NEWS 28 COEXISTENCES / DECEMBER 2016



C (existences

NEWS 28/coexistences / December 2016

Dear All,

They didn't know it was impossible, so they did it. How daring! And yet... Ten years since Coexistences, here in Lausanne, have been standing with those, over there in Israel and in Palestine, who keep on hoping. What a long way we have come together!

Each of us celebrated this anniversary in their own way: implementing a project, organising a visit, hosting within the family, preparing a meal, fund raising, writing, photos... As many people as invisible but indispensable links towards the success of the projects and events, such as the ten years of the association, an anniversary which brought together many of us in Kfar HaNokdim, in Israel, in the Judean desert. Review of a noteworthy year...

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NEWS 28/GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016

Under the presidency of Fiuna Seylan-Ongen, and to end this intense anniversary year, we held our General Assembly on Wednesday 16 November 2016 at the Ecole catholique du Valentin in Lausanne which many of you attended.

Our three summer projects went well and everybody, participants or volunteers, came away enriched and regenerated.

For the *TALI-JCJCR* group (7-13 July), Daniela Hersch gave us a very positive feedback and informed us that the school principals are determined «to work for the continuation of the *Dialogue et Identity* programme in their schools and to draw on the activities implemented in schools in the Lausanne region, carrying a message of hope and meaning which unite us beyond borders».

As for the *HER VOICE* group (14-23 August) presented by Fiuna, it demonstrated when presenting their work with families, the different communication tools they had acquired, and how, during this demonstration, new truths emerged. We know from Ulfat Haider and Sarki Golan, the facilitators, that they left genuinely satisfied with the work effected within the group and very grateful towards the volunteers and the host families who welcomed them into their homes.

Finally, for the *BREAKING THE ICE* **group (25 August-8 September),** François Feihl informed us that the participants stated their intention, once back in Israel, to organise a new meeting with the families similar to the one which took place in April 2016 and also their commitment to organise another activity involving intercommunity meetings.

You can find the complete summaries, narratives and testimonials of the summer trips 2016 by clicking on this link: http://www.coexistences.ch/pdf/news27_fr.pdf

Concerning the *In between* project, Carole Guinard and Shira Lapidot's initiative, a crowdfunding operation was launched in order to raise the amount needed to make a viral film in Israel to be diffused on the WEB and which will be accessible to as many people as possible. The project has been sent to all the film schools in Israel and Palestine and the productions will be selected by a specialised Swiss, Israeli and Palestinian jury. The amount targeted has been reached and the project is following its course. The President recommends you all to view the film used as a basis for the project, «We can talk», by clicking on this link (You can also read more information in the report on the voyage in Israel and Palestine, at the end of the newsletter).

Finally, the other activities linked to the very life of our association, here in Lausanne, took place to everybody's satisfaction and there again, many of you participated. **Non-violent Communication Workshop** on 23 and 24 September 2016, led by Godfrey Spencer. **Fundraising evening** on 19 June 2016. **Café Coexistences** on 13 March 2016: «Dialogues in Israel» conference by Michal Levin, supervisor of dialogue groups in the Jerusalem YMCA and other institutions. **Grand Ball of the «Petit Nouvel An»** in favour of Coexistences on 15 January 2016.





PROJECTS 2017

Three projects are taking shape. They will be explained in detail during a special meeting scheduled for Tuesday 17 January 2017 at 18 H 30 in the Ecole Catholique du Valentin in Lausanne.

However, Fiuna outlined the profile of the groups:

Then for the third consecutive year, *Her Voice*, a group of Israeli and Palestinian girls who dialogue in the framework of Beit HaGefen (from 20 to 29 August).

Finally, for the eighth year running, a *Breaking the ice* group comprising Arab and Jewish students from Haifa University in collaboration with Beit HaGefen (from 5 to 19 September).

SPOTLIGHT ON THE YMCA CHOIR

This project is close to our hearts because the YMCA chorale brings together in equal proportions young Jews and Palestinians, girls and boys, aged 15 to 18 from East and West Jerusalem, in a single community who sing and dialogue.

