



## **HOLY LAND CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL FOUNDATION Saturday, October 17, 2015 Program**

### **Palestinian Christians: Persecuted on all Sides**

With the burning of churches and holy places such as the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fish – Palestinian Christians continue to fight for their rights against occupation and oppression. Adding to this burden is the new threat by ISIS who has threatened to “purify” Jerusalem if Christians do not leave this sacred city. As if this were not enough, our Evangelical brethren have for a long time denied the Palestinian Christian presence and identity in the Holy Land. These nails add to the already heavy cross Palestinian Christians have suffered: being made refugees, lack of access to education, limited employment, and humiliations in their daily lives. This panel will discuss the conditions affecting the Palestinian Christians and look to signs of hope for the future such as the canonization of the first Palestinian Saints and the recognition of the State of Palestine by the Vatican. What can we hope for the future?

### **A Call to Action: Capacity Building with the Palestinian Diaspora**

Palestinians have made their mark as successful leaders across the Diaspora. Their impressive successes should be utilized not only for the benefit of their immediate communities, but also to benefit Palestinians all over the world, particularly in Palestine. Their economic influence must be harnessed toward playing a positive and direct role in nation building in Palestine. This panel will look at how collaborative research, knowledge-sharing, leadership, citizen diplomacy, training, business opportunities and investments can strengthen the Palestinian infrastructure and pave the way for an economic viable, independent, Palestinian state. It will explore the current and projected state of the Palestinian economic and political structures and how Palestinian leaders in the Diaspora can affect it positively. This panel will explore the ways in which business opportunities in Palestine are not only viable investments with a positive return, but a national contribution to the creation and economic viability of an independent Palestinian state as well. The panel will focus on how young up-and-coming business leaders can be involved in this process.

### **Christians of the Middle East in Crisis**

Christianity’s presence in the Arab Middle East dates back to the advent of Jesus Christ, and for the past two millennia Christian Arabs have been a fundamental part of their region’s culture, contributing to art, technological innovation, scholarship, nation building, and economic development. Despite their firmly established traditions and respected reputations, many Arab Christians currently live as victims of extremism, occupation, and civil war. This antagonistic environment is a recent development in a long history of coexistence between Muslim and Christian Arabs. Arab Christians are currently subjected to discriminatory laws, a profound lack of security, and dispossession due to internal displacement from war and the actions of extremists and fanatics. This panel features Muslim and Christian speakers who will discuss the current living conditions of Arab Christians, how extremists in the region are not representative of Islam at large, and the ways by which organizations like the U.S. Muslim & Christian

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Coalition (MCC), organized by HCEF, can protect religious minorities in Arab countries and promote the return of peaceful coexistence.

### **Human Rights Violations in the Holy Land: Legal and Ethical Perspectives**

Palestinians live under Israeli policies and practices -- on both sides of the Green Line -- that consistently deny them their basic human rights. This panel will examine Israel's behavior toward Palestinians from legal and ethical perspectives, highlighting the village of Iqrit as a clear example of human rights violations. Panelists will also discuss Palestinian youth development as a primary means for positive change and how we all can cooperate globally to protect Palestinian rights through the effective implementation of international law.

### **The Role of Women and Youth in Building the State of Palestine**

Palestinian women are at the heart of their families, society, and national development. The youth are the future leaders of Palestine. If we are to take building the State of Palestine seriously, then we must consider the essential roles of both women and the youth in that effort. Palestinian women have served as the guardians of Palestinian identity through their art, culinary tradition, and activism, through which they have inspired and empowered their peers and families. Palestinian youth, both in Palestine and around the world, have a strong attachment to their national identity. They are educated, skilled, and passionate for their homeland's cause. This panel will address ways by which Palestinian women and youth in Palestine and around the world are already mobilizing as active champions of justice, peace, and coexistence as well ways we can further empower their efforts.

### **Western Policy and Palestine**

Over the past year the international community has paid more attention to Palestine after Israel's assault on Gaza, and it seems mainstream opinion is changing more favorably toward the Palestinian cause. There are a number of indicators for this, such as the Vatican's recognition of Palestinian statehood, the increasing number of protests in countries throughout the West critical of the occupation, the rising popularity of the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and Western media becoming gradually more inclusive of the Palestinian narrative. This panel will discuss this change in general outlook toward the Palestinian cause and the impact this new perspective will have on Western policy toward Palestine. How might Western leaders change their positions on Palestine in light of popular sentiment? Panel speakers will also consider how Palestinians, both experts and the general population, view this development.