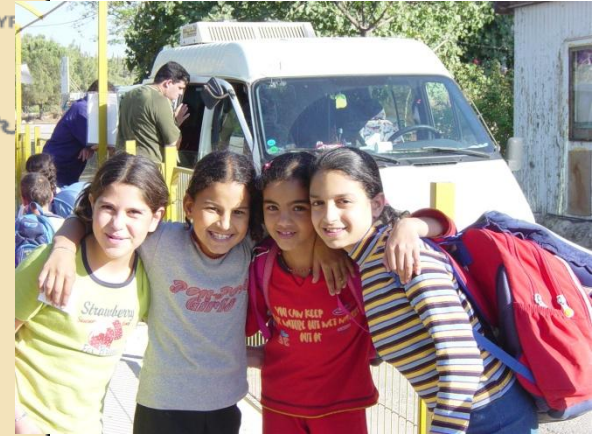
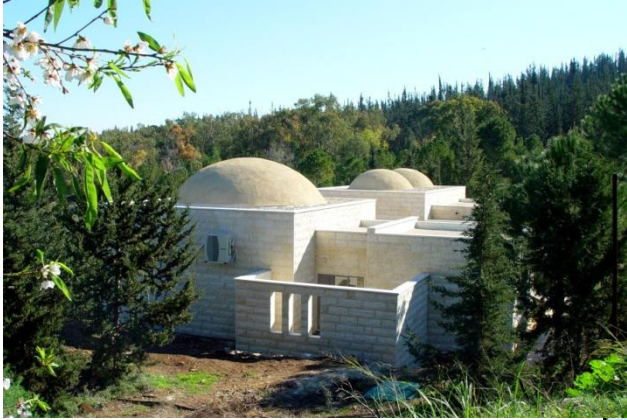


# Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam “Oasis of Peace”

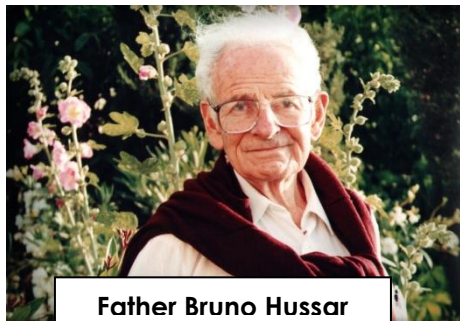


# Introduction to NSWAS

Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS, "Oasis of Peace" in Hebrew and Arabic respectively) is a village in Israel of Jews and Palestinian Arabs of Israeli citizenship. Situated equidistant from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, NSWAS was founded in the early 1970s on land originally leased from the adjacent Latrun Monastery. By 2018, over 60 families have come to live in the village, with an equal number of Jews and Arabs. Eventually the village will include about 140 homes.

The residents of NSWAS demonstrate daily the possibility of Jews and Palestinians living together equally by developing a community based on mutual acceptance, respect and cooperation.

Democratically governed and owned by its residents, the community is not affiliated with any political party or movement.



**Father Bruno Hussar**

## HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE:

### Envisioning an "Oasis of Peace"

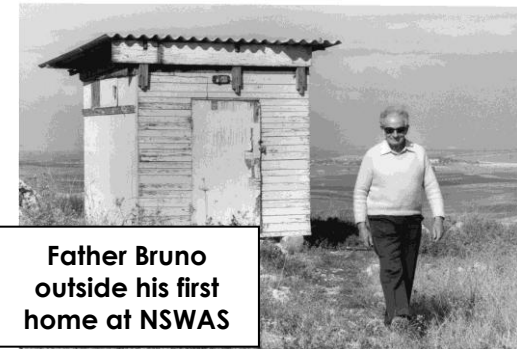
Over forty years ago, Father Bruno Hussar first came to dwell on the land in Israel that would come to be known as an "Oasis of Peace", home to a School for Peace and a Primary School and to Jewish and Palestinian residents committed to living together and respecting one another's language and culture. Inspired by a phrase in the book of Isaiah, Father Bruno envisioned a manifestation of the Old Testament's prophecy that "My people shall dwell in an oasis of peace" (Isaiah 32:18). The "Oasis of Peace", Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam was conceived of and nurtured by Father Bruno, a Jew born in Egypt and a convert to Catholicism, who dedicated over 30 years of his life to encouraging Jews and Arabs to live together peacefully.

In 1972, Bruno camped without modern conveniences upon a hillside that he leased for 25 cents a year for 100 years. In 1978, the first families arrived to join him along with funds to begin construction on infrastructure for water, sewage, and electricity.

Father Bruno later wrote of his idea, "We had in mind a small village composed of inhabitants from different

communities in the country. Jews, Christians, and Muslims would live there in peace, each one faithful to his own faith and traditions, while respecting those of the others. Each would find in this diversity a source of personal enrichment."

