

# NEWS 46 /

COEXISTENCES / MARCH 2025





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In these fragile times where a ceasefire is holding more or less, where we see some Israeli hostages coming back home, but where we are also witnessing Israeli exactions in the West Bank and Gaza, where the promised assistance disappears by simple decree, the world seems more and more to be toppling into a grotesque drift, we concentrate on those men and women who continue to dialogue. More than ever, they need our support.

You will discover below the account of Rozana's visit from 6 to 15 December 2024 and the visits planned for this summer. Thanks to all of you who are committed to giving several hours of your time and participating in the success of these visits. And thanks to all of you who support our action financially. That is so precious.

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### ROZANA, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024

These health professionals who work in seven major hospitals in the West Bank and Israel have undertaken a two-year cycle during which the teams improve their professional capacities, learn from each other, build up a collaborative approach and find answers to the daily obstacles linked to the lack of confidence and prejudices between themselves and their patients.

The third and last group of 2024 comprises 14 female and male nurses from the occupied West Bank and Israel who Coexistences received, in collaboration with the NGO *Rozana Health Diplomacy*.

These women and men, united by their profession, extended in Switzerland their preliminary work of more than forty hours concerning the problems and a common ideal where the circumstances in which they live and practice their profession are very different. For the Israelis, the conditions of life under the occupation of their colleagues have been a discovery and an awakening, and, for the Palestinians, many of them discovered the story of the Holocaust.

In the current context of extreme violence and unequalled distrust, this visit is a small miracle realized by men and women sharing the same fundamental values, human rights, equality and fraternity.

One of the Israeli participants resumed the general feeling by saying that this visit allowed her to understand that coexistence was possible, at least with the inhabitants in the West Bank. The group members, the male and female facilitators, as well as *Rozana* are extremely thankful and the group is reinforced, describing itself after the visit to Switzerland, as a family. It was accompanied by two Hebrew and Arabic interpreters Tagrid and Doly, as well as the project leaders, Maya Arnon for the Israeli side and Luke Atkin for the Palestinian side.

### THE TEN DAYS IN SWITZERLAND

The visit went really well and allowed the group, expertly accompanied by the facilitators, Michal Levin and Saber Rabi who we have known for many years, and who tackle very sensitive subjects with courage and sincerity.

The group arrived on 6 December and went immediately to Château d'Œx where they stayed for 5 days. The internal work was centred on equality as a basis for building peace, the notion of partnership, and the obstacles in the construction of a just peace. It also approached the heritage of the Holocaust and the moral questions raised by the devastation of Gaza. Due to a good internal dynamic, the participants wanted to approach subjects we thought impossible since the 7 October: identities, the importance of Jerusalem, of the Temple Mount and Al Aqsa, the Palestinian refugees and that of the right of return.

These discussions enabled them to understand each other in depth: one of the participants, although involved for many years on the Israeli left, organiser of demonstrations and who knew many Palestinians, told us that this was the first time that she had had such profound discussions with Palestinians allowing her to understand their point of view.

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ROZANA'S STAY, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024

Apart from an excursion where the group walked in the snow and appreciated the beauty of winter in the mountains, several presentations were organised in order to familiarise the group with our country: three presentations on the health system, end of life and palliative care in Switzerland by the doctors Bernard Borel, Josiane Pralong and Pierre Corbaz, one on sexual and gender identities, and inclusivity in the reception of patients by the secretary of VOGAY Sarah Blaser and one on the Swiss political system by Coexistences.

These discussions prepared the meeting which took place at the Riviera-Chablais Rennaz Hospital where, after a visit of this modern hospital, the participants presented to about fifteen Swiss or French colleagues their respective health systems, the tricky question of genetic diseases due to intra-familial marriages (in Palestine) as well as a project of mobile consultations in primary care for isolated populations. This was followed by a rich exchange.

The IMD Business School for Management in Lausanne offered them a full day on leadership and resource techniques. The group questioned the type of leadership that they had seen exercised as the one they practice and familiarised themselves with the notion of situational leadership (adaptable according to the context). During the day, the person charged with customised training, Ms Jennifer Jordan, based herself on the internal work already accomplished to lead the group to a new level of consciousness, that of being a united team through this training and reinforced by a better self-understanding.