Thanks to the dialogue, the chorale facilitates an in-depth exploration of identities, life experiences, narratives, religious traditions and national stories, in the secure space of the musical ensemble and individual friendships.

Their artistic choices reflect the values of equality and inclusion evoking the notion of beauty in diversity. From very different musical traditions, the chorale integrates into its repertoire and musical style innovating Eastern and Western influences, thus pushing back the frontiers of music and dialogue.

Ever since its foundation in 2013, this chorale has made frequent tours (United States, Japan) and for the first time is coming do dialogue work in Europe here in Switzerland.

The dialogue programme for this coming year will be dominated by the fact that 2017 will mark 50 years since East Jerusalem passed from Arab control to Israeli control, and this may well be a year marked by violent incidents. That is why the programme intends to provide the participants with tools allowing them to «steer» emotionally and relationally at this sensitive time, and participate in local and global discussions on and around Jerusalem.

The stay in Switzerland will give the chorale the opportunity to become familiar with direct democracy, and pursue their training in conflict resolution and the group decision process.

A collaboration is envisaged with one of the ensembles led by the choirmaster from Lausanne, Dominique Tille. A public concert will punctuate the chorale's visit.

In the listening time of 4'55 you can meet their founder and choirmaster, Micah Hendler who talks about the principles of this ensemble and listen to an echo their music:

> http://www.pbs.org/video/2365541516/



TEN YEARS OF COEXISTENCES:

The project around this anniversary was conceived back in 2014. The goal was to bring together all those who had been invited to Switzerland over ten years, to strengthen the links which were established, to mobilise the energies here and over there, and to promote new encounters since the different groups did not know each other. Thirty work sessions were needed to reunite 40 members or sympathisers of the association, broken up into four groups for four regions in Israel and Palestine, and also in situ, to revive contacts enabling about 170 people among those who came to Switzerland to participate, of which Arabs and Jews in equal numbers. This event will be presented more widely at the meeting on Tuesday 17 January 2017, but already, at the end of this newsletter, in a «road movie» signed Egard Bloch.

TAKE UP YOUR AGENDA

GRAND BALL OF THE «PETIT NOUVEL AN» FRIDAY 13 JANUARY 2017 AT THE CASINO DE MONTBENON IN LAUSANNE

Ten candles! You're not ten years old every day and of this new edition of the "Petit Nouvel An" Grand Ball in favour of Coexistences, nothing has leaked except that it has certainly not fallen upon deaf ears and that the unsurpassable Orchestre Jaune are going to have us dancing! Ten years is something to celebrate and we all want to be there, so here is an address: carole.guinard@coexistences.ch to say how many of you are eager to offer your organisational, setting-up, serving, clearing-up talents, in short, all those big and little tasks which make the celebration memorable and give you dark rings under your eyes and other aches and pains guaranteed until Monday.

So all together we will open the 2017movement and, thanks to this combined effort, from 8 p.m. until 2 a.m., on the dance floor, bar and buffet, meaty, veggie, vegan, gluten free, lactose free, and even worse!

While waiting for this yearly Friday night fever, the communication group and work groups express their warm wishes that this celebration will usher in a year of joy and goodwill. And thanks to one and all for you faithful support throughout these ten years of existence. An encouragement to persevere by the side of our friends who, in Israel and Palestine, have made the future their choice.

Happy Birthday!



OCTOBER 2016

TEN YEARS OF COEXISTENCES: AN INTENSE MOMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

For a few days, Massimo, in charge of Coexistences' ten years organisation team, Carole, member of this team, Alain, photo editor of the trip, and I criss-crossed the region by car to meet all our friends who came to Switzerland, domiciled between the Galilee, Haifa, Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories; we joined the members of Coexistences invited by the people and families of different organisations who came to Switzerland between 2006 and 2016. A tour which ended with the unforgettable get-together of some 170 people in Kfar HaNokdim, a touristic site beside a Bedouin village in Israel on the borders of the Judean desert, on the road between Arad and Massada.

En route.

