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Conference to explore resolution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict

A lineup of prominent speakers will participate next month in a two-day international conference focused on finding a just resolution to the Palestine-Israel conflict. "Breaking Down the Wall of Silence: Voices We Need to Hear" will be held at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, Aug. 24-25.

Jean Zaru, a Palestinian Christian from Ramallah, Palestine, who is former president of the Jerusalem YWCA and a member of the International Council of the World Conference for Religion and Peace, will be a featured speaker as is Rosemary Radford Ruether, Carpenter Emerita professor of Feminist Theology at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. She is the author of "The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

Other speakers include Stephen Zunes, professor of politics and international studies at the University of San Francisco; Isham Ahmad, professor of politics at St. Mary's College in Moraga who is originally from Birzeit University in the West Bank; Anna Baltzer, granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor and author of "Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories"; Mitchell Plitnick, director of Jewish Voice for Peace, and Craig and Cindy Corrie, the parents of Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old Olympia, WA, resident who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer four years ago in Gaza.

On the opening night of the conference, there will be a premier showing of the documentary film, "Holy Land: Common Ground," produced by Ed Gaffney.

The conference has been organized by Sabeel (Arabic for "the way"), a Jerusalem-based ecumenical international grassroots peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians. It promotes nonviolence, human rights, international law, democratic principles, and Gospel teaching on justice and peace building.

Its partner organizations include the American Friends Service Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Pax Christi USA and the US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation.

Local co-sponsors of the conference are the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose; the Episcopal Diocese of California, the Middle East Children's Alliance and St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Berkeley.

Conference hours on Friday, Aug. 24 are 1 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 25. A Middle East buffet will be served on Friday evening.

Cost of the conference is \$70 for both days, with a reduced price of \$40 for students, seminarians and others on low-income budgets. The Saturday-only fee is half price. To register by phone, call (503) 653-6625, or send a check to Friends of Sabeel, PO Box, 9186, Portland, OR 97207.

For further information go to the Sabeel website: www.fosna.org

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