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Contact: Alaina Sadick

www.anahatagrace.org | anahata.outreach@gmail.com

5th Annual DC Global Mala Project Unites Yoga Community for a Cause

WASHINGTON, DC — On Sunday, September 18, DC activists and yogis of all traditions will gather for a collective practice in support of Anahata Grace—a DC-based nonprofit that brings the benefits of yoga to vulnerable communities locally and abroad. The majority of funds from the event will support an upcoming teacher training project in Ramallah, West Bank, to increase resources and establish new and increased sustainable yoga-based wellness programs to schools, community centers, and refugee camps.

In addition to improving physical and mental health and providing relief for stress disorders, yoga can be integrated into life off the mat as a catalyst for transformation and growth within a community. According to Maha, co-founder of [Farashe Yoga](#), a nonprofit center in Ramallah, these tools are especially important in the Palestinian context, where movement and access to economic and social resources is heavily restricted.

Farashe and Anahata will serve as partners on the project—which will be the first of its kind in Palestine. Since it opened in 2010, Farashe has been striving to meet the needs of the community—offering safe, accessible yoga throughout occupied territories with only a few volunteer teachers. Anahata will help to increase the cadre of teachers that are able to offer these healing services and enable Farashe to increase their program offerings and outreach efforts.

Anahata's international work is directed by its mission to empower people to work through trauma and improve their quality of life—removing barriers to holistic wellness tools that exist where those services are most needed. Beginning with a pilot project in Rwanda in 2007, they have focused on work in post-conflict areas, building sustainable programs through teacher trainings, program development, and the creation of supportive grants tools.

"Yoga is a transformative healing practice. As we move, breathe, and open to the meditative awareness of our own being, we are reminded of the interdependency of all things and of our belonging in the world," says Shawn Parell, Director of Programs for Anahata Grace. "Inspired by our own experience on the path of yoga, we believe it should be available to anyone who seeks it."

This year marks the 5th anniversary of the DC Global Mala Project, which has become one of the largest in the world, having raised over \$50,000 through the support of sponsors and participants since its inception in 2006. The event is one in a series of events taking place in more than 200 cities around the world in September—which is also National Yoga month—to raise awareness and support for some of the most pressing issues facing the world today. One such parallel event will be hosted by Farashe in Ramallah on the same day as the DC Mala—raising funds across the world for the same cause.

"Yoga is one of the few common denominators for millions of people around the world; together we are creating a circle around the earth and dedicating our energy to peace" said Shiva Rea, world-renowned yoga teacher and catalyst for the Global Mala Project.

Hundreds of participants are expected to gather for the Mala events on Sunday in Meridian

Hill Park and adjacent Josephine Butler Parks Center. The schedule includes a Dharma talk and meditation practice, a fundamentals clinic for first time practitioners, and the core practice of 108 Sun Salutations—all led by renowned teachers and set to the tune of the DC Drum Circle.

Information and tickets to the event available at <http://www.anahatainternational.org/index.php/dc-global-mala/>

About Anahata Grace

Anahata Grace is an international nonprofit organization, based in Washington DC, serving vulnerable communities locally and abroad through compassionate action to promote healing and social change.

Believing that everyone deserves a path to wellbeing, Anahata Grace serves at-risk populations in communities through a local campaign and international projects in trauma-affected countries. The focus of the local campaign is to provide yoga classes and other wellness services to domestic violence survivors, veterans, adults with HIV/AIDS, homeless adults, front-line workers, and at-risk youth. Internationally, Anahata provides yoga teacher trainings and learning immersions in partnership with community-based organizations in post-conflict areas.

About Farashe Yoga Center

Amidst a backdrop of a prolonged 60-year conflict, Farashe, a community yoga center in the heart of the Palestinian city of Ramallah, is providing a safe place for Palestinians to breathe, and relieve stress and anxiety from the harsh daily realities of living under military occupation. Farashe, which means "butterfly" in Arabic, aims to bring safe and accessible yoga to all throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, as a catalyst for transformation and growth within themselves, their families, and community.

Created and built purely through volunteers and donations, the Farashe Yoga Center is committed to the principles of "seva". As a not-for-profit organization, class fees are reinvested into the Center's maintenance, outreach yoga sessions in surrounding refugee camps, and to community development projects identified by the communities they work with. Though yoga is still new to most Palestinians, Farashe has been well-received by the Ramallah community with dozens of people coming to volunteer their time and resources to ensure its operation. Farashe officially opened in November 2010 and offers yoga classes five days a week, continuing to draw in first-time and veteran yoga students from all over the Palestinian territories.