

2004 LETTERS to the Donors

ISRAELIS

- 1. From the bottom of my heart I want to say „Thank you“ for giving me and many other young Palestinians and Israelis the chance to meet and to explore the way we feel and think about each other. I discovered many things I wouldn't have had the opportunity in any other way. For me as a young Israeli woman it was a wonderful experience. For the future I wish I would have the chance to meet my new friends in our own home Israel-Palestine. It is difficult to describe the unique experience I went through in a few words.**
Michal, 23 years, Israel NSWAS
- 2. This was very important for me. I found out a lot about myself and the society which I'm living in. ...It made me realize that if you put enemies together and take away all the „bad“ factors which are part of the conflict, these people are not enemies any more –just human-beings which can share joy, tears, pain etc. with each other... I really made good friends from the other side, people which I care for and which I will be very upset if anything happens to them. Putting faces to the enemy is very powerful for me.**
Sharon, 30 years, NSWAS Jerusalem
- This opportunity brought me the chance to get a new point of view of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the life I live at home in Israel. I have learned so much and met wonderful people. It was very different from all the activities I get to do at home, and I plan to transform everything I learned here into actions towards solving this conflict at home. I believe with all my heart that these meetings are way to peace, through the people.**
Limor, 21 years, NSWAS
 - I come from Tel Aviv and had an unique experience in my life to meet Palestinians the last two weeks. Suddenly the city under the bombings of the Israel army gets a different meaning because now my friends are there. I wish all Israelis and all Palestinians could have this experience to meet –at least the next generation to become open-minded, consider the other side and include the consequences. I hope the situation in Israel will change, that the media will be more objective and ‚real‘ and won't tell the Israel lies anymore to make people radical – as they do now.**
Lial, 24years, NSWAS
 - I'm studying in the university of Beer-Sheva. Because I had the opportunity to come here I met wonderful people. I came to know the other side.**
Michal, 24years, NSWAS
 - Thank you for giving me the the chance to see the light in the black tunnel –we and the Palestinians are in. Sometimes you can't see this light in the great darkness at home. But when I meet the other side, when I make friendships with them, I come to know, they are the same like us.**
Arik, 26 years, NSWAS,

- While staying in Germany, we (the Israeli group) met young students from the Palestinian's occupied areas. We talked about our lives and the war and tried to think about ideas how to make this terrible situation stop. The project offered us the opportunity to meet our so-called enemies and we all promised to fight together against war and for peace.

Gil, 17 years, NSWAS

- Tomorrow I'll leave Germany, where I met more than 20 Palestinians from the Westbank and some from Israel (since 1948). This meeting means a lot to me and really helped me to know and understand more about me and about the conflict between Israel and Palestine. I realized that I live in a racist society. We need to take responsibility about our actions in the present and in the past 56 years. It was a wonderful experience.

Dori, 23 years, NSWAS

- It was a great opportunity to meet Palestinians from the Westbank in this great project. Since, it helped me and many others to re-shape our political opinions. I'm proud to say that now I'm smarter and more aware of the political world around me.

Omer, 16 years, male, Israel NSWAS

- Here I had many discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with many people, who all are, in different ways, a part of it. The project enabled me to learn and understand more about the situation I live in and, more important, about the situation in the occupied territories. I have met teenagers from „the other side“ and talked to them in a peaceful and respectful manner that never could happen where we all live. This project has deeply infected all of us and I have no doubt that both groups, when we return home, will become a part of the small but growing movement against the occupation.

Omer, 17 years, NSWAS

- Here I had the option to see that the Palestinian teenagers are not different than me and my friends. We became closer to each other and managed to find ways to overcome the differences. I now have new hopes for an end of this bloody conflict. Thanks for the amazing vacations I have had.

Gal, 17 years, male, Israel, NIR, July 2004)

- In this moment my country is in a war. Most people in such a situation don't see the enemy as a human being. Each side sees the others as an object, as a number. In such occasions many disgusting acts are been done by both sides. Seeing the human-being and listen to the opponent's opinion, recognizing their abilities and creativity and talking to the others without patronizing, is very important. I thank you from the deepest place in my heart for giving me the chance to see the individuality in each person. But the question that is left: How can we make a difference?

