Approximately 160 people from 30 states, representing 63 member groups of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, met at the historic Thurgood Marshall Center in Washington, DC, from September 16 through 19, 2011, for the 10th Annual National Organizers’ Conference of the US Campaign.

OPENING PLENARY:
“What the Arab Spring & Palestinian Statehood Mean for Our Work”

The opening plenary featured a panel discussion with Omar Barghouti, political analyst and author, Helena Cobban, journalist and publisher, and Rami Khouri, syndicated columnist, moderated by Nadia Hijab, writer and analyst and Advisory Board member of the US Campaign.

The panelists contextualized the Palestinian mass protests of March 15, the Nakba on May 15, and the Naksa on June 5 within the Arab Spring. They addressed the ways in which the Arab Spring can facilitate the work of U.S. advocates of a just resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and spotlight Israel’s violations of human rights and international law. Their presentations helped set the stage for the conference’s work on changing the discourse and isolating apartheid through BDS, and challenging U.S. policy through political activism and calls to end military aid.

MEMBER GROUP REPORT-BACK

Felicia Eaves, Steering Committee Co-Chair, Phyllis Bennis, Steering Committee member, and Rana Libdeh, Membership and Outreach Coordinator, facilitated a two-part member group report back. First, member groups posted their accomplishments over the previous year on thematic poster boards. Then, member groups returned to plenary to give brief but inspiring updates on their work on boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and challenging U.S. diplomatic and military support of Israel’s human rights abuses.

PLENARY II: Crafting & Sharpening Effective BDS Campaigns: Changing the Discourse & Isolating Apartheid Israel

This plenary featured a panel discussion with Dalit Baum, Global Exchange, Andrew Kadi, US Campaign Steering Committee Member, Nancy Kricorian, CODEPINK, Tory Smith, BDS Earlham, Students for Justice in Palestine–Earlham, Rebecca Subar, Jewish Voice for Peace, and David Wildman, General Board of Global Ministries–United Methodist Church, moderated by Omar Barghouti, political analyst and author.

As boycott and divestment activism in the United States continues to build momentum, panelists shared their experiences on effective targets, tactics, and strategies to craft and sustain BDS campaigns that influence discourse and isolate Israeli apartheid, contributing toward change in U.S. policy and the goals of promoting freedom, equality and justice in Israel/Palestine. Dalit Baum spoke about choosing BDS targets and crafting effective local campaigns against them. Andrew Kadi spoke about cultural boycott and its strategic importance in the BDS movement. Nancy Kricorian spoke about the creative tactics that CODEPINK has used in its boycott campaign.
against settlement cosmetics manufacturer Ahava. Tory Smith spoke about efforts on Earlham College’s campus to get the university to divest as a case study in the growing nationwide campus movement. Rebecca Subar spoke about the “We Divest” Campaign to compel financial services provider TIAA-CREF to divest from the Israeli occupation. David Wildman spoke about the importance of church divestment efforts, highlighting divestment votes in the United Methodist and Presbyterian churches next year. Panelists then led small group discussions with US Campaign Steering Committee members to further strategize about overcoming obstacles and moving forward on BDS campaigns.

Click here to watch the video of this energetic panel discussion.

**WORKSHOPS**

During lunch, conference attendees participated in the following member group-led workshops:

- **Lobby Day Training**, presented by Mike Coogan and Josh Ruebner, US Campaign, and Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK.
  Lobby Day participants had the opportunity to discuss their upcoming meetings with their Members of Congress, talking points, and review Lobby Day materials.

- **Student Organizing Meeting**, presented by Omar Barghouti.
  Students discussed successes and challenges with organizing campaigns on their campuses.

- **“FBI Raids on Supporters of Palestinian Rights: What you should know about the Supreme Court’s ‘material support,’”** presented by Nancy Murray, Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights and Director of Education for the ACLU of Massachusetts.
  In the wake of FBI raids and subpoenas being issued to 19 activists, this workshop reviewed the significance for our work which the Supreme Court case implicated in the raids, gave an overview of new surveillance powers and offered a basic “Know Your Rights” training.

