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COEXISTENCES / OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2023

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Testimonies

We invite you to read the testimonies of those who, motivated by the spirit of dialogue, have one day come to Switzerland as part of our program. For the most part, they are responses to messages of sympathy sent by Coexistences members or families that hosted them here.

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OCTOBER 7

AJ (facilitator Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

In general there is no safe place, war is everywhere, and violence is escalating in the country. It will be a difficult period. We hope everyone stays safe here.

TS (facilitator Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

Everything is in chaos. I just came back from the south. It is an awful situation for both nations.

OCTOBER 8

E (Young Ambassadors for Peace/2023)

Thank you. I don't even know what to say about the situation... Too many of my friends got shot or (are) missing...

AS (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Yes it is a terrible tragedy. And in the West Bank there is a lock down, there is no school, there is no work, there is a strike. Israel announced the lock down of the WB, so all the borders and the check points are closed. And the kids stay at home, there is no school. We are safe, it's all around us, we hear the bombs, we hear the rockets, we see them sometimes at night. You know the fact that we live in the West Bank so we are not targeted by these rockets, so we hope for the safety of everyone.

SP (Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

Her, her family is all together and doing well, but many of her friends are in the army now.

Participants Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023

O and family, N and G are ok. Some continue to exchange and encourage each other within YAP.

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OCTOBER 9

TS (Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

We are in the West Bank under constant danger. Our movement(s) are greatly restricted due to the checkpoints and the group of settlers who are shooting at us. They are also cutting off fuel. The situation is a disaster. Everyone is suffering, and at any moment one of us could be a victim. Until now we are physically fine. About Nevo (an Israeli participant) I think he is suffering as we are suffering, and we wish everyone safety.

AA (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

I feel so frustrated and helpless in front of the horrible news and pictures I see.

11 OCTOBRE

RM (YMCA 2008-2009)

Thank you dear F,

It really means a lot any kind of support or care. It's really scary to be here right now. Yet there is light and love in all of it. A lot of beautiful grace and unity.

I know this is a complex time from the outside. Also from the inside. I wish it was possible for us humans to support humans and human life regardless of the "side". It's a mess.

No (I have not been called to serve), I was a teacher in the army.

I will serve as a clown tomorrow for those in need of some good human eyes and play.

AJ (YMCA 2008-2009)

Hey F,

I don't know if there are words to describe the feelings. It is horrible and going to be much horrible every day.

It is the first time I feel scared of tomorrow...

The situation in Jerusalem is so scary. It is bombarded by police and army at every entrance of our neighborhoods, checking, arresting, bullying.

Being dehumanized and scared on our existence here.

(At the suggestion of temporarily staying elsewhere) It is calm now here but we can't stay away from our families. In case anything happens. You never know.

It means a lot (that we are in your hearts).

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KR (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Thank you very much dear L for the kind words.

The situation is not good in both Israel and Palestine. Hope all the killing stops soon before many more lose their lives. Sending a hug to you and our whole sane group.

ML (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Thank you so much dear L for the warm words. Yes they are very meaningful, we need these words desperately here, everything is very sad very sad. I tell myself everyday that I am not going to watch the news then I still sit by the TV and watch the news every time and I really get very upset. So thank you for thinking about us. I hope there will be some better times. Meanwhile it is terrible what is going on here, its terrible what is going on in Gaza as well. Everything is a disaster. Anyways I hope we will talk, I hope there will be a ray of hope next week or the week after. So thanks for your message

OCTOBER 12

ML (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

This is a total total tragedy, Amira Hass has sent me messages she received from friends in Gaza and it is horrible to hear their cries and then silence.

(When I say that the attack was horrific, with nameless acts against the people of the south) Yes but it is not coming from nowhere, they (Gaza) have been under siege for 16 years, how can one not revolt?

Many on both sides want to talk, to understand and process their emotions. She (and her work partner) receive a lot of demands.

KA (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Dear L,

I really appreciate this.

