

Social Crisis Management: Training the Trainers

# Anti-Incitement

## Jericho, Palestine

EMERGING PALESTINIAN COMMUNAL LEADERS DEVELOP THE  
“NINETY-SECOND PERFECT PITCH” TO STRENGTHEN SOLIDARITY  
AT MOMENTS OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY.

A partnership of The International Center for Conciliation, Boston, MA & Jericho, Palestine,  
Municipality of Jericho, and an-Najah National University, Nablus

January 2017

---

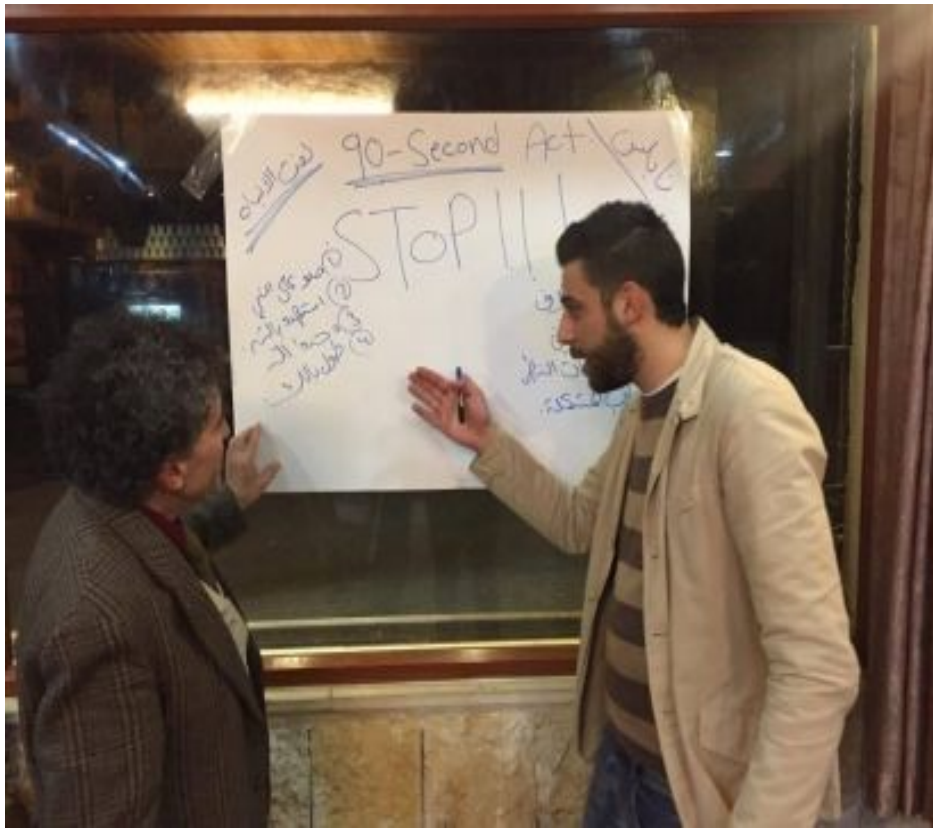




## Introduction

For four days in January, emerging Palestinian communal leaders gathered in Jericho to respond to a single concern. Men and women of all ages and work experiences, from towns and from rural areas, from Jenin in the mountains of the North to Dura in the plains of the South, sat in somber consultation and in playful experimentation, plowing through what is generally known about crowd behavior and trying to relate this to special problems that they have observed in situations of rising tension. They began by analyzing nightmares and fantasies, playing “war games” to test strategies for social interaction. Via a custom written role play written in different versions with different endings and enacted by ICfC Program Director, Ashraf Awada and Facilitator Noa Radosh from Seeds of Peace, trainers had the opportunity to test formulations that would support empathy to

those that would disinhibit violence. Scenarios led to scripts.



How should a leader, spotting people in the Town Square becoming increasingly agitated, command attention? Should she use the universal word, STOP, or might he capture attention more effectively by using nuanced Arabic words? With what authority and in what tone of voice should leaders gain the confidence of the crowd? Would pains from remembering the past or hopes from anticipating the future more effectively deter conflict or disinhibit spasms of violence? What communal tasks and goals, proposed at such moments, renew trust and hope for people who are frightened and feel impotent to influence their fate? Late into the night, these issues were discussed over delicious Palestinian delicacies, with uplifting songs and dance. These hard working strangers from around

Palestine understood: to strengthen community one must live in a



community.

