

المركز الفلسطيني لقضايا السلام والديمقراطية
Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy



Annual Report 2021

The Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy received a grant from the European Union to implement a three-year project ;**Palestinian Youth for Peace**; a project that aims to find a Palestinian public opinion supportive to peaceful political consensus in Palestine.



Dr. Taleb Awad, (head of Board) and Ms. Hilda Issa (executive director) sign the EU contract; (Palestinian Youth for Peace)

PCPD General Assembly:

PCPD was founded in 1992 by the following figures:

- Mr. Bashir Barghouti (passed away)
- Dr. Tayseer Arouri (passed away)
- Dr. Sameer Abdulla
- Dr. Tamer Essawi
- Mr. Hana Amira

In addition to this, the PCPD has a general assembly of **33 members**, who are responsible for electing the Board of Directors. The staff make up the executive body of the organization, followed by a large number of young volunteers (PCPD Youth Supporters) who, together with the staff, conduct various innovative interventions to advocate for the mission and vision of the organization.

PCPD GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

1- Ms. Sona Arouri	11- Ms. Enas Maswada	21- Mr. Munther Qareq
2- Mr. Abbas Milhem	12- Ms. Fadwa Khader	22- Ms. Taghreed Kishek
3- Dr. Talib Awad	13- Ms. Yasmeen Enaya	23- Ms. Hana Sahel
4- Ms. Shola Abed Hadi	14- Mr. Aref Jafal	24- Ms. Ann Ankar
5- Mr. Muhammad Saleem	15- Ms. Sahhar Barakat	25- Ms. Shahrazad Tmazi
6- Mr. Hashem Barahma	16- Mr. Ameen Enabi	26- Ms. Hazar Ismael
7- Mr. Thaer Hanaysha	17- Ms. Haneen Zeidan	27- Ms. Nina Thabet
8- Mr. Ghassan Abdulla	18- Ms. Neda Abu Sibah	28- Mr. Khaleel Sheeha
9- Mr. Waleed Maqbul	19- Mr. Naeem Al-Ashhab	29- Mr. Emad Daoud
10- Mr. Issa Samandar	20- Ms. Intisar Salman	30- Ms. Sabreen Amouri

During April of 2020, the PCPD general assembly met and elected a new board of directors that consisted of 9 members. Out of the 9, 6 of these members were women. Two of these women took major positions at the board as; treasurer and assistant deputy director.

PCPD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1- Dr. Taleb Awad – Head of Board	6- Ms. Shahrazad Tmazi – member
2- Ms. Tagreed Kisek – Deputy to the Chairwoman	7- Ms. Nida Abu Sibah – member
3- Ms. Fadwa Khader – Treasurer	8- Mr. Aref Jafal – member
4- Mr. Walid Maqbul – Secretary	9- Ms. Hana Sahal – member
5- Ms. Sahhar Barakat - member	

PCPD STAFF:

Full time staff

1- Ms. Hilda Issa – Executive Director	5- Mr. Firas Marwan – Media Coordinator
2- Mr. Naseef Muallem – Policy Advisor	6- Ms. Rana Abu Sair – project coordinator
3- Ms. Ekram Zbeidi – Program Coordinator	7- Mr. Thaer Hanaysah – project coordinator
4- Ms. Randa Sharkas – Accountant	

Part time staff

- 1- Ms. Anbara Shalalda – external trainer/ facilitator
- 2- Mr. Uday Ammar– external trainer/facilitator

YOUTH INTERNS

The PCPD has a large number of youth who come from all over the West Bank and who act as interns. They are youngsters; they are university graduates in media and social and political studies.