The situation here is very bad, especially with the two girls and what we see on social networks. I pray that this period passes quickly and that security prevails on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

Thank you very much.

RK (Roots 2018)

We need all your prayers, I need them...

Feeling your love... Big hug

Thank you.

(Answering prayers for his/her heart to find its way to reparation, using the kintsugi metaphor).

I always use this metaphor ♥. It is truly beautiful and resonates with what I hope to find when this is all over.

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SD (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

I am fine (returned from travel). I returned to work and routine. I meet family and friends to feel better.

The situation in Herzliya is fine, there are occasional alarms, but nothing unusual. In Jerusalem it is a little more complicated. There are multiple harassments of Arabs – assault, violation of workers' rights and so (on) just because they are Arabs.

But overall, I imagined it worse. People are functioning, going to work, the shops are open. There seems to be some sort of routine. You feel more the low morale and the fear... Everyone recites the same propaganda... Everyone reacts from the gut. Everything is emotional. Very few people think logically.

This is a very dark time.

There is hatred between everyone. Even close friends on the other side I feel it's hard to make sense of them. They say things out of fear. I try to accommodate. But it is hard. I hope for better days to come

Everything here is mental chaos. Jewish people are busy with international outreach. And how the world perceives what they do.

There is a lot of volunteers who enlist for this from all over the world. Everyone recites a slogan: We will win, and rely on stories without factual evidence. Everyone says the same sentences.

I talked with Israeli and Palestinian co-directors in various organizations. There is also a collapse there. Inability of the Israeli side to be empathetic to anything. Lack of sight of the other on any scale.

It seems that the Arab Palestinian public in Israel suffers the most. On the one hand, we condemn the atrocities that took place on Saturday. On the other hand, any expression of solidarity with what is happening on the other side is considered incitement and support for terrorism.

Not easy at all. A lot of students kicked out of university because solidarity posts with Gaza.

A lot of fear and propaganda and collective trauma. This is the situation here.

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Here are some more testimonies that we have collected lately, in response to messages of sympathy.

OCTOBER 8

OZ (facilitator /Breaking The Ice / 2022)

We are truly living through the greatest nightmare imaginable. Terrorists have entered the kibbutzes in the border area with Gaza and have simply gone from house to house shooting entire families, some of whom include good friends of ours. We're in a nightmare.

I ask him if he might have to go into the army.

It depends on developments in the north.

S (facilitator /Breaking The Ice / 2022)

Thank you, we are ok.

We are at the beginning of the process and we do not know how it will develop in the coming days. Unfortunately, if there is no decision to make peace, the war will stop and then return.

I ask him: Do you think there is a chance that, after (if...) the situation calms down, this government will be held accountable and brought down? Which could lead to a big reshuffling of cards, like happened after the Kippur war?

Unfortunately, here we are talking about the expansion of the government and not about a real change in its composition. And this is following the "incomprehensible" step of the international community which supports the government unconditionally. Until now, many of the protestors are busy proving to the government that they are good fighters. If real change happens then it will take a long time. The government is trying to blame the army and not themselves.

A (Breaking The Ice)

Thank you. These are really very very hard days.

OCTOBER 9

SB

Thank you for your words, I really appreciate it. I'm at Mom's in France, hoping to get home tomorrow but no plane right now. We are horrified by the carnage. Horrified too by the unheard-of daily violence of the settlers in the occupied territories. It's all the same. Our families and friends are well, but everyone is very shaken.

OCTOBER 10

O (Breaking The Ice)

Thank you for your heart-warming words. I am currently visiting the USA, my return flight has been cancelled, for the moment there are no flights back to Israel.

TA (Breaking The Ice / 2014)

Thanks for thinking of us- We're ok. Difficult period in truth, but it will work out in the end.

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OCTOBER 11

AS (Breaking The Ice / 2023)

All is well with me and my family. Scary situation, but hopefully it will get better.

GS (Breaking The Ice / 2010)

G. is currently an archaeology post-doc in Chicago, with his wife R. and two children. He has just applied for an assistant professorship at Harvard. His parents live near Ahskelon.

