



A Spectrum of Light in the  
Middle East

September - October, 2004

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### **A Look at the Bright Side**

It is always darkest just before dawn. As night leaves us, the birth of a new day is heralded by the faintest glimmer of light brightening the sky. This is the promise of a new day approaching, a promise of hope. In this newsletter, The Prism Group focuses on bright aspects that rarely receive sufficient press coverage; glimmers of hope in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

### **The New School Year**

September starts the new school year throughout much of the Middle East. This year, The Prism Group is able to report on a number of positive programs being run in both the Palestinian and Israeli educational systems, programs intended to promote co-existence and peace. Ultimately, if today's leaders cannot bring peace to the region, the task will fall to the next generation. What that generation is taught today, may very well determine how actively it fights for peace tomorrow. In the past, we have researched incitement and reported on Palestinian Authority schoolbooks that encourage violence and glorify terrorism. In this report, we offer a more optimistic view. For example:

- **The Hope Flowers School** in the Bethlehem area. Muslim children from El-Khadar attend a school, which is dedicated to "education for coexistence, peace, non-violence and democracy". As part of its ongoing curriculum, the school teaches Hebrew in both primary school and high school.
- **Center for Bilingual Education in Israel:** Located in Jerusalem, this Israeli-based organization sponsors bilingual schools for Jewish and Arab children.
- **Mar Elias College:** The campus of Mar Elias, part of a large complex of schools, centers itself on the values of mutual recognition, understanding, and appreciation. It is a place where students, faculty and staff work and plan together for a future of coexistence and peace. According to Abuna Elias Chacour, the school's president: "It is a matter of building bridges among the members of the same family: Christians, Jews, Moslems and Druze". The college accepts students from all these faiths.
- **Windows:** This is a wonderful magazine that is prepared by Israeli and Palestinian children. It is written in both Hebrew and Arabic. WINDOWS also

runs community dialogue projects and a magazine for high school youth, Panim El Panim (Face to Face).

- **Neve Shalom/Wahat el Salaam:** Neve Shalom/ Wahat el Salaam is an Arab-Jewish village founded in 1970 close to the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. The residents are Muslims and Jews, citizens of Israel, who have chosen to create a shared community to provide a model of peaceful coexistence between religions. In 1979, the village opened the School for Peace (SFP), currently attended by approximately 250 students.

## Medical Marvels

Peace is more than just the cessation of violence. It is about people living together and working together to promote understanding. Doctors have the ability not just to heal the body, but often to mend a society.

In August, a joint conference on diabetes was held in the Palestinian city of Tul Karem. The conference was organized by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel as part of its Specialist Clinic project. The Palestinian Medical Association in Tul Karem hosted the event, which was attended by approximately 120 Palestinian physicians and included lectures and speeches by both Israelis and Palestinians.

During 2004, Israeli hospitals provided health care to a number of Palestinians, who required urgent services that could not be provided by the Palestinian Authority's health services. Some examples included:

- **Meir Hospital, Kfar Saba**

Earlier this year, a Palestinian baby conceived by in-vitro fertilization, was born in the 31st week of pregnancy. The baby subsequently developed an infection and was admitted to a Gazan hospital. There he was given antibiotics not suited to the pathogen causing the infection. His condition deteriorated seriously. Doctors in Gaza said his only chance of survival was to be treated in Israel.

The baby was received by Meir Hospital's premature baby I.C.U. His parents were unable to leave Gaza and be with the baby, due to a lack of documents. The head of the I.C.U, Dr. Tzipi Dolfin (who is also an unpaid deputy mayor of the neighbouring Israeli city of Ra'anana) contacted Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, noting that the presence of the parents at his bedside and their ability to give him warmth and love would help the baby recover. Arrangements were made, and the parents were able to join the infant in Israel during his recovery.

- **Soroka Medical Center, Beersheba**

Humanitarian gestures at Soroka Medical saved Palestinian children from Gaza who have no medical insurance. A seven-year-old girl suffered second and third-degree burns over a third of her body, after she had been left alone at home and a large pot of boiling water had overturned on her. Her grandfather, who worked for many years as a building contractor in Israel, thanked the hospital and said that without its care, she would have suffered great pain and died.

During that same week a 22-month-old Palestinian boy was brought to the hospital with a severe bacterial infection. Both were successfully treated at Soroka's pediatric I.C.U. The Prism Group notes that Soroka, because of its proximity to Gaza, often receives cases which cannot be successfully treated in medical facilities supported by the Palestinian Authority. As noted above, such services are often rendered even though the treated individuals are without insurance and may lack the financial resources to pay Soroka.