After the days of intense coexistence in the chalet, our 20 visitors spent two days in host families with whom they were able to enjoy the Christmas market in Montreux. It provided for one and all strong experiences and the opportunity to go beyond new limits.

The stay was covered in the daily newspaper *24 Heures* and in the weekly *Tachles*. Thank you to Francine Brunschwig for her positive article.

(To be read, in French) [www.24heures.ch/lausanne-des-infirmiers-israeliens-et-palestiniens-dialoguent-sans-tabou-378227175673](https://www.24heures.ch/lausanne-des-infirmiers-israeliens-et-palestiniens-dialoguent-sans-tabou-378227175673)

## AFTER THE STAY

We received a very warm thank you letter from the woman director of Rozana as well as several feedbacks. You can discover more with this link:

[www.rozana.org/december-2024-newsletter](https://www.rozana.org/december-2024-newsletter)

Since their return, under the effect of the suspension of funds from the agency of American Development USAid (representing 40% of the global funds for humanitarian, urgency and development aid), which financed this programme, the group has not been able to meet in person as planned but have assessed its impact at a virtual meeting. Even without the financial funds, the cross-border collaboration on concrete projects (mobile clinics for women) is being pursued on an individual level.

The group also participated at the end of January at the hackathon of the NGO *Tech2Peace* and won a prize. At this event, two of the Palestinian participants (one from the West Bank and the other from Israel) wore the pin of solidarity with the hostages, the small yellow ribbon, an eloquent witness of the empathy and awareness resulting from their participation in this in-depth dialogue process. This event was covered in the daily newspaper *Haaretz* on 31 January 2025, to be read on following page.

Haaretz | Friday, January 31, 2025

7

WEEKEND

In war – and in health

Israeli and Palestinian professionals joined forces to develop some innovative medical apps. But in addition, what emerged simultaneously were some very special human bonds

Barry Danino

“We don’t have skyscrapers like this in Bethlehem,” some Palestinian colleagues told me as they had their photographs taken on the 29th floor of a high-rise in the center of Tel Aviv.

Two weeks ago, in the midst of the war in Gaza and with the suffering on both sides surging to new heights, a hackathon for Israeli and Palestinian professionals took place in the seaside city. The attendees included men and women from Israel and Palestine – Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. Even A, a male mental health nurse from the Strip, took part via Zoom.

For several weeks ahead of this first face-to-face meeting, they worked in four groups over Zoom to develop an application for medical use and showcase it at the hackathon. The participants included physicians as well as professionals from various medical fields: nutrition, psychology, occupational therapy and nursing. In the virtual meetings, the approximately 20 participants initiated, planned and finalized a presentation of their project, including economic-feasibility estimates, guided by around the same number of consultants, helpers and judges.

Behind the hackathon initiative stand two nonprofit organizations – Tech2Peace and Rozana – and funding from USAID, the U.S. Agency for International Development. Tech2Peace, together with leading tech players including Microsoft, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Google for Startups, organizes high-tech and entrepreneurship training programs and conflict-resolution dialogues for mixed groups of young Israelis and Palestinians; it sometimes organizes events abroad. The organization, founded in 2018, provides a safe environment that encourages free expression of opinion and ideas, with an eye to creating working teams.

Rozana works in the region to forge collaborative efforts between Israeli and Palestinian health care professionals through seminars and in-hospital training. The international organization has affiliates in Europe and North America, but its regional operations office is headquartered in Jerusalem. It was established 12 years ago in the wake of an incident that exemplified the disparity between the medical systems serving these two populations.

Rozana Salawhi was 4 when she fell from the ninth floor of a building in Ramallah and sustained multiple, life-threatening injuries. Her mother, journalist Mayra Abu Ghannam, managed to get her to Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem, hoping that she would receive better care at an Israeli institution. She credits this decision with saving her daughter’s life. Ron Finkel, an Australian businessman who was inspired by the little girl’s story, recognized the potential of cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli professionals and decided to create Rozana, whose motto is “Peacebuilding through health.” The organization is mainly funded by USAID as well as private donations.

There are hundreds of alumni of Rozana and Tech2Peace activities, some of whom continue to keep in touch. Medicine is by nature a fertile ground for creating such connections, since those working in its many fields share one overriding commitment: ensuring the health of their patients. Indeed, to meet that commitment, teams from every

community – Jews and Arabs, secular and religious alike – are typically able, within the framework of the nonprofit initiatives and similar projects, to work together in almost full equality.

