



JANUARY 1, 2023

**The Salam Institute for Peace and Justice
Annual Report**



Salam Institute
For Peace and Justice

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A Message from the President

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

As we close another year of dedication and shared effort at the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, I find myself deeply moved by the progress we have made in advancing our mission. This year, we have witnessed a journey marked by the establishment of the **Network for Forgiveness & Reconciliation in the Arab Region**, together with a series of impactful programs and partnerships that reflect our values of peacebuilding and Reconciliation. From fostering interfaith dialogue to promoting education on forgiveness and conflict resolution, each project is a step toward creating a world where understanding and respect triumph over conflict and division. I am especially proud of our work to empower women and youth, who are at the forefront of driving change.

The journey toward peace is never without its trials. We have faced barriers — from political challenges to shifting societal dynamics — yet through every obstacle, our resolve has only grown stronger. We believe that each challenge presents an opportunity to listen closely, respond with greater empathy, and act with intention. These experiences have reinforced our commitment to non-violence, inclusion, and justice, providing a deeper purpose to our work in community healing and reconciliation.

As we look ahead, we remain committed in our belief that peace is not just the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, dialogue, and understanding. We will work hard for 2024 to deepening our initiatives in peace education, interfaith engagement, and supporting the leadership of women as peacemakers. By equipping communities with the tools for dialogue

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and forgiveness, we aim to inspire a new generation dedicated to building harmony and reconciliation within and across their societies.

This year's achievements are a result of the unwavering dedication and passion of our team, partners, and supporters. Together, we have created spaces for dialogue, and laid the foundation for more resilient and inclusive institutions and communities. Your support has been instrumental in allowing us to continue on this path toward empowerment and more cohesive societies.

Thank you for your partnership and your commitment.

In peace and solidarity,

Professor Mohammed Abu-Nimer

Executive Director, Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

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About the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

Founded nearly a decade ago by Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice emerged from the collective efforts of esteemed academics and practitioners in conflict resolution, peace studies, Islamic cultural studies, and international development. Dr. Abu-Nimer's extensive experience in Arab-Israeli dialogue, interfaith peacebuilding, and conflict resolution models within Muslim communities laid the foundation for an organization dedicated to fostering pluralism, non-violence, and human rights. The Salam Institute was established to bring an authentic Islamic and interfaith perspective to peacebuilding worldwide.

Mission and Vision Statements

Mission: To promote peace, reconciliation, and development through the values of inclusivity, justice, and non-violence, drawing upon the rich traditions of Islamic teachings and interfaith dialogue.

Vision: A world where communities coexist in peace and understanding, grounded in respect for diversity, equality, and the principles of justice and non-violence.

Organizational Background & History

The Salam Institute has engaged in a wide range of peacebuilding initiatives across the globe, working in diverse regions such as the West Bank and Gaza, Sri Lanka, Mindanao (Philippines), Egypt, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, the Balkans, and the United States. The Institute focuses on fostering inter-religious dialogue, exploring and utilizing resources within Muslim communities for peace and development, and providing expert knowledge to governmental and non-governmental bodies on conflict dynamics in the Islamic context. Additionally, the Salam Institute contributes to advancing Islamic models of conflict resolution and integrating local traditions and values into broader efforts for peace and development.

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Areas of Focus and Thematic Priorities

The Salam Institute's work revolves around:

- **Inter-religious Dialogue:** Facilitating understanding and action-oriented peace and justice among diverse faith communities.
- **Peacebuilding Resources:** Utilizing and developing resources within Muslim communities to contribute to global peace efforts.
- **Conflict Analysis & Support:** Offering scholarly insights and professional expertise on conflicts' socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic dimensions.
- **Capacity Building & Empowerment:** Enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals and communities, with a focus on integrating Islamic conflict resolution and peace models.

Guiding Principles

The work of the Salam Institute is rooted in five core principles:

- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring all voices are heard and respected to foster healthy relationships and meaningful resolutions.
- **Justice:** Centering peacebuilding on justice and reconciliation, laying a foundation for sustainable healing.
- **Non-violence:** Advocating for peaceful strategies to resolve conflicts, reinforcing the capacity for individuals to engage in nonviolent dispute resolution.
- **Empowerment:** Reducing asymmetries in power through equipping communities and individuals with knowledge, skills, and resources for peacebuilding.
- **Equality:** Raising awareness and challenging assumptions of superiority based on religion, gender, race, and other social categories to practice and promote the value of equality in all efforts.

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2023 Highlights & Key Activities

In 2023, the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice marked a year of active engagement, dialogue, and expansion, focusing on promoting reconciliation, non-violence, and empowerment across the Arab region and beyond. The Institute's initiatives spanned various activities, including network meetings, lectures, collaborative projects, and training sessions aimed at fostering peacebuilding, gender equality, and community resilience. Below are some of the key highlights and major achievements of the year:

1. Establishment of the Regional Network for Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Arab Region

The Salam Institute's network have founded the Regional Forgiveness and Reconciliation Network in partnership with Rased – Al Hayat Jordan through multiple meetings, fostering collaboration and strategic planning:

- **Committee Meetings:** The administrative committee played a pivotal role in planning upcoming activities, setting the agenda for expanding the network's reach, and preparing for in-person events. Each committee member took the lead on overseeing one of the network's key thematic areas.
- **Network Engagement:** Key meetings were held to address immediate crises and emerging challenges:
 - **Libya Floods & Morocco Earthquake:** Network members from Libya and Morocco shared firsthand perspectives on the post-disaster humanitarian context. Strategies to address challenges arising from these crises were discussed.
 - **War on Gaza:** Members issued a collective statement advocating for the cessation of the conflict in Gaza, engaging with institutions focused on reconciliation, and promoting peace.
 - **Welcoming New Members:** The network welcomed four new members, including Hisham Dabboussi, facilitating discussions on women's empowerment, awareness-raising, and preparations for developing knowledge papers.

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- **First Anniversary Celebration:** The network celebrated its one-year anniversary, reflecting on accomplishments, sharing experiences, and strategizing future improvements.

2. Promoting Reconciliation & Forgiveness

Lectures and discussions brought together diverse voices to enhance understanding of reconciliation efforts across the region:

- **Conflict Resolution Across the Arab Region:** Lectures covered topics from the conflict dynamics in Yemen to the role of religious diversity in community reconciliation, enhancing members' knowledge and fostering practical peacebuilding approaches.
- **Empowering Women in Peace Processes:** Sessions on women's roles in forgiveness, reconciliation and political participation across the Arab world addressed the challenges women face and highlighted strategies to overcome barriers.

3. Advancing Women's Participation & Peacebuilding

Collaborative efforts emphasized women's empowerment and involvement in peacebuilding:

- **Yemen Peacebuilding Initiative:** A training on women's empowerment in peacebuilding, facilitated by network members, showcased experiences from across the Arab region, underscoring the crucial role of women in conflict resolution.
- **Women in Public Affairs (Libya & Jordan):** Discussions on supporting women's participation in public spheres highlighted the intersections of Arab experiences and the need for increased support.
- **Women's Participation in Reconciliation:** A session dedicated to women's involvement in reconciliation processes aimed to enhance members' understanding and strategies for overcoming challenges faced by women in the Arab world.

4. Advocacy & Cultural Initiatives

The Salam Institute's advocacy efforts and cultural initiatives aimed to further peace education and inter-religious understanding:

- **Cultural Awareness through Film:** The screening and discussion of *The Unexpected Peace* served as a tool to raise awareness of reconciliation practices, and potential application in the Arab region.

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- **Reconciliation Conference in Tunisia:** Salam Contributed to supporting a strategic conference focusing on mediation workshops enabled the exchange of experiences and challenges in peace mediation.

