

Submitted: 17/ October / 2017

To Dr. Hiroshi Niwano
Chairman
Niwano Peace Foundation

Code No : 16-A-0011

Women's Fund for Human Rights, Ltd. (MachsomWatch)

Activity Report (Fiscal Year 2016-2017)

“Touring the Israeli Occupation and Sharing the Need for Peace with the Israeli Public”

1. Purpose of the project (In around 300 words)

The goal of this project was to enable Israelis to experience the reality of the Occupation. Most Israelis have never experienced the checkpoints and the impact of the Occupation on the Palestinian population. By taking Israelis on tours, we sought to physically expose Israelis to the actual effects of the Occupation. The tours include the large checkpoints, the separation walls and fences and demonstrate the journey thousands of Palestinians pass through daily in order to reach their places of work within Israel, where they can earn better livelihoods than working in Palestine. The tours also bring participants to the agricultural checkpoints, where Palestinians farmers are at the mercy of the military to open the gates and give them access to their lands. By seeing landscape, we hoped that Israelis begin to understand the disruption and discomfort that Palestinians endure daily as they carry out their day-to-day lives. This project had another purpose as well, and that was enabling Israelis to meet and hear from Palestinians who live under Israeli occupation. Israelis on our tours had the opportunity to meet with Palestinians from various communities who shared the challenges they face living under Occupation. These face to face meetings enabled Israelis to hear from Palestinians directly, and help challenge stereotypes and fearful impressions of Palestinians. The feedback we hear demonstrates that a total turnaround happens, as Israelis meet Palestinians who have similar personal goals to that of Israelis for a decent safe life for their families

2. Contents of the project, and how those were implemented (In around 600 words)

MachsomWatch organized and conducted 25 daylong tours for the Hebrew-speaking Israeli public in multiple languages from October 2016 at the beginning of the project until September 2017. In addition, we conducted another 14 tours during this time in English, in which some Israelis also participated. These tours, lasting 7 hours each, were of selected checkpoints, and included visits to Palestinians in the communities around Tulkarem. The tour participants were primarily recruited

through paid announcements in *Haaretz* newspaper, through social media, our mailing list, and by word of mouth.

Our tours in the Central West Bank introduced Israelis to the reality of life in the OPT. The tours focused on how the Separation Barrier disrupts the lives of the Palestinians, and on the hardships inflicted by the checkpoints, roadblocks, gates, and other barriers that are obstacles in their freedom of movement. Through the tours, the participants experienced and saw for themselves what the media seldom portrays, namely, the thousands of Palestinian acres seized in order to construct the Separation Barrier and expand Israeli settlements; the sewage and polluted water streaming from the settlements into the Palestinian villages; a lone Palestinian house that has been surrounded by a wall and fence to comply with neighboring settlers' needs, and agricultural lands separated from their owners. The participants are also able to meet Palestinians during the tours. These are Palestinians who speak about their daily lives, and who illustrate what it means to live under Israeli occupation. This includes the owner of a plant nursery, who must travel many kilometers and through a checkpoint to get to his nursery, even though in reality, it is right near his home village.

At the end of each tour, we also request feedback from the participants. Most of the participants concurred that the tours provide a lot of insight into the conditions that are imposed on the Palestinians. The tour guides, all volunteers with MachsomWatch, also wrote up reports of each tour and shared them with our internal network.

3. Time line records in general in chronological order (In around 300 words)

The timeline for this project was as follows:

September 2016: Our volunteer guides checked the route, and made changes when necessary to accommodate security concerns

September 2016: MachsomWatch members designed an announcement, which was published in *Haaretz* newspaper.

In November, we held a special tour to the Jordan Valley.

In early November 2016, MachsomWatch members created a new announcement for tours in November, December and early January 2017, which was placed in *Haaretz* newspaper (see at the end of this report).

September- October-November-December 2016: We conducted 9 tours (5 in Hebrew, 4 in English)

January 2017: MachsomWatch members designed advertisement tour announcement, which was published in *Haaretz* newspaper

January-March 2017, we held 8 tours (5 in Hebrew, 3 in English)

April 2017: Again, MachsomWatch members designed an announcement, which was published in *Haaretz* newspaper for tours in May 2017.

From April until June we conducted 11 tours (9 in Hebrew, 2 in English)

In June we did not hold any tours because of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. and the extreme heat in the region

From July until end of September, we conducted 10 tours (6 in Hebrew, 4 in English)

In September, we designed a new announcement, which appeared in *Haaretz* for tours in September, October (including during the Jewish holidays)

4. **Achievements** (In around 300 words)

The achievements of this project were that we did 25 tours in Hebrew for 742 Israelis from October 2016 until end of September 2017, as well as another 14 tours that had 316 participants, including some Israelis. The feedback that we received from the tours reveal that the participants felt that the information was given in a fair and unbiased manner and offered in a very thoughtful way, allowing the participants to see for themselves, and not feel that the tours guides were trying to “brainwash” them. The positive feedback on these tours encourages us to continue with our work.

We also published at least 5 unique paid announcements in *Haaretz* newspaper. While the announcements aim to bring participants to our tours they also serve as a reminder to the general public of our continuing work for peace.

5. **Tasks or challenge in future, or what is remain to be done** (In around 300 words)

For the future, MachsomWatch needs to improve its recruitment activities to reach members of the Israeli public who would not ordinarily be inclined to attend a MachsomWatch tour. For example, we could try to recruit members of the Israeli political echelon, from the Parliament and the municipalities. We could also try to appeal to Israelis who do not read *Haaretz* newspaper. Although we do advertise our tours on Facebook, we have yet to learn how we can successfully appeal to Israelis who proclaim that they support the Israeli occupation of the territories.

In addition, we could develop tours to additional regions, such as tours around the Jerusalem checkpoints for participants who are in this area and regular tours to the distant Jordan Valley. In the past we had tours around the checkpoints of Jerusalem, but we ceased them due to the security situation and they never resumed.



Photo from a MachsomWatch tour in 2017: Israelis meeting with a local Palestinian



הצטרפו לסיור במרכז הגדה המערבית

באזור שבין קלקיליה לאלפי מנשה,
בין קדום לקדומים, בין מסחה לאלקנה,
שם נפגוש פלסטינים הממשיכים להאמין בשלום
ונשמע על חייהם ומחשבותיהם.

סיורים בעברית:
שבת 19.11 | ד' 30.11 | שבת 24.12
שבת 14.1.2017 | שבת 28.1.2017

סיורים באנגלית:
ה' 17.11 | ב' 12.12 | ד' 4.1.2017

לפרטים נוספים והרשמה:
tourismw@gmail.com
www.machsomwatch.org
055-6641797

لا للحوجز
لا لمأخوטים
WATCH
مخسوم

נשים נגד הכיבוש ולמען זכויות אדם
نساء ضد الاحتلال ومن أجل حقوق الإنسان
Women against the Occupation and for Human Rights

בתמיכת הקרן החדשה לישראל

כל הדרכים בשליטת צה"ל. משך הסיור כ- 6 שעות.



Paid announcement that appeared in Haaretz newspaper for MachsomWatch tours in December 2016 and January 2017

Translation of one of our tour reports:

Saturday tour 15.7. 2017: Pitzi tour leader, Raya reporting

Participants: 21

Composition: multiple ages. Most are aged 40 to 50. One of the tour participants was a young

man whose grandfather was our tour leader's children pediatrician.

Most of the visitors arrive from the central region of Israel, a couple from Jerusalem and a couple from Kibbutz Ma'abarot.

The tour took its usual route.

The lunch in Nabi Elias was made earlier around about 12.00. Half an hour's pause with the falafel for 5 NIS. Delicious and pleasant to the palate and the pocket.

From there we were supposed to go to the opening the agricultural checkpoint at Habla. However, at Eliyahu checkpoint we looked like "suspects" and we were taken aside for a more thorough check, which delayed us and was not taken into account, so we arrived after the opening of the gates in Habla. However, we were under the impression that the security check at Nabi Elias checkpoint impressed the tour participants, giving them an insight that "this is how it is" in the territories. The clock is not exactly a factor when it comes to Palestinians or left-wing tour participants.

Habla: the gate was open, the hour was 13:25, the heat was terrible and there was almost no traffic of people crossing the checkpoint. The heat exhausts them all including perhaps the Occupation itself.

Almost. Two soldiers approach us and ask to correct the information we shared: We are not checking the Palestinians on their way home. Pitzzi thanks them for the "correction." We know those who do the security checks. Then the nice soldier says: They only check documents (closing a circle) and if they have not transferred stolen property. So, do they check or not?

Jayyus: A meeting with N, a Palestinian. As always, his words are sincere, cutting and warm. There is no contradiction. He does not fake, expressing in his tone and in his words, how a person feels under occupation and still has hope, even if distant. And I wonder how his parents saw him as a newborn and gave him the name that defines him so well? [His name means pleasant in Arabic].

Qaddum: A meeting with S, who despite the years (already the sixth year), talks about the non-violent struggle against the theft of land and blocking of the road, which makes the drive to Nablus much longer. What Hebrew, what diction, he loves to tell, even after all that he has been through... For years he loved working in Tel Aviv, how he was part of a society of people, people in the simple sense of the word, Jews and Palestinians who worked together, made a living, each in his own way and abilities, regardless of nationality. He still has hope. For S there is no option other than hope.

And let's not forget the delicious chocolate popsicle in the small shop in the center of the village, a popsicle that sweetens us and refreshes us, also because of the price. We have to buy two, because we barely have half shekels. And there are those who buy and buy three.

And last but not least, the house that is fenced off and under siege which is known as Hani's house. The story of Hani's house needs to be experienced in person, needs to be seen with one's own eyes. Because what the eyes see is impossible to believe and to describe. Hani's House is a demonstration of the one of the Occupation's creative solutions.

In summary: Even if the tour participants come with a willingness to see with their own eyes, the intensity of the sight-seeing experience is invaluable. It seems some people will return home a little changed. And that is also something. Some of the participants will serve as ambassadors and recommend our tours to their friends and family. Hopefully, some of them will join us in our work.