

GAZA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

Newsletter



J
U
L
Y

N
E
W
S
L
E
T
T
E
R



PRESS RELEASES

-A PRESS RELEASE was issued by GCMHP condemning the bombing on Gaza beach and calling for putting national interests above any considerations. In the release, GCMHP condemned the crime of bombing that took place at the Helal resort on Gaza beach which resulted in killing 6 and injuring about 25 people. Also, GCMHP condemned the subsequent arrests of individuals and breaking into institutions. The Programme considered such events falling into the interests of the enemies of the Palestinian people and endangers seriously the security of society and citizens. To read more, please [LINK](#)

-A PRESS RELEASE was issued by the United against Torture (UAT), in which the Palestinian, Israeli and international members strongly protested against the closure of Nafha Society for the Defense of Prisoners and Human Rights. In the release, it was stated that *"The military order, issued by the Israeli Army Commander in the West Bank, alleged that the closure of Nafha, together with 6 other organizations for a period of two years, was due to the fact that they were used to "finance terrorist organizations"*. To read more, please [LINK](#)

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

-Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and Al-Wedad Association for Community Rehabilitation completed a course entitled "mental health and human rights" which lasted for 72 hours. The course was part of enhancing the skills of youth leadership and their involvement in the community services as well as their practical abilities in the area of psychosocial intervention. Among the topics presented were; social upbringing, awareness and education, behavioral problems and dealing with them, psychological stress, and psychosocial intervention and debriefing.

-Gaza Community Mental Health Programme held a training workshop for needs assessment of the Palestinian police officers. The meeting

was attended by various departments' representatives in Palestinian police in order to identify the needs of staff the area of mental health and human rights, as per the memorandum of understanding that was signed between the two parties. A number of GCMHP professionals participated in the meeting including Dr. Zeyad Awad, Dr. Yaser Abu Jamee, and Husam El-Nounou. Based on the meeting, it was agreed to start the training program for the officers.

-Gaza Community Mental Health Programme held a training course entitled "school mediation and children's mental health" with participation of 20 graduates of psychology, sociology, social work, and counseling. The Psychologist Hassan Zeyada welcomed the participants, pointing to the significance of this course and its application. On the first day, two Mental Health Workers, Rawyah Hamam and Ismael Ahmed talked about violence phenomenon at schools, its causes, effects, and definition of mediation, principles of mediation and the impact of mediation in decreasing violence at schools. The course contains many important topics over the period of 2 weeks. The first week is about school mediation, and the second about the children's mental health; including a number of lectures dealing with some psychological and behavioral problems of children and the mechanisms for dealing with such problems.

EVENTS & CONFERENCES

GCMHP and WHO organized a meeting entitled "Promoting Community and



National Participation in GCMHP's Fifth International Conference: Siege and Mental Health... Walls vs. Bridge". It is worth to mention that many heads of local NGOs and

representatives of universities, the Popular Committee to End Gaza Siege and the Palestinian International Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza participated in the meeting. Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina, Director General of GCMHP, welcomed the attendants, emphasizing the necessity of promoting the local participation. In turn, Mr. Mahmoud Daher, Manger of WHO Gaza office, added that WHO acts as co-sponsor in the conference, highlighting the deteriorating health conditions of the Palestinians resulting mainly from the siege. [Details...](#)

The Public Relations Department of GCMHP held a study day at GCMHP main hall about



Palestinian model for social reconciliation with participation of professionals of GCMHP and the Post Graduate Diploma students. Dr. Samir Zaqout and Hasan Zeyadah presented a paper about reconciliation at the social level and ways of building the model of social reconciliation. It was concluded to build a model for social reconciliation in order to be presented for discussion with other NGOs in Gaza.

-The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme in coordination with Ministry of Education (Counseling Unit) held a workshop to coordinate the joint activities in the governmental schools for the school year 2008–2009. The workshop, which took place at the Roots Restaurant, was with participation of heads of counseling sections, schools headmasters, a number of counselors, and professionals working with GCMHP. Mohamed El Zeer, the Coordinator of the Community Centers, welcomed the participants emphasizing the high needs of children for mental health services resulting from the difficult circumstances and harsh

conditions that they are living as a result of the siege. In her part, Ms. Zeinab El Wazeer, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Education, thanked the Programme for the efforts conducted to benefit the Palestinian community, particularly students in terms of reduction of violence. Ms. El-Wazeer emphasized the significance of mutual cooperation between the Ministry and the civil society organizations, particularly GCMHP in providing services for the students under the difficult conditions that Palestinian children go through of killings, arrests, and siege. At the end of the workshop, the participations were divided into groups to be familiar with each other and to discuss in details the mediation program over the next period as well as distribution of counselors to the targeted schools.

