



## Newsletter

June 2020: Peace throughout Covid-19 times

**B8 of Hope has been in contact with all of its 16 grantees throughout this crisis.** We welcome the opportunity to give them support on a case-by-case basis, either with advice, visibility, and networking opportunities, or funds for targeted activities.

### Our “digital” and “hands-on” activities



**Turning into Zoom-bees  
to support our grantees and partners  
who maintained their work online!**

Several events were made accessible to larger audiences, such as:

- **Parents Circles Families Forum** webinars centered around *Apeirogon*, a novel by Colum McCann that is based on the true story of Bassam Aramin and Rami Elhanan, Palestinian and Israeli bereaved fathers of two little girls (available on Amazon)
- Interactive presentations by **Roots** on different themes (Shoah, Naqba day, Roots women photography workshops, Roots Youth group activities)
- The **Combatants for Peace** and **Parent Circle Families Forum**’s Israeli-Palestinian Joint Memorial Ceremony – this event broke all records with 170 000 online participants!
- **Alliance for the Middle East Peace**’s conferences on the Covid-19 challenges that concern all peace communities
- An interactive presentation about Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on healthcare, with Akram Amro, director of **Green Land Society**, and Kenneth Bob, co-founder of **Project Rozana**
- **The LightHouse is Here**, a small Israeli initiative on our radar that hosts powerful dialogue sessions with Palestinians from Gaza

A special thought for our friend Rami Aman and his colleagues in the Gaza Youth Committee who were arrested by Hamas after participating in Zoom bridge-building calls with Israelis ([click here](#) for more information).



**Turning our 2-day, on the ground synergies-building **Workshop** into a 2-hour digital forum of ideas!**

Our pool of 16 civil society and grassroots organizations, represented by a cohort of 30 key Israeli and Palestinian peace-builders, gathered online on May 7th. This streamlined online version was facilitated in partnership with the German organization Forum ZFD and their two facilitators, Jana Grieb and Torge Kuebler. (A heartfelt thank you for their rigorous work).

A visual image of feedback gathered from participants at the end of the workshop:





Trading our humanization hat  
for a humanitarian one!

A key word in our B8 of Hope terminology is **Humanization**. However, the pandemic called upon us to switch caps. Through April and May, we rolled up our sleeves and became hands-on: temporarily trading in our familiar Humanization hat for a needs-based Humanitarian one. Our very short targeted fundraising campaign was supported by a small yet extremely generous group of donors, who covered the costs of two urgent projects:

1. 500 packages for a one-month supply of food were assembled and distributed in 20 West Bank communities, bringing much needed relief to 500 families made vulnerable by the pandemic's economic consequences. Our grantee movement **Taghyeer**'s volunteers and activists administered this life-saving project.
2. Palestinian Patients suffering from chronic diseases such as cancer, kidney failure and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome were given supplies to protect themselves from the corona virus; Personal Protection Equipment including masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and hazard suits for 60 people were purchased and distributed by Taghyeer to patients who need this equipment for weekly medical treatment.

B8 of Hope helped chronically ill patients receive their medical treatments on time, and with protection from infection by the corona virus. Along with local partner organization **Green Land Society for Health Development** (also one of our grantees), **Taghyeer** helped these patients to access hospitals safely by supplying 40 Palestinian volunteers. From the West Bank to Israel, they ensured patients' security in transit and at checkpoints, and obtained special medical movement permits to facilitate travel between the different Palestinian governorates.

Click on the image below to start the video



# Peace-building news from B8 of Hope grantees

## 1) A Land for All – 2 States 1 Homeland

A Land for All finalized a draft of the **booklet** that details their ideas for an alternative solution to the 2 States Solution: 2 sovereign States with several joint institutions, and freedom of movement for all within the framework of a confederation (inspired by the model of the European Union).

The Corona crisis has only reaffirmed that Israelis and Palestinians live in a shared space; that their adversities are shared. Medical teams of Jews and Arabs working together to combat Covid-19 have demonstrated **the shared destiny of this land**. The future depends on Israelis' and Palestinians' ability to develop an inclusive solidarity.