Research & Publications

In 2023, the Salam Institute made significant contributions to academic research and policy discussions. The research outputs provided valuable insights into themes of religious diversity, interfaith dialogue, and justice, and have informed both programming and field operations.

Chapter Contribution: Religious Diversity in Arab Society

Chapter Title: *Chapter 9: Religious Diversity in Arab Society: Myth, Conspiracy, and Reality*

Author: Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer

Book: Islam and the Drive to Global Justice: Principles of Justice Beyond Dominant Ethnic and Religious Communities, Edited by Safi, L. M. (2023), Published by Lexington Books.

Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer's chapter delves into the complexities of religious diversity within Arab societies, examining the myths and conspiracies that often shape perceptions and realities around this topic. The chapter critically explores how religious diversity is understood, experienced, and often contested within the Arab world. It highlights the challenges and opportunities that this diversity presents for social cohesion, dialogue, and peacebuilding.

The research reflects on key themes:

- The impact of religious diversity on social and political dynamics in the Arab region.
- The role of inter-religious dialogue in fostering understanding and mitigating conflict.
- How dominant narratives and misconceptions can hinder genuine efforts toward pluralism and reconciliation.
- Opportunities for building inclusive communities that recognize and respect diverse religious identities.

Capacity Building & Training Initiatives

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In 2023, the Salam Institute's commitment to capacity building was evident through targeted training sessions and initiatives enhancing peacebuilding skills, and fostering gender-sensitive approaches. The capacity-building efforts were tailored to address the needs of specific target audiences and contexts, promoting sustainable change and resilience across diverse communities.

1. Emergency Planning in Libya

Focus: Gender-sensitive approaches to emergency planning and response.

Participants: 56 female participants

Impact: Four comprehensive training sessions were conducted in Libya, focusing on emergency planning, crisis response, and reducing harm during service delivery in the wake of local challenges. These sessions integrated gender perspectives, equipping women with the skills to effectively lead and respond to emergency situations in their communities, while considering the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and children during crises.

2. Women's Empowerment in Peacebuilding (Yemen)

Focus: Enhancing women's roles in peacebuilding and public affairs.

Participants: 25 (18 female, 7 male), supported by 5 network members.

Impact: This training initiative empowered Yemeni women to take active roles in peacebuilding within their communities. Drawing on experiences and lessons from other Arab regions, the training sessions encouraged the development of local peace strategies, increased awareness of women's rights and roles, and facilitated collaboration among participants to strengthen the impact of women in public spheres and peace processes.

3. Enhancing Reconciliation Efforts in Iraq

Focus: Conflict resolution and reconciliation between diverse communities.

Participants: 21 (9 female, 12 male)

Impact: The training highlighted reconciliation efforts between Arab and Yazidi communities in northern Sinjar. Participants learned about the challenges and opportunities in managing reconciliation processes, exploring ways to build trust, understanding, and peaceful coexistence. This initiative contributed to the wider goal of promoting non-violence and fostering dialogue among groups with a history of conflict.

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4. Women's Participation in Reconciliation Processes in the Arab World

Focus: Women's roles in reconciliation and overcoming challenges to peace processes.

Participants: 38 (25 female, 13 male)

Impact: This session provided participants with insights into the role of women in reconciliation efforts across the Arab world. By focusing on practical experiences, challenges, and opportunities, the initiative enhanced members' understanding of women's contributions to peace and their potential to drive change. It also equipped participants with strategies to overcome gender-specific barriers in reconciliation processes.

5. Regional Conflict and Peace Dynamics (Yemen, Syria, Palestine)

Focus: Conflict resolution in diverse Arab contexts and integrating women in peacebuilding.

Participants: Approximately 20 per session, gender-balanced

Impact: A series of discussions covered topics like the conflict dynamics in Yemen, the challenges of integrating returnees in Syria and Palestine, and the role of religious diversity in community reconciliation. The capacity-building efforts were designed to foster practical skills for conflict analysis, community engagement, and developing peace-oriented approaches across different regional settings.