The commitment of the medical teams creates an atmosphere in which it’s possible to bridge some of the gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian health care systems, break down barriers and sow seeds of hope between neighbors on both sides of the fence. These are precisely the goals of the Tel Aviv hackathon I took part in, and others like it.

Part of the day was devoted to networking through casual conversation during the breaks, where topics covered shared areas of interest as well as what gaps in Palestinian professionals’ knowledge and training can be rectified in future encounters, including in our hospitals in Israel. We exchanged contact details and set up additional virtual and face-to-face meetings.

A, the Gaza mental health nurse, managed to take part in 15 of the preliminary online meetings in advance of the Tel Aviv event. On the day of the hackathon, sitting in an empty room in one of the only active hospitals in Gaza, with white walls around him, he was an active participant. When the internet connection in Gaza permitted, he helped his group present their project, answered the judges’ questions and observed other participants’ presentations. His group is developing an interactive app that helps assess a patient’s emotional state – their feelings of weakness or strength, their mood and so on. The app collects the data and provides quantified information to the attending physician or therapist, which enables more holistic and successful

your colleagues?

“There is no doubt that the war has affected us. Some of us were compelled to leave our homes and live in other places. In general we are all in need of psychosocial support and positive energy to survive.”

The last of the apps presented at the hackathon – four created by groups and two solo efforts – was developed by Shiri Sharon, a Ph.D. candidate in occupational therapy from Tel Aviv. Sharon asked the participants “not to normalize the situation, to pause for a moment and say that we all wish for an end to the war, for an end to the suffering of both peoples and for the return of all the hostages.” After the applause, she proceeded to present her stand-alone project – the app she is developing would enable patients undergoing rehabilitation after suffering an upper limb injury to use their phone to film themselves doing exercises at home. The app would provide an immediate indication of the range of movement (in degrees) that they are capable of and how much more they would need, for example, in order to be able to raise a glass to their lips without using other parts of their body. The information would also be transmitted directly to a therapist, who can advise the patient. This would enhance and expedite the patient’s exercise routine, with frequent one-on-one appointments, for which there are long waiting lists, rendered unnecessary.

At one point during the hackathon, F, a nurse from Bethlehem, noticed the chain around my neck: the dog tag pendant reading “Bring them home now” in Hebrew and English – alluding to the Israeli hostages in Gaza – was hidden under my shirt. Quite surprisingly, she told me she too was wearing one, which she had received from an Israeli colleague. The brief conversation piqued my curiosity, and a few days later I asked the organizers of the hackathon for her contact information. She agreed to talk to me and he quoted in an Israeli newspaper, as long as no identifying details were given. We spoke the day after the Israel Defense Forces launched its new operation against terrorists in Jenin, and set up checkpoints on the roads of the West Bank.

What was it like going home today? “I’m wiped out. I left work at 3:30 [P.M.] and got home at 7 [the distance between her job in Jerusalem and home in Bethlehem is about 10 kilometers, or 6.2 miles]. I have to say that my friends and I were surprised and disappointed. We were sure that after the cease-fire would take effect [in Gaza], life would go back to routine here, too.”

Why did you choose to take part in a joint Israeli-Palestinian project?

“When I was young, my mother was friends with Israeli women. We brought them vegetables that my mother picked in fields near our house. I remember tasting sweets that I wasn’t familiar with at their place. I was curious about the life of the Jews at an early stage. Since then I have taken part in professional workshops with Jews quite a few times, but I wasn’t able to forge meaningful connections with them. When I heard about the Rozana project, I was sure that every-one who lives on a kibbutz is a settler. I only understood in the past year that

“I feel safer in Tel Aviv than I do on my way home. I’m afraid of settlers who stop us and threaten us here. The media on both sides is doing a bad job, hiding what’s actually happening and not reflecting the truth. Until participating in Rozana’s projects, I was sure that every-one who lives on a kibbutz is a settler. I only understood in the past year that

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Israeli and Palestinian participants in the hackathon in Tel Aviv, in mid-January. Some 20 professionals showcased their apps in front of colleagues and judges.

Photos by Hanna Zech

there are many [Palestinian] peace activists like me. You should know that people from Bethlehem are optimistic: After the war everything will be all right.”