HEBRON	BETHLEHEM
Ms. Haneen Jaber Ms. Haneen Salayma Ms. Reema Jabari Ms. Mesan Abu Sheikha Ms. Shatha Odeha Mr. Mahmoud Al-Jamal Mr. Mahmoud Zareer Ms. Hiba Nataha Mr. Islam Natsha Ms. Lana Shaheen Ms. Dina Jalboush Ms. Rula Taniya	Ms. Wala Sanad Ms. Batoul Sanad Ms. Nardeen Issa Ms. Manal Radayda Ms. Aesha Ms. Wijdan Radayda
TULKARM	QALQILYA
Ms. Tala Qudsi Ms. Sara Jayousi Mr. Ahmad Iraqi Mr. Fadi Odeha Mr. Hazem Zedian Mr. Nadeem Njaem Mr. Hisham Fakhoury Ms. Israe Daas Ms. Israe Zbeidi	Ms. Rania Sasa Mr. Kamal Syam Ms. Sally Mustafa Ms. Besan Khlaef
RAMALLAH	NABLUS
Ms. Hala Faqees Mr. Islam Naser Mr. Yousef Sweiti Ms. Taqwa Balawi Ms. Nihal Barghouti Ms. Baylasan Karaja Ms. Lena Qatami	Mr. Zaid Ibraheem Mr. Beram Ghazal Ms. Hiba Masri Ms. Hadeel Salahat Ms. Alla Al-Amla Ms. Hala Haj Ali Ms. Haya Arandi Ms. Dana Ghazi
JENIN	
Mr. Ahmad Kilani Ms. Shahnaz Darwish Mr. Nidal Hamad Ms. Hadeel Khanfar Ms. Maryam Daoud Ms. Nada Bani Nimreah Ms. Ansam Daraghma Ms. Narjes Atatra	



POLITICAL ANALYSIS:

Over the past year, political talks regarding the Deal of the Century have been taking place in Palestine. The results of these talks consisted of Former U.S. President, Mr. Trump, officially announcing on January 28th, 2020, the U.S.A.'s support of Israel in their annexation of 30% of the West Bank; another huge blow for the Palestinians.

The Palestinian civil society was highly active during these discussions up until the U.S. announcement in August 2020 of the Israel - United Arab Emirates Normalization Agreement; The Abraham Accords. This agreement stipulated a suspension of Israel's annexation plan. According to a public opinion poll (No.77) conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, Palestinians view the U.A.E's decision to normalize as an abandonment of the Palestinian National cause; they consider it a biased agreement benefiting Israeli national interest only, and a big failure for Palestinian diplomacy. Findings also show a significant decline in support for the two state solution compared to the situation three months ago. These agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrein have served to infuriate all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad who convened via video conference in an effort to forge a united front against Israeli normalization and annexation; against the 'Deal of the Century'.

The one positive element that resulted for Palestinians from these diplomatic relations was the formation of an unofficial coalition between the historically rival political parties; Fatah and Hamas. These two parties united over their shared opposition against the stipulations listed within the 'Deal of the Century,' and made a decision to hold parliamentary elections. This is a major step forward for Palestinians since the last parliamentary elections were held in 2006. Since September 2021, the Palestinian civil society has been discussing the upcoming elections, beginning with the Palestinian Legislative Council, followed by Presidential elections which are stipulated to take place in March of 2022 (Is this correct?). These elections are the main reason for the relevance of this project.

The spread of COVID 19 has majorly impacted the Palestinian economy, resulting in a huge decrease in employment rates since 2020. Job losses have been detrimental within certain sectors of society due to the fact that many families relied upon these jobs as their only source of income, leaving them with no money during the regular, periodic lockdowns. The ones who preserved their jobs were also still affected through having their salaries decreased to half of their previous wages. Further, the Palestinian government is also facing difficulties in finding the funds to pay for the salaries of their governmental employees.

During November 2020, there were some changes in the Palestinian political context related to the reinstatement of security coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. This action was not approved by some of the Palestinian political parties. Hamas in particular was in opposition to the coordination, as the party has previously been involved in talks with Fatah regarding the reconciliation and unification between the West Bank and Gaza.

Most of the political parties on the left, particularly the Palestinian Popular Front, were also against the Palestinian Authority's decision to return to the security coordination with Israel. The Palestinian Authority asked Palestinian ambassadors from the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to return to work while simultaneously resuming the security coordination with Israel. Most likely the election of President Biden played a role in this.

While in the meantime (at the beginning of 2021) the conduction of parliamentary and Presidential elections were announced, yet no date has been set for the municipal elections. This focus on elections can go one of two ways; on the one hand it could open up new opportunities to call for municipal elections, while on the other hand it might be that the leading parties and other civil society organizations are busy with the parliamentary and presidential elections and therefore don't call for municipal elections, and they have no time to call for the local elections. In 2021 the project will continue to push for municipal elections.



ABOUT US:

The Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy PCPD is a civil society non-for-profit Palestinian, non-governmental organization that was established in 1992. PCPD works to achieve just peace based on international legislations that promote a genuine peace according to UN Resolutions 242 and 338; which call for the establishment of an independent democratic Palestinian state based on the 1967 border agreement of the occupied areas with East Jerusalem as its capital.