ZIKHRON YA'AKOV SUNDAY 23

We meet up with the two Swiss groups who went to the north to Haifa and the Galilee. Zikhron Ya'akov is a town approximately thirty kilometres to the south of Haifa, close to the Mediterranean coast, and the starting point of our journey. The meeting took place in the house of Dafi, one of the pillars of *Tali*. The teachers made us a warm welcome and, a few moments later, invited the Swiss guests to take part in a religious ceremony led by a dynamic young rabbi, in a "conservative" synagogue (Jewish liberal movement, a minority in Israel). A time of sharing with the taking out of all the scrolls of the Torah, carried by both men and women, accompanied by the songs and joy emblematic of this celebration. The long procession weaved its way through the corridor of an old people's home adjoining the religious building: the old people are not forgotten!

Back at Dafi's to share on their beautiful terrace a sumptuous pot-luck meal. Impossible to resist! At the end of the evening, Ziv Deshe, Dafi's husband, mayor of Zikhron Ya'akov a small town of 25,000 inhabitants, showed as round his town. On the way, he explained how the work done by his wife and the *Tali* group had opened his mind, him a right-winger, member of Likud. "It is essential to reach solutions. There is no other alternative", he acknowledges.

HAIFA, MONDAY 24

The following morning, after a refreshing swim and a short walk with the teachers of *Tali* on Nahsholim beach close to Zikhron Ya'akov, en route for Haifa and the rendezvous on the terrace of Beit HaGefen. In this centre, an oasis of dialogue and discussion recognised for decades in the city, we find Asaf, the director, accompanied by the facilitators Ulfat and Sarki, who the host families of the *Her Voice* 2016 adolescents still remember. These girls are just one of the ten youth groups that Beit HaGefen has established this year. There is no lack of work because, explains Asaf, "Jews know little about Arabs, whereas the latter know more about Jews due to their minority status". Combatting ignorance of the other is a reason in itself for the edification of this platform. Showing us the exhibition dedicated to the works of fifteen Jewish and Arab artists, our host reminds us that Haifa remains the town the most open to integration in the country. Beit HaGefen, funded for 50% by the Municipality, develops dialogue activities on themes other than just the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict such as gender studies or abuse. The declared aim of the centre is to celebrate difference.

After the visit to the Beit HaGefen theatre, opposite the main building, we discover the alleyways of the Arab neighbourhood of Wadi Nisnas. A short visit to an Armenian family who have a ceramic shop familiarise us with the insecurity experienced by the members of this small minority today reduced to 90 families in Haifa. They are divided between great loyalty to Israel and the pervading feeling of being displaced in this country, even though they say they feel well there. Wadi Nisnas with its beautiful Arab houses, boutiques, shops, like the one full of eastern musical instruments where we stop for a while, seems a protected haven, out of time, with few tourists and away from the daily convulsions in the country.

AKKO, TUESDAY 25

The following day, we go to Akko. In the gardens of the municipal museum of the ancient crusader capital, we share delicious refreshments with avec the *Women in Movement* who live in towns and villages in the Galilee. There are 25 of them, sitting quietly in the shade of a tree, and one after the other, express their motivation for dialogue.

«The trip to Switzerland by our group has reinforced our motivation», says Zahava. Apparently, these women are very closely knit. «This work gives me the strength to fight against my illness», declares Faida. Do women, mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers of large families feel themselves called upon to play an active part in the transmission of coexistence? «My daughter who speaks many languages, told me that she wanted to learn Arabic and the two others are proud of what I am doing», explained Ohra. «I live close to the Arab village of Sakhnin, my children spent time together in Jewish and Arab youth camps», says Simona. «I was educated in Haifa and my parents are sensitive to good relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims», says Houda who lives in the small town of Shfar'am inhabited by Christians, Muslims and Druze. «In the company of my granddaughter of 7, my daughter took part in the Walk for Peace», says Yaël, born in Morocco and who now lives in the Galilee, and she talks with nostalgia of the wonderful time of coexistence between Jews and Arabs in her country of birth. But her dialogue posture is not always evident within her family and with her own children. Zahava is the first to admit that her son, who lives in the Jewish settlement of Gush Etzion, in the Palestinian territories, considers her action insane. The Arab children also react to images of violence on the conflict broadcast on Israeli television. But, thanks to their dialogue work, the mothers manage to put things into perspective.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY 25

