

Parents Circle Families Forum

Annual Report 2017



Bereaved Palestinian and Israeli Families
for Peace and Reconciliation

Reflecting on the Highlights

Reflecting on the highlights of 2017, one can only be proud of the achievements of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF). This has been a difficult and dark year, fraught with violence and anger, and in many cases political manipulations. Yet the work we do in Israel, Palestine and internationally is of paramount importance and continues to have a rippling effect which brings with it a sense of hope and light to all who are exposed to our unique message of reconciliation.

Our joint Palestinian-Israeli board in its first full year of operation set an example and precedence for other joint organizations and initiatives by which equality is not determined by symmetry but rather, by respect and humanistic values.

This report will reflect the impact of our work through the eyes of the **photographers** and **translators** we work with on a regular basis, that accompany our Dialogue Meetings, Parallel Narrative projects and the work on the ground. We can experience, through their lenses and language, the extraordinary moments they, as outsiders, identified as catalysts for change in attitudes and the possibility of recognizing the humanity of the “other”.



PCFF Directors welcome Mr. Yamazaki, Mayor of the city of Ayabe Japan



Breaking The Wall between us on International Women's Day



Roni Hirshenson at the Israeli -Palestinian Memorial Day



Learning about the Palestinian Naqba in Lifta village

Reconciliation through Language

Dima Kanan, translator

“The most unforgettable moment for me was at a Dialogue Meeting in the West Bank. A young man asked a bereaved, Palestinian mother if she had forgotten her dead son. She replied with tears in her eyes,

‘No moment, no matter how joyous, is ever the same after the loss of a child. My daughter said she felt like an orphan at her engagement party because her mother could not join in the happiness of the occasion.’

This bereaved, Palestinian mother has experienced a transformation and has become one of the most active leaders of the Women’s Group.”



Taghrid Shbita, translator

“I cried all through the story of a Palestinian mother who lost her son saying that she was doing the work to prevent other mothers from experiencing the pain of loss and to protect the blood of her other children.”





Netta Hazan, translator

“A moment I will never forget was at the workshop for Young Ambassadors. I met a Palestinian man from a refugee camp, who had never before met Israelis apart from soldiers. He wanted to share his daily life with me and to let me know how difficult it is. At the start of a joint photography workshop on points of view, he felt angry and frustrated, but slowly he started to see the humanity in the other and by the end when the facilitators asked for feedback from the group he was in tears and said he could not wait for the next meeting.”



Amal Abas, translator

“I translated an incredible moment when Suha, the bereaved mother of Mohammad Abu Khdeir, came to a Dialogue Meeting in the Parents Circle’s office in the West Bank. She listened to the Israeli mother tell her story of loss and was so moved that she told the horrific story of Mohammad’s death. I was moved to tears when Suha decided to join the Parents Circle as a member and agreed to come to International Women’s Day in March.”

Reconciliation through the Lens

Ephrat Beloosesky, photographer

"I photographed Israeli and Palestinian women on a visit to Lifta, a former Palestinian village which existed before 1948 and is now in Israel. This visit was part of the Parallel Narrative Experience which brings Israelis and Palestinians to participate in workshops, dialogue meetings and visits to explore each other's personal, historical and political narratives. I found it both sad and moving at the same time, to see the Palestinians visit this site which holds so many sad memories and to experience the empathy of the Israeli women who were part of the workshop."



Yifat Yogev, photographer

"International Women's Day was an extraordinary experience for me, watching women from both sides experiencing the same pain and shedding the same tears when they heard the story of the death of a Palestinian youth and then seeing them decorate and destroy the makeshift wall as a symbolic act and the final silent walk to the check point of some 300 women was unforgettable."



Amir Haymar, photographer

“I witnessed an unforgettable day of activism created by the alumni of the Narrative Project. Some 200 Palestinians and Israelis gathered first at the Everest Hotel to discuss their plans for solidarity and peace building and to learn about the Palestinian village Wallaje, that is struggling under the decrees of the occupation, and then marched towards the village in solidarity.”



Mohammed Hammara, photographer

“I managed to capture the friendly atmosphere of an event created by alumni from the Narrative Project. They invited NGOs and the general public to meet other organizations working for peace and introduced them to the Parents Circle. They managed to bring nearly 200 people who had never been exposed to a meeting with Palestinians and Israelis.”



photographers:

Ephrat Beloosesky, Yifat Yogev, Amir Haymar, Mohammed Hammara, Rami ben Ari

Education

This year the PCFF's education team created a new approach to the work in high schools. PCFF members met with the teachers before the Dialogue Meeting. This proved to be very successful and the feedback from the facilitators of these Dialogue Meetings was very positive, they found the students much more willing to listen. Feedback from the teachers who worked with the students after the Dialogue Meeting is also an indication of the success of this new idea.



Summer Camp

As with every year, the Summer Camp is one of the highlights of the work. Some 40 Palestinian and Israeli youth and their friends met for the first time. They exchanged stories of their lives, and created art, while learning to identify the humanity in the other.





International Relations

The message of reconciliation was heard all over the globe and more and more we realize how much it is needed in this very troubled world.

The Parents Circle is gratefully supported by Friends of organizations in the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom. In addition, our members are invited to speak at conferences, symposiums, and workshops all over the world as leaders, experts and real-life examples of the possibility of reconciliation. They are sources of inspiration for the possibility of peace.



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2017 by the Numbers

- ☛ **410 Dialogue Encounters** engaging **8,000 Israeli and Palestinian** high school youth, young adults, adults and international communities.
- ☛ **4 Parallel Narrative Experiences** over 3 months each, engaging **120 participants** in joint knowledge building workshops, increasing their empathy to the other side and their belief in the possibility of reconciliation and peace.
- ☛ A Parallel Narrative Alumni Conference with **180 Israeli and Palestinian participants.**
- ☛ **30 “Women to Women” dialogue meetings** were held, 7 in Israel and 23 in Palestine, engaging a total of **670 Israeli and Palestinian women**
- ☛ Our Parallel Narrative Experience programs show **significant signs of success** amongst participants:
 - **96% demonstrated a greater understanding** of the other as a result of their participation
 - **88% demonstrated an increased empathy** toward the other
 - **76% demonstrated a greater trust** in the other
 - **97% demonstrated an increased readiness** to act to end the conflict
- ☛ Our Women to Women Dialogue Meetings are making a difference:
 - **73% felt they had achieved a deeper understanding** of the conflict and of the other
 - **80% were interested in deepening the dialogue** with women from the other side
 - **68% were interested in taking action** to promote peace and reconciliation

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*Gifts of \$5,000 and above

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cupboard door.

A moving Friday meeting at the Finchley Mosque, London

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