



**American Friends  
Service Committee**

# **A Guide for Organizers:**

## **How to Plan a Mock Congressional Hearing**

**Prepared by:  
Chicago Middle East Program  
American Friends Service  
Committee  
Summer 2010**

**[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)**



***The following guide was prepared by members of the Chicago Hearing on US Policy on Israel and Palestine. A mock Congressional Hearing was held Sunday, April 18, 2010 in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. To view video from the Hearing access [www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org).***

## **Overall Objective of Holding a Mock Congressional Hearing:**

Often it is difficult to get the attention of members of Congress. Writing letters, making phone calls, attending lobby days, and even personal visits in home districts can often feel fruitless – especially on the issue of Israel and Palestine. Many activists in the U.S. give up trying to influence Congress due to the form letters and canned responses from U.S. Congress members that claim Israel is “the only democracy” in the Middle East, and thus should not be publicly criticized for its human rights record and violations of international laws. Combined with the fact that many who do Middle East peace work do not have the financial influence that might sway politicians’ willingness to speak out, activists tend to work to sway public opinion through educational events or public protests in the hope that grassroots pressure and a change in the public discourse will one day be represented by U.S. Congressional action.

*This guide offers a creative approach to Congressional advocacy for those who would like to hold their members of Congress accountable for US policies that impact the prospects for a just and lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.*

Congress often calls “Hearings” in order to get more information about an issue, be it health care, the improper use of government funds, or an environmental catastrophe. In these Hearings, members of Congress listen to expert witnesses give testimony, then pose questions to these witnesses to gain further information and clarity. Official Hearings are determined by committees or subcommittees of Congress, with politics influencing the selection of witnesses offering testimony and the resulting policy recommendations that emerge from the Hearing.

By holding our own Hearings, with witnesses that we believe are often left out of the political process and who can bring critical perspectives

on U.S. policy, we are able to set the agenda and frame the debate in a way that we feel will better inform the public and our elected leaders. Inviting our elected officials to “listen” is the first step to deepening the dialogue, challenging myths and misinformation, and encouraging policy makers to change unjust U.S. policies.

From our introductory statement of the Chicago Hearing:

*“The Chicago Hearing is modeled after a Congressional Committee fact-finding meeting. It will bring together witnesses to tell seldom-heard stories from Israel-Palestine that raise critical questions about the effects of U.S. policies in the region.*

*The Hearing highlights voices of those on the other end of the pipeline of U.S. aid to Israel. Israeli, Palestinian and American witnesses will testify to lives lost, freedoms denied and property destroyed by Israeli policies buttressed by U.S. aid and support.*

*This Hearing examines U.S. foreign policy, Israeli treatment of Palestinians, and their relationships to fundamental American values and interests. After the event, the Chicago Hearing’s organizing committee will prepare a report summarizing the findings of the Hearing with conclusions and recommendations for follow-up by public officials and the media.”*

This guide is intended to provide organizers with a template for organizing a Mock Congressional Hearing in local communities. The Chicago Hearing was a success in part due to the experience and dedication of its steering committee. The Hearing was nine months in the making, with opportunities for the organizers to season new ideas and approaches. We hope that our process will inspire others to creatively engage our elected officials and influence real change in our country’s policies.

*- Jennifer Bing-Canar, Chicago Hearing steering committee chair*

# STEPS FOR ORGANIZING A HEARING IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

1. **Develop a Steering/Planning Committee.** Spend some time finding the right talent and mix of people to oversee this project. Be sure to include people who have strong facilitation skills, writing skills, networking skills, fundraising experience, and deep knowledge of the subject matter. The committee should include people who are able to commit a significant amount of time to organizing meetings, follow up tasks, and seeing the project through to the end.
2. **Choose a Subject and Title.** Choosing the right title can take a while. Brainstorm initial ideas, then test the title with various people in your community. We chose the title, “*Does U.S. Policy on Israel and Palestine Uphold our Values?*” We included “values” in our title because we felt the policy discussions around Israel and Palestine often focus solely on “interests” rather than “values.”
3. **Determine the audience.** We asked ourselves: “Who do we want to come to the Hearing? Who are we trying to influence?” Members of the U.S. Congress were an obvious audience we hoped to reach, either through the Hearing itself or through its follow up. Another main target was to reach people who are in the “curious middle” – people who want to learn more about the issue or examine it from a new perspective. We hoped that students, people involved in the faith communities, and the public interested in politics would attend. We also hoped that people in Palestine and Israel would be part of our audience – not to learn new content,

but to see that Americans care about the situation and are actively trying to hold our elected officials accountable. This hope influenced our decision later on to record and broadcast live our Hearing.

