



Society of St. Yves

Catholic Center for Human Rights

I Am My Brother's Keeper

Welcome – أهلا وسهلا

The Society of St. Yves – Catholic Center for Human Rights ("St. Yves") is a Catholic human rights organization, founded in 1991 by Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah, and operating under the umbrella of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The organization was named after St. Yves of Bretagne, the patron saint of lawyers known as the "Advocate of the poor". Ever since its establishment, St. Yves has been representing the needy, oppressed and marginalized in the Holy Land.

St. Yves is guided by the principle that every human being - irrespective of race, color, gender or religion - is equal and has fundamental, irrevocable rights, as reflected in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. Over twenty seven years of legal service, St. Yves boasts diversity as the composition of the staff has included men and woman, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Muslims and Christians.

St. Yves operates on both legal and advocacy spheres; from legal representation to building community-based awareness. St. Yves runs a dense awareness raising program with the aim of empowering the local community to know how to demand its rights, as a major tool of empowerment. Through National and International Lobby and Advocacy we are able to bring the plight of the poor and marginalized to the attention of communities around the world in an effort to bring pressure for justice.

St. Yves aims towards community lawyering and hence it has an 'open door' policy. Because its roots go deep into the community, St. Yves is exposed to common threads of injustice and discrimination. We are then able to take principled cases to courts in an effort to find just and equitable solutions for the entire community in an unjust, difficult and taxing political reality.

The words of Nelson Mandela ring with truth and express something of the motivation and vocation of St. Yves and its staff: " To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity".



Raffoul Rofa
Director



Our Vision

The Society of St. Yves believes that every human being is created in the image of God and the dignity and rights of everybody are God given. St. Yves strives for a social order that values the dignity of all people in the Holy Land, and aims to reflect its core principles and beliefs in its daily work, from gratis legal consultations and representation to local and international advocacy.

The Palestinian population of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under Israeli occupation and clearly do not have even a modicum of their basic rights and freedoms. Israel's belligerent occupation of Palestinian lands and its discrimination against the Palestinian population both in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Israel allows St. Yves to give legal assistance in all aspects of Palestinian life as the Palestinian people are discriminated against in all spheres of civil, cultural and economic life.

Our Mission

The Society of St. Yves is the Catholic Center for Human Rights of the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land. It provides legal aid to the needy, oppressed and marginalized and tries to raise the awareness of human and civil rights in the country. This is to be reached by resisting and combating the violations and impacts of the occupation through legal actions, class actions and promoting justice and fairness for everybody on the local and international levels.

Our Work



Jerusalem Residency

Following the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem, Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem but did not grant citizenship to its Palestinian population. Instead, Palestinian Jerusalemites were given the “permanent residency” status, an inferior status which does not grant full citizenship rights and can be easily revoked at the discretion of the Israeli Minister of Interior. Palestinians, the original population of the city, have been threatened by policies and practices which aim to silently and forcibly displace them out of the only city they call home, by revoking their residency, eventually rendering them stateless. St. Yves provides legal aid for Palestinian rights to residency in their hometown.

Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement is a universal right to every human being. Everyone has the right to leave any country including his own, and has the right to return to his country. Furthermore, every individual has the right to move freely within their own country. Palestinians, however, face arbitrary restrictions on their daily movement, such as roadblocks, checkpoints, the annexation wall, as well as arbitrary and punitive practices of closures within the West Bank and Jerusalem. Since entrance and exit points of all Palestinian cities are governed by Israeli military checkpoints, when Palestinians want to move within the occupied territory – even to Jerusalem - they are confronted with discriminative profiling and bans on movement. St. Yves defends Palestinians practice their freedom of movement.

Land Confiscation

International law has a clear stance on the confiscation of private property: in occupied territories – such as the occupied Palestinian territory - confiscation of private property and establishing settlements by the occupying state are prohibited. Yet, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, thousands of confiscation orders have been issued by Israel during the last 5 decades of occupation, under the pretext of security and public needs. Often the land is then used to establish or expand Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands. St. Yves provides legal representation and awareness raising to Palestinian farmers and land owners against such practices.

National Insurance

East Jerusalem Palestinians with an Israeli “permanent residency” pay taxes and social security contributions like Israeli citizens, and as such are entitled to all social benefits from the Israeli national insurance, including unemployment, disability, widowhood and old age benefits. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the Palestinians residents of East Jerusalem live under poverty line, only a small percentage of them receive social services and benefits from the national insurance. St. Yves helps those deprived of their social and economic rights to retain them.

Our Work



House Demolitions

Adequate housing is fundamental to human dignity and is a basic human right. Since the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1967, Israel demolished tens of thousands of Palestinian homes and structures vital to Palestinian livelihoods in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, using its discriminatory planning and zoning regime which in practice prevents Palestinians from building on their own lands while allowing illegal Israeli settlements built in the same areas inside the occupied Palestinian territory to grow unhindered. Today, thousands of demolition orders are pending and can be carried out any minute, causing more Palestinian families to be forcibly displaced and transferred out of their lands. St. Yves litigates against home demolitions, advocates for the right to housing and promotes planning rights for the Palestinians in their lands.

Family Reunification

The right to family is a basic human right and families are entitled to protection by society and the State. Since the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israeli citizens and residents married to residents of the occupied Palestinian territory were able to obtain a legal status in Israel for their spouse after an application process. In 2002, the Israeli government froze applications for family unification. Since then it became very difficult for newly married couples to live together, and tens of thousands of requests have been unprocessed or rejected. The freeze on family unification continues today and causes severe distress and chronic uncertainty to Palestinian families. Here, St. Yves intervenes to support couples in their struggle for their right to a family unification.

Child Registration

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Israel in 1991, a child has the right to be registered directly after birth and is entitled to health care as well as education. It is estimated that currently tens of thousands unregistered Palestinian children live in Jerusalem, as Israel does not give automatically identification to children when one of the parents is neither an Israeli citizen or a permanent resident. Hence, these children are deprived of healthcare or education as long as the child registration process has not successfully ended. St. Yves assists parents in the difficult process to register their children.

Disability Rights in East Jerusalem

People with disabilities in East Jerusalem are no exception to the Israeli discriminatory policies against Palestinians and suffer from discrimination in their rights and entitlements, mainly in access to services. St. Yves aims to promote and safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities in East Jerusalem, in addition to improving lobby and advocacy strategies in achieving their rights and entitlements from the Jerusalem municipality and national insurance. St. Yves provides consultation services and legal representation for persons with disabilities in East Jerusalem.

Contact Us



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WESTERN USA LIEUTENANCY



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PEOPLE CHANGING THE WORLD



EUROPEAN UNION

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