- **Israeli doctors, Palestinian children**

Saving Children, an organization run by Israel's Peres Peace Center, has enabled hundreds of Palestinian children to receive free medical care from Israeli doctors in the last four months.

Previously, scores of Palestinian children with serious medical conditions went untreated due to a lack of funds and access to proper medical care.

Four Israeli hospitals participate in the 'Saving Children' program. A committee comprising several dozen Palestinian pediatricians from the West Bank and Gaza

screen Palestinian infants and children. They refer Palestinian children suffering from serious conditions that cannot be treated by Palestinian doctors. Congenital heart disease, which is prevalent among Palestinians due to a high rate of consanguineous marriage, is the mostly commonly treated condition.

Under the auspices of the program, nearly 200 Palestinian children have already undergone major surgery at Israeli hospitals, at no cost to the families. Another 350-400 children have had free diagnostic testing. Prof. Anwar Dudin, a Palestinian project coordinator and a pediatrician at Bethlehem's al-Yamama hospital describes the project: "This program is a program of hope - a collaboration of Palestinian and Israeli doctors..."

### ■ **Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem**

Doctors in Jerusalem had an opportunity to show that medicine and the need to heal is more important than nationality, politics, or religion. Hadassah has a long history of treating both Israelis and Arabs and is one of the primary hospitals where terror victims are sent after an attack. In recent months, however, this policy of treating all those who need medical attention was extended to an Iraqi orthopedic doctor who was the only survivor of a terrorist attack in Baghdad. The blast left him with injuries to his eyes, abdomen, neck and shoulders. Doctors at Hadassah made it clear that the Iraqi would be welcome, and so he was.

### **Sports – a Universal Unifier**

Like medicine, sports are also a great unifier. As an example, we offer the case of the Peace Team, a unique example of Palestinian-Israeli co-operation. The soccer team plays in friendly international tournaments and also competes in the Israeli Professional Indoor Football League. The Peace Team has two coaches – a Palestinian coach, who is the former captain of the Palestinian national team, and an Israeli coach who has held various professional sporting and coaching positions.

This year, a soccer team from the Arab town of Sakhnin became the first Arab soccer team to win the Israeli national cup. The squad of Hapoel Bnei Sakhnin is composed of 10 Arab players, 8 Jews, a goalkeeper from Guinea, a defender from Cameroon, a French midfielder, a Polish midfielder and a Brazilian striker. They were cheered on by a stadium packed with fans, both Arab and Jew, from the team's home region of Galilee in the north of Israel. The team has just returned from a European tour, representing Israel in the UEFA cup.

### **The Pride of Peace – Lions**

In September, the Ramat Gan Safari park in Israel gifted the Qalqilya Zoo, located in the West Bank, with three young lions, along with two adolescent zebras and a deer. The staff of the two zoos have maintained close ties throughout the years of conflict.

Both the Palestinian zoo caretakers and their Israeli counterparts believe a shared love of animals may help their peoples build a bridge to peace.

"They'll be the main attraction," said Dr Sami Khader, the veterinarian at the Qalqilya zoo. "Lions are the king of any zoo. Without a king, you've got a problem."

This is part of an on-going project of Ramat Gan Safari to liaise with other zoos in the region. Earlier in the year, it supplied 2 grey kangaroos to the zoo in Amman, which had been previously living at "Gan Guru" in the Beit Shean Valley.

"If we forge lots of little links then maybe it will result in one big connection and better understanding between the two peoples", said Israeli vet Motke Levison, who escorted the animals to Qalqilya.

## **Talking Together: Palestinian - Israeli Radio Station**

All For Peace, based in Jerusalem, is a new radio station with a mission: to promote intercultural awareness between Arabs and Jews in their own languages, and to instill hope for the future of the region. The station also produces programs in English.

The project is funded largely by the European Union and is run as a joint project of Biladi, The Jerusalem Times and The Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace. The station may be found on the Internet, at [www.allforpeace.org](http://www.allforpeace.org)

## **About The Prism Group**

The Prism Group continues to focus on several key issues and is pleased to see that its efforts are causing "spectrums of awareness" in many places. We look forward to your feedback. Please share this newsletter with your friends.

## **The Prism Group Website:**

Please visit our site and help direct others to the existing fact sheets. If you have ideas for fact sheets that you believe we should investigate and compile, please write to us at: [info@theprismgroup.org](mailto:info@theprismgroup.org).

Our web site is [www.theprismgroup.org](http://www.theprismgroup.org).

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