

Dear Friends,

We, Aziza Zahran and Diane Swords, are two Syracuse Peace Council members who are glad SPC brought us together! We hope you will join us in supporting the Peace Council's important work for social justice.

Aziza Zahran: I became active with the Syracuse Peace Council in 2014 while Israel was carrying out more than 6,000 air strikes on Gaza, an area roughly the size of Detroit and with a population more than 1.8 million people. Gaza, according to the United Nations, is one of the most densely populated places on earth. Many of Israel's targets during the 2014 assault were residential buildings, hospitals, schools.

I remember the feeling of anger and helplessness as I drove home from work. I came to a stop at the intersection of Erie Blvd. and E Genesee St. and saw a group of people protesting the assault, and turned around and came back to find out who they were. They told me they were with the Syracuse Peace Council Justice for Palestine committee and invited me to attend a meeting.



In May, following Palestinian protests and resistance to forced displacement in Jerusalem, Israel launched another military offensive on the people of Gaza. The Justice for Palestine committee gathered to hold signs in support of the Palestinian people living under siege in Gaza and military occupation in the West Bank.

Photo: Michaela Czerkies

I joined the committee of diverse people from all backgrounds and faiths who come together to bring attention to the occupation, home demolitions and violations of human rights the Palestinians face under a brutal military occupation daily with the assistance of American taxpayer funds.

When Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced the Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act, H.R. 2590, she stated: "Peace can only be achieved by respecting human rights, especially the rights of children, and this includes the U.S. taking responsibility for how taxpayer-funded aid is used by recipient countries, Israel included."

(over)

This is a very important legislation the Justice for Palestine committee members are working on building support for. It is especially important to me because I'm one of the Palestinian children who witnessed the brutality of the Israeli occupation. Please read further and sign the petition at this link: tinyurl.com/HR2590petition.

Diane and I are working to advance these common goals. Jews and Palestians all should have safety and equal rights.

Diane Swords: I have been involved with SPC since moving to Syracuse in the 1970s. Many factors influence my dedication to peace and social justice work. Definitely, the stories I heard as a Jewish child about the horrors of the holocaust ignited my commitment that no-one should be treated as Jews were. The more I look around, the more I see cases of people's cruelty against one another. The story of the mistreatment of Palestinians is a glaring example.

Nuclear weapons are the ultimate in human cruelty. My long-time engagement for nuclear abolition began with the Freeze campaign in the late 70s, and is currently focused on the Back from the Brink campaign to prevent nuclear war (preventnuclearwar.org), which SPC's Nuclear Free World Committee is leading in Syracuse. We are part of a renewed worldwide movement, and your support helps SPC to participate in this urgent groundswell for planetary survival and for shifting resources. You can read more and promote this effort with your legislators at this link: peacecouncil.net/programs/nuclear-free-world-committee.

We are both active with the Syracuse Peace Council whose many committees work to dismantle all oppressive systems. Oppressive systems maintain their power by dividing us on both personal and political levels. In our case especially, it benefits the oppressor for Jews and Palestinians to fight among ourselves instead of uniting against colonialism. Fortunately, Syracuse Peace Council brought us together as we saw the need for working across these separations that hamper our work to liberate everyone. Often the conversation around Israel and Palestine is presented as an either-or choice — either you support the rights of Palestinians or you support the rights of Jews. That is not the case. Our



The Nuclear Free World Committee commemorated the 76th anniversary of Nagasaki Day with a vigil and tableau in front of the State Office building. "Money" was thrown into the "fire" to illustrate the immense wastefulness of nuclear weapons spending - the U.S. spends \$10,000 every 4.5 seconds on nuclear arms. Syracuse Mayor Walsh and County Legislator Mary Kuhn spoke on the importance of local elected officials signing on to the Back from the Brink

(continued on page 3)



The Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation committee (NOON), in collaboration with Women of Italian and Syracuse Heritage, is distributing "Celebrate Diversity: Replace Columbus" lawn signs in the greater Syracuse area. NOON believes that the Columbus Statue should be removed from the center of our diverse city and replaced with a broader cultural heritage display honoring not only the Italian Immigrants, but all the varied peoples and cultures who have contributed to the richness of our region. Another NOON program is the Witness to Injustice/KAİROS Blanket Exercise, a 2.5 hour participatory educational program exploring the history of what is now known as the U.S. that non-native people rarely learn in school or other settings. The program usually is in person, but is currently only online. Contact SPC for information. Photo: Annabel Hine Otts

mission is to create a safe, sustainable and equal environment for everyone, for all Palestinians and Jewish people in Palestine, Israel and globally displaced.

Governments should protect human rights, not violate them, whether in Palestine, Israel, the US, China, Burma, or anywhere. An example of SPC's work to prevent our government from violating the rights of people within this country is our Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation Committee, which works tirelessly to support the rights of the indigenous people of our area.

In addition, we work in coalition with organizations such as the Syracuse Police Accountability and Reform Coalition, Alliance for a Green Economy, Urban Jobs Task Force, CNY Solidarity Coalition and more.

This has been a hard year for all of us as we watch U.S. militarism funded almost without limit, while people die of Coronavirus, lose their jobs, watch the country burn, and see our children's education deprioritized. The Beyond War and Militarism Committee works directly on shifting these values away from military spending and corporate greed, and toward human needs.

We ask that you help SPC continue to educate, agitate and organize to change local and national priorities towards human rights, peace, the environment, education and health. We need to fight

(over)

right now - not other humans, but the virus, the climate catastrophe, and injustice everywhere.

Please donate generously using the enclosed coupon and envelope, or online at peacecouncil.net/donate. If you can, please consider becoming a monthly or quarterly pledger by contacting michaela@peacecouncil.net.

We thank our community for your ongoing support for the peace movement—our accomplishments together would not be possible without you.

Salaam, Shalom, Peace,

Aziza and Diane

P.S. To see the recent work of the committees in detail, read the e-newsletter published on August 22 at www.peacecouncil.net/programs/e-newsletter.



Aziza (left) speaking at a Justice for Palestine rally, and Diane (right) speaking at an SPC Birthday Dinner.