After the visit of the municipal museum relating the recent history of the town of Akko, we say goodbye with regret to the Women in Movement. We set off to Jerusalem. When we arrive in the evening at the restaurant, we have the pleasure of meeting up with the Jerusalem group led by Sylvie, as enthusiastic as usual, and the West Bank group led by Jamal and Gadi. The two groups had shared the activities of the day. After the meal, Hamutal, member of the Jerusalem YMCA programme, wants to share with us a new dimension of the tensions. After having spent her youth in Haifa, she chose to live in Jerusalem «because the heart of the conflict is there». Jewish, an declared left-wing and non-violent activist, with her Israeli and Palestinian friends she opposes the destruction of the houses of the latter. She participates in «Free Jerusalem», an association which unites Israelis and Palestinians in East and West Jerusalem, both populations ignoring each other according to her. One has to take into consideration the Palestinians' suspicions toward their own activists who they accuse of colluding with a «normalisation by accepting the occupation». On the other side, the Jewish protesters are not regarded any better by the majority of Israelis who do not understand how they can challenge their soldiers. «We are depressed, but our actions take on their full meaning over time. Education through dialogue is our hope for the next generation», says the young woman. A little more optimist, Annuar takes over: «It is impossible to change the perception of reality so long as each other's history is ignored. We must start by learning each other's language». Resident of East Jerusalem, he married an Israeli Jew and is the father of a child aged one and a half. It goes without saying that dialogue and coexistence are vital for him. He thinks that the conflict will only be resolved if the Israelis are liberated from their sense of fear. Even though has no illusions, he tries to make the point of view of the Hebrew State more flexible and even confesses that he managed to temper, even inflect, the point of view of the Israeli President, Reuven Rivlin in person, to whom he teaches Arabic.



WEST BANK, WEDNESDAY 26

We take road 60 between Jerusalem and Hebron in the Palestinian territories and go firstly through Bethlehem, then Beit Jala. We wait for the West Bank group and together we enter the Palestinian camp of Al Aroub, 12,000 inhabitants. Abdel, the UNWRA representative, the United Nations organ of assistance and protection of Palestinian refugees, welcomes us at the entrance to the camp. «Our situation is getting worse and worse. Our leaders are weak and divided and the Israeli politicians won't grant us anything», he recriminates. The visit of the camp accompanied by the Palestinian employees of UNWRA is as rich as it is moving. We make our way through the camp late morning, at the end of school day. Groups of school children, mostly girls dressed in strict school uniforms, black and white striped, surround us and greet us enthusiastically. A little further on we enter a centre for the handicapped where, in particular, 40 children from 6 upwards, are taken care of. Speech therapists, teachers and sport coaches work with those who walk and/or express themselves with difficulty. A «Team for Peace» even practices sport for the disabled, explains Taisir, who accompanies us in Al Aroub. He is himself a voluntary worker in the centre and extremely committed to the promotion of these physical activities. The money mainly comes from private donations collected on the occasion of religious festivals.