PCPD forges a feminist perspective to achieve gender equality, social justice, freedoms, and to build a vibrant and tolerant Palestinian state that enjoys peace and security, a state that is accountable, committed to the rule of law and

is open to the participation of all despite sex, religion, color or political thoughts. PCPD is committed to a culture that promotes women's and youth's political empowerment which allows youth and young women to participate and represent themselves in all spheres of their lives. We aim to create a culture that increases women's opportunities to have leadership roles and to have their voices heard. We aim to create a safe space that enables them to participate in the decision-making processes within political and public life. We aim for a culture that is committed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and the elimination of violence against women; sexual and gender based violence.

OUR VISION

Palestinian Society is committed to practicing true democracy in a free independent democratic state that adheres to the values of good governance, gender equality, freedoms, social justice, and integrity.

OUR MISSION

PCPD is working towards a well-functioning, free and independent, democratic Palestinian state. We aim to build a vibrant and tolerant society whose government is accountable and open to the participation of all with a particular focus on women and youth. This goal is in alignment with the principles of good governance and rule of law. We aim for the formation of a system that respects, protects and enforces basic human rights, with a particular focus on women's rights. We aim for a society that is able to enjoy the values of integrity and is capable of holding the national and local governments accountable in order to empower democratic practices; a civil society that helps keep government power in check.



OUR VALUES

As an organization we share common values and principles that guide PCPD's work. Our core values are based on a holistic understanding of **peace** and **democracy** as not merely the absence of war or direct violence, but also the presence of positive conditions that support physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of the Palestinian people.

- We are committed to fundamental human rights, dignity, and the rule of law and encouraging critical debate and respecting diverse opinions.
- We are committed to equality between men and women in accordance to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the International Conventions, mainly CEDAW.
- We believe in a society where all people are free to participate fully in civic, economic, and cultural life.
- We are committed to addressing inequalities that cut across multiple lines, including race, class, gender, and citizenship
- We are committed to real and just peace as outlined in the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and international resolutions.
- We are committed to transparency, sharing and making information available to all relevant parties, internally and externally.
- We are committed to holding those in power accountable for their actions and in increasing the power of women and youth groups.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

PCPD believes that when young women and men are trained and empowered they will become interested in developing their own political agenda. This agenda will be used as a platform to engage in diverse political interventions and dialogues including those that are community and media-based. This will challenge discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices as well as promote greater respect for and enjoyment of women's and men's equal civic, political, social and economic rights. If they are encouraged, supported and empowered, we believe that the targeted youth will become interested in growing their capacities for engagement, so that they can be involved in political processes with different political actors. They will learn how to hold local and national duty bearers accountable regarding the equal rights of youth and their full participation in the public and political sphere. Youth influence in politics can inspire political parties to become more open and democratic in terms of their membership and practices and guarantee the inclusion of youngsters in their structures and decision-making processes moving forward.

At the PCPD, we believe in the importance of promoting a just and gender equal constitution. The right to participate in constitution-making is grounded in the principle of political participation. There are a number of international and regional legal instruments that recognize political participation as a fundamental human right, including the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women, which calls particularly for women's political participation; "State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure women the right to: equality with men, to participate in the formulation of government policy, to hold public office and perform in all public functions at all levels of government". In 2014, PCPD produced a Gender Sensitive Constitution which we will continue to advocate for until it is approved.

PROGRAMS:

JUST PEACE AND SECURITY:

PCPD promotes a genuine peace based on UN Resolutions and the Palestinian Declaration of Independence (PDI). A peace that will lead to the establishment of an independent, democratic Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967; with a focus on human security, conflict resolution and mechanisms based on international legitimacy. Our goal is to revive a positive peace through building the capacity of youth and local actors who will promote tolerance and reduce prejudices. We aim for a society that enjoys peace and security, where conflicts are dealt with through non-violent approaches, where human rights are respected and where citizens can feel safe and secure. The political participation of women in processes relating to peace and security is crucial for the establishment of said international peace and security. In Palestine, young women and men need to be part of the negotiation, peace and reconciliation processes. They need to be active in the public sphere, in accordance with the PDI and the resolutions of the UN Security Council Resolutions, mainly 1325. To ensure this, we promote the inclusion of women in political and peace processes.

