

# ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION of NORTH AMERICA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Voices of Compassion: IONA Joined “Interfaith Voices for Gaza” Event to Advocate for Ceasefire and Freedom

[WARREN, MI] - In an exceptional display of unity and empathy, a diverse assembly of individuals from different faiths and background came together in an event titled “Interfaith Voices for Gaza: An Evening of Learning, Lamentation and Liberation”. Hosted by the Steering Committee of Friends of Sabeel – Southeast Michigan and held at the Christ Episcopal Church in Dearborn (1/24/2024), this event aimed to address the ongoing conflict in Gaza and foster understanding, compassion, and unity.

The Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) played a vital role in sponsoring the event, underscoring its commitment to promoting peace and justice in the region. Imam Mustapha Elturk, the President (Ameer) of IONA, also took the stage as one of the esteemed speakers, sharing his insights and heartfelt message with the attendees.

The event featured a distinguished lineup of speakers, including Jonathan Kuttab (Director of Friends of Sabeel North America); Rabbi Alana Alpert of Congregation T’chiya; Huwaida Arraf (Palestinian Christian Activist and co-Founder of the International Solidarity Movement); Dr. Soraya (Layla) Saatchi (Philosopher, Middle East Historian, and Assistant Professor of Teaching with the Irvin D. Reid Honors College at Wayne State University); Rosina Hassoun (Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology at Saginaw Valley State University); and Joshua Feinstein of Jewish Voice for Peace – Detroit.

Throughout the evening, the speakers explored the historical context of the Palestine-Israel conflicts, emphasizing a time when diverse communities coexisted harmoniously in the region. They also shared deeply personal experiences related to the ongoing conflict, providing insight into the profound impact it has had on individuals and society as a whole.

A resounding message from the event was a call to governments worldwide to take proactive steps in initiating a ceasefire and securing freedom of Palestinians. Imam Mustapha Elturk emphasized that “the current conflict in Gaza is a test of humanity, a moral challenge that calls upon the conscience of the global community.” He presented heart-wrenching statistics, such as the devastating loss of at least 23,000 Palestinian lives, many of whom were innocent children; the relentless bombardment, restrictions, and abuse endured by the people of Gaza, as well as the widespread destruction of homes, schools, farms, and hospitals. Most strikingly, it was revealed that 93% of Gaza residents are grappling with hunger.

Imam Mustapha Elturk and the other speakers fervently urged the international community to intensify their efforts toward achieving a ceasefire and liberating the Palestinian people from the persistent oppression they endure.

This event served as a powerful reminder that unity, understanding, and empathy can pave the path towards peace and justice in times of conflict. IONA’s significant role in sponsoring and speaking at the event exemplifies its dedication to building bridges and fostering positive change.

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IONA’s mission is to transform its members and help transform the surrounding communities to righteous, God-fearing people, who collectively strive for the highest moral standard and constantly seek forgiveness from our Creator to earn His pleasure. We seek His compassion and mercy in this life and in the hereafter. We rejuvenate our soul through internal struggle and spiritual exercise in worship of our creator God. The strength of our belief in God gives us the courage to establish good and forbid evil, thus promoting a system of justice for all mankind.