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ANNUAL REPORT 2017



A word from Mehra Rimer, Co-founder and Chair

In 2014, I was invited to visit the Karama (Dignity) Center, a nascent “incubator” for dialogue, bridge-building and non-violence in Gush Etsion, Palestinian Territories (Area C). At Karama, extraordinary Israeli and Palestinian peace activists gathered to envision a social and political reality founded on dignity, trust, and a mutual recognition and respect for both peoples’ historic belonging to the land.

Their initiative was mind-blowing. I went back a few times to the center and to that region to learn more and discover other sets of activists and grassroots projects. I came back every time with hope. I wondered why these constructive initiatives rarely made the news and I decided to make it my mission to give them visibility and support.

In 2015, I organized the “Painful Hope” conference, in order to share with my Geneva community the glimpse of hope that I felt at Karama when I first met the Palestinian non-violence activist Ali Abu Awwad and his Israeli partner, Shaul Judelman. The association B8 of Hope was born shortly after, in 2016, with the enthusiasm and support of my Geneva friends and co-founders. Like myself, they were all motivated by that glimpse of Hope and Ali’s vision that “dialogue is a secure place for argument”, that “non-violence is the art of being a human being” and finally, that “peace is a place where two truths meet and where we can live in dignity, respecting our differences”.

The Israeli and Palestinian civil societies are leading the path to peace, from the bottom up, through people-to-people connection and respect. We need to support them. This is what B8 of Hope is striving for!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my amazing co-founders who have developed our activities tremendously in the two years of our association’s existence. You will discover our work through this annual report and can find out more on www.b8ofhope.org. Last but not least, a big thank you to our supporters and our volunteers who make our work possible.

B8fully Yours,



Mehra Rimer

About B8 of Hope

Despite living so close to each other, Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank exist in almost complete separation. Both sides have little knowledge of each other's lives and are too often raised to fear and hate each other.

In 2016, a group of eight friends in Geneva, hailing from diverse backgrounds –among them Jewish, Christian and Muslim– decided to found B8 of Hope (to be pronounced Beit, the Arabic and Hebrew word for home). They were all inspired by the work of Ali Abu Awwad, a non-violence activist dedicated to Palestinian-Israeli dialogue.

Ali Abu Awwad often says to his audience abroad: “Stop being pro-Israel or pro-Palestine. You are not helping by adding more fuel to the conflict. If you want to help, be pro-solution!”

OUR VISION

B8 of Hope promotes established grassroots initiatives led by Israeli and Palestinian civil society activists. The goal of these initiatives is to re-establish as far as possible individual links between Israeli and Palestinian people, to teach them to know and accept one another and to communicate through peaceful dialogue.

We believe that by supporting these initiatives of dialogue bridge-building and by uniting rather than dividing, we are creating the favorable conditions for a sustainable peace.

OUR MISSION

B8 of Hope serves as an umbrella organization that donates to constructive grassroots initiatives in Israel and Palestine. B8 of Hope:

- funds their activities on the ground
- gives them visibility by organizing public interventions at different venues and institutions
- creates networking opportunities
- offers the possibility of synergy on the ground between organizations and abroad between their supporters
- provides media coverage
- advises the initiatives on how to better structure and use their resources

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN 2017

Throughout the year, B8 of Hope organized and supported the following activities:

MARCH

- Ali Abu Awwad (Taghyeer and Roots) and Jean-Marc Liling travelled to Paris to present Roots, notably to J-Call Paris and to the *Liberal Synagogue of Paris*.
- Ali Abu Awwad participated in panels at Geneva's *International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights* and at the Global Studies Institute.
- Huda Abuarquob (Alliance for Middle East Peace) and Yael Treidel (Women Wage Peace) gave a conference at the Geneva's Graduate Institute.
- B8 of Hope organized its first fundraising gala in Geneva more than 450 people attended and heard from activists from our organizations.

JUNE

- Two members of the B8 of Hope committee travelled to Israel and Palestine to visit the supported projects and hear feedback from activists and stakeholders.

SEPTEMBER

- Miriam Toukan (Israeli Arab Christian singer, voice of Women Wage Peace) and Idan Toledano (Israeli Jewish musician, member of Combatants for Peace) gave music workshops and a concert at the *Ecole Internationale de Genève*.
- Further networking events in Paris, including at *Sciences-Po* and at the *American Graduate Studies Institute* were held by Jean-Marc Liling and Ali Abu Awwad.

OCTOBER

- Screenings of the movie *Disturbing the Peace* followed by panels with activists took place at Ciné 17, *École Internationale de Geneve* and *Le Rosey Concert Hall*.
- Ali Abu Awwad and Huda Abuarquob travelled to Morocco to speak at different panels as part of the *Jewish-Arab Music Festival of Essaouira*.

NOVEMBER

- Women Wage Peace and Huda Abuarquob were invited to speak at the commemoration of Yitzhak Rabin at the *Mairie du XX^e* in Paris. B8 of Hope organized some networking events.

