

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace

Winter/Spring 2006  
Volume X Issue I

Outdoor Leadership Program  
Alumi Summit  
Seeds in Spain  
Quake Relief  
Karjat '06



# contents

## regional

- 8 Graduate Leadership Summit**  
Middle East Seeds in their 20s return to Maine to rekindle relationships begun at Camp.
- 10 Karjat '06**  
Indian, Pakistani, and Afghani Seeds and educators meet in India for the first-ever South Asia Regional Conference.
- 12 Spain: Taking Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue to Europe**  
Seeds learn more about each other and about the conflict between Spain and Catalonia while being hosted by the City of Badalona and its pro-basketball team.

## features

- 16 Into the Woods: The Outdoor Leadership Program**  
Every summer, second-year campers disappear into the woods of Maine. Ever wondered what happens out there? The mystery is (partially) revealed.
- 18 Barrier to Peace? Barrier for Peace?**  
Four Seeds living on the outside of Israel's Wall/Fence share their opinions.
- 20 Model United Nations**  
Delegates to these simulations argue policies that are not their own, giving them valuable insights into how others think.
- 22 Seeds Respond to South Asia Quake**  
With funds raised around the world, Pakistani Seeds help victims of October's terrible earthquake.
- 23 Mumbai Floods**  
An Indian Seed recounts the disaster first-hand.
- 24 My Name is Yusuf**  
A Gazan relates his interactions with Israelis at his home, at a hospital, and at Camp.
- 26 Delegation Leaders Encounter the "Other Side"**  
The adults who accompany Seeds to Maine relate their experiences.
- 28 Camp '05**  
Reflections on another summer on Lake Pleasant.
- 30 Reviews: Munich & Paradise Now**  
Shira Kaplan and Hatim ElTayeb examine these two controversial Oscar-nominated releases.
- 31 Interview: Jen Miller**  
Yara Owayyed talks to the former camper and counselor about *Inheriting the Holy Land*, her new book featuring Seeds.

## departments

- 3 From the Editor
- 3 "ALL—UP!" with Tim
- 4 Your Letters
- 14 Seeds in the Lead
- 29 Art & Poetry

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*The Olive Branch* is a magazine written and edited by youth from Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, India, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Macedonia, Morocco, Palestine, Pakistan, Qatar, Romania, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen and the United States, who are part of the Seeds of Peace program. All opinions expressed in the magazine are solely those of the writers and not of Seeds of Peace, *The Olive Branch*, or its staff.

### The Olive Branch Staff

Eric Kapenga, Editor  
Manar Alnatsha & Agam Rafaeli, Assistant Editors

### Regional Editors

**Afghanistan:** Mir Akhgar, Khabir Sallah  
**Cyprus:** Suleyman Gelener, Ersev Ersoy  
**Egypt:** Khaled Sallam  
**India:** Divya Moorjaney, Shanoor Servai, Siddarth Shah  
**Israel & Palestine:** Ibrahim Abu Arafah, Sagi Ganot, Shuki Hasson, Yara Owayyed, Aya Zuaiter  
**Jordan:** Dana Audallah  
**Pakistan:** Arooj Babar, Nijah Khan, Rayhan Tariq  
**Balkans:** Gent Salihu  
**USA:** Joey Katona

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### THE OLIVE BRANCH

**Seeds of Peace**  
**P.O. Box 25045**  
**Jerusalem 97300**  
**Tel. +972 2 582-0222 Fax. +972 2 582-2221**  
**E-mail: olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org**

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## Seeds of Peace

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Tim Wilson, Vice President, Camp and Center Director  
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### Regional Coordinators, Israel & Palestine

Tareq Arow, Kheirallah Bazbaz, Rona Harari, Inbal Leibovits, Eldad Levy, Ruba Musleh, Tomer Perry, Tamara Qaraqe', Yaara Sarussi, Sawsan Samara, Maisa Totry

Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that helps teenagers from regions of conflict learn the skills of making peace. A safe environment is created at our own camp in Maine where youngsters can air their views and learn the leadership and conflict resolution techniques required to end the cycles of war.

# From the editor

olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

Since this is my first issue editing *The Olive Branch*, I'd like to take this space to introduce myself. I've been a counselor at Camp for eight sessions, beginning in 1999 and including the more recent Beyond Borders and Leadership Summit. I've also worked for several US newspapers, including the Dayton (Ohio) Daily News.

Because this is my first issue, I would like to hear from you about what we've done right and what we can do better. If you are interested in writing, drawing, or taking photos for the magazine, or you have story ideas, please contact us. You can reach Assistant Editors Agam & Manar, and me, at olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org. I would particularly like to talk to Seeds who want to help design the way *The Olive Branch* looks.

As you read this, we are preparing for our next issue, which will feature stories from Afghanistan, Cyprus and the Balkans. We will also hear from Seeds in Jordan and Egypt. Please let us know if you want to contribute to those stories.

As always, I hope you find *The Olive Branch* thought-provoking, challenging, and informative.



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## "ALL — UP!" with Tim Director, Camp & Jerusalem Center

Dear *Olive Branch* readers,  
I am sitting at my house in Maine; it's gorgeous outside—a snowy, wintry, cold day. Leslie and I have been on the phone all morning. Again, we're reading through piles and piles of camp applications. What an exciting time of year! I cannot wait to escort the first busload of Seeds onto camp this summer—our fourteenth season of Seeds of Peace!

Really, it's hard to believe that we have been at this for fourteen years. With everything that is happening around the world today, Seeds of Peace's work is more relevant than ever.

It would be easy for all of us to be ostriches—to put our heads into a hole and never look up from the darkness. But, as Seeds and Seeds of Peace supporters, we have all made a commitment—to our homes, to our families, to our nations, to our friends (and foes) across borders, to the world, and to one another. We have all committed to never falter in our efforts as a Seeds of Peace family.

The one thing I am sure of is Seeds of Peace's Seeds. There is so much I have learned from you all and, now, it is more important than ever for you to teach others the same lessons you have taught me.

I don't have answers for a lot of what is going on—whether it be a natural disaster or a political

situation. But I believe in the power of Seeds and in all of you who recognize the goodness on both sides; I believe in those of you who realize that you are not always going to agree but that you still need to talk.

I hope that what is written in the pages to follow (the good and the bad) will motivate all of us to step away and recommit to making compromises, talking to one another, and working towards a better life for our families and our communities.

We all owe a big thank you to Eric Kapenga, a longtime member of the Seeds family who has just moved back to his hometown of Jerusalem to work at the Seeds of Peace Center as, among other things, *The Olive Branch* editor. Eric has some great ideas for the organization and is working hard with many Seeds to turn those ideas into reality.

So, as you juggle all that life is throwing at you, please take the time to really read and understand what is in these pages. And please continue to work hard for the betterment of those around you. We cannot lose hope.

Happy reading—and be safe,



*EDITORS' NOTE: Tim's fourth grandchild, Eleni-Claire Leotsakos Wilson, was born on Feb. 3rd!*



# Letters

olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

## CAMP REFLECTIONS

Camp completely shifted my perceptions and my perspective. Not that we used to curse our so-called enemy before going to camp, but our views have softened in one way or the other.

Seeds of Peace provided us an opportunity to voice our opinions and to change our mindsets.

And now we Seeds are ready to spread this message far and wide.

**Sundas Manan**  
(Lahore)

## BEYOND RIGHTS

Recently overheard at the Seeds of Peace Internet Bulletin Board:

"We were here first."

"This place is holy for us."

"You have no right to be here."

"All we want is what is rightfully ours."

"You have so many places to live in. Why did you have to take away ours?"

"It's OUR land!"

In a crazy world like ours, where even facts can vary wildly from one person to the next, we can't seem to stop fighting about the issue of "rights." Those statements above were made by thousands of Israelis and thousands of Palestinians in a thousand different places, no place more so than at our beloved Seeds of Peace Camp.

Each person who made them was utterly convinced they were true. How could it possibly be any other way? I was born here. My parents were born here. My ancestors were born here. Here — I'll show you my documents, my certificates, my Bible. I'll quote you a million sources that say that this land is rightfully mine. Mine, and no one else's.

And there is a fundamental problem in this — it's never going to go anywhere. If you have your rights, and I have mine, and we all fight to the death to protect them, then die we will. And people have died, hundreds and thousands, because we couldn't see what we were doing.

We couldn't see the lives destroyed, families destroyed, homes destroyed — and eventually the land we cherish so much, destroyed. All we could see was "rights."

I'm never going to stop believing in rights of the Jewish people to this entire land. I've been taught this since I was born, and it's really too late to be changing it now.

Call me brainwashed, call me ignorant, but I believe I have the right to live where I live, to speak my native language, to openly lead my life as a Jew in his homeland.

But I also believe that if I cling to my rights stronger than I cling to my life, I'm not going to get very far.

For better or worse, there are going to be two countries on this land. And that — a chance to live peacefully, to end this stupid fight that's not about reality but about so-called truths we can never agree on — is far more important to me than any right.

**Sagi Ganot** (Holon)

## CYPRUS STILL DIVIDED

Turkish and Greek Cypriots have not been successful in forming a common government and accepting each other's presence on the divided island.

The "Annan Plan," prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, was the biggest hope on the road to peace and

forming a new Republic. Although accepted by a majority of Turkish Cypriots, it was rejected by three-quarters of Greek Cypriots, leaving the peace process even further behind than where it started.

In my opinion, the most important contribution to peace in Cyprus would be the world accepting that Turkish Cypriots deserve political equality and abolishing the unjustified isolation.

Seeds of Peace is a big hope in this context, since it teaches young people how to listen to one another and show respect for different perspectives. Seeds proves that the members of the two communities on Cyprus can live together in equality. If these virtues are also accepted by our leaders and taught to the whole community, we will become two societies respectful of each other's rights, taking the first step towards peace.

**Ersev Ersoy**  
(Nicosia)

## PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

I believe that now is the time for change, for a new era. Fatah lost because the Palestinians did not feel it had improved their situation, either politically or economically. So they voted for an alternative they believe will improve their status.

**Amin Khatib**  
(Jerusalem)

No one can claim that the Palestinian elections weren't fair — they were observed by the entire world. The world wanted the democratic system applied; it was and the Palestinians chose Hamas.

Stopping aid to the Palestinians is not a solution: you can't fix a "mistake" by making another mistake. The only solution is peace through negotiation with those selected to lead the Palestinian people. The results should be respected as the Palestinian choice, and if not for that, then for the sake of democracy.

**Wasim Jabari**  
(Jerusalem)

I love and admire the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, so it upsets me that Palestinians voted for a party which wishes to destroy their neighbor.

I realize that Hamas provides good social services; but tell me, is there no other way to get social services? If the Palestinian people just wanted social reforms, and that was their will, it would have happened. Instead, this election expresses pervasive Palestinian frustration (that's my supposition, at least). And, I understand completely why you feel frustrated. I would not put myself in the situation of being a Palestinian for anything in the world because I'm aware of how hard your lives are, how the endless checkpoints and violence wears you down, how you feel degraded and like refugees.

At the same time, does it make sense to elect a party which promotes and perpetuates the cycle of violence? Will it help you?

**Adrienne Yoe**  
(Yarmouth, Maine)

My prediction is that Hamas will be brought into the mainstream and will be forced to put down its weapons. Some of its members will accept; those that don't will probably join Islamic Jihad.

Voters paid little attention to the bigger picture, which centers on negotiations with



Israel and reaching an independent state. People were mainly concerned with social services and were simply sick of Fatah being so corrupt and unable to deliver on negotiations with Israel.

Thanks to their social services and ability to better manage in municipalities, Hamas as the alternative proved a much better choice than Fatah.

