We are not weak, we are strong, and sometimes we don’t know this fact. You need to bring the strong out of you. I did this and I am proud. Coming to the centre helped me to know more about myself and what I can do. I didn’t know that I can stand in front of governments and demand for things I need for my children and for my community. Now I say my rights are not just about me, they are also about my community."

Volunteer from the Women’s Committee in Kufr Aqab, East Jerusalem
BUILDING A NEW LANDSCAPE FROM THE GROUND UP

The International Community Action Network is committed to creating a world in which all people share the same rights.

We believe that social justice is the most reliable foundation for strong, healthy, and tolerant communities. Housed at McGill University since 1997, ICAN has established 11 academically linked and volunteer-driven rights-based community practice centres in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. These centres empower over 120,000 people per year to access institutions, to work together to improve neighbourhood conditions, and to influence policy.

Focus Areas

All ICAN’s centres employ social workers and lawyers and are situated in the heart of disadvantaged communities. Our centres provide access to social and legal aid such as:

- Adequate housing
- Legal rights
- Rehabilitation
- Youth empowerment
- Education
- Programs for women victims of violence
- Care and access for the disabled, sick and elderly
- Referral services
- Outreach
- Public education
- Government policy research
Empowering the community to effect change

ICAN is committed to the belief that the reduction of inequality and the promotion of civil society and social justice are intricately related to peace building and security. We use an approach called Rights-Based Community Practice in which Social Work and Law work together to promote the rule of law among people of diversity both within and between different social groups.
ICAN’s 11 centres have been developed in cooperation with Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian partners. Established in some of the most disadvantaged areas of these three countries, the centres are autonomous while they share these 7 key concepts:

1. Located in the most disadvantaged and the most ethnically diverse communities in their respective cities

2. **Walk-in services** to address personal experiences of disentitlement. Services are offered primarily by volunteers from the community, many of whom experienced disentitlement and have been assisted by the centres

3. **Volunteer-based**. Community volunteers participate in decision-making processes that impact on the policies of the practice centres, allowing for civilian oversight at different levels of policy and programming

4. **Employ social workers and lawyers**, allowing non-state actors to take legal ownership and enhance civilian oversight of the legal system

5. **Outreach work** to identify common legal and social issues of disentitlement and recruit the community and volunteers to organize around them

6. **Counter disentitlement** through community organization, legal action and empowerment

7. **Academically linked** providing community residents with academic and institutional resources, and universities with progressive learning environments for community practice, research and volunteering
ICAN CENTRES
PALESTINE . ISRAEL . JORDAN

PALESTINE

ICAN’s main institutional partner in Palestine is An Najah National University in Nablus. ICAN has 5 affiliated centres including its main centre in Nablus, 3 centres in East Jerusalem (Sur Baher, Al-Tur, and Kufr Aqab), and the mobile centre which serves surrounding communities.

From social isolation to community action

Kufr Aqab, East Jerusalem

ICAN Fellow Kifah Banioweda organized the most marginalized members of the community—mothers of children with mental and physical disabilities—to establish "The Women’s Empowerment Committee".

Up until Kifah’s intervention, these women were kept out of public life, shamed for circumstances beyond their control.

Kifah facilitated their transition from isolation to action by organizing support groups. As the attendance to these support groups grew, so did their ambition.

Today these women are the greatest actors of social change within their community. A strong team of 12, the municipality granted them an office in which to conduct their various activities. These initiatives include visits to the sick and elderly, food and clothing collections, and advocating for the rights of women and other marginalized community members.

Mobile Rights Centre

The Mobile Rights Center, pictured above, now serves over 8 cities around Nablus in the West Bank.