DECEMBER

- Ali Abu Awwad participated to the *Zurich Human Rights Film Festival* and met with our team in Geneva for work sessions.



bruce shaffer hiddens

JUDUR / SHORASHIM / ROOTS

Along with Taghyeer, Women Wage Peace and Combatants for Peace, Roots is one of the four flagship initiatives supported by B8 of Hope. Roots is the first initiative launched by Ali Abu Awwad, with an Israeli partner, Shaul Judelman.

Roots is a unique network of local Palestinians and Israelis who have come to see each other as the partners they both need to end the conflict. Based on a mutual recognition of each people's connection to the Land, they are developing understanding and solidarity despite their ideological differences.



Their work is aimed at challenging the assumptions their communities hold about each other, building trust and creating a new discourse around the conflict in their respective societies.

Roots fosters a grassroots movement of understanding, nonviolence, and transformation among Israelis and Palestinians. It offers places where people can take responsibility and challenge the assumptions their communities hold about each other, building trust and creating a new discourse around the conflict in their respective societies.

Through its projects and workshops (the list is long: youth programs, meetings between the two communities in different forms such as photography workshops, speaking tours abroad), Roots create trust and partnership — the societal foundations upon which future political agreements can be built.

In 2017, B8 of Hope chose to sponsor two series of activities organized by Roots: the holiday camps and the pre-army academies visits.

HOLIDAY CAMPS

During the summer 2017, Roots welcomed 37 Israeli and Palestinian children living in the West Bank for a five-day overnight experience in Kibbutz Manera, in the north of Israel. Through a mixture of outdoor activities and workshops, the camp provided a fun and carefree setting for positive interactions.

During the same week, Roots ran four one-day summer camp at Merkaz Karame, with local children. Each day saw between 45 and 60 participants.

A message from David, the camp director, to his staff:

The campers soaked up love, respect and the experience of being heard. They saw that even between us it is okay to disagree, to get angry, to be hurt. But, the main thing they saw, is that it is okay to apologize. To forgive. To walk forward.

We can be proud with what we have done and I am telling you this is just a beginning. We are raising a generation for peace. We are writing the Ten Commandments of reconciliation. I promise that this is just a start.

PRE-ARMY ACADEMIES VISITS

Roots brings its message to the Israeli pre-army academies, exposing the students to both the Palestinian and settlers' narratives in order to build up their understanding of the people with whom they will be interacting during their service. This program is met with resounding approval and will be developed over the coming months.

More information : www.friendsofroots.net

TAGHYEER / CHANGE

The second flagship initiative supported by B8 of Hope is Taghyeer, a national peace movement founded by Ali Abu Awwad at the heart of the Palestinian civil society.

This innovative Palestinian nonviolence movement focuses on engaging the Palestinian society on a way forward to achieve social change and national goals through nonviolence.

With the financial support of B8 of Hope, Taghyeer set up several workshops to bring communities together around its strategy of social change through nonviolence.

THE EARTHWORM PROJECT

B8 of Hope helped implement an environmental project by connecting the Forest Tree Foundation with Ali Abu Awwad.

The Earthworm project aims to bring people together as caretakers of the land. At the Karama center, the project shows how humble actions, such as composting with worms, can help reduce waste, heal the land and create abundant and nutritious food. Palestinians and Israelis come to learn how to integrate those practices in their daily lives.

In the spirit of the work of Taghyeer, earthworm composting is part of a wider nonviolent movement fostering daily acts of care for a land that has suffered so much from divisions and conflicts.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Taghyeer facilitated a six-day series of training workshops with the International Alternatives to Violence Initiative. The objective was to prepare activists to cope with violence, handle conflicts and build trust and cooperation skills.

With the active support of B8 of Hope, Taghyeer also played a key role in bringing Palestinian women to meet with the Israeli activists of Women Wage Peace. In August, Taghyeer brought together a group of 70 Palestinian and Israeli women to work on the participation of thousands of independent Palestinian women to the Journey to Peace. This mass march to the Dead Sea successfully took place in October. Its aim was to seek a just and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



© Taghyeer



SUMUD CAMP

Taghyeer participated in a camp organized in Sumud, a Palestinian village that was destroyed by Israeli settlers. Since then, the settlements have been removed by the army, however the Palestinian village was never reestablished.

A group of organizations from the West Bank, Israel and the United States gathered at Sumud during summer 2017 to help reestablish the village in the form of a camp.

B8 of Hope now works with Taghyeer to build up its organizational structure and broaden its reach. Taghyeer is building links with Palestinian-wide organizations (mainly youth movements) and villages across the West Bank with the objective of training fifty young women and fifty young men to be the carriers of Taghyeer's mission of social change through action and peaceful opposition to occupation throughout Palestine.

More information : www.friendsoftaghyeer.org



© Women Wage Peace

WOMEN WAGE PEACE

Women Wage Peace is a broad-based grassroots movement founded after the Gaza War of 2014 and supported by B8 of Hope.

Women Wage Peace counts among its thousands of members women from the political right, center, and left, Jewish and Arab, religious and secular – all of them united in their demand for a political agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

B8 of Hope supports three distinct projects: Middle Eastern Salad, Politics of Acquaintance and the Journey to Peace.