One of the most important projects under the Peace Program is **Femininfluencer**; a project that empowers and enthuses young female activists in using classic and social media as a means for change. This project enhances women's rights and freedoms to expression, movement and equality. The young women who participated in this project were the recipients of a capacity building program that qualified them to: conduct and participate in dialogues with Public Opinion and Policy makers, lead live TV sessions, produce TV spots and conduct Film Screening workshops to disseminate ideas related to women rights, equality and activism in the public sphere in line with the international Agreements and declarations that Palestine signed related to CEDAW and 1325. *(This project is funded by Operation 1325 and with the support of Swedish Institute SI).*





Under the peace program, the youth attended many lectures regarding the importance of peace for Palestinians and they were very enthused to meet political figures and public opinion makers to discuss the future of peace within Palestinian society.



Youth conduct open dialogues with the Palestinian Authority, a PCPD initiative entitled; *Let's talk freely; a project implemented in partnership with Aman.*

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW:

What about this? What are you saying? Are you defying what “rule of law” means? Are you stating that this is the goal for Palestinian Society? Is this the definition that PCPD is striving towards? (mentioned below).

PCPD’s vision is to see a well-functioning, independent, democratic Palestinian state based on the principles of good governance and the rule of law; a system that respects, protects and fulfills human rights and gender equality and promotes peace and security for all its citizens. PCPD contributes to this vision through building up youth who believe in the possibility of achieving this goal. Particular attention was focused on the dissemination of UNR 1325 by meeting with many females in positions of political power. These youth are taking action by means of public accountability in order to ensure the government’s commitment to periodical elections, freedoms of expression and equality for all citizens in accordance with: the Palestinian Declaration of Independence (PDI), the Palestinian Basic law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, and other additional conventions signed by the Palestinian Authority.



PCPD along with PAX entered into a regional project entitled: **MUSAWAT; Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) in Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories Countering four pillars of discrimination**. This project is in cooperation with *Alef Act for Human Rights* (a Lebanese NGO) and *Peace and Freedom Organization* (an Iraqi NGO); working together and committed to contribute to strengthen Social cohesion and equality in Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, by increased Freedom of Religion and Belief, a reinforced sense of shared citizenship and countered gender, religious and sectarian based discrimination. **This project is funded by PAX, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.**