Now we are stuck. The world won't talk to Hamas, and Fatah won't form a unity government with Hamas. The solution to this will have to be a combination of the world listening to the new government formed by Hamas and Hamas redefining its policy on Israel.

**Fadi ElSalameen**  
(Hebron)

Given that Hamas has accepted responsibility for many attacks on Israel in the past, Israel has reason to be alarmed at the outcome of the elections.

If Hamas doesn't lay down its weapons, as is my expectation, at least Israel will know where to respond. If Hamas resumes suicide bombings/freedom fighting, it will be a government-delegated operation. Israel won't be fighting private 'terrorist' groups while also fighting the PA: they will be united and the opposition will have a face.

On the Palestinian side, corruption has plagued Fatah in the past and so the Palestinian people elected Hamas to represent them. The people who voted in favor of Hamas can't all have been members of the party, nor is it likely that they all condone the violence that it advocates.

**Gabby Weinrott**  
(Philadelphia)

I am extremely impressed with the Palestinian people for carrying out a smooth and transparent election. The fact that the Palestinians shine as a beacon of true democracy in the Arab world, while still under occupation, is very inspiring.

What I say from now on is an attempt to guess what the near future holds. Since Hamas has never been a part of the Legislative Council, much less the majority party, it is difficult to predict what course of action they will take. I believe they are going to focus on in-house cleanup more than anything.

Governing is a challenge that they have not taken on before, and being in such a dominant position is a surprise, even for them. They will have to get their act together to show the Palestinians that they

can be a functioning government. They are aware that the Palestinian vote was not so much an affirmation of support for Hamas but a rejection of the corruption and stagnation that reign in Fatah.

Perhaps the trickiest issue for Hamas will be how to deal with the international community. A lot of aid for the Palestinian government comes from the EU and the US, which may be cut off if members of Hamas become part of the government.

Palestinians may seek alternative sources of funding, such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and other countries. Those countries are currently benefiting from large surpluses due to high oil prices, and may be more willing to give money to the more transparent Hamas than they were to a corrupt Fatah.

As for the peace process, what peace process? It has been on hold for nearly six years now and the latest steps taken by the Israeli government are unilateral, not part of what I would consider a "peace process."

**Saad Shakhshir**  
(Amman)

I think that Israel and the U.S. have to respect the results of the democratic process in Palestine and deal with its outcome. I expect Hamas to deal with the great responsibility of leadership in a reasonable way, as it has done before with social, economic and education problems in the Gaza Strip.

**Hiba Nusseibeh**  
(Jerusalem)

#### ARIEL SHARON

Great leaders are those who are able to read the changing political map and adapt their policies accordingly. They are able to admit their past mistakes and opt for another path as they mature. Great leaders realize that what might have been best for their country a few decades earlier is not necessarily right for their country now. They are fluid, and their fluidity is their main strength.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was a great leader. Sharon changed his horses mid-stream in a way no one had foreseen. Apart from the international pressure exerted upon him (particularly by President Bush), two other things affected his change of policy. One was the passing of his wife Lilly, who died of cancer several years

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**YOUNG CAMPAIGNERS:** Palestinian boys distribute materials outside a polling station in Hebron on election day.

PHOTO CREDIT: MANAR AL NATCHA



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ago. The second was some sort of political awakening, which made him read the regional map in a different light and realize that it was time for withdrawal, rather than further occupation.

The thought of Sharon stepping out of the political arena is a saddening one. I have heard US State Department experts argue that if Sharon won the upcoming elections, he would have finally shaped the eastern borders of the State of Israel. Just like he withdrew from Gaza and evacuated 8,000 settlers, he would have reached a resolution regarding the West Bank.

But our leader seems to have been taken away from us. The only real leader in Israeli politics is now out of the political game. A bulldozer turned into a peacemaker? Sharon was a human being, who matured alongside the State of Israel, and whose political ending came when we most needed him.

**Shira Kaplan  
(Herzliya)**

When the Gaza pullout took place, a lot of Palestinians were celebrating and congratulating each other as if a new baby had been born. I never felt like it was a celebration and had complex feelings about the entire Disengagement Plan.

Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan maintains the occupation but with more international legitimacy; it has nothing to do with ending Israeli control over the Gaza Strip. It is very clear, even in the Israeli media, that Israel will continue to supervise and guard Gaza, maintain exclusive control of its airspace, and continue to conduct military activities in the sea off the Strip. Moreover, Israel also reserves the right to act militarily inside Gaza.

To further legitimize his plan, Sharon dismantled the Gaza settlements and returned the land they were built on to the Palestinians. The Gaza settlements, together with Israeli-only roads and the military bases protecting them, occupied almost a third of the Gaza Strip. Where have these Israeli settlers been relocated to? Israel? Some, but all are free to move into new settlements in the West Bank!

Even as Sharon promised to dismantle the settlement outposts in the West Bank, their numbers kept increasing. It's hard not to see the Disengagement as simply another "peace plan" to ease diplomatic pressure on Israel. All of a sudden, Sharon was a messenger of peace; with that perception, he could do whatever he wanted.

Even though, as some have suggested, Ariel Sharon may have been changing before his departure from politics, Palestinians can never forget his history. He rose to power in the Israeli political scene with his hard line policies and his history of aggression. He is the father of the settler movement and was found indirectly responsible, by an Israeli commission, for the massacres of Palestinians at the Sabra & Shatila Refugee Camps in Lebanon. Under his leadership, the IDF decimated 13 percent of the Jenin Refugee Camp. Imagine destroying 13 percent of Ramat Gan, Herzliya, or Rishon le-Tsion?

He has also left us the legacy of the Wall. Originally an Ehud Barak initiative, Sharon redirected it to dissect the Palestinian territory, taking land and water. His disregard for international law highlights his disingenuous attitude toward peace; his willingness to justify the deaths of innocents speaks to his own moral character. Sharon's movement to the "Center" only

means that the Center has moved much further Right.

**Dina Jaber (Nablus)**

The Media is doing what no Doctor dares to do. Not because the Doctors are afraid, but because the Media is wrong. The politicians keep saying: "Now's not the time for politics." They are wrong as well.

It is time for politics and only politics, and not talking about Ariel Sharon's past, present or future. A country must act with what it's dealt, and if that means that a prime minister can't function in this role, he must be replaced, and political changes will occur.

What needs to be avoided is having its media and politicians refer to an ill leader as deceased.

A quick look at the papers will tell you that Ariel Sharon is no longer with us. Telling a man's life story while is still alive is nothing but pure sensationalism. It should not happen. Let the man wake up, or have a doctor declare his death, before you do.

**Ron Roman  
(Haifa)**

Normally, you won't find me writing about a member of the Likud party. My ideology is the complete opposite of its "truth," and my views on most of its members are very negative. Why, then, have I nurtured sympathy and respect for a person I once hated?

Certainly, Sharon is not an innocent. When a person serves the army for almost 30 years, you may assume he is dragging a bag of sins on his back (and in his heart). I know Palestinians hate him: they are very clear on this issue. They see him as a murderer who belongs on trial for war crimes. This said, I have to conclude that given his actions over the last three years, he does want peace.

No one can forget that it was Sharon who formulated, planned, and carried out the Gaza Disengagement that withdrew Israeli settlers from the Strip. For a person who was often called "the father of the settlements," the Withdrawal was a less than obvious move.

Sharon is a part of the generation that fought and gave blood for this country to exist. For the people that were here in 1948, giving away land is hard. Still, as hard as it was to do so, he came to realize how important it is to give up land for peace. He changed from extreme right-wing politician to peacemaker. I believe it was very hard for him to reconcile this with his ideology, but he did so because he knew it was best for the people who had chosen him as their leader. His devotion, assertiveness, and realism made him the great leader he was.

Today, Sharon is not our leader. But he wasn't defeated by the people: he was betrayed by his own body. It doesn't matter if you are Palestinian or Israeli—I believe we can all agree that Sharon has made an important contribution to solving the Middle East conflict. That is the way I will remember him.

**Omer Duvdevani  
(Rosh Ha'ayin)**

According to approval ratings, Ariel Sharon has been an incredible success as a leader. Everybody seems to like him (well, not everybody, but a lot of people). Why?

Well, here is what I think. It's essential to talk if you want to do something.

But talking won't get things done. At

some point, you just have to do. I think “doing” is the key here.

No one can tell exactly what will happen before you do something, and if it is something big, it is likely that a lot of people will oppose you.

A lot of people opposed Ariel Sharon. A lot of people think that he did the wrong thing. But most people supported the “doing.” They were just happy that something was being done!

Not talked about ...

Not agreed about ...

Done.

For better or worse, someone was finally DOING something.

**Aviv Liron**

**(Kibbutz Ein-Harod)**

### UPDATE ON THE MAINE SEEDS

For the Maine Seeds, this year has been full of changes, new faces, and new ideas.

In the fall we gathered to discuss *Crash*, an acclaimed film about racism in the US. The meeting took the format of a dialogue session. We hope to organize more discussions and continue to have healthy debates about issues important to us.

At the end of December, we received shocking news that a Portland Seed had been reported missing on Christmas Eve. One of the original Maine Seeds in 2000, Siphat Chau is a good friend to many of the Portland Seeds and part of the Seeds family.

When we learned he was missing, Seeds organized a search for him the next day. About 20 people, including Seeds from 2000, his brother, and his friends from Portland, searched the woods, railroad tracks, and warehouses near his house. Nothing was found.

We then made up copies of a photo of Siphat and put them up around Portland. We asked a local TV station to do a story on Siphat, which they did.

We are still wishing for his safe return.

Tim joined us at a recent meeting and we discussed the results of the Palestinian elections and the situation in the Middle East. Throughout his travels to visit Seeds overseas, Tim has been an important part of Maine activities. Portland Seeds are now working with dedicated volunteers whose insight and guidance have been incredibly encouraging.

With their help, we have begun work on our annual Thank You Dinner, a Leadership Summit to reunite Maine Seeds. We hope to raise money for the upkeep of the camp.

We are crossing our fingers that our recent grant application to fund “Portland Color Games” is accepted. We want to organize and host the first local games to encourage friendship between the six competing schools in the City of Portland.

Next year will begin a new cycle of campers from Maine. Seeds will be from the central Maine area, followed the next year with Seeds from northern Maine and cycling back to Portland in 2008. This rotation will represent more areas of the state at Camp and give Seeds an influence state-wide.

Through the busy and trying months, we work toward our goal of improving acceptance and understanding. While we strive for connectedness in Maine, we hold onto the great dream of peace for the whole world.

**Grace Batsford**  
**(Portland)**

See something here you'd like to respond to? Your Letters are most welcome! Letters are edited for length, content and style. E-mail submissions to [olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)



**MAINE SEEDS** from both Portland/Lewiston visited Bates College on Dec. 5 to hear from a professor about the study of anthropology and how it relates to today.



ONCE AGAIN IN MAINE: Barak Amram (Jerusalem), Ruba Musleh (Ramallah) and Hidy Boctor (Cairo).

# 120 alumni back at Camp



Sami Ammous  
(Amman)

Older Seeds, where art thou?

If there was one question the 2005 Leadership Summit was intended to answer, that would be it, though maybe in

not such the Shakespearean manner. Seeds of Peace realized there was great potential going untapped in the form of older Seeds. (*Mind you, younger Seeds, that we are not all that different from you—we only went to camp a few years before you. I was at camp for the first time in '97, went back in '98, and have been involved with Seeds of Peace in*

*Jordan ever since.*)

The Leadership Summit was a first of its kind: a gathering of Seeds from 1993 to 1999. There were around 120 of us in all, from Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Palestine (plus a few Americans here and there).

