

Parents Circle Families Forum Annual Report 2016



Bereaved Palestinian and Israeli
Families for Peace and Reconciliation

The Parents Circle – Families Forum

Is a unique, grassroots organization made up of more than 600 Israeli and Palestinian families, who have lost an immediate family member to the conflict.

Our long-term vision is to have a reconciliation process as an integral part of any future peace agreement. We can no longer be satisfied with political agreements which bring temporary ceasefires. We want a permanent, sustainable peace. By creating understanding and humanizing the “other side”, we lay the foundation for reconciliation. We educate the general public and our leaders to understand that reconciliation is possible and essential to stop the bloodshed, prevent future bereavement and achieve a lasting peace.







Looking Back on 2016

We have been faced with daunting challenges, unpredictable events and yet we have continued to work with a passion to create a better future for both Palestinians and Israelis.



We understand that we cannot allow the situation to affect who we are, but rather, that we should be a catalyst for change.

We are determined to spread our message of reconciliation and to work on the ground, no matter how dark and difficult the times.

The highlights from 2016 are many and rewarding despite the times.



Parallel Narrative Project

The Parallel Narrative Project, which brings Israelis and Palestinians to participate in narrative exchange workshops, dialogue meetings and site visits to explore each other's personal, historical and political narratives is proof of our special status in both communities. We now have some 800 alumni who have come together to engage in non-violent and solidarity actions that address a shared concern. One alumni group issued an Arabic-Hebrew phrasebook to be used in hospitals as a phonetic dictionary for Israeli and Palestinian patients who share a room but do not share the same language. Another group created a website dedicated to information on organizations protecting Palestinian rights. These ideas allow each side to see the humanity in the other.

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Youth and Young Adult Programs

Our Summer Program for bereaved Palestinian and Israeli youth goes from strength to strength. The counselors were once youth participants themselves and have grown up in the atmosphere of the Parents Circle. They are becoming the next generation of peacemakers. In fact, two young men, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who both lost a sister, were the most moving speakers at the Alternative Memorial Day Ceremony which we mark for both sides.

Two young, bereaved, Israeli and Palestinian, young adult delegations traveled to Japan for a cross-cultural experience. The young adults met with public figures, including the Prime

Minister, with families and with Japanese students. The PCFF young delegates were received warmly and their message was highly appreciated. A youth delegation, comprised of 10 bereaved Palestinian and Israeli youngsters ages 14-18 attended a week-long workshop on youth in conflict in Italy. We continue to share our stories and facilitate Dialogue Meetings in high schools. For many 16 or 17-year-old young people, it is the first time they have met someone from the “other side” and the first time they can experience their humanity. We found it extremely important to train teachers to handle dialogue amongst the students following our meetings and that has become another mission for us.



Women's Group

The Women's Group, made up of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian women, continues to flourish and have a stronger voice. The cadre of trained women facilitators grew by 70% this year so that more women from our group could travel on speaking engagements abroad, facilitate Parallel Narrative groups and Dialogue Meetings.

The Women's Group created a social enterprise called, Taking Steps, www.steps4peace.org which was launched in the European Parliament, the Bundestag, and U.S. Congress



Mazen Faraj and Rami Elhanan

Organizational Growth

PCFF combined its Israeli and Palestinian Boards of Directors, making it a fully joint organization.

This move has great symbolic significance, as it reflects that the organization is equal in both messages and actions. The merge will continue to strengthen the reputation and legitimacy of the PCFF, and serve to support the already unified operational level.

We welcomed Rami Elhanan as our new Israeli Executive Director. He has been a member of the Parents Circle since he lost his beloved daughter, and because of his extraordinary work on the ground he enjoys the complete trust on both sides.

Even in these dark times, the PCFF held an extraordinary meeting on the seashore for more than 200 members, which in these times is somewhat of a miracle.



International Relations

PCFF facilitators are invited to lead panels, speak in universities, community and religious centers, facilitate workshops and make keynote addresses in professional conferences. It is clear that now more than ever our message is global. This year our members participated in “Women in the World” London, Muslim/Jewish conferences in the U.S. and Germany, YPO Edge in Dubai, TEDx in Munster, Germany, Semi di Pace in Italy and many other prestigious venues and events.

Parents Circle Friends Deutschland (PCFD) has joined PCFF’s family of “friends” organizations and are now officially registered and operating in Berlin. We are grateful for the wonderful team in Germany for their hard work and commitment for peace and reconciliation.



Financials

Our Supporters*

We cannot afford to give up hope and we dare not give in to waves of violence. We thank all of our supporters from all over the world not only for their financial support but for their encouragement and solidarity.

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