

## 12/10/24 Briefing with PCFF Directors

**Ayelet Harel (new Israeli Co-Director of PCFF):** I am a single mother of 3 children, based near Tel Aviv. I joined the Parents Circle because in 1982 I lost my eldest brother. He was 19 at the time, and was a soldier. He was killed in a war with Lebanon. His loss changed our family's life, I still think about him every day. I was in high school at the time, then went to the army and continued life working in TV and media. Only at the age of 44 I learned about the Parents Circle, joined it, and met Palestinians for the first time. Hearing about their loss and life gave me an entirely new perspective about the conflict, the 'other side', about how we all live with hate and fear. Since then I've been involved as a staff member, facilitator, speaker, board member. I was also involved with Women Wage Peace for several years.

This past year has been a roller coaster of horror, which we can't wake up from. There is so much fear, anger, and loss. Since I've joined as co-Director, it's been filling me with energy and sense of mission instead of despair. It helps me feel better about myself and doing something active.

**Nadine Quomsieh (Palestinian Co-Director of PCFF):** I am a mother of 3, based in Bethlehem. I've been working with the Parents Circle for 11 years and became the co-Director 1.5 years ago. The past year has been the most difficult of it all. We have a lot of supporters but we are also being attacked as peace activists, from all sides. It's hard to find new people to support and understand that there are Israelis who believe in Palestinian freedom. Even my mother does not approve, as she sees more people being killed in Lebanon and Syria too. I try to not let my young kids know what's happening too much, but they still hear about it from friends or see pictures. When Iran attacked Israel, those rockets fell in my area in Bethlehem. She's really struggling. My son is a teenager and doesn't understand why I talk to Israelis.

**Shiri Ourian (Executive Director of AF-PCFF):** You face a serious challenge. You have to bring people together who are told they are enemies, during an active war. There are the logistics of dealing with border crossings, closures, and restrictions. There is the psychological level of trauma and continued pain. What has been the most challenging?

**Nadine:** Despite everything, these sides do want to talk to each other. Joint meetings are harder and have to move virtual because of restrictions, or make other changes to the programming. The human in person element is so important. But we have a new workshop series called Voices for Peace which is a storytelling workshop, and we have a new Women's Group which is very successful. We are so excited to finally have these in person programs. There are new women members that joined our group.

**Shiri:** The amount of newly bereaved members joining the Parents Circle has been so inspiring. There are over 85 new families, both Israeli and Palestinian.

**Ayelet:** People need time to grieve and be part of their own communities, which is a natural response. But this isn't a one time tragedy that ended. It's continuing, and we don't know how long it will last. Right after October 7th was very difficult because everyone received different narratives - like two different movies that Israelis and Palestinians are watching. You have to really go out of your way to find another narrative. In our team we get to work together and learn from each other, but the rest of the public don't. And with that comes a big sense of despair. But

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the new members are a major source of strength. It's surprising to see people join PCFF so soon after their loss, when for me it took decades.

Just yesterday we were in Nativ Haasara (a village near the border with Gaza) with the Inon family. They lost both of their parents on October 7th and all four kids have joined PCFF.

**Shiri:** And what gives you pride in the Parents Circle?

**Ayelet:** Every year we do the Joint Memorial Day Ceremony. This year we had to do it in a secret location, with a closed audience, and recorded in advance. The Palestinians weren't able to join due to restrictions. We lit candles for them, and recorded their stories to include in the program. It was very emotional.

**Nadine:** Every year we have a joint summer camp for Israeli and Palestinian youth. We were able to take 40 children from bereaved families to Cyprus for the joint summer camp. It was really exciting to witness them together, after they have been through so much this year. They had the hard conversations, really heard and understood each other. By the end they all hugged and cried when saying goodbye. They haven't been able to meet in person since then but they meet on zoom and stay in touch.

**See *slide show about key activities this year***

**Shiri:** Listening from the Heart is a program from AF-PCFF. We learned from the success of dialogue meetings in Israeli and Palestinian societies, and brought this model to the US with an on demand program to help reduce polarization in the States. Particularly on college campuses. To learn more about it: [www.parentscirclefriends.org/listening](http://www.parentscirclefriends.org/listening)

**Audience Question:** In addition to the new members joining, are there other members that have left or are also active? What about Rami & Bassam?

**Ayelet:** Rami and Bassam are very active. Bassam is one of our International Spokespeople.

**Nadine:** Our members have gone through a lot of training. Every time they read or learn about someone getting killed, they are reliving their trauma. No one has left.

**Audience Question:** Has the messaging changed in the last year?

**Ayelet:** We have to be responsive to what's happening. We got expelled from public schools, went to court and won, and they banned us again. It's not easy to go with our usual message to Israeli schools, especially with a Palestinian partner. The youth are somehow more to the right, and are very angry. Our first message is just the fact that there are bereaved families who are different, just hear our voice. Before we get into complex, deep, and political. We need to adjust a little bit to each audience. But we are still clear on social media and with each other about our principles.