Being back at camp was a great experience. (*Younger Seeds, you may start relating now.*)

There was still the daily ALL-UP! call (though you could skip breakfast if you felt like it and Tim didn't mind too much). There were the dialogue sessions (which you were supposed to attend but some people skipped).

There were also workshop sessions (which were pretty cool) and the activity periods (which coincided with the dialogue sessions, which explains why some people skipped dialogue). There

was lunch and dinner (and dessert at every meal), but you weren't assigned a table.

That said, it wasn't like a typical camp experience at all.

For one, you didn't have Counselors running around telling people to speak English. There was no lights out! You could stay up for as long as you wanted. But that meant a lot of people missed breakfast. There were, believe it or not, smoking areas. (*Kids, don't smoke!*) There were also long lectures about things older people care about, like work and politics in the real world.

We played a lot of sports, but there were no counselors to ask us to wear proper shoes (and thus I broke one of my toe-nails playing basketball wearing sandals).

And there was no lights-out! (I'm sorry but that one was the greatest.)



**EGYPTIANS:** Maha Azmy, Mai About Samra and Mariam Kamal.

# Seeds renew ties at Summit



**Shereen El Sammaa**  
(Cairo)

**T**he 2005 Leadership Summit, held at Camp last August during Third Session, was built around the idea of utilizing the huge untapped body of older Seeds, and involving

them in the decisions of the organization. The focus of the Summit was not on regular camp activities that would initiate dialogue, but rather on skill and leadership enhancement and identifying areas of strength within the 120 participants that could be used to further the work of Seeds of Peace.

During the one week-long Summit, delegates participated in one of the following workshops: Media, Business, Politics, or Conflict Resolution. Each of these workshops was geared to aid Graduate Seeds (Seeds who are university-age or older) in designing and planning joint projects that benefit Seeds of Peace alumni and that support the organization's mission.

Distinguished guest speakers from these four fields were invited to lecture at camp about their area of expertise, and were asked to assist the delegates in

designing successful projects.

In addition to the workshops, we had two hour daily dialogue sessions which helped us identify ways that the organization can support older Seeds, introduced us to the organization's future plans, and began to establish and develop a strong and well-networked body for graduate Seeds. The dialogue sessions helped put our goals in perspective so that we could efficiently design projects back in the workshops.

There was definitely a lot of positive energy going around, but very little time to fully utilize that energy. By the time we as delegates were able to identify and unite our various goals and needs from Seeds of Peace, the summit was already ending, leaving us little time to effectively plan our projects and present them accurately to the rest of the summit participants.

One of the most significant outcomes of the summit was the creation of a plan for establishing a steering committee for the graduate body of Seeds.

The success of the Summit will depend on one factor now, which is our energy and enthusiasm when we go back home, each to our personal lives and problems. At the end of the day, it's always up to us to pave the way to a better future.



# SOUTH ASIA CONFERENCE

Karjat '06



**BOYS IN BLUE:** Roman Zardosht (left) and Aryan Bahadary, both from Kabul, were part of a 21-Seed delegation to the conference from Afghanistan.

For four days in January, 24 adult educators and 56 Seeds from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan met in Karjat, India, for the first-ever South Asia Regional Conference. Seeds representing all years of the South Asia program re-connected with old friends, met new friends, and worked to create a strong foundation for continued regional programming. Seeds also focused on building communication skills to improve their ability to manage conflict through dialogue.

I spent the three best weeks of my life at the Seeds of Peace Camp in Maine, and I think our one week at Karjat could account for the fourth best. Not only for the fun and enjoyment I had, but also because of what I learned there.



**Haris Saboor**  
(Kabul)

ful families, and showing us around Mumbai.

I met Seeds from previous years, people I had always wanted to meet. It was a fabulous gathering and I made many friends. I thank my Indian friends for making us their guests, introducing us to their wonder-

Thanks to the active listening and communication exercises we did at the conference, my communication skills have improved.

Camp made me think big and this conference made me think bigger and more positively. But most of all, it made me think about myself to an extent and depth that I never thought possible.

I developed confidence in myself and what I can do as an Afghan teenager and a young and open-minded person for my country and for a future of peace. We reached a series of conclusions and decisions that could be very effective to the future of peace and Seeds of Peace in the region.

Let there be Peace.



PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): MIRA SETHI, MANGESH KAMBLE, MANGESH KAMBLE, MANGESH KAMBLE, LESLIE A. LEWIN, LESLIE A. LEWIN

Passport, please,” said the immigration officer from behind the desk. “How long are you here for?”

“Umm, about four days,” I replied, scratching my head.

“And what are here for?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Seeds of—”

“Oh, agriculture.”

“No,” I laughed. “Indo-Pak peace dialogue.”



**Mira Sethi**  
(Lahore)

Her lips eased upwards in a smile. She stamped my passport and handed back my documents. “Welcome to Mumbai, ma’am. And good luck.”

I was in Karjat, outside Mumbai, along with 55 other Seeds

from India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to attend the 2006 South Asia Regional Conference.

We reflected on past achievements and difficulties and chalked out goals for the future. The emphasis was on good communication; most of our workshops centered on active listening, a skill invaluable to everyday life as well as conflict resolution.

It was T-shirt hot. It was green. It was windy. And it was four days of amazing discovery. The active listening, the not-so-active listening, the warm-up games, the heated discussions, the rolling lawns, the swings, the Seeds of Peace song, the talent show and the immense talent it showcased, the food, the meetings, the star-studded sky—the conference was fantastic.

Karjat '06 was a milestone. It was a milestone because it was the first of its kind. It was a milestone because it was cross-generational, including Seeds and educators from all three countries.

It was a milestone because it was productive and challenging and fun. More than anything else, it was a milestone because it brought us all together. It brought delegations together, it brought the Indians and Pakistanis together, it brought the Afghans, Indians, and Pakistanis together. It was truly South Asia.

To me, this conference was all about synergy, a concept Tom (our facilitator) introduced as our session began. I think the participants will get what I mean by this.



**LOOKS LIKE CAMP:** Hamza Usmani (left, Lahore), Najibullah Haddad (Kabul), Sanket Brahmabhatt (Mumbai), Suresh Kenkre (Mumbai).



**FIRST SOUTH ASIA CAMPERS:** Representing the 2001 camp delegations from South Asia, Zunaira Hijazi (left, Lahore) and Radhika Lalla (Mumbai) served as counselors during the conference, helping to run sessions and facilitate discussions.



**EDUCATORS:** Pakistanis and Indians listen closely during their opening session.



**PLANNING:** Indian Seeds present collaborative project proposals to their adult educators.

# HOLA! Seeds in Spain



**CATALONIAN HOSPITALITY:** In November, fifteen Israeli and Palestinian Seeds spent a week in Badalona, Spain, hosted by the city and its pro-basketball team, Club Joventut.

**T**he week-long trip to Spain in November was an excellent opportunity to dialogue with Israelis, since it is difficult for us Palestinians to meet with Israelis in the region.

We were able to share our thoughts in a peaceful spot in the world. We took advantage of the opportunity to express what had been gathering in mind since our last meeting in summer 2005.



**Nicola Kabar**  
(Beit Jala)

Because many political changes had occurred since the summer, including the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the Palestinian preparations for parliamentary elections, we had many subjects to discuss.

Dialogue was led by older Seeds, Kherallah Bazbaz and Yaara Sarussi. Because they were once campers, they knew how Seeds feel during dialogue sessions.

**W**hen we first arrived at Barcelona Airport, I could sense the excitement—a week to be spent with people I had never met before.

The first night was spent trying to remember everyone's names, so we played games in dialogue to help us feel com-



**Lydia Marouf**  
(Ramallah)

fortable communicating with each other. By the third day, we had become great friends and had an incredible time together laughing, telling jokes, and listening to music.

Dialogue was very different than it had been at Camp. It was not about politics and wanting to argue. Rather it was getting to know each person as an individ-

ual, as a regular human being. Instead of pointing fingers at each other, we spent the week talking about ourselves, our dreams, wishes, hopes, and plans for the future.

At first, we had a hard time opening up and sharing who we were deep inside. The week went by: we spent our nights talking for hours and our days laughing and touring the beautiful cities of Badalona and Barcelona.

It is hard for a lot of people to understand the Seeds of Peace program and to



**CROSS CONFLICT DIALOGUE:** Mohammed Haj-Yehia (left, Taybeh) and Kherallah Bazbaz (Jerusalem) talk to a Badalonian about the Spain-Catalan conflict.

accept Israelis and Palestinians meeting. But without dialogue and without being in each others' presence physically and trying to break through the walls of fear and misunderstanding, peace will never be achieved.

**B**efore the first dialogue started, we all had an idea about what these sessions are: a big fight about politics and our Opinions. So, we were all sitting in a big circle in silence; no one wanted to start the fight.



**Gal Sasson**  
(Jerusalem)

Luckily Yaara and Kherallah had a different idea about dialogue, seeing them as an opportunity for learning about each other. We then had many wonderful conversations, really getting to know each other as human beings.

One dialogue session, they asked us to share five personal things about ourselves. For some of us it was hard to open up like that, but because of it, we took a big step forward as a group.

These dialogues were far different than the sessions we had at Camp. They were calmer and more open to getting to know "the other side." Our week in Spain is a part of a process continuing through today.

**D**ialogue activities in Spain were nothing like those I had experienced in my previous Seeds of Peace activities. Unlike at Camp, we were only Israelis and Palestinians, the two sides of the conflict, which made it feel more intimate and directly related to what's going on in our region.

Moreover, it wasn't a co-ex session; it was a dialogue. As the leaders of the future, we talked about what a leader really is, the roles of a leader, and how we as a group set goals for ourselves.



**Oded Yohai**  
(Herzliya)

Dialogue in Spain helped me explore my leadership, plus, as a "fresh" Peer Support, I

got the chance to implement ideas I was exposed to at camp.

The experience left me with mixed feelings. On one hand, I felt I created something beautiful and unique with my Palestinian partners, whether on the basketball court, in dialogue session, or during late night talks. On the other hand



**SPANISH MEDIA:** Walid Ghadban (left, Horfesh), Ido Zahavi (Tel-Aviv) and Yusra Abbas (Ramallah) talk to the host of a television news program.

I had a realization about how different we are and I contemplated the thought of never achieving peace.

I guess that if we continue working as a team, that goal will get closer and closer.



**Salem Coptly**  
(Jerusalem)

ences at Seeds of Peace. My character has grown stronger. I have seen a side of the "enemy" which few others have because of all the problems we face in our country. We as a group gathered, made friendships, went through dialogue,

played as a team.

But is this all just a utopian facade that isn't our reality? Do things at home really change?

It is hard to rule on that, but I know that Seeds has changed our views of each other. We as Seeds come out with an amazing experience and are encouraged through Seeds of Peace activities back home to improve the societies we live in.

**F**orca *Penya!*" shouted the group of Palestinian and Israeli Seeds in unison as they cheered on the basketball team. The words, "Power to *Penya*," refer to the basketball club that was hosting us in the Spanish city of Badalona.

As I think back to that night of excitement, I realize that we as Seeds create power for ourselves—power to change, power to make a difference.

Although we may not feel it yet, we have all been influenced by our experi-

**RAKIA** Three Seeds bring together 50 Jewish and Arab primary-schoolers from the Jewish-Israeli town of Tivon and the Bedouin town of Kaabyeh.

**SESAME SEEDS** Three Haifa Seeds run activities at the Romema primary school.

**MUN** Fourteen Seeds are preparing for upcoming conferences.

**PRESENTATIONS & OUTREACH PROGRAMS** Seeds present at schools, including Shlomi, Qalanswe, Poriya and Leyada, focusing on stereotypes in Israeli society.

