



# Developing Tomorrow's Peace

The Peres Center for Peace

מרכז פרס לשלום  
مرکز بيرس للسلام  
The Peres Center For Peace



The five main pillars that guide the Peres Center's peacebuilding activities

Dialogue and People-to-People Interaction

Capacity-Building through Cooperation

Nurturing a Culture of Peace in the Region's Youth

Business and Economic Cooperation

Humanitarian Response

“In spite of our differences, we can build peace, not just negotiate peace. We can create the proper environment, and not just become victims of the existing environment.”

Shimon Peres

## About Us

The Peres Center for Peace is Israel's leading non-profit organization promoting peacebuilding between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and in particular between Israelis and Palestinians. Founded in 1996 by the President of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shimon Peres, the Peres Center conducts dozens of projects, involving thousands of Israelis and Palestinians, fostering socio-economic cooperation and

people-to-people interaction.

Programs are designed to empower the populations of this region to be actively engaged in peacebuilding in order to advance the creation of a real, effective and durable peace, in fields such as medicine, sports, agriculture, the environment, business, education, youth, technology, the arts, and more.

The Peres Center's innovative programs comprise a diverse

and multi-faceted spectrum of participants – old and young; women, men, children and youth; professionals and agents of change, with an emphasis on residents of disadvantaged communities. By focusing on common Arab and Israeli social, economic, developmental, cultural and educational interests, the Peres Center continues to successfully forge lasting partnerships between Israelis and Palestinians and neighboring countries, based on mutual respect and understanding. Barriers are broken down, fears are overcome, dialogues are conducted and friendships are formed, paving the way to a real and lasting peace between peoples.

**People build peace, not just governments.**



## Agriculture, Water and Environment

Considering the shared nature of agricultural conditions and challenges throughout the Middle East, the Peres Center implements programs that facilitate cross-border research and cooperation in order to enhance crop management practices, environmental protection and water quality. Such cooperation is of utmost importance to the future of the region as pests and pollution know no boundaries, and geographic conditions demand the use of common water and natural resources. Leading projects include:



**Training and Capacity-Building:** Strengthening the capacities of Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian agricultural sectors brings mutual benefits to the broader region. Through joint workshops, seminars and tours, projects enhance regional integration, irrigation facilities, pest monitoring and control, post-

harvest installations, forestry care and rural services. Such projects treat critical pollution problems, while promoting environmentally-friendly best practices, creating new job opportunities and ensuring food and water security.

**Crop Production and Marketing:** Programs provide advanced training and equipment to Palestinian and Jordanian farmers and introduce improved practices for the production of profitable crops such as strawberries, dates and olives. The projects nurture regional cooperation and joint product development and marketing, whilst simultaneously promoting environmentally-friendly best practices.

2.6 million strawberry bushes planted over 260 dunams in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the "Strawberries for Peace" profitable crop management project.



**Advanced Water Technologies and Management:** As the umbrella organization for multiple universities, research institutes and R&D centers, the Peres Center facilitates the development of cross-border solutions and new water resources to address scarcity of water and food in the region. Projects focus on nanotechnology in water treatment, desalination and purification, wastewater recycling, and more, and involve Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian researchers and experts, agriculturalists and academics.

**"We don't need more cemeteries and deaths. So I decided to work for peace. There are people willing to work together in every field – agriculture, IT, industry – in every field we can help each other."** *Amin, Israeli Olive Oil Board*



## Business and Economics

Regional economic cooperation has the ability to strengthen markets whilst fostering friendly cross-border relations. Such cooperation presents realistic, feasible avenues for building professional and personal relationships between actors within conflict regions. Through joint economic research, capacity-building workshops, and professional networking, the Peres Center provides critical space for interaction between influential regional players, developing economies while encouraging partnership and interaction. Leading projects include:

Annually facilitate business meetings for over 600 Palestinian businesspeople with Israeli companies, resulting in commercial deals valued at millions of shekels annually.

**Business-to-Business:** Programs foster encounters between Israeli and Palestinian businesspeople from parallel sectors, acquainting them with the market on the “other side”. Through presentations, product sampling and networking, professional ties are formed with a view towards increasing bilateral trade and enabling private-sector growth. Participants gain a greater understanding of their respective fields and discover the need and potential for cross-border partnership.

