

CIF Israel's IPEP 2023 report by Priska Fleischlin, Switzerland

I am a Social Worker MSc in Switzerland and participated the CIF program in Israel 2023.

The CIF program offers a unique opportunity to meet social workers with whom we share a common and global definition, global ethical principles and values. After the Covid pandemic, I was eager to open my horizon and learn from colleagues.

In May 2023, I started the journey into the unknown: just before I departed, aggressions occurred between Israel and Palestine and surrounding countries. Will the program take place? Yes, it did – and it was a unique experience, I am glad I made it. The only thing I missed was to talk to Palestinian social workers, to better understand their situation.

Not only could we visit various highly interesting social work programs across the country, but we also learned history, culture and social life in Israel.

Would I go into details, I had to write a book – with every hill we crossed and place we visited somehow an additional world. As a country of 22.380 km², 9.136 000 citizens, in war with Palestine and conflict with neighbor countries, the attitude of life is much influenced. Additionally, during the time there, weekly demonstrations have taken place against the massive change in the justice system, and the violence between Israeli Military and Gaza arose.

We visited Tel Aviv and the work with youth and migrants, the social work union, Jerusalem and social workday center and a specialized women's house for orthodox women in need, Afula and Social Work with Youth, Nof HaGalil Migration Centre, Haifa's Social Work University, Yerucham and the Bedouins. Lake Galilei, and two Kibbutz, Jerusalem old town and a Druse town. Thanks to the many discussions with different people, I was able to get a different picture than if I had traveled alone.

Most of all we have met people who are trying to live a normal life, to manage issues that social workers work with in many places, but with country unique problem of Israel. We have met social work colleagues – colleagues that are human rights defenders, system change maker, sensitive to individual and societal needs, open and encouraged to go an extra mile. Not all of them are educated as social workers – and that's another unique part of Israel; there are visionary who saw a need, wanted to help building up the young state of Israel and did all the fundraising and starting up work.

A big applause to the organizing team of CIF Israel, it was not a single person but a team of passionate and engaged people. Never did I travel like this – from the airport were Guy picked me up until the last day were Miriam brought me to the train station in Jerusalem, all of them has spent free time and a lot of energy just to show us social work in Israel.

My warmest thanks to you! I can highly recommend participating a CIF program.

Photos next pages:



