

Wahat al-Salam

واحة السلام



Neve Shalom

נווה שלום

Oasis of Peace

Communications and development -  
special projects

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To all of our friends,

Once again, we started our day with sirens and rocket fire, as the US and Israel began a new operation against Iran. We, and much of the country, spent most of the day in shelters and safe rooms, as missiles bound for the airport, or just for anywhere in the county, rained down on us. What should have been a day of rest, a quiet day in the holy month of Ramadan, a day in which we might have walked outside to enjoy the first signs of spring, was, instead, a day of renewed fear and anxiety.

Once again, we are caught in a battle of enormous egos, intransigence and narrow economic interests. Despite the bold words, it is doubtful whether the current operation will benefit the people of our region, or even the embattled, battered citizens of Iran. It is clear to us, who stand against violence, that is innocent civilians who ultimately pay the price of war. The deaths of 148 schoolgirls in Iran, the death and wounding of innocent civilians in Bet Shemesh are unforgivable: We cannot abide the fresh collateral killing and the world's indifference.

We have not yet begun to recover from the shock and trauma of over two years of war in Gaza. Tens of thousands of Gazans killed, millions homeless with no hope of a real solution, and Jewish Israelis still trying to process the horrific Oct. 7 massacre and the conditions in which hostages were held for so many long days and months.

So please forgive us if we are not gung-ho supporters of a new military operation – one we knew, before the first missile fell, would send those with access to shelters running for cover, those without access trying for cover as best they can. By continuing to draw our attention to a new-old war arena, our government enables the extreme right-wing Jewish settlers to continue their theft and terrorism of innocent Palestinian families, and it pushes aside our dreams of true healing, renewal and peace and understanding between Palestinians and Jews. At the same time, it ignores the needs of its own citizens, including Palestinian-Israeli citizens who are killed daily in unchecked violence.

The actions of these countries – the US, Israel and Iran – come just as local civil society organizations and peace activists are getting ready for a huge peace conference in London, in cooperation with other European countries, to jump-start the realistic, policy-based peace process. It was planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, and its existence is now uncertain. As in previous attempts, we first need to learn to sit at a table together.

In the village, school is cancelled until further notice – another disruption in the lives of young people who may be traumatized by sirens and the reverberations of falling missile shards. We are physically safe, being among the lucky ones with access to shelter. Some of us even use the long time we spend sitting in the shelters to get to know neighbors, read new books, practice hobbies or even perfect our Wordle scores.

Our faith in the simple idea that peacebuilding is the only way forward – for humanity – and that it must be valued above all else, remains unshaken. As always, we continue to educate for peace in every way possible and to work to bring people to our side in the shared struggle to bring justice, equality and a truly peaceful shared society to our region. The violence and aggression around us threaten our dreams of peace, but we refuse to stop believing that peace is both possible and necessary.

To those who have reached out and those who are thinking of us and sending prayers, we thank you. Even when we are isolated within our concrete bomb shelters, your words remind us that good friends are always there to support us.

Yours,

Samah Salaimé and the WASNS Communications and Development Team