

Kolot: Voices of Hope

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is mired in a morass of despair. Many of those who have worked with or supported the peace process for a generation or more are dispirited and unable to believe that progress can be made in the foreseeable future. No wonder, there is hardly any good news around Israel/Palestine from any of the traditional news organizations. The cynical news adage, "if it bleeds, it leads," is unfortunately accurate. We hear about the violence; we hear that there is little to no hope for coexistence, little to no hope for peace

However, the bad news is only part of what actually occurs in the region. The history of Israeli/Palestinian cooperation on the ground seldom gets reported. Even today many groups, Israeli and Palestinian, collaborate with one another in the course of their day-to-day lives. There are numerous examples of the two peoples working together on such issues as water and land use, education, health, travel and commerce, bereavement support, civil and human rights, and—most notably—peace.

The work of these organizations needs to be told, their history of mutual understanding compiled. The stories of how these NGOs function offer us the fresh air of hope that a dispirited American Jewish community needs to breathe. Unfortunately, such efforts by grassroots bodies in Israel and Palestine have largely gone unacknowledged by the media.

Partners for Progressive Israel believes that compiling and telling the stories of these cooperative endeavors by and about those working in grassroots activities in Israel and Palestine will open new perspectives for many of us in the United States. We all stand in need of hope; we all want to hear that the spirit of mutual respect and equality still resonates in the region. And most important, we need to know that there are individuals and groups committed to living in peace with "the other." Such hope is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Partners' new program, Kolot: Voices of Hope, wants to bring these tales of goodness to those of us who so often fall prey to despair.

Program Objectives

Partners for Progressive Israel is dedicated to educating Americans toward the achievement of a durable, secure and just peace between Israel and its neighbors, as well as attaining civil rights, equality and social justice for both peoples. Our program, Kolot: Voice of Hope, seeks to realize the following goal:

To create awareness among Americans in general and American Jews in particular regarding the fact that collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians exists and that there remains hope for achieving positive change on the ground.

- Research, identify, collect and collate stories of collaboration between at least 50 Israeli and Palestinian organizations;
- Share these stories in the coming year with well over 100,000 people nationwide through a variety of communication channels;
- Provide a dedicated platform for the stories to be shared, in particular, with American young people;
- Explore ties with other progressive American organizations in realizing our objectives.