Benny, 18 years, NIR

- During the last weeks, both Palestinians and Israelis have listened to each other –and more important, have made friendships together. We are able to tell and listen our personal stories and to discuss the conflict we are living in. I feel how important this

program is which enables the youth to change the future. To have a dialogue is essentially today.

Tahel, Jerusalem, 16 years, NIR

- **I had an extremely wonderful two weeks here. I faced the problems in my life, which I rather forgot before...I met Palestinian people and got to know them. I had this chance that most people in Israel don't get: to see our enemies and understand that they are all people, we all want to feel safe...Actually even if we have different ways, it comes down to the same target –peace!**

Stav, female 16 years. NIR

- **This trip was very important for me as an Israeli but even more as a person. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is so complicated and sitting at home, inside all of that, surrounded only by Israelis, it is much easier just to blame the other side and get angry and hate them. But we all just need to stop for a second to see how all this hate and all this violence is wrecking each others lives! I got the chance to prove myself and feel in my heart, what I already knew: We are all human-beeings!**

Shifra, 15 years, NIR female Israel

- **We discussed about the conflict and the problems that each side suffers from. This allowed me to see how the Palestinians think and feel.**

Yotan, 16 years, NIR male, Israel

- **I want to express my deep appreciation for the „Vacations from War“. It was an incredible experience. I met interesting people I would have never met anywhere else and most importantly, learned about the conflict I live in from new points of view That I wouldn't have been able to realize on my own. Living in Israel I rarely ever get to see the other side of the Arabic-Israeli conflict, and every chance I get to hear the other story is greatly important for me. These past two weeks were truly enlightening for me and I will never forget them. The overall experience here was overwhelming and wouldn't have been possible without this project. Every day I learned more about myself and about the people I met here. I will keep in touch with them! One of the important steps towards peace is learning about the other nation, cultural differences and similarities. With more understanding the tolerance grows.**

Noa, 20 years, NIR

- **I enjoyed and studied a lot in those last two weeks. I feel closer to the other side now, to their perspectives and feelings**

Yossi, 18years, NIR

- **As you know we have some problems between the Jewish people and the Arabs (Palestinians). Although we live next to each other for more than 50 years we hardly get to talk to each other. Here we talked a lot and tried to understand each other. Most people in Israel don't have the opportunity to come to know Palestinians. Thank you for giving me this privilege.**

Yuval, 20 years, NIR, Israel, July 2004

- Surprisingly, it was only in Germany, where I could truly meet my neighbours. Peace in the Middle-East isn't only something created by politicians but also formed within the people. By helping this project, you made Israeli and Palestinian youngsters to open their hearts and minds. You are changing history!

Robert, 24years, male NIR

- The last weeks I could broaden my mind. We had many sessions, in which both sides had the chance to speak freely and have the others listen patiently. I came with an unsolid political opinion – and also have not yet developed one- but now I have more points of view, I know more personal stories from the two sides, all of which will stay with me in the future. In the free time we got to know the others not only in a political light but as people as well.

Audrey, 17years, NIR

- It was great to meet people from different cultures. I learned a lot new facts, what I didn't know. It was an amazing experience. I think everybody should go through it.

Avital, 16 years, NIR

- I had a wonderful time here in Germany. I became familiar with the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Being able to travel away from the middle-east and discuss such issues in a peaceful environment, helped both sides to relax and be able to express themselves freely. I became able to realize the different perspectives and meanings of the conflict. Breaking the ice between us, Israelis and Palestinians, was hard but became possible due to the different games and equipment we were given.

Yotan, 20 years, NIR

- I would like to thank you of the bottom of my heart. I think that the war and the hatred between Israeli and Palestinians is in big part a result of ignorance and misunderstanding. Projects like „Vacations from War“ are the best way to overcome these problems. It allows to look on the conflict from the other side, to recognize the enduring suffering of each side and helps you to understand, that we all are human beings, who's only wish is, to live in peace. Only through this process of dialogue and understanding we ,ll finally manage to bring peace and prosperity to our region.

Inshallah!

