

Free Gaza Movement (FreeGaza.org) Participant Biographies

Huwaida Arraf (Palestine) +970.599.130.426

Huwaida is a Palestinian-American, and also a citizen of Israel. She is a human rights activist and co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement. In 2007 she received her Juris Doctor from American University in Washington D.C. and she is currently teaching Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at Al Quds University in Jerusalem.

Vittorio Arrigoni (Italy)

Vittorio has wide experience in international charity work and in the battle for human rights in Europe and Eastern Europe and Africa. In 2003 Vittorio first visit to Palestine, at first in a work camp managed by IPYL in Eastern Jerusalem and later in Nablus in the Balata refugee camp. In 2006, trying to go back to Palestine, he was held in Israeli detention for a week while appealing a decision to deny him entry, then expelled from the country. In August 2006, at the request of the European Union, Vittorio attended the first free elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an international observer. Vittorio manages one of the most popular blogs in Italy at:

<http://guerrillradio.iobloggo.com/>.

Greta Berlin (USA) +357.99.08.17.67

A cofounder of the Free Gaza Movement, Greta Berlin since the early 1960s has advocated for justice for the Palestinian people. She is the mother of two Palestinian/American children, whose father was born and raised in Safad, Palestine. She has been an outspoken advocate for the rights of Palestinians and has spoken and written extensively about what she has witnessed during her three trips to the Occupied West Bank.

When not working with Palestinians, Greta has spent 30 years teaching engineers and scientists how to design and deliver presentations. She has been in the West Bank three times since 2003 and was wounded by Israeli gunfire in July 2003 while trying to pull down the gate in the fence at Anin, just outside of Jenin.

Lauren Booth (UK) +44.771.504.8821

Lauren, a broadcaster and journalist, has regular columns in the Mail on Sunday and writes features for the Sunday Times and Femail.

In 2005 Lauren travelled to the West Bank where she interviewed Mahmoud Abbas. She recently visited the region again and is campaigning for justice for Palestine.

Dr. Uri Davis (Palestine)

Uri, 64, is an international acclaimed author, academic and peace activist who calls himself an anti-zionist Palestinian Jew born in Jerusalem. He is an observer member of the Palestine National Council.

Monir M Deeb (Palestine/USA)

Monir was born in 1951 in Gaza City, Palestine, to refugee parents from Haifa and El Majdel (today called Ashkelon). He came to the USA in 1979 and is a naturalized US citizen. He is the past president of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), LA chapter, and was a speaker in the Arab-Jewish Speakers Bureau in Los Angeles. He owns a construction company in Northridge, California, where he resides with his wife and three children.

Dr Bill Dienst (USA)

Bill is a Family and Emergency Room physician for Omak, a town in rural Washington in the northwestern United States. In 1985, after an intensive summer course in Arabic, Bill took an extra year of medical school, and spent a half year in Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza volunteering with various Palestinian healthcare organizations, initially with the Palestine Red Crescent Society headquartered in Egypt.

He has been to Palestine on trips sponsored by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, by Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility to Israel/Palestine and with the Palestine Medical Relief Society.

Ana Maria Del Mar (Spain) +34.7671.002015

From Vilanova I La Geltru, Cataluna, Ana Maria worked 25 years as a criminal lawyer and has visited the West Bank six times. In 2005, badly injured by an Israeli soldier while at a non-violent demonstration against the building of the separation wall in Bil'in, she had her upper arm broken in two places. She was injured again in 2006 at another Bil'in demonstration when shot at close range with a plastic coated bullet. On this trip to Gaza she hopes to help ease the Gazan people's suffering and help prevent the Israeli government from persecuting innocent civilians.

Hedy Epstein (USA) +44.787.224.9933

Hedy was born in Freiburg, Germany on 8/15/1924, the only child of Ella & Hugo Wachenheimer. She lived in Kippenheim, 30 km north of Freiburg, where her father's side of the family had lived for generations. She left Germany at 14, in 1939, on a Kindertransport (children's transport), to London, England - one of almost 10,000 mostly Jewish children. Both her parents, as well as other family members, perished in Auschwitz in 1942.

In July 1945, she returned to Germany to work for the American government, first with the U.S. Civil Censorship Division and then as a research analyst at the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi doctors who performed medical experiments on concentration camp inmates.

