

UN Group Helping Palestinians Overcome Trauma of Occupation

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RAMALLAH, May 7, 2013 (Wafa)- The conflict in the region and the Israeli occupation and its practices traumatizing Palestinians prompted a team from the Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) of Meaningful World to visit the occupied territory this week to help Palestinians overcome their trauma.

Founder and President of ATOP, Ani Kalayjian, who headed the team, told Wafa that their main goal is to work with traumatized young and old Palestinians, including prisoners and their families as well as refugees by conducting training and healing sessions and lectures to rehabilitate them.

She said that they are also working on violence within the society caused mainly by being victimized by occupation.

“When communities are victimized there is more attraction to victimhood which is called horizontal violence,” Kalayjian said, “When we are pressured by Israeli government but we can’t negotiate with them, they are not listening, so that pressure coming from top down is going to the side, and our side is each other.”

Kalayjian said that they are working with Palestinian children at schools to help them overcome their psychological shocks mainly caused by the political situation through different art programs, such as essay writing competitions.

“Most of children are traumatized. When they are asked how many of you have seen somebody killed, all of them raise their hands!” she said.

She agreed to the notion that it’s hard to heal children if they have to see soldiers pointing weapons at them or killing their families on a daily basis.

The main reason behind violence and lack of human rights in Palestine is the occupation which Kalayjian described as “greedy.”

She said, “Why not accept the two states and leave the occupied territories!”

Kalayjian said they worked with Arab American University in Jenin, gave lectures, and conducted a half-day training and they will work again with them next year.

During their visit, ATOP team met with the Minister of Social Affairs, Majida al-Masri, in order to put trainings into place where they can prepare a large number of people; social workers, teachers, students and parents.

The team will also conduct healing, peace building and meditation sessions at Birzeit University to help students increase their inner strength.

ATOP of Meaningful World was established in 1990. It is a New York–based international humanitarian charitable organization affiliated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.

It is devoted to fostering a just, peaceful, and meaningful world collaborating with many organizations to bring rehabilitation programs to more than 29 humanitarian empowerment, educational, and rehabilitation programs around the world, in locations such as Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and US.