4. **Determine a budget.** Sketching out at the beginning how much money you have to work with (or anticipate raising) is key. Financing local speakers or “experts” is not as costly as bringing people from overseas, yet international speakers can build a larger audience. Using technology to bring in witness testimony can save money. Recording the Hearing professionally and using technology to webcast the event is costly, but worthwhile. A sample budget is included in the appendix.
5. **Develop the Program.** There are several components to developing the Hearing program:
  - a. **Determine content areas.** Through analysis and discussion we determined the subjects we wanted to highlight in our Hearing, trying to pick issues that we felt would resonate with our target audience. We decided that property rights, freedom of movement, and U.S. foreign assistance (in the form of U.S. military aid to Israel) were three aspects of U.S. policy towards Israel and Palestine to highlight. We initially had a list of five topics, but quickly realized the time constraints if each topic was to be thoroughly addressed.
  - b. **Identify Witnesses to give Testimonies.** After selecting content or topic areas, we came up with lists of potential expert “Witnesses” for each topic. We consciously tried to identify both Israelis and Palestinians as

witnesses, and considered gender and experience on the issue. We learned that having a prioritized list to invite was essential, as often the top choice may have a scheduling conflict or may not be available.

- *Send letters of invitation to Witnesses.* We developed standard text for letters of invitation that described the purpose of the Hearing. Even if we reached Witnesses by phone, we still put in writing our formal invitation. We were clear in our letter about reimbursing for travel, giving honoraria, getting biographical information and a photo headshot for use in publicity.

c. **Select a Listener Panel.** We composed the “listener” panel to include Congressional representatives (or their staff) from the area where we held the Hearing (Hyde Park, Chicago), faith leaders (we were able to get a representative of each of the three Abrahamic faiths), and academics. As in selecting witnesses, we developed long lists of potential panelists to ensure a diverse and distinguished panel. We invited four Congressional representatives to join the Listener panel, but only one representative agreed to participate and we decided to cap the Listener Panel at eight.

- *Send letters of invitation to the Listener panelists.* We did a separate letter for Congress members versus faith/academic leaders. Generally, it is best to have the shell of the program already in place (some Witnesses confirmed), including some logistics like date, time, place, before you

send the invitations.

- *We asked each Listener to ask probing questions of each Witness,* in an attempt to replicate the ideas or misconceptions that s/he hears often from his/her community. We were pleased that our panel of Listeners did their homework and had good questions for each topic. Fact sheets (see item listed later) were also given to the Listeners ahead of time to help them prepare.

d. **Choose a Moderator.** This is a key role for the Hearing. Your moderator should be a good facilitator, have deep knowledge of the issue, be able to keep the program moving on time, and set the appropriate tone for the Hearing. Ideally the moderator should be a person of some stature in the community, either in the subject area or as a local or national “celebrity.”

- *Send letter of invitation to the moderator.* Follow up the letter with a detailed phone call, giving the moderator as much knowledge about the program and witnesses as possible. The moderator should have all biographical information well ahead of time, as well as a “day of” script to keep the program on time.

e. **Identify Congressional members for Listener Panel.** Generally members of Congress respond better to a constituent request than from a group outside their district. We chose members of Congress based on where we held the Hearing, but one might consider inviting other

Congressional members who have a concern for the issue – either due to the Congressional committee they serve or due to their personal interest/stake in the issue.

- *We sent letters of invitation to Congressional members two months in advance* of the Hearing – once the program was well set and the website was ready for prime time. We sent the letters of invitation by registered mail, via email and fax, hand delivered (in DC), and made follow up phone calls. We were persistent. We also noted that a chair would be designated at the Listener table with their name on it – whether or not they chose to come or send a staff member. See appendix for sample invitation letter to Congress.
- *One month prior to the Hearing, we sent letters to all members of the Illinois Congressional delegation* inviting them to “attend” the Hearing, but limited the invitation for the Listener panel to four members of Congress (two U.S. Senators, two U.S. House reps).