**GATHERINGS THE JERUSALEM SEEDS** have held a monthly meeting since October while in the Triangle Area, meetings have been held in Taybeh. Seeds in the center of the country held crazy Hanukkah parties. Seven Seeds spent an overnight in the Druze town of Dalyat Al Karmel. The Haifa group hosted an activity for Arab and Jewish youth in the neighborhood.

**DIALOGUE IN JERUSALEM** Twenty-four Israeli and Palestinian Seeds from the city participated in a dialogue-through-art program at the West

Jerusalem YMCA, while the Jerusalem Dialogue group is holding regular meetings.

**HOLIDAY OF HOLIDAYS** Fifty Seeds ran an activity at the festival for Arab and Jewish children from the Hadar neighborhood.

**SEMINAR** Thirty-seven Seeds simulated the Palestinian Elections

**SERVICE-LEARNING TRAINING** in Ramallah Twenty-five Ramallah and Jerusalem Seeds attended the art training workshop.

**SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT IN JERICHO** Thirteen Ramallah and Jericho Seeds joined students to paint classrooms at the Jericho Secondary School. The students learned about Seeds of Peace and Camp; school presentations are planned.

**SEMINAR** Thirty-nine Seeds listened to speakers from the Palestinian Central Elections Committee talk about the Legislative Council elections. Seeds then created their own parties and a mini-campaign was held.

# Seeds in the

## No debate: Anat best in the World



**WORLD CHAMPION:** Anat Gelber, pictured at a debating tournament in Ireland.

BY DANA HAWWASH  
(JERUSALEM)

Anat Gelber (Haifa) has won the title of “World’s Best English as a Second Language Speaker” at an international debate championship for University students held this January in Dublin, Ireland.

Anat, who is finishing her Masters in Ethics and Logic at the University of Haifa, attended Camp in 1994. She says she wasn’t a good debater during Dialogue Sessions, but that it was at Camp that she realized every argument has two sides. “Even if I disagree with someone, that doesn’t mean that he doesn’t have good reasons to support his case,” she says.

Anat loves the intellectual challenge of debating, particularly the creative chal-

lenge of debating a topic or a position for the first time. She also appreciates that debating teaches people that arguments are not zero sum games. “Just because I have an opinion about something, doesn’t mean that someone can’t think differently than me and still have many strong arguments to support his stand.”

There is a difference between arguing and debating, she says. “In order to be a good debater you must also be a good listener, while most people, when they argue, hardly bother to listen to the person on the other side.”

Anat discovered her talent for debate while she was pursuing her Bachelor’s degree. At first, she says, she was very bad at debating, but decided to join the University of Haifa’s debating society. The rest, she says, is history.

## Bushra Jawabri (Arroub Refugee Camp)

Bushra is currently working as a consultant at the World Bank. She is conducting a project developing a new idea linking gender equality to commercial, financial, and economic performance of countries.

“I’m just glad I am working on issues I have so much passion for,” she says. “Working on women’s issues, especially in the Middle East, is quite depressing. It is shocking to many that female labor force participation in the Middle East/North Africa region is one of the lowest

in the world. We have too many educated women sitting at home.”

Bushra recently completed her Masters in Foreign Service at Georgetown University, with a concentration on Foreign Policy and International Security. While working on her degree, she presented the Palestinian/Israeli issue on various panels at Georgetown and other universities in DC.

Prior to joining the World Bank, Bushra interned at the U.S. Congress, where she worked for Senator Carl Levin’s office.



## Dor Kaidar (Kfar Saba)

In early December, Dor organized the first Graduate Seed seminar following the summer’s Leadership Summit. Using his connections from his job as a journalist, Dor lined-up a slate of speakers, including an anchorwoman from the Knesset television station, a leading economics professor, a representative



from the justice department, and the chief editor of an Arabic-language newspaper.

The forty Israeli Seeds attending the two-day seminar

learned more about the Israeli political system, corruption in the Israeli government and the Israeli and Palestinian economies.

“People learned a whole lot more about the way the Israeli political system works—they are more involved in it now.”

# Lead

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): ANAT GELBER, RANA ABULNOUR, ALLEN KING, DOR KAIDAR, BUSHRA JAWABRI



## Cairo Seeds start school club to promote SOP spirit

BY KHALED SALLAM  
(CAIRO)

A group of six Egyptian Seeds has formed a club at their high school called “Students for Social Responsibility.” The club, started in October, has over 40 non-Seed members at the Modern Educa-

tion School, and focuses on refining the social and communication methods that students employ in their interactions with each other.

The club meets twice a week and has held several activities, including a workshop on how to manage anger.

“We also teach students to respect

other’s opinion and how to solve their problems in a peaceful way,” says 11th-grader Rana AbulNour (Cairo), one of the founders of the program.

This relatively small group hopes to spread the SOP spirit and set an example for other Seeds in different regions.

## Ruba Musleh & Eldad Levy (Ramallah, Kiryat Gat)

Eldad and Ruba represented Seeds of Peace at an event honoring the organization hosted by the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in September. The Seeds, who both work for Seeds of Peace as regional coordinators, met with the US representative to the United Nations, Ambassador John Bolton. Following this

event in New York, the pair travelled to Portland, Maine, and Detroit to participate in panel discussions on the role of NGOs in promoting peace efforts in the Middle East.

“We spoke about our personal experiences in SOP but also about our work with the younger Seeds,” Eldad said.



# Into the Woods

## The Outdoor Leadership Program

**W**rapped in mystery as thick as the fog on the White Mountains, the Seeds of Peace

Outdoor Leadership Program (OLP) is a key experience for returning campers.

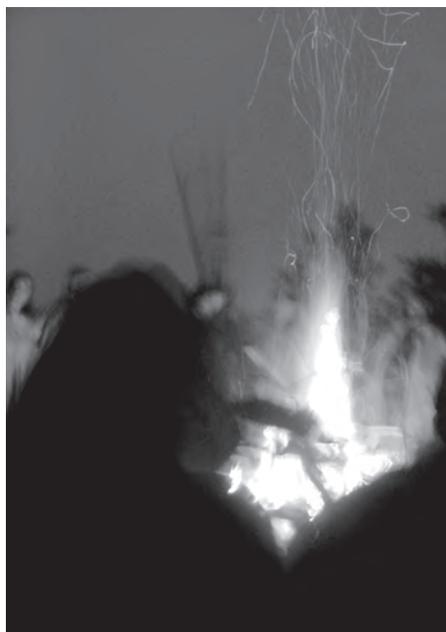


**Joey Katona**  
(Los Angeles)

I experienced OLP for myself during Second Session this past summer. I had no idea what to expect until several hours after beginning the trip. A shroud of secrecy surrounds OLP, which strengthens its ef-

fectiveness in bringing together second-year campers, known to Seeds as Peer Supports (PS's).

The woods of Maine provide the PS's with greater possibilities to interact with



one another and to be a part of different styles of facilitation.

Being surrounded by nature heightens the opportunities the teenagers have to

interact with the "other side."

"The power of OLP is that Nature becomes the grand facilitator, not any human," says Wes Days, the PS program Coordinator and Facilitator.

"This is where the transformative power is."

The Outdoor Leadership Program began in 2002 as the project of two counselors from Maine, Sierra Fletcher and Matt Nelson. On the first ever OLP, PS's stayed in cabins and went on simple day hikes. A few State Troopers came along.

The program started to get more intense in 2003: the PS's traveled deeper into the woods, but still stayed in cabins, which limited them to day hikes. Wes got the vibe that the PS's wanted more, and that is exactly what was in store for them the next summer ...

In preparation for Camp 2004, Counselors Chris Littlefield and Annie Kelly

scouted possible OLP sites and decided on a location near the New Hampshire border. They purchased backpacks and tents for the program, no doubt overjoyed that the PS's would be staying in cabin luxury no longer.

Chris noticed positive changes in the 2004 PS's as a result of the greater amount of freedom and challenge presented by the new adventure. Because they were creating their own campsites and cooking their own meals, the PS's had to be in constant communication and cooperation.

OLP was revamped into a more intense program to correspond to the expectations of PS's at camp. PS's need to get away from the distractions of camp and realize that their experience is supposed to be very different from that of the first-year campers.

Chris believes that the current OLP pro-



gram is tougher than three-day versions of the US Outward Bound programs. This level of difficulty prepares PS's for their role at camp.

Chris' most memorable moment on OLP was during first session of 2004. The PS's took their time hiking down a mountain and didn't return to the campsite approach trail until 11 p.m.

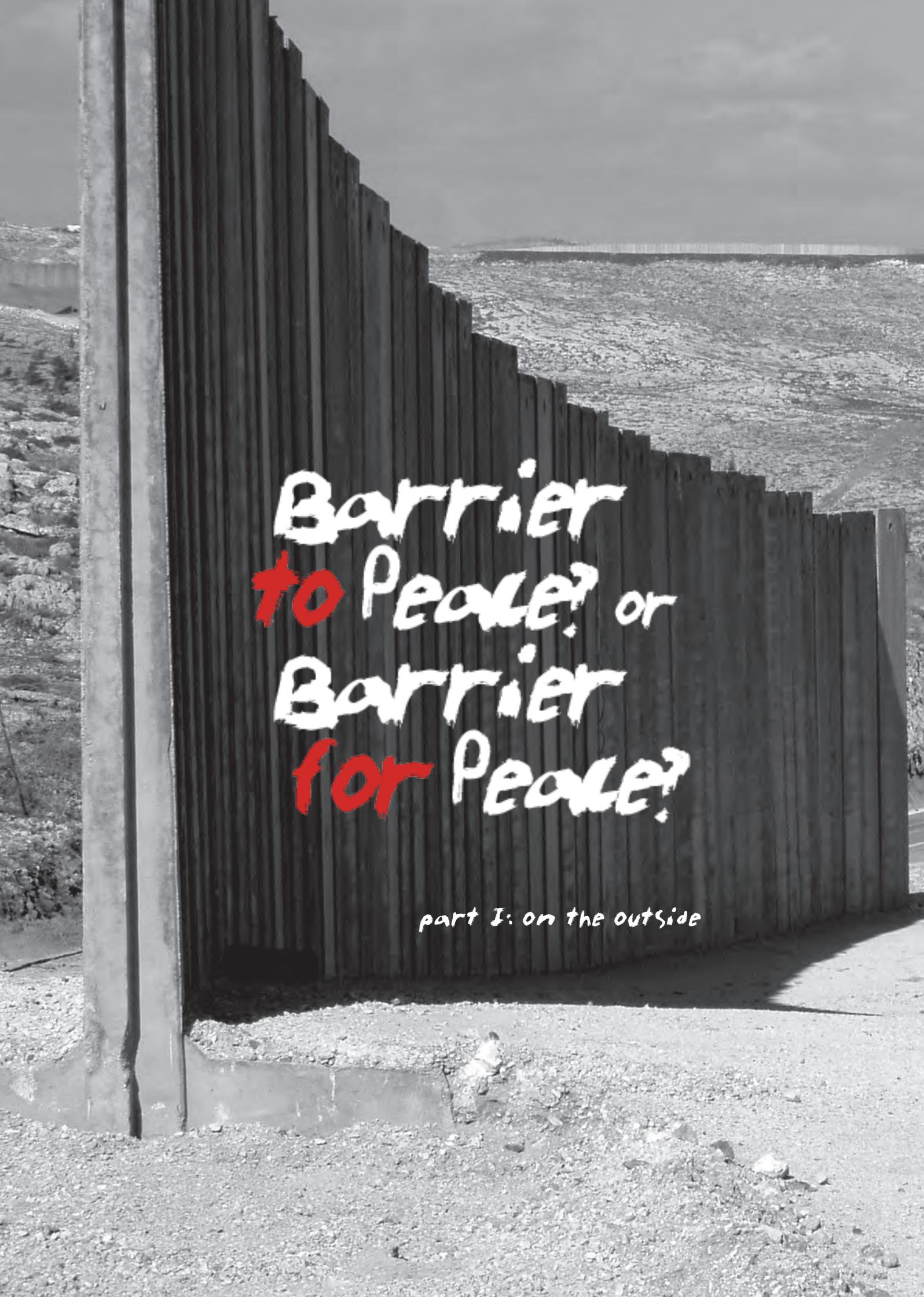
The group of 32 was cold, hungry, and thirsty. Rain clouds obscured the moon and the group had only one flashlight.

