



**Bosnian-Initiative**  
c/o Cyriakusgemeinde  
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**Komitee für Grundrechte  
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ubihedi@t-online.de Frankfurt, 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2003

**Dear Donors and Friends,**

**We already sent you a report about the campaign "Vacations from War 2002". Therefore this is just a short summary of that report (which we can send on request).**

**In this letter we will give more space to the impressions the participants themselves wrote last summer.**

Altogether in the last nine years more than 15,000 children, youths and accompanying responsible adults, most of whom, refugees and orphans, are victims of the Balkan wars, have spent two weeks in summer camps with their supposed enemies, eating at the same table, laughing, talking, and sometimes grieving together.

In the summer of 2002 we also succeeded in organizing **meetings for 96 young people from Israel and Palestine**, though at that time it seemed unlikely that we would be able to realize this project, since the war was escalating almost daily. **Palestinians from the West Bank, who got around the curfew in a most risky and dangerous manner**, participated in all three meetings. One young man had hidden under the load in a truck to get to Jericho and then to Jordan via the Allenby border bridge. The parents of some participants on both sides knew only that they had been invited to Germany but not that they would meet with "the others". The Palestinians were taking a big risk, for they could be denounced for "**collaborating with the enemy**", with very serious consequences. Some of the Israeli participants are conscientious objectors refusing military service in the occupied territories and were just then branded "**traitors of the fatherland**".

The groups remain in contact by e-mail and try to meet from time to time in Jerusalem. For some of the participants from Palestine this is extremely difficult or impossible.

**In the summer 2003 we plan summer camps for about 1500 children from Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia on the Mediterranean Sea in Croatia and Montenegro.**

**Again we want to give 50 young people from Israel and 50 from Palestine the opportunity to meet in Germany for an intensive exchange of their different point of views and to try to develop a perspective together.**

**We know it sounds naive, but nevertheless we are convinced that the best war prevention is for young people from both sides of a conflict to spend their holidays together. Who organizes "Vacations from War" for children and young people from India and Pakistan, from Ethiopia and Eritrea, from Washington and Baghdad, from New York and Kabul?**

**Yours sincerely,  
Helga Dieter**

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**One vacation sponsorship costs \$ 125, but we appreciate any amount.**

**Please make out checks to the Bosnian Initiative and send them to Katha Pollitt, c/o The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003 or directly to us in Frankfurt.**

**If you need a tax exempt 501 (C 3) for a higher grant please contact Helga Dieter.**

## **Statements of some Participants written in summer 2002**

### **Muslim Refugees from Eastern Bosnia (Srebrenica), now living in Tuzla**

**Hallo,**

my name is Mirnesa Handzic and I live in a village for widows and orphans from Srebrenica near Tuzla. There I live with my grandma. This is my second time at the seaside and I found a lot of new friends. I want to thank you for making possible these holidays for me.

**Dear Donators,**

my name is Emina Tuzlic, I am 15 years old and have finished the 8th grade. Here everything is super. We have different workshops, where we can learn something new. I am a good swimmer. I was born in Gradacac from where we had to flee. My father was killed in the war and I live in an orphanage in Tuzla. These holidays, which you have made possible for me are super and I will never forget them. Here in Zivogosce we do a lot of things, making walks, having disco at the terrasse every evening and then a meeting, where we discuss what we will do the next day. We made a boat trip to Makarska and went to the shell-museum. I thank you very much for making possible these holidays for me, which I will always remember.

**Dear Donators,**

my name is Nihada Ibric, I am 10 years old and have finished the fourth grade. I live in an orphanage in Tuzla. This is my first time at the seaside and I wish I could come again. Thank you very much for making possible for me these holidays. I love you, Nihada.

**Dear Donators,**

I write you this letter because you really are a human character. I live in Bosnia. Please call me. The prefix is 00387, but I don't have a phone.

### **Serbian Refugees, now living in Srebrenica**

**Dear Donators,**

my name is Aleksandar Krajisnik and I finished the 5th grade. I live in Srebrenica. I want to thank you for making possible for me these wonderful holidays. I have found a lot of new friends from Tuzla. Before the war I lived in Visoko. I live with my father, my sick grandmother and two sisters, my mother has left us 5 years ago, she was from another ethnic group. My father has no permanent job and it is hard to make a living for us. This is my first time at the seaside and I want to thank you for everything.

**Dear Donators,**

my name is Petar Tesanovic, I live in Srebrenica and finished the fourth grade of the primary school. I live with my father and my brother, my mother was killed during the war. Here in Zivogosce everything is super.

I want to thank you for making possible for me to come to the seaside. I love you.

**Dear Donators,**

my name is Zarko, I live in Srebrenica and have just finished the 6. grade.

I live with my parents in a very small apartment but I am very happy for still having parents at all. During the war my family and I had to seek refuge in Srebrenica, where we still stay. My hobby is playing football and everyone tells me, I am very talented, but unfortunately there is no team in Srebrenica, where I could play.

**Palest. 18 y., masc.**

...I met some great people, I have made some very close and precious friends. It was very exciting for me to see the changes that happened in the group. And in the end -almost a peace-agreement...

**Palest. 18 y., masc.**

...I wish these beautiful days would last forever. I feel proud of myself and of the other Arab people because of our ability of convincing the Jews that we are not people seeking destruction but people seeking freedom and justice. ...We are seeking the same destination: Peace! I wished, peace would somehow fall down from somewhere making life as beautiful as here.