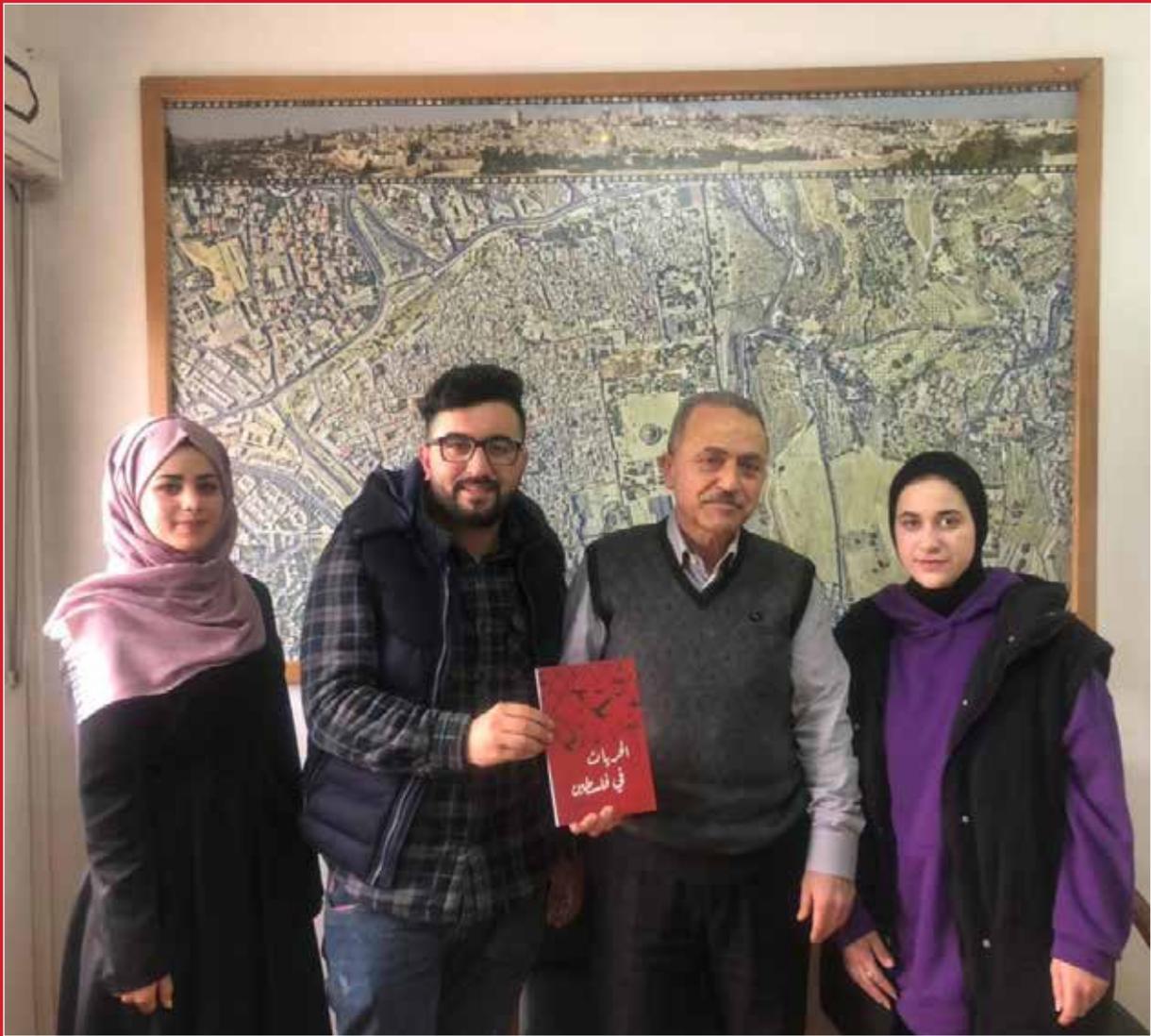


Our project 'Students Acting for Honesty, Integrity and Equality (SHINE)' started in 2017 and was successful in enhancing the capacities of school students to monitor their local governments. It empowered them to engage within the public sphere through taking part in the enhancement process for national integrity and transparency in order to bridge the gap between local government and public citizens. Throughout this project we taught students about their legal right to both monitor and hold their government accountable for its actions. The students felt proud to learn these skills and were empowered to meet influential members of society such as local mayors, engineers and contractors.

Throughout this project, PCPD focused particularly on marginalized areas and was keen to establish local integrity clubs since the majority of students in these areas do not engage in public life; they only move between their home and their school. Outside of these two areas, their movement and activism is highly restricted as it is monitored by their immediate and extended families as well as their local communities. The communities where this project functions, tend to be extremely poor. They live deprived of many basic needs and services, as the government has failed in its role to provide them. PCPD is eager in its vision for the acceptance and establishment of integrity clubs in the hopes that these clubs will aid in spreading the values of integrity, transparency and anti-corruption through the means of social auditing and accountability throughout the West Bank. PCPD believes in the need to develop a network of students who can take initiative within their communities to exchange experiences, share lessons learnt and implement creative ideas in the field. ***This project is funded by Integrity Action.***



Under the Musawat project, the PCPD arranged for a session between two religious leaders (one Christian and another Muslim) to talk about the freedoms of religion in Palestine. ***This project is funded by PAX, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.***



At the start of 2021, the core group from the Musawat project continued to coordinate with political and religious figures in order to continue the dissemination of the book, *Freedom in Palestine*. The dissemination was led by 26 young activists from the core group; representing all of the districts of the West Bank. As a result, the book was successfully distributed within all the districts. In addition to the core group of 26, another 13 youth, peers of the core, expressed interest through joining and participating in these meetings. *This project is funded by PAX, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.*



Through the Musawat project the youth had a chance to visit the Sanctuary of Abraham in Hebron during the religious and historical tour of the West Bank.



Visiting the glass factory in the Old city of Hebron, during the religious and historical tour conducted through the Musawat project.



A visit to a catholic Convent in Artas village during the tour.

During the Musawat project, the youth also participated in the painting of a mural that represented the importance of the freedom of expression. This painting was a replica of the mural that exists on The Wall near Jenin and Hebron. The murals were painted through the cooperation of the local governments, youth activists, and representatives of civil society organizations and political figures.

This project is funded by PAX, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.