6. **Outline schedule of the day.** We realized that bringing in witnesses on three topics would take a good amount of time. With a time schedule in hand, we were able to figure out how long each introduction, witness, and question period should be for each topic area. The schedule was useful to give to all participants for their preparation. Asking a live audience (much less a remote audience viewing via the webcast) to sit for nearly four hours, we realized we would have to keep to a tight agenda and schedule appropriate break times. Once we

developed our time schedule, we shared this with participants in order to keep the program running smoothly. The schedule was printed in the packets given to all who attended the Hearing at registration, and was emailed in advance to people who registered for the webcast ahead of time (sample outline in appendix).

7. **Select a venue.** Choosing a venue can be time consuming. We first had to estimate our audience size (we ended up overestimating the live audience size) and then find a room that would accommodate that number. We wanted a certain “professional” look to the room, particularly as it was to be taped. Ideally a public Hearing room would work, but not all public government buildings will allow the use of their space. We were certain to get a contract in writing, to avoid any last minute cancellations due to outside pressure to stop the event (which we did not experience, thankfully). We found it very useful to keep in constant contact with the venue liaison, informing her of our progress and equipment needs. A space was reserved for our Hearing nearly six months in advance.
8. **Design a logo.** We hoped that our Hearing would appear as professional as possible and have its own unique identity as a project. After many ideas generated to build on the theme of listening/hearing/speaking, we used a flyer using a microphone as a symbol, and later designed a “Chicago Hearing Seal” to imitate the U.S. Congressional seal. We used the seal in publicity postcards, on the Congressional Briefing packets (handed out at the Hearing) and also printed these seals on fabric to use to decorate the tables and room the day of the Hearing (sample Chicago Hearing seal in appendix).

9. **Design an outreach flyer.** Having a flyer early in the process was key to generating publicity and excitement for the Hearing. Once the witnesses were confirmed, we sent out a first flyer, later adapting it to include members of the Listener panel and the moderator. A pdf version of the flyer was also accessible via our website (sample flyer in appendix). We also designed a 4x6 postcard with general information about the Hearing. This postcard turned out to be cheaper to reproduce than the flyer itself. Many online printing shops can produce thousands of postcards at low cost (see sample postcard in appendix).
10. **Develop a website.** We found it essential that we have a web address/ url and dedicated website for our Hearing, although this may not always be necessary if your organizational website is easy to maneuver and has good web traffic. We worked with an outside web designer and a full time volunteer to design and maintain our website: [www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org). The website was also the portal for viewing the Hearing live, for accessing our fact sheets and outreach flyer, and later for viewing the video clips from the Hearing. The website included information about the witnesses, their introducers, the topic areas, U.S. policy as it related to the topics, and information on the Listener panel (including the invited Congressional members). It also listed the organizing committee members and a way to be in contact with our organization.
11. **Create and implement a fundraising plan.** Once the program is developed and the budget written, begin to fundraise for your Hearing. People like to give to projects they can “see” happen, so don’t hesitate to ask people who may already be financially supporting your work. We wrote a letter (see sample in the appendix) that each coordinating committee member then personalized and sent to 10 friends. We identified some potential donors we all knew, met with some individually, and also encouraged people to donate at the Hearing itself (we decided to make the event free, in order to build an audience). We developed an online fundraising capacity through [giveforward.org](http://giveforward.org) (that takes a small percentage, similar to paypal), where we could track our fundraising efforts publicly. In all publicity emails and on our website we gave opportunities for people to donate. We were able to raise nearly \$10k for our efforts.
12. **Create and implement an outreach plan.** Developing the flyer, postcard, website and fundraising letter definitely are components of an outreach plan, but we also mapped out upcoming events in the Chicago area where we could be certain to hand out information about the Hearing. We also wrote up a list of organizations to whom we reached out to, including to people and places near the venue for the Hearing. We also contacted bloggers, mainstream event websites, and ally websites to have our event posted on their websites.
13. **Determine whether to webcast or broadcast event.** We felt that our program was a new and creative approach to advocacy work, and therefore we wanted to maximize our viewing public. We observed other live webcasts which helped inform our set design and webstreaming capacity. While hiring a professional team of videographers and the equipment necessary to do high quality recording is expensive, we felt the cost was worth it (approximately \$5k). Many people who could not watch the

program live are able to view the Hearing on our website. Some people who attended the program said they went back to the video to “see it again” due to the powerful testimony and interchange between Listeners and Witnesses.

