

CIF Israel Peace Project 2022

May 8 – May 22

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Edna Bar On, CIF Israel President

Pictures by participants

CIF Israel proposal was presented to EC and BD in spring 2019 to be carried out in spring 2020 but was carried out in spring 2022

- + **The proposal was outlined to enhance cross-cultural coexistence:**
- + “Encounter the possibility of diverse cultures flourishing side by side, in mutual respect, without loss of one’s identity or culture.
- + It will take place in a village - Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom "Oasis of Peace":
- + an intentional community jointly established by Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.
- + The village is located midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa



Program description:

The program started on Sunday May 8, 2022, in Jerusalem with a **welcome meeting** and two participants presentations while the third participant presented at the evaluation meeting



The professional program started the next day with an **orientation meeting** at the International Relations Department, **the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security** following with a visit to Yad Vashem: Holocaust Museum.

Later, the participants accompanied by CIF members visited the **city market and cultural-touristic sites in Jerusalem.**

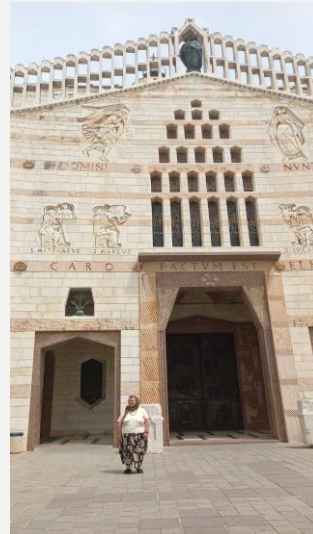
The next days participants visited the **Old City of Jerusalem and an Arabic girls' school** while accompanied by CIF Israel Arabic member, **Israel Museum** with CIF Israel members and an **Orthodox Women Shelter**. Also, they visited an **archeological site with educational activities** including school, after school and summer camp programs for children with special needs, youth at-risk, new immigrant children and others where they use nature to return to normative environments. Participants met with a group of Arabic girls from a nearby neighborhood who were participating in the program.



On the fifth day, participants went to other **host families in the north part of the country** and visited different places where they experienced a variety of **cultures and touristic sites which reflect societies, cultures and religions including a visit to a Kibbutz**



On Saturday they visited a **child protection center and prevention of family violence in the Arabic society in Nazareth** and one participant, who just joined the program, was accompanied by CIF Israel Arabic member to **religious and cultural sites**.



On Sunday morning two participants visited an **Absorption Center for Ethiopians** and then



all participants met at the **village "Oasis of Peace" where the Peace Project started.**

Peace Project Program description:

On May 15 noon, arriving in “Oasis of Peace” with CIF Israeli members. Entering hotel rooms and after lunch, meeting for **introduction and orientation tour in the village** with a village habitant and the head of village foreign affairs.



Late afternoon: Pickup by CIF members for a tour in the ancient **mixed Arabic and Jewish populations cities Lod & Ramla** meeting with Arabic and Jewish families.

Next day meeting with **Elementary bilingual school manager and staff** to learn about the special system and unique program for Arabic and Jewish children in the school.



Meeting at the village library with **the School of Peace leader** and visiting the **art gallery** with one of the inhabitants' Arabic artists. Later, they met with her husband Rayek who wrote a book: "The Anteater and the Jaguar - A Story from the Oasis of Peace". In the book, he shares his journey in Israel, Palestine and in the Oasis of Peace, discusses the history of NSWAS (Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam) and explores the questions: **"Who are we politically?" "What is our stance toward the wider conflict?" "How can we bridge gaps between our two narratives? And more importantly, "How do we, in the face of the wider conflict, educate the children of the community?"**



Evening: Joining the community at the **Pluralistic Spiritual Centre** for a **dinner, movie, and discussion** with the **movie actor** along with community members and several CIF Israel members.



The next day started after breakfast with cultural activity with the **elementary school students**. Following was a meeting with **school staff** for discussion and lunch. Then, a **guided tour to Emmaus** and discussion regarding the Palestinian situation past, present and future. In the evening, meeting with CIF Israeli members to elaborate the day experiences



Next day (fourth day in Neve Shalom) after breakfast, **mindfulness, mediation and coping with trauma** session moderated by CIF Israel members and chairpersons of “Ossim Shalom” organization



The Peace Project in “Oasis of Peace” village was completed and participants left with CIF members to Tel Aviv area while **visiting historical sites.**

They started the **last part** of the program at other host families.



During the program third part, the participants visited a **hostel shelter for disadvantaged youth** who can't stay with their families



Later, they had a **tour in Old Jaffa**



Afternoon, participant from Thailand organized a **Zoom meeting** between an **Israeli social worker** who specializes in Inclusion and accessibility in higher education and employment for people with disabilities and learning disabilities and a **professor in Thailand** to discuss their work in the same area. The meeting opened an opportunity to continue with their discussions in Thailand and in Israel:
The next day, participants visited **an Arabic town and met with citizens:**



Later, we had an **evaluation meeting** to listen to the participants remarks and to discuss their experiences and conclusions following with a **farewell party:**



Program evaluation as reported by the participants:

1. “The conflict between the Jews and Palestinians is very complicated...living in “Oasis of Peace” was a **great experience** as residents try their way to find out the solution for the conflict – it’s hard work but need to be preserved to bring a change....”
2. “CIF Israel arranged not just “Oasis of Peace” but **visits to many places to get the idea of how, why, and what Israel is all about...**”
3. From the professional point of view: “...social workers must engage with complex and diverse situations when ethnic and religious issues are difficult to treat, and it is **impressive to learn that the social workers can understand the abuser and can bring a change...as well as the methods used to help the youth in distress...**”.
4. The program was reported as “**no problems**” regarding information about CIF before the program, receiving adequate information from CIF Israel about the program before arrival and there were no problems with the application process.
5. **Two** participants were accepted two years ago; **three** participants canceled their participation, **one** participant was accepted last year when a new deadline was published.
6. All participants had experience with IPEP before arrival and the only complaint was that they **had to follow the Covid-19 requirements by themselves**. Also, because of the special situation after the pandemic, CIF Israel was more flexible with hosting the participants when they arrived up to three days before the program started.
7. The third participant arrived **5 days late due to Covid-19** but was hosted after the program completed and had two days orientation and tours in Jerusalem.
8. All participants reported **high satisfaction with the professional aspects of the program, the cultural/social exchanges and the host families living**. They all reported **very high satisfaction and strong impression regarding the program in “Oasis of Peace”**.

Peace Project results:

1. The purpose **to expose our IPEP participants to an exclusive place where conflicted groups live together** and demonstrate a practical expression to its vision of an egalitarian society through pioneering educational work at The School for Peace, Children's Educational System and the Pluralistic Spiritual Centre was **fully achieved**.
2. The purpose **to introduce the diverse fields of social work and welfare agencies for the Arabic and Jewish populations** in the light of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Israel, the impact of the political, social, and cultural situation on two million Arabs as well as Jews who are Israeli citizens living and working together was **fully achieved**.
3. In line with the proposal, the program was part of the Israeli IPEP and offered, beside the living and activities in the village, **living with Jewish host families but not with Arabic families** though there were visits to Arabic and Jewish agencies and meetings with Arabic and Jewish professionals and cultures. Also, the plan to have host families in the village could not be reached and the participants lived in the local hotel.
4. The participants had a full program in the village arranged ahead by CIF Israel, but no plan was set for **CIF Israeli members to take part in several activities** (like at the schools and at the coffee shop) in order to support and help the participants and the school's staff to exchange information regarding CIF. Those activities which involved CIF Israel members were very well received by the participants, the community, and the professionals.
5. The benefit expected from the program didn't realize: **CIF Israel didn't succeed in recruiting Jewish and Arab professionals** in the village to CIF Israel though we tried to explain who we are. On the other hand, organizing a program in the village and taking part in the village activities as well as connecting with organizations which strive for the same purpose and the same vision of CIF, **may offer a chance to organize a CIF international conference in Israel in this unique place in the future**