Outcome & Long-Term Impact

The training and capacity-building initiatives in 2023 were instrumental in enhancing participants' understanding of conflict resolution, non-violence, gender-sensitive programming, and community empowerment. By focusing on localized contexts and leveraging the experiences of network members and practitioners, these efforts have contributed to building more resilient communities that are equipped to navigate conflict and promote sustainable peace.

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Challenges & Lessons Learned

Throughout 2023, the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice encountered several challenges across its various programs and initiatives, reflective of the complex and ever-evolving nature of peacebuilding work. Despite these hurdles, the Institute adopted strategic approaches to navigate obstacles, ensuring that projects continued to advance and deliver impact.

1. Navigating Political Instability & Crises

The Institute's work in regions affected by political instability and conflict, such as Libya, Yemen, and Gaza, required adaptability in response to shifting political landscapes, security concerns, and humanitarian crises. **Strategy & Lessons Learned:** Flexibility in programming was essential to adjust activities according to changing circumstances on the ground. This required open communication with local partners and the ability to adapt timelines and project goals swiftly. Moving forward, the Institute has learned to build contingency plans into program design, allowing for rapid shifts without compromising impact.

2. Addressing Gender-Sensitive Issues in Traditional Societies

Implementing capacity-building initiatives, particularly those focusing on women's empowerment and gender-sensitive approaches, often faced resistance in more traditional communities, where established norms and cultural perceptions may hinder participation and acceptance. **Strategy & Lessons Learned:** The Salam Institute overcame these challenges by working closely with local stakeholders and community leaders to ensure cultural appropriateness and by leveraging local networks to promote inclusivity. This approach highlighted the importance of grassroots mobilization and culturally embedded advocacy. Future strategies will prioritize early engagement with community leaders and the development of locally driven narratives to foster buy-in and support for gender-focused initiatives.

4. Resource and Capacity Constraints

Balancing the scope of activities with the available resources, including human and logistical support, proved challenging, particularly when aiming to scale up programs or respond to emerging crises. **Strategy & Lessons Learned:** The Institute adopted a strategic focus on maximizing existing resources through partnerships, capacity-sharing, and leveraging

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network members' expertise. Developing strategic partnerships and collaborations was a key lesson learned, enabling the Institute to amplify its reach and impact without overstretching its resources. In future programming, a stronger emphasis will be placed on resource sharing and long-term partnership development to enhance sustainability.

Shaping Future Approaches

The challenges faced in 2023 have underscored the need for flexibility, inclusivity, and local engagement in the Salam Institute's work. Moving forward, the Institute will continue to:

- **Incorporate Contingency Planning:** Embedding adaptive strategies within project designs to swiftly respond to changes and crises.
- **Foster Deeper Community Ties:** Enhancing long-term engagement and trust-building with local stakeholders and communities.
- **Empower Through Localization:** Strengthening the role of local partners and voices in shaping and leading initiatives, particularly those that address sensitive cultural and gender issues.

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Looking Forward: Plans for 2024

As the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice looks to the year ahead, we are guided by our continued commitment to advancing peace, reconciliation, and justice through innovative and impactful programming. Building on the successes and lessons learned from 2023, our strategic priorities for 2024 are designed to deepen our engagement with communities, strengthen partnerships, and foster sustainable change. Below are our key goals and areas of focus for the upcoming year:

1. Expanding Women's Empowerment & Leadership Initiatives

Building on our existing programs that support women's roles in peacebuilding and reconciliation, 2024 will see an expansion of our women's empowerment efforts. We aim to:

- **Strengthen Women's Leadership Networks:** Continue to support and grow networks of women peacebuilders across the Arab world, focusing on capacity building, leadership skills, and peer support.
- **Launch New Projects on Women's Civic Engagement:** Roll out initiatives that empower women to take active roles in public life, community decision-making, and advocacy, especially in contexts where their voices are underrepresented.

2. Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Diversity Engagement

Recognizing the power of religious diversity as a tool for reconciliation and understanding, the Institute plans to:

- **Develop New Interfaith Programs:** Establish spaces for dialogue and collaboration among different faith communities, aiming to build bridges, foster mutual respect, and promote peaceful coexistence.
- **Publish Practical Resources on Religious Diversity:** Produce practical guides, toolkits, and knowledge papers to support practitioners and community leaders in using religious diversity as a means of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

3. Building Community Resilience through Youth Engagement

Youth remain a vital force for positive change and community transformation. In 2024, the Salam Institute will:

- **Launch Youth Peacebuilding Initiatives:** Create training programs and platforms for young leaders to actively participate in peace and reconciliation processes. These

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initiatives will focus on dialogue, mediation skills, and social cohesion in communities affected by conflict.

- **Support Youth-Led Advocacy & Social Change Projects:** Empower young people to design and implement advocacy campaigns that address issues such as social justice, human rights, and gender equality, with mentorship from experienced peacebuilders.

4. Advancing Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Training

To further support communities facing conflict and promote non-violent approaches, the Institute will:

- **Expand Capacity Building for Mediation and Reconciliation:** Develop and conduct targeted training sessions for community leaders, activists, and practitioners on mediation, conflict analysis, and negotiation skills, with a focus on local contexts and culturally appropriate strategies.
- **Enhance Tools for Conflict Prevention:** Provide resources and guidance for early conflict identification and prevention, equipping communities to address disputes before they escalate into violence.

5. Deepening Partnerships and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Collaborative work remains at the core of our approach, and in 2024, we will:

- **Foster New Strategic Partnerships:** Engage with local NGOs, government agencies, international organizations, and academic institutions to deepen our reach and create more holistic, sustainable peacebuilding programs.
- **Participate in Regional and International Forums:** Actively contribute to key regional and global dialogues on peacebuilding, gender equality, interfaith collaboration, and non-violence to amplify our voice and exchange best practices.

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Acknowledgements

The work of the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in 2023 would not have been possible without the dedication, passion, and support of many individuals and organizations. We extend our deepest gratitude to all who have contributed to our mission of fostering peace, reconciliation, and understanding.

Our Team and Staff

A heartfelt thank you goes to our exceptional team, whose commitment to peacebuilding and tireless efforts on the ground have driven our achievements this year. Their resilience, creativity, and hard work are the foundation of all that we do.

Partners and Collaborators

We are deeply grateful to our partners, both local and international, whose collaboration and shared vision have enriched our programs and expanded our impact. Your expertise, support, and willingness to work together have been invaluable in advancing our mission. We are especially thankful for the contributions of local organizations, community leaders, and peace practitioners who have helped shape our work and ensure that our initiatives remain relevant and impactful.

Donors and Supporters

To our donors and supporters — your belief in our mission has empowered us to continue building bridges and fostering reconciliation across communities. Your contributions have enabled us to reach more people, develop meaningful programs, and respond to emerging challenges in the field. We thank you for your generosity and ongoing support.

Participants and Beneficiaries

To the individuals, community members, and participants who have engaged with our programs, shared their stories, and contributed to our peacebuilding efforts — we are honored to work alongside you. Your courage, openness, and willingness to be part of transformative dialogue are at the heart of our success. You inspire us to continue working for a future where peace, justice, and non-violence prevail.

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The Board and Advisors

We also extend our appreciation to our Board of Directors and advisory members, whose guidance, strategic insights, and governance have been instrumental in shaping our direction. Your leadership and support have ensured that the Institute remains true to its values while adapting to the changing landscape of peacebuilding.

As we look to the future, we are filled with hope and determination to continue this journey together. We deeply appreciate every individual and organization who has contributed to our vision, and we look forward to another year of collaboration, growth, and shared achievements in the pursuit of peace and justice.

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The End

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