Yonatan, 17 years, NIR

- I'll thank for the amazing experience I had. I think that every Palestinian and Israeli that get to know each other bring peace a step closer. Many people are suffering in our land and this seminar gives us hopeand the belief that each and everyone has the power to change.

Moran, 25years, BB

- I want to express my deep gratitude...I'm studying Hebrew literature. This seminar was an amazing experience. It was not easy at all, many times we were hurt, sometimes we weeped –but we did all this with people that we can#t meet in Israel:The Palestinians. I will express my ideas when I go back to Israel and hopefully I'll be able to do something little for peace.

Shoshana, 24years, BB

- **My parents were born in Iran and came in the 60th to Israel. This seminar was one of the most emotional experiences in my life. I'm a peace activist in my country but in Israel it is impossible to meet Palestinians, it would be dangerous for them.**

Natalie, 30years, BB

- **A new period in my life has been established. This seminar was the last key to complete my personal and political character about the conflict and wars in general. Please let me thank for an important event that should continue growing in Israeli's and Palestinian's hearts and let us hope that this horried conflict will end.**

Oron, 23years, male August 2004 BB

- **I just had a very intensive, interesting, not always easy „Vacations from war“. I learned to listen to the other side's stories, myths, narratives, needs,wills and hopes. I also told the other side about mine. More than always I believe now that war is caused by one-sided and egocentric points of view on both sides. After participating in this seminar, me and the people around me will be able to see both sides.**

Einat, 19 years, male, August 2004 BB

- **After many years that I live real close to Arabic neighbours, this is my first time to meet Palestinian people and really talk with them. A few of my best friends got bombed by the Palestinians and our life is always with a great fear –but still: I believe in peace and want that my children and the children I teach in school will live in a safe place. I haven't seen tv and news for three years, since the last Intifada started because it makes me feel so sad and hopeless. In this seminar I decidedto do something and I have got the feeling that also the people from the other side will do the same.**

Hadas, 27 years, female Jerusalem BB

- **We in Israel want the war to end, we all want peace and quiet. Right now this is not the situation. Palestinians have no way to meet Israelis, just as soldiers, which is a very bad experience. This seminar gave me the honour to sit with Palestinians and understand their situation. I also could explaine mine. To me this beautiful project taught me tolerance and listening.**

Shani, 24years, female, August 2004, BB

- **It was really exciting, refreshing and fulfilling –and of course hard, touching, frustrating, confusing. This experience has given me the chance to see things from a whole different perspective in a whole different environment. I learned to listen, really listen to the other side of this conflict – the Palestinians whose voice we usually can't hear or accept, as a society that needs to take the responsibility –Israel.**

Besides that we had pure fun together. The time I spent here gives me and my Palestinian brothers the ability to dream.

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PALESTINIANS

- **I'm from Jerusalem-Palestine. Here I met new people from Palestine, Israel and Germany. All of us have the chance to see new worlds. We look at the Palestinian issue from a new vision, we understand the conditions from both sides. This makes me think deeply again and again about everything. We and the Israeli friends have a lot of fun and also a lot of work together. We look at each other from the human side, not from the political side. All of us disagree with the force and crimes, we totally agree on the peace-way.**

Hamza, 18 years, PPM

- **This program is a true success. I am truly amazed by the great effect this experience has had on my personal point of view. I have always believed in peace and in the hope of one day living in an independent state of Palestine neighbouring the state of Israel. I have met Israelis in different programs in the past, but I never came so close to them. This program allows both, Palestinians and Israelis, to discuss openly and exchange their various points of views, but it also helps us to see each other as human-beings and not just as „enemies“. I never thought that I could treat Israelis like my own brothers and sisters. I can honestly say that Israelis also are yearning for a peaceful solution to put an end to the suffering and bloodshed.**

Jumara, 19 years

- **We discuss several issues about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We exchanged informations about culture and history and both nationalities tried to understand the other side. I had the chance to meet normal people from Israel, who are confused and lost in the conflict like me. We are trying to come to a peaceful resolution that will please both sides –in other words: Peace...This has been a very enjoyable adventure that opened up my eyes and the eyes of the others: How people can just live a democratic and fruitful life without fears. We all have wings...**

Mira, 18 years, PPM

- **The support for this project enabled us to show the other side that we are suffering from their occupation and from their doings.**

We are really in need for these kind of programs to let us find another way to speak and understand our conflict in order to overcome it and to create a peaceful solution for it.