F is one of 16 Palestinian and Israeli graduates of a Rozana program that involves three days together in Jaffa, a day in Jerusalem, and 10 days in Switzerland, including a week of lectures and dialogue in a remote cabin and a leadership training day at the IMD School for Business Management in Lausanne.

According to Maya Arnon, a Ph.D. candidate and medical director of Rozana’s Nursing Hub program, “The advantage of these encounters lies in the fact that the participants come of their own volition. They aren’t sent by an organization and they don’t represent the medical institution they are part of – and that makes them freer. The workshops they took part in also included clinical lectures in the field of nursing, but no less important was the open dialogue. They talked about the Nakba, the Holocaust, the kibbutzim and October 7, people on both sides spoke of their pain – but not at the expense of the other side.”

F told me that the encounter and what she heard there about kibbutz life intrigued her and her Palestinian colleagues. The result, she says, is that hope

fully, during the program’s last activity that’s planned for February, the Palestinians from the West Bank will stay on a kibbutz.

But in the meantime, U.S. President Donald Trump has signed an executive order freezing nearly all foreign assistance for three months. For Rozana, this means a halt to all the plans and activities for 2025.

Barry Danino is deputy director of the Pediatric Orthopedic Department at the Dana Children’s Hospital in Ichilov Hospital, and a lecturer at the Tel Aviv University School of Medicine.



Shiri Sharon, a Ph.D. candidate in occupational therapy, presenting her app at the Tel Aviv event.

HAARETZ, 31.01.2025

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ROZANA'S STAY, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024

## THANKS

Very warm thanks to all those who were involved in a beautiful, convivial and incredibly effective work group: Marianne and Cyrille Francillon, François Feihl, Miriam Lazega Kuelling, Marion Mendelzweig, Sandra Modiano, Halina Sandri, Massimo Sandri, Fiuna Seylan Ongen.

And to all the host families for their interest, their welcome and their enthusiasm: Elizabeth and Jean-Pierre Clement, Georges and Genevieve Conne, Marianne and Cyrille Francillon, Sylvie and François Feihl, Delphine and Ariel Friedman, Daniela and David Hersch, Nathalie Katz and Yves Lachavanne, Danielle and Pierre Kohler, Miriam and Paul Lazega Kuelling.

Our warm thanks go to Bernard Borel, Josiane Pralong, Pierre Corbaz and Sarah Blaser for their excellent and fascinating presentations, Christian Moeckli and Nathalie Shai for having opened their work place and organised a captivating day in the Riviera Chablais hospital and, finally, Jennifer Jordan, Shlomo Ben Hur and his management to have once again made it possible to profit from the exceptional resources of the IMD.

The Civil Protection ensured the transport of this group. The commitment of the canton of Vaud at our side is a strong symbolic gesture and the concrete expression of its involvement in favour of peace. We thank them most particularly this year for their great flexibility, having had to fetch the group at Zurich airport and coordinate a return simultaneously to Geneva airport and that of Zurich.

This stay would not have been possible without several donations, in particular from the Sandoz Foundation, The Swiss Society of Friends (Quakers) and from Daniel Halpérin and the commitment of Laurent Enser who works at raising funds. Should they find here the expression of our gratitude.

For the group of organisation, Fiuna Seylan Ongen



AT THE CHALET IN CHÂTEAU D'EX, WITH THE CIVIL PROTECTION DRIVERS



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ROZANA'S STAY, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024



TOP: KAREEM AND NASSER  
BOTTOM: DOLY AND TAGRID (INTERPRETERS)



# NEWS 46 /

ROZANA'S STAY, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024



TOP: MAYA AND NAJAH  
BOTTOM: GABY AND LAMIA



# NEWS 46 /

ROZANA'S STAY, 6-15 DECEMBER 2024



TOP: CHEN AND KHITAM  
BOTTOM: AYHAM AND GANDY

# NEWS

## 46 / PROJECTS 2025

### ROSSING CENTER PROJECT / EDUCATION TOWARDS CHANGE 2 TO 8 JULY 2025

The **Rossing Center** is an organisation for education and interreligious dialogue based in Jerusalem. It acts on three levels:

- Their **Education department** supports youth workers and teachers to enable them to acquire the competences indispensable to the building of an equal and pacific society through the education they give to their Jewish and Arab students.
- Their **Dialogue department** focuses on the commitment of Jews and Arabs to act together coherently in order to make the mixed spaces in which they live, work and study, shared and inclusive.
- Their **International Involvement department** provides networks, research and both local and international information services.



We have known the **Rossing Center** well through the teachers and school principals groups who we welcomed several times under the name of *Tali-Dialogue and Identity*.

The **Rossing Center** has set up a new two-year training project for school principals and teachers with the aim of giving them the tools enabling them to provide an education based on respect, equality and research for peace. It is in this context that we will welcome from 2 to 8 July the school principals and teachers, accompanied by two experienced facilitators, Hussam Elias and Reut Ben-Horin.

Their objective is that the programme, in conjunction with Coexistences, far from the claustrophobic climate of the conflict, will allow for a more open and constructive dialogue for the school principals and teachers, and give them the opportunity to escape from the intensity of the present conflict in order to envisage different possibilities for the future.

The study trip will take place during the summer holidays between the first and second year of their course, allowing the participants reflect upon and resume the progress and challenges of the past year, and discuss ideas and plans for the second year.

After their stay in host families, the participants will spend a few days together in a convivial place to experience an authentic coexistence. If possible, meetings will be organised with representatives from the cantonal teaching staff.

In charge of the organisation group:  
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Fiuna Seylan Ongen · f.seylan-ongen@coexistences.ch



# NEWS

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### TOMORROW'S WOMEN / YOUNG LEADER PROGRAM 11 TO 23 JULY 2025

For 21 years, **Tomorrow's Women** (TW) trains young women (15-30 years old) from Israel, Palestine and the USA to become strong, compassionate leaders who come together to resolve conflicts and inspire actions promoting equality, peace and justice for all.

Their action is based on different values: peace is not just an absence of violence, but also a process of the creation of an inclusive culture, which relies on the compassionate dialogue, on the recognition of inequality between Palestinians and Israelis, and consequently on the necessity to re-establish justice, and the importance of the role of women for the quality of building peace.

During the 4 months preceding their stay in Switzerland, the 14 young participants in the **Young Leader Program**, aged between 15 and 17, will work together for around 40 hours over 4 weekends on the key notions of identity, sex and gender, personal, family and community narratives, and the social, economic and political issues of different social groups.

In Switzerland, the group will stay 15 nights in a chalet in the region of the Diablerets, accompanied by two facilitators, an art therapist and a person in charge of the camp. The participants will discuss in depth the question of identities, the impact of the conflict on their lives, their needs and hopes, prepare their return and formulate their dreams for the future by defining the achievable steps.

On their return, after an assessment session, they will be able to join one of the twelve programmes of Tomorrow's Women providing the tools and concrete opportunities of action: dialogue facilitation, conflict resolution, mediation, digital activism, media literacy, public speaking academy, Arabic/Hebrew courses, entrepreneurship and design workshops as well as coaching/monitoring programmes.



The model of pacification and leadership of **Tomorrow's Women** has been fine-tuned in collaboration with professional facilitators from Israel, Palestine and the United States. It is inspired by the *Compassionate Listening Project* (Leah Green and Gene Knudsen-Hoffman from the *Nonviolent Communication* (Marshall Rosenberg) and *The Way of Council* (Jack Zimmerman).

Arts are an integral part as a way to personal healing, group expression and connection, as well as a means of social and public involvement.

In charge of the organisation group:  
Fiuna Seylan Ongen - f.seylan-ongen@coexistences.ch

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### BEIT HA'GEFEN / EDUCATORS FOR SHARED SOCIETY 17 TO 25 AUGUST 2025

**Beit Ha'Gefen**, an Arab Jewish centre in Haifa, founded in 1963 and pioneer in the domain of intercultural dialogue, is a non-profit organisation which endeavours to establish egalitarian and shared spaces among the diversity of identities and cultures in Israel.

Their activity is based on the conviction that interpersonal relations, the intimate meeting with the story of another, different cultural and spiritual values, are essential to break down the barriers and build more confidence. Confidence to build a bridge between national and religious groups scarred by the conflicts, tensions and tragic separations.



We are well acquainted with the director of **Beit Ha'Gefen**, Asaf Ron. He has participated several times in the hikes of Breaking the Ice as facilitator alongside Ulfat Haider. And we appreciate his leadership capacity and determination.