**Capacity-Building:** It is in Israel's interest to be surrounded by neighbors with strong and viable economies and stable societies. Increasing the economic and business capacities of neighboring societies, particularly the Palestinian Authority, through training seminars and workshops with Israeli counterparts, simultaneously cultivates cross-border relations and partnerships. Projects contribute to the development of Palestinian infrastructure, industrial zones, business councils and organizations, narrowing the gap between the two economies and supporting the growth of a thriving, independent Palestinian economy.



**Research:** Working groups comprised of Palestinian, Israeli and international economic experts, members of economic organizations, academics and officials from international institutions conduct research on economic scenarios in the region and make recommendations that promote win-win outcomes for Palestinians and Israelis. Their recommendations are published in position papers that are disseminated to generate awareness of findings among senior level decision-makers.

**"The course at Israeli design school Shenkar enabled us to appreciate the importance of design in increasing sales. I am still in contact with the instructor who provides advice about our new designs for the Israeli market."** *Shaban, Palestinian Shoe and Leather Association, Hebron*

## Civil Leadership

A strong civil society is a strategic element in every peacebuilding process. Civil society leaders are “agents of change” who shape public opinion, influence mindsets and pave the way for real social change. Accordingly, the Peres Center designs and implements programs that engage civil society and community leaders from both sides, creating a strong cross-border network, whilst providing enrichment and professional training. Programs generate dialogue channels between Palestinians and Israelis across professional



fields, enabling participants to serve as leading public examples of Palestinian-Israeli cooperation. Leading projects include:

**Young Political Leaders:** This joint program for emerging Palestinian and Israeli political

leaders includes public speaking and debate training, negotiation and mediation courses, meetings with senior level regional and international politicians and more. Participants are able to get to know their counterparts, forming relations that aid them in their future professional careers.

**Forums for Public Debate:** Quality programming that confronts political issues and debates is extremely important in a thriving democracy. As such, the Peres Center runs events for the Israeli public, diplomatic community and media. This provides a forum to engage in intelligent discussion, to stay informed and updated about the transformations in the Middle East, and to broaden understandings and perspectives of complex issues related to the conflict.

Established the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum which unites over 100 organizations from both sides working towards peace.



**Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum:** Recognizing the importance of cooperative, synchronized efforts between peace organizations, the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum, facilitated by the Peres Center and Palestinian NGO Panorama Center, brings together organizations from both sides for networking, capacity-building and media advocacy. The Forum's actions reach out to the Palestinian and Israeli publics as well as senior level decision-makers in the region and the international community and advocate a powerful message of partnership and peaceful relations.

**"I never had the opportunity to partake in a meeting with Palestinians, much less be part of such a meaningful relationship that enables us to truly tackle the core issues and grasp the Palestinian side." Itai, 28, Hebrew University Student Union Director, Jerusalem**



## Culture, Media and Arts

Cultural and artistic activities are a means of creative expression and an effective tool with which to open minds and challenge beliefs. Through visual and performing arts, powerful emotions such as fear, hope and aspiration are able to manifest in unique and extraordinary ways, in a language that transcends the confines of letters and words. The Peres Center utilizes this

Over 60,000 Palestinian and Israeli children have participated in peace education programs using theatre and visual arts.

invaluable peacebuilding tool, delivering theater, visual arts, cinema and photography programs that unite Palestinian and Israeli adults, youth and children, providing an alternative medium to address the challenges of the conflict. Leading projects include:

**Theater Programs:** Values of peaceful relations, respect, and mutual understanding are imparted to Israeli-Jewish, Israeli-Arab and Palestinian children and youth through the creative and self-expressive medium of theater. Mixed Israeli-Palestinian casts perform bilingual Hebrew and Arabic plays in kindergartens and schools across the country, helping to break down emotional barriers and build personal connections between youth who have very few opportunities to meet.



**Photography:** Israeli and Palestinian photojournalists and documentary photographers are brought together for a joint creative process, recognizing that under regular circumstances they have little opportunity to work together. Programs encourage participants to express their own experiences and portray alternative views of the conflict in an unrestricted environment.