Under the Musawat project, the Palestinian youth had the chance to participate in an exchange project with Dutch and Lebanese youth. After many zoom meetings, the Palestinian youth were able to travel to Jordan and meet with the Lebanese youth. ***This project is supported by Anna Lindh Foundation.***



Civil Society for Dignity is a three-year project implemented by a consortium of four NGOs: The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement (PCR), The Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy (PCPD), Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND) and is funded by The European Union. The project is implemented all across the West Bank and East Jerusalem with a specific focus on women and youth. The project will contribute to the overall objective to “enable Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to play their legitimate role as advocates and watchdogs in Palestine”. A participatory approach has been adopted to design the project, through consultations with many relevant stakeholders, including youth and individuals, groups, various CSOs and grassroots movements as well as local authorities. Furthermore, the action has been shaped on the basis of knowledge, skills and field experiences gained from past actions in this field. These actions include: youth empowerment, bridging the gap between citizens and their representatives, gender equality, local and national advocacy, social cohesion, as well as accountability, integrity and good governance. The participatory approach will continue throughout via trainings, especially in participatory video, and feedback loops. ***This project is funded by the European Union under the Civil Society Program.***



PCPD youth involved in the project, *Civil Society for Democratization and Participation*, Young Palestinians and the 2021 Municipal Elections, went to the streets and hung posters demanding a wider participation from youth in the local government elections. ***This project is in cooperation with PAX and funded by ifa (institute fur Auslandsbeziehungen) with the support from the Federal Foreign Office.***



After launching the Murals, the youth opened discussions with local citizens who had been invited to join. The discussions centered around the importance of holding local elections on time as well as the encouragement of youth and women to be part of local political life, decision-making processes and particularly the upcoming elections. *This project is in cooperation with PAX and funded by ifa (institute fur Auslandsbeziehungen) with the support from the Federal Foreign Office.*



The campaign in Hebron was focused on establishing a simulation of the electoral process through setting up a polling station in the street. The youth set up an election box, which they acquired from the CEC, and practiced the process of anonymous voting with interested citizens who gathered to see what was happening. The core group played the roles of employees working for the electoral polling station and they checked the IDs of the citizens, registered their names and gave them papers to vote with. They also hung banners on the entrance of the polling station, as well as distributed posters and copies of the newsletter to participating citizens and passersby. The youth showed sincere interest in this campaign since most of them, who were in their twenties, have never had the chance to vote before. The main Palestinian TV channels were also very interested in this campaign and many of them showed up to cover the event; it ended up being broadcasted multiple times. *This project is in cooperation with PAX and funded by ifa (institute fur Auslandsbeziehungen) with the support from the Federal Foreign Office.*



With support from the Central Election Committee, PCPD was able to reach a much wider sector of Palestinian society and encouraged them to take part in the local elections.



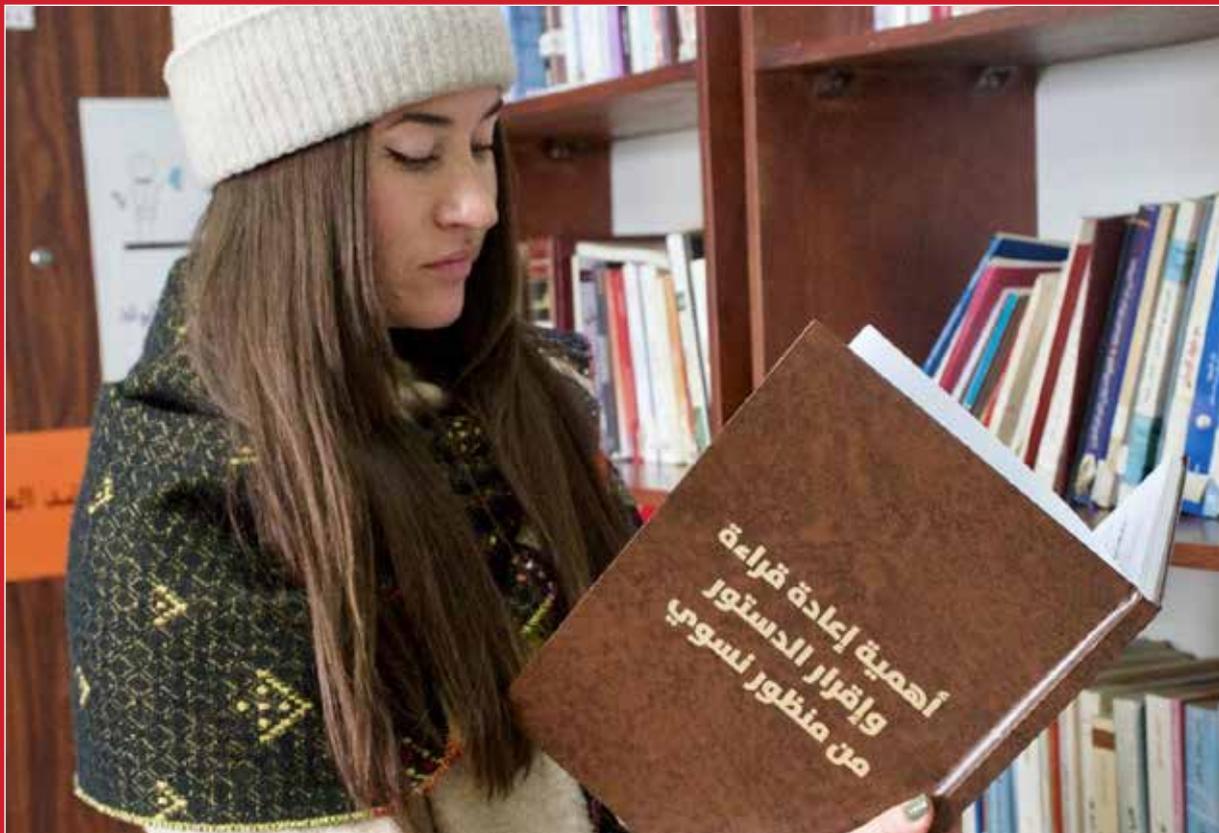
Under the Civil Society for Democratization and Participation: Young Palestinians and the 2021 Municipal Elections, the youth collaborated in painting a mural in the city of Jenin. The mural contained a message which demanded increased participation from young women and men in the local government elections. *This project is funded by ifa and implemented in cooperation with PCPD and PAX.*



