

Dr. Abu Jamei shines vivid light on the Gaza Strip during his 'Trauma and Hope' speaking tour

Dr. Yasser Abu Jamei, head of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP), is now back in the Gaza Strip following his January 20 – February 14, 2023 'Trauma and Hope' speaking tour of the United States sponsored by the Gaza Mental Health Foundation.



Dr. Abu Jamei's itinerary took him from Gaza to Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago and neighboring towns, Ann Arbor, Boston and Cambridge, Baltimore and Bethesda, and Washington DC.

After making previous US visits in 2015, 2016 and 2018, Dr. Abu Jamei used his fourth trip to consolidate old friendships; to make new professional contacts; to raise awareness through the media and presentations in five universities, church halls, a synagogue, and community centers; to raise funds at benefits and house parties; and to meet with State Department officials and elected Members of Congress and their staffs.

Dr. Yasser speaking at the Al Nahda Community Center near Chicago.



Dr. Yasser with Sen. Chris Van Hollen (MD)



Dr. Yasser with Rep. Rashida Tlaib (MI) and a Palestinian flag.



Dr. Yasser with Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Dr. Nancy Murray, president of the Gaza Mental Health Foundation, Inc.



In addition to a Congressional briefing, he held two dozen Congressional meetings in offices of Representatives and Senators who, since the 15-year-long blockade began, have rarely had the opportunity to engage directly with a visitor from the Gaza Strip.



Speaking at Congressional briefing

Nearly all the elected officials and staff who met with him seemed fully engaged as he described the severe mental health impact on children and their caregivers of the suffocating blockade, the economic crisis with its 50% unemployment rate, the massive military bombardments of 2008-9, 2012, 2014, 2021 and 2022, and the deaths and injuries inflicted by Israeli soldiers to suppress the 2018-2019 unarmed civilian demonstrations known as the Great March of Return.

Many of those who met with him appeared stunned by a map showing how the May 2021 bombardments pockmarked the tiny Gaza Strip, where nearly half of the population are children and 70% are refugees.

Although Dr. Abu Jamei's visit is unlikely to lead to an immediate shift in the posture of Congress towards Israel and Palestine, it has undeniably planted seeds and opened eyes. It is now up to constituents to make their voices heard and urge their elected Members to do what they can to ensure that the children of the Gaza Strip have a decent future.



Wherever he went Dr. Yasser made new friends and educated them about the situation in the Gaza Strip. He also learned about struggles for justice in the US and made the sort of connections that can help build a global movement for human rights.

Everywhere he spoke audiences responded generously. Funds raised during the tour will enable the GCMHP to expand the services and quality of care it offers to Gaza's beleaguered residents.