**Visual Arts:** Educational programs for Israeli and Palestinian children utilize visual arts to impart values of respect, mutual understanding and tolerance. Children are encouraged to express their feelings about coexistence and acceptance of others through the creation of their own personal artwork, complemented by a moderated discussion about these values.

**"I see this experience as an opportunity to go inside Israeli society, inside their classrooms, and tell this story and give them some hope. As two peoples, we really have a wall between us, but we are all human beings, and we can be partners."** *Palestinian actor in coexistence play, Jerusalem*

## Medicine in the Service of Peace

The Palestinian healthcare system, whilst not always state-of-the-art, faces increasing demands on its limited resources as the conflict continues. In cooperation with the Israeli medical community, the Peres Center assists in the creation of an independent Palestinian medical system through human resource development, advancement of complex medical services and cross-border cooperation and knowledge transfer, as well as providing humanitarian medical aid to Palestinian babies and children. Leading projects include:



**Saving Children:** In partnership with the Palestinian pediatric community, since 2003 this project has facilitated the referral of Palestinian babies and children to Israeli hospitals for complex investigations, diagnoses, and surgical procedures, when such services are unavailable in the Palestinian Authority. Over 1,500 referrals are received

annually, resulting in major procedures such as cardiac surgery, bone marrow transplantations, cochlear implantations, brain and neurosurgery, cancer treatment and more.

**Training Doctors:** Due to limited opportunities for residencies and fellowships in the Palestinian Authority, the Peres Center initiates advanced training programs for Palestinian doctors and medical personnel in Israeli hospitals. Trainees specialize in many fields and assist in strengthening a growing, independent Palestinian medical



system. Cross-border cooperation and knowledge exchange is facilitated through joint conferences which present state-of-the-art developments in medicine.

**Developing Infrastructure:** The development of medical infrastructure is central to reducing the humanitarian crisis within the Palestinian Authority. Accordingly, the Peres Center, in cooperation with Israeli hospitals, has assisted in the creation of a Pediatric Hemato-Oncology Center in a Palestinian hospital, providing cancer patients with much-needed treatment within their own community and ensuring Palestinian-Israeli partnership and cooperation.

Over 8,000 Palestinian children received medical treatment in Israeli hospitals; Over 120 Palestinian doctors completed residencies and fellowships in Israeli hospitals.

**"I was afraid of Israelis after what they did to our house. How could I go to them, have them treat my child? But after spending time at their hospital, I realized they are very different to the soldiers that came to our house."** *Mother of Palestinian child treated through Saving Children, Gaza*



## Sport

From values of teamwork and common goals to shared struggles and victories, sport has the power to unite youth from different cultures and backgrounds. Through a language understood by all players, Palestinian and Israeli children unite under the common banner of sport, cheering each other on, helping each other win and building lasting friendships.

Over 12,000 children from some 35 disadvantaged Palestinian, Arab and Israeli communities participated in over 600 joint sporting activities.

These extra-curricular programs provide youth from disadvantaged communities with stimulation of the mind, body, and spirit. In addition to the positive impact on the thousands of annual participants, the benefits of these programs are felt by the youth's peers, coaches and families, spreading the powerful message of Palestinian-Israeli dialogue and cooperation and inspiring entire communities. Leading projects include:

### **Twinned Peace Sport Schools:**

The longest running coexistence sport program in the Middle East, this program provides Palestinian and Israeli children aged six to 15 with weekly sports training, peace education and inter-language learning. Children meet



their 'twinned' school for monthly activities and events in a safe, healthy and fun environment built on principles of equality, diversity and respect.

**Twinned Peace Kindergartens:** This initiative brings together Palestinian, Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli children aged four to six for weekly sport activities, peace education and cultural activities. The program develops motor skills and teaches values of cooperation, coexistence and tolerance to kindergarten children and their families from the culturally diverse communities of Jerusalem and Jaffa.

**Apprentice Coach Training Program:** Israeli and Palestinian graduates of the Twinned Peace Sport Schools are encouraged to volunteer in their communities by becoming apprentice coaches. This not only provides the opportunity for continued sport training, but also engages youth aged 15-18 in more sophisticated peace education activities, making them 'ambassadors' for peace in their communities.