After this visit we take the road back to Jerusalem, road 60 again. At a junction of the Gush Etzion roundabout, we stop off on the land of Ali Abu Awwad, co-founder of the NGO "Roots. After a meal in company of the West Bank group, under the warm end-of-October sun, we listen to the remarks and debates of the peace activists, united by their desire for non-violence, solidarity and friendship. Among some memorable stories, we would retain that of the Israeli Gershon Baskin, invited to Switzerland by Coexistences in 2009 where he officiated as leader of the Wounded Xrossing Borders group (ex-Israeli and Palestinian wounded and imprisoned combatants) and also intermediary in the liberation in 2011 of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit held prisoner by Hamas. Baskin wants to see an autonomous Palestinian economy. «Mahmoud Abas told me: we're not lacking in sun here so let's make Palestine champion of this energy». That is why Gershon Baskin is currently involved in a solar energy project in Palestine with the help of a Dutch company specialised in this renewable source. He still firmly believes in an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution. "For this realisation, an Israeli leadership above all, but also a Palestinian one, should emerge. Foreign assistance will also be needed." Other members of Wounded Xrossing Borders, ex Palestinian combatants, voice their opinion in turn. Some recall that their trip to Switzerland brought down barriers between the members of Wounded Xrossing Borders, which was hardly a foregone conclusion after repeated prison sentences in Israeli jails. «There's no other solution than peace, but Israeli occupation hampers steps in this direction», regrets Khaled. After having fought against Israel with a Kalashnikov and lost a brother killed on a control at a checkpoint guarded by soldiers, Ali Abu Awwad is clear: "Our strategy must be based on values and a non-violence movement." However he has no illusions for the time being, the populations in their majority rejecting such an approach. The conflict is not founded on identities, but comportments: «The Israelis must be courageous and recognise the Palestinians, but the latter are faced with the same challenge. It is for them to fight for a more moral society leading to two States." Roots distinguishes itself because it fully associates the Israeli settlers in its work, such as Shaoul Yudenmann, an American Jew, dressed in orthodox garb. He talks to the assembly about his feeling «of having come home to Judea» in 2000, when he settled in the Palestinian territories. For him, it is essential to change the concept. «Instead of saying: the land belongs to the Jews or the Palestinians, it is preferable to say the opposite: Jews and Palestinians belong to this land.»

As many ideas and opinions in an increasingly tense and oppressive political climate. These partisans of non-violence, «tinkers of hope», according to the term used by Samy Cohen, Director of Research at Sciences Po Paris*, are a minority and are split up into numerous groups with varying objectives. Without a doubt, a first milestone would be to favour a unification of all these points of view around an objective even remotely common: coexistence.



*Samy Cohen

Israël et ses colombes. Enquête sur le camp de la paix Paris, Gallimard, 2016, 320 p.

JERUSALEM - JERICHO, THURSDAY 27

After a visit of the Hadassah hospital in company of the Jerusalem group, we go to the Supreme Court close to the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament). The judgement of an administrative prisoner is being held there. This is someone suspected of terrorism and imprisoned for months, even years, without judgement. Unfortunately, pressed for time, we have to leave the court-room before hearing the verdict. We abandon the Jerusalem group and make our way to Jericho, the lowest town on earth. There, escorted by the West Bank group bus, we come to a magnificent spot and a warm welcome, the Mud House, to spend the night after an evening in Ramallah where we attend the presentation of the «Two States, One Homeland» Palestinian movement. A presentation followed by an exchange of contradictory, even polemical opinions, but rich and vigorous.

KFAR HANOKDIM, VENDREDI 28

After a short night and an evening in Ramallah with the West Bank group, we set off from Jericho early in the morning at top speed for Kfar HaNokdim. We border the Dead Sea and turn off towards Arad before arriving at this magnificent site, erected in the middle of the mountainous desert, a few kilometres from the ancient fortress of Massada, an eyrie overhanging the Dead Sea. Danielle and Massimo, in charge of the choice of the site, have good reason to want to be there before everybody. To put up and feed all the guests is no small matter.

We take advantage of this advance to organise everything, explore and take possession of the place. Then, the two buses, one from the north with the Swiss groups and their hosts from Haifa and the Galilee, the other from Jerusalem, arrive in Nokdim. Rapidly, everybody, young and old and *in between*, settle in. While some will be in a room, the majority will sleep in tents, men and women separated of course. There are 170 of us, but we should point out that even though Jews and Arabs are there in equal numbers, women form the great majority.

The festivities begin on this Friday afternoon, under the responsibility of the *Sulha* group. Assembling in different circles, this group's "trade mark", will continue until the end of Saturday morning. Yoav Peck, director of *Sulha* opens the festivities. "Each of us assembled here is conscious that our visit to Lausanne has reinforced us. Live this moment with your emotions, your worries and your frustrations. We are going through a difficult period in Israel and in Palestine and many of us are grieving. Some are unable to see each other or communicate", he says, alluding to the seven Palestinians in the West Bank who were expected and whose demands for permits were deposited in due form. Mounir and Foul were turned down, three authorisations were granted. Only Jamal, who has a six-month permit, and the brother from Wadi were with us. The death of a Palestinian adolescent from Beit Ommar, killed during a confrontation with Israeli soldiers, saddened us here...