Palestinians have struggled to preserve a measure of calmness through their strong family loyalties and communal aspirations. But global and regional problems are creating new uncertainties. How can Palestinians protect themselves from becoming the “next Syria?” However different the problems that Palestinians face, the fear itself could lead to behavior that disrupts communal life.





## **Background**

The International Center for Conciliation, in partnership with an-Najah-National University, launched a pilot project in March 2016 to train the Jericho Municipality and Palestinian Emergency Committees on approaches to Community Based Disaster Management. The core of this training was developed by Palestinian Professor Jalal Dabbeek, a world class expert on seismic engineering and the social, political, economic and humanistic implications of a full range of natural disasters. In the months that followed the successful Phase I, ICfC President Hillel Levine and Prof. Dabbeek are developing a unique Master's degree program in Disaster Management Planning and Community Development. Experienced Palestinian experts in IT, technology management, community development, emergency medicine and public health fields will be trained through seminars and field work in the Jericho-Nablus area, preparing responses

to local, regional and global natural disasters projected over the coming years.



Mayor Abu Hadid- Mohamed Jalita, with the support of Governor Majed Fitiani and other officials of the PA invited an expansion of ICfC training in Jericho and areas of Palestine, and beyond our specialization in natural disaster management. Leadership, particularly at times of stress, emerged as an important issue. We discussed this need in relation to the organizational issues of Crisis Management. Parties consulted from the academy, from government agencies, and international agencies as well as from the business world have been eager to assist.

## Implementation



During the Fall of 2016, a growing fear was expressed among exemplary community leaders of Palestine that developments in Syria might be a harbinger of Palestine's uncertain fate. While Palestine's problems are so very different and its cohesive forces greater than many of its neighbors, the fear of becoming the "next Syria" could have its own consequences. A "Training of the Trainers" on incitement, and how it could be prevented, received immediate support, in tandem with the Crisis Management training that we already had been planning. Our staff compiled a list of participants from the major regions of Palestine, from Jenin to Dura, women and men, Palestinians of different religious and ethnic backgrounds, with an age span of their mid-20s to their early-50s. These are people who have demonstrated leadership in a variety of domains. We were eager to conclude the training before confusing messages, emanating from UNESCO, the UN Security Council, the Paris Peace Meetings and the Executive and Congressional changes in the US added to the uncertainty



that Palestinians were feeling about their future and how it could lead to intra-communal conflict -- agitated street exchanges, jostling, even violence. We organized this as a "Training of the Trainers" with each participant pledging to return home and to train a comparable number of leaders. We issued 25 invitations with less than a week's response time. This invitation called for a commitment of four full days with compensation only for travel expenses, not for salary loss. We were delighted to engage the full attention of these leaders who additionally undertook a commitment of significant time to train local leaders. The enthusiasm was such that the participants pledged themselves to train 1,000 Palestinians in what came to be called the "Perfect Pitch" -- a 90-second appeal to Palestinian solidarity and civility in pursuing a Two State Solution, supported by "bottom-up" local leaders as well as "top-down" national leadership. ICfC staff observed every training, throughout Palestine, providing encouragement, evaluations, and finances.



## Next Steps

We hope to engage well-established organizations, such as the Aspen Institute and Facing History and Ourselves, that have vast global experience and useful collections of the best thinking of savants from

different cultures, for training devoted citizens, not necessarily those with advanced education. The goal will include community-based conversations on identity, community, and polity, encouraging citizens to participate in civic and community building activities and to meet six-month goals proposed by our trainers. We will provide more about the didactic methods that are leading to these positive results, as well as how to integrate these experiences with conflict resolution, economic and cultural development, and our ongoing commitments to Disaster Management.



In our Crisis Management work, with its emphasis upon leadership training, we have been in ongoing discussion with our partners at the Municipality, as well as at an-Najah National University. A cost for us has been a delay in preparations for Part II of our local Disaster Management Project, making Jericho a model city of resilience and community-based preparedness, while at the same time recruiting and training experts whose services will be very much in demand in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf States, but far beyond, as well. The cadre of advanced professional who will join our Master's degree program will uphold the standards of our

community-based program as part of their field work requirement. Palestinians, justifiably seeking economic opportunities in global markets where they have been marginalized, as well as their sense of dignity and respect, soon will join the elite of the best trained and the best intentioned global leaders for the realization of "Millennial Goals," not only for 2020 but for 2030 and beyond, as well.