14. **Determine whether food or refreshments will be served.** Due to the length of our program, we felt it was necessary to entice our audience to stay with free food and refreshments at the end of the program. We were not able to get donated food due to the venue/university’s restrictions, but we were able to negotiate a good price with the food vendor (who provided Middle Eastern food). Water was available throughout the program.
15. **Set up registration.** We experimented with an online RSVP system, Eventbrite, to have people register in advance of the program. The system is free, as long as you are not charging for the event. We got good feedback from audience members who used this system and it was helpful to get a sense of the audience before the event. We did not anticipate, however, how many online registrants would not show up – nearly 25% of those who had pre-registered did not show up. This was partly compensated by the number of “walk-in” registrants. We had an easy registration system, even with a few people who called to register over the phone because they did not have a computer. People could click on a button on the Chicagohearing.org website to register and be directed to the Eventbrite site.
16. **Set up social networking sites** (eg Facebook event page). In general it is a good idea to have an event page on Facebook, as it gives the Hearing more visibility to new networks. This medium is heavily used by students, although a growing number of middle-aged adults also use Facebook. We emphasized on the Facebook page that audience members still had to register for the Hearing on the Eventbrite site, and for the most part there was little confusion.
17. **Maintain contact with Hearing participants.** This is no small task, and essential for the success of the event. From the beginning, get photo head shots and bio information for publicity from each participant (Witness, Introducers, Listeners). It is helpful in correspondence to “rehearse” their role, giving them time limits and the program schedule. Be sure to determine logistics for their arrival at Hearing. We invited all participants to a catered lunch at the Hearing site before the program started to ensure their on-time presence and for everyone to meet each other before the program began. Be sure to have honorarium checks (if you decide to give honoraria) ready for the day of the Hearing.
18. **Do a walk through of the venue before the Hearing.** Prior to the event, be certain to visit the Hearing space and determine all of your stage and technical needs. If you plan to videotape the Hearing, be certain that the video crew sees the space and has adequate power and bandwidth for broadcasting.
19. **Plan for security needs.** Anyone organizing Middle East-related events knows to plan for possible disruptions. Be sure to find volunteers who know about nonviolent intervention (who are not threatening, but are firm) who can be in the audience and also help as ushers. In some instances, you may have to hire security guards (in the university setting it was necessary)

## 19. **Security needs**, Continued)

or alert local police about what is happening. Be sure to connect with campus security or police, appointing someone from the coordinating committee to be their liaison (food also helps these relationships). We did not have tight security (ie checking bags or metal detectors) and we did not have any disruptions at our program, but it is good to have a plan in case something happens.

## 20. **Develop and design a “Congressional Briefing Packet.”**

In order to imitate real Congressional hearings, we developed a “Congressional Briefing Packet” for each member of the audience to receive at registration. This packet included the day’s program, biographical information on all the speakers, and one page fact sheets on each of the three topics covered in the program. Preparing these one page fact sheets is time consuming, so be sure to plan in advance for research and design. (AFSC fact sheets on the three topics for the Chicago Hearing are on our website and can be used or updated in future Hearings.)

## 21. **Develop and pursue media strategy.**

Determine at least two months prior to the event a small group who is willing to serve as a media subcommittee. Their tasks should include: writing press releases (see appendix for a sample), writing a public service announcement (PSA) for radio, contacting bloggers and key websites that highlight U.S. activism on this issue, finding possible journalists for human interest or in-depth feature stories, determining media spokespeople from the organizing committee, getting quotes and/or sound bytes from witnesses prior to the event, preparing day-of press kits.

Media subcommittee should also send thank you messages to all press who show up for the event.