During the session, certain members of the assembly voiced their opinion in turn. However, if the use of English and Hebrew goes without saying, the Arabic translation is lacking, even if the organisers try to step in. Then, Yoav, under the supervision his *Sulha* facilitators, familiar with this sort of exercise, split up the session into smaller circles. The participants particularly from *Breaking The Ice*, *Her Voice*, *Women in Movement*, *Jerusalem YMCA Programmes* and the members de Coexistences, in function of their tour in Israel or Palestine, relate their voyage, their expectations and difficulties, wavering between hope and indignation. In the evening, after the camp fire and the arrival of Shabbat, we all go to eat.

Later on, a moving moment as we gather beneath the stars of the Judean desert to meditate and have a thought for Jan de Haas, initiator of the project.



KFAR HANOKDIM, SATURDAY 29

Some of us who woke up very early take the opportunity to savour the beauty of the sunrise over Massada, while others indulge in the pleasures of yoga, an exercise led by Lisa from *Sulha*. After a solid breakfast, the activities are resumed, the circles are restored with Israelis, Palestinians and Swiss. At that moment Sylvie tells me that after the dissolution of the YMCA Mothers' Programme in Jerusalem in 2008, following the war between Israel and Gaza, meetings have taken place once again, but in the absence of two mothers, the son of one of them being hostile to any contact with Israel. But the meeting for the ten years' preparation made it possible to reach a magnificent reconciliation with everybody falling into each other's arms and promising to never be divided again... A beacon in the night.

During the break when everybody comes together under a tent, Carole, in the presence of the directors Moriya Benavot and Uri Levi, explains the approach of the *In Between* competition for which the projected documentary will serve as the starting point. This short film, the account of three Palestinians and three Israelis involved in dialogue, has been sent to all the schools of art and cinema both in Israel and in Palestine. The students whose scripts were selected (thirteen years after a first jury) are to make a very short, approximately 1-minute film on the theme of dialogue in the conflict. The first three will be awarded a prize and diffused massively on the web and social networks. This work is being coordinated in Israel by Shira Lapidot and has obtained the support of Sapir College in Sderot.

But it is nearly time to separate. After the recital of the Jerusalem YMCA mixed chorale (boys and girls, Israelis and Palestinians under the direction of Micah Hendler), who had come especially from the holy city to rejoice us with their melodious songs in Arabic, Hebrew and English, everything is coming to an end and Lisa whispers in my ear, tears in her eyes: « What, it's already over?» Yes, the event is over. But we will support the efforts consented by all our friends to make it happen again.

