

UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

Newsletter 25

July 2012



Dear Friends,

Hope you're having a nice (if rather damp) summer.

This edition of the newsletter is devoted to reports about the recent visit to the UK of two speakers from the Parents Circle–Families Forum: Israeli Robi Damelin and Palestinian Siham Abu Awwad. Both are wonderful and moving speakers and tirelessly promote the message of the organisation, which is to work for peace and reconciliation between the two sides in the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. The organisation focuses on making an emotional breakthrough

and recognising the humanity in the other. As people bereaved by the conflict, their argument is a particularly compelling one. Fabric wristbands bearing the message 'It Won't Stop Until We Talk' were distributed throughout the week.

Events were held in London, Godalming, Cambridge and Warrington. Thanks to all who attended and supported one or more of the events during Robi and Siham's visit. Thanks to everybody who kindly hosted our speakers and thanks to Robi and Siham. These visits are both physically and emotionally gruelling for them but they remained cheerful

and energetic throughout the week.

We were delighted that the visit received coverage in the *Guardian*: www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/24/hideously-diverse-britain-mothers-plea

As always we are in need of donations to support this vital work. Please do consider supporting our Partners For Peace initiative by taking out a small monthly standing order. Information about how to do this can be found on our website. Donations through Just Giving can be made by following this link: www.justgiving.com/f-b-f-f

Diane Taylor

FBFF Manager

PCFF makes its mark in the UK Parliament

Our flagship event during the week was a reception in the state rooms at the house of the Speaker of the House of Commons,

the Rt Hon John Bercow MP. One of our patrons, the Labour MP Huw Irranca-Davies, secured part of these prestigious

apartments for the reception, which was attended by MPs, peers, religious leaders and opinion formers. Guests

enjoyed drinks and canapés in the plush and historic surroundings of the state rooms, complete with antique paintings and magnificent views of the Thames.

During the reception Huw Irranca-Davies emphasized the importance of the work of PCFF and the need to raise awareness of this important work among parliamentarians.

Mark Durkan MP, another supporter of PCFF's work, put forward an Early Day Motion, highlighting this work and calling for reconciliation to be a part of the framework of any future peace deal.



Huw Irranca-Davies MP with Siham and Robi in the Speaker's House

Siham and Robi welcomed to Cambridge

Edward Kessler MBE, director of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge, which is dedicated to teaching, research, dialogue and studying relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims throughout the ages, kindly hosted our speakers.

In the beautiful building that houses the institute Robi and Siham showed the PCFF/Saatchi film *Blood Relations*. This short film details a project to encourage Israelis and Palestinians bereaved by the conflict, and those on both sides who support peace and reconciliation, to donate blood to each other.

The thinking behind the campaign is: how could you inflict harm on someone who has your blood flowing through your veins. During the week of Robi and Siham's visit the film won three major awards at a major advertising festival in Cannes.

Students from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds attended the meeting and asked some stimulating questions. One speaker asked if initiatives such as boycotts, disinvestment, etc, helped the cause of peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Both speakers replied that while such initiatives were sincerely intentioned they did not help to bring the two sides closer together.

Simon Baron-Cohen, the Professor of Developmental Psychopathology at Cambridge University, gave a vote of thanks and highlighted the important role of empathy in helping to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.



Dr Edward Kessler (top)
Professor Simon Baron-Cohen
and the Woolf Institute
website (www.woolf.cam.ac.uk)
records the PCFF visit (left)

Please support our work by signing a standing order (last page). Or click here to make an on-line donation:



Two Sided Story gets its UK premiere

We launched our week of events with the UK premiere of *Two-Sided Story* at the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley. This powerful new documentary chronicles what happened when Israelis and Palestinians from a range of backgrounds, including activists in the Palestinian resistance and Israeli settlers, were brought together for a series of meetings. They listened to each other's narratives and began to understand more about the pain, fears and hopes of those on the other side.

The documentary gave us a great deal of food for thought and it was fascinating to see the shift in the views and attitudes of people on both sides once they got to know each other as individuals.

We hope that the film will return to the UK for a series of screenings in November.

Two Sided Story שני פנים לסיפור للقصة وجهان



Below: The historic Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley where *Two Sided Story* received its first showing in the UK.



Conflict resolution discussed in Warrington

We were delighted to be invited to Foundation for Peace in Warrington for a meeting about conflict resolution in which Robi and Siham were guest speakers.

The Foundation works nationally to support those affected by terrorism and conflict, including veterans and victims of terror attacks. It supports young people to turn away from violence, and works to build

stronger communities without prejudice and discrimination.

Through this work, the organisation equips people with the skills to use their traumatic experience in order to do something positive, for their own wellbeing and to help their communities.

People from a variety of backgrounds and conflict zones attended and we hope to

collaborate with Foundation For Peace on future events.

■ Robi and Seham were also hosted by a variety of other organisations during their visit – Godalming Quakers, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, South London Interfaith Group and Woolfson & Tay Bookshop. Many thanks to all those who welcomed us and helped us to disseminate our vital message.

UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

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Patrons: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams • The Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks • Juliet Stevenson
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