

## **Palestinians and Israelis Building Peace Together How to Get Involved**

by Lyn Fine and Annette Herskovits

### **Grassroots Disarmament**

Speaking of disarmament in relation to Palestine/Israel seems almost incongruous. But if one looks at grassroots activities rather than what the Israeli government and Israeli and Palestinian extremists have done, one finds a multiplicity of projects in which Palestinians and Jews, in Palestine/Israel and the United States, cooperate peacefully. As Quakers have shown, nothing is more transforming than working toward a common purpose with “the enemy.”

“Separation” appears to be central to Ariel Sharon’s design for the region’s future. Israeli law forbids Palestinians from the Territories to enter Israel, although a few exemptions are granted, and the Israeli army generally stops Israelis from crossing into the West Bank. But contact and cooperation continue.

### **List and Categories**

Our initial plan was to list 108 organizations, a highly auspicious number in Buddhism—the world is said to have known 108 bodhisattvas. But as we worked, we were delighted to discover more groups than one issue of *Turning Wheel* could hold. So we decided to post a longer list on the BPF website ([www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)), where it will be updated regularly.

People cooperate in a multitude of ways, so we have grouped the organizations into categories to make the list more accessible. We selected organizations that bring Jews and Palestinians into direct contact. Thus the list does not include many important peacemaking efforts, such as:

**Government-level peace plans:** The 2001 Taba talks, Geneva accords, and Ayalon-Nusseibeh peace plan, developed with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators, show that some agreement is possible.

**Jewish peace organizations in the U.S. and Israel:** Tikkun Community, Brit Tzedek v’Shalom, and Gush Shalom, for starters. There are too many to list here.

**Palestinian nonviolent resistance:** Palestinian organizations (the Holy Land Trust, Panorama, Sabeel, etc.) are training Palestinians in nonviolent direct action and, increasingly, Palestinian villagers are resisting nonviolently the confiscation of their land and destruction of their homes.

**War resistance:** There are currently 1,662 Israeli “refuseniks”—reserve officers and soldiers, pilots, and draft-age students who will not serve in the Occupied Territories.

And many resist quietly, finding ways to do their military service outside the Territories, or stay out of the country.

Palestinian self-help efforts: Poverty and unemployment are so widespread in Palestine that simply surviving is an act of peaceful resistance.

Our hope is that readers will inform others about this work—by writing editorials and letters to the editor, organizing events, communicating with elected officials—and, if possible, will contribute or raise money for a group, work directly with a group, or even be inspired to create a new group. Many active in this work say that peace will not come with signatures on a treaty; instead, people must open their hearts to the suffering of their adversaries and start planning to live together. We see this project as a small contribution toward this transformation.

### **Notes on History and Terminology**

The state of Israel was established in 1948 in the area called Palestine and immediately invaded by the neighboring Arab countries. Most Palestinian Arabs then fled their homes. Today, about 4.6 million still live in refugee camps in surrounding Arab countries and in territory occupied by Israel in 1967.

Arabs who remained in Israel and their descendants (Muslims, Christians, and Druze) now constitute about 20 percent of Israel's population. They are Israeli citizens but suffer discrimination.

**Occupied Territories:** Land occupied by Israel in the 1967 war with Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. Since 1967, Israel's government has demolished about 12,000 Palestinian homes. And it has encouraged the building of Jewish settlements; about 400,000 Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank in violation of international law.

**The Green Line:** Border between Israel and the West Bank.

**Oslo Accords:** Signed in 1993 by Israel and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), it called for Israeli forces to progressively withdraw from the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and for self-government within those areas to emerge through the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA never gained control of more than 18 percent of the West Bank's territory.

**Intifada:** Palestinian uprising in the Territories against Israel's occupation. The first started in 1987 and ended with the Oslo accords; the second started in 2000 after negotiations between Israel and the PA failed.

**The Wall/Barrier:** Built by Israel to separate it from the West Bank, this structure runs beyond the Green Line to allow Israel to annex large settlements. The International Court of Justice declared it a breach of international law.

