

Al-marsad's Narrative Report for 2011

Presented January 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

During 2011 Al-Marsad continued to enhance its reputation and live up to its name as the true Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Syrian Golan. Since 2004 Al-Marsad has successfully met the many challenges it faced as it struggled to establish itself as a legitimate voice for local human rights challenges and issues. This report will examine the activities of the organization, its staff and interns over the period of 2011 in order to take account of important achievements and identify issues and areas where improvements can still be made.

The dedication of the board, staff and local and international volunteers continues to be Al-Marsad's greatest strength. The development of close ties with UN human rights bodies and other international human rights organizations and the visibility of our programs has greatly improved our credibility among the local population and media outlets. Our status as the central advocate for human rights in the Golan was made clear after the Nakba and Naksa day protests, when Al-Marsad was inundated with requests for comment and widely quoted in news reports around the world.

Al-Marsad continues to look for improved funding to make the organization stable and sustainable. Unfortunately, we still suffer of lack of resources for conducting our projects and launch professional advocacy campaigns, train more local staff and undertake larger research projects. Increasing Al-Marsad's resources continues to be a major priority.

Al-Marsad carried out the following major activities in 2011:

- Continuous monitoring and documenting of specific human rights violations in a professional way, through the gathering of first-hand accounts by eyewitnesses and victims.
- Acted as a source for information and testimony for media outlets around the world following the protests on Nakba and Naksa day.
- Publishing a report titled: Ownership to Occupation: The Forced Evictions and Internal Displacement of the People of the Syrian Golan.
- Currently editing a thorough legal report detailing the violations of international humanitarian law by the actions of Israeli Occupying Forces on Nakba and Naksa Days using eyewitness testimony and video evidence.
- Provided support and/or legal advise for local residents who were arrested or detained following the protests.
- Preparing a report on the construction of an illegal “security” wall at the border.
- Meeting with the Israeli Occupying Forces to discuss the removal of landmines from residential areas in the Golan.
- Continued to develop robust networks with Palestinian, Israeli and International NGO’s.
- Al-marsad application for getting a Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC is being discussed inside the UN before voting.
- Conducting a program of human rights speaking tours in the Golan for delegations, groups and individuals.
- Currently preparing a shadow report for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- Successfully campaigned on behalf of women to improve their ability to travel to Damascus
- Petitioned organizations and governments to enforce a boycott of products made by settlers in occupied territory.

A. Specific staff activities

Mr. Salman Fakher-Eldeen

Salman is a communications and public relations officer for Al-Marsad. He is the first point of contact for the organization, fielding media inquiries, hosting delegates from other NGO’s and providing visitors with personal human rights tours and information about human rights issues in the Occupied Golan. Salman coordinates interviews with local human rights victims due to the needs of the international volunteers. In the wake of the Nakba and Naksa Day protests Salman was widely interviewed and quoted in news reports around the world. Salman also oversees Al-Marsad’s internship program. His extensive knowledge of the area and connections in the community helps our international volunteers get access to the information they need to produce high-quality research and ensures they have an enjoyable time in the Golan. He acts as a tour-guide and translator and arranges field trips to important locations in the area.

Dr. Nizar Ayoub continued in his role as consultant and legal researcher with Al-Marsad. He has been active in establishing and developing the internship program, and also supervising the interns work, reviewing, editing and assisting the interns with their legal research. Dr. Ayoub was also responsible for applications for funding and establishing good relationships with donors. He has been busy drafting a variety of reports including a strategic plan for 2010-2012. He has also compiled and sent a variety of funding proposal packs to potential donors and drafting activity reports to them. During 2011 he follows Al-marsad's application for the UN for getting a consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC. Dr. Ayoub has also been involved in networking with other NGOs. Strong relationships with other human rights organizations provides a valuable support structure and a wealth of experience to learn from.

Mrs. Majdoleen Safadi began her position as part-time administrative assistant in October 2009. Since then she has taken control of overall running of the Al-marsad office. Her main duties include office accounting and financial management, preparing annual and interim financial reports, monitoring of Al-Marsad's correspondences, assisting in the drafting of funding proposals and general office administration. She ensures that the office is efficiently and professionally organized and as such her role is vital to the development of the organization.

Mrs. Areen Sabaq Halabe (BA in English and Education) continues her part-time position as a translator, secretary, program assistant and website manager. Since then she provided vital translating services from Arabic and Hebrew into English, facilitating the interns research on a broad range of topics. This important service enables the researchers to access information that would otherwise be unavailable to them. She recently translated Al-Marsad's report "Breaking Down the Fence" into Arabic and is currently translating other English language reports. She has also developed an informative power point presentation which documents the reality of life under occupation in the Golan and is developing Al-Marsad's Arabic language website.