**PLENARY III: Challenging U.S. Policy: Strategies to End U.S. Support for Israeli Occupation & Apartheid**

This plenary featured a panel discussion with Jennifer Bing, American Friends Service Committee, Cindy Corrie, Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace & Justice, Alli McCracken, CODEPINK, Peter Miller, Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights, and Martha Reese, Committee for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine, moderated by Phyllis Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies and US Campaign Steering Committee member.

Panelists from US Campaign member groups discussed their innovative educational and political initiatives to organize and mobilize to challenge U.S. support for Israeli occupation and apartheid and to change U.S. policy to support Palestinian rights. Many panelists emphasized how their groups’ initiatives fit into the larger US Campaign coalition’s goal of ending U.S. military aid to Israel as a means to change policy.

Jennifer Bing spoke about Chicago-area initiatives to hold elected officials accountable through mock hearing and bird-dogging. Cindy Corrie spoke about achieving policy change by creating congressional district and statewide lobbying coalitions in Washington State. Alli McCracken spoke about challenging the Israel lobby’s agenda through “Move Over AIPAC!” Peter Miller spoke about affecting policy by working within the structures of local political parties. Martha Reese spoke about the burgeoning national ad campaign—“Be on Our Side”—to raise awareness about ending U.S. military aid to Israel.

“Panelists emphasized how their groups’ initiatives fit into the larger US Campaign coalition’s goal of ending U.S. military aid to Israel as a means to change policy.”

“It is a just cause, a noble ideal, a moral quest for equality and human rights.”
Panelists then led small group discussions with US Campaign Steering Committee members to further strategize and advance member group planning on moving forward these important initiatives. Click here to watch a video of this motivational panel.

US CAMPAIGN PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL REPORT

In plenary, US Campaign staff—Josh Ruebner, National Advocacy Director, Anna Baltzer, National Organizer, Rana Libdeh, Membership and Outreach Coordinator, Joshua Hough, Communications Director, and Mike Coogan, Manager of Finances and Administration and Legislative Coordinator—and Steering Committee Co-Chair Felicia Eaves presented the US Campaign’s annual report (July 2010-August 2011).

The annual report highlighted the US Campaign’s accomplishments in its two program areas (Challenging U.S. Military & Diplomatic Support of Israeli Human Rights Abuses and Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS)), membership and outreach, communications, finances, and recapped staff, Steering Committee members, and Advisory Board members. Click here to read the annual report. Click here to view a PowerPoint presentation of the annual report.

STEERING COMMITTEE INTRODUCTIONS & BALLOTS

The Elections Committee, composed of Nancy Murray (Advisory Board representative), David Wildman (Steering Committee representative), Emmett Whittaker (member group representative), and Josh Ruebner (staff liaison), announced that nine people had submitted their candidacies to stand for election to the Steering Committee to fill three regular three-year terms. In alphabetical order, the candidates were:

- Salam Al-Rawi
- Jim Haber (Jewish Voice for Peace)
- Sydney Levy (Jewish Voice for Peace)
- Mike Merryman-Lotze (American Friends Service Committee)
- Peter Miller (Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights)
- Gael Murphy
- Dave Reed
- Kristin Szremski (American Muslims for Palestine)
- Alison Weir (Council for the National Interest)

NOTE: Organizational affiliation is only for identification purposes; members of the Steering Committee serve in their individual capacities.

After each candidate, or a chosen surrogate, spoke for two minutes each, the Elections Committee distributed voting cards and ballots to delegates representing member groups in good standing of the US Campaign.

CONCERT WITH SIMON SHAHEEN

After dinner, conference attendees joined several hundred additional guests for a benefit concert at All Souls Church with world-renowned ‘oud and violin player Simon Shaheen. A Palestinian, born in the village of Tarshiha in the Galilee, Shaheen began playing the ‘oud at the age of five, and a year later began studying violin at the Conservatory for Western Classical Music in Haifa. Shaheen has become one of the most significant Arab musicians of his generation. His soaring technique and melodic ingenuity fuse together traditional Arabic music, jazz, and Western classical styles.