**Palest. 24 y. fem.**

When they told me about this trip it took me a lot of time to decide: How can I sit with those people who kill mine every day? How can I meet them -after all the difficulties I face every day while going to my work -all that fear of death or loosing work? But at least I wanted to meet them to find a solution even if we were so far from it.

During this seminar the only important thing for me was that I talked to Israeli -peaceful people-I thought they wouldn't even exist.

**Palest. 22 y. fem.**

First of all: The discussions between both parties were very productive. We raised many issues and I think personal issues and stories had an effect on both sides -especially the Israelis. I believe opening up by saying what we really believe and not what our leaders or political parties want us to say made it possible to interact and listen to the others while developing our believes and thoughts.

**Israeli, 22 y. mas.**

When I first heard about this seminar I jumped on the opportunity... The seminar seemed to me like a fantastic chance to change all this -and in retrospect- it did! I now feel better equiped and stronger when turning back. Throughout the seminar my opinions and feelings changed constantly as a result of the ever changing dynamics of the process. The partial hostility I felt coming from the Palestinian side in the first days,-by which I was curiously surprised-, quickly changed to a warm and smooth atmosphere with most of them. Thinking back...there are many issues in my mind.but also faces, sounds and feelings, personal stories and personal views from the real people of the other side.

**Israeli, 21 y. fem.**

I never in my life met a Palestinian person. The only time I saw them was on tv. All my life I was scared from people, who live near me and speak Arabic. I right away connected them to the hate they have towards all Israeli. Here I came to know that first of all they are Human Beings before any political masks. I got to understand here what is really going on in the Westbank I know this seminar costs a lot of money and efforts...but it is really worth it!

**Israeli, 25 y. masc.**

I was at a point of frustration and desillusion that is very common in Israel society these days... I had prepared myself for an exchange of political ideas. I was astonished that the Palestinians were more focussed on the emotional side of the conflict -how they feel under Israeli occupation. I couldn't believe how so much of their attention is infact focussed on what is evidently so fundamental -their lack of equality, not in national-political terms (at least not as much), but in basic human terms. In their freedom of movement, their right to personal security and their right to dignity. These issues brought me to realize the underlining basis of the conflict -the oppression of one side by the other.

## The Croatian, Serbian and Muslimic Teenager from Bosnia exchanged letters with the young people from Israel and Palestine

### Zivogosce 19<sup>th</sup> of August

Zdravo,

We are children from different ethnic groups in Bosnia. Now we spend our holidays together at the Croatian Adria. That we are together here is an exception, but for us it is no problem anymore. We are from Banja Luka, Gornji Vakuf -Uskoplje, Brcko and Tuzla. We would like to send you a song of peace:

Mi smo za mir!  
Neka ljubav vlada svijetom  
Nasom jedinom planetom.  
Neka ljubav pobjedi  
Mi smo za mir, mir!  
I ptica let.  
Neka ljubav vlada svijetom  
Nasom jedinom planetom  
Neka ljubav Pobjedi!

We want peace  
Love should govern the world  
our one and only planet.  
Love should win.  
We want peace, peace!  
Fly, bird, fly!  
Love should govern the world  
our one and only planet  
Love should win!

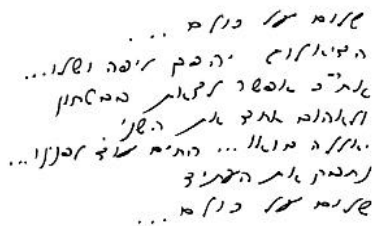
### Walberberg, 23th of August

Dear all,

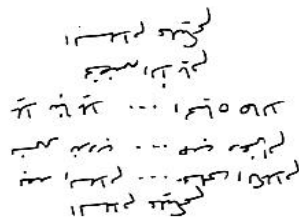
First we -Palestinians and Israeli- want to thank you for the letter, that you sent to us. Secondly, we want to introduce ourselves. We came to Germany from both sides to sit together and discuss our bad situation. We agree that the Palestinians have the right to live in their homeland and that there must be an end with the occupation. We also agree that the suicide bombing should be stopped immediately. We hope that both sides can live in harmony and peace. We wrote this poem for you

in Hebrew

in Arabic.



שלום לכולם...  
הקולות יחד יהיו זיכרון...  
אנחנו נשבע לך שיש לנו  
ואנחנו נשבע לך שיש לנו  
אנחנו נשבע לך שיש לנו  
אנחנו נשבע לך שיש לנו  
אנחנו נשבע לך שיש לנו



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Peace for everybody.  
The dialogue will be  
beautiful and peaceful.  
People will live in security  
and will respect each other.  
Come on with us, we still  
have all the live ahead of us.  
Lets look towards our future.  
Peace for everybody

### Zivogosce, 25th of August

Hallo,

Thank you for your answer to our fax. We are the next group here in Zivogosce with young people from the three nationalities in Bosnia. In this holiday-camp we relax and try to forget the terrible memories of the war. We hope the war in your country will stop as soon as possible. Because of the war in our country we know what war can do to people. We send you a favorite song of us:

Kad bi svi ljudi na svijetu  
Bas kao sva djeca na svietu  
Odlucili da Nebi tad  
Bilo ni rata  
A ko je sam  
Dali bi mu brata  
Sav bi strah  
Skinuli s vrata jer bio bi mir.

If all people on the earth  
just as the children on the earth,  
would decide that  
there is no war anymore  
and anyone who is alone  
would get a brother,  
all fear would vanish  
because there would be peace.