It took them two and a half hours to climb to where they had pitched their tents, a hike that would have taken 20 minutes in daylight.

Encouraging each other, the PS's linked arms all the way up so that no one strayed off the steep trail in the darkness.

For Chris and the others who lived to tell about the journey, OLP was never meant to be easy.





Barrier  
to People? or  
Barrier  
for People?

part I: on the outside



The Wall that is being built between Israel and Palestine has many names: “The Wall,” “The Anti-Terrorist Fence,” “The Security Fence.” What you call it reflects your attitude.

I live in northern Jerusalem, next to the Palestinian towns of Shu’afat and Al-Ram. Before the *Intifada*, my friends and I used to play football with kids from Al-Ram. That doesn’t happen anymore. First stones were thrown, then shooting began. An IDF checkpoint was set up next to my house. Innocent people were killed by terrorists in front of my eyes. That is the reason I support this physical obstacle in front of my windows.

I believe the day will come when we will destroy it together, but today it protects my family and friends. I want you to know that the Wall doesn’t just harm Palestinians and violate their rights. It protects me and my family.

— Dan Dobin (Jerusalem)



I await the day the Fence and Wall will be torn down. I hope to see young adults who did not grow up with soldiers carrying guns roaming their streets or tank chains ruining their roads.

Palestinians affected by the barrier justly complain of the limitations on their freedom of movement, but their eyes show no traumatic fear. On the other side of the Fence, there will live young adults whose parents, brothers, and sisters will have been saved because of the sensors on the wire.

I criticize the path of the Fence and the constraints it brings but not its purpose. The Fence and Wall are both necessary and detrimental to human life.

Each side naturally wants to battle the violence before them, whether it is a suicide bomber or a soldier carrying a gun. How many will embark on a journey to battle wire and concrete? What generates more anger—an object or people with live ammunition? I await the day the Fence and Wall will be torn down, when it is no longer needed by the many people whose lives it will have saved.

— Michal Brosh (Herzliya)



My name is Sivan Tene and I am an Israeli Seed. I believe that the “Anti-Terrorism Fence” is bad and the way it’s being built is even worse.

When I got back from Camp five months ago, the first thing I wanted to do was actually see where you, Palestinians, live. I felt like I couldn’t really understand the meaning of Seeds of Peace unless I could actually go and see what the Wall and Palestinian life are all about.

And that’s exactly what I did. An Israeli friend of mine told me about non-violent protests against the Wall. He had been at them many times before and had told me about all of the bad things that this barrier causes. I felt I had to see it with my own eyes. So I went to the protest (which of course took place in one of the villages where the barrier is being built). It was really hard to see the barrier. There is no logical explanation for why it is built there! Or in a way that hurts so many people.

We, the Israelis, demonstrated alongside the Palestinians. Of course, it was a non-violent demonstration—only shouting. We tried to talk with the soldiers but they simply ignored us.

Some of you may not agree with me and some might even be angry with me, but I was there, unlike most of you. And I suggest that anyone who wants to understand the true meaning of the barrier go to one of the protests and see these painful sights. Because it is really something you should see before you talk about it.

Don’t get me wrong: I agree that there should be a separation wall between the two nations until there is peace. But people must understand that this specific Wall creates a cycle which hurts us all: it harms Palestinians and does nothing to make them want to stop their attacks on Israelis.

Personally, I think the “Anti-Terrorism Fence” should be built on the Green Line and not through Palestinian farmland.

— Sivan Tene (Kefer Yehezkel)



Wall or fence? Well, it’s both. To Palestinians, it is a wall that violates their natural human rights and prevents them from leading a normal life. To many Israelis, it is a fence that prevents Palestinian attackers from entering Israel and ensures a safer and more secure life.

My question is this: Does being a fence make it more legal and does that justify its construction even when we all know its consequences? To all those who support the Wall, I ask: Do you feel comfortable knowing that this “fence” prevents you from seeing Seeds from the other side, and prevents those Seeds and their families from living like normal human beings? Do you feel comfortable living in peace and security when other human beings, let alone your own friends, are not?

It divides the Palestinian people, takes Palestinian land, and isolates Palestinians from the outside world and from each other. Many families have been separated from their farms, which are then added to Israeli lands. Families are being divided, children are being prevented from going to their schools, and employees are unable to get to work.

After studying the histories of other nations, I realize how many of them had barriers that were later destroyed – the Berlin Wall, Apartheid in South Africa, racism in America. “Every wall must fall” is now a popular saying among Palestinians.

We all know that there are solutions to stopping the bombings that are carried out in Israel other than a cage.

The Wall must be removed. Yes, there needs to be separation; yes, we need a solution, but this one is in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Wall must fall!

— Sharihan Abdel-Rahman (Abu Ghosh)





# MUN

*Seeds refine their negotiation skills and understanding of politics through simulation of the United Nations*

Recently I participated in Kosovo's first-ever Model United Nations (MUN) simulation as a representative of the Republic of Albania, a country neighboring Kosovo.

Participation in the MUN Security Council strengthened my comprehension of international affairs, developed my negotiations skills, and furthered my critical thinking on particular issues.



**Gent Salihu**  
(Pristina)

As a Security Council, we simulated debate over whether we should offer

full support for a process to determine Kosovo's future status as an independent sovereign country, a month before the meeting of the real Security Council was held on this issue.

Our debate was held in front of an audience which included ambassadors of the diplomatic offices in Pristina, Kosovar political leaders and the Kosovar media, which commended us on our critical



**MUN DELEGATE** Gent Salihu is interviewed by local media in Kosovo.

evaluation of the situation.

Our simulation proved accurate: a month later, the real Security Council

issued a statement offering "Full Support for the Start of a Political Process to Determine Kosovo's Future Status."

**S**imulations put us into a state in which we live in the shoes of other people. This forces us to go through the cognitive challenge of understanding them, granting us the invaluable opportunity of taking us places we would otherwise not go and learning things we otherwise would not.



**Agam  
Rafaeli**  
(Haifa)

One such exercise was held in mid-January, just before the Palestinian legislative elections.

Thirty-seven Seeds from all over Israel came together for a 24-hour Model-UN-style simulation of the Palestinian election campaign.

The participants were briefed by Arnon Regular, *Haaretz* newspaper's Palestinian elections correspondent, before splitting up into groups representing four

major Palestinian parties. A fifth group of "journalists" was charged with reporting each party's platform and views on current events in Palestinian life. Each party had to research its own history and policies and put out a platform and general outlook on the elections.

The seminar ended in a full scale debate between representatives of the parties during which they were faced with questions from the journalists.

The seminar ended in a full scale debate between representatives of the parties during which they were faced with questions from the journalists.



**SARI GEIGER** (Jerusalem) presents the case for her "Palestinian party."

**S**ince participating in Seeds of Peace, I have been interested in politics, dialogue, and negotiation.

This year I attended a Model United Nations conference in Turkey through my school.

I represented Afghanistan on the Security Council, which meant I had to give an opening speech about "my country" and fight for it in the most important UN committee.



**Mahdi  
Sabbagh**  
(Jerusalem)

This was one of the hardest things I've done. I had to choose the right words and the right opinions to accurately represent Afghanistan, and since it is a country that has suffered a lot, I had a tough time choosing between opinions and solutions to adopt. I absolutely wanted

to put myself in an Afghan's mind and defend his country at all cost.

Dialogue at the MUN conference is very different from that at the Seeds of Peace Camp. For one, it's more formal, less emotional. Plus, you always represent a country and perspective different from your own. It sometimes seems impossible to talk in favor of an opinion you don't agree with, but that's the whole point of these conferences.

**A**s a boastful, arrogant high school junior, I remember politely turning down my English teacher's offer to join the school MUN delegation. The idea of hours of mock debate took me back to my summer in a Maine dialogue hut. After a session of taking care of business and handling the notorious J-O-B, the conference didn't appeal.



**Guy  
Eisenkot**  
(Herzliya)

A year later it came to my attention that Seeds of Peace was sending a delegation to an MUN conference in Tel-Aviv. The opportunity to represent Seeds of Peace was very attractive.

I decided to apply and I recruited two friends to join me.

In the end we were selected—a delegation of six motivated, active Seeds that couldn't wait to get their hands dirty preparing for the conference.

Our assigned country, Sudan, wouldn't have been our first choice, but we decided to embrace the African republic and to make it our own. Each of us had to research the Sudan, its traditions, customs, and history. In a later stage we composed a policy statement about the issues that would be debated in our committees.

The conference opened with some very amusing speeches ("Jordan requests the UN fund its nuclear program") and very interesting guest speakers, including the (real) American ambassador to Israel, Dan Kurtzer.

During the three-day conference we learned official debating procedures, which we later came to appreciate. They allowed delegates an equal opportunity to express themselves, despite differences in personal volume of voice or aggression of speech.

I went through a dramatic change of mind while participating in this particular program. After my experience with Model United Nations, I came to adore this form of debate and often try to introduce it to the discussion groups that I take part in. This year I will be co-chairing the Territorial Disputes Committee at the conference and I will see how the debate looks from the moderator's chair.

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): MAHDI SABBAGH, ERIC KAPENGA, GENT SALIHU



# Seeds Respond to South Asia Quake

**O**n October 8th, 2005, Pakistan was shaken by a demonic earthquake. More than 75,000 people did not see the rising sun that morning.

Seeds all over the world responded to the tragedy. In Pakistan, Seeds collected money for the relief effort in their schools and neighborhoods, and from their families.



**Sara Pervaiz Amjad**  
(Lahore)



**Ayyaz Ahmad**  
(Lahore)

Initial funds in the amount of \$1,000 from the Seeds office in New York were soon supplemented by funds from the wider Seeds family. It was wonderful to see how everyone was helping out in one way or another.

Pakistani Seeds then met to discuss other effective ways of helping earthquake victims. One group visited a Lahore hospital and

met with spinal injury victims. We heard that a team of doctors from a local hospi-



**EARTHQUAKE AID:** Pakistani Seeds on their way to the Rawalpindi Railway Hospital with relief supplies.

tal was being dispatched to the affected areas. After getting in touch with them, a list of the exact medical items they required was obtained and we decided that Seeds of Peace would help them with medical supplies. A Seed, along with Regional Coordinator Sajjad Ahmad, went to purchase the medicines and donated them to the team of doctors.

After touring several hospitals where victims had been brought, we decided

that we could be of more help in Rawalpindi (near Islamabad) where countless patients were being brought directly from the northern areas. A Seed got in touch with the management of a small hospital in Rawalpindi and found out that they were in dire need of volunteers. Seeds got together and purchased quilts, mattresses, and water bottles as requested by the hospital, while another group of Seeds purchased essential medicines.



A team of eight Seeds, along with Sajjad Ahmad, took the supplies to the Pakistan Railway Hospital in Rawalpindi, along with chips, juice boxes, and board games for the younger patients at the hospital.

We volunteered at the hospital for a day and were able to ask patients how they felt and about their immediate requirements. Every patient had a story to tell. It was difficult to stand in front of them knowing that we could not undo the damage that had been done, or bring back what they had lost. All we could do

was hold their hands and pray for their strength.