Hi,

Thanks for your e-mail. Everyone in our family is doing well.

Indeed, we are totally shocked and at a loss for words.

The truth is that even before the current war, R. and I began to think that we had no reason to return to Israel.

Since there's no chance I'll be accepted to Harvard (I only applied to experience the process), we're perhaps considering trying to move to Canada.

In other words, there's a reasonable chance that I won't end up being an archaeologist at all.

It will probably be very difficult to emigrate, but maybe better for the kids.

These are indeed difficult times.

OCTOBER 12

O (Breaking The Ice)

In reply to an e-mail in which I ask her if she has any news of the BTI participants:

So far, all are ok, I haven't received any bad news. Some groups have started writing to each other again on WhatsApp, wishing each other to get through this ordeal unscathed. If there's any news I'll let you know.

SB

In reply to an e-mail in which I ask her if she's with B. and if she's been able to find a plane home:

No, we're at Mom's together, and hope to leave Sunday evening with El Al. My heart bleeds for both sides. Two inhuman carnages.

OCTOBER 18

O F (Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

I am fine, thank you. We always ask in our prayers that this thing will end, and we will hold a Zoom meeting for everyone to share thoughts and feelings. I believe that this matter will not end quickly, according to what is reported in the news It will take a long time and things will get worse, and no one wants this thing, and here we are waiting for the news and waiting for everything to end well.

Israel is doing a lot of terrible things and this is a very bad thing. One doesn't want this war to end quickly. One wants to enter Gaza by land, and this will take a lot of time and there will be many losses and terrible and difficult things.

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S (Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

Thank you. How are you?

Yes I'm safe, I'm with my parents at their home.

Hope so much that the situation will not get worse, not here and not in Gaza.

My studies postponed again, now for the 3rd in December.

Hoping for better days. ♥

OCTOBER 28

A (Jerusalem Youth Chorus / 2017)

Yes, it is very difficult, but we are working to do the change, thanks.

OCTOBER 29

M (Young Ambassadors for Peace / 2023)

Thank you. We're all well.

Yesterday I was with my friends at a park and there was a red alert, and a missile fell really close to where we were and it was pretty scary but im okay now.

Anyways I'm hoping for good and I believe everything is happening for a reason.

Can't wait to go back to Europe and meet you all again after everything is over. ♥

NOVEMBER 1

SR (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

As a Palestinian citizen of Israel, I live with the double threats of the ongoing war, and the danger of settlers attacks - a "confusing crown" that I live in a village on the Green Line, as well as the threat of the authorities (courts and police) from expressing rejection of war and solidarity with children, women, and elderly civilians.

It's this special place we're in where we see what's happening.

We are now immersed in the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, especially Gaza, and this is very important, but my greatest fear is that after the war we will return to how we were. Therefore, I see the importance of approaching the issue as a political issue and not just a humanitarian issue.

The international community's intervention alongside Israel with its armies and media and supporting the right-wing government in passing its policy of purging Gaza of its people and throwing them into Sinai is a politically incorrect act. Because it is a decision that leads to more war and violence. Instead, these countries should have seen what happened as an opportunity to sit down with the parties to find a political solution.

Currently, what is being proposed is a two-state solution, and it is not known if it is viable because the settlements have swallowed up a large percentage of the West Bank and cut off its connections. But it is - after all - the only solution that has been on the negotiating table for more than twenty years.

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It must also be emphasized that the war is between political positions and not a religious or cultural militia. The presence of Jewish voices in favor of a political solution and not in favor of war is important for two reasons: First, not to treat the conflict as if it were a religious conflict, but rather a political conflict, and on the other hand, to have a voice that can be built upon in the future and provides us with hope for another relationship between the two peoples - a relationship based on recognition of rights and freedom.

