



UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

NEWSLETTER NO. 20, SEPTEMBER 2011

Introducing Diane Taylor, Manager of Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum



As Chair of FBFF I am delighted to introduce Diane Taylor, who has been appointed the first Manager of our organisation. She started work in this part-time post on 18th July.

This is a huge and important step for us and will enable us to expand our activities. With Diane in post we hope to be even more active in spreading the message of the bereaved families and in raising funds to support their projects in Israel and Palestine that promote dialogue and reconciliation.

Diane was one of a number of very talented applicants for this new post. She is a freelance journalist, writing mainly for the Guardian, and author of 11 non-fiction memoirs including one which spent five weeks in the Sunday Times best-seller list.

Diane is also the co-founder of the NNLS Drop-In Centre for Destitute Asylum Seekers, which was set up in March 2006 and has become a very important source of support for the hundreds of asylum seekers who use the service.

We are very pleased to welcome Diane to our team and look forward to the initiative and creative energy that she will bring to FBFF.

Judith Elkan

Hello everyone,

I'm very excited to be working for FBFF and look forward to building on the organisation's excellent work and helping to promote the message of



peace and reconciliation disseminated by the Israeli and Palestinian bereaved families.

If you have any ideas for awareness

raising and/or fundraising events here in the UK, or if you have contacts who might be interested in supporting our work, please let me know. A new standing order form is attached to this newsletter. If you're able to commit to giving just £5 per month and can encourage friends and relatives to do the same it will make a real difference to us.

Thank you.

Diane Taylor

Please support our work. You can make an on-line donation to FBFF by clicking here:

DONATE NOW



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16 Lynmouth Road, London N2 9LS • Tel 07966 145098 • www.FamiliesForum.co.uk

Blood relations

Israeli and Palestinian members of the Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF) are exceedingly busy in the run-up to International Peace Day on 21st September.

Working with a top advertising agency, they have planned a bold initiative to mark the event this weekend: Israelis and Palestinians will be donating blood to each other in a symbolic act called 'Blood Relations'. The bold poster to advertise this initiative asks: 'Could you hurt someone who has his blood running through your veins?'

The blood donors will be telling their stories and making it clear that too much blood has been split already and that the act of donating blood is a symbolic one to try to heal the conflict.

The blood exchange event will be accompanied by the launch of the Paperworks exhibition by the PCFF Women's Group. This powerful exhibition has previously been shown in the UK and was received very positively.

The 20 Israeli and Palestinian members of the forum who participated in the project used materials connected with the loved ones they have lost, like uniforms and newspaper cuttings, to create artwork expressing their thoughts about the conflict, about bereavement and about peace and reconciliation, in a very creative way.

Lobbying the UN

PCFF is also engaging directly with the United Nations and is calling on UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon and UN representatives to unveil the blood relations poster in conjunction with the opening of the General Assembly and to bring to the attention of all, how urgent the need is for an end to the killing.



In a letter to the UN representatives they describe their long-term vision to create a framework for a reconciliation process to be an integral part of any future political agreement, whatever the result of the Palestinian quest for an independent viable state.

'We who have paid the ultimate price understand with each anniversary of the death of our loved one, just how dreadful and futile it is to continue to kill each other. We implore you to bring the parties together to negotiate a future of peace and to become part of the solution. Neither side will disappear,' they say.

◆ Karen Armstrong supports the blood donors: watch her video at <http://vimeo.com/28166162>



PCFF visit to the UK

Siham Abu Awwad (left) and Robi Damelin will be visiting the UK between Tuesday 8th November and Saturday 12th November.

We are planning a range of fundraising and awareness raising events for their visit.

Please let us know if you are interested in helping to organise a fundraising dinner or brunch or in hosting a meeting.

Summer camp in an oasis of peace

A very successful summer camp was organised by PCFF for Israeli and Palestinian teenagers in the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. The village was founded in 1970 and Israelis and Palestinians live here peacefully side by side.

The camp provided an opportunity to open hearts and minds on both sides and for everyone to get to know each other as individual human beings. It was a chance to show the young people that there's grief and pain on both sides and that empathy can help to promote reconciliation.

Two young members of the forum, who have lost

family members in the conflict, acted as counsellors. Youngsters were divided into different age groups for a range of activities including get to know you games, a film screening about the conflict and a forest outing. Palestinians and Israelis shared bedrooms and enjoyed a music workshop with a group of Israeli and Palestinian rap and hip hop artists.

Everyone left feeling inspired to spread the message of peace and reconciliation. The Israeli and Palestinian youngsters have stayed in touch since the camp using e-mail and Facebook.

◆ *The photos below show a few of the camp activities – and one of many emotional farewells.*



What the participants said about the camp

'The experience was incredible. I'm leaving with a feeling – stronger than ever – that peace is an option, that it is possible... so happy to have the chance to participate in a camp like this. I learned that judging the other will not bring people to justice.'

– 18 year old from Abu Dis, Palestine

'For the first time I heard the plight of the Palestinian people, and I saw things from their point of view. Some of these conversations were very enlightening, but they were very hard for me from an emotional standpoint.'

– 16 year old from Haifa, Israel

'The personal stories from the Israelis and Palestinians made me realize that everyone is sharing the same pain.'

– 16 year old from Bethlehem, Palestine

'Osama's personal story, and those of Guy and Yigal and Suheir

(counsellors), were very meaningful to me. They almost made me cry.'

– 14 year old from Haifa, Israel

'At the camp I saw something I didn't expect – that the relations between us were actually so friendly! I enjoyed the movie and the woods, but I especially enjoyed the sea. I even learned some Hebrew! The Israelis are really very nice, and I enjoyed getting to know them, and now I feel like I can form my own opinion.'

– 14 year old from Nablus, Palestine

'I am leaving feeling great! Despite the language barrier I have managed to connect with the Palestinians and share my life with them, and they have shared their lives with me. It really affected me to hear first-hand accounts about life beyond the Green Line. Now I have a much greater hope that it is possible to have an

open conversation with our Arab neighbours.'

– 17 year old from Tel Aviv, Israel

'I left the camp with feelings of love and respect for all the people who participated. I am glad we had the opportunity to express our thoughts and feelings openly. I learned a lot about friendship and brotherhood, about how we do not have to give up hope for peace.'

– 18 year old from Hebron, Palestine

'The camp woke me up to questions about communication and knowledge of the other. I want to talk to anyone who would talk to me, as we all need to talk more and open the doors that remain closed, to allow serious and open dialogue between more teenagers from both peoples.'

– 16 year old from Tel Aviv, Israel

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Patrons: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams • The Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks • Juliet Stevenson
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UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

Standing Order Form

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When you have completed this form, please return it to:

Ronnie Cohen, Hon Treasurer, FBFF, 5 Temple Close, Cyprus Road, London N3 3SB.

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