In cooperation with Ministry of Education, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme

held a training course entitled "School Mediation & Stress Management". The training

will be divided in two parts; the first is held in Gaza



Community Center about "school mediation; the second part about "stress management" which will be held at the Ministry of Education. In the first day of course, Mr. Ahmed Awad, Director of Counseling Department at the Ministry and the Psychologist Hassan Zyada, welcomed the attendance emphasizing the key mutual cooperation between GCMHP and the Ministry, and stressing the significance of the school mediation program in alleviating the level of violence between students as well as equipping them with alternative skills in dealing with conflicts. At the end, Ms. Rawya Hamam, Mental Health Worker, talked about the definition and forms of conflicts as well as

the behavioral, psychological, and emotional reactions to conflict.

-Enas Jouda, Mental Health Worker, held a psychodrama session at the Family and Child Care Centre for Counseling and Training, which deals with children who are suffering from traumas and violence. The psychodrama session was to introduce the staff of the Center to new concepts in dealing with children's behaviors.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot presented a paper about adolescence and its accompanying problems for 40 youth and parents at El-Salah School in Deir El-Balah.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot lectured at GCMHP about behavior modification and alternative means of punishment for 20 kindergarten teachers.

-Dr. Rageb Abu Moeleg participated in a training course about school mediation and the behavioral problems for 20 trainees from various community organizations.

VISITORS & DELEGATIONS

Marwan Diab, met with Mr. Ryan Lehman, a teacher of communication studies and conflict resolution at North Park University in Chicago -USA, through video conferencing, and talked about the role of GCMHP in alleviating the mental health impacts of siege on the Palestinian population. Mr. Lehman was provided with a report about impact of siege on the Gaza population.

Dr. Nancy Elaine Stoller, a Research Professor at the Dept. of Community Studies, University of California visited Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and met with Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina and a number of GCMHP professionals and talked about GCMHP's activities and the role of GCMHP in offering mental health services and research studies for the Palestinian population. The Professor was accompanied for a field visit to families in Gaza to witness

first hand their living conditions under the current circumstances.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina attended a meeting at Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights regarding the prevailing social problems among children and women as well as joint cooperation between GCMHP and the Center regarding future work.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina and Barbara Celinska met with Heba Al-Qedwa from UNDP to discuss the future joint work regarding the capacity building project for staff of the Ministry of Health.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina met with Mr. Mario Carera, from SDC and representative of the Donors' Consortium, and talked about the activities of GCMHP and issues related to the implementation of the strategic plan for 2008.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina participated in a meeting with Ministry of Health and World Health Organization WHO about mental health projects in Gaza Strip.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina attended a meeting - via video conference - with the Ministry of Planning in Ramallah to discuss the national plan regarding policies for social services in Palestine.

-As part of their membership in the Advisory Committee of "Bridges", Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina and Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit attended a meeting at World Health Organization in Jerusalem regarding ways of developing the magazine BRIDGES, which is issued by WHO on health related matters.

-Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit met with an international volunteer at the Palestinian Center for Human Rights and talked about the impact of siege on Palestinian life in Gaza Strip, emphasizing the impact on children's and women's mental health. Dr. Thabit presented some research results confirming the impact on children and the mental health disorders they are suffering

from including; anxiety, depression, and fears.

-Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit participated in meeting - via video conference - with participation of children rights groups in Jerusalem and UNICEF in Gaza, in which children protection issues were raised as well as preparation for a workshop to be held in Jordan regarding children's rights, took place.

-Husam El-Nounou participated in a meeting for the strategic group for conflict transformation which is sponsored by the Palestinian Non-governmental Organization (PNGO) and Responding to Conflicts (RTC)-UK.

-Husam El-Nounou participated in a meeting for the Palestinian Youth Forum "one Palestine for all" in which a training course for youth was discussed.

-Husam El-Nounou met with three professionals from Al-Jazeera Media Center where an agreement was made of regular feeding of media activities to the center to be published about GCMHP.

-As part of civil society organizations, representing GCMHP, Husam El-Nounou participated in a meeting with NGOs in Gaza for the purpose of joint efforts confronting the clashes that took place at Shejaya neighborhood. A press release was issued and meetings with government figures took place in order to restore order in the area.

PUBLICATIONS

-Siege and trauma and its impact on mental health and resilience among children in Gaza Strip, is a new research study conducted by Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit. To read more, please [LINK](#)

-The relationship between Siege of Gaza Strip, anger, and psychological symptoms is another new study conducted by Dr. Abdel Aziz Thabit. To read more, Please [LINK](#)

-An article entitled "Death for the Eighth Time" was written by Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj and published in Al-Quds Newspaper. To read the Arabic version, please [LINK](#)

-An article entitled "the teacher and the students" was written by Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj and published in Al-Quds. To read the Arabic version, Please [LINK](#)

-An article entitled "truce in Gaza Strip" was published at Palestine newspaper which was written by Wael Mabhouh.

