

**DEAR FRIENDS OF COEXISTENCES,  
AUTUMN DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN REST...**



## **TOUR OF THE MONT BLANC-BREAKING THE ICE 2012 / 23 AUGUST - 6 SEPTEMBER**

**"Breaking the Ice" is based on a simple idea: out there in the mountains, solidarity and trust in each other are the conditions of survival. Getting a mixed group to face together the objective dangers and the aridity of the mountain environment should also allow for the emergence personal relations and challenging the negative representations of the Other.**

This project is established in partnership with the Haifa University, whose responsables are concerned by the lack of contacts between Jewish and Arab students.

Since 2010, groups of 8 to 12 young Jewish Israelis and Israeli Arabs, boys and girls, have been selected by the university, physically and psychologically trained, then sent to Switzerland accompanied by professionals of group dynamic. They spend two weeks in the Alps, an opportunity to walk together, face cold, rain and wind together, sleep

together and learning to stand each other (snorers know no nationalities...).

Once back at home, they commit to intercommunitary activities, including presenting their experience at the university, thus helping to spread the word about the program and recruit the participants of the following year.

"Breaking the Ice" is in its third year. Like last year, it involved a trekking in mid altitude mountain while camping in self-reliance. 2012 like 2011 has been plagued with a much mitigated weather, not to say terrible at times, the walks having had to happen under heavy rain shower, and even at times snow. The circuit took the group from la Fouly going through the Italian Val Ferret, walking up the Val Veny, cross the French border at the Col de la Seigne, to end the trek in Chamonix. It was thus a half tour of the Mont Blanc, guided again by Denis Ducroz and Jean Troillet. We'd like

to underline once more the very strong symbolic force for the participants to cross borders void of any check points, police and soldiers...

Upon their return to Israel, most of the participants have kept contact, taking part in debriefing meetings as planned; they have presented to various audiences their experience, have met again at various excursions they organise together in the desert. Some of these youth have shared with us how much their participation moved them, radically alternating their vision of the other side. A couple was formed, she an

Arab, he a Jew, who didn't know each other before. In the perspective of the Middle East conflict, these are drops in the Ocean one could be tempted to say. But the motto of Coexistences is that every action that leads to closing the gaps between the antagonistic parties is worth it, however modest it might be, if only for the personal benefits the participants derive, and also because no one can fathom the trickling effects such awareness could trigger.

François Feihl

## JERUSALEM VISIT / 20 - 24 SEPTEMBER 2012

**Further to the work the board dedicated to fundraising and the identified need to be more proactive in the development of new projects, Fiuna Seylan Ongen and Edgar Bloch visited Jerusalem to assess the impacts on the participants of the stays in Switzerland and evaluate the opportunity of collaboration with new groups of dialog and new institutions. ONO Academy, Zahava Neuberger from the JCJCR, TALI, SULHA, Mosaica, International YMCA Jerusalem, Neve Shalom and Search for Common Grounds were met.**

In short, the trip to Switzerland is very beneficial for the dialog groups and has given them the impulse to continue the work back home. Coexistences is perceived as being a benevolent hosting institution and enjoys great respect for the quality of its volunteering hosting, and above all for its non intrusiveness into the dialog work being done by the groups.

A number of projects have emerged from this trip. At the Café Coexistences of December 3d, the various projects were detailed to assess the interest they raise and start setting up the various work groups.

### The following 3 projects were chosen:

- **Tali/JCJCR – July 2013** A group of directors and their co-pilots of 8 schools who since 6 years work on their school pairing. You will remember that we had hosted some of their teachers in 2011. The aim of the trip is to enable the directors, who are less involved in the day to day running of the program, yet are the true champions of these pairings, to allow them to get to know each other better, to work on the theme of dialog, and to meet people in charge of religious matter in Switzerland. The work group is formed and is lead by Daniela Hersch.

- **Sulha – May 2013** This organisation, born in 2008, organises large encounters aiming at reconciliation in big groups of 80-100 adults and of 40-60 young adults (16-21 yo), alternating dialog, meditation, music and walks in the desert. The SULHA project aims at hosting the 16 facilitators who since 2008 volunteer on their free time. The nucleus of a group is formed around Halina Sandri. Thanks to anyone interested by this project to contact directly Halina to join the work group (halina\_rabczynska\_sandri@yahoo.fr).

- **Mont Blanc - Breaking the Ice – August-September 2013** Building in the long term the partnership with Haifa University and Beit Hagefen for students dialog, Francois Feihl and the work group will prepare this year's trip.

Ono Academy (the February 2010 group of religious leaders) wishes to continue its action, People's Peace Fund (Sulaiman Khatib who came in 2009 with the Wounded Xssing Borders group) has expressed his interest to work with us and we are continuing to explore with Mosaica (democratic development through the inter-religious dialog, minorities rights) the practical feasibility to host a mixed group of boys, orthodox Jews and East Jerusalem Palestinians.

As for the YMCA of Jerusalem, our historical partner, the priorities of his director Forsan Hussein have changed as he wishes to concentrate efforts on the development of educational programs locally. There are no immediate projects, but the doors are not closed.

Sylvie Berkowitsch resigned this summer from her position at the YMCA following the cancellation of the intercultural festival.

## **ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING AN ACTIV VOLONTEER**

Beyond the funds we will be able to raise towards the 3 projects of 2013, **it goes without saying that for Coexistences to continue its action in the long term, a renewal of the volunteers is vital.** We therefore encourage those who do not do that already, to take actively part to our association's life and help recruiting new vocations by talking around you about Coexistences. Brochures, events (Café Coexistences) and the website [www.coexistences.ch](http://www.coexistences.ch) are there to provide the necessary information.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **CAFÉ COEXISTENCES / 11 SEPTEMBER**

Meeting at the Maison de la Femme for the viewing of Jean-Pierre Clavier and Yvan Dalain's movie "Au cœur du racisme" ("At the heart of racism"), from 1984, followed by a discussing animated by Jean-Philippe Rapp and Monique Eckmann: "To confront oneself with the reality of the other, what difference does it make?" In spite of a small attendance, the discussion was lively and fascinating thanks to the quality of the movie and of the animators.

### **CONFERENCE DAVID GROSSMANN / 13 NOVEMBER**

Touring Europe for the launch of his latest book, David Grossman was at the Théâtre de Carouge, where we gave him a Coexistences presentation brochure as well as presented our action to the public who came in number to listen to the intervention of the well-known writer.

### **EVENING ACAT / 15 NOVEMBER**

Massimo Sandri was invited to present Coexistences at this evening organised by the Christians' Action for the Abolition of Torture. The welcome was warm and the interest high, the presentation and the Mont Blanc film were very well received and appreciated.

### **CONFERENCE SHAUL ARIELI/ 22 NOVEMBER**

Given the events in Israel and Gaza, Shaul Arieli cancelled its tour but the November 22 conference was maintained. Pascal de Crousaz and René Schwok presented their analysis of the recent events. Massimo Sandri presented Coexistences, alongside a stand.

### **DVD " OÙ SONT LES FRONTIÈRES? "**

This film of 26mn detailing the stay and the climb of the Mont Blanc by the first group Tour du Mont Blanc-Breaking the Ice 2010 is available for sale with Massimo Sandri ([massimo.sandri@chuv.ch](mailto:massimo.sandri@chuv.ch)) and Fiuna Seylan Ongen ([kaplumba5@bluewin.ch](mailto:kaplumba5@bluewin.ch)) at the price of 15.- (donation 30.-).





## TO OUR FRIENDS FROM THERE

**Given the events in Israel and Gaza mid-November, the board felt adequate to send to all those we hosted and those we work with on the 2013 projects, the following message of solidarity:**

"Dear friends

Your friends in Switzerland wish to let you know how much the recent events in your country let all of us at Coexis-

tences think of all of you, how hard it must be on you. We know from past experiences how relationships established between you through your participation to dialogue programs may become strained in such circumstances. Please consider that remaining connected to each other may be your contribution - however small - to a better future.

With love,  
The board of Coexistences"



As the year end celebrations are just a few days away, we wish you a VERY happy festive season with your loved ones, and look forward to see you again at the upcoming Grand Bal du Petit Nouvel An which will raise money for our action like every year.

Mark your calendars for January 11 from 8pm onwards at the Casino de Montbenon. Do please pass around the message of this beautiful musical and dancing moment!

For those who do not know it yet: it is a dancing evening where the Orchestre Jaune plays live famous old rocks or screaming Italian slows with wit and a unique blend of professionalism and fun. The result is joy and happiness that stick to you for many days... The prom runs from 9pm to 2 am which allows combining activities that evening.

With our warmest greetings and wishing to see you latest on January 11 at the Grand Bal du Petit Nouvel An! Come in numbers!

**Fiuna,  
in the name of the whole Communication team  
and of the board**