

واحة السلام
נווה שלום



Wahat al-Salam
Neve Shalom

Oasis of Peace

Winter 2018 Newsletter



Sections

Participants at the conference listened, reacted, and took notes as Professor Steven Zunes spoke about the history of nonviolent action in conflict zones.

**Beyond Dialogue:
Nonviolence and
Social Action**

**Yesterday and
today with The
Primary School**

**'Refugee': An
Exhibition with
Purpose**

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Beyond Dialogue: Nonviolence and Social Action

Can nonviolence change the world? Thanks to the Topol Family Foundation, proponents of peace were given the chance to find out at Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom on October 15. This one-day conference brought together the experiences of peace activists from many countries and walks of life as they spoke, worked, and learned from each other.

"Beyond Dialogue: Nonviolence and Social Action" connected activists with peace training, workshops, and speeches given by people who have changed the world. Steven Zunes and Simone Zimmerman were among those who presented at the conference, giving attendees valuable information as well as reinforcing the value of nonviolence in the region.

The conference went 'beyond dialogue' with organizations like Combatants for Peace, a group of former combatants who work to break the cycle of violence through their stories, and the photo-documentary

"This should be taught to children in schools everywhere. It's about more than nonviolence-- it's about being active and aware. This is empowering!" -- Workshop Participant

group Activestills. Attendees met in workshops designed for activists to share their skills and learn more about the efforts and struggles of others throughout the region.

Early in the day, a group of Palestinian youth spoke about 'Palestinian Nonviolent Protest against the Occupation.' These young activists were the first people from Gaza many of the Israeli members of the audience had ever spoken with. When asked what they needed most from the audience, they replied that the best thing to do was to add their voices to those on the other side of their border—as part of the protest and to let the people of Gaza know that they are not alone.

This was the central theme that emerged from the conference, one that would sustain activists in the region and beyond. Despite the day-to-day burnout and isolation felt by so many, there is without question a community behind them. Can nonviolence change the world? Will it? Yes, as long as we are together.

The conference, organized by the School for Peace, is another form of its work in developing Jewish and Palestinian change agents - people who will transform dialogue into action. The School for Peace continues its work at an astonishing pace. Each year, hundreds of professionals spend 15 to 18 months learning how to solve serious problems as partners, not enemies. Each program has been possible because there was a family of supporting friends, from USAID to the European Union, from donations made in honor of a child's birthday to donor bequests.



“[conferences like Beyond Dialogue] make you feel like you are not alone—that you have partners in this world and you can do things together.” — Samah S.

Left: Singer-Songwriter Haya Zaatri performs at the conference.

“This kind of conference needs to be replicated! it was informative, it was eye opening, and it gave me hope.”

--Barbara R.



Yesterday and Today with The Primary School

Gal Zak and Abdullah Abu-Katish's teachers created a curriculum that has evolved to meet the challenges facing the children of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. Always bilingual, binational and multicultural, you've made it possible for the Palestinian and Jewish children and families to create a way forward together. You adopted an additional first grade each year for the past four years and you joined with a generous supporter to provide a unique musical education with classical and traditional instruments and lessons for every child in the school!

But can the school nurture the development of young people who can work with and beyond dialogue? if you are in it with them, then they can do it!

How does the primary school shape its students' lives? For Gal, now nineteen years old, the impact cannot be overstated. “Going [to the primary school] really affected every aspect of my life. I think every child that would grow up in a place so different would be affected by it.”

Ten years ago, Abdallah said “The dream of Neve Shalom, we were living it. It can be a reality. The Neve Shalom reality was our reality.”

Bilingualism is one of the biggest impacts on graduates' lives, many report — and these two were no exception. Fluency in both Hebrew and Arabic "gives me the opportunity to communicate with others,” Gal said,

“In a typical Israeli school or Palestinian school, you get a narrative that one side is good and one side is bad. [Primary School] taught me both sides of the story. Both sides are very bad and both sides are very good, I think.”-- Gal

“and that has let me see from perspectives I just wouldn’t have had access to otherwise.”