## **Arab-Jewish Citizen Dialogue**

### **Bereaved Families Forum**

(theparentscircle.com) 500 Israeli and Palestinian families who lost loved ones in the conflict. Has conducted over 1,000 programs in Israeli schools with a Palestinian and Israeli speaking of losing a loved one. Organizes public events, e.g., displayed 800 coffins draped with Palestinian and Israeli flags near New York's U.N. headquarters in 2002.

### **Hello Peace!**

(hellopeace.net) Provides free telephone service to anyone in Israel or the Territories wishing to talk with someone on the other side chosen from a pool of names.

### **Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group**

(traubman.igc.org) Brings together Palestinian and Jewish Americans. Started in the San Francisco Bay Area, it has now spread to many other U.S. cities.

## **Arts and Culture**

### **Arab-Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa**

(arab-hebrew-theatre.org.il) A troupe of Arabs (from Israel and West Bank) and Jews, who write and perform plays in Arabic and Hebrew about the conflict; seen by more than 15,000 students.

### **Comedy for Peace**

(comedy4peace.org) Palestinian American comedian Ray Hanania and Jewish American filmmaker David Lewis plan a comedy tour of the Middle East in early 2006 and a documentary, *Laughing Through the Tears*.

### **Just Vision**

(justvision.org) Compiles an online gallery of 180 "portraits" of Israelis and Palestinians working with people on both sides of the Green Line (including a former Israeli settler and a former Palestinian fighter). Plans curricula in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, and a documentary.

### **West-Eastern Divan Orchestra**

(danielbarenboim.com) Young Arab and Israeli musicians who rehearse every summer in various cities and perform around the world, and in the Palestinian Territories. Directed by Israeli Daniel Barenboim, cofounder with the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which also established the Palestine Youth Orchestra with conservatory students from Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem.

## **Cooperative Living**

### **Neve Shalom/Wahat El Salaam**

(Oasis of Peace in Hebrew and Arabic, [nswas.com](http://nswas.com)) A village of Jews and Arabs within Israel established in 1970, owned and run by its members. The village's bilingual schools are also open to children from surrounding Arab and Jewish communities. The School for Peace trained 35,000 adolescent and adult Jews and Arabs in peacemaking skills, with special attention to national identity and power asymmetry. Humanitarian projects include medical assistance to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians.

### **Direct Action and Solidarity Groups**

Anarchists Against the Wall

([af-north.org/wall.html](http://af-north.org/wall.html)) Israelis who join Palestinians in nonviolent actions against the Wall Barrier.

Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

([icahd.org](http://icahd.org)) Resists demolition of Palestinian homes with nonviolent direct action and mobilizes Israelis and Palestinians to rebuild them. Also helps Palestinians deal with Israeli authorities.

Ta'ayush

([taayush.org](http://taayush.org)) Arabic for "life in common," Arab and Jewish Israelis who engage in concrete daily actions of solidarity with West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, e.g., organizing convoys to bring food and other necessities to Arab villages.

### **Economy**

Center for Jewish Arab Economic Development

([cjaed.org.il](http://cjaed.org.il)) Aims to nurture economic cooperation between Jews and Arabs in Israel and close gaps between them.

Sindyanna of Galilee

([sindyanna.com](http://sindyanna.com)) Arab and Jewish Israeli women who distribute local Arab products—olive oil, soap, baskets, etc.—worldwide. Also works with West Bank farmers whose land has been confiscated or destroyed by Israeli forces.

### **Education**

Hope Flowers School

([hope-flowers.org](http://hope-flowers.org)) A Palestinian school near Bethlehem, K-7, that adds peace and democracy to standard curriculum, e.g., creative solutions to confrontation, standing up for your rights nonviolently. Counsels children and families traumatized by the violence. Had exchanges with Israeli schools until second Intifada, when they were outlawed. Jewish volunteers teach children about Judaism.

Jewish-Arab Center for Peace at Givat Haviva

(givathaviva.org.il) In central Israel; Arab and Jewish staff offers broad range of educational programs for peace and coexistence to 15,000 students, teachers, and community professionals annually: Camp Coexistence (see “Sports”), Children Teaching Children (on issues of national and personal identities and joint citizenship); Children’s March for Peace; courses on Arabic culture and language.