Saed, 21 years, PPM

- **In this camp we talk about the situation in Palestine and we try to find some solutions for it. The first point we agree are the settlements in the Westbank must be closed.**

Akram, 19 years, PPM

- **This successful experiment was an unbelievable chance for me. It gave me the hope of having peace some day.**

Luma, 20 years, PPM Palestine

- Every day when the sun rises up on the earth it brings us a new hope of a sunny future. This is what you are doing for us. You help us to imagine a future, where we live with the other part of the conflict together. For me as a Palestinian it was a wonderful experiment. It changed some of my beliefs and affected me to think about solutions in a new way.

Mohammed, 19years, PPM

- I'm participating in a very successful summer-camp. When I met the Israeli group and heard their points of view about the conflict I changed some of my opinions. Moreover I feel that they also came to know many important things about our situation. This camp is one of the best ways to help the two sides to find peace.

Jalal, 19 years, male, Palestine, PPM

- Despite our different opinions between the two groups we could speak and discuss about anything we wanted, especially about very important cases. We got more informations about the other side by the discussions, lectures and movies about our conflict. Our leaders helped us to reach the aim, that a solution is possible.

Ibrahim, 20 years, PPM

- This is really really amazing –to know that we can live in peace together without killing each other. This project helped us to learn more facts about the situation. I'm lucky because I had this chance. I wish that all Palestinians and Israeli get this chance to see the other side as human-beings with a heart.

Reham, 16 years, PPM

- My thanking-words will not be enough. This is really an unique experience for me. Everything is new: The people, the discussions, the issues. These days here in Germany are the first time for me to feel, what „freedom“ means. To feel it –this was the hardest part for me because I start to think about my life, my existence and the reasons why I don't have this kind of life back home in Palestine. This also led me to think about peace and the best solution, a good end for the conflict. Here I found out that life is a valuable thing and we have to take care of it, this means to know how to spend each day of it for the sake of ourselves and the others. Thank you a lot for giving me this opportunity.

Maysa, 17 years, female PPM

- This was my first time to meet with Israelis and discuss the ongoing and neverending conflict. This trip was very special for me because I have never had the opportunity to leave Palestine. This was my first trip to cross the border and you made it happen. I think this project is very successful and I hope, that it will continue to unite both, Palestinians and Israelis under one roof, so that one day we all live in peace.

Saleh, Palestine, male 17years, PPM

- This trip was very useful for me. I learned things, which will help me in my life. First of all to become patient and that I always have to think before I speak.
- Aya, 16 years, PPM female Palestine

- **The project helped us to know the other side's ideas and beliefs about the situation which both of us are living in. For me as a Palestinian it was a wonderful experiment. It changed some of my beliefs about the other side and affected me to think about solutions which both sides can live with.**

Khalil, 16 years, PPM

- **I've been working for six years in peace-camps and organisations (also in the US), but I never had the chance to come to such a seminar. This project showed us where we really stand, which is close to peace. All we need is a better vision of tomorrow and the will to give. Peace is the only hope for a brighter tomorrow.**

Ihab, 21 years, male, Israel-Pal. August 2004 BB

- **An unique experience! The first time for me, hoping it won't be the last time. The metaphoric name „Vacations from war“ really touched me. But I think we need to stop the war, not take vacations only and then we go back to it. I'm really thinking how it is going to be, when I go back, especially that it always moves in one direction, which is to the worst!. But vacations usually give a new spirit and power. I'm not giving up but why it has become so hard to go on?**

NN BB

- **It is very useful to make those projects because it will help both sides of conflict or war to plan their future and to share their feelings and opinions together, so they can live in peace and coexistence. Thanks...**

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- **This seminar gave us a big chance to speak and explain our feelings to the other side, what we can't do in our land. I hope this program is continued as it says „Vacations from War“.**

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- **I feel very good for participating in one of these marvellous meetings and I'd like to thank you. But next time I need more preparation for this program and a schedule in advance. In addition to that I'd need a good guide for the Palestinian group.**

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