22. **Identify “day-of” tasks.** Writing up a list of tasks to take care of the day of the event is essential (see appendix for our sample list). Be sure to appoint a leader to oversee registration, identify people to be the liaisons with the Listener Panel, with Witnesses and the moderator (making sure they have information packets, know when their time to speak will be, getting them water and other personal needs, ushering them to designated seating area, practicing the sound system, having them sign a release to be video and audiotaped). Be sure as well to identify a liaison with media – someone who can also provide an impromptu interview if necessary. As stated earlier in the section on security, the head usher should also be the leader should any disruptions occur.

23. **Identify volunteers for “day-of” help.** The list of tasks for the “day of” the event can be quite overwhelming, so be sure you have a good pool of experienced volunteers who can help out. It is best to get commitments a month in advance, with follow up the week prior to the event. People like to be given “roles” at events. Two important volunteer tasks (in addition to previously mentioned) are photographers to take still photos and people to take notes on the proceedings. Even though we videotaped the event, it was very useful to have note takers who could give us commentary and quotes right away for the website and for immediate follow up work. Posting photos of the event to the website and Facebook immediately after the program is a good idea – so plan for it to happen.

24. **Follow up.** One viewer of our Hearing congratulated us on a job well done, then said, “Okay, now for the real work – the follow up.” Our follow up tasks include updating our website with the video footage from the Hearing, making a shorter summary video/dvd with highlights from the Hearing, producing a summary report of the Hearing for distribution to members of the U.S. Congress (both to those invited to participate and to key strategic members who address this issue on select House and Senate committees) with specific recommendations for follow up actions, securing appointments with local members of Congress for face to face meetings, following up with media contacts, including web bloggers, and identifying potential new locations and audiences for replicating mock Congressional Hearings.

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### **Appendices:**

- **Sample Budget**
- **Fundraising letter**
- **Invitation letter to Congress members**
- **Sample schedule of the day**
- **Outreach flyer**
- **Postcard**
- **Logo**
- **Sample press release**
- **Volunteer Task List**

**“Congratulations on a wildly successful event. It was very well done, well-attended, smartly argued and very educational and informative.**

**And the substance was moving and persuasive. You even got a representative from Durbin’s office to attend.**

**You brought a very important hearing to Chicago, and it appears people the world over watched it on the Web. I hope the reports, the feedback and the followup are just as riveting and productive.”**

*-- Chicago area Professor*

**“Amazing event!**

**Thank you for the opportunity to allow us to come out and listen to such an extraordinary panel of speakers!**

**Event was prompt, organized, and informative.**

**I hope for many more to come.”**

*-- Audience member feedback*

**For more information about organizing a mock-Congressional Hearing, please contact us!**

Chicago AFSC staff:

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Visit our Chicago Hearing website:

[www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org)

# Sample Budget

## Room Rental

Cloister \$365  
Library & Lounge \$585  
Building Mgr \$15 X 10 hours \$150  
Housekeeper \$28 X 10 hours \$280  
    subtotal \$1,380

## Videotaping and Webcast

3-camera production with all required microphones, cameras, lighting, crew, etc.  
audio feed provided for Cloister speaker system  
streaming video output provided for live webcast \$5,690

## Publicity

Flyers printing \$300  
Program printing \$300  
Posters PR \$200  
Postcards \$200  
Seal for middle of tables on stage & in lobby \$300  
Skirts and coverings for tables \$750  
    Subtotal: \$2,050

Fact Sheets    Printing four fact sheets        \$3,000

Catered lunch Program Participant Catered Lunch in the Lounge 25 X \$15 = \$375  
Refreshments 200 people @ \$5 per person \$1,000

Program Subtotal        \$13,495

## Speaker fees

Intro 1	(\$350)	\$250 travel	100 honorarium
Intro 2	(\$125)	25 travel	100 honorarium
Intro 3	(\$125)	25 travel	100 honorarium
Witness 1	(\$1,650)	1,400 travel	250 honorarium
Witness 2	(\$750)	500 travel	250 honorarium
Witness 3	(\$550)	300 travel	250 honorarium
Witness 4	(\$3,000)	2000 travel	750 housing 250 honorarium
Moderator	(\$600)	250 travel	350 honorarium

Listener Panel travel 10 X \$50 = \$500  
Speakers & Listener Panel fees Subtotal \$7,650  
**Total \$21,145**

# Sample Fundraising Letter

Dear Friend of Middle East peace,

April, 2010

Did you ever feel such frustration over the Israeli-Palestinian situation that you wanted to shout from a mountaintop so that the whole world could hear you?