A CHILD'S SMILE, written by Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj as the cover page of the annual report.

I have spent the whole of 2007 in medical treatment for a serious blood disease. I was lucky to have been diagnosed early enough and to receive the most advanced treatment. I am grateful to my doctors in Gaza and in Tel Aviv, to the Board and colleagues of GCMHP, to all friends who surrounded me with kindness and to my family for unyielding support. I am grateful and content to continue to work for human rights, mental health, justice and peace. Some people are surprised that against all the destruction and deprivation, people are still resilient and as ever hospitable. It is not an exaggeration to state that Gaza today is overwhelmed with a long history of unending disaster and accumulating layers of trauma. The effects are to be felt everywhere and in every house. With the Israeli suffocating siege, Gaza has become a big prison. It was nearly twenty years since we started in Gaza. Then, it was the Intifada of the stones. Our determination to build and develop continues to guide us. I was asked once "how could you work in such a poor and desperate environment"? My motto was that if I could make one child smile every day that would be an achievement. That is the same today. Nothing should divert us from our vision of development, the goal to instill hope and to make a child smiles.

MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Ensherah Zaquot, a Psychologist, had a meeting with a German journalist Thorsten Schmitz, from Sueddeutsche Zeitung magazine and presented him with information about the Programme and the services offered. She gave specific information about psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and mechanisms in dealing with children who are traumatized. Also, she talked about the use of psychodrama with children and adults as debriefing tool. As part of the interview, the journalist documented cases of children during psychodrama sessions talking about their experiences and dreams.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed by the journalist Mirvat Ouof from Islam-on-line and talked about siege and its impact on Palestinian children from physical, social, and psychological perspectives.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed by Tahran International Radio and talked about siege and its impact on Palestinian women, highlighting the issue of differences of impact of siege on both women and men.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed by Algeria International Radio and talked about siege and its impact on the Palestinian mental health, stressing the issue of negative and positive impacts of closure as far as enhancing the resilience and steadfastness of Palestinians.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed by Islam-On-line website and talked about the psychological impacts of targeting journalists and medical teams by the Israeli occupation forces on the mental health of Palestinian community.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina was interviewed by the Palestine TV and talked about the impact of siege on the mental health of population in the Gaza Strip.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina was interviewed by Al Aqsa Satellite channel and talked about international conference that GCMHP and WHO are jointly organizing in October of this year.

-Dr. Rageb Abu Moeleg was lively interviewed by El-Erada Radio and talked about addiction in terms of therapy and prevention techniques.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed by a journalist from Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights to talk about the impacts family separation due to siege on the psychological wellbeing the children and.

-Dr. Samir Zaquot was interviewed El-Eman Radio and talked about the negative effects of using mobiles on teenagers, particularly its reflection on social relations with family and the community.

-Mr. Jaser Salah conducted an in interview with Al-Quds Satellite channel and talked about the impacts of discrimination among siblings.

-Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit was interviewed by El-Eman Radio in Gaza on the role of parents in educating their children, particularly their advice to the graduates of high school in choosing the topics of interest for studying at the universities.

-Manal Awad and Marwan Diab were interviewed by Al-Jazeera English on line website and talked about impact of siege on domestic violence.

[LINK](#)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, in Partnership with World Health Organization (WHO), have continued preparations for holding GCMHP's 5th international conference entitled "**SIEGE AND MENTAL HEALTH... WALLS VS. BRIDGES**". The conference is decided to take place in Gaza city and Ramallah through the video conference technique, on 27th -28th October, 2008. To read more about the conference, please [LINK](#)

-Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit participated in a workshop held at Comodore regarding the proposed study to evaluate the effectiveness of psychosocial programs with children in crisis situations. The issue of community organizations cooperation and involvement in the study was discussed.

-Dr. Abed Aziz Thabit participated in a workshop in Gaza organized by the World Health Organization entitled "community mental health...present and future", in which the role of post graduate diplomas and masters graduates in developing the mental health situation in Palestine was discussed.

-Marwan Diab from GCMHP and Dya Saymah from WHO presented a paper entitled "the wellbeing of Palestinian children and adolescents" at a symposium under the title "the well-being of refugee and displaced children and adolescents for the 20th Biannual meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development that was held in Germany from 13-18, July 2008. The paper was presented by one of the attendees due to inability of the two psychologists to leave Gaza because of the siege. To read more, please [LINK](#)

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina participated via video conference in a conference in Jerusalem held by FFIPP in Jerusalem and presented a paper about psychosocial impacts of siege on the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip.

-Dr. Ahmed Abu Tawahina participated in a workshop organized by WHO at El-Andalus Hotel regarding the comprehensive approach in offering mental health services. In the



workshop, Ahmed presented a paper entitled "ways of enhancing mental health services in Palestine".

Dr. presented a paper entitled "ways of enhancing mental health services in Palestine".