

United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East Conference

Thursday May 10, 2007

LaGuardia Community College
Little Theater

The conference will provide an analysis of the domestic and international consequences of United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East. Scholars and activists will present, discuss, and debate their perspectives on the history and contemporary involvement of the United States in this region. The conference will provide students and faculty with the opportunity to extend their knowledge beyond conventional discourse and thereby open up further avenues for research and political engagement.

PROGRAM

9:15 – 10:15 am – Panel 1- History and Contemporary U.S. Policy in the Middle East

Panelists: Sara Flounders and Ronald Bleier.

Moderator: Prof. Tim Coogan

This panel will explore the history and contemporary application of U.S. Policy in the Middle East. Panelists will examine the origin and evolution of U.S. intervention in this region, the objectives of U.S. involvement, the social costs of these policies, and their present manifestation.

10:30 – 11:30 am – Panel 2 – Palestine: History and Narrative

Panelists: Toufic Haddad and Aaron Levitt

Moderator: Prof. Terence Julien

This panel will explore the history and contemporary narrative of Palestine. The panelists will present both an oral and pictorial exposition of the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), the historical struggle for Palestinian self-determination, and the present conditions of life for the Palestinian people.

11:45 am – 12:45 pm – Panel 3 - The U.S./ Israel Relationship

Panelists: Toufic Haddad and Ronald Bleier

Moderator: Prof. Michael Frank

This panel will explain the unique relationship that exists between the United States and Israel. The panelists will examine why both Democratic and Republican Administrations provide unconditional support for Israel's policies of occupation, settlement, and war; the role of the Israel Lobby in U.S. domestic politics; and the role Israel plays in the U.S. strategic objective of dominating the Middle East and controlling its resources.

1:00 – 2:00 pm – Panel 4 – The Assault on Civil, Constitutional, and Human Rights

Panelists: Lynne Stewart and Maria Lahood

Moderator: Prof. Donald Monaco

This panel will examine selected aspects of the assault on civil, constitutional, and human rights by the U.S. Government in its 'War on Terror'. The panelists will explain how legal protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and by International Laws and Conventions are being subverted in the name of national security.

2:15 - 3:15 - Panel 5 - Resistance to Occupation and Oppression

Panelist: Dr. Barbara Nimri Aziz and Donia Mili

Moderator: Prof. Donald Monaco

This panel will explore the social and political context of resistance movements in the Middle East. The panelists will examine the origin, evolution, and contemporary manifestation of key struggles for national liberation and self-determination that are distorted, de-contextualized, and criminalized in Western political discourse.

SPEAKERS

Dr. Barbara Nimri Aziz is currently a freelance journalist and broadcaster. She received her Ph.D in 1974 in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. For eighteen years she did ethnographic research on Asian society and history. She left that career to become a journalist, and has recently focused largely on Iraq. Since 1988, she has spent a total of 26 months living in the Middle East, visiting Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, the West Bank, Turkey, and Israel. She has been published in the Christian Science Monitor, the Manchester Guardian, Middle East International, the Detroit Free Press, Natural History and numerous other publications. She is also the author of several books including an upcoming *ReleTigris: Real Life Encounters with Iraq* and *Heir To A Silent Song: Two Rebel Women of Nepal*. Since 1989 Aziz has worked on a community radio station in New York - WBAI Pacifica Radio (RadioTahrir.org). She works as a producer, commentator, and interviewer, and also as a correspondent reporting from the Middle East. She donates a lot of time to non-profit organizations that work for justice in international affairs. She has recently been awarded a Fulbright Professorship in North Africa for the coming academic year. Aziz, with colleague Leila Diab, founded an organization called "Radius of Arab-American Writers in 1992, which is a network of established and emerging Arab-American fiction and non-fiction writers, essayists, poets, journalists, photojournalists, and academics.

Ronald Bleier is a journalist and writer who lives and works in New York City. He spent two years in Iran as a Peace Corps Volunteer. He edits the Demographic, Environmental and Security Issues Project website, and he writes on Middle East Issues, the Bush Administration, and 9/11 analysis.

Sara Flounders is a writer, political activist, and Co-Director of the International Action Center with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. Among her extensive publications, she is co-editor along with Teresa Gutierrez of *War In Columbia: Made In U.S.A.*, a contributor to: *Challenge To Genocide: Let Iraq Live*, and a contributor to: *Metal of Dishonor: How the Pentagon Radiates Soldiers and Civilians with DU Weapons*.

Toufic Haddad is a Palestinian-American activist and writer who edited the radical journal "Between The Lines", published from Jerusalem and Ramallah. He is also a frequent contributor to the International Socialist Review and Znet. He is currently co-editing a book with Dr. Tikva Honig-Parnass on the Palestinian Intifada.

Maria Lahood is an attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights, where she specializes in international human rights litigation, seeking to hold governments responsible for extrajudicial killings and war crimes abroad. Her cases include *Arar v. Ashcroft*, against U.S. officials for sending Canadian citizen Maher Arar to Syria where he was tortured and detained for a year; *Matar v. Dichter*, against an Israeli official responsible for a "targeted assassination" that killed 15 Palestinians; *Belhas v. Ya'alon*, against a former Israeli official responsible for the 1996 shelling of a U.N. compound in Qana, Lebanon that killed over 100 civilians; *Corrie v. Caterpillar*, on behalf of

Palestinians killed and injured in home demolitions and Rachel Corrie, an American human rights defender who was killed trying to protect a home from being demolished; and Wiwa v. Royal Dutch/Shell, for the torture, detention and execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other human rights activists and protestors in Nigeria.

Aaron Levitt is a photographer, a member of Jews Against the Occupation, and a member of the International Solidarity Movement with Palestine. He is a member and past board member of West End Synagogue. He is also a director of research at a New York City homeless services agency.

Donia Mili was born in 1973 in Paris, France to French and Tunisian parents. Donia was 16 years old when she first started in television at the grass roots level while studying in Ottawa, Canada. While pursuing an M.A. degree in Near East Studies at NYU, she became involved in documentary production. After contributing to several projects, she produced and directed her first film, "Uprooted" in 2006. The film addresses the debate of non-violent versus violent resistance in the context of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation.

Lynne Stewart is a radical human rights attorney who has been falsely accused of helping terrorists. Now convicted, she faces 30 years in prison. This is an obvious attempt by the U.S. government to silence dissent, curtail vigorous defense lawyers, and instill fear in those who would fight against the U.S. government's racism, seek to help Muslims being prosecuted for free speech and defend the rights of all oppressed people. Ms. Stewart has a long history of representing unpopular, politically controversial, and socially marginalized clients who come from the most oppressed segments of U.S. Society.

We would like to thank the following:
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