In May 1945, she arrived in the United States and quickly became involved in peace and social justice issues. Since 2003, she has visited Israeli-occupied West Bank five times to witness the effects of Israel's occupation.

Musheir El-Farra (Palestine/UK) +44.771.504.8821

Originally from Khan Younis in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, Musheir is married to Dr. Wesam Al Qarra and has three children. Born in Khan Younis on 25 May 1961, he is a civil and structural engineer in the UK, from where he also coordinates support for four children's projects in the Gaza Strip: Al Asria Children's Library project in Jabalia refugee camp; "New Horizons" children's centre in Nussairat refugee camp; "Never Stop Dreaming" Children's Centre in Khan Younis, and the "Children's Mobile Library". He made a documentary film called "Voices through the Rubble" about the situation in the Gaza Strip in 2004 and is making another documentary about the visit of Al Asria children Folk dance group to Britain in 2005. In 2007 he was prevented from travelling to the Gaza Strip to visit his elderly mother before her death. He writes political and social articles in Arabic in Al Quds newspaper.

Jeff Halper (Israel)

Jeff is an Israeli professor of anthropology and coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), a non-violent Israeli peace and human rights organization that resists the Israeli occupation on the ground. In 2006, the American Friends Service Committee nominated Jeff to receive the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize with Palestinian intellectual and activist Ghassan Andoni.

Fathi Jaouadi (Tunisia)

Fathi is married and has one son. Doing an MA in Documentary Film-making at Brunel University in London, Fathi is part of the film crew on the boat. (See www.arabdochohouse.org)

Ramzi Kysia (USA/Lebanon) +357.99.08.17.67

Ramzi is an Arab-American writer and non-violence trainer and activist. Since September 11, he has spent almost four years working in the Middle-East, including a year in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness, a year in Lebanon (during the 2006 Israeli bombardment), and several months in Jordan, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine. He was last in Palestine in May/June 2005.

Paul Larudee, Ph.D. (USA)

Paul, a cofounder of the Free Gaza Movement, is a San Francisco Bay Area activist on the issue of justice in the region known as Palestine, which includes Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem.

He was born to an Iranian Presbyterian minister and his American missionary spouse in 1946 and grew up in the American Midwest.

Jenny Linnell (UK)

From the UK, Jenny has been involved in human rights work for many years.

Dr. Edith Lutz (Germany) +88.1631.638582

Edith, 59, is married with 4 grown children. A former professional nurse, Edith became a teacher. Engaged in Judaic studies, her thesis on H.Heine, she is co-initiator of Schalom5767 and initiator of "Abrahams Töchter" ('Abrahams's daughters'). She joins this voyage to help children in Gaza and highlight the core of Jewish religion: love and humanity instead of force and hatred.

Theresa McDermott (Scotland) +44.7709.677.006

Theresa, 41, a postal logistics worker from Edinburgh, spent a month in Palestine in 2004.

Anne Montgomery (USA)

Anne, 81, is a Catholic nun of the religious Order of the Sacred Heart. She taught for 30 years and became a peace activist after age 50. She joined Christian Peacemakers Teams (CPT) in 1995 and has worked with CPT in Palestine.

Andrew Muncie (Scotland) +44.778.557.5873

Andrew, 34, is from Spean Bridge in the Highlands of Scotland. He has philosophy degrees from Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, plays online poker for a living and has been deported twice from the West Bank by the Israeli government – once when trying to prevent a collective-punishment house demolition in the Balata refugee camp by the Israeli army and the second time whilst working with the Tel Rumeda project in Hebron.

Thomas H. Nelson (USA) +357.963.535.89

Tom practiced corporate law with Oregon's largest law firm for nearly 20 years. He became involved in Palestinian issues in 1997 and co-founded Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights. When he left the firm 12 years ago, Tom first formed his own small-firm partnership and now is a solo practitioner near his home in Zigzag, Oregon, in the foothills of Mt. Hood.