The booklet is a product of a **joint effort** by the movement's Palestinian and Israeli activists. Throughout the confinement, Zoom conversations with supporters have taken place. Overall, participants believe this recommendation constitutes a breakthrough for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the coming weeks, **A Land for All** will launch a series of conversations between Palestinian and Israeli activists. Participants will examine current political challenges (annexation) and possible **strategies and actions**. A Land for All will broadcast these conversations live on their Facebook page.

B8 of Hope is organizing additional interviews and greater media exposure for a joint Israeli/Palestinian movement at offers an "out-of-the-box" solution.

## 2) Combatants for Peace

Shortly before Geneva's lockdown began, we held a mid-February **screening of the award-winning film *Disturbing the Peace* at Institut Florimont in Geneva**. Steve Apkon and Marcina Hale's inspiring film features the Combatants for Peace (CFP). It has now become our tradition to screen this film in local Geneva high schools and to spread its important message, "*There is another way*" than violence. This message applies to any conflict.

Click on the image below to start the video



CFP activists and the film's protagonists, Suleiman Khatib and Assaf Yacobovitz, used Skype to talk with the audience after the screening. Coincidentally, John Lyndon, Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), was in Geneva at the time. He kindly agreed to attend the screening, and also helped to answer students' questions. We are infinitely grateful to the Institut Florimont who has integrated a screening of this film into their annual Human Rights week.

CFP's flagship event during these challenging past couple of months was the **Joint Memorial Day ceremony** on Monday April 27th 2020. This virtual event was co-organized with the bereaved members of Parents Circle Families Forum. The ceremony went VIRAL!

Click on the image below to start the video



Back in 2006, only 50 participants gathered for this event. By last year, the number of participants grew to 9'000. This year, 170' 000 joined in on-line, and **broke the record** with the huge increase in attendance! (Read the [New York Times' article](#).)

B8 Of Hope co-sponsored the ceremony, contributing to the professional technical costs.

While for many Israelis and Palestinians the concept of a joint ceremony is controversial and even painful, B8 of Hope finds this event to be the bearer of a brighter future.

**Combatants for Peace** are former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian freedom fighters who put down their weapons to work together for a **just and peaceful solution**. Parents Circle Families Forum represents hundreds of bereaved families from both sides of the conflict. They share sorrow and join forces to form a new path of peace, equality, and dignity for all.

The joint Israeli-Palestinian ceremony celebrates what bereaved families share: the unspeakable pain of losing a child, parent or sibling, and the important universal message that can act as a model for conflicts in the rest of the world:

*"If I who have lost a beloved one can walk the path of peace,  
then surely you can too".*

Pictures from “behind the scenes” of this unprecedented virtual event – The event was streamed from 2 professional studios: one in Tel-Aviv (with the Israeli speakers) and one in Ramallah (with the Palestinian speakers)



Credit photo: @Combatants for Peace

### 3) Parents Circle Families Forum:

“*Changing minds one heart a time*”, PCFF enables collaboration between the 600 bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families.

Playing a central role as speakers during the Israeli-Palestinian joint Memorial Ceremony, the PCFF kept very busy during the past months with a series of Zoom events:

- 2 webinars with Colum McCann, award-winning author of *Apeirogon*, a novel that tells the stories of Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, the Parents Circle co-directors. 600 people attended.
- 60 bereaved members met to connect over working during the Covid-19 crisis
- 2 training sessions for new Palestinian facilitators
- 2 “movie Club” meetings with Israelis and Palestinians to discuss 3 PCFF films
- 4 Women Leadership group meetings
- 20 Dialogue meetings with student groups including Israelis, Palestinians and internationals.
- 6 meetings with Alumni from various “Parallel Narrative Experience” Groups



Credit photo: @heidi.news

We feel very fortunate that their representatives came to Geneva just before the Covid-19 crisis!



#### 4) Green Land Society For Health Development

As the name implies, Green Land's focus is humanitarian, and its goal is to create a positive change on the ground. Recently, Green Land has **worked primarily with patients that need transfers to West Bank and Israeli hospitals** during the difficult conditions of closure and blocks, including inside the West Bank, that are currently imposed. Some volunteers were old and vulnerable; others simply could not reach those areas thanks to the lockdown. A variety of professional transportation, including taxis, was used to avoid blocked gates. Most chronic patients were able to reach their chemotherapy or dialysis unit. Resources were spent to cover the costs of scarce masks, covers and gloves for drivers, patients, and their companion. Green Land also supported severely underprivileged patients with supplies of basic medications and life-saving groceries.