Here at AFSC, we feel that frustration often. We invite speakers, lead delegations, give presentations. But that's not enough. And we all know it.

So, on Sunday, April 18, we are metaphorically shouting from the mountaintop. We'll be staging a mock Congressional Hearing to examine the question: Does US Policy on Israel and Palestine Uphold our Values?

This hearing will bring witnesses to share the seldom-heard stories of real life under occupation from Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans who are engaged in the pursuit of a just peace. A distinguished panel of academics, elected officials and faith leaders will pose questions. More than 250 people will be part of the live audience in Chicago.

But here's where it gets interesting. And where you can help.

This event takes place in Chicago, but will be webcast live across the world through the website that was developed just for this event – [www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org).

Viewing gatherings are already being organized across the U.S., in the Middle East, and Europe. Colleges are planning viewings. This will be the 2010 version of shouting from a mountaintop. But it's an unavoidably expensive undertaking.

Can you help by making a tax-deductible contribution of \$100 or \$200 or more?

We already have several organizations and individuals who have committed thousands of dollars to make this ambitious event a reality. But we still need to raise about \$20,000.

We welcome any help that you can provide to help pay for this wide-reaching event. Unlike many one-time events, taking place in one city, one time – this event may be seen by thousands of people all over the world. Some will watch it live. Others will watch it afterwards on their own schedule. It will also be posted on YouTube (in segments) and on our dedicated website. We plan to take copies of the testimony to members of Congress – to the ones who aren't able to come on the 18th. We're expecting a very big ripple effect.

Please mark your calendars for April 18, 2010 – from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm – and plan to come or watch the event from home or with friends.

We are confident that this Hearing will generate renewed dialogue and engagement with elected officials and press on the need for new U.S. policies in Israel and Palestine. We hope to model a creative way for holding public events on this and other critical global issues. With your help, we can ensure that this event lives up to its potential in changing the debate in multiple spheres. With gratitude for your support of AFSC's endeavors to bring peace and justice to the Middle East.

Jennifer Bing-Canar  
Chair, committee to organize "Chicago Hearing"

Reserve a seat at the Hearing now! Seating at the Hearing is limited. Please RSVP at [www.chicagohearing.eventbrite.com](http://www.chicagohearing.eventbrite.com). Those who give \$100 or more by March 30 will be guaranteed a seat.

# Sample Letter of Invitation to Congress

The Honorable xxx  
DC Address

Date

Dear Senator (or Congressman) Name here:

We cordially invite you to participate in a very special public hearing to take place in Chicago on Sunday, April 18, 2010. You would be joining a distinguished listener/questioner panel comprised of clergy, other legislators, academic and community leaders. The event is an initiative of the American Friends Service Committee.

As you may know, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has worked for many years to build momentum for changes in US policy that would reflect our values of justice, peace, freedom, equality, and dignity for all.

Specifically regarding the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian crisis, there is rarely an opportunity where US policy towards this troubled area is openly debated, allowing the public to be exposed to the challenging realities that prevent a just peace. That is why we have called for a Chicago Hearing on US policy as it relates to Israel and Palestine, to be held on April 18, 2010 from 1:30-5:30pm.

This will be a major event in Chicago's historic Hyde Park neighborhood. Additionally, the program will include an international audience, as it will be broadcast live over the Internet. The event will be available to view through our website, [www.ChicagoHearing.org](http://www.ChicagoHearing.org), and will later host a recorded video of the proceedings.

We have chosen three topics for focus during this hearing, issues that we feel are of interest to Americans: Property Rights (including house demolitions, settlements, and Jerusalem), Freedom of Movement (including the barrier, checkpoints and the closure of Gaza) and Military Aid and Arm Sales. Witnesses from Israel, Palestine and the US will offer testimony on these topics.

Each topic is planned to last about an hour, with opportunities for our international audience to hear testimony and reactions/questions from you and others on our distinguished listener panel.

Thank you for considering this request. We have reserved a place in your name on the listener panel, and if you cannot personally attend we hope you will send an appropriate person from your staff.

We will be contacting your office in the coming few days to follow up this letter and answer any questions you might have about this important program in Chicago.

