

A M E R I C A N F R I E N D S O F  
*Neve Shalom*  *Wahat al-Salam*  
נְוֵה שְׁלוֹם واحۃ السلام  
O A S I S O F P E A C E



Spring 2019 Newsletter

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## Generous Donations Support the School for Peace

On January 31, 2019, all USAID funding for projects that involve Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza was terminated. This was devastating to the ongoing initiatives in the area, from women's training and education to support for traumatized children, and the School for Peace (SFP) was no exception. Building Peace and Resilience, an SFP Change Agents program designed to help 120 Palestinian and Israeli mental health professionals develop skills in trauma response and reconciliation, had received a million-dollar grant to be distributed in three parts. The third installment, it seemed, would not be coming. The School for Peace immediately reached out to AFNSWAS and European Friends Associations. When the USAID news broke, the School for Peace was in the middle of training the second 40-person cohort of mental health professionals and beginning to start the third. Without the necessary funding it would be impossible to complete the second cohort's training— let alone continue with the next group as

planned.

The School for Peace and Inmaa, SFP's partner in Palestine, redesigned the final section of the program. By cutting costs wherever possible while refusing to compromise the trainees' education, they were able to create a reduced budget for the last year of the cohort's education.

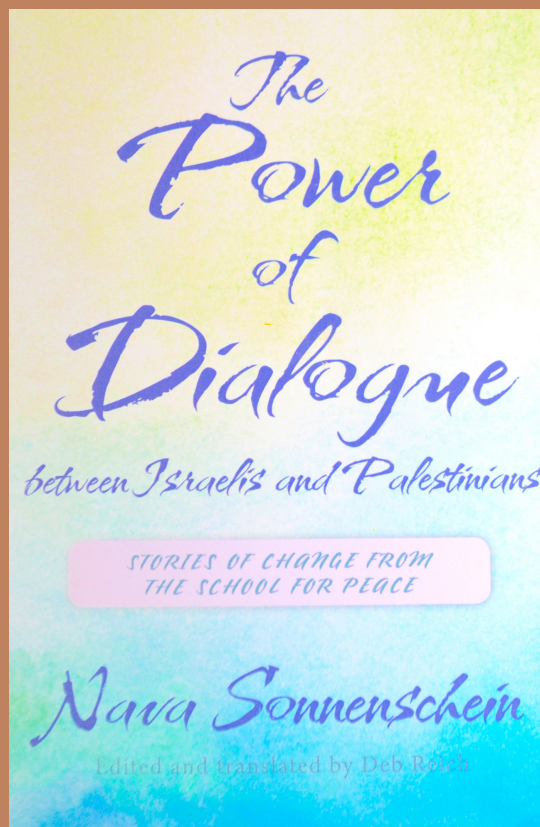
Within weeks, our hope was answered by generous donations from members of the AFNSWAS community, contributing over 80 percent of Building Peace and Resilience's budget within the first month— enough to continue the program on schedule.

Words cannot suffice to thank the extraordinary efforts and incredible people responsible for providing SFP with the tools to continue. Projects that bring people from different backgrounds and different "sides" together are deeply important, especially in the midst of increasing uncertainty and conflict. These gifts ensure that the mental health professionals of Building Peace and Resilience continue to learn and grow as professionals, build a network of peace-seeking colleagues, and become further equipped to foster peace and justice through their work.

Thank you.

**It was a formative, eye-opening experience that took me to uncharted territory. It was mind-stretching.**  
—Dina Zarega, SFP Graduate

*The School for Peace continues its work in many areas of life. From doctors to architects, politicians to city planners, the School for Peace teaches professionals the skills they need to create a better future. Hundreds of professionals spend 15 to 18 months learning how to solve serious problems as partners, not enemies. In Nava Sonnenschein's new book, 'The Power of Dialogue', she interviews several School for Peace graduates about their experiences during their programs and how that experience has shaped their lives in the years since. 'The Power of Dialogue' is now available in the AFNSWAS online shop.*



**"Conducting these interviews was profoundly enlightening for me. We at the School for Peace are often asked about the impact of our work and now, it seems, we have some sort of answer."**  
Author  
Nava Sonnenschein

## The Children of the Village Excel In and Out of School

It's been an exciting semester for the children of WASNS! This year the Primary School is a finalist for the Ministry of Education's Prize for Excellency. Representatives from the Ministry of Education visited the school on February 20th to see the school and witness firsthand the academic prowess and social skills encouraged by the bilingual and multicultural curriculum. Meanwhile, members of the 5th grade class were hard at work designing and building robots for the national competition in Robotics, Mathematics and Cybertech. They made it to the finals, showcasing their work with other brilliant students from around the nation.

