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The Missing Pieces of the Middle East Peace

On Thursday evening, October 23rd at 7:30 pm in Kane Hall on the campus of the University of Washington, Mercer Island residents are invited to attend a public presentation by Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian academic and President of Al Quds University and Ami Ayalon, former head of the Israeli Navy and past Director of Israeli Internal Security (*Shin Bet*). This event is the results of work by an organization originating from Mercer Island called FindCommonGround www.findcommonground.org.

Leslie Susser, in the July 2003 issue of *The Jerusalem Report* writes the following: “Last year at the height of suicide bombings and while the Israeli Army was combing Palestinian cities for terrorists, former *Shin Bet* security services Chief Ami Ayalon quietly visited East Jerusalem to discuss a peace plan with Al Quds University president Sari Nusseibeh. The two met a few months before at a conference in Europe and were struck by the similarity of their views. They agreed that violence was leading nowhere and that Israeli and Palestinian leaders should get back to the negotiating table and tackle the tough issues.” The result of that meeting is a joint initiative called the People’s Voice. The People’s Voice is a grass roots initiative aiming for a million signatures on a declaration for principles of peace. Ayalon and Nusseibeh believe that with a mass petition, signed by the Palestinian and Israeli citizenry, no government will be able to ignore them. On Thursday, October 23rd you will have the opportunity to hear the ideology behind this petition as well as the success and challenges of the work of the People’s Voice campaign in Israel and Palestine. An additional public appearance of Dr. Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon will take place at 3:30 p.m. also on Thursday, October 23rd in Piggott Auditorium on the campus of Seattle University.

The sponsoring organization, FindCommonGround, was founded a year and a half ago in order to discover and present ways to end the cycle of death and violence in the Middle East. FindCommonGround’s goals are: to inform the general public that peace in the Middle East is important for a secure and prosperous America, to educate citizens about the complexities of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and to provide a forum to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of direct U.S. involvement in creating a peaceful solution. Founding members of the Steering Committee include Island residents: Rick Duchaine, Rev. Paul Fauske, Rev. Robert E Hughes, former residents the Rev. Jack Olive & Glynn Olive, and Yaffa Maritz, Malka Applebaum Maizel, Paul Shoemaker, Vicki Smolke and the Rev. E. Anni Stedman. Additional members of the Steering Committee include:

Sister Joyce Cox, Barbara Hurst, Rabbi Anson Laytner, Lori Markowitz and the Rev. Andrew Overman .

Past lectures co-sponsored by FindCommonGround that were held on Mercer Island included: Professor Stephen Speigel, Middle East Specialist from UCLA, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, Palestinian Academic and Pollster from Ramallah, East Jerusalem, Dr. Eyad Saraj, the Mental Health Director for Psychiatric Services in Gaza and Jonathan Jacobi, Founder of the Israel Policy Forum in New York. Co-sponsorship of this event is provided by: Beyond Borders: An Arab - Jewish Dialogue, Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, Jerusalem Arc, Middle East Center, Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, Seattle University, Temple De Hirsch – Sinai and University Temple, United Methodist Church. FindCommonGround hopes that the October 23rd presentation will be one of many future public presentations.