**נאחזים באנושיות**  
**متمسكون بإنسانيتنا**



# Parents Circle- Families Forum (PCFF)

## 2024 ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

Promoting Dialogue,  
Reconciliation, and Resilience

# OUR VISION FOR 2024

- Presenting the humanity of the other during times of ongoing horrific war.
- Finding opportunities for dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.
- Empowering women in leadership roles.
- Community Resilience

# KEY ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW (2024)

## **Summer Camp**

Bi-national and uni-national engagement for youth.

## **Women's Group**

Women in leadership roles

## **New Member Outreach**

80 New Members -- Balanced recruitment of Israeli and Palestinian members.

## **Dialogue Meetings**

Local and international engagement reaching thousands.

## **Community Development**

Supporting local community

## **Staff Resilience**

Regenerating trust and empathy





## SUMMER CAMP

- **Location: Cyprus**
- **Participants: 39 Palestinian & Israeli teenagers**
- **Staff: Translators, social workers, facilitators,**
- **Partnership with Peace by Tourism (culinary)**
- **Continuation**





## WOMEN'S GROUPS EXPANSION & INITIATIVES

- Resilience seminars with over 250 women participated, focusing on healing, empowerment, and increasing influence.
- Palestinian women held a 3-day resilience seminar in May, strengthening relationships, sharing challenges, and promoting wellbeing amid conflict.

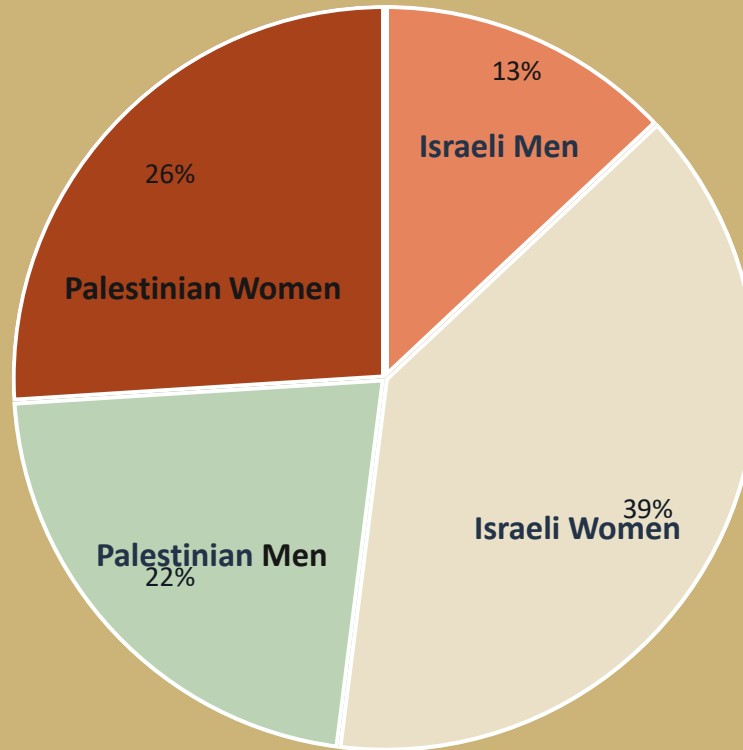
### Campaigns:

- Hosted the “Her Voice – Our Future” webinar with 5 women activists, including bereaved Israeli and Palestinian women, discussing peace and future initiatives.
- Hosted “Children’s day” webinar with 6 new women members sharing their stories of loss and resilience.
- Produced a video for International Women’s Day shared on social media.

- 63% of PCFF staff are women.
- Increased women’s participation in dialogue programs.
- Leadership training for Palestinian and Israeli women.



# Newly Bereaved Membership Demographics 2024



○ Israeli Men    ○ Israeli Women    ○ Palestinian Men    ○ Palestinian Women



# Global Advocacy and Outreach



## Prizes

World Freedom Prize- PL Foundation

The International Peace Award- Pax Christi International

Sean MacBride Peace Award

Intercultural Achievement Award- Austrian Embassy

Nuremberg International Human Rights Award

## Listening from the Heart Virtual Launch



## Major Contributions

- Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony: An annual event drawing global attention.
- International Peace Day, emphasizing shared humanity.
- Listening from the Heart.





## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CAMPAIGNS

- **Olive Harvest:** Supported hundreds of families.
- **Back-to-School:** Provided supplies to thousands of children throughout all Palestine.
- **Ramadan Campaign:** Delivered food packages to vulnerable families.



# STAFF RESILIENCE & DEVELOPMENT

- **Staff Retreat:** 3-day professional development in Cyprus.
- **Staff development,** strengthening communication skills and deepening professional relations
- **Training:** Enhanced facilitation and outreach techniques.



- Outreach and expanding our community.
- Positioning new members as key leaders, with a focus on youth as the next generation and women as driving forces for change.
- Re-design educational programs adjusting to the new reality.
- Enlarging PCFF Media products and exposure.
- Partnership with other peace organizations in both societies.
- Professionalizing our programs, methods and skills.
- Building the capacity of PCFF to remain a strong, independent voice for peace.
- Expanding funding sources to ensure the long-term viability of programs and campaigns.
- Resilience and solidarity campaigns.

## LOOKING AHEAD: