

The Courage to Dream

"If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not an issue in which many find hope. Each day we are confronted with more news that makes a nonviolent future in the region seem increasingly unattainable. Recently, the US has taken huge steps backwards allowing Israel to build more illegal settlements, attacking the Goldstone Report on the Gaza War, and showing little interest in developing the positive themes of Obama's speech in Cairo earlier this year.

Yet, as Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out, those of us who would dream for peace and justice must have the courage to remain hopeful. **In fact, we have much upon which to pin our hopes:**

Join IFPB's *Hour-a-Month* Project!

Contribute **just one hour each month** to peace and justice, without lifting a finger!

Too good to be true?

See back page for details . . .



Photo: Sid Bremer

- **IFPB delegations continue to bring back the stories of courageous Palestinian and Israeli activists** who refuse to submit to war and occupation and who insist on a positive and nonviolent future for their peoples. Their struggles strengthen our resolve and commitment to work in solidarity.
- **The Palestinian and Israeli leaders who signed a letter of support for IFPB** illustrate the power of joint struggle to end the occupation. They continue to have "the courage to be" and their support gives us hope.
- **More people around the world are taking the time to learn, and committing the energy to work, on peace between Israelis and Palestinians.** IFPB delegations continue to grow with 32 people returning last month from our 2009 Olive Harvest delegation. Across the board, our movement is developing more depth and capacity to make change.
- **A growing number of congressional representatives are resisting the knee-jerk support for war and occupation that has long characterized US policy in Israel/Palestine.** Interfaith Peace-Builders has taken a lead role in this movement through our *Grassroots Advocacy Training and Lobby Day* and unique delegation-based education and advocacy model. The US government can no longer ignore our voices.

Our hope and our vitality, however, will not sustain themselves alone. Interfaith Peace-Builders depends upon your support and your contribution.

For 8 years, IFPB has held tight to the dream that the struggles of individual people do make a difference in this world. Since becoming an independent organization in 2006, it is that vision which has allowed us to grow and build and make a real contribution to the pursuit of peace and justice. **IFPB has maintained the courage to dream and hold on to hope. That has made the difference in our work.**

Save the Children

Report from the 2009 Olive Harvest Delegation
By Sid Bremer

Qassam rockets, firing wild from besieged Gaza for eight years until 2009, had hit the two *kibbutzim* we visited Thursday.

One rocket killed five cows and slightly injured two children in the older, farming *Kibbutz Zikim*. At Sderot's urban neighborhood *Kibbutz Migvan*, another smashed a dresser-sized hole into a home where a mother sheltered with two of her three daughters; she ran out covered in white dust to find the third, six-year-old Bar, safe too.

"Daddy, if I hear a red-color alarm and the nearest house is on the other side of the street, should I run across the street or lie down?" Bar asked her father, one of the four eloquent Jewish leaders who talked with us at the *kibbutzim*. He has to answer their terrible questions while he "tries to teach my daughters not to hate the other side."

And with just 5-10 seconds from the sounding of the Sderot alarm to a Qassam hitting, parents must ask themselves — again, terribly — "Which child will I protect first?"

But they stay because "it is home," and their child wants "to sleep in my own bed." On the farm, "a rocket doesn't make a lot of damage, but it makes a lot of fear," the farming father said. But he takes pride in having a school so good that parents from Ashkelon, a city normally out of Qassam range, send children there.

Our hosts worried deeply about the emotional wounds and spiritual scars to the children, while engaged in "daily thinking about how to save your own soul." Crowded into Gaza, 1½ million people on "the other side" don't even have a choice to leave or stay.

On whichever side of Gaza's blockaded checkpoints, all struggle against the fear, the hardening hatred, the "craziness" — the "not-*post*-traumatic" experience of this war. Many fail, although our courageous hosts have not. But one has a friend who spent six months in jail when he was a young man rather than do Israeli military service in the West Bank or Gaza, and he now says, "If they send one more rocket, we must wipe out Gaza City."

All four of the people we talk to think political leaders on both sides have failed their own psychological struggle against fear and hate — and failed them, the people living in Israel's southern communities.



A local artist constructed this menorah from Qassam missiles that fell on Kibbutz Zikim. The bottom is a plow and the piece is inspired by the scripture: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4)



IFPB delegates view the remnants of Qassam missiles which hit the city of Sderot

"They are all idiots," the grandfather said — "infants," the mother concluded.

So every one of our four hosts volunteered the same opinion: *The international community — the United States — must force "them" (they all used that word) to an agreement.*

After 61 Years . . .

Report from the 2009 Olive Harvest Delegation

By Linda Bronstein

He walks a little stiffly, and his hearing is not what it used to be, but his mind is clear and he speaks with passion. Yassir is 84 years old, and has lived for 61 years in *Deheisheh Refugee Camp*. He was a young man when he and his family fled before an invading army, and he remembers that day as if it was yesterday.



Speaking through an interpreter, he says that it was 4:00 on a morning during Ramadan, and the family was just getting up for the breakfast they needed to finish before dawn. Shooting started outside. The young men of the village went out to investigate, and determined that soldiers had surrounded the village on three sides, leaving one escape route open. They sent the women, children and elders by that route to safety, and the young men stayed to try and defend the village.

They had only a few guns among them, but they had hopes that help from other Arab countries would arrive. It never did. They hung on for a while, watching one of them after another fall to the invader's bullets. Eventually those who were left abandoned the village and followed the women and children to *Deheisheh*.

Since that day, he has not seen his home village. He says he's been told that the village was bulldozed the day after the battle. But after 61 years, he still wants to go home.

He wants to visit his father's tomb. He says that the sun over his home village is different from the sun anywhere else, and he wants to see it again.

And then he smiles. He invites us all to come back and visit him again, when he can offer us tea and cakes in his own village.

2009 / year in review

Interfaith Peace-Builders entered 2009 planning for growth. Our strategic goal was to hire a third staff member to supplement the work of full-time staff Mike Daly and Jacob Pace and half-time Senior Fellow Joe Groves. Our plans for growth were not realized, however, because of the economic crisis. **Yet unlike other nonprofits, IFPB has resisted making staff cuts and has not reduced our programming.** On the contrary, our programs expanded and our delegations grew in size. These are two of the major successes we count in 2009, but there are many, many more. To name but a few . . .

>>> **Interfaith Peace-Builders' first *Grassroots Advocacy Training and Lobby Day* brings 200 people to Washington DC for skills training and congressional advocacy experience; participants call the event "exceptional"** • IFPB's Board of Directors agrees to an ambitious Strategic Plan and lays out quarterly benchmarks to success in the 2010 fiscal year (July 2009 – June 2010) • **IFPB launches the new *ifpb.org*** • 16 people join IFPB's 30th delegation in May; the second co-sponsored by the *National Peace Foundation* • **IFPB officially opens west coast office at 1111 Junipero Serra in San Francisco** • 23 people join IFPB's 31st delegation in July; the second co-sponsored by the *US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation* • **32 Palestinian and Israeli colleagues sign moving letter of support for IFPB, calling on others to join them by making a donation** • IFPB's Board of Directors grows when Mark C. Johnson, Doug and Mary Ann Kerr, and Richard Moss join the Board; Allie Perry will join in January • **32 people join IFPB's 32nd delegation, making it the largest ever, and bringing our total since 2001 to more than 500 delegates** • IFPB endorses the historic March for Gaza, initiated by *CodePink Women for Peace* • **IFPB delegates in 2009 reach tens of thousands through media events, public speaking and organizing >>>**

Join IFPB's Hour-a-Month Project!

We, like you, have many dreams. One of our dreams is to build a community around Interfaith Peace-Builders. A community of delegates. A community of supporters. A community of *friends*.

A related dream is to grow Interfaith Peace-Builders into the organization we know it can be. We need to hire an additional staff person to sustain the current program and have the ability to create and respond to new opportunities. We want to offer more delegations, with more creative programming and more participants. We want to offer scholarships and recruit community leaders from disadvantaged and minority communities to travel with us to Israel/Palestine. And our wish list goes on . . .

The point is that we have never been afraid to dream. And if we have the means, we know our dreams will be realized. That is where you come in. If you have hope, then we need you to have the courage to invest in Interfaith Peace-Builders. Your monthly donation will make a lasting contribution to our work for peace and justice.



"I have cut back on other donations due to the economy. But Interfaith Peace-Builders changed my life so I need to support it."

Wendy Hartley
IFPB delegation participant and donor

JOIN OUR *HOUR-A-MONTH* PROJECT **Donate an hour of your salary each month** **for a nonviolent future in Israel/Palestine!**

IFPB's *Hour-a-Month Project* allows you to become an active partner in our unique work by *donating just an hour of your salary each month*. Give no more and no less. Everyone can participate. No matter what your income, you can make a lasting contribution to a nonviolent movement for peace and justice by supporting Interfaith Peace-Builders!

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Click on the link for Hour-a-Month Program
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