



My name is Ben MacLeod and I recently graduated high school in Geneva and am now starting Law School in Switzerland, I am also a B8 of Hope Next Gener and I had the opportunity to shadow Mehra through Jerusalem and the West Bank for a week during the month of July. I followed Mehra as she was on the ground to meet with various B8 of Hope grantees all over Israel and Palestine.

In alphabetical order, below is an overview of the organizations I met and what I learnt about them.

Amal-Tikva

Amal-Tikva is an Israeli and Palestinian run non-profit which helps peacebuilders and cross-border organizations to streamline and be more efficient in every field from implementing their missions, to communicating their visions or organizing their operations. B8 of Hope is a partner of Amal-Tikva. For example, the two NGOs collaborated on an Umbrella Crowdfunding campaign and B8 of Hope is currently going through Amal-Tikva's *Fieldbuilding 360°* program to better itself and clarify its aim.

Whilst Mehra met with Ariel and Meredith, the COO and CEO of Amal-Tikva, who took her through a module of the *Fieldbuilding 360°* program, I got to sit with Adi, who heads the *Embodying Peace* program for AmalTikva. *Embodying Peace* allows young people from around the world to get remote or in-person internships with organizations whose needs match their skills, optimizing the productivity and efficiency of the experience for both the interns and the organizations. Adi gave me a thorough run-through of Amal-Tikva's different initiatives and general mission to better the field of peacebuilders in the Holy Land.

Combatants for Peace

We met with Combatants for Peace in the West Bank where I got to listen-in as Mehra debriefed recent activities with the activists and discussed upcoming initiatives. Combatants for Peace strives to organize non-violent demonstrations and events in Israel and the West Bank.

Parents Circle Families Forum

In Beit Jala, we also met with Parents Circle Families Forum, an organization which brings together grieving parents from both sides of the conflict. Meeting with the bereaved Palestinians and Israelis who are committed to working towards a solution was incredibly inspiring and emotional. They took us through their mixed Palestinian and Israeli activities and workshops, and shared stories about the overwhelmingly positive impact of their actions.

Tech2Peace

Tech2Peace is an NGO which organizes intensive seminars with educators from large Israeli and international high-tech firms where Israeli and Palestinian young adults learn about the field of tech. The students are offered dialogue sessions in their learning process. Our meeting with the founders of Tech2Peace was more friendly than it was professional, and we all had the opportunity to experience full body failure after consuming our weight in Arabic sweets at a café in the Beit Hanina neighborhood of Jerusalem.

Taghyeer

Taghyeer is a Palestinian non violence movement with a domestic approach to peacebuilding.

I already knew Ali Abu Awwad (its founder), thanks to B8 of Hope, and my sister (a fellow Next Gener) had shadowed him a few years back. However, seeing Taghyeer operate a specific activity on the field was a first for me. It was tremendously enriching to see the way Ali, his colleagues, and his team expose children to non-violence through an art therapy workshop. This art therapy session was organized in collaboration with Holy Land Trust, for Palestinian children from south Hebron hills to help them heal their traumas through art.

Green Land Society for Health Development

Doctor Akram Amro, founder of Green Land Society met with us in Hebron. The discussion was held in the facility co-financed by B8 of Hope and where children learn about the importance of their

environment through an environmental cleaning project. Akram told us about the importance of instilling a sense of civil service and giving back into Palestinian youth. His approach of the Palestinian issue, through teaching the younger generation about cherishing every aspect of the land that they are fighting to bring peace to, was incredibly refreshing and interesting.

Horizon

Horizon is the only initiative that we visited which isn't a B8 of Hope grantee, we paid them a visit out of curiosity and friendship.

To finish off a beautiful day in the West Bank, we headed to Hotel Murad in Beit Sahour where we met with the kids participating in the Horizon programs. These teenagers are academically gifted and get offered opportunities to study in prestigious high school institutions from Jordan to Switzerland. We spoke with them about their experience with the program which they all described to us as an incredible opportunity for them to make something of their high potential. The students affiliated with Horizon are trained and prepared to be top applicants for grants and scholarships to the best universities around the world. There, I met with some students studying at Aiglon, near Geneva, making friendships back home.

Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow

Mehra and I's visit to the MEET campus was fascinating as I got to learn about this initiative which offers a 3-year extracurricular free program for Israeli and Palestinian high schoolers to collaborate on building a start-up. After speaking with the MEET executive director and team, we got to go around meeting the students as they worked on their startups in teams a few weeks ahead of large presentations. Their projects were all socially or environmentally minded and showed tremendous initiative.

Roots + A Land for All

Roots is a bi-national initiative with a network of Israeli residents of the Gush Etsion area and Palestinians from neighboring towns and villages who have come to see each other as the partners who both need to make changes to end their conflict. Café Judur is one of their activities which I got to attend at the beautiful Karama Palestinian Non Violence Center. We got to discuss with Rav Schlessinger, one of the spokesperson of Roots, and Israeli and Palestinian members of the organization. They all shared an unbelievable optimism and will to make the situation better.

This edition of Café Judur featured speakers from an initiative called A Land for All. A Land for All offers an alternative to the two-state solution, proposing to make the Holy Land a confederation between a Jewish State and an Arab State sharing the same land. Seeing the inspiring people from A Land for All discuss with the members of Roots was an unforgettable experience which truly anchored the idea that there is room for peace.

Conclusion

The experience I had in the Holy Land with Mehra was tremendously enriching and eye-opening. As a diaspora Jew, I believe that there is no other way to experience the land that we cherish than by seeing both of its facets. Meeting the inspiring grantees of B8 of Hope convinced me that the forces fighting for peace are stronger, bolder, and more determined than those waging war. This short trip sufficed to convince me that I wanted to become more involved in the strive for peace in the Holy Land, and I believe that B8 of Hope is the philanthropic entity closest to my values.