



# 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

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**Bijayanand Misra**, *Co-Chair*  
ARC•PEACE India,  
[bijayanand.misra@gmail.com](mailto:bijayanand.misra@gmail.com)

**Luz Maria Sanchez** *Co-Chair*  
ARC•PEACE Peru  
[marilush@terra.com.pe](mailto:marilush@terra.com.pe)

**Dick Urban Vestbro**, *Secretary*  
Sweden, [dickurba@gmail.com](mailto:dickurba@gmail.com)

**Oscar Margenet Nadal**,  
*Vice-secretary*, Spain  
[margenetnadalriba@gmail.com](mailto:margenetnadalriba@gmail.com)

**Leyla Ayoub**, Tunisia  
[leylaayoub@hotmail.com](mailto:leylaayoub@hotmail.com)

**Osman El Kheir**,  
ARC•PEACE Sudan  
[osman.elkheir@gmail.com](mailto:osman.elkheir@gmail.com)

**Franziska Amacher** ADPSR,  
USA, [famarc@earthlink.net](mailto:famarc@earthlink.net)

**Dania González**, Cuba Solar  
[daniam@arquitectura.cujae.edu.cu](mailto:daniam@arquitectura.cujae.edu.cu)

**Tom Woolley**, Scientists  
for Global Responsibility, UK  
[tom.woolley@btconnect.com](mailto:tom.woolley@btconnect.com)

**Graeme Bristol**, Centre for  
Architecture and Human Rights,  
Canada/Thailand [gbristol@gmail.com](mailto:gbristol@gmail.com)

**Hector Animas**  
ARC•PEACE Mexico  
[hectoranimas@me.com](mailto:hectoranimas@me.com)

**Ryoichi Shuto**, Japan  
[ludwigrs55@hotmail.com](mailto:ludwigrs55@hotmail.com)

**Andreas Fitrianto**, Indonesia,  
[andreafitrianto@gmail.com](mailto:andreafitrianto@gmail.com)

**Predrag Milosevic**, Serbia  
[pmilos59@gmail.com](mailto:pmilos59@gmail.com)

**Øystein Grønning**, Norway  
[oystein@migrant.no](mailto:oystein@migrant.no)

**Natalia Dulcey**, Colombia  
[nadulcey@yahoo.com](mailto:nadulcey@yahoo.com)

**Paul Mpungu**, Kenya  
[pmpungu@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:pmpungu@uonbi.ac.ke)

**Paul Broches**, ADPSR  
*UN representative*  
[broches@mitchellgiurgola.com](mailto:broches@mitchellgiurgola.com)

*Honorary members for life:*

**Tician Papachristou**,  
**Yury Platonov**, **Akio Hayashi**,  
**Jim Morgan**, **Sven Thiberg**

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