the election of the overall Jerusalem Municipal Council. However, the extension of Israeli law to East Jerusalem residents includes social benefits, such as social security, health insurance, and various entitlements. There are also civil responsibilities, such as the payment of income taxes.

The American Friends Service Committee was encouraged by residents, other voluntary agencies and church groups to establish a community information and legal aid center to apprise East Jerusalem residents of their rights and responsibilities under Israeli law, as well as to provide legal assistance in cases where civil rights might be at issue. The AFSC hoped that the provision of these services might help relate the residents of the municipality of Jerusalem, both Arab and Jewish, in ways that would reduce tensions and friction among them. The importance of such a center was confirmed by many individuals in both the Arab and the Jewish communities.

The Quaker Service Information and Legal Aid Center officially opened on July 1, 1974 in a renovated store in the center of the city's Arab business district. During the initial years of the Center's operation, half of the clients asked for information about national insurance, social welfare, municipal services, immigration

or identity cards. Center staff in these instances would clarify a client's problem by contacting the relevant government agency, urge the agency concerned to take appropriate action, and advise the client on the often complicated procedures that needed to be followed.

The other half of the persons who visited the Center asked for the advice or services of a lawyer. Cases handled included damage, divorce, landlord-tenant problems, and expropriation of property. The function of the Center was to determine clearly a client's needs and to refer him or her to one of the dozen or more Arab or Jewish lawyers willing to accept Center cases. Since clients were typically low-income persons, the Center would pay part, and sometimes all, of the client's legal fees.

In the summer of 1975 the Quaker Service Information and Legal Aid Center began providing Palestinian detainees and their families with legal aid and emergency assistance. These were Palestinians, both from East Jerusalem and the West Bank, who were involved in administrative detention and demonstration arrest cases. They were persons, for example, who were accused of membership in, or of recruiting for, an organization deemed illegal by the military government, or persons accused of participation in anti-occupation demonstrations. In 1976 Quaker Service assisted detainees or their families in 26 such cases. In 1977, owing to increased public awareness of this service and referrals from other agencies, the number of detainees aided more than doubled.

#### The Present and Future Scope of the Center's Services

The work on behalf of Palestinians held in administrative detention has markedly increased in importance and significance. Seventy-five percent of the Center's clients now requiring legal aid are detainees. By virtue of a close relationship to the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose regional offices around the West Bank and the Gaza Strip often refer requests for legal aid to the Quaker Service Center, the Center has developed the ability to identify those cases where detainees would face trial without legal representation if assistance were not to be provided by the Center. By paying the lawyers' fees in whole or in part in such cases, the Center can insure that persons held in detention will have the services of a lawyer. A strong emphasis is placed on encouraging families of detainees to pay part of these fees.

Recognizing that there are limitations within the judicial apparatus of a military occupation, it has nevertheless been possible through legal intervention to win early release for persons arrested without sufficient cause, to ease treatment of

the accused during interrogation, to plea bargain for lower sentences, and to successfully challenge summary procedures that are not in accord with due process. While all of these benefits have not been obtained in every case, there have been substantial achievements in most cases beyond the basic humanitarian benefit to the detainee of having a lawyer.

A new and important aspect of the Center's work that developed in 1978 is involvement in legal challenges to requisition of land for Israeli settlements on the West Bank. The Center assisted the first West Bank villagers ever to have recourse to Israeli courts to challenge the expropriation of their private property for purposes of Israeli settlement. The villagers succeeded in winning a temporary stop-work order and show-cause order delaying the seizure of their land. Since then, on the strength of this first example, other villagers addressed similar petitions to Israel's High Court of Justice. Two more temporary orders were won, but in March, 1979 the High Court ruled that these settlements were legal and could therefore continue to be built. Attorneys related to the Legal Aid Center are evaluating the implications of these decisions and will be recommending whether or not there are next steps to be taken.

With detention cases now very much in the forefront of the Center's work, it has become clear to the American Friends Service Committee that the amount budgetted for legal fees and for social casework must be substantially increased over what it was in the earlier years of the Center's operations. As recently as the 1977-78 fiscal year, the Center's staff consisted of two AFSC Representatives, James and Deborah Fine, plus a Palestinian staff director, Rihab Essawi, who has a master's degree in social work, and a part-time secretary. Legal fees totalled only \$13,000. Both the staff and the funds available for legal expenses are now clearly inadequate to cope with the burgeoning load of work. Because of these new and increased demands, the budget in the current fiscal year has been increased by 50%. Preliminary budgets for fiscal years beginning October 1, 1979 and October 1, 1980 are appended.

In October, 1978 the American Friends Service Committee appointed Jean de Muralt, a Swiss national, as its Representative in charge of the East Jerusalem Center. He assumed his responsibilities on January 15, 1979. Jean de Muralt has a law degree from the University of Geneva and was formerly head of the Jerusalem and West Bank delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. He is currently assisted by the staff director, Rihab Essawi, and by Penny Robbins, a part-time secretary sponsored by Quaker Peace and Service in London. The budgets provide for the addition to the staff of a Palestinian associate with social work experience. The roster of Arab and Jewish lawyers who are willing to accept cases from the Quaker Service Center is being enlarged.

April 1979

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
Middle East Program

Quaker Service Information and Legal Aid Center

Preliminary Budgets  
for Fiscal Years Beginning October 1, 1979 and October 1, 1980

	1979-80	1980-81
AFSC Representative		
Field maintenance	\$ 14,000	\$ 15,400
War zone insurances	2,561	2,817
Ongoing home costs	12,822	14,104
Pension plan	1,569	1,726
Field staff salaries	17,000	18,700
Legal fees	75,000	82,500
Office occupancy costs	6,500	7,150
Office supplies	1,400	1,540
Repairs and other services	500	550
Program supplies	2,000	2,200
Telephone and telegraph	2,000	2,200
Postage	300	330
Equipment purchased and leased	500	550
Program travel and transport	3,500	3,850
Printing and publications	250	275
Emergency grants to individuals	3,500	3,850
Miscellaneous	2,000	2,200
Contingency (10%)	14,540	15,994
Project supervision and coordination and reporting costs (15%)	<u>23,991</u>	<u>26,390</u>
Totals	<u>\$183,933</u>	<u>\$202,326</u>

April, 1979