Abulkher Abu Jabal has continued to provide crucial legal advice to the Arab population of the Golan. He has also worked extensively on the problem of family separation for the local indigenous communities and writing to the Israeli authorities for removing the obstacles which forbidding the population from travelling to Damascus and end the discrimination against women on this regard.

Jameel Abu Jabal is one of the members of Al-Marsad's Board of Directors. He is intensively engaged with the daily work of Al-marsad and continues to help coordinate the work between all employees, prepare financial reports and provide supplies and services to the office and the interns.

C. Interns

Al-Marsad's internship program continues to thrive, having hosted four international interns in the first six months of 2011. Mai Brit Wulf arrived in March and stayed until June. She is preparing a report on Druze identity. Don Pyper arrived in June and will stay

until the end of August and is developing Al-Marsad's report on the Nakba and Naksa day protests and the right of return for refugees. Mona Smith and Anna Sanchez Lopez both arrived in early July and will work until the beginning of November and the end of September respectively. Their research topics in the are in the development stage.

The interns assisted the work of Al-Marsad by:

- Undertaking legal research,
- Conducting interviews with Majdal Shams residents,
- Assisting with the drafting of various reports for the UN bodies,
- Writing position papers on various topics including education and Druze identity
- Writing position papers regarding the human rights violations perpetrated by the Israeli Occupying Forces on Nakba and Naksa Day.
- Producing news articles for Western news outlets.
- Undertaking research on the psychological effects of occupation and witnessing violence on youth.

Al-Marsad believes that its international internship program is of great benefit to both the organization and the individual interns themselves. This year we have established links with the University of Hamburg in Germany, Windsor Law School in Canada, and Complutense University in Madrid. Al-Marsad believes that there is a currently lack of information about the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan within the international community and that inviting interns live and work in Majdal Shams allows them to gain an appreciation for the area and share their experiences with others when they return home. To date all of the interns that have worked with the organization have said that they found the experience to be beneficial on a multitude of levels.

“Working as an intern with Al-Marsad has been a fantastic experience. It provided me the opportunity to do human rights research about situations that are affecting the local community, to learn about the conflict in the Occupied Golan and to take my research back with me to Canada. The people of Majdal Shams were incredibly welcoming and I'm happy I can tell their story to students in the West.”

D. Composition of Al-Marsad's Board of Directors

1. Dr. Samia Abu Jabal, President. Gynecologist.
2. Majeed Safadi, LLM Journalism. Director of Al Jazeera camera staff Israel/Palestine.
3. Jamel Abu Jabal, PhD Jurisprudence.
4. Atef Safadi, press photographer EPA.
5. Naif Fakhreldeen, LLM Veterinary.
6. Madad Kalani, LLM Communications.
7. Madad Ewidat, farmer.

E. Composition of Al-Marsad's team

1. Dr. Nizar Ayoub, Consultant/Legal researcher. PhD International Law, Institute of State and Law, Moscow. Lawyer-Member of Israel Bar.
2. Abulkher Abu Jabal, MA Jurisprudence, St. Petersburg University, Lawyer Member of Israel Bar.
3. Salman Fakherdeen, Public Relations Officer
4. Mrs Majdoleen Safadi, Administrative Officer
5. Mrs. Areen Sabaq Halabe, Secretary and Programme Assistant.

▪

1.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Al-Marsad is proud of what it has accomplished in 2011. The organization was able to provide commentary and context for dozens of media outlets in the wake of some of the worst violence this area has seen during the conflict. We continue to produce high-quality legal research, monitor and document of human rights violations, and build the capacity of the organization despite our precarious funding situation.

The organization continues to evolve and has now firmly established itself as a credible voice for issues about human rights in the Occupied Golan. New legal reports and shadow reports were developed by the local team and the international volunteers. The high-quality research they consistently produce suggests that the close cooperation between the interns and local staff is providing them with the resources necessary to maximize their time spent in the Golan. We expect interest in our internship program will continue to grow in the months and years ahead, creating more links between Al-Marsad and solidarity organizations and universities around the world. The dissemination information as widely as possible remains the one of the best means to improve human rights conditions of local residents.

Al-marsad still facing a problem with mobilizing funds requested for conducting its work and suffered from cuts that have been made by the Spanish Solidarity. For 2012, we have quite high expectations of mobilizing more resources by getting new international partners. In case we will get a consultative status with ECOSOC, It would be an opportunity to reach the international community for advocating human rights issues in the occupied Golan

End