[your name] on behalf of the Organizing Committee

# Sample Schedule of the day

Organizers and Volunteer schedule  
Chicago Hearing Program  
Sunday, April 18, 2010

We hope to have the Audience and speakers in their seats by 1:25pm.

The Program will start promptly at 1:30pm.

This event is being webcast live. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping noise to a minimum. Please turn off or silence your cell phone.

- 1:30 Welcome by Jennifer Bing-Canar, American Friends Service Committee
- 1:40 Introductions by Helena Cobban, Moderator, Chicago Hearing
- 1:50 Introduction, "Property Rights" by Mezna Qato
- 1:55 Testimony by Jeff Halper, ICAHD
- 2:10 Questions from the Listener Panel
- 2:40 Break – 10 minutes only
- 2:50 Introduction, Helena Cobban
- 2:55 Introduction, "Freedom of Movement" by Lisa Kosowski
- 3:00 Witness Testimony by Jad Isaac, ARIJ
- 3:15 Questions from the Listener Panel
- 3:45 Break – 15 minutes
- 4:00 Introduction, Helena Cobban
- 4:05 Introduction, "Military Aid" by Josh Ruebner
- 4:15 Witness Testimony by Amer Shurrab
- 4:25 Witness Testimony by Cindy Corrie
- 4:35 Questions from the Listener Panel
- 5:05 Summary and Closing, Helena Cobban

Please join the audience in the lobby for refreshments after the Program concludes at 5:15pm. Individuals from the audience may ask you questions at that time.

# Sample Flyer

## CHICAGO HEARING

A Mock  
Congressional  
Hearing

DOES U.S. POLICY ON  
ISRAEL AND PALESTINE  
UPHOLD OUR VALUES?

### Witnesses

ON PROPERTY RIGHTS:

**Jeff Halper**, Coordinator of the Israeli  
Committee Against House Demolitions &  
**Mezna Qato**, Palestinian human rights  
activist

ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT,  
ASSOCIATION AND SPEECH:

**Jad Isaac**, Director of the Applied  
Research Institute - Jerusalem & **Lisa  
Kosowski**, attorney and board member of  
the Arab Jewish Partnership

ON MILITARY AID:

**Amer Shurrab**, a Palestinian from Gaza  
whose two brothers were killed in Operation  
Cast Lead, **Cindy Corrie**, whose daughter,  
Rachel, was killed by an Israeli bulldozer  
during a home demolition in Gaza, & **Josh  
Ruebner**, National Advocacy Director of  
the US Campaign to End the Israeli  
Occupation

*Moderated by Helena Cobban*

### Listeners

John J. Mearsheimer,  
Professor at the University of  
Chicago

Barbara Ransby, Professor at  
the University of Illinois

Rabbi Brant Rosen,  
Co-Founder of the Jewish Fast for  
Gaza

Ghada Talhami, Professor  
Emerita, Lake Forest College

Zaher Sahloul, M.D., Chairman  
of the Council of Islamic  
Organizations of Greater Chicago

Sen. Roland Burris (*invited*)  
Sen. Richard Durbin (*invited*)  
Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (*invited*)  
Rep. Bobby Rush (*invited*)

**SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 1:30 TO 5:30 PM**  
**Ida Noyes Hall at The University of Chicago**  
**1212 E. 59th St., Chicago**

Initiative of the American Friends Service Committee, Chicago - 312-427-2533 ext 19  
**RSVP REQUIRED.** Please **RSVP** online at [chicagohearing.eventbrite.com](http://chicagohearing.eventbrite.com)  
Live Broadcast available at [www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org)

# Sample Postcard

## Front of Postcard



## Back of Postcard

MOCK CONGRESSIONAL HEARING  
ON US POLICY

SUNDAY, APRIL 18

1:30PM-5:30PM

Ida Noyes Hall  
1212 E. 59th St, Chicago

OR

WATCH IT LIVE

[chicagohearing.org](http://chicagohearing.org)

RSVP

REQUIRED TO ATTEND

[CHICAGOHEARING.EVENTBRITE.COM](http://CHICAGOHEARING.EVENTBRITE.COM) | For more info: [contact@chicagohearing.org](mailto:contact@chicagohearing.org)



Featuring witnesses  
from Israel, Palestine  
and the United States

Distinguished panel of  
Listeners include: US  
Congress Members  
(invited), Academics  
and Religious Leaders

# Sample logo



# Sample Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Groundbreaking Chicago Hearing to Ask:  
Does US Policy on Israel/Palestine uphold our values?"**

The first ever Chicago mock Congressional Hearing on US foreign policy in Israel and Palestine will be held this Sunday from 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. at Ida Noyes Hall on the University of Chicago campus. An overflow crowd is expected for the Hearing that will examine whether US policy on Israel and Palestine upholds not just American interests, but also American values.