Father Bruno died in 1996, yet his objectives continue to be fulfilled today. The community has grown to more than 60 families, has hosted over 66,000 youth and adults at its internationally recognized School for Peace, and educates students in grades K-6 in its bilingual bicultural primary school. "What is being done at NSWAS," wrote Father Bruno in 1991, "is the result of the efforts, of the vision, of the tenacity of many men and women,



**Father Bruno  
outside his first  
home at NSWAS**

from the beginning in 1970 up to today."

## VILLAGE DEPARTMENTS



## ● PRIMARY SCHOOL & JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Founded in the 1980s, the pioneering educational system in NSWAS provides bilingual and multicultural schooling to children from NSWAS and the surrounding area.

Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam runs an educational framework that today includes nursery level, kindergarten and primary school. The framework includes approximately 250 children, the majority of whom travel daily from more than twenty communities within a radius of 30 kilometers. The educational framework at NSWAS was the first school in the region that was bilingual and binational and now has become a model for other bilingual/ binational schools throughout Israel.

Children in the framework are educated to meet the requirements of the national school system and to be confident and knowledgeable of their own identity, culture and traditions. Each class of students is co-taught by a Jewish and an Arab teacher. Additionally, both Jewish and Arab staff members administer the schools.

The children learn to speak each other's languages (Hebrew and Arabic) and become aware of each other's religions and cultures. Whereas other children in Israel grow up in relative ignorance of the other people that share the same land, children in

the NSWAS educational framework learn to accept the inter-cultural exchange as something that is natural and desirable.



Since the school works according to an egalitarian and democratic model at all levels, the children also learn that it is possible for Arabs and Jews to work together and share authority. There is an atmosphere of openness and tolerance at the school that encourages the children to understand, accept and appreciate each other.

## ● SCHOOL FOR PEACE

The School for Peace (SFP), a dynamic center of inter-group experience and research, has brought together over 66,000 youth and adults with diverse and often diametrically opposed ideological backgrounds. Participants are encouraged by trained facilitators to examine each other's opinions and emotions and to listen to those from the other side, thereby developing tools to manage conflict. While these facilitations are not expected to solve differences, they provide rare opportunities for both sides to hear

each other and interactions with a constructive impact on the society at large. The SFP strives to respond to requests to coordinate conflict management programs given its limited resources.

**Youth Encounters:** Each year, Jewish and Arab high school seniors participate in workshops in binational (Arabs and Jews together) and uni-national (Jews or Arabs only) settings. Uni-national encounters prepare participants to engage in binational workshops.

**Advocates for Change:** the SFP, with support from the United States Agency for International Development, trains targeted professionals working in media, education, mental health and justice, to become agents of change at their workplace and beyond.

**University Workshops & Courses:** The SFP collaborates with four Israeli universities, Ben Gurion, Haifa, Hebrew and Tel Aviv. Activities range from weekend encounters to semester courses. Women's courses at Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Universities invite Arab and Jewish women to address common issues while developing leadership skills.

**Women's Projects:** The SFP provides facilitator training and university courses for women who do not normally have access to higher education. "Women in Time of Change" has been one of their most popular courses, running in its 9<sup>th</sup>

year at Tel Aviv University and now also taught at Ben Gurion University. After courses end, participants are encouraged to become actively involved in bringing women together in their home communities.

**Other Encounters & Training:** Israel-Palestine workshops reach those under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority; participation depends on the political situation, some encounters are held in other settings such as Cyprus, Turkey, or Jordan.

### • DOUMIA/SAKINA & THE PLURALISTIC SPIRITUAL CENTER

The Doumia/Sakina ("House of Silence") serves as a common spiritual sanctuary for the village. Built on a hill overlooking the Ayalon Valley, this peaceful non-denominational center invites villagers and visitors alike to reflect and meditate. The Pluralistic Spiritual Center (see front cover; top left photo), created in memory of Father Bruno, coordinates seminars and lectures on spiritual and ethical values. The Spiritual Center organizes interfaith workshops and seminars.

### • HUMANITARIAN AID

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are facing a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions. The situation in many towns and villages is desperate and on the brink of catastrophe. The residents of

NSWAS have responded by organizing the Humanitarian Aid for Palestinians project to help alleviate the suffering. They have raised money for the distribution of food and medicine, and are conducting medical treatment days in towns and villages. Additionally, they have sent over 10 tons of medical supplies and food aid and organized volunteer medical teams that have cared for more than 17,000 of their Palestinian neighbors.

### • THE NADI – YOUTH CLUB

The Nadi ("club" in Arabic) is a place where the youth of NSWAS can foster and sustain interpersonal connections after they split in different middle schools, allowing them to stay an important part of the community. The Nadi provides a framework, for a variety of stimulating, and challenging extracurricular activities and initiatives.

### • THE GUEST HOUSE

The Guest House offers accommodation for the individual traveler, as well as a wide range of group programs, including brief introductions to the work of the village, seminars on peace and conflict resolution work, and alternative tourism.

Facilities include a large outdoor swimming pool, a restaurant, catering facilities, conference halls, seminar rooms, and other unique functions such as the "House of Silence."

## QUICK NSWAS FACTS

- 70 families live in NSWAS
- 19 additional families have been accepted
- 300 families are on the waiting list to move into NSWAS
- 90% of Primary School students live outside of NSWAS
- In 2005 the first 3<sup>rd</sup> generation NSWAS member was born
- NSWAS is governed by a democratically elected mayor and city council
- More than 66,000 people have participated in SFP workshops
- NSWAS has a swimming pool and sports hall
- There are 13 NSWAS Friends associations world-wide; Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA.
- NSWAS is approximately 50 acres in area (200 dunoms).
- NSWAS has been visited by many public figures/celebrities including Hillary Rodham Clinton, Richard Gere, Jane Fonda, Eve Ensler, and many ambassadors.



Latrun Monastery

Yitzach Rabin Forest

**NSWAS Aerial Photo**

1. Hotel Guest Rooms
2. Hotel Lobby and Dining Room
3. White Dove
4. Public Relations/ Administration Building
5. Swimming Pool
6. Auditorium
7. School for Peace
8. Primary School
9. Basketball courts
10. Doumia-Sakina
11. Bruno Hassar Spiritual Center\*
12. Sports Hall\*

*\*Not built at time of photo*



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How is NSWAS financed?**

NSWAS receives half of its income from donations from the thirteen International Friends Associations around the world. Grants are also received from foundations and international organizations such as the European Union. Some funding is available from the Israeli government and the village collects local taxes from its residents.

### **How is NSWAS governed?**

NSWAS is democratically governed. There are two elected committees; the Aguda manages all the administrative aspects of the community while the Amuta is responsible for the educational departments. Both committees are equally represented by Jews and Arabs.

### **What is the procedure for people who wish to join the village, and has it changed over time?**

People who wish to join the village are screened by a committee, which recommends suitable candidates. The committee looks at various aspects of families who apply to live in the village including:

- How willing they are to make a commitment to the community

- How well they might handle the challenges of living with the "other side"
- Their willingness to contribute and participate in community activities
- Their interest in sending their children to the Primary School

There is currently a waiting list of 300 families to live in the village.

### **What role does organized religion play in the lives of the residents? Do people participate in each other's festivals? How is religion integrated?**

Since the majority of the village members are either secular or regard religious belief as a personal matter, religion is seen more in terms of being a component of one's cultural identity. The School and Kindergarten offer a framework for celebration or commemoration of holidays and national days. Sometimes too the adults initiate activities connected with holidays to which they invite their neighbors and friends of both sides.

### **How are national holidays commemorated?**

The village tries to approach national holidays in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of the two peoples. Commemoration of national days takes place every year at the school. Sometimes the Pluralistic Spiritual Center arranges events that deal with national days, both for NSWAS

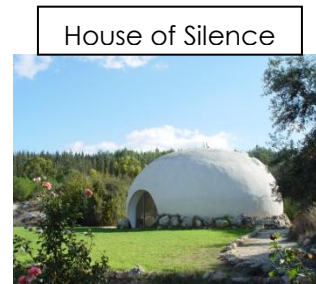
members and the general public and individual village members organize activities as well.

## **ABOUT THE American Friends of Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam**

The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam encourages, supports and publicizes the projects of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, the "Oasis of Peace." For more than Forty years, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam has been dedicated to dialogue, cooperation and a genuine and durable peace between Arabs and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis. The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is a not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status under Internal Revenue Code.

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## **Visiting Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam**

If you are interested in visiting NSWAS, please contact the village before your visit:

Rita Boulos

[rita@nswas.info](mailto:rita@nswas.info)

Phone # if calling from the US: 011-972-2-991-5621 #101

More visitor information: <http://nswas.org/spip.php?rubrique158>

If you are interested in staying at NSWAS, please contact the Guest House for reservations:

From the US: 011-972-2-999-3030

Office hours: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

(Israel's Time Zone is US EST +7 or GMT +2)

<http://www.nswas.org/hotel/>

## **Directions to Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam:**

From Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport:

1. Take the Tel Aviv – Jerusalem Highway (No. 1) toward Jerusalem
2. At the Latrun Interchange, exit the highway. Turn right toward Beer Sheba.
3. Continue straight for about 3 kilometers to the “Nachshon/Neve Shalom” exit. Follow the exit road, then turn left and follow signs to “Neve Shalom” (about 4 kilometers).