It is not strange to find on the other side - the side that calls for war - also Arabs, Muslims, and even Muslim clerics who forbid solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In moments of war, many rational and democratic people lose their rationality and democratic principles, and we see them acting as advocates of war and revenge and do not want to hear any political talk. Unfortunately, they are implementing a political agenda that they are usually not convinced of. I am confident that they will return to their rationality after the war.

It is difficult to start again to build the trust that is necessary to revive the Arab-Jewish partnership to advance a just political solution. But I believe that this is the right way to do in order to bring the change.

In general, in the first week - the Jewish side remained on the 7th of October, while the Palestinian side went beyond that and is waiting to see what happens next.

Some of the joint staffs opened an internal conversation and returned to working with each other, and there are staffs that have not yet reunited. In the ordinary street and in the media, things are much more difficult. ...

It is possible to talk about where we went wrong, but it is important to know that what is happening is precisely the result of the lack of dialogue and examination of the possibility of coexistence.

NOVEMBER 1

RA (Sulha / 2013)

Dear S!

It is wonderful for me to receive this special message from you.

how can I forget you and your family! I lived with you in your home, and I felt like I was one of you, I felt like I was your son!

Thank you for who you are, and for your constant kindness, even after ten years. The situation here is very bad.

I feel a lot of helplessness and sadness because of the death and blood that is being shed everywhere.

It saddens me very much that feelings of revenge and hatred are controlling the situation, but I continue to be optimistic despite all the difficulties, and I am grateful to God that I am still able to be optimistic despite all the difficulties.

My family is physically fine, and this is a great blessing from God, but our morale is deteriorating, and doubt and a feeling of helplessness are rampant everywhere.

It does not matter how good your English language or the letters you wrote, what is important to you is that you remembered me and decided to write to me.

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I miss those days, your special company, the beauty of Switzerland, and my memories with you. In fact, I will tell you a secret! One of the most beautiful things I loved about Switzerland at that time was your psychological calm, There was no police, no army, no war, no conflict, no difference between this and that. Even we were all with each other with a lot of love and warmth.

I am here in Jerusalem in my work as a firefighter, trying to continue spreading hope. Although it is difficult to be a spreader of hope at a time like this, I am still trying, because I love Jerusalem, and I love it to be the most beautiful country and for all its people to enjoy love and life.

From here, from the heart of Jerusalem, I send you and your wonderful family my greetings, and I hope to meet you soon.

I wish I could invite you to me, but I do not prefer to do that now at the present time because of the war, but consider it an open invitation to visit me at my home any time you want when it improves. and if I have the opportunity, I will come to visit you soon.

Thank you for the great interest and love in this message, and I hope to hear from you and your news?

I hope my English is understandable and correct!

with lots of love.

Your sincere friend R.

NOVEMBER 2

AS (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

I hope you're all doing well. I wanted to take a moment to explain why I've been silent recently. It's been a challenging time for my family as my brother was arrested in Israel because of permit issues, and we've been dealing with that situation. On the work front, we've been facing difficulties with our team, which has been quite stressful, to have disagreement in a critical time like this it is not helpful.

Additionally, there have been trust issues with our alumni, which we had to deal with immediately and arranged for a uninational meeting. We have alumni in Gaza, and I've been trying to keep in touch with them as some of them have lost family members, had their houses bombed, and are stuck in Egypt.

Since the war starts I was in many calls with ALLMEP (Alliance for Middle East Peace) and brainstorming how can we help and support and I am working on raising the voice of Gaza and the stories behind the numbers being killed daily.

Currently, we're working on a fundraising initiative to support women in Gaza by providing them with basic hygiene products and diapers for the babies. It's a cause that's close to my heart, and I'm grateful for your understanding during this challenging time. Your support means a lot to me. I would like to have a zoom meeting with you all to share and check on you and hear your wisdom.

If not as a group please feel free to reach out i would love to have a chat with you all. I believe everyone is going through alot and super busy.

Thank you for being a part of this group and for your understanding.

Stay safe

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NOVEMBER 3

YM (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Frankly? Worried, frustrated, angry. There is no leadership in Israel that can take this violence into transformation. I am working now with a lot of organizations inside Israel which have Arabs & Jews as workers/students and trying to help them to deal with this situation. A very sad moment in our history.