Children at the village are excelling outside of school as well. Lihi Joffe, who grew up in the village, has recently become the new manager of the youth activity club (the Nadi)— and she has big plans. The Nadi— which means 'club' in Arabic— already boasts an impressive range of activities from theatre to strategy games, all of which serve to boost children's confidence and sense of belonging. Lihi plans to take it to the next level with a leadership program, which will augment the Nadi's current activities with public speaking opportunities and leadership skills courses. As Primary School students grow into engaged, confident members of the community like Ms. Joffe, and the Primary School itself grows in size and recognition, we at AFNSWAS are always delighted to see what comes next. By supporting them we support the foundation stones for a peaceful future.



Primary School children demonstrate their knowledge of fractions.

## Sister Aziza, Human Rights Activist, Honored During International Rescuers Day

Azezet H. Kidane, better known as Sister Aziza, was awarded the 2019 Contemporary Rescuers Award on March 7th to commemorate her lifetime of humanitarian activism and advocacy for the disenfranchised in Palestine, Israel, and around the world.

Originally from Eritrea, Aziza became a nun in order to devote her life to treating those suffering from leprosy, a condition she saw affect the lives of many during her childhood. She soon discovered, however, that both the needs of others and her compassion for them extended far beyond one disease. Before coming to the region in 2009, Aziza worked in Sudan and South Sudan, delivering aid and helping refugees rebuild their lives. For nearly ten years, she has worked with the Comboni Sisters Organization to provide medical care, legal advocacy, and education in the West Bank. She also works with the Physicians for Human Rights, an organization that provides free healthcare for African refugees in Tel Aviv. During this time she has uncovered many instances of human trafficking and abuse, conducting and recording interviews with patients to expose human trafficking organizations and help victims seek justice. The ceremony to celebrate Aziza took place in the International Rescuers garden, part of the Spiritual Center. It was presided over by Center Director Hezzi Schouster who, along with internationally known genocide authority Yair Auron, PHR-Israel Executive Director Ran Golstein, and WASNS Director of Communications and Development Samah Salaime, spoke about the importance of Aziza's contributions to humanitarian efforts. After this, Aziza spoke more about her life, her work, and what she has learned from her experiences. "To be human and to respect... this is the best thing in life that there is to do." These words, reflecting her wisdom and devotion, are an essential tenet not only of Sister Aziza but of WASNS and peace-builders around the world.



**“To be human and to respect...  
this is the best thing in life that  
there is to do.”  
--Sister Aziza**

## Women's Day Celebration Brings Generations Together



Samah Salaime speaks with International Women's Day attendees as they look at Fair Trade goods made by women in the West Bank and Gaza.

On March 8th, several WASNS programs collaborated to celebrate International Women's Day. This evening of education and solidarity brought activists together to honor each other, share experiences, and learn about pressing issues facing the world's women.

The event began with a powerful exhibition protesting violence against women. 'She's Gone', currently on display at the Oasis Art Gallery, showcases works centered on the tragedy and brutality of gendered violence. Anwar Dawood, WASNS Municipal Society chair, spoke about the epidemic of violence against women and the roles that community— between Palestinians and Israelis and between women and men— can play in restoring justice and creating a better future. Afterwards, second-generation feminist activists were honored by their veteran counterparts in a series of speeches. Educator Nur Najjar, social worker Tali

Sonnenschein, and news anchor Ranin Boulos were among those honored along with comedian Noam Shuster-Eliassi, who closed out the ceremony with memories of her childhood in the village, community history, and observations on current events. This light-hearted end to an evening full of both sorrow and joy drove home what was, for many, the reason they had come: to find community and connect with others dedicated to justice and equality. This International Women's Day, newcomers and longtime participants alike found their community at WASNS.



Museum and Art Gallery Director Dyana Shaloufi Rizek welcoming discussion about an exhibit.

**"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, supporter**

**Because you Believe in Peace**

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**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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