Community Service Centre, Nablus

ICAN’s flagship centre, the Community Service Centre employs 10 full-time staff and trains 1500 student volunteers every semester. At the forefront of youth engagement, this centre is recognized for training and providing volunteers to a large number of Palestinian NGOs.
BUILDING A NEIGHBOURHOOD OF COEXISTENCE

ISRAEL

ICAN’s main institutional partners in Israel are the Arab-Jewish Centre for Equality, Empowerment, and Cooperation (AJEEC) and Sapir Academic College. Centres operate in Sderot, Ofakim, Beer Sheva, and Lod, serving mixed communities of Jewish Israelis, Palestinian Israelis, Russian immigrants, East African asylum seekers, Bedouins, and other groups. ICAN’s advocacy efforts in Israel focuses on issues such as public housing, access to transportation, universal health care, and improved access to mental health professionals.

Finding common ground through grassroots advocacy

Ofakim and Sderot, Israel

ICAN Fellow Amit Kitain began his field work in Sderot, one of our most stable centres, a staple of the community. Fuelled by social work students from our academic partner Sapir College, this centre is one of the few places in Sderot that manages to bring together a society that often segregates itself by ethnicity. At this centre, Ethiopian asylum-seekers volunteer alongside newly arrived Russian immigrants and societal gaps are bridged in the most constructive way as members of the society recognize their need to work together. Recent advocacy achievements include:

- Reinforced psychiatric and social work staff at public mental health clinics
- Subsidized housing renovations for low-income residents in Sderot
- Ongoing discussions with the Minister of Transportation regarding public transportation issues
I CAN’s institutional partners in Jordan is the University of Jordan and its main centre Waq3 is located in Ashrafiyeh, where Jordanians, Yemenis, Libyans, Palestinians, and now over 30,000 Syrian refugees live side by side amid scarce services and resources.

I CAN’s notable efforts in Ashrafiyeh include providing integration programs for Syrian refugees as well as campaigns to combat violence against women, influencing public policy and pioneering programs to educate women and men.

**Women take the lead**

ICAN Fellow Ibisisam Khasawneh has been over-seeing the centre’s activities since arriving there last September. Among other projects, Ibisisam facilitated the establishment of a women’s committee consisting of residents from all backgrounds that have been bringing positive social change to the neighbourhood of Ashrafiyeh. Improved waste management practices, more green space from the municipality to serve as a playground for children, and an overall greater sense of unity between these two communities have been established.

**Responding to the Syrian crisis**

ICAN’s first Syrian fellow Adnan Almhamied braved ISIS territory to join the program in 2014. At the Waq3 centre in Jordan he initiated the Let’s Talk program to engage Syrian and Jordanian men in constructive dialogue on personal, political, and social issues, a first step towards healing, integration, and resilience.

**Waq3’s major projects include:**

- A core group of university volunteers help children with their homework each week and plans for building a children’s library are currently underway.

- Dream a World Child-Friend Space: every week local artists are invited to the centre to engage with children through the arts, offering emotional and psycho-social support.

- The centre offers daily literacy programs and workshops on gender-based violence and women's rights funded by the EU. Women have the opportunity to learn about their rights regarding issues such as divorce, property ownership, and child custody.

- The women’s committee has established peer lending projects to fund personal needs, family expenses, and other small projects. One such program helped a group of Syrian women establish a kitchen to run a catering business.
ICAN'S MSW FELLOWSHIP AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Training the next generation of social justice leaders

The leaders of ICAN’s centres are community organizers from the Middle East who were trained at McGill University’s School of Social Work in human rights advocacy, rights-based community practice, and community organizing.

These fellows spend one year with their families living and studying in Montreal, sowing the seeds of coexistence to bring back home and strengthen their vision of a Middle East where all people share the same rights.

As an ICAN Fellow at McGill, I feel like a bird, flying in a flock of birds who have never met one another before. Strangers though we are, we have made a pact to protect each other on our journey.

