

**DEAR FRIENDS, SUPPORTERS AND MEMBERS OF COEXISTENCES,
AS WE ARE ABOUT TO CLOSE THIS YEAR, HERE ARE THE LATEST NEWS
OF THE GROUPS WE HOSTED AND OF OUR ASSOCIATION.**



FOLLOW-UP OF THIS SUMMER'S GROUPS

TALI/JCJR GROUP

A GROUP OF ARAB AND JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS FROM GALILEA WORKING IN THE PAIRING PROGRAM « DIALOG AND IDENTITY »

Daniela Hersh informs us that upon their return from Switzerland, the group met once at Nitsa's place, to share pictures and discuss about the seminar done in Switzerland. Further to this meeting, we received 2 dairies from Ronit and Nitsa, 2 shorter ones from Joumana and Ilana, as well as an evaluation of the process by Ruth, all available at this link.

All these documents testify to the crystallization of the group, a "magical" moment free from their daily constraints, the value of contacts with Swiss citizens, be they Coexistences members or speakers, and the feeling that their work in the schools is being recognized. The motivation has been strengthened as the group kicks off a new year. Besides those already enrolled and who confirmed their wish to continue the program, new teachers have joined, among which and for the first time, a Muslim teacher. Two training sessions took place already and the class pairing dates have been fixed for the whole year 2011-2012. In December, a new inter-class meeting will take place involving all the class pairs. It will be dedicated to the various celebrations (Christmas, Aid-el Ahda, and Hannouca)

Daniela is regularly updated by Nitsa on the group's news. She also met with Eva, co-responsible for the program, who visited Switzerland for interfaith meetings. Eva relayed the group's wish to do anew such a seminar in a few years.

PIECE OF PEACE

WE ARE HAPPY TO INFORM YOU THAT SYLVIE BERKOWITCH, WHO DIRECTED THE COEXISTENCE PROGRAM AT THE JERUSALEM YMCA FOR MANY YEARS, AND FURTHER TO HER RETURN TO ISRAEL AFTER 2 YEARS IN SWITZERLAND, JUST STARTED IN THE SAME CAPACITY AT THE YMCA.

She will therefore be our interface. At our end, Coexistences has nominated an official contact point for the YMCA, the «YMCA Contact» group. This group will form the main contact point with the YMCA and ensure continuity, run regular relations throughout the year at different levels with the YMCA and participate to the groups' trips organisation in coordination with the «Host Families» and «YMCA trip» work groups.

Here are the news the facilitators Asma and Shira give of the this summer's group :

«Dear Swiss friends,

We would like to give you some news of our group. As indicated, the Swiss experience was very powerful for the "kids", we could say unforgettable. They have created very strong emotional bonds that are lasting to this day. They say it, and we see it at informal times – such as before and after the sessions and on Facebook...

It has not been easy to keep the dynamic after such an intense experience, and we are still working at it (this process), probably until the end of the program. We are also busy with a group work which should lead to a group project. This is a challenge, especially when reality here is so extreme, with the issue of the settlements, the (right wing) Israeli policy, the process towards the declaration of a Palestinian state, etc.

Reality keeps on creeping in and it is incredible how they (the youth) have developed this ability to disagree and yet care for each other and joke among themselves.

Upon our return, we had an in depth discussion which was so impressive (for us), and we were moved by the maturity they gained (during the trip to Switzerland).

We hope you are all very well, and we send you loads of Middle-Eastern sun, our love and respect,
Take good care, Asma & Shira”

Here is another extract of the 2011 trip report from Michal Levin, the supervisor of the facilitators, which is a beautiful acknowledgment of our action :

«The trip to Switzerland is the result of a fruitful relation between the Coexistences association of Lausanne and the YMCA, for over 5 years. Coexistences invites dialog groups at the private houses of its members, and this is an extraordinary initiative. Here is a generous investment in time, thinking, and in money. The trip and the stay at hosts'houses leave a profound and meaningful mark on the participants, and trigger our admiration for the capacity of individuals, in the framework of a volunteer's organization, to give so much of themselves for the Israeli-Palestinian case. Everyone put in presence of this deep and generous commitment feels an immense and deep gratitude. We are in presence of an exemplary illustration of solidarity and commitment, a faith in community volunteering and a spirit from which we have much to learn.»

BREAKING THE ICE 2011

THE 2011 PARTICIPANTS MET ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, AND MET THE 2010 PARTICIPANTS. OLFAT GETS THEM FREQUENTLY INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES FROM HER JOB AT BEIT HAGEFEN, SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS WHERE THEY CAN TESTIFY ABOUT THEIR DIALOG EXPERIENCE

Olfat, Mayaan and the 2010 and 2011 participants also organised at the Haifa University on November 22d a presentation of the project to recruit participants for the 2012 project. This presentation drew around 50 interested people, of which 20 took part in a trekking around the Mont Carmel a few days later. Massimo and François, who were on an official Coexistences visit, took part to the trekking. A spontaneous demand emerged at the end of the trekking day to see if it could not be renewed on a regular basis, which for us is a very encouraging sign.