Ken O'Keefe (Ireland/USA)

Ken, 39, grew up in California and was in the U.S. Marines in the 1991 Gulf War. He initiated P10K (www.P10K.net) in 2004 to recruit international observers to live side by side with Palestinians. He was jailed by the IDF for refusing to sign a statement agreeing not to return to Gaza and deported from Israel after 20 days in jail as a 'security threat'. Now in Hawaii, he has become a legislative representative of District 6 (Oahu) of the Reinstated Hawaiian Government (www.Hawaii-gov.net).

Mike Prior (UK) +44.7960.369.997

Mike, 66, is from Manchester, UK. He has been to Palestine three times since 2003. He has been refused entry to Israel because of his work with ISM and has since been active in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Haq Nawaz Qureishi (Pakistan/UK)

From Bradford, UK, Haq Nawaz, 26, is a member of the punk rock band Fun-da-mental and was in the band The Cult. He owns and runs the London record label Nation Records and is going to Gaza to take a stand against Israeli oppression.

Adam Qvist (Denmark)

Adam, 22, an essayist and co-author of the novel "City Might Fall" (2008), works on sexual and reproductive rights with the Danish Family Planning Association of Sex and with the European Youth Network for Sexual Rights: YouAct. He's visited Palestine in 2000 and 2007.

Yvonne Ridley (UK)

From County Durham, Yvonne is a TV presenter, author and activist. She first came to prominence when arrested and held for 10 days by the Taliban in Afghanistan following the 9/11 atrocity. She was released on humanitarian grounds. Founding

member of Stop the Wall and the Respect Party, she has been trying to enter Gaza for many years to show solidarity with the people trapped there.

Courtney and Kathy Sheetz (USA)

Kathy, 61, is mother of a lawyer, a doctor and fellow passenger on the Free Gaza, 25-year-old videographer Courtney. Grandmother to four girls and another on the way, Kathy spent the last 12 years on grassroots and human rights organizing in Haiti. A retired nurse, Kathy brought her justice-activist daughter Courtney with her to World Social Forums in Mumbai and Port Alegre. Courtney has gone to Haiti with her since age 8, and now is completing her bachelor's degree in New York City and has made videos in Haiti and with the MST landless movement in Brazil.

Ren (Lawrence) Afif Tawil (USA)

Ren was born in San Francisco, CA (USA) in 1953, as was his mother. His father Afif George Tawil was born and raised in Jerusalem, Palestine but was visiting the US in May of 1948 and as a result could not freely return and became a 'displaced person'. He first became aware of the politics surrounding the 'Palestinian Problem' after the June War of 1967 as an 8th grader, and has maintained an interest ever since.

Mary Hughes Thompson, Canada

Mary was born in Bolton, England and immigrated to Canada, then to the United States. She is a member of the Writer's Guild in Los Angeles, a licensed pilot and a proud grandmother. She's been to the occupied West Bank six times, and this will be her seventh trip and her first to Gaza. In 2002, she was beaten by illegal settlers from Itamar near Yanoon, where she was helping Palestinian farmers harvest their olives.

Darlene Wallach (USA)

Darlene, 57, is an anti-zionist activist for social and environmental justice. She lives in San Jose, California (USA) and is of Jewish Eastern-European descent. Darlene spent almost two months in Palestine from May to July 2002. She visited Gaza, Ramallah and then a night at the Balata Refugee camp where she was detained and arrested with seven other internationals. All eight received deportation orders from the minister of the interior. They had witnessed brutal collective punishment of the Palestinians. Although Darlene fought the deportation order and was the first person to be let out of prison on bail, she was nonetheless eventually deported.

Donna Wallach (Israel/USA) +357.99.194.722

Donna, 57, is an anti-zionist activist working for social and environmental justice. She lives in San Jose, California (USA) and is of Eastern-European Jewish descent. She lived in occupied Palestine in the Tel Aviv area for 15 years from 1981 to 1997 and experienced, first hand, the impact of the brutal Israeli occupation on Palestinians living inside Israel as well as the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. She was in Ramallah during its siege in 2002 and spent a week in the Gaza Strip. She joins the boat crew in grief and outrage that all historical Palestine is still occupied by the apartheid state of Israel.

Kathleen Wang (USA)

Kathleen, an LA resident since 1967 raising and supporting her family, says her sympathies lie with those families who are prevented from caring for their beloved children and grandchildren due to the cruel Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories. She tends her 8 grandchildren whenever possible and delights in her new great-grandchild.