The evening included a gift presentation to Interim Director Nadia Hijab, the world-premiere screening of a short retrospective documentary about the US Campaign’s first decade of work, and a rousing address by former National Organizer Noura Erakat.
MEMBER GROUP ENDORSEMENT PROPOSALS

This plenary session on Sunday morning was facilitated by Felicia Eaves, Co-Chair, US Campaign Steering Committee, Bill Fletcher, US Campaign Steering Committee member, and David Wildman, Co-Chair, US Campaign Steering Committee.

Member groups in good standing submitted four proposals for endorsement that were presented to the plenary. The assembly then voted to determine if the US Campaign would endorse these member group-led campaigns and initiatives, it being understood that the US Campaign’s role would be limited to helping to publicize the initiatives voted upon.

The first proposal, “Turn Up the Heat on Veolia,” presented by Nancy Murray, Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights, requested US Campaign endorsement of a budding national BDS campaign against Veolia, a French multi-national that profits from Israeli occupation by servicing illegal settlements with transportation and waste management. The proposal was endorsed by consensus.

The second proposal, “Aligning United Methodist Investments with Resolutions on Israel/Palestine,” presented by Susanne Hoder, United Methodists Kairos Response, requested US Campaign endorsement of a resolution for the United Methodist Church to divest from selected corporations profiting from Israeli occupation at its 2012 General Conference. The proposal was endorsed by consensus.

The third proposal, “ICHAD-USA Proposal and Request for Endorsement,” presented by Elyse Crystall, Israeli Committee against House Demolitions—USA, requested US Campaign endorsement of ICAHD-USA’s anti-apartheid educational campaign. With the US Campaign having already adopted an anti-apartheid framework in 2006, the proposal was endorsed by consensus.

The fourth proposal, “The Global March to Jerusalem—North America,” presented by Scott Kennedy, Resource Center for Nonviolence, Paul Larudee, Global March to Jerusalem-North America, and Feroze Mithiborwala, Global March to Jerusalem, requested US Campaign endorsement of a planned North American contingent to join a global march to Jerusalem in March 2012. After extensive deliberation, it became clear that no consensus existed on this proposal, which was then put to vote. The proposal did not receive the 2/3 vote necessary for US Campaign endorsement.

Click here to read all of the member group proposals.

WORKSHOPS II

Conference attendees then participated in member group-led workshops in three separate sessions. The workshops presented during these sessions included:

  - The first portion of the workshop examined some leading Zionist organizations and identified some key programs, litigation and legislative attempts to promote and support the propagation of the Zionist agenda in DC. The second portion focused on campaigns and strategies to counter Zionist organizations.

- **Defining Violence & Nonviolence: What does this Mean for Palestine?**, presented by Maggie Goff, WESPAC
  - Participants were asked to list different forms of civil disobedience and resistance. After compiling a list, participants were asked to do a grid activity based on whether they think

“We cannot be both the world’s leading champion of peace and the world’s leading supplier of the weapons of war.” –President Jimmy Carter
A coalition of more than 375 groups working to end U.S. support for Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

something from the list is violent and if they would or would not do it themselves. The session ended with a discussion on the forms of resistance in Palestine and the United States and how we continue a campaign rooted in nonviolence.

**Building BDS Globally**, a discussion with [Omar Barghouti](#), Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), and [Sasha Gezlin](#), US Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI)

Palestinian youth in Gaza (from the Palestinian Youth Against Apartheid and Palestinian Students’ Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel) were not able to participate as planned. Instead, representatives of PACBI and USACBI led an energizing discussion and Q&A with participants, addressing questions about academic and cultural boycott and providing background and examples.

**Responding to Water Apartheid in Gaza: The Time is Now**, presented by [Ziad Abbas](#) and [Leena Al-Arian](#), Middle East Children’s Alliance

This workshop addressed the water crisis in Gaza, and the need for urgent response by individuals, groups, and grassroots organizations. It examined the history of Israeli military control of Palestinian water resources, and specifically on Israel’s water apartheid policy as part of the greater ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

**Exposing AIPAC: Delving into the Nitty-Gritty of How the Israel Lobby Works**, presented by [Alison Weir](#), Council for the National Interest

The workshop explored the characteristics and coordinated pattern of giving of Israeli stealth PACs, the history of AIPAC and its various quasi-legal activities, and the interlocking organizations promoting pro-Israel Mideast policies. It was presented by the foremost researchers on the topic and included diverse strategies for change, with Grant Smith.