While in Israel, Massimo and François met the partners of the Mont Blanc project, namely the Beit Hagefen's director

and the Haifa University authorities, which expressed their support for this collaboration and wish to pursue it. An academic dimension to the project was discussed, in the form of a partnership between the Haifa University and the Sport section of the Lausanne University department.

Massimo and François spent a few more days, invited by the families of many of the 2010 and 2011 participants. The warmth of the reception, and the testimonies heard have shown the depth of the impact our action has left on the minds of these young people.

2011 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IT TOOK PLACE ON NOVEMBER 16 AT THE CPO. THE 2010 ACCOUNTS WERE APPROVED, THE 2011 ACHIEVEMENTS REVIEWED AND THE POTENTIAL 2012 PROJECTS WAS PRESENTED BRIEFLY:

YMCA group 2012
2012 Breaking the Ice
«Jerusalem Archeology in dialog» project.

«Jerusalem Archeology in dialog»: led by Yonathan Mizrahi, of the Israeli association Emek Shaveh, the project aims to develop a mixed group of Jewish and Palestinian archeologists who, through discussions, fieldwork and dialog, will develop a common narrative on a specific archeological site demonstrating how past can be seen as belonging to all culture, thereby creating a multicultural and alternative narrative to the current and dominant one sided and nationalistic discourses on both sides. The group wishes to start meeting in Jerusalem in January 2012. The trip to Switzerland will be dedicated to writing up the group's findings

report as a narrative which embodies Jerusalem's multicultural heritage. It should take place in autumn next year. For more on Emek Shaveh, visit their website <http://www.alt-arch.org/>.

As announced, after 6 years and more than 15 successful projects, running debriefs in Israel and more generally structuring our relations with our local partners is the best way to ensure a good follow up, demonstrate our seriousness and commitment, and justifies for the need to see concrete outcomes to the trips to Switzerland. François and Massimo concluded the 2011 Mont Blanc and the creation of the «YMCA contact» work group follow the same logic.

THEATER

AFTER «A BOTTLE IN THE GAZA SEA» AT THE CPO WHERE COEXISTENCES WAS VERY WARMLY WELCOMED AND PROMOTED BY HER DIRECTOR, ANOTHER PLAY IS ON:

«Zakia and Rachel, hope at the foot of the wall» by Edith Cortessis, is on show in our part of the country. For Edith Cortessis, through the portrait of two women who overcome preconceived ideas, this play is «a testimony to these artisans of hope who never get credit on the TV news». Edith dedicates a part of her play to our action and the successful climb of the Mont Blanc by the youth of Haifa in August 2010. Just returned from Israel, Massimo attended a show and took part to the ensuing debate during which most questions were directed to Coexistences. This show has contributed to promoting the goals and actions of our association.

We are also very happy and proud to inform you that Gershon Baskin, one of the Wounded Crossing Borders facilitators hosted by Coexistences in March 2009 and founder of the IPCRI www.ipcri.org, played a key role along Egypt during the long years of negotiation between Hamas and Israel for the liberation of the soldier Gil'at Shalit. For more, read the article of our member Edgar Bloch on the news website La Méduse. ch (in French though): La Méduse. ch

Last, for those on Facebook, the «Coexistences. ch» page created in March 2010 communicates all the news, activities and events of our association and counts currently 76 members. The proportion of young is higher, among which participants of the various stays, but also supporters of our action. It is another way to publicize our action more widely.

A DATE TO MARK IN YOUR CALENDAR

THE TRADITIONAL BAL JAUNE DU PETIT NOUVEL AN TO COLLECT FUNDS FOR COEXISTENCES WILL TAKE PLACE JANUARY 13 AT THE CASINO DE MONTBENON

Doors open at 8pm, the concert starts at 9pm. Do please share this with friends and relatives as from 350 entries onwards, all the proceeds of this event will fund our projects. We really look forward to seeing you on this first and warm event of the year, it will fill you up with a contagiously joyful spirit!

And for those who do not know yet the event : what is the Bal Jaune ? It is an evening rythmed by big classics and where one is not alone in his corner. Old rocks, ragging slows rearranged and played with wit by very skilled musicians. All that results in a joy that sticks to you for many days on...

We are truly looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you at the Bal Jaune! Until then, and in the name of the Communication group, the board and all the work groups, we send our very Best Wishes for a beautifully happy festive season and our warmest wishes for health, joy, fulfillment and community engagement for the year to come.

**With our warmest regards,
in the name of the Communication group,
Fiona**