MIDDLE EASTERN SALAD

Middle Eastern Salad is a series of gatherings organized by Women Wage Peace. During the months of July and August 2017, meetings were organized for 134 participants in total. Participants were Israeli and Palestinian men and women, children and teenagers, educators as well as young Palestinian activists from the Taghyeer movement.

Through ice breaking activities and lectures about the non-violence approach, the meetings aimed to create personal and professional connections between the participants and to re-write the usual “victimhood” stories on both sides in a positive, empowered and future oriented way.

For many Palestinians participating, the workshops were their first meeting with Israelis who were not soldiers.

POLITICS OF ACQUAINTANCE

During the summer 2017, Women Wage Peace organized three events in different places in Israel with Huda Abu Arqoub, director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace. These conferences gathered almost 800 participants in total, including many Arab Israelis.

Huda has embarked on this journey of meetings to forge connections with Israeli women. Her goal is to create another language, the Politics of Acquaintance. Huda aims to take leave of the slogans that bog everyone down again and again, and to create a language based on sincere curiosity that strives to reveal what all Israelis share and what is possible.

For many participants, it was the first time they heard a Palestinian speaking in this way. Many of them reported they felt empowered and deeply inspired.

JOURNEY TO PEACE

On September 24th, Women Wage Peace began a journey of hope and peace with the financial support of B8 of Hope. The Journey to Peace demanded the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a political agreement and the inclusion of women in the negotiation process.

The Journey to Peace began at the end of Rosh Hashana and reached its high point during the week of Sukkot in the Tent of Sarah and Hagar – a huge tent of discussions, hope and peace, art and music happenings, encounters and talking with decision makers. Israeli and Palestinian women sat together, asking the end of the long running dispute and calling for the leaders of both people to begin continual negotiations until an agreement is signed. From there, the movement continued to Jerusalem, where the largest women's congress in a mass event was launched.

33,000 Palestinian women from the Taghyeer movement participated in the Journey to Peace. Meetings between Women Wage Peace and Taghyeer allowed women from both sides to meet, connect with one another, engage in conversations and plan future activities.

More information: womenwagepeace.org.il/en

COMBATANTS FOR PEACE

The newest initiative supported by B8 of Hope is Combatants for Peace, which is actually one of the oldest among our four flagship initiatives. Combatants for Peace is a group of Palestinians and Israelis who have taken an active part in the cycle of violence in the region: former Israeli soldiers and former Palestinian combatants.

In 2006, Israeli and Palestinian former combatants laid down their weapons and established Combatants for Peace on the basis of non-violence principles. The movement –an egalitarian, bi-national, grassroots organization– was founded on the belief that the cycle of violence can only be broken when Israelis and Palestinians join forces.

Committed to joint nonviolence since its foundation, Combatants for Peace works to both transform and resolve the conflict by ending Israeli occupation and all forms of violence between the two sides and by building a peaceful future for both peoples.

For over a decade, Combatants for Peace have embodied and served as a model for humanistic values of freedom, democracy, security and dignity for all. Through joint nonviolence actions today, they lay the foundations for a nonviolent future. The movement already changed attitudes on a wide scale, both within the Israeli and Palestinian public as well as with governmental decision makers.

In keeping with their values, the Combatants for Peace work towards a mutually agreed upon solution that will allow both Israelis and Palestinians to live in freedom, security, democracy and dignity in their homeland. Peace does not happen by itself; It requires commitment, perseverance and continuing efforts.



© Combatants for Peace



ACTIVITIES

Combatants for Peace is organizing different activities that involve group meetings with Palestinian and Israeli members of the movement who present their personal stories and hold open discussions with the participants. Among their many activities, B8 of Hope was very inspired by their Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony – in memory of the victims of the conflict on both sides.

B8 of Hope screened an amazing documentary about the movement at different venues in Geneva and region; one thousand guests attended and contributed through donations that will go towards Combatants for Peace work in 2018. The documentary is called “Disturbing the Peace”. The screening was followed by a discussion with the film directors and producers Stephen Apkon and Marcina Hale and two of the protagonists of the documentary and Combatants for Peace founders: Chen Alon and Sulaiman Khatib.

More information : cfpeace.org

BRIDGE-BUILDING THROUGH MUSIC: THE POLYPHONY FOUNDATION AND KESHET EILON SPECIAL PROJECT

A strategic partnership has developed between two schools of music, Polyphony Foundation and Keshet Eilon Music Center. This partnership is based on the shared understanding that Music and the Arts have the power to transcend long existing cultural and social boundaries between the Arab and Jewish communities in Israel. Driven by this belief, both entities have been working on creating opportunities for Arab and Jewish youth to make music together while encouraging excellence in the field of classical music. The joint Program, "The Scholar in Residence Seminar" aims at creating a highly meaningful shared musical experience for talented young Arab and Jewish musicians, believing that such safe and neutral environment will enable them to overcome long existing cultural barriers and discover how much they have in common rather than the widely held misconceptions and stereotypes.

Our fundraising events were made possible in part by:





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