**Social Media for Palestine Activists: When Retweet is Not an Option**, presented by [Abraham Greenhouse](#), The Palestine Freedom Project

Many individuals and organizations already use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other applications for activism. But how can we take our efforts to the next level? Participants learned to integrate campaigns, build their audiences, measure their impact, address security issues, and avoid carpal tunnel.

**TIAA-CREF: Bringing BDS to Your Local Community**, presented by [Sydney Levy](#), Jewish Voice for Peace

We’re asking TIAA-CREF, the largest retirement fund in the United States, to divest. Do you know teachers or doctors? Live close to a university or hospital? Then you have an easy entry into our campaign. You probably live near one of TIAA-CREF’s 60 offices nationwide.

**The Global March to Jerusalem**, presented by [Scott Kennedy](#), Resource Center for Nonviolence; [Feroze Mithiborwala](#), Global March to Jerusalem; and [Paul Larudee](#), Global March to Jerusalem-North America

Organizers in the Middle East and South Asia are asking North America and other regions to join a nonviolent march to Jerusalem of one million persons on March 30, 2012. This workshop was for those who wish to be a part of this effort.

**Campus Organizing: You don’t have to be a student to get started!**, presented by [Michael Rabb](#), CU-DIVEST!

Campus organizing is sometimes seen as only a student activity--but the typical college campus is a whole community: students, faculty, staff, alumni and local citizens--all should play a role in

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Above: Ziad Abbas of MECA speaks about the water crisis in Gaza.

Above: Michael Rabb of CU-DIVEST explains how non-students can contribute to campus campaigns.
executing a BDS campaign.

**Derail/Dump Veolia**, presented by **Dalit Baum**, Global Exchange
Participants learned more about the global campaign against this French occupation profiteer, about its municipal services across the U.S. (Water, Transportation, Energy and Waste) and about local campaigns brewing across the U.S. against this company’s business. Discuss local/national/global campaign coordination and strategize.

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**CLOSING & ELECTION RESULTS**

The Elections Committee announced the results of the Steering Committee election. The four candidates with the most votes, in alphabetical order, were:

- **Sydney Levy** (Jewish Voice for Peace)
- **Mike Merryman-Lotze** (American Friends Service Committee)
- **Peter Miller** (Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights)
- **Kristen Szremski** (American Muslims for Palestine)

The US Campaign would like to thank all nine candidates who ran for election this year.

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**LOBBY DAY**

On Monday, many conference attendees stayed in Washington, DC, to meet with their Members of Congress to discuss U.S. policy toward Palestine/Israel and urge them to hold Israel accountable for its misuse of U.S. weapons, among other issues of concern.

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**CONFERENCE EVALUATIONS**

The following figures were collated from evaluation forms that were provided in each participant’s conference packet:

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best), did this conference meet your expectations?

- **Average score:** 4.58/5

On a scale of 1-5, were the sessions (panels, workshops, strategizing, etc.,) useful?

- **Average score:** 4.55/5

On a scale of 1-5, did you find the conference preparation, the program structure, location, and other logistics to be satisfactory?

- **Average score:** 4.75/5

On a scale of 1-5, did this conference provide you with concrete ideas, skills, and tools for action when you return home?

- **Average score:** 4.5/5

Selected comments:

- First time to a US Campaign Conference- very impressive!
- Most valuable aspect of the conference: bringing people from all over the country who are doing work, especially BDS. Very energizing- good coalition building!
- Loved the Thurgood Marshall Center!
- Good subjects, discussions, and ideas.
- Networking was great. Schedule was good with lots of chances for discussion.

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“I’ve been deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us... in South Africa.” - Archbishop Desmond Tutu