Gal spoke about the way the primary school affected his feelings about the world. "It changes you. For the good, I think- a confusing kind of good, but still good." Gal, Abdallah and the other PS students see themselves as part of a larger change. “We are kind of the second generation. The adults who taught us, the first generation, they grew up in a very different way and place in life. We, on the other hand, were really born into this kind of thinking. It’s very different.”

Abdallah, like Gal, was also looking towards the future. “I think it's so important to show kids the possibilities, to communicate with them, to open the world for them... I think they should see it all.” Abdallah knew that he wanted to foster peace. “I think peace is inside us, not on a piece of paper; it exists within us even if it's intangible. We have to feel it, and there's a lot more we can be doing to make it happen.” Abdallah left this world too young, but he lived his too-short life as a peacemaker from the inside out.

"At Neve Shalom, the world is much larger."

--Abdullah

Today, the Primary School lives a continuous cycle of experimentation and evaluation. It is committed to being a laboratory for innovation as well as a model for moving forward, living and learning together. Today, the Primary School is building a broader and stronger school community through frequent parent meetings, echoing the children’s experience of building a shared egalitarian society. The parents will be learning with their children, not only “from” their children. The effects of being part of the ‘change we want to see’ will ripple through the parents’ extended networks as they share their experiences with friends and relatives. To make it possible for every parent to become part of the ‘work’, the parent- series of 15 meetings include trained Palestinian and Jewish facilitators and translators. Those parents will have a role in the first international conference, planned for the end of 2018-2019, on the Primary School’s bilingual, binational, multicultural model and curriculum education. This will include building a website for national and international outreach.

Today, the staff continues its work on the new Primary School curriculum (including methods, materials, real-life examples and teacher-training support options), to be published in both Hebrew and Arabic and available to Jewish and Arab teachers in mixed, intentionally bilingual or separate schools. We know that this is expensive work, but we all know, too, that it is much less costly than on-going conflict. Your gifts are making it possible to do the work now, bringing Abdallah’s and Gal’s dreams to fruition for this next generation.



Doumia-Sakinah: A Learning Experience

The Pluralistic Spiritual Center, or Doumia-Sakinah, provides an opportunity for reflection and the advancement of peace through dialogue and study.

One highlight of the center is a museum where people of all ages and from all places can learn about the ideas and history behind Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom, explore concepts of peace, and develop new understandings. The museum's display of audiovisual, textual, and interactive collections allows museum-goers to fully engage with its material— and, in doing so, connect with the core concepts that Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom represents. Over the past year, The Oasis Art Gallery has served as a place where minds and hearts are opened. The Oasis Art Gallery brings Palestinian and Israeli artists together to experience and interact with one another, creating both art and understanding.

The gallery's most recent project, Refugee, was a multimedia exhibition exploring the experiences of refugees from many times, places and conflicts. The exhibition, which closed on October 8, contained art by, for, and about refugees in the hopes of promoting dialogue and understanding in a world with an increasing number of refugees.



"These are not easy times for peace seekers, but I still think the persistent, resilient seekers are our best hope. Thank you to all at AFNSWAS and to all the sensible, persistent, resilient peace seekers at Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam."

--Judy Livingston

They say we live in challenging times. Our focus is on meeting the challenges with our commitment to support Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam's work of building peace. The School for Peace, the Primary School, the Pluralistic Spiritual Center, the Museum and Oasis Art Gallery receive every visitor, workshop participant or student as a partner in building the future.

**Because you
Believe in Peace**



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Giving

Will your legacy continue your commitment to the work of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam? A bequest or a planned gift to AFNSWAS keeps your commitment alive.

Together We are Making Peace a Reality

Supporting the projects of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, strengthening a shared society between Palestinians and Jews through education, engagement and activism.

The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

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