It was gratifying to hear about the lifesaving Israeli-Palestinian collaborations for healthcare issues from the organization's director. We are reminded of this truth; the Coronavirus does not stop at borders thus **cooperation is essential/saves lives**.

#### #therealenemyisthevirus

Two heartwarming pictures that went viral on social media!



#### 5) The Road to Recovery



Credit photo: @Road To Recovery

While transporting Palestinian patients from checkpoints to Israeli hospitals is the RTR's primary activity, this has clearly slowed down dramatically during the Covid-19 crisis. Only the most urgent cases of Palestinian patients are allowed into Israel. Also a complicating factor, most RTR volunteers are retired Israelis who are in the high-risk group. The managing team posted a request for new, younger volunteers to join RTR. The response has been overwhelming: **more than 120 new, younger volunteers joined RTR's ranks within a day**.

## 6) The Peres Center for Peace Saving Children Program

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, mobility became more restricted; the Peres Center was affected from both an organizational and programming standpoint. Nevertheless, the Saving Children Program has continued to **provide treatment for Palestinian children in Israeli hospitals**. Non-urgent procedures have been postponed due to the pandemic, but the most vulnerable cases have received the necessary treatments.

The pandemic proves that the **health of Israelis and Palestinians are interconnected**, that viruses and illness know no borders, and that high-quality healthcare is a right that all deserve.

Our friend and partner Nadav Tamir, director of International Affairs, joined the Road to Recovery! *"I never had the time before, but always wanted to help the RTR, and they need me more than ever now, because most of their volunteers are in the sensitive age. I drive Palestinian patients, mostly children, every day"* shared Nadav to B8 of Hope Chair. We always encourage and cherish these **inter-NGO synergies!**



One of this winter's highlights, before we all switched to confinement mode, was a lunch in Geneva in honor of **Chemi Peres**, son of the late Shimon Peres and current chair of the Peres Center for Peace and Innovations. B8 of Hope's Steering Committee lunch was represented by Luc Fayon, David and Mehra Rimer.

## 7) Karama Center



Credit photo: @Karama Center

This piece of agricultural land in the Gush Etzion/Beit Umar area belongs to the Abu Awwad family and serves as a venue for bridge-building activities. Hosting these activities necessarily came to a halt during the lockdown. The Abu Awwad family took the opportunity of this quiet time to refurbish and groom the **Karama Center**.

Since Yossof was tragically killed more than a decade ago, the Abu Awwad brothers and sisters, prompted by their mother, channeled their sorrow and anger into building a better future for the next generations. They have been involved in several peace-building initiatives; **Karama is their oasis of peace**.



## 8) The Jerusalem Youth Chorus

Amongst many on-line events, this Chorus surprised us with a beautiful video: "Home" (from Home). Israeli and Palestinian singers David Broza, Mira Awad, Achinoam Nini, stars from the Hamilton musical and many more were joined by a hundred JYC friends from around the world, including our chair Mehra Rimer – representing B8 of Hope.

"Home" is a **song of solidarity** that welcomes sharing the feeling of togetherness. As Melanie DeMore, Vocal Activist, puts it: music is a "*weapon of mass connection*"! 💜

Click on the image below to start the video

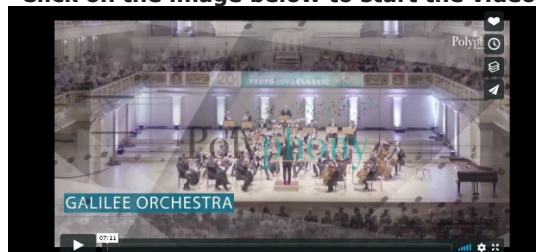


## 9) The Polyphony Foundation

Polyphony has safely continued its bridge-building work with music, by adapting its activities and implementing thoughtful solutions.

With a spirit of innovation, they introduced Mosaics, a **weekly video series** that highlights Polyphony's activities and performances. Students, musicians, and guest artists are featured, bringing us a brush of happiness and comfort with music, while inspiring students to continue their musical studies.