The event will be webcast live worldwide from the website [www.chicagohearing.org](http://www.chicagohearing.org).

Some 350 people will be attending the Hearing and many more will be gathered at colleges, houses of worship, and private homes to watch live on the internet -- from Boston, New York, Detroit, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., to Indiana and Idaho, to Walla, Walla, Wash., and San Francisco.

**Press Release Continued on next page...**

# Sample Press Release continued

Staff members from the offices of US Sen. Richard J. Durbin and Rep. Bobby L. Rush, whose Congressional district includes the Hyde Park site of the hearing, also will attend.

“The American people voted for hope and change, and we see neither when it comes to US policy towards Israel and Palestine,” said Jennifer Bing-Canar, coordinator of regional programs at the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago.

“It’s critical that people around the world see that ordinary Americans -- as well as our elected officials -- care about the lives of people who are affected daily by US policies in the Middle East,” she said.

The Hearing, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago, brings together witnesses from Israel, Palestine and the United States who will testify to the impact of U.S. foreign policy on property rights, freedom of movement, and military aid.

Witnesses include:

- Cindy Corrie, whose daughter Rachel was killed by an Israeli bulldozer while she tried to stop the demolition of a Palestinian family's home;
- Amer Shurrab, a Palestinian peace activist from Gaza who will speak of his family's devastation during Israel's 2009 war in Gaza;
- Jeff Halper, coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions;
- Jad Isaac, an environmental expert and director of the Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem.

A Listener Panel of Chicago-area religious leaders and academics will question the witnesses. Panelists include:

- John Mearsheimer, professor of political science at the University of Chicago;
- Cantor Michael Davis, member of the Jewish Fast for Gaza
- Ghada Talhami, professor emerita of politics at Lake Forest College;
- Cotton Fite, associate priest at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Evanston;
- Barbara Ransby, associate professor of gender and women's studies, African American studies, and history at the University of Illinois at Chicago;
- Zaher Sahloul, M.D., chairman of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago;
- Yali Amit, professor of statistics and computer science, University of Chicago.

The moderator is journalist Helena Cobban, former columnist at the Christian Science Monitor and contributor to the blog, Just World News ([justworldnews.org](http://justworldnews.org)).

“We hope this Hearing will bring the question of values into the discussion about US policy,” said Jennifer Bing-Canar. “These witnesses will put a human face on those who pay a price for unjust laws and practices most Americans would never tolerate.”

The event is free and open to the public. However reservations are required at [www.chicagohearing.eventbrite.com](http://www.chicagohearing.eventbrite.com).

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The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) was founded in 1917 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for its humanitarian work in Europe, including assisting Jews in escaping Nazi persecution. Since 1949 AFSC has worked to build a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians that provides justice and security for all peoples living in the Middle East. AFSC’s work is based on the Quaker belief that there is that of God in each person and a commitment to nonviolent action for social change.

# Sample To Do List

## **VOLUNTEERS MASTER SCHEDULE Day of Program**

EARLY ROOM PREP – arrive by 9 am /2 people

LUNCH SET UP – arrive by 10:30 am if possible  
Leaders: 2 people & friends All early volunteers

GREETER at front (directing traffic): /2 people /Other coordinating committee members as available

REGISTRATION – arrive no later than 11:30 am/ Leader: 1 person /6 additional registrars

Press Check in: 1 person

USHERS – arrive no later than noon /Leader: 1 person /8 ushers additional

TIME KEEPERS /2 people

PHOTOGRAPHERS /3 people

NOTE TAKERS /3 people

TECH LIASION /2 people

TWITTER /1 person

REFRESHMENT SET UP /3 people

CLEAN UP CREW /Everyone!

HONORARIA & CHECKS /1 person