Once we got back to Lahore, we took bedding to another hospital along with some clothes and milk cartons. After visiting a social welfare center, we were contacted by Almas Butt, the Regional Head of the SOS Children's Village and 2004 Camp Delegation Leader. She told us that the Village was going to accommodate 50 children from the earthquake zone. A group of Seeds went with her to buy bedding for the new children.

A Seed got in touch with a professor at a Lahore university. Students and teachers there were starting a housing project in the affected areas and planned to build small units using metal and insulation materials. Each unit would cost about \$300. We decided that all the remaining money raised by Seeds—about \$1,300—would go to this project.

The children soon came to the SOS Village and Seeds started a volunteer program to tutor the young victims. It was wonderful to see how knowledge can be imparted beautifully in the simplest of ways, and how even fifteen minutes of our time can be important for someone. Children told us their stories. We were there as friends, to make life as normal as possible for these kids after the catastrophe they had survived.

It was satisfying to see that we were not only helping people who had managed to make it to other cities—in fact we were able to make a difference to victims in areas directly affected by the earthquake. The earthquake was a jolt that made us Seeds come together as the family that we are and hopefully, always will be.

# Mumbai Floods

Last year's monsoon season brought record rainfall to Mumbai. The subsequent flooding killed over 1,000 people.



Ira Shukla  
(Mumbai)

On July 26th, school closed early and so I began to walk the seven-kilometer journey home with two friends. The rain was falling heavily, with storms and thunder, and the water climbed to our knees.

We were drenched from head to toe, our bags wet, our books lost, our mobile phones out of order. And it seemed as if the whole of Mumbai had come down on foot.

We saw two little school children happily walking on top of a wall; the next minute the wall, which was holding back the rising water on the other side, collapsed.

My eyes started searching for the kids at once, but I couldn't see anything, just reddish water. People rushed to rescue the children, and as I came back to my senses, we continued moving. Two hours had passed since we left school.

A few minutes later, as we were pushing our way through the water, I heard someone call out my name. My heart bounced as I saw my father standing ahead waving at me. I breathed a sigh of relief. But what I didn't know was that this was just the beginning.

We were about three kilometers from home when our car stopped. The water outside was chest-high. People told us that there were bodies floating nearby. We decided to stay in the car. We were wet and hungry and the only thing to drink was the rain water.

I was just about to fall asleep when my phone rang. For the first time that day my mobile showed "MAA" (my mother). She was crying: she had not spoken to me since morning and the news on the radio had terrified her.

Dawn finally broke and the traffic cleared; by morning we were home. Home had never been so sweet as it was that day.

Even now, as I think of that day, I am not able to believe how I managed to pass those 16 difficult hours.

A few months later I heard the news of the earthquake in Pakistan and Kashmir. My suffering was nothing in comparison. Their pain was much more gruesome than ours.

That one night of suffering changed me as a person. I could feel deeply for the people undergoing pain from the earthquake. My only prayer to God is to give them strength to face nature's fury.



**RELIEF EFFORT:** Ibrar Chaudhry (Lahore) with supplies for earthquake victims.

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): SCOTT ANGER (INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE), SAJJAD AHMAD, SAJJAD AHMAD

# My Name is Yusuf

A Seed Traces His Journey  
from Gaza to Camp



Yusuf was tired of arguing about the past. He urged our Dialogue Group to concentrate on the future when we got trapped in arguments of history. He had big ideas about peace, and took advantage of every opportunity to share them. Before any of us knew his story, we knew of his dream for peace.

—Adam Sege (Mass.)

Until September 2005, I lived with my family—my dad, his mother, my mom, and my four siblings—in a house in the Gaza Strip next to the Israeli settlement of Kfar Darom, by its military base. (I have since moved to Ramallah to be able to participate in Seeds of Peace activities and to attend a better school. My family is still in Gaza).

The 1990s were by and large calm, or at least seemed to be. It was the time of the Oslo Accords. I used to care about sports, especially football, and little about the news and politics. Things changed in 2000.

When the second *Intifada* broke out, the Israeli army told us to leave our house. The family discussed whether to leave or to stay. My mother was very frightened and she wanted to leave. All of the neighbors had left and their houses had been destroyed. My father never wanted to leave our home. He told us that whoever wanted to leave could, but that he was going to stay.

If we were to leave our home, it would simply be destroyed and we would never see it again—these were the words of my father. We all decided to say at our house.

But living there was getting more difficult every day. The Israeli soldiers had moved in. The roof of our house was covered in camouflage nets and barbed wire and there was a machine-gun post and a camera. We lost the normality of our lives.

The army occupied the top floors of the house. No one was allowed to come into the house, except for the soldiers and journalists—who had to have permission to enter. My house wasn't my house.

I started to care about the news—indeed I had to and wanted to share in the discussions about the situation. I also wanted to know when I would be free to play football again in the garden.

We were also not allowed on the second and the third floors of our house because the army told us that they were "Area C," where the Israeli military government runs everything and the Palestinians have no authority. The living room, where all seven of us had to stay at night, was "Area A." We called it the jail. The bathroom, kitchen and bedrooms were "Area B"—where Palestinians administer themselves but Israel has security control. (Luckily they were not "Area C"!) My sister labeled the doors of the house. We had to get permission to go into the kitchen and a soldier would come with us if we had to go to the bathroom.

This continued for five years. Everything around was tanks, soldiers, shooting, rockets, destruction ...

But it was our love of our home that always gave us the power to keep on going. It was our belief that we all are humans, who are always able to live together, which never let us feel that we hate them. My father used to say that we are all the sons of Abraham. So we have the right to live in peace and they also share the same right.

My life took a change for the worse when I was shot on Feb-

ruary 18, 2004. The bullet stopped near my spine. The day of the shooting, we were visited by United Nations workers, who had permission to visit us. At the end of the visit, I was standing outside my house, waving them goodbye, when I was shot.

I crumpled to the ground. I was very sure it was my end and that I was dying. I even said the *Shahadat*, the words a Muslim says when he dies. But I did not die. In the hospital, I hoped that I would die because I was not able to move my legs.

And it was painful. My parents, sisters and brothers were in a terrible situation. But thanks to the help of God and a German friend of my father's, who got in touch with the German Embassy in Tel-Aviv and made sure I got good treatment in a hospital in Israel—thanks to this, I can walk.

I am still on medication though because sometimes my legs won't move right. It is too dangerous to remove the bullet and any operation will cause even more damage to my spine. So I

have to live with the bullet for the rest of my life. The Israeli doctors also told me that I am not allowed to practice sports.

It was a very tough time. I did not know how I was going to live. But at the hospital, for the first time, I met Israeli civilians, not Israeli settlers and not soldiers. They were just humans, just like we all are. I was helped by them and they were kind to me. I realized that we really are the sons of Abraham. One soldier shot me, but

many people saved my life. I felt like a human for the first time at the hospital. I realized that I could do something for this world.

The Israeli soldier who shot me changed my life. My dad says someone needs to forgive, if not the soldier then you.

So I was wondering why we are fighting, why I was shot without reason. And it was not only me, many young people from the two sides have suffered. We are all going to die, for sure. But the land will not die. Can the people live together?

Then I had the chance to join Seeds of Peace in 2005 and attend Camp, where I met with young Israelis. And there I felt, once again, that it is unfortunate that we are fighting.

When I was back home in Gaza, before the Withdrawal, I gave one of the soldiers who was at our home a green Seeds of Peace T-shirt.

My family, like many Palestinian families, and Israeli families as well, share the same belief. So the future belongs to us and we all have to work to change the situation in this very beautiful area.

My dear friend, I know that you want to live safely with us. Israel will not die and Palestine will come for sure but we need to realize our dreams without losing each other.

— Yusuf Bashir (Deir el-Balah)



# Delegation Leaders encounter the "other side"

Consider me a counselor for the grown-ups. When the buses arrive, the Seeds of Peace staff cheers and bangs on drums. Seeds find their counselors and immerse themselves in camp life. The Delegation Leaders (DL's), however, follow my colleagues and me to the other side of camp.



Daniel Moses  
(Boston)

Each morning we get up with the bells and make our way to line-up. After breakfast we have dialogue sessions, run by DL facilitators. We organize "cultural moments." We do various exercises to get to know one another. As grownups, we learn camp life.

The mornings—especially the dialogue sessions—can be intense. To let off steam, we move our old bones. We play volleyball and ping-pong. We go dancing. We bring folk-singing, jazz, African drumming, and

improv theatre to camp. Lately, we have organized afternoon discussions related to education. We explore the region around Otisfield. Once each session, we go to Boston. And yes, we also shop.

Trust grows. In the first week of each session, the DL's go to Hurricane Island, off the coast of Maine. We dangle on cliffs, climb rocks, and help one another through caves. We try to fit our entire group into a small boat and somehow get to the other side of a pond. (I will never forget Maha's face as the boat slowly sank.) We cook beans on an open fire. We tell stories.

The dialogue sessions continue to be difficult. Coming to Seeds of Peace remains a risk. Each DL has a different experience. But there are common themes. While he roped himself in before climbing up a cliff, a Palestinian DL turned to the Israeli DL holding the rope. "Please, for a few minutes," he said, "forget that I'm a Palestinian and you are an Israeli." Although DL's don't forget, as camp goes on, they see one another more and more as individuals. They discuss. They listen. Many become friends.

What should the rest of the Seeds of Peace community know about the DL's? They take their responsibility to the Seeds seriously—and it is a serious responsibility. By speaking with parents, educators, and the broader public at home, the DL's help to create the environment that makes Seeds of Peace possible. This is a crucial and often overlooked fact. At the same time, the grown-ups have their own life changing experiences.

Over the last year, DL's have established a vibrant network in the Middle East, dedicated to dialogue across borders and the peaceful resolution of conflict. This April, 70 DL alumni are meeting in Turkey to figure out how to make the most of this network. If Graduate Seeds, who met this past summer at the Leadership Summit, need help organizing their many wonderful projects in the region, the DL's are ready. The DL network will continue to expand—and so will the network of Seeds.

The work of Seeds of Peace will take generations. Seeds



PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI delegation leaders Reyad Shoblaq (left) and Shoshana Gurman (right) get ready to climb at Hurricane Island Outward Bound School off the coast of Maine.

graduates will gain positions of power. Over time, with many steps forward and some steps back, they will build a different world. At the moment, DL's have their own share of influence. In the not too distant future, Seed alumni will become Delegation Leaders.

Seeds: look forward to still more adventures and more good work.

In the summer of 2005, I participated in the second camp session of Seeds of Peace as an Israeli delegation leader. Now, six months later, the first feeling that comes to mind is longing: longing for that place that allows for living with an enemy without violence, experiencing only dialogue.



Dorit Gadasi  
(Jerusalem)

I miss that time of positive interaction and fruitful discussions with all the camp members, as friends and partners in an extraordinary and optimistic setting.

Early every morning, each of us would rise, youth and adult alike, to meet at the daily line up and listen to Tim's powerful voice. We might begin the day with a hug or kiss for the kids and wishes for an enjoyable day.

Delegation leaders had separate activities including discussions, excursions, and even games. Many hours were spent in stormy arguments that continued on field trips or at mealtime. At times our discussions led to difficult emotions and raised voices, but we always maintained mutual respect and dialogue and lived together as a team.

Pleasant Lake was a gorgeous and relaxing setting and provided respite from fiery issues. The camp staff, both adult and youth, ensured that our daily needs were met. We could take full advantage of this unique experience, without being distracted by technical and logistical problems. Camp allowed meaningful discussions and relationships to evolve among delegation leaders, including those from “the enemy,” with whom we spent the greater part of the days and nights as we shared rooms together.