#### Opening of the Heart

(openingoftheheart.org) U.S.-based educational program for teachers offers films, curricula, books, exhibits, and training based on compassionate dialogue and careful listening to people on the other side of the conflict.

#### PRIME Curriculum Project

(vispo.com/PRIME) History teachers, people from the West Bank, Palestinians, and Israeli Jews develop texts for students ages 15-16 presenting the Palestinian and Israeli narratives, without attempting to build a “common narrative”—e.g., 1948 is described both as the Israelis’ year of “independence” and the Palestinians’ “catastrophe,” or Naqba.

### **Environment**

#### ARAVA Institute for Environmental Studies

(arava.org) Conducts research with Palestinians and Jordanians about air quality, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture in the Middle East.

#### Friends of the Earth Middle East

(foeme.org) Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists working on transborder issues, especially shared ecosystems, including the Jordan River Basin and Dead Sea (Palestine, Jordan, and Israel). Offices in Amman (Jordan), Bethlehem (Palestine), and Tel-Aviv (Israel).

#### Good Water Neighbors

(a project of Friends of the Earth Middle East) Uses interdependency of shared water resources as a basis for cooperation. In each of two communities on either side of a border, a staffer and young volunteers study its “water reality”: Where is water coming from? How is it allocated? What is its quality? How is it priced? What happens to sewage? Groups share results, then work to raise awareness at regional level.

### **Health**

#### Physicians for Human Rights—Israel

(phr.org.il) Defends right to health in Israel and Territories: runs mobile clinics in Territories and Tel-Aviv (for undocumented); also challenges doctors’ participation in torture; advocates for those in Gaza cut off from treatment because borders are now closed and for West Bank Palestinians impeded from access to health services.

#### Bridges

(bridgesmagazine.org) The first Palestinian-Israeli public health magazine, written and run by Palestinian and Israeli academics and health professionals. Covers the impact of the conflict on health in both societies, and other topics relevant to both populations.

#### Peace Through Health

Partnership in Emergency Medicine (no website; google for news articles) Three hospitals—one Israeli, one Palestinian, one in Boston—cooperated in training 300 Palestinian, Israeli, and American nurses and doctors in emergency medicine. Plans a joint Israeli-Palestinian toxicology center.

### **Human Rights**

#### Hamoked

(hamoked.org.il) An Israeli organization that assists Palestinians in the Territories whose rights are violated by Israeli policies.

#### Rabbis for Human Rights

(rhr.org) Opposes restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement and house demolitions through legal and direct action. Participates in the olive harvest in the West Bank and helps the farmers sell the oil.

#### B'Tselem

(btselem.org) The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories uses Palestinian and Israeli researchers to document human rights violations in the Territories; universally respected for its accuracy.

### **Interfaith**

#### House of Hope

(hohpeacecenter.org) In Galilee, founded by a Palestinian Christian, it brings Arabs and Jews together for dialogue, lectures, and conferences; runs a Peace Kindergarten and a summer peace camp for youth.

#### Interfaith Encounter Association

(interfaith-encounter.org) Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Baha'is in Holy Land and Middle East promote coexistence through cross-cultural and interfaith study and dialogue. Established the Women's Interfaith Encounter (women meet monthly and share religious celebrations) and Youth Interfaith Encounter.

#### Sulha Peace Project

(sulha.com) Sulha (forgiveness) is a traditional Middle East reconciliation ceremony for feuding families involving sharing cups of coffee. Project organizes three-day festivals with shared prayer, religious study, music, stories, and ideas; drew several thousand Muslims, Christians, and Jews in 2005.

### **Media**

### Alternative Information Center

(alternativenews.org) A Palestinian/Israeli think tank focusing on media activism, human rights research, and political analysis.

### Crossing Borders

(crossingborders.org) Bimonthly magazine in English produced by Palestinian, Jordanian, and Israeli (Jewish and Arab) youth; used in schools in Palestine, Jordan, and Israel.

### Palestine-Israel Journal

(pij.org) Copublished and produced quarterly by Israeli and Palestinian journalists and academics. Aims to “analyze freely and critically the complex issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians, without prejudice and taboo.”

### Radio All for Peace

(allforpeace.org) Broadcasts from East Jerusalem with half- Palestinian, half-Israeli staff; Arab and Israeli music, talk shows, and interviews of Palestinian and Israeli political figures; in Arabic and Hebrew.

## **Peace Walks**

### Middleway

(middleway.org) Applies dharma teachings to peacemaking; organizes peace walks lasting one or several days in Israel and Territories—sometimes going back and forth at West Bank checkpoints or walking along the Wall; led by Israelis, joined by many Arabs. (See article on page 27.)

### Public Policy and Advocacy

Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (ipcri.org) A think tank devoted to developing practical solutions to the conflict. Palestinian and Israeli experts produce detailed proposals about security, borders, Jerusalem, refugees, water, and peace education textbooks.

### Negev Coexistence Forum

(dukium.org) Joins Bedouin and Jewish communities in Israel’s Negev Desert. Increasingly concerned with protecting Bedouins’ rights.

## **Sports**

### Breaking the Ice, Antarctica Project

(breaking-the-ice.de) Joint Israeli-Palestinian expedition reached the summit of a previously unclimbed Antarctica peak in January 2004 and unfurled the two national flags. Plans a trans-Sahara journey for 2006.

### Camp Coexistence

(soccerforpeace.com, a Givat Haviva project; see “Education”) Arab- and Jewish-Israeli children, ages 10-12, meet for four days in summer to train with professional soccer players.

### Hapoel Jerusalem Youth Program

(mpdn.org/hjyp.htm) Gives 4,000 Jerusalem youth a chance to play sports, primarily basketball (the most popular); trains Arab coaches and players from Jerusalem area; works with parents and teachers to strengthen players’ academic skills; and integrates players in informal classes and training with teams from Jewish public schools.

## **Truth and Reconciliation**

### PRIME

(vispo.com/PRIME) Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, founded by two professors, one Palestinian, one Israeli. Explores establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Palestine/Israel, and argues that redressing the continued injustice inflicted on Palestinian refugees is essential to peace and the spiritual healing of Israeli Jews.

## **Women**

### Bat Shalom

(batshalom.org) Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women working together for a just resolution of the conflict and an equal voice for Jewish and Arab women within Israel; resistance and educational activities, including days of solidarity with Arabs in villages slated for demolition.

### Jerusalem Center for Women

(j-c-w.org) Palestinian group works to empower Territories’ Palestinian women. Cooperates with Israeli Bat Shalom through the Jerusalem link, which helped establish the U.N.- based International Women’s Commission to ensure women’s full participation in all peace negotiations.

Women’s Partnership for Peace in the Middle East (gwip.org/programs) Formed in Oslo in 2003 by Israeli and Palestinian women to strengthen women’s role in fostering reconciliation. Projects include: a gathering of Israeli and Palestinian businesswomen to explore joint business ventures; a journalists’ forum to promote coverage of peace building initiatives and publication of Palestinian journalists in Israeli press and of Israeli journalists in Palestinian press.

## **Youth**

Summer Camps for Jews and Arabs

([traubman.igc.org/camps.htm](http://traubman.igc.org/camps.htm)) At least 14 such camps in North America, including: Building Bridges for Peace ([s-c-g.org](http://s-c-g.org)), which brings teenage girls from Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza to Colorado's high country; Seeds of Peace ([seedsofpeace.org](http://seedsofpeace.org)), which brings 300 Arab and Israeli teens to Maine for training in leadership and communication skills.

#### Peace Child Israel

([peacechild.net](http://peacechild.net)) Uses theater to foster dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian teens throughout Israel and East Jerusalem. Teenagers tell about their lives and the conflict, create dramatic pieces based on their stories, and perform them in Arabic and Hebrew. v

See [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org) for the complete list of organizations.

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