



ARC•PEACE

International Architects Designers Planners for Social Responsibility

NGO in consultative status (Category II) with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

BOARD

Stockholm, 20 May 2014

Bijayanand Misra, *Co-Chair*
ARC•PEACE India,
bijayanand.misra@gmail.com

Luz Maria Sanchez *Co-Chair*
ARC•PEACE Peru
marilush@terra.com.pe

Dick Urban Vestbro, *Secretary*
Sweden, dickurba@gmail.com

Oscar Margenet Nadal,
Vice-secretary, Spain
margenetnadalriba@gmail.com

Leyla Ayoub, Tunisia
leylaayoub@hotmail.com

Osman El Kheir,
ARC•PEACE Sudan
osman.elkheir@gmail.com

Franziska Amacher ADPSR,
USA, famarc@earthlink.net

Dania González, Cuba Solar
daniam@arquitectura.cujae.edu.cu

Tom Woolley, Scientists
for Global Responsibility, UK
tom.woolley@btconnect.com

Graeme Bristol, Centre for
Architecture and Human Rights,
Canada/Thailand gbristol@gmail.com

Hector Animas
ARC•PEACE Mexico
hectoranimas@me.com

Ryoichi Shuto, Japan
ludwigrs55@hotmail.com

Andreas Fitrianto, Indonesia,
andreafitrianto@gmail.com

Predrag Milosevic, Serbia
pmilos59@gmail.com

Øystein Grønning, Norway
oystein@migrant.no

Natalia Dulcey, Colombia
nadulcey@yahoo.com

Paul Mpungu, Kenya
pmpungu@uonbi.ac.ke

Paul Broches, ADPSR
UN representative
broches@mitchellgiurgola.com

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Tician Papachristou,
Yury Platonov, **Akio Hayashi**,
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President Albert Dubler
International Union of Architects (UIA)
Tour Maine Montparnasse - B.P. 158
33, avenue du Maine
75755 PARIS Cedex 15 – France

Dear colleagues,

ARC•PEACE writes to you in support of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), which has proposed that UIA suspend the membership of the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA) for its failure to discipline members whose work is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This convention clearly prohibits the transfer of the civilian population of an occupying power into occupied territory. We agree that IAUA has the authority to discipline or even eject members that violate professional ethics, including respect for international legal standards. Indeed, there are few higher reasons for a professional association to discipline members than for serious violations of international law, as in this case. If IAUA cannot be moved to disciplinary action by the repeated and flagrant violations being carried out by some of its members, then UIA must remind IAUA that professional ethics do not exist to be enforced only sometimes.

We are well aware that many Israeli architects and planners do not violate international law. Some Israeli architects deplore the actions of their colleagues who are designing for the Israeli government's military occupation, and indeed some have even spoken out in opposition to these actions. We have great respect for our colleagues who hold on to their ethics in the face of a hostile national government and military establishment. These courageous colleagues need international support for their principled ethical position, and the best support UIA can give is to insist that IAUA also uphold ethics. Principled architects will not lose their representation at UIA, because IAUA does not speak for them: IAUA speaks for a position that architects should not be disciplined for grave violations of international law – a position that none of us can accept.

ARC•PEACE was founded in 1987 to promote peace and protect the natural environment through outreach and education among architects, designers, and planners. The situation in Israel/Palestine has been an ongoing concern of our network for many years, and we have been greatly discouraged that the growth of Israeli settlements within what was to have become a Palestinian state has consistently decreased the prospects for peaceful solution of the conflict. Architecture and planning, when conducted ethically and in a spirit of social responsibility, are valuable tools for achieving peace among people and harmony with the natural world. We are pained to note that when conducted unethically, architecture and planning can become tools of military occupation and even instruments of war by other means. If professional ethics mean anything, certainly they mean a refusal to participate in such a destructive and damaging form of professional practice.

We urge UIA to accept RIBA's proposal and thereby to encourage IAUA to regain a proper respect for professional ethics and international law through disciplining the unacceptable actions of some of its members. This is essential to maintaining the mission of architects and planners to serve the public interest as agents of peace and social responsibility around the world.

Bijay Misra
Co-Chair

Dick Urban Vestbro
Secretary

Raphael Sperry
ADPSR, USA