NOVEMBER 4

AS (Reinforce the facilitators of the conflict / 2022-2023)

Thanks for reaching out

I always remember our peaceful days in Switzerland and the conversation we had

What is going on is beyond terrible beyond a conflict no place is safe. IDF is terrorising people in the west bank besides the attack from the settlers

And I am sure you see the genocide in Gaza

Each 9 minutes a kid being killed

Can you tell me what the people think about this war?

Yes I talked with F yesterday

I know how much all of you care and concern

It is highly appreciated

Feel free to contact me

And thanks for sharing also

I know about what is going on in the world

So much hate

They think if the hate Jews they support Palestine but it is not true

We want all the people to go out and push on the governments to have a ceasefire now when it is not too late

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S (Breaking The Ice / 2010)

S lives on Kibbutz Naan (SE Tel Aviv), with her partner A and two children. Unrelated personal elements are omitted, just indicated by (...). Translation from Hebrew.

NOVEMBER 1

Hi F

Considering the situation, we're doing relatively well. Sad, worried, shocked. I've lost my sense of security, Amir is combat-ready and a member of the reserve class at the kibbutz.

As for the war, it's fine, we don't have any relatives killed/kidnapped/missing, but unfortunately we know a few people to whom it's happened. Three people from the kibbutz were murdered on October 7.

The war is terrible and there's no winner, and I'm for peace... at the moment, I'm not sure there's any hope for our generation.

I'm also disappointed that the Economist interviewed one of the Hamas leaders.

What do you think of the situation?

NOVEMBER 2

Hi S

Glad to hear from you (...).

As far as the war is concerned, I'm very sad. What Hamas has done and is doing is awful, as is the Israeli government's hyperviolent response against Gaza. What will happen after the war, and how will the State of Israel deal with the immense hatred that the war will arouse in the Palestinians? A difficult question. I think a lot of you.

NOVEMBER 3

Hi F

Right now, I'm hoping that after the war there will be a Jewish state, the state of Israel. If we don't react harshly, we will simply cease to exist. Already now, no one lives in the border areas of Gaza and Lebanon.

It's okay if you don't want to continue this political discussion. Although I'd be happy if we did.

If Hamas weren't a terrorist organization that uses the population as a human shield, the Israeli attack would have far fewer consequences for civilians.

I believe that this is a struggle for our very existence, and that we have never encountered such an enemy.

And also that it's important to work towards a two-state solution, to create a normal reality for the Palestinians too. But Hamas won't accept any agreement that doesn't eliminate Israel, from the sea to the West Bank. She sends me a video.

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NOVEMBER 4

Hi S

I understand what you're saying. But I'm not sure that eliminating Hamas is a realistic option with a government that has no political project to promote equal rights for Palestinians. Here's a link to what I think is a relevant article in the New York Times:

(October 16, TL Friedman, Why a Gaza invasion and "once and for all" thinking are wrong for Israel. The author argues that it would be infinitely preferable for Israel not to invade Gaza, not to play into the hands of Hamas and Iran, and that the fight against Hamas is futile without a radical overhaul of relations between Jews and Palestinians).

NOVEMBER 5

Hi F

Very well. His argument is problematic if he just says what not to do...

I very much hope that after this horrible war, Bibi will fall, and that we will succeed in electing a government that is new in every way and move towards a two-state solution. This scenario consoles me for the horrors that are happening now.

What TL Friedman advises is also what I thought until now... but unfortunately it's impossible. We can't have 5% of our population displaced, keep considerable troops mobilized for every eventuality, and at the same time signal to Hezbollah and others that they can strike us without our responding, that we're weak... then they'll do it again, (which is what Friedman proposes) it's unfortunately impossible, quite simply, although this scenario would preserve innocent victims... if only this scenario were possible!

Thank you for sending me this article, I'd be happy if you sent me others that you read, it helps me to learn.