



Newsletter

December 2023

Dear Friends and supporters,

The hopeful and promising month of September, which was supposed to be a prelude to a constructive and busy fall, turned into a tragic and dark autumn. Our world turned upside down on October 7th, and our hearts kept breaking into a million pieces as time passed, moving from October, and then into November.

It is with a heavy heart that we would like to recount how we resumed our positive, hopeful activities in September, how we have been dealing with the devastating situation, holding true to our values, and, more importantly, how our grantees have been faring in these extremely unprecedented and difficult times.

In September, we celebrated International Peace Day on the 21st. We had the honor of hosting two young alumni from our grantee organization, [Tech2Peace](#) programs. Ben (Israeli) and Reem (Palestinian) came to Geneva for 48 hours and spoke to a total of 800+ high schoolers at [the Ecole Internationale de Genève \(International School of Geneva\)](#) campuses about their transformative experiences since joining Tech2Peace. By bringing their voices to Geneva, we aimed to foster a healthier discourse around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We also hosted a dinner in honor of our two peacebuilders, attended by the Ecolint principal, teachers, and students.



Incidentally, in September, we also launched a call for applications for the third edition of the B8 of Hope & [Philanthropic Adventures](#) workshop, an educational 5-week program in the form of an after-school activity about peace philanthropy. Tech2Peace was initially going to be our case study for this edition. Unfortunately, due to the tragic situation, with the attacks by Hamas into Israel and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war, we had to quickly alter the normal course of this workshop for the participants of this third edition. We transformed it into a peace and empathy workshop.

Our advisory board member, [Dr. Ahmad Abu-Akel \(University of Haifa\)](#), a neuroscientist with expertise in empathy studies, kindly trained us and prepared the B8 of Hope and Philanthropic Adventures facilitators in record time. We piloted this new workshop throughout October and November.

Find more details about the workshop by clicking on the following link:

[SUMMARY WORKSHOP](#)

Watch the video created by participants of the peace and empathy workshop in support of Reem and Ben from Tech2peace:

[VIDEO](#)



*Philanthropic Adventures is a non-profit association for young people to find information, inspiration and support to take action for social and environmental issues they care about. Philanthropic Adventures aims to democratize the concept of philanthropy and help young people define their engagement and bring change. Philanthropic Adventures and B8 of Hope offer a free of charge in person workshop to a group of 8 to 12 Swiss high schoolers (aged 15 to 18) from different schools in Geneva and the region.

In the fall, we also kept tabs on our B8 of Hope [Next Gen Youth Group](#), a diverse network of youth, consisting of B8 of Hope youth program alumni and volunteers. We had the opportunity to offer them a firsthand perspective on what transpires in the peace community during these tragic times and the kinds of conversations held between Israeli and Palestinian peace activists. The Zoom session organized by two members, Laura and Juliet, and facilitated by Uri and Abeer, Tech2Peace co-founders, was inspiring and meaningful for all the youth who identified with the voice of B8 of Hope. We were deeply touched by Uri and Abeer and their willingness to participate and join our youth community.

In October, just before our world turned upside down, our Executive Director, Mehra Rimer, went to Israel and the Palestinian Authority Territories in the West Bank to attend an event co-sponsored by B8 of Hope and other international sponsors. The event, named "Mother's Call," was co-organized and led by Palestinian and Israeli women from two organizations: Women of the Sun and [Women Wage Peace](#). Hundreds attended the event, including diplomats and ordinary citizens. Palestinian, Israeli and international Keynote speakers called upon Israeli and Palestinian political leaders to end the cycles of violence and bloodshed and return to the negotiating table and pave the way for a just and sustainable peace. Little did we know that an un-precedented bloodshed was about to happen.



On October 7th, a day after returning from the grounds of an inspiring and hopeful trip, our Executive Director discovered the horrifying news regarding the barbaric attack of Hamas on Israeli civilians. Her friend and peace activist, **Vivian Silver** (co-founder of Women Wage Peace), was among the missing people and assumed to have been taken hostage. It is with deep regret that we now find out that Vivian was actually killed on that dark Saturday. We mourn her loss and the tragic way in which she was taken. Vivian was an outstanding peace activist and an inspiration to the whole peace community.

A few weeks later, we also learned of the tragic and violent death of **Ayat Khadoura**, the outspoken, sharp member of our grantee organization [Zimam](#). She was one of Zimam's star agents of change in Gaza, critical of her reality and a lover of life. In the month before the war, Ayat was leading the production of a series of short films for Masa7aChannel about the beauty of Gaza, the coexistence between religions and cultures over the years, and a history that extends beyond conflict and bloodshed. She was tragically killed along with her three siblings and grandparents during an attack over her home in Beit Lahia.



Our hearts are deeply broken, and we send our heartfelt condolences to Vivian and Ayat's loved ones and colleagues on the ground. The harsh reality of the conflict is directly affecting people we know. We send empathy and strength to all those enduring the weight of this unbearable situation. At B8 of Hope, we grieve for the loss of innocent lives, as well as those of change-makers and peace activists. Our hearts are heavy with the collective sorrow caused by these profound losses.

What warmed our hearts in these dark days was that our grantees continued their work and their belief in our shared humanity.

Since October 7th, members of our grantee organizations have been grappling with personal and national shocks. In the initial aftermath of the Hamas attacks, Palestinian members reached out to their Israeli counterparts, offering messages of empathy. As the war between Israel and Hamas escalated, the situation grew more complex. Many of the peace activists, whether Israeli or Palestinian, from bi-national organizations supported by B8 of Hope, initially held separate meetings within the framework of their respective NGOs and movements to express and process their pain. In a subsequent phase, bi-national meetings were organized swiftly. Israeli members also expressed empathy for the innocent civilian victims and relatives of their Palestinian colleagues in Gaza and in the West Bank (as there were also a number of casualties and loss of lives in different areas of the West Bank).

While some activists took a break due to personal trauma, the majority remain committed to their core values and are working together. This collaboration extends to joint Arab and Jewish movements within Israel, as well as between West Bankers and Israelis.



Navigating this collaboration is inherently challenging and not without its risks. Engaging in peacebuilding during times of war is a precarious undertaking; some Israelis have come under police scrutiny. As the conflict intensifies, Palestinians involved in peacebuilding face increasing risks in persisting with their peace activism. Uni-national Palestinian movements are redirecting their efforts toward addressing humanitarian needs. Currently, their focus is on keeping communities together and assisting those in need, providing essential items such as food and medicine within the West Bank.

- **Multiple Meetings:** Grantees have actively participated in numerous meetings, both uni-national and bi-national, within the framework of their respective organizations.
- **Media Engagement:** In response to the ongoing conflict, our grantees have engaged with press and media outlets, sharing their perspectives and updates on the situation.
- **Community Support:** Many activists, whether Israeli or Palestinian, have sought solace in uni-national gatherings to process personal trauma. Simultaneously, they have engaged in bi-national meetings to foster understanding and collaboration.
- **Continued Collaboration:** Despite the challenges and risks involved, the majority of our grantees remain steadfast in their commitment to core values, actively working together. Joint Arab and Jewish movements within Israel, as well as collaborations between West Bankers and Israelis, continue to be a priority.
- **Humanitarian Focus:** Uni-national Palestinian movements, backed by B8 of Hope, are redirecting their efforts towards addressing immediate humanitarian needs. This includes keeping communities together and providing essential assistance such as food and medicine within the West Bank.
- **Forward-Thinking:** Despite the current crisis, our grantees are actively thinking about the future. They are strategically planning for the post-war period, demonstrating resilience and a commitment to peacebuilding beyond the immediate conflict.

[Additional details can be found in the following link:](#)

Peace Activism in Times of War

[In addition, please find below a list of interesting articles and media coverages of representatives of B8 of Hope grantees and others.](#)

Press and Media Coverage of Peace Activists



Despite of these very tragic times, we wish all of you a happy Holiday Season. May the darkness end, and may peace prevail.

In empathy and peace,

The B8 of Hope Team