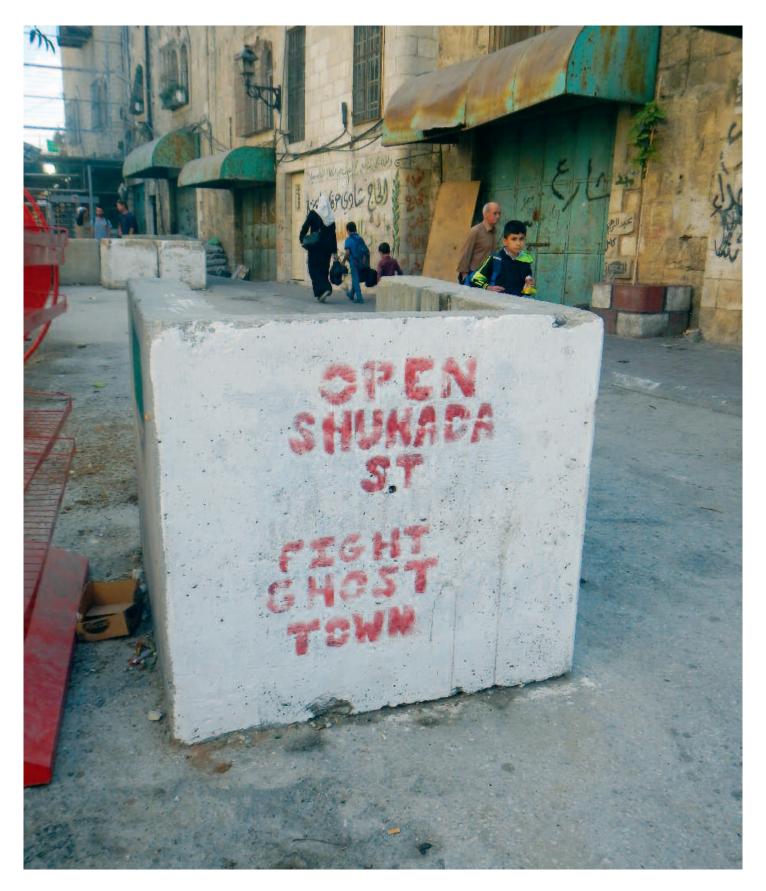
Just a word to express our thanks to the members of the ten-year preparation group, Massimo, Carole, Danielle, Fiuna, Halina, François and Laurent, in Lausanne, to all our correspondents of this project in Israel and in the Palestinian territories, Eva, Zahava, Ulfat, Sylvie, Asaf, Jamal and Gadi, and to all the host families in Israel and Palestine. Without them, this moment marked by solemnity, emotion and great beauty could never have taken place.

Edgar Bloch (in collaboration with Danielle Bloch)





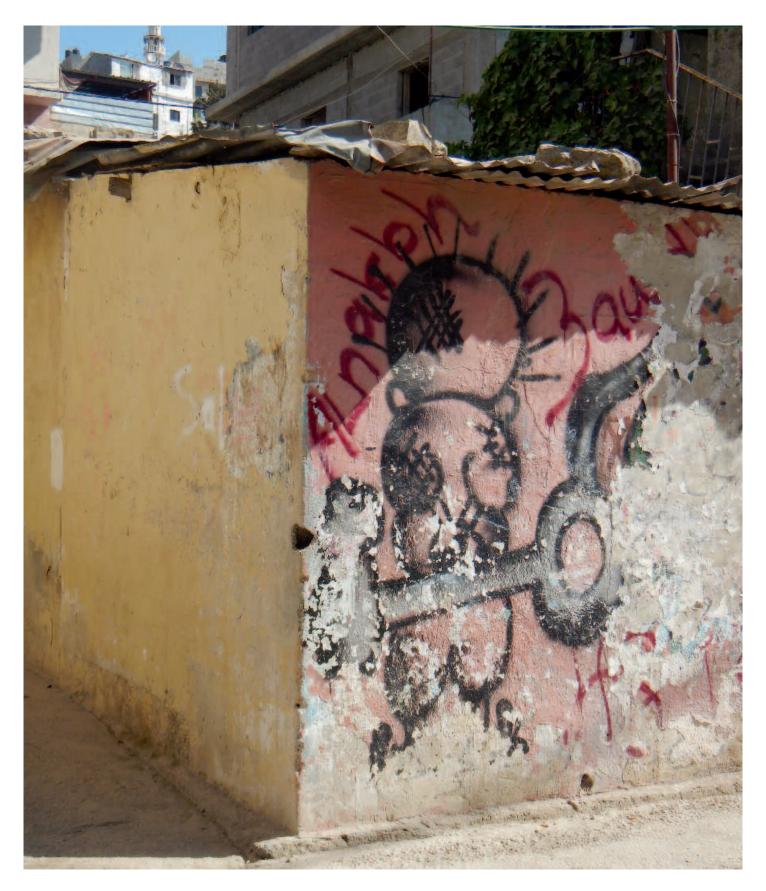
























NEWS 28/ THE TRIP SEEN BY MARTIN HOEGGER



NEWS 28/ THE TRIP SEEN BY MARTIN HOEGGER



NEWS 28/ THE TRIP SEEN BY ROSELINE AVIGDOR











Mosaic: of Jerusalem town hall