Asaf proposes a two-year training programme to a group of youth workers and teachers from his region involved in the promotion of sharing and understanding different cultures. This programme focuses on nature as the major cohesive element, open to the enhancement of a feeling of equality. Nature is easily accessible from Haifa, and there are many activities to be had there. The wager of this programme is that strong links will arise between Arab and Jewish participants. In the mid-term, a true "community" will emerge, a community of youth workers and teachers involved in the promotion of interconnection.

During this first year, a training circuit in the Alps comprising a mixed group of around twelve people will be most useful. The trip to Switzerland will be essential for the creation of a positive group dynamic. The environment of the Alps is almost unrivalled and the links forged with Coexistences over the past fifteen years are a fantastic asset.

The stay will take place from 17 to 25 August. The group will spend the first four days in a chalet at Vers l'Eglise (in the region of the Diablerets). On 21 August, they will move to Lausanne where the participants will be hosted by families.

In charge of the organisation group:  
François Feihl - f.feihl@coexistences.ch  
Massimo Sandri - m.sandri@coexistences.ch  
André Katz - andre.katz@coexistences.ch



### JERUSALEMS / 27.11. 2024

On that day was the opening, in the Arab bookshop l'Olivier in Geneva, of the mural realised by the Swiss artist François Burland on the theme of **JerusalemS**.

This mural was made in the month of September 2024 following a writing workshop proposed by Licra Geneva, Coexistences and ICAM on the theme of a plural Jerusalem. A part of the production of this workshop was chosen by the artist to inspire the frieze he then realised.

At the opening, a musical reading was given by the participants at the writing workshop. Among them, two members of Coexistences, Jean Lazega and Sandra Modiano. The latter ensured the animation of this workshop with Carole Fumeaux, general secretary of Licra Geneva.

### THE GRAND NEW YEAR BALL / 10.01.2025

We have resumed the Ball after having cancelled it last year. But you might ask why dance when the situation in the Middle East is so dramatic? Well, we dance for those who continue to talk to each other against all odds, for those who have the courage to project together a shared life.

The Grand New Year Ball, year after year, unites those who like to dance, listen to music, spend a joyful and gourmet evening together. It was just that, dancing, gourmet and festive! Many of you joined us and experienced its special convivial and good-humoured atmosphere.

**L'Orchestre Jaune** (The Yellow Orchestra), which has accompanied us since 2008, once again enchanted us with its enthusiasm, generosity, its timeless tubes and the energy of its musicians.

The Ball was organised by a new team under the guidance of Massimo Sandri. Andre Katz was in charge of the organisation of the reception, Ingrid and Roland de Muralt at the food stand, Miriam Kuelling Lazega at the confection of the mezzes, Massimo Tinghi for the lasagne, Olivia Sandri at the bar, Sandra Modiano at the general organisation and Carole Guinard at the communication. But further still we were helped by more than thirty tireless volunteers, for the reception, the sale of food or drinks, preparing the hall and clearing up at the end of the evening.

Thank you one and all; this evening is about to enter into the legend of Lausanne...



### PROJECTION OF THE FILM BY HANNA ASSOULINE AND SONIA TARAB, "RÉSISTER POUR LA PAIX" (RESIST FOR PEACE)

This film tells the trip the two women made in Israel and Palestine, one year after their first stay, which took place a few days before the 7th of October. They joined the activists committed to peace and justice whom they had met some months earlier. "Raise loud their voice despite the war, amid the chaos". This is a documentary along the roads through Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Bet Jallah, the kibbutzim, and the checkpoints. Meetings between these women and men, listening to their personal stories and the reality of the tragedies they experience, while, in the face of everything, they continue to forge ties among themselves.

Hanna Assouline is the founder of **Peace Warriors**, a women's movement for peace, justice and equality. Created in France in 2022, it unites women of all sensitivities, cultures, beliefs and origins.

After meeting her at a round table organised by Mehra Rimer of B8 of Hope in Geneva last November, Sandra Modiano suggested organising a public screening of this film. It could be done conjointly with other associations, the CENAC (Centre for non-violent action), Licra Geneva and Licra Vaud (International league against racism and antisemitism) and should take place this autumn. We will of course keep you informed.