Click on the image below to start the video



## 10) Women Wage Peace



Credit photo: @Women Wage Peace

This Israeli movement includes women from all walks of life -- Jewish, Muslim, Christian, secular and religious, from the left, center and right of the political spectrum. All are united by their bid to bring back diplomacy.

During the confinement, WWP was prevented from entering the public sphere to conduct business as usual, including their rallies and their “parlour” and “politics of acquaintances” meetings for new audiences. However, they continued as many activities as possible with the help of their digital platforms and Zoom sessions for women from Israel and partners from the West Bank.

During the lockdown **balconies became the space** for activism in lieu of “standing in intersections” events could take place. On Thursday afternoons, hundreds of their activists went to their balconies carrying WWP signs, then posted their photos on social media. The lockdown has loosened up, and our Women Waging Peace are back in the streets breathing peace, with beautiful smiles behind their masks!



Credit photo: @Women Wage Peace

## 11) Our Generation Speaks

Welcome to our newest grantees, who joined our pool in February!

The flagship activity at OGS is a **summer program** that hosts a cohort of promising young Israeli and Palestinian students that have the potential to become future leaders and game changers in their communities. The program nurtures entrepreneurship and leadership skills, but all in-person events had to stop; all activities were moved to Zoom. This summer’s fellowship program in Boston was cancelled. The freeze on physical activities poses great challenges to startups powered by their alumni.

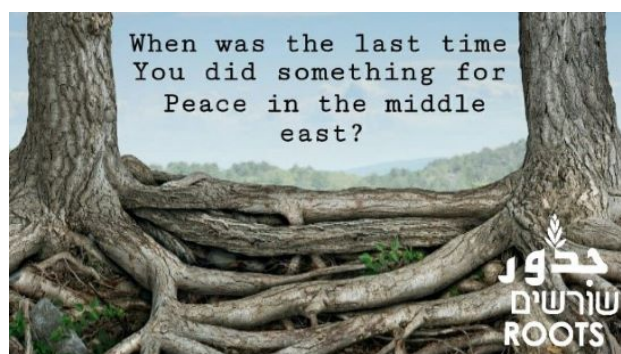
On the other hand, this period has enabled organizers to focus on strategy, infrastructure and lesson planning so that everything will be ready to go in the future. We are very excited about this venture, and look forward to a deep and meaningful partnership in better times!

## 12) Judur/Shorashim/Roots

Roots were our first-ever grantees. They fully realize that both peoples have roots in the Holy Land, and that it is much more productive to **recognize the other's narrative** rather than being stuck in one's own.

Several of Roots' bridge-building and dialogue groups are restricted, but still manage to function with Zoom and WhatsApp. These include the Young Adults Program, the after-school program, inter-religious groups, and women's group. The vision of their Youth programs is being developed with the help of Zoom, but work on advancing issues with the Civil Administration (building and other permits for Palestinians) has come to a halt. The Jordan Valley branch had to cancel their leadership seminar, and a pilot program for the Palestinian Alums of the Young Adult Program and Israeli pre-military academy has been put on hold. Also postponed is their alumni weekend seminar. Their US speaking tour was cancelled, and over 25 groups who had planned to visit them were forced to cancel their plans as well. Roots has been severely affected by the confinements.

The silver lining: some of the virtual experiences were heart-warming and trust building, even though it is hard to facilitate a difficult conversation online. Online discussions are less emotional, nuances are lost in translation, and there is a lack of eye contact. Participants, however, were able to visit each other's homes (**creating a safe space**) and join a virtual Ramadan Iftar dinner in a participant's home. Roots has also held several webinars with different themes and multiple participants.



The roots and destinies of the two peoples are intertwined

### 13) Taghyeer

This Palestinian movement promotes an identity of nonviolence to strengthen the vision of positive change within Palestinian society. They engage Palestinians, especially women and youth, in social, political, economic, and environmental rights and responsibilities. Taghyeer promotes a **progressive, peaceful, active non-violent and positive culture among Palestinians**.

During the Covid-19 crisis, Taghyeer provided urgent assistance to isolated and underprivileged West Bank families as part of an emergency plan. With the help of B8 of Hope and other partners, **Taghyeer succeeded in delivering food parcels despite experiencing great difficulty in coordinating and obtaining the necessary entry permits**.

In partnership with B8 of Hope and The Green Land Society for Health Development, Taghyeer is currently working on **providing precautionary medical supplies** to a volunteers and medical professionals in the West Bank who work day and night to protect their community.

### 14) Teachers Lounge



Credit photo: @Teachers' Lounge

If teachers are heroes, then the Teachers' Lounge are superheroes! Members go through the process of "**meeting the other**", and their role as educators is an even greater game changer. Their example has an impact on the way their students see and treat "the other". Nelson Mandela once said that education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world. The Teachers' Lounge greatest weapon is not only education, but also their humanity.

Naturally, most meetings migrated to Zoom. The teachers emphasized and expressed how important it was for them to continue meeting during such unusual times. Although this year's program was almost finished and the next cohort only joins in October 2020, teachers focused primarily on completing this year's tasks and starting to plan for the next cohort.

B8 of Hope was very honored to be invited to Teachers' Lounge's closing ceremony.

## 15) Tech2Peace

Tech2Peace offers opportunities for young Israelis and Palestinians in their 20s to learn entrepreneurial skills in the context of high-tech. **While developing their skills, participants in Tech2Peace's seminars learn about each other**, their different realities, and their common aspirations as future leaders and entrepreneurs. Tech2Peace nurtures the connections that are made by keeping their alumni involved with the organization while they build their businesses and careers.

Throughout the Covid-19 period, the Tech2Peace team used social media to promote their **summer seminars**. Young Israelis and Palestinians have responded in mass – the quantity of replies has been overwhelming! B8 of Hope is honored to be part of the next step choosing the applicants.

Monthly Zoom meet-ups with people from the hi-tech industry and the peace/political/international sectors will be organized for alumni. We are very proud to have brought **2 speakers from our Geneva B8 of Hope community** to Tech2Peace. It is heartwarming when members and friends of our Geneva community get directly involved in the activities of initiatives supported by B8 Of Hope. In early May, our friend Pierre Hazan used Zoom to share his expertise in conflict resolution with a group of Tech2Peace alumni. In early June, our friend Abir Oreibi was able to share her expertise in high tech accelerators and incubators in Switzerland. A heartfelt THANK YOU to Pierre and Abir for your time and support.





## 16) Zimam



Credit photo: @Zimam

Zimam is the Arabic word for “reins”. The work of this Palestinian youth movement figuratively takes over the reins to guide their society’s development with leadership training for messengers of change and transformation. Zimam 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 in the West Bank and in Gaza.

While some of Zimam’s activities like the Leadership incubator have been postponed, others have been able to continue with Zoom:

- the **Zimam Ambassadors**, narrative and diplomacy training for young activists who go on to advocate for their shared values locally and internationally
- **Politics Café**, safe spaces for young people to come together and discuss pressing issues as diverse as the Occupation and LGBTQ issues
- **Community outreach** (staying connected to local communities in the West Bank and Gaza by creating initiatives that respond to societal needs, such as the "Be Positive, Stay at Home" Campaign)
- **Transform** (leadership training workshops).

Zimam also used the time to work on a new strategy, cut some of the programming, trim the budget, and double down on joint work. In response to the current humanitarian crisis, they have launched "Common Ground", a project which **brings together a select number of mid-level Palestinian and Israeli leaders** to (I) meet each other for the first time, (II) explore areas of shared interest, and (III) create a sustainable end product that will allow youths to get to know the other while educating young leaders about the two societies’ shared interests.

**You made it !**

**Thank you for reading all the way to end !**

If you wish to have a global vision of our activities,  
[click here](#) to read the 2019 Annual Report.

## Postponed Events

- **Screening of the documentary** "Les Guerrières de la Paix" by the young and talented French film director Hanna Assouline, with 2 protagonists and Hanna herself present. An early June screening was planned in Lausanne, but we prefer to postpone and find a more reliable date.
- A **pilot trip** to Israel and the West Bank's Palestinian Territories in October. A small group of our supporters were to visit the region and see all through the lens of B8 of Hope. This trip would have provided an opportunity to witness things for oneself, to travel with our chair and co-founder Mehra Rimer, and to meet our heroes, "the peace-builders on the ground".

**Stay tuned for more news in the summer.**

We will keep you posted as the situation evolves.

## INITIATIVES WE SUPPORT



**Karama/Dignity**  
Palestinian Non-Violence Center