The experiences from camp were vast: living by the extraordinary lake whose colors would change throughout the day; communal living with adults from neighboring countries, even countries at war; an educational team accompanying a group of youth, far from their home and families, and watching them find their innermost strengths in this potentially difficult setting.

Since returning home, we have continued our commitment to develop and maintain the dialogue that began at Camp. Haya Shapira organizes the Israeli Seeds of Peace delegation leaders, who meet to further the educational discussions of peace and create true neighborly relations with bordering countries.

As I continue to work in the Israeli educational system, I strongly believe that the key to a real understanding of “the other” is through ongoing and continuous dialogue as it occurs in Maine. Thus we can build a true and respectful relationship, neighbors of peace.

**T**here is a well-known proverb in Arabic in which two people are having a conversation. One says to the other, “The more you live, the more you’ll know.” But the other replies, “That is not true; the more you travel, the more you’ll learn and know.”

That is exactly what happened to me when I joined Seeds of Peace as a Palestinian DL. I thought that I knew the nature of



**Khader  
Abu Alia**  
(Jerusalem)

our Israeli neighbors since I have lived most of my life in the region. I discovered, however, that I need to know more, not only about our struggle with the Israelis, but also about the nature of the Israelis as human beings.

Dorit Gadasi and I taught a short Arabic and Hebrew program to the rest of the DL’s and the facilitators. We found that Palestinians and Israelis can be very successful and compatible partners. The quick preparation, the coordination, and the cooperation between us

made us both feel that we are good partners regardless of our race or our different point of views about the struggle.

It is widely believed among both our communities that we can not trust the other side. But whoever gets to know Ron Yossid and Shoshana Gurman might change their mind. I do not know about others, but I personally trust those two people with my life! I wish that there were hundreds of thousands of Shoshanas and Rons in Israel; it would make our life much easier and our long-lasting dilemma would be solved much faster.

I just wish we had a Maine Camp big enough to host *all* the Palestinians and Israelis for a period of time. I’m confident that they would have a better understanding of each other, and both sides would reconsider violence as a means of solving our problems.





**S**eeds of Peace International Camp began with the counselors' warm welcome of pounding drums, smiling faces, and outstretched hands.

As I passed through the camp gate, I saw the flags of Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Maine, and the United States. These flags represented each of the delegations present at camp, 200 campers in all. Fluttering

among the national flags was the Seeds of Peace flag, embodying the vision of co-existence.



**Eitan Paul**  
(New Jersey)

We arrived as separate delegations, consum-

mate debaters of our country's positions; we would leave as friends, aware that co-existence is possible. We proved so in the woods of Maine. We arrived with diverse national and religious identities; we'd leave with an additional, common identity—ambassador of peace.

It was not an easy or quick process. It might best be described as intense and sobering and very worthwhile. In dialogue sessions, we shared diverse points of view. Living together as campers, we began to break down negative stereotypes of bunkmates and tablemates.

At Lake Pleasant's edge, we were all on one team, cheering each other on in activities against other camps. Camp worked. In the dialogue sessions, early shouting gave way to an ability to listen to other viewpoints and to recognize that pain and suffering do not discriminate. We learned to communicate. Camp activ-

ities encouraged us to see that while one of us might be able to run faster or swim farther, we were all teenagers sweating in the noonday sun, eager for a chance to jump into the lake.

As we passed the relay wand from hand to hand during Color Games, we learned to trust. We took up instruments and made music together. I played the saxophone with an Israeli guitarist, a



Jordanian drummer, and a Pakistani vocalist singing "My Generation" by The Who. We attended each other's religious services and tasted each others special dishes. We admired the colorful traditional clothes of the Afghanis and the rhythmic pounding of the tabla by the Jordanians. We watched as the Palestinians performed their traditional dance, the *Debka*, and were amazed when an Israeli joined the group, wanting to be taught the intricate dance steps. We learned to respect.

I lived in a Middle East bunk with three Jewish Israelis, one Arab Israeli, one Palestinian from the West Bank, two Palestinians from Gaza, an Egyptian, and a Jordanian. At first members of "opposing" delegations distanced themselves, speaking in their native tongues and congregating with those of the same del-

egation. The only American in the group, I tried to befriend each one and create an atmosphere of trust and respect. I learned something from each one.

As the grandson of Holocaust survivors, I was taught the importance of dialogue in building tolerance. Everyone in my bunk had experienced firsthand the consequences of intolerance. While inescapably we would get stuck on one issue or

another, we came to realize that certain disagreements are inevitable. At some point it is necessary to move on and agree to disagree. In our formal dialogue sessions, we would discuss what we were willing to do for peace, what we could give up for peace.

Everyday teenagers wearing the green Seeds of Peace T-shirts accomplish something that world leaders still struggle to achieve. They listen to each other, suspending personal agendas, cultivating meaningful friendships—putting the Seeds of Peace motto into

practice: "Treaties are negotiated by governments, peace is made by people."

John Wallach always used to say, "Make one new friend." I made many. Each time a delegate leaves this special camp—returning to his/her homeland with a more open perspective and the ability to see an "enemy" as an individual—a different corner of the world benefits.

What happens at this place of vision and hope is a living example of what is possible. We learned to believe—peace is achievable, one friend at a time. The words of the 13th century Persian poet, Rumi, have become our endeavor: "Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there."

# poems

## Dawn of Day

The storm has blown away  
The night has passed away

Look at the East and with joy, sway  
For it is, at last, the dawn of day

Of misery and pain, of blood and war  
Has the world suffered a thousand scars

The gloomy clouds hid every star  
The white flag made black with tar

Formed again is the love that tore  
The dove has silenced the lion's roar

— Muhammad Uzair Aftab (Lahore)

## Lonesome Darkness

A baby girl, frozen  
on piled rubble,  
is playing with broken mud-bricks.  
She stops at a sound,  
glances around,  
all she sees is rubble.

Hills of rubble, nothing else.  
Windows, broken.  
Breaths, frozen.  
No mockingbirds that sing  
No friends are heard.

She drops her head down,  
And restarts to play around.

Dry brown tears staining  
her yellow cheeks  
clearly manifest why  
she has ceased to cry.

A cruel wind blows  
a heartless night  
towards her side.  
Darkness swallows  
Everything bright.  
One more time  
she stops to look  
around,  
No mama is found.

Lonesome darkness  
is all she can see.

— Mujib Mashal (Kabul)

## Mission Accomplished

How can I forget those days,  
Spent away from home,  
in some distant land...  
Away from the loved ones, away from  
friends...  
Looking at the future trends,  
with a gleam in the eye and mission  
at hand.

I walked on to my goal, only to find  
A new family to welcome, a new home.  
I felt elated, save the beauty of this  
place,  
But at the love and care distributed  
apiece,  
Love bloomed and blossomed and  
sang aloud:  
I am a Seed Of Peace, Seed Of Peace.

Where was the anger, where was the  
jealousy,  
that thrust its venomous teeth of  
enmity?  
A foe of yesterday smiled calmly at me,  
And said, "Here's a friend God left as  
a legacy."  
There was a whirlwind of passion and  
unity ...  
The paternity of peace rose above  
each humanity.

This was where religions dissolve,  
boundaries melt...  
Where an era of friendship begins,  
The bright hue of the sun reaches,  
Even the suburbs of every heart...  
Clearing all fogs of discontentment and  
hatred.  
The mission I left home with, is long  
accomplished, my beloved.

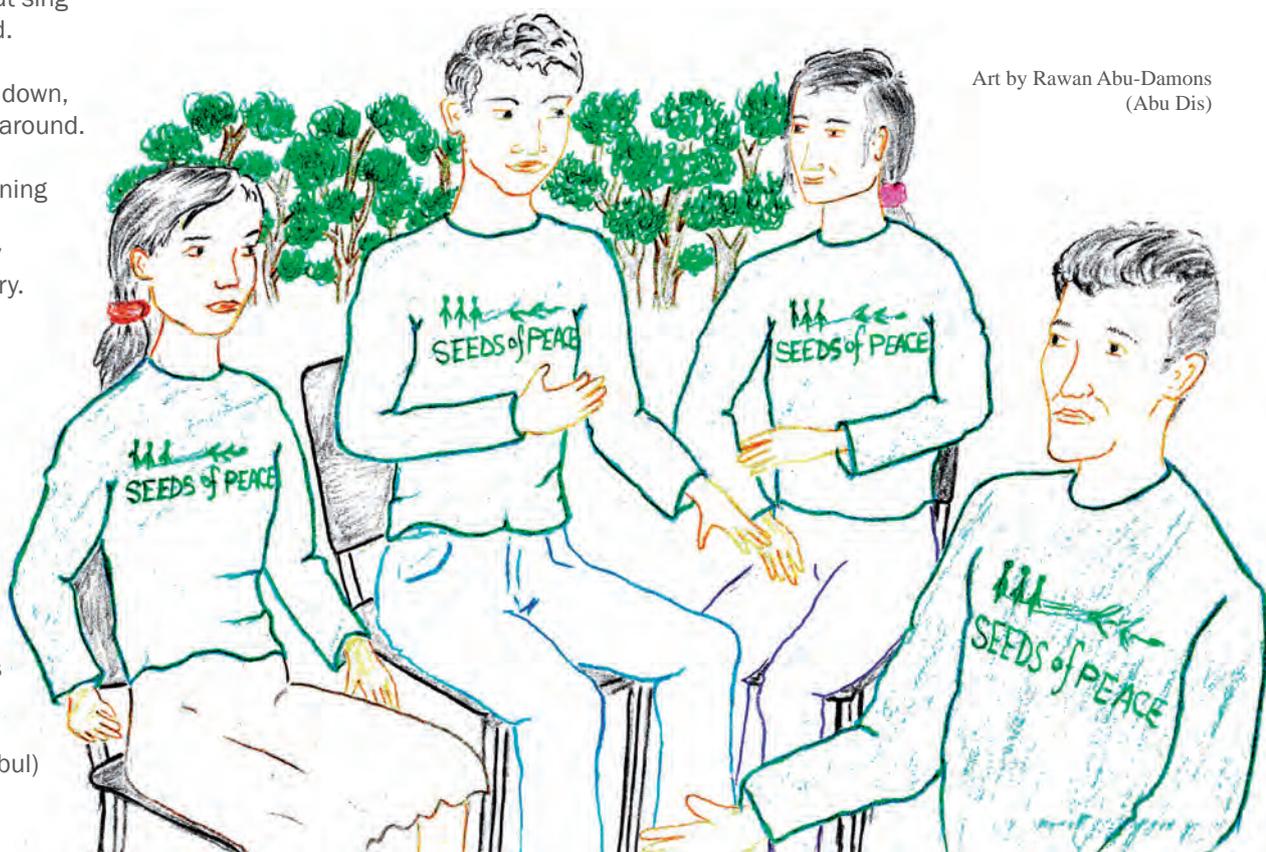
— Reshmi Mukhopadhyay (Mumbai)

## Don't

watch them walk away  
watch them walk ... but don't stop  
them  
reach out your hand ... but don't touch  
them  
turn your back and walk the other way  
then you'll be one with the world  
you'll know where the neighbor went  
you'll know where your best friend  
went  
because you have gone too

don't let them walk away  
stop them ... reach out your hand and  
hold theirs  
don't turn your back.  
be yourself ... not the world  
don't leave ... or you'll find yourself  
alone  
don't follow the world because they  
turned away  
let people follow you

— Trishya Gandhi (Mumbai)



Art by Rawan Abu-Damons  
(Abu Dis)

# INTERVIEW: JEN MILLER

**YARA OWAYYED (Jerusalem):** I know who you are, but for the sake of those who don't really know you could you please introduce yourself, as a Seed, as a Counselor, and as an author?

