

Breaking Barriers – An Israeli-Palestinian Solidarity Project Founders Program 2002

Who are we?

We, an Israeli young women and a Palestinian young men, decided, from our experience of meeting each other and having the chance to know each other, to cooperate and work together to give this chance to more people. We are not connected to any political party or group, but try to expose young people from many directions to the possibility of meeting.

Background and Vision

The situation in Israel-Palestine is a reality of fear, suffering, violence and desperation. In the last two years many people who support the peace process lost their faith. Hundreds of people were killed and injured, injustice is taking place every day, and the solution seems to move farther and farther away.

A reality of closure, siege, hunger, death and daily humiliation for the Palestinian side, and daily fear from suicide attacks for the Israeli side- raises a new generation of enemies, that see each other only through the eyes of the occupation and the power game. The more separation, the more estrangement.

The conflict in Israel-Palestine is forced on the people that live in the region by manipulations and oppression and pushing them to the arms of desperation and violence. Each side is stuck in the position of the victim. On both sides, people lost hope to ever reach peace. They believe there is no way the other side will accept them. The hatred and ignorance increase. People from both sides meet each other only as occupier and occupied. The leadership, which is not interested in co-existence, controls the media. It is blocking the chance of meeting and talking on a human level, because this is the ultimate way of caring, developing empathy and understanding the situation which has developed.

Goals

We believe this circle of violence can be stopped- and the way to do it is to start from individuals, to build mutual interest, solidarity and trust between the people. This is a chance that the young people in the region deserve; to take responsibility and to make a change. We believe the way to do it is by meeting and making these connections, which will continue afterwards. This is not a replacement for a political solution, but a part of it. Today, these political meetings almost don't take place.

Our destination is to increase the group who will have hope, work together, and spread this hope to our society. We see the importance of the fact that we are independent. The young people we bring don't represent movements, but come as individuals. One of our purposes is that people that took part in this project will continue and organize also meetings by themselves, will enter the circle of activism, and this way goodwill grows.

Preliminary Outline:

The project based thus, and already begun in the two seminars in Germany this summer, followed by meetings that begun taking place in Jerusalem, as well as working teams that started to put out projects (like going into schools), is comprised of a few segments. The idea behind it is that the first and profound, meeting, in addition to being an irreplaceable means for creating communication and understanding creates a group of involved and motivated young people who want to work together. This group has a unique potential because of the common experience its members have been through. This is therefore a multi-layered program which continues this process and sets a frameworks and tools for these participants to keep meeting, take action, and spread what they've learned to a growing number of people. The program is constructed of the following parts:

1. Continuing seminars abroad.

Organizing of additional seminars abroad, where more people will be given the opportunity to talk to and get to know each other, reach out of the bubble of animosity and ignorance and open up to other voices. As well as additional seminars where there will be special attention put on joint activities, volunteer work in various places, keeping and building the continuing personal connection and trust between the people.

2. Israeli-Palestinian Working Teams.

Those teams, including people from both sides who attended the seminars and meetings that took place so far, already started working together on cooperative projects. Our vision is that after taking part in meetings, the young Israelis and Palestinians will start taking actual active steps together to change the reality.

Meetings Team.

Developing continuation meetings on various issues between both groups in Israel-Palestine, in weekend seminars and single days, opened for new people to come and take part of the process, which includes discussions, workshops, lectures, and a safe space for conversations and communication.

Information and Education Team.

Developing joint and separate educational and instructive activities in both societies: entering schools and youth groups, talking to people in the streets, reaching media, organizing conferences in community centers and universities, writing and filming mutual communication and more. All this will be done while keeping the network of connections and cooperation, all the while bringing new people into the circle.

Solidarity Actions Team.

Building actions, from both sides, that will bring out the message of mutual solidarity between the people, a message against the suffering and a commitment to stay human and carrying to one another. The first activity we're working on is Israelis going to Palestinian villages of people they met, by invitation, meeting local people and their friends and bringing with them the message of solidarity.

3. Giving Tools to the New Activists.

Giving people in these groups tools to take greater parts in the organization, initiation and execution of all the above through leadership training courses, conflict resolution and mediation in times of conflict tools – these will be put into practice both in the coming seminars as well as in the streets with the public we are a part of.

All these amounts to a program which develops and expands with every step and all elements which are mutually dependant and create a process which not only actively involves its participants but also many other people in both societies.