Part of the activism which took place regarding election campaigning involved conducting visits to local governments in multiple regions across the West Bank. These visits involved the distribution of cups and coasters with the slogans, “Yes to youth engagement in local elections”, and “Let’s not forget the local elections!” Participants also met the mayor of Beitunya municipality, Mr. Dawla, and opened discussions regarding the importance of enthusing youth and women to participate in both electoral and decision making processes within the local government.

WOMEN PROGRAM

The PCPD is committed to working towards the 2030 Agenda; to achieve Sustainable Development through the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of human rights and gender equality for all people. Thus we believe in Goal 5; Gender (female/male) representation in global government will be equal. We believe that more women in politics makes for stronger democracies, therefore, we have to create equal opportunities for female leadership and participation at all levels of decision making processes. This involves adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforcing legislations that promote gender equality. **Goal 10**; reducing inequalities through empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all. In order to enhance women's full participation in the electoral process we first need to motivate women to participate in the elections. This can be done through increasing their political influence and educating voters on issues pertaining to women and girls. **Goal 16**; Peace and justice within strong institutions will ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels. We believe that increased female representation within local governments is the first step towards female participation in other decision making positions. Because of this, we believe that it is crucial to begin with fair gender representation.



Producing a booklet entitled; the importance of rereading the Constitution from a gender perspective, under the project: Towards an equal and fair Palestinian Feminist Constitution; the Constitution that we desire. ***This project is funded by WOMAN WORLD DAY OF PRAYER.***

PCPD is interested in revising the Palestinian Gender Sensitive Constitution. Our aim for this is to foster gender equality for both young women and men, to address circumstances that may limit women's enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities as well as to approach the Official Palestinian Committee and pressurize them to convene in order to create a **Fair Constitution for Palestine** through the implementation of a variety of innovative initiatives, ie. sits ins, street activities, meeting the public, preparing a Newsletter and Position Papers which will be published across various media channels.



PCPD along with PCPD youth coordinated a campaign in Salfeet on the 25th of November 2021, to celebrate **16 Days Activism Against Violence towards Women**. The campaign involved conducting an extensive awareness session targeted towards students at Al-Quds Open University. A number of 65 youth attended. At the end of the session, the youth went to the streets and opened discussions with local citizens regarding the importance of a Gender Sensitive Constitution. The youth saw this campaign as an opportunity to increase the awareness among citizens regarding their rights, particularly those pertaining to freedom and gender equality. The prepared newsletter along with 100 medals expressing the slogan "Our Constitution protects us," were distributed to local citizens during the campaign.



An exciting project called “Jame’t Banat (the Girls’ Gathering)” is a project that brings young women together to talk about their personal lives, the challenges that hinder them from being activists and the measures needed to empower them. *This project is funded by ZFD.*



Young women enrolled in a project entitled, “Empowering young Palestinian women in the West Bank to change public opinion on gender using filmmaking and targeted advocacy”. This project is supported by **Mennonite Central Committee**. The project aims to increase the capacities of young women to help them advocate for their rights and to stop violence against them.



Challenges facing the PCPD during 2021

The year 2021 brought with it a number of changes that affected Palestinian society on both physical and political levels. Along with the rest of the country, PCPD was working under the new COVID-19 restrictions, and our staff and participants were living in constant fear of getting sick. Although we were able to conduct almost all of our activities face to face, since there were no official closures, there was still much fear of the virus, and as a result not many people were willing to join the prepared sessions and meetings. PCPD used zoom meetings to keep connected with the youth, especially when there was a need to coordinate field activities. Zoom meetings became very helpful during these times to maintain communication. PCPD administrators were able to stay connected with the participating youth, and the youth were also able to organize activities among themselves through the use of Zoom meetings. These online meetings were also able to save on transportation costs. However, one drawback was that we did see a decrease in youth participation during this time period, due to the fact that many youths preferred to meet in person and found it difficult and less motivating to participate online.

The second challenge is the lack of rule of law within the Palestinian society. There is no freedom of expression for any new idea that is promoted by progressives, particularly within the secular and leftist communities. The Palestinian Authority gives all types of favored supports and services to any Islamic religious movement for their enjoyment of rights and free space, while simultaneously creating difficulties for progressive parties. A prime example of this happened during an activity that PCPD was conducting in Tulkarm city. PCPD had obtained a government issued legal permit to conduct a field activity in the city. However, one hour before the start of the event, we got a phone call from the police telling us to change our location since Hizb Tahreer, one of the Islamic Fundamental parties, was conducting an activity there. Hizb Tahreer had not obtained a permit for their event, yet they were given preference over the PCPD.

The government is allowed to get away with this because they currently are not being held accountable by local citizens. This lack of accountability is mainly as a result of a sense of disempowerment among Palestinian youth who feel that they do not have space to express themselves freely. They are constantly worried about being arrested by the security forces. When youth want to express themselves, they have to

take three factors into consideration: first the Israeli occupation, second the Palestinian Authority and third the currently patriarchal Palestinian society.

The third challenge that we have faced during the reporting period was the postponement of the Palestinian elections that were supposed to take place on the 22 of last May, the Pfizer vaccine scandal, as well as the assassination of Palestinian activist, Nizar Banat. Such issues caused The Freedom of Religion and Belief to tumble to the bottom of the priority list, making PCPD's project coordination for field activities more difficult.

The fourth challenge was finding religious leaders who were willing to attend the activities due to the fact that most of these religious leaders demanded a long list of information and details about the project; the donor, the participants, the location and the political affiliation of our organization as well as the political affiliation of the CBOs where the activities were being conducted.

The fifth challenge was the suspension of all PCPD activities for ten days during the recent Gazan war; it was impossible to talk about freedoms while people were under attack.

The sixth challenge was attempting to move freely between districts. The roads were frequently blocked by the Israeli military and groups of settlers who were stoning any non-Jews who attempted to use the main roads in the afternoons.

Additionally, dealing with the consequences that came from the assassination of Palestinian activist Nizar Banat were extremely challenging. The Palestinian civil society has devoted most of its time and activities towards this issue in order to defend ourselves and our work from any similar future attacks.

The final challenge that the PCPD faced was attempting to defend themselves against the recent attacks towards non-governmental Palestinian organizations by the Israeli government who labeled them as terrorist organizations in an attempt to delegitimize and deplatform them. This situation majorly impacts all the Palestinian NGOs. Further, the Palestinian Authority imposed a number of restrictions on the PCPD and other NGOs by increasing their already cumbersome bureaucratic requirements and limiting their banking activity. As a result, the space for freedom within Palestinian civil society is shrinking. This fear increases when citizens know that there is no rule of law to protect their rights.

The PCPD family would like to express **A BIG THANK YOU** to the following funding organizations who have made the work of the Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy possible.

The donors



PCPD produced a number of publications this year, mainly the following:

The Palestinian Question between the Occupation Hammer and the Separation Anvil
Civil Society and Dignity

Civil Society for Democratization and Participation

Social Accountability and the implementation of the main tools

Multi Stakeholder Dialogue Manual



المركز الفلسطيني لقضايا السلام والديمقراطية
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