**JEN MILLER:** I first attended Seeds of Peace in 1996 as a camper in the American delegation. I decided to go because I had been so impressed by the Seeds I met at the signing for the Oslo Declaration of Principles ... After spending some time with them, I found them fun and exciting and passionate about life. I was a camper in '96 (I was 16) and a program leader (like a PS) in 1997. In 1998 I attended the youth summit in Villars, Switzerland. I worked as a creative writing and arts counselor at Seeds from 2000-2002.



**YARA:** *Inheriting the Holy Land* is your first book. How did the book happen? What inspired you to write it?

**JEN:** I was inspired to write *Inheriting the Holy Land* because I wanted to let the voices of young Israelis and Palestinians be heard. There's so much sensationalized information about the conflict in the media, and I wanted to show the humanity in the region. I also had a lot of questions about the conflict that I wanted answered. What is it like to serve as a combat soldier in the IDF? What do Israeli and Palestinian textbooks really say about history? What is the experience of living in a refugee camp in Gaza? I went to the region to seek out answers to these questions and to understand how Israeli and Palestinian teenagers and young adults were dealing with the conflict.

**YARA:** What is the book about?

**JEN:** The book follows my journey through Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza and explores the lives of Israelis and Palestinians I meet along the way. The real focus of the book is young people—roughly 15-24 years of age. I go into their homes, their schools, their places of worship to understand how they relate to the world around them and how they view the future. I devote a lot of time to these experiences in relation to the conflict: the *Intifada*, the tension between Israel as a democracy and a Jewish state, the teaching of history, the media, etc. For many of these topics, I interviewed Israeli and Palestinian leaders to see how they viewed the younger generation and to see how they would respond to the questions and concerns that young people had about the region. I interviewed Yasir Arafat before he died, Ehud Barak, Bibi Netanyahu, Mahmoud Abbas, members of the Knesset and the PLC, and many others.

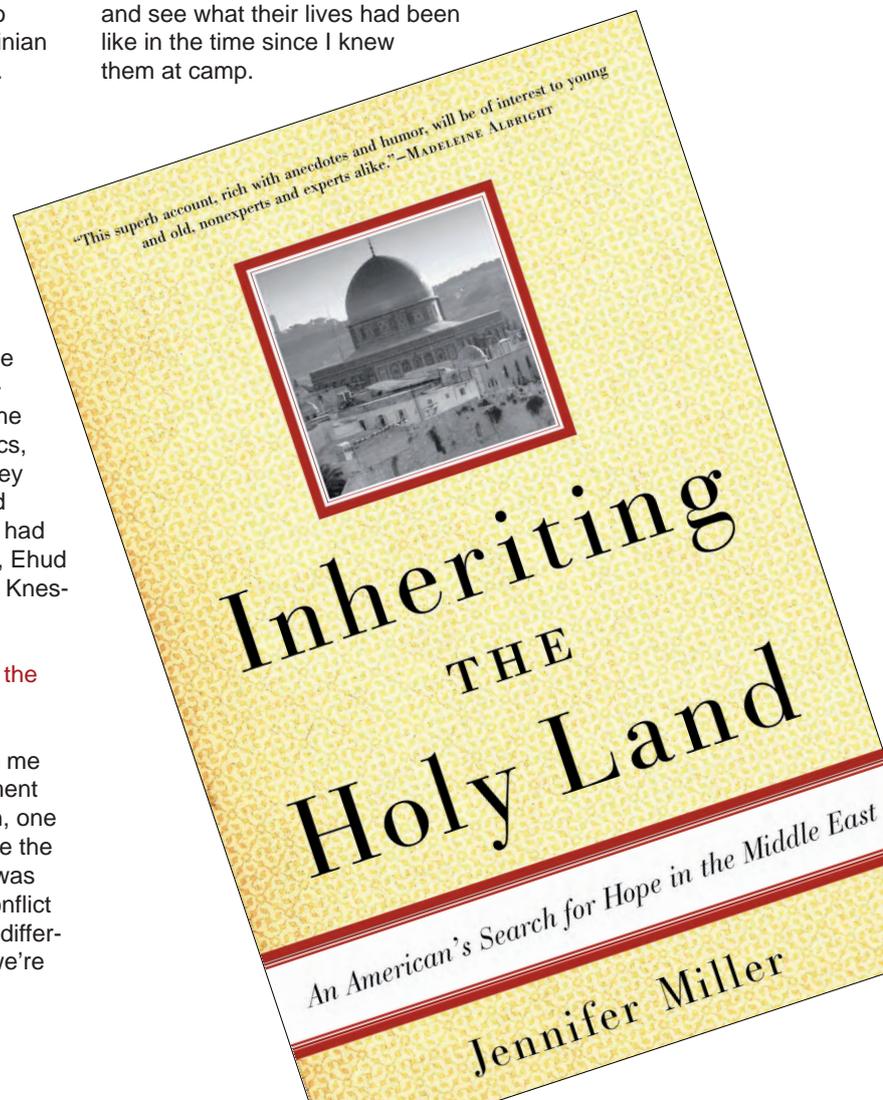
**YARA:** Did your own experience as a Seed help you write the book?

**JEN MILLER:** My experience in Seeds had huge effect on me and the book. I grew up in a fairly homogeneous environment where I was exposed to only one social class, one religion, one view of the world. Seeds of Peace showed me how diverse the world is and how many conflicting viewpoints there are. I was forced to understand the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from Israeli and Arab perspectives. I was also exposed to different religions and ethnicities. I came to understand that if we're

ever to solve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians—or any conflict for that matter—we must understand how all the parties involved feel. We must appreciate their diverse needs and concerns. In the end, everyone has to make tough compromises, but I learned the necessity of hearing all voices ... I wanted to hear what the young people had to say—not impose my ideas on them.

**YARA:** I remember I would see you a lot sitting with many different Seeds and talking to them, with a fresh sheet of paper and your pen always poised. What kind of Seeds did you look for when you started the work on your book?

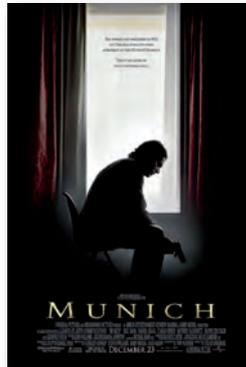
**JEN:** You're right that I interviewed dozens and dozens of Seeds at Camp in 2003 when I started researching the book. I didn't have an "ideal" Seed in mind. I knew that I wanted a diverse selection of young people to follow, so I tried to interview people who had different political, religious, and ideological beliefs. I also tried to find people with distinctly different personalities. It was important that people be honest with me ... I wasn't looking for Seeds of Peace "poster children" who would talk about how wonderful life is and not be honest about the complexity of the situation. As I'm sure you know, everyone in Seeds has strong opinions, so finding people to candidly express themselves wasn't a problem. You should also know that many of the young people in the book are my friends from Seeds of Peace—Israelis and Palestinians in their twenties. I wanted to reconnect with them and see what their lives had been like in the time since I knew them at camp.



# REVIEWS

## Where Spielberg Went Right

Shira Kaplan  
(Hertzliya)



## Film Shades Issues Beyond Black and White

Hatim ElTayeb  
(Cairo)

**THE PUBLIC UPROAR** in the Jewish world against Spielberg's *Munich* seems to me a bit exaggerated. My main concern is that it stems from fear – fear to perceive reality from more than one angle, and fear to engage in constructive dialogue about Israel.

My premise is that most of what Spielberg presented in *Munich* is painfully true. I am a Jewish Israeli student at Harvard who served in an Israeli elite Intelligence Unit. I am a member of Seeds of Peace who has engaged in dialogue with Arabs for almost a decade. I am a Zionist, not a post-Zionist, and a patriot. And I think that most of what Spielberg depicts in *Munich* is accurate, rather than inaccurate.

Let me confess my ignorance: I did not know screenwriter Tony Kushner's history before I watched the film. Only later did an American friend tell me about his association with the post-Zionist movement and his long history of criticism of Israeli actions.

But my ignorance to some extent worked in my favor. I entered the movie theater without holding grudges against anyone; I lacked the Kushner-bias. My mind was clear – a *tabula rasa* – when I analyzed the film and tried to identify the source of others' criticisms.

I regret to say that most of what I have seen in *Munich* is consistent with what I have witnessed as an Israeli. Is there anything wrong in seeing what I saw and accepting it? At the end of the day, Israelis and Arabs, be they soldiers, terrorists or peacemakers, all are born human beings. Just as I entered the theater in ignorance, a blank slate, we, the children of the Middle East, are born from oblivion and ignorance as we leave our mothers' wombs. It is poverty, insecurity, and despair that bring the evil out of so many of us. But not one of us is genetically codified to be evil.

Spielberg's *Munich* depicts a multi-faceted reality that is hard to digest, especially for American Jews. Protective of the Jewish cause, protective of Israel, they have accused Spielberg of being a liar and a self-hating Jew. But Spielberg has done what many of us ought to have the courage to do – step beyond our limited narrative, and listen to another version of the same story.

This movie is not only about Munich 1972, or good vs. evil, or Ali Hassan Salameh, or Avner. This movie is about tuning ourselves to another radio station, to a wavelength different from our own, and listening carefully. Because if we do, we will hear the broadcaster whisper, "We are all human beings."

We are all human beings.

**IT SEEMS TO ME** that whenever two extreme sides come to a single conclusion on something, the opposite is generally true. And so, when some right-wing Israelis condemned *Paradise Now* for humanizing the monstrous character of Arab terrorists around the same time that some Nablus residents condemned the movie for inadequately portraying the heroism of their martyrs, it became clear that the movie was doing a pretty good job of communicating the frustrations of the entire conflict.

The film, directed by Nazareth-born (now Dutch resident) Hany Abu-Assad is the first Arabic production to be in wide distribution in the US. It's also the first Palestinian movie to be awarded the Golden Globe for 'best foreign film.' In fact, after having swept the independent film circuit in Europe, and now an Oscar nominee, there cannot be much question as to the artistic caliber of the film. What is at question is the message it presents.

Abu-Assad paints the most human profile of the conflict that I have yet to see as he tells the story of two average young men from Nablus and the 48 hours that follow their selection for a suicide attack. He is able, with strokes of dark humor and grim, real-life drama, to accurately depict the frustrating intricacy of the question of suicide bombers. He does not presume to offer a solution, nor does he take a position. He does what I think is the thing most lacking in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue today: he accurately portrays, without propaganda or exaggeration, the humanity of the people involved.

I suppose the striking point for many Israelis is that the humans being portrayed in this scenario are in fact Palestinians, with actively anti-Israeli convictions. Had there been a parallel story depicting the trials and tribulations of an IDF officer and his squad-mates, it might have been better received. But it would be unfair and unrealistic to put that kind of limitation on art. Abu-Assad, along with co-directors and producers Amir Harel (Israeli) and Bero Beyer (Dutch), has created a piece that really focuses on the heart of a question that anyone concerned with the conflict needs to think about deeply. He has exposed the painful breadth of intricacies that go into creating these individuals and that influence their final decisions.

I think that *Paradise Now* can and should be a valuable tool for igniting real and honest dialogue, both in the region and internationally. We finally have an honest perspective on terrorism and suicide bombers/martyrs. Abu-Assad has taken away all our labels of black and white, right and wrong, and left us wondering where to point the finger.

AFGHANISTAN ALBANIA BOSNIA BULGARIA CANADA CROATIA CYPRUS EGYPT GREECE INDIA IRAQ ISRAEL JORDAN  
KOSOVO MACEDONIA MOROCCO PALESTINE PAKISTAN QATAR ROMANIA SERBIA TUNISIA TURKEY YEMEN UNITED STATES



[olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org) • [www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch)