



The Mossawa Center 2018 The Year in Review



Establishment of Friends of Mossawa in the United States

Following her relocation to the United States, Suha Salman Mousa, the Mossawa Center's US Coordinator, worked with supporters of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel to establish Friends of Mossawa. Friends of Mossawa seeks to fill a gap in the United States, where the voices of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel seldom reach mainstream voices. The decision to create Friends of Mossawa came on the heels of a series of attacks on the Palestinian Arab community in Israel, including the passage of the Jewish Nation-State Law. In such a climate, Palestinian initiatives to garner solidarity amongst the international community are of the utmost importance.



Training nurses in Jisr Al-Zarqa

As a result of the Mossawa Center's advocacy efforts, fifty young women and men in Jisr al-Zarqa had the opportunity to participate in a fully-funded training program to prepare them for a degree in nursing. Jisr al-Zarqa is one of the most impoverished Arab localities in Israel and has a severe shortage of medical facilities and personnel. The majority of the students passed the preparation examinations and are thereby eligible to enroll in nursing school. Jisr al-Zarqa is one of many Arab localities facing a medical staff shortage.



Strengthening Palestinian Civil Society in Israel

With the support of the European Union, the Mossawa Center is currently implementing a project that seeks to strengthen the sustainability and impact of Arab civil society organizations in Israel. Impacting tens of Arab civil society organizations, the project gives grassroots actors the tools to organize their communities and advocate for their rights.



The Forum of Arab Cultural Organizations begins its activities defending the right of people to be exposed to Palestinian culture

In cooperation with the Forum of Arab Cultural Organizations, the Mossawa Center continued its efforts to defend Palestinian Arab freedom of expression, engaging in coordinated advocacy against the Culture Minister Miri Regev's "Loyalty in Culture" bill and advocating for the transfer of funds to Arab cultural institutions. The Forum is one of the first thematic coalitions of civil society organizations in the Palestinian community. Over the course of 2019, the Mossawa Center will continue to encourage such coordinated efforts, particularly in the field of health, education, welfare, environmentalism, and women's rights. The Mossawa Center has also worked with Arab localities in collecting over 50 million NIS from the Ministry of Culture, a fourfold increase from the amount allocated in 2012 when the Mossawa Center successfully filed a petition against the Ministry. Moreover, the Director of Arab Culture in the Ministry of Culture recently announced that a number of local Arab authorities will receive special budgets to build cultural institutions in various fields.



The "Your Voice is Strength" campaign succeeds in raising female representation in local Arab municipalities

A record twenty-seven Arab women were elected to local council in October with the support of a coalition of Arab civil society organizations led by an Arab women's organization. The campaign, "Your Voice is Strength" ("Sowtik Qowee"), made major gains in building public support of women's representation at all levels of society. An unprecedented thirteen lists were led by Arab women, seven of which were elected. In addition to these achievements, "Your Voice is Strength," which was led by a coalition of twelve civil society organizations, including the Mossawa Center, also raised awareness of issues facing Arab women in Israel society and in their communities. The coalition plans to build on its work in the coming years, both by supporting those women who were elected to local council, as well as by preparing for the next elections.



The Mossawa Center pursues legal action against police officer who attacked peaceful protesters in May, 2018

The Mossawa Center has taken steps to file an indictment against Lior Hatem. Hatem was among several officers who brutally attacked peaceful protesters in Haifa on May 1, 2018. As evidenced by video recordings and witness testimonies, police and special forces charged the crowd, beating and arresting demonstrators without provocation. The Director of the Mossawa Center, Jafar Farah, was among those arrested. While in police custody, Hatem beat and kicked Farah in full view of commanders and other police officers, breaking his knee. Farah spent the night at Bnei Zion hospital with his hands and feet handcuffed to the bedposts, per the officers' orders. The detainees who remained at the police station remained handcuffed on the floor for the entire night. Adalah defended Farah and the other detainees, who were released two days later. The Mossawa Center calls on the police to close all files against the detainees.



The Mossawa Center establishes poverty programs in fifteen Arab local authorities

As part of an economic development program, the Mossawa Center assisted fifteen Arab municipalities in accessing state funds. Since 2013, the Mossawa Center has advocated for distributive justice, holding the Israeli government accountable for poverty in the Arab community, where nearly half of all families live below the poverty line. In so doing, the Mossawa Center has contributed to the establishment of over fifty anti-poverty centers in Arab towns. The Mossawa Center has also continued to advocate for the rights of families impacted by the Citizenship Law, which denies Palestinians from the occupied territories who marry Israeli citizens citizenship and even permanent residency in Israel. Families affected by the Citizenship Law often experience extreme poverty as a result of the financial burden the law poses.



The Mossawa Center expands its international advocacy efforts

The Mossawa Center made several achievements in international advocacy over the course of 2018. For over ten years, the Mossawa Center has engaged in sustained advocacy in the European Union to promote the rights of Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens. Part of these efforts has included advocacy for increased engagement with the Arab communities elected leaders. To this end, the Mossawa Center, in cooperation with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, organized a delegation of Arab political leaders from the Joint List to the European Union. These efforts resulted in an increase in interest in the Arab Palestinian at the European level, culminating in a meeting with the High Representative Vice-President of the European Union, Federica Mogherini. Soon thereafter, the Mossawa Center traveled to New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco to launch Friends of Mossawa and garner support in the fight against the Jewish Nation-State Law. The Director of the Mossawa Center traveled to the United States once again in November to participate in the United Nation's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, during which he addressed the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.



The Mossawa Center and the Arab Center for Alternative Planning initiate the creation of popular committees to strengthen the struggle for housing rights in Arab localities

In cooperation with the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, the Mossawa Center launched a program for the creation of popular committees for land and housing in eight different Arab villages. The committees organize families that suffer at the hands of the government's discriminatory planning policies, as well as legislation such as the Kaminitz Law, which criminalizes "illegal" construction. So far, the program includes committees in Qalansawa, Wadi Ara, Taybeh, Deir al-Assad, Jisr az-Zarqa, Al-Araqib, Zarnouq, and Umm al-Hiran.



The Mossawa Center supports local councils in building and planning

The Mossawa Center and the Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities have struck down an attempt by some parties to repeal the Fast-Track Planning Law, which allows for the rapid planning of new residential neighborhoods. This law is particularly crucial for the Arab community, where government neglect and the refusal to allocate lands to Arab localities has resulted in severe overcrowding. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many heads of local councils do not have the knowledge necessary to access funds for planning and construction. In October, 2018, the Mossawa Center organized a roundtable during which it presented information on the Fast-Track Planning Law and the budgets offered by the national government to Arab localities for housing and planning.



The Ministry of Health responds to the Mossawa Center's demand for a comprehensive plan of action to address gaps in the healthcare system

The Ministry of Health responded to the Mossawa Center's demand to develop a program to close the health gap in the Palestinian Arab community, which were neglected Government Decision 922 for the socioeconomic development of the Arab community. Following consultations with Arab hospitals, the Galilee Association, and Arab experts in the field of health, the Ministry of Health produced a workplan for the improvement of the healthcare system in the Arab sector. The Ministry of Finance, however, has refused to allocate the budgets for the program. In 2019, the Mossawa Center will advocate for the implementation of the plan.



The Mayor of Haifa adopts the demands of the Mossawa Center for monitoring budgets to close the gaps

The new mayor of Haifa, Dr. Einat Kalisch-Rotem, accepted the Mossawa Center's demands, including its recommendations for closing the gaps between Arab and Jewish communities in Haifa. The Mossawa Center submitted its demands to all candidates and parties running for election, including the former mayor, who refused to accept the recommendations. The Mossawa Center will continue to advocate for social justice in Haifa in the coming years.



The Israeli Knesset makes constitutional the second-class status of the Arab community through the passage of the Jewish Nation-State Law

In July, the Knesset passed the Basic Law "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People." The law renders constitutional segregation in housing and planning, downgrades the status of the Arabic language, and explicitly denies persons their rights based on their national identity. The Mossawa Center engaged in extensive advocacy against the Jewish Nation-State Law, both before and after its legislation. In the coming year, the Mossawa Center will promote legislative alternatives to the Jewish Nation-State Law in the Knesset, including legislative proposals promoting equality and democratic values.



Sheikh Sayah Al-Turi imprisoned and the implementation of amendments to the Planning and Building Law

On Christmas day, Israeli authorities arrested and imprisoned Sheikh Sayah al-Turi of Al-Araqib. Al-Araqib is one of thirty-five unrecognized villages in the Negev Desert. Although these villages pre-date the establishment of the state of Israel, the government refuses to recognize them as official localities. Resultantly, an estimated 50,000 indigenous Bedouin citizens live without access to basic state services and in under constant threat of heavy fines, arrest, and the demolition of their homes and workplaces. The village of Al-Araqib has been destroyed over 140 times yet Palestinian Bedouin citizens, including Sheikh al-Turi, remain steadfast, unwilling to accept relocation so that the state can remove them from the land.

2018 Publications

The Mossawa Center published a series of reports over the course of 2018, including a publication on industrial zones in Arab towns, a position paper on social justice for the Arab residents of Haifa, the 2019 Ministry of Housing budget and its implications for the Arab community, and a series of research papers on Arab civil society in Israel.