**"I was very afraid before my first meeting with Palestinians. But after the first day I could feel the connection, especially with four Palestinian and Arab children from Jaffa with whom I exchanged ICQ addresses."** Adir, 13, participant in Summer Camp Coexistence, Kiryat Gat

## Youth Dialogue through Technology

The rapid advances in technology, from video conferencing and e-mailing to blogging and Skype, are transforming the way people from different cultures, ethnicities, and regions perceive and interact with one another. For Israelis and Palestinians these technologies are particularly valuable since, despite their physical proximity, contact between the two sides is severely limited. Capitalizing on these technologies, the Peres Center designs programs that enable youth from both sides to engage in unprecedented, frank dialogue concerning the conflict and their lives, in a safe and reassuring virtual environment. Leading projects include:



**Peace Computer Centers:** A specially designed virtual peace education curriculum is implemented in “Peace Computer Centers” established by the Peres Center in Palestinian and Israeli communities. Each year 350 youth from both sides meet, connect and gradually dissolve

stereotypes, repair misconceptions, overcome emotional barriers and jointly undergo a process of viewing counterparts as humans and not as “enemies”. The facilities are open to all community members, providing residents with invaluable infrastructure otherwise unavailable to them.

**Peacemaker:** This peace education program, based on the PeaceMaker® computer game developed by ImpactGames, allows players to take on the role of Palestinian or Israeli leaders in order to solve the conflict through tools such as diplomacy, infrastructural development and more. Through educational workshops implemented

Established 12 fully equipped Peace Computer Centers in disadvantaged communities across Israel and the Palestinian Authority, used annually by thousands.



in Israeli and Palestinian high schools, participants analyze the complex reality of this region and understand the constraints and obstacles facing each society.

**International Youth Exchange:** This year-long program for Israeli and Palestinian teenagers comprises locally run recreational and educational activities, reinforced by a cultural exchange program abroad and a reciprocal visit by teens from the host country. The program provides an unprecedented personal understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to foreign participants, and enables Palestinian and Israeli teens to recognize their similarities, overcome negative perceptions and form long-lasting global friendships which are maintained via the Internet.

**"The program is very good for peace. I learned that everyone – both us and them – has a normal life and talks about peace all the time – everyone wants to live in peace."**  
*Mala, 15, participant in the Peace Computer Schools, Bethlehem*



## Community Programs in Jaffa Home to the Peres Center for Peace

The Peres Center for Peace is located in Jaffa, an area with immense historic, cultural and social significance and a diverse Jewish, Muslim and Christian population. Residents suffer acute socio-economic predicaments including high rates of crime and school drop-outs, and are three times more reliant on welfare services than the municipal average. Neighborhoods bordering the Peres Peace House are severely impoverished, and residents, mostly Arab citizens, endure harsh living conditions.

Provided legal aid to over 100 Jaffa residents and afterschool care to 20 underprivileged Jaffa children annually since 2005.

Since moving to Jaffa, the Peres Center has partnered with local NGOs to offer crucial programs and services to the local community. Harnessing 15 years of experience in developing social infrastructures, cultivating leadership, empowering communities and encouraging cross-sector dialogue, the Peres Center engages with the community to identify its immediate and long-term needs. Programs empower residents to play an active role in the development of their community and provide services and facilities otherwise unavailable. Programs are run locally, many directly from the Peres Peace House and include:

**Legal Aid:** In response to the immense need for legal services amongst Jaffa residents, the Peres Center has facilitated, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Tel Aviv University Legal Clinic, the establishment of a free legal service at the Peres Peace House, accessible to all Jaffa residents.

**Community Board:** Founded by the Peres Center, the Tel Aviv University Legal Clinic and 15 local members, the board addresses communal issues and integrates residents into decision-making processes. Due to its success in addressing community problems, a member of social services and the Tel Aviv-Jaffa City Council have joined the board.



**Other activities and services include:** personal holistic consultation services addressing residents' diverse needs such as legal, financial and social issues; after-school educational and recreational facilities for children; communal clean-ups and restorations; women's empowerment and employment training courses and more.

**"The Peres Center helped me and my children to receive government services that I did not even know we were entitled to."**  
*Amal, 35, Jaffa*

## Working together to build tomorrow's peace

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