### HOW TO CONTINUE

At the General Assembly on 24 September 2024, we voted on the priorities of actions following the reflections of the work group *How to continue* and here is where we are:

1. The inventory of the capabilities and availabilities of our members is ongoing, a questionnaire was sent out and the answers are being sorted. Thank you for having replied.
2. In the framework of our reflections on the improvement of the reception of the visits, a meeting of the three work groups in our association for the 2025 visits will take place soon. This meeting will be the occasion to share the experiences, assess the good practices and discuss the challenges around the organisation of these visits.
3. The liaison group with Israel and Palestine is fine-tuning its role and being constituted. We will be able to tell you more in the next newsletter.
4. The setting up of a crisis centre to support the committee in the case of tension was the object of a first reflection, and the specifications are being drawn up.



# NEWS

## 46 / NEWS FROM THERE

### A DEATH SO UNFAIR

Coexistences is under the shock, grieving the terribly unjust death of Tamam Al Saadi, mortally wounded in Jenin by the Israeli army on his way home from work at the hospital on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.

Tamam participated in the programme **Young Ambassadors for Peace** of the **Parents Circle-Families Forum** (PCFF) in 2022-2023, which culminated with a ten-day stay with our organisation in Switzerland.

All along these intense days of coexistence and sharing, in casual and deep discussions, he was involved, asked intelligent questions, never got angry nor nor portray himself as a victim despite a particularly difficult context, was well-balanced, good-humoured, and generous of heart and soul.

He was liked and appreciated in the group, he expressed himself clearly and had a global vision, so much so that the participants often asked him to talk in the name of the group. He was also touchingly thoughtful and capable of harbouring several narratives, and not only his own.

Back home, strengthened by this intense coexistence, all the group held the annual summer camp for Israeli and Palestinian children aged from 8 to 10. Thus, they showed through their manifest confidence and collaboration, what the relation between Palestinians and Israelis could be when in-depth encounters, understanding and recognition are made.

He was indeed a seeker and builder of peace.

Tamam, a nurse on his way back from work in the hospital, was killed during a bombing in his neighbourhood. How bitter it is to talk of him in the past instead of talking of his wedding projects and of what he brought to his community! Should his soul be blessed and his memory be a source of inspiration.



TAMAM, DURING HIS STAY IN SWITZERLAND WITH THE YOUNG AMBASSADORS FOR PEACE, SUMMER 2023

We share in the grieving of his family and community, of his brothers and sisters of the *Young Ambassadors for Peace* and the *Parents Circle-Families Forum*.

Fiuna Seylan Ongen

### DÉCRET AMÉRICAIN ET PROJETS DE LOIS EN ISRAËL

Two recent announcements have strongly impacted the work with our partners in Israel and the West Bank.

On the one hand, the American decree to cease the contributions of USAid, and, on the other, two bills to be presented in the Knesset:

1. The bill "taxing NGOs" plans a tax on 80% of donations an Israeli NGO receives from abroad. It is not clear whether this would only apply to government donors or also to private ones. The Israeli government reserves the possibility to exempt certain NGOs from this tax (for example, those promoting the colonisation and who receive considerable financing from evangelical organisations). This project also plans to ban NGOs from filing a lawsuit.
2. The "ICC" bill criminalising any form of cooperation with the International Court of Justice.

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**We have sent a support letter to our partners as follows:**

**3.3.2025**

*Dear friends and partners,*

*The committee and members of COEXISTENCES are dismayed by the unprecedented attack from the Israeli government against human rights and democracy. We refer to the vote by the Knesset of a new bill threatening NGOs.*

*We resolutely condemn this deliberate attack against the NGOs that choose to fight for peace, dialogue, equality and civil rights.*

*And that comes with the cancellation of the activities of USAID!*

*We fully sympathise with you, our friends and partners, who could be directly affected if the bill is accepted.*

*Be sure we will do everything we can to stop this infamous bill and we will continue to stand at your side in the battle for peace and humanity.*

*With solidarity and love,*

---

**Our partners immediately replied to our letter and here are some of their words:**

**3.3.2025**

*Dear All,*

*Thank you very much for your kind message.*

*Inshallah, we will see better times, and as soon as possible.*

*Best wishes,*

*Eszter*

*Combatants for Peace*



# NEWS

## 46 / NOUVELLES DE LÀ-BAS

**6.3.2025**

*Dear All,*

*Thank you for standing in solidarity with us during these challenging times. We deeply appreciate your support. The passing of this bill is indeed very concerning, and we are grateful to know that we have such dedicated friends and partners by our side in the fight against it. Your efforts are deeply valued.*

*We'll be in touch in case of any developments.*

*With gratitude,*

*Rana*

*Combatants for Peace*

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**17.3.2025**

*Dear Massimo and Coexistences community,*

*Many thanks for this kind note, and for your solidarity around this growing threat to civil society. I have attached a short explainer that has more detail on the NGO taxation threat. We know that this legislation can be prevented from progressing if enough people raise alarm. Especially those who are known to be friends of Israel. If you have members of the Swiss Parliament or figures from govt/Jewish community institutions who would be willing to raise with Israeli government officials, it may really help.*

*With thanks as always,*

*John Lyndon*

*Allmep (Alliance for Middle East Peace)*

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**17.3.2025**

*Dear friends,*

*Thank you so much for your support.*

*In friendship,*

*Ronit Zimmer*

*CEO, Rozana*

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**To the letter sent to the Jerusalem Youth Choir, we had to add this specific sentence:**

*And that comes with the cancellation of the activities of USAID and your inscription on the BDS black list!*

**3.3.25**

*Dear Coexistences,*

*Thank you so much for this heartfelt message of solidarity. It is a challenging time indeed, but we are still determined to continue our work. We are grateful for our longstanding relationship with the Coexistences community, and hope we may be able to visit again with our singers - perhaps in summer 2026?*

*Many thanks,*

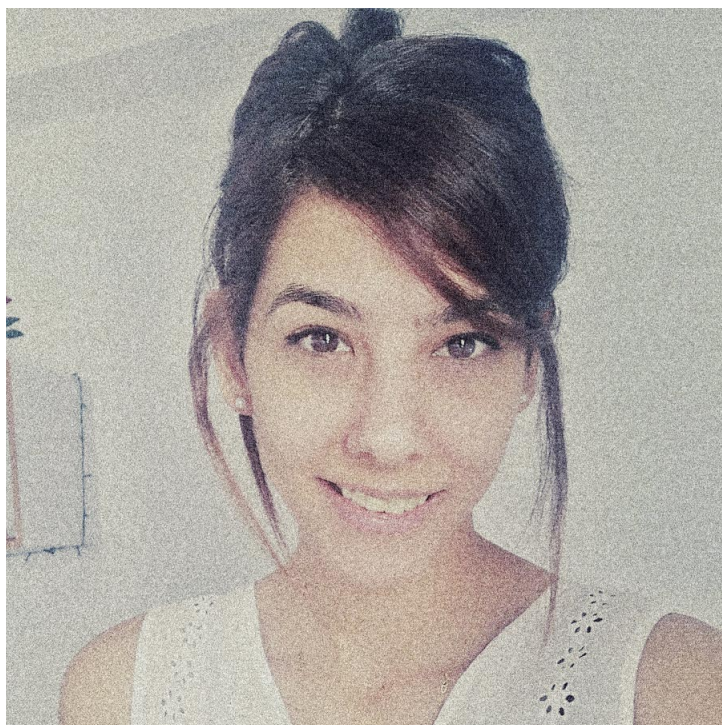
*Micah Hendler*

*Jerusalem Youth Choir*

### SAMAH DARWISH IN THE KNESSET / 4.3.2025

Samah Darwish came several times to Switzerland via Coexistences (the last time with the group of mediators of the conflict in 2022). She became a lawyer in 2018 and obtained a Master's degree in public policy, management and conflict resolution. She is currently the director of the "Racism Crisis Center", a centre for the defence of people who have suffered from racist violence.

In this role, she intervened in the Knesset which regularly invites commissions to debate specific questions. This time it concerned racial profiling, following the racist incidents over the past year. Those invited were representatives of the government and representatives of the civil society involved in human rights.



Samah defended the situation of people in Israel, in particular the Ethiopians and Arabs, discriminated against by the police and security personnel for racist reasons. She noted that such discriminations were unacceptable from the point of view of the law and have no place in a democratic country. She finally filed a document in front the commission, a document proposing dispositions to be taken to prevent these aberrations.

We are very proud of the career path of Samah and, in particular, of her very professional intervention!

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Looking forward to seeing you soon and our best wishes to all for Eid-el-Fitr, Pessach and Easter...

The communication group and the committee