



Newsletter

SPREADING OUR WINGS

Dear community of friends and supporters,

We hope that you had a nice summer and have resumed work comfortably after the slower summer months.

Here are our latest exciting updates.

OUR B8 OF HOPE FAMILY IS GROWING in every way!

The team

Our three brilliant summer interns, **Brooks, Ilona** and **Parker** have now returned to their studies at (respectively) the Geneva Graduate Institute, Mc Gill in Montreal and Wesleyan in Connecticut. We are thrilled that they will continue supporting us on a part-time basis throughout the academic year, while deepening their knowledge about our peace building efforts.

Mylene, an amazing PhD student at the University of Bern, has recently joined the B8 of Hope's family of volunteers for the coming year. While on location in Jerusalem for her PhD research, she has agreed to conduct surveys for B8 of Hope on a pro-bono basis, and dedicate part of her time spent in Jerusalem to us.

On September 2nd, the one and only **Chrystelle** started part-time work as our administrative assistant!

Thank you to all of these angels, not to forget all the other volunteers who lend us a hand when needed.

The space

Our Chair and co-founder Mehra Rimer and Chrystelle are currently **relocating from the Rimer family's kitchen table** to a bigger and better workspace in Chêne-Bougerie. This workspace has also been donated by the Rimers. Please note, however, that our official address remains the same: Avenue de Champel 4, 1206 Genève (courtesy of co-founders Leila Hawa and Arun Chandrasekharan).

The initiatives

The number of Israeli and Palestinian initiatives that we support has also grown (in alphabetical order):

- 1) [A Land for All - Two States, One Homeland](#)
- 2) [Combatants of Peace](#)
- 3) [Jerusalem Youth Chorus](#)
- 4) Karama Center (website in progress)
- 5) Keshet Eilon's school of music (specific projects involving Jewish, Palestinian and Bedouin communities around music)
- 6) [The Parent Circle Families Forum](#)
- 7) [Peres Center Saving Children Program](#)
- 8) [Polyphony Foundation](#)
- 9) [Road to Recovery](#)
- 10) [Roots](#)
- 11) [Taghyeer](#)
- 12) [The Teachers' Lounge](#)
- 13) [Tech2Peace](#)
- 14) [Women Wage Peace](#)
- 15) [Zimam](#)

The most recent newcomers are:

Zimam

This Palestinian youth movement based in Ramallah focuses on a domestic approach to conflict resolution. They work with the leaders of tomorrow to build a more democratic, actively engaged and pluralistic society in the Palestinian Authority Territories of the West Bank and Gaza.



The Teachers' Lounge

This Jerusalem-based professional development program harnesses educators' power to positively redirect a dialogue toward understanding the "Other", thereby addressing the deep rifts of fear, anger, and suspicion that continue to drive apart the diverse residents of Jerusalem. The program's main goal is to produce a growing cohort of educators - both Palestinian and Israeli - that is committed to the ideals of a shared society and peaceful coexistence. The educators are trained to promote these ideals in their personal lives as well as classrooms.



Zimam and Teachers' Lounge joined the group of initiatives that we support thanks to our chairwoman Mehra's hard work in the region last July. Mehra Rimer's regular trips to the region enable B8 of Hope to monitor the projects that we finance, maintain close ties with peace activists, and deepen our understanding and knowledge of the complexities that locals face. Her presence also provides a good opportunity to study new initiatives.

On-site visits

Below are the highlights from Mehra's trip during this July.



A women's photography workshop in Gush Etzion and the Palestinian Authority Territories Area C, operating within in the framework of **Judur/Shorashim/Roots** (a bi-national dialogue, transformation and bridge-building initiative that we have supported since B8 of Hope's foundation). This photography workshop, facilitated by the Swiss photo activist **Saskia Keeley**, teaches photography skills to a group of Israeli and Palestinian women over several sessions. The activity fosters deeper conversations and comprehension of the "Other"'s narrative.

Roots is all about humanization. One of the co-founders told Mehra "*Our weapon is our humanity*". Working within the framework of the Palestinian Non-Violence Movement Taghyeer/Change and its women's group, Saskia also hosted a series of photography workshops in Nablus (the Palestinian Authority Territories in the West Bank). This movement, also part of our group of initiatives, focuses on changing Palestinian society from within by encouraging Palestinians to become leaders for the changes they want to see in their society. The Change that Taghyeer promotes will not only have a positive impact on Palestinian society, but will also create a ripple effect in Israeli opinion.