Kifah Banioweda, ICAN MSW Fellow ’16

Besides the social work curriculum, these Fellows are placed in community organizations in Montreal to learn new models to put into practice in their home communities. They also receive conflict resolution training and participate in workshops, retreats, and narrative exchanges to explore their diverse cultural and political perspectives.
Dr. Jim Torczyner joined the McGill University’s Social Work faculty in 1973 after completing his PhD at Berkeley. He later founded the Montreal Consortium for Human Rights Advocacy Training (MCHRAT) which extends multi-disciplinary expertise to groups that have traditionally lacked access to such knowledge. In 1997, Dr. Torczyner refocused his attention primarily on the Middle East and founded ICAN with a belief that the reduction of inequality and the promotion of civil society are intricately related to peacebuilding. Jim has published extensively on rights-based practice and is currently writing a book on the 20-year ICAN experience.

Amal is one of the key shapers of public opinion regarding the status of women and the Arab minority in Israel. A former ICAN Fellow, her tremendous contributions bringing greater equality to Israeli society include economic empowerment programs for Bedouin-Arab women, establishing bilingual schools, and leading the Arab-Jewish Centre for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation (AJEEC). She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize within the “1000 Women Submissions Project”. Amal is currently pursuing her PhD in Social Work at McGill University.
YOUR CONTRIBUTION MAKES AN IMPACT AT EVERY LEVEL

Support community action in the Middle East

ICAN’s program was the subject of a comprehensive independent evaluation commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency (now Global Affairs Canada). The results are impressive. Evaluators found that ICAN achieved excellent results in all outcome areas. Despite the political and economic instability, ICAN improved center and network management skills, responded consistently to the socio-economic and political needs and challenges identified in national and local contexts, improved the psycho-social well-being of residents, and spurred positive change in municipal and public policies.

ICAN is playing a crucial role in each of these societies. It is improving access to education, housing, literacy, and health. It is teaching people about their rights and about how their rights may be vindicated through the democratic process.

We could not do this work without your support. Please join us. Your gift will be more than a contribution; it will be an investment in a productive, peaceful, and secure Middle East.

$50 Supports one case at ICAN’s RBCP centres to access rights and entitlements, working together with trained volunteers and staff.

$750 Fully revitalizes the home of a low-income family in Palestine or Jordan.

$5000 Provides a volunteer training program at one of our centres, developing community leaders in marginalized neighbourhoods.

$25 000 Supports one community organizer in one of our centers for a year.

$100 000 Supports a two-year fellowship at McGill University for an emerging civil society leader.

Gifts can be made to ICAN through McGill University and are tax deductible in Canada in the United States. For more information about making a gift to ICAN, contact Amal Elsana at 514-398-6717 or amal.el-sana@mcgill.ca
I immediately knew that this was the place I had dreamed about; this was the place I imagined when I decided to study social work.

Ayala, ICAN Community Worker
ICAN MOVING FORWARD

For the next five years, ICAN plans to focus on advancing resilience training and empowerment with the following initiatives:

1. **Maintain and develop the programs taking place at our 11 centres** in Ashrafieh (Jordan), Nablus (Palestine), East Jerusalem (Palestine), Sderot (Israel), Lod (Israel), and Beer Sheva (Israel) by building relationships with Institutional partners and recruiting the next cohort of ICAN MSW Fellows for 2017.

2. **Assist An Najah University in Nablus, Palestine to establish an internationally accredited academic Social Work program.** In line with this goal, ICAN's planned expansion of rights-based community centres into the Negev and the Galilee will be directly linked to the An Najah academic program, providing students the opportunity to put their theoretical learning into practice to service marginalized communities in the region.

3. **ICAN knows first-hand the key role social workers play in facilitating the integration and resettlement of traumatized communities.** As the Syrian crises rages on, ICAN is committed to 1) assisting the Jordanian government to integrate Syrian refugees into Jordanian economic, social, and institutional life and 2) to laying the groundwork to introduce the profession of social work in Syria and to train future generations of Syrian professionals dedicated to the democratic rebuilding of their country.

These goals entail further developing our programs at Waqe3, our centre operating in East Amman that provides many Syrian refugee families with workshops on gender-based violence, information about their rights, and is in the process of establishing a children's library and art centre.

We are finding the resources to establish a mobile rights centre to serve in the Zaatari Refugee camp, and are recruiting more Syrian social justice leaders to join our International MSW program at McGill.