Saskia's session facilitated the sharing of and reflection upon images that participants shot for homework. These images were assembled and used to create a Problem Tree that acts as a visual baseline for challenges that the community faces. At a second workshop, the Tree was used to help identify development challenges, and develop localized plans of action for the Nablus Women's Group later in July 2019.

Another "women's" event that Mehra attended is **Women Wage Peace's "Politics of Acquaintance" meeting** in Rishon Lezion near Tel-Aviv. B8 of Hope enthusiastically sponsors these kinds of awareness-raising meetings. Approximately one hundred women gathered at that meeting to be introduced to a Palestinian and a woman who resides in a settlement. A deeply meaningful dialogue transpired between the two women, in front of the captivated audience. Mehra Rimer also took the stage to talk about our support from Geneva.

Women Wage Peace bridges the divides inside Israel and unites women from all walks of life that support a return to a diplomatic peace process. Today, the movement boasts more than 43,000 members. Its members include women from diverse communities within Israeli society: right, center and left; religious and secular; Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouin; young women and older women; women from the center of the country and those from the periphery. They work in partnership with Palestinian women who are peace activists in their own society. Women Wage Peace also advocates for the inclusion of women in all aspects of political decision making, as mandated by **UN Resolution 1325**. This resolution recognizes the fact that women are as key to promoting sustainable peace processes, as they are to ending violent conflict; therefore it is obligatory to include women in all aspects of decision-making, especially as regards peace and security.



During Mehra's stay, Women Wage Peace started preparing for their end of August, **four-day March**. The photographer Arielle Littman followed them in Jerusalem, Lod, Tel Aviv, Rahat and Sderot.

Women of all religions, ages, social backgrounds and political affiliations marched towards a common goal of a better future, speaking words of wisdom, empathy and solidarity.

Other highlights of Mehra's trip include a **visit to the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation in Yaffo/Jaffa**. B8 of Hope occasionally supports the Saving Children Program, an organization that provides care and treatment to Palestinian babies and children in Israeli hospitals.



A **visit to the Polyphony Foundation** in Nazareth was another stop in the region. Through a shared passion for music, Polyphony develops a cadre of future leaders committed to improving civil society. What B8 of Hope loves so much about this organization is summarized by a quote from founder Nabeel Abboud Askhar:

"Music enables young [Jewish and Arab] people to create something beautiful together that needs commitment—to music and to each other."

Speaking of youth, Mehra also had the opportunity to spend time with the activists of another new Israeli-Palestinian initiative: **Tech2Peace**. The young co-founders run **high-tech, peace-building seminars** that focus on creating lasting, positive

relationships between new generations of Israelis and Palestinians. They believe that their participants will not only become peace activists, but also potential colleagues with a strong basis for future positive interaction.

Tech2Peace's summer was very busy with 2 successful workshops in Yeruham and Nazareth. We partially sponsored these workshops, and we cannot thank co-founder Uri Rosenberg enough for his kind words of thanks! Here is what Uri wrote on his Facebook page:

"Between the Tech2Peace seminar in Yeruham and the one in Nazareth, I want to personally thank B8 of Hope, a small Swiss NGO you might have never heard of. Because they're not an NGO that focuses on PR - but on doing real grassroots work.

B8 of hope is literally a "house (bait, beit) of hope" for us. They are a group of Swiss people who care about Israelis and Palestinians, and are devoted to peace more than most Israelis and Palestinians are. Where we Middle Easterners see a dead-end, a zero-sum game, these amazing Swiss people see rays of hope. And they're super realistic. They believed in Tech2Peace from the first moment, not because they thought we'd change the world, but because we told them our realistic goals - how many young people we want to affect, what kind of community we want to build.

B8 Of Hope is for Tech2Peace everything a real partner can be. They connect us with other NGOs in Israel and Palestine we had no idea ever existed. I'm 12 years in this Israeli-Palestinian dialogue world, and they know the ecosystem much better than me.

Thank you for being our partners, listening to all our problems, connecting us with people, and most important - believing in us - young Palestinian and Israeli entrepreneurs".



Tech2Peace participants enjoyed a two-day intensive startup workshop with Irwin Boutboul from Google for Startups! This amazing opportunity helps participants to develop their own initiatives and put their newly learned skills into practice. These are the first steps towards building startups with Jewish-Palestinian collaboration.

In no particular order, the trip's other significant moments include:



A **visit to the Palestinian Nonviolence Center Karama**, near Beit Ummar (Palestinian Authority Territories Area C), which we have helped to build with our funds.

Meeting with Raz Kones, co-manager of Roots Youth Group. Raz came to our gala last year and moved us to tears! Mehra attended this summer's first meeting of her group's young Palestinians and Israelis. Watching these young people meet for the first time and quickly evolve – even in terms of body language—was nothing less than astonishing.



Visits to the women of Jubbet Adh Dib near Bethlehem in the West Bank. These women have taken charge of their village's management! Their values are in-line with those of the **Taghyeer** movement: they foster small but valuable changes in their community.



While in the West Bank, a **meeting with the Youth of Sumud** in the Southern Hebron Hills to discover what non-violence means to them, and how they put it into practice.



Meeting with Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin the co-founders of the **Parents Circle and Families Forum**. Both lost their daughters in the conflict but refuse to see each other as enemies. Sharing sorrow, these men are also paving a path for peace, hand in hand.



Visits to Combatants for Peace's Israeli and Palestinian teams, in Tel Aviv and in Jericho. Some activists from the **A Land for All, 2 States 1 Homeland** also attended.



Mehra participated in an activity organized by a small organization called **The Home**. Founder Inon Kahati's vision is a healing process achieved through a collaboration to clean cigarette butts and plastic waste off the streets. Caring for the land to which both Palestinians and Israelis feel so connected is a good way to build bridges. Cleaning the land is cleaning the hate!



So much fun running into Uri and Ossama from Combatants for Peace, and the folks from **The Road to Recovery** at The Lighthouse!

The Lighthouse is Here is an initiative that B8 of Hope wants to explore further. Our partner **Stars of Hope** helped us discover this amazing place. Thank you, Jeff Parness, co-founder of Stars of Hope, for supporting this initiative and for involving us. Located near Kibbutz Be'eri at the Old Sulfur factory, people have met here since early 2018 to open their eyes, ears hearts, minds and souls. They explore the consciousness of the people in Gaza and the region.

In the shadows of a British-era sulfur factory, Israelis and Palestinians from all walks of life as well as internationals come to **weekly open meetings along the border**. They gather within sight and hearing of the ongoing border conflict to explore what it means to recognize the humanity of "the Other". They discuss and experience what it means to have hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. The Lighthouse is a place where personal connections are forged using cell phone technology (WhatsApp) to speak with Palestinians inside Gaza. Voices are broadcast so that people on both sides of the border can connect as fellow human beings; they discuss their hopes, dreams and desires for a peaceful future built upon mutual respect and shared values. Hundreds have participated in the weekly Friday sessions: leaders and volunteers of some of leading peace, co-existence and environmental organizations. The Lighthouse is a powerful symbol of hope, light and human connections.



Throughout this trip, Mehra strengthened our ties to partners like **Alliance for the Middle East Peace** (www.allmep.org). Thank you, John Lyndon, director of ALLMEP, for your constant help with finding connections and networking opportunities for us!

Two American organizations: **Reconsider** (<https://reconsider.org/>) and **Embodying Peace** (<http://embodyingpeace.org/>) partnered with us for a project to creating more synergies between the initiatives that we support. Thank you, Stephen Apkon, for travelling to Jerusalem and dedicating time to this project. Amitai Abouzaglo – what a lucky coincidence that you were in the area at the same time as Mehra! B8 of Hope

grabbed the opportunity to use your skills for this project. We wish you the best of luck in launching Embodying Peace. We deeply value our partnerships with both Reconsider and Embodying Peace.

Upcoming events:

November 26th - 6.30 pm

**Series of meetings and presentations by A Land for All: Two States One Homeland activists,
in partnership with the University of Geneva, at Uni Mail**

January 27th .-7.00 pm:

**Meetings and presentation by the Parents Circle Family Forum activists, Robi Damelin and Bassam Aramin,
at The International School of Geneva Art Center (La Grande Boissière Campus)**

The Parents Circle Family Forum is an association of 600 bereaved Israelis and Palestinians who have lost an immediate family member in the conflict. They are working hand in hand together, sharing sorrow, bringing hope by trying to stop acts of violence through reconciliation - a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable peace. The organization uses all resources available in education, public meetings and the media to spread these ideas.

Stay tuned for more news about our pool of organizations!

B8 of Hope

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