



Combatants for Peace Annual Programs Report, 2017-2018

"If I am not for me, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

– Hillel

Introduction

In 2006, Palestinian and Israeli former combatants laid down their weapons and established Combatants for Peace (CfP). Committed to joint nonviolence since its foundation, CfP works to end the Israeli occupation and all forms of violence to build a peaceful future. For over a decade we have led action based on shared values of freedom, democracy, security and dignity for all. We inspire profound individual and communal change in Israel and Palestine and serve as a model for societies across the world separated by seemingly intractable violence. *Combatants for Peace is the world's only nonviolent movement founded and sustained by former armed combatants in an ongoing conflict.* The unique impact of our grassroots, binational approach was recognized in both 2016 and 2018 when CfP was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Key Programmatic Growth 2015-2018

Despite the political situation worsening on the ground, Combatants for Peace continues to reach new milestones, expand our reach, and develop new initiatives to declare: violence is not our fate, there is another way! Combatants for Peace has entered 2018 with increased momentum. The past year has seen extensive growth of our programs, implementation of new partnerships, and building of the largest-ever binational community of Palestinians and Israelis engaged in peacebuilding and nonviolent direct action. Below is our programmatic growth chart.

Program Name	Activities	Quantity 2015	Quantity 2016	Quantity 2017	Growth '15-'16	Participants 2015	Participants 2016	Participants 2017	Growth '15-'17
Binational Community Building	Bi-national Groups	5	8	9	60%	200	300	400	50%
	Memorial Day Ceremony	1	3	4	25%	3000	3500	4500	28%
Direct Action	Freedom March (Monthly)	--	12	6		--	600- 700 (Monthly)	600-700 (each)	New
	Coalitions (Jordan Valley and Sumud)			2				500	New
Encounters	Parlor Meetings	50	74	62	48%	1613	3064	3065	0%

	Educational Tours	8	7	13	46%	240 (approx)	210 (approx)	400 (approx)	47%
	Disturbing the Peace Screenings	-	15	85	82%		600	5100 (approx)	88%
	Nonviolent Communications Training	-	-	2 workshops	New	-	-	60 people	New

In 2017, we celebrated our eleventh anniversary, launched American Friends of Combatants for Peace, added a new regional group, held the largest-ever Freedom March and largest-ever Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day with over 4,000 people locally and 50,000 people participating worldwide to mark 50 years of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. We started nonviolent communications training, held nonviolent activist trainings (NVC and NVA) and mobilized two new direct action coalitions in the Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills. Throughout 2018 we plan to continue growing our programs and new activities to resist the status quo of fear, hate, and oppression.

Programs & Activities

Bi-national Community Building

“Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause--the cause of liberation.”

- Paolo Freire

Regional Activist Groups

Our binational regional activist groups are the core of the Combatants for Peace movement: building a community of activists to end the occupation and actualize our shared values. Through these groups, activists from Israeli and Palestinian cities pair up and work on addressing local needs and problems. In addition to the ten regional groups, including Jerusalem-Jericho, Tel-Aviv-Ramallah (new as of 2016), Beer Sheva-Hebron/South, Jerusalem-Bethlehem, Tel Aviv- Nablus, Tivon-Al Aqabah (North), Tel Aviv-Qalqilya (new as of 2017) and others; we also have two region-wide groups: the Theatre of the Oppressed¹ group and a women’s group (new as of 2016).

From 2016-2017, the groups created a unique space for bi-national women’s leadership, built playgrounds in the Bedouin villages of Fasail and Auja, participated in olive harvests in areas targeted by settlers, rebuilt demolished homes and buildings in the South, participated in direct action coalitions such as Sumud: Freedom Camp and Jordan Valley, worked with our Encounter program to host parlor meetings, conducted educational tours, enacted Theatre of the Oppressed activities and more. Additionally, Combatants for Peace is in the process of developing a region-wide bi-national group for youth, to target the next generation before they are indoctrinated with violence. We have began the process of bringing youth together for bi-national activism and will solidify the group in 2018.

¹ The Theatre of the Oppressed is a methodology developed in Brazil to bring about social and political change through theater activities

Joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony

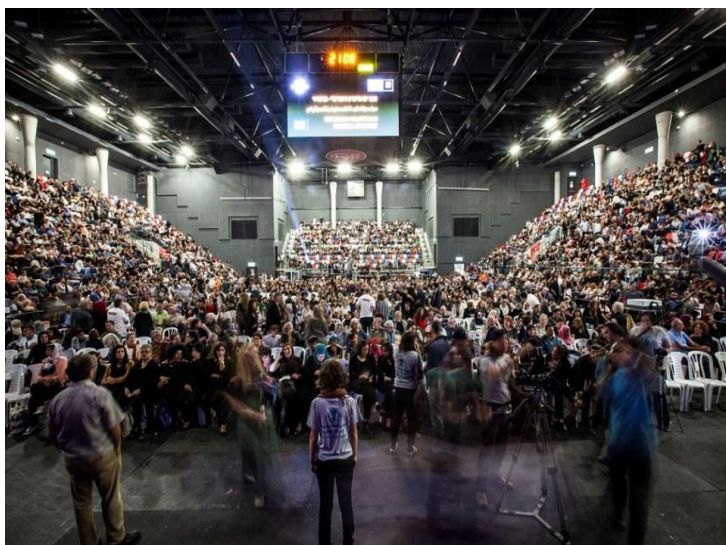
What began as a small ceremony of 50 in 2005, has grown to be one of the largest Memorial Day events in Israel and *the largest annual event of the peace movement* with over 4,000 attendees in 2017. Additionally, we expanded the program in 2017 through livestreaming the event for an audience of over 500 in Beit Jala (for Palestinians who could not get permits) and in Tivon (for Arab and Israeli residents of the North).



[Click here](#) to watch an overview of the 2017 ceremony.

The ceremony is undoubtedly our flagship project, gaining popular support and the attention of tens of thousands across the world. Recognizing the asymmetry of the conflict and the relative comfort that allows Israelis to maintain the status quo, CfP focuses this ceremony towards an Israeli audience. We seek to expose the occupation's violence to Israelis, teaching them about the reality on the ground and mobilizing them to demand an end to the occupation and a just peace from their leaders. We recognize the power dynamics of the conflict and focus on Israeli power to demand change, while also recognizing the lack of Palestinian leadership in peacebuilding. This ceremony, while honoring the fallen, sends this message as well: while unequal, both Israelis and Palestinians are victims of violence and capable of change.

This unique event provides the platform for Israelis and Palestinians to both grieve together and to stand strong in demanding an end to the violence. We provide a cathartic alternative for Israelis who want to commemorate Israeli Memorial Day but seek a ceremony that both honors the victims of violence and does not inflame nationalist and militaristic passions.



The event's unique nature draws attendees from outside of the far left; attendees are not only people active in the peace camp, but are diverse and seeking a different way of expressing their views and hopes. Each year, the event succeeds in injecting Combatants for Peace's values, rejecting violence and embracing another way, into public discourse. The success of the event models for Israeli, Palestinian and

international audiences that nonviolent, bi-national cooperation is feasible. Thanks to

domestic and overseas media coverage, including over 50,000 people livestreaming the ceremony, we are able to spread our message and call on ever-increasing numbers of people to join our bi-national, nonviolent movement for peace.

2017 brought a unique challenge to our event - West Bank Palestinians were not permitted by the Israeli Civil Administration to enter Israel for the ceremony. There was a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv shortly before the event, and all the permits were canceled. Despite our best efforts, including working with politicians and lawyers, we were unable to get the permits re-approved for the first year of the past twelve. This impacted the shared nature of the event and forced us to be creative. Palestinian speakers who were supposed to speak live were recorded on video and their messages streamed to the audience in Tel Aviv. We expanded the Beit Jala parallel ceremony and brought in Israelis to join in solidarity with our Palestinian partners. We live streamed between the two events and despite the physical distance, created a shared ceremony and connection between the attendees at all locations. We are taking all possible measures in 2018 to stand up to an increasingly repressive regime and ensure that many West Bank Palestinians will be able to attend. Recognizing the political limitations of the occupation, we will continue our large parallel event in Beit Jala, a central location in the West Bank that is also accessible to Israelis. We are hoping next year permits will be granted so that Palestinians can attend the Tel Aviv ceremony once again. If they are not, we will expand the Beit Jala event or add a second parallel West Bank ceremony.

In 2018, we expect another 10% increase in attendees to the main event in Tel Aviv, will host even more participants with parallel events in Beit Jala, in Northern Palestinian/Israeli communities in Haifa and Tivon, and reach a wide audience of livestream viewers with screenings in New York, Berlin, London, and more. As we are coming up on the 70th year since Israeli Independence Day / the nakba, we will continue to strengthen our partnership with the Parents Circle – the Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Families Forum, and work on building partnerships with other progressive organizations such as Breaking the Silence and New Israel Fund.



Direct Action

“Nonviolent direct action seeks to establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.”

-Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Since its foundation, Combatants for Peace has viewed itself as part of a wider nonviolent movement opposing the occupation, oppression, and mobilizing for freedom and justice in Israel and Palestine. This belief has expressed itself in partnerships with other organizations, both for specific programs and international campaigns. For example, Combatants for Peace has taken part in the Olive Harvest Coalition alongside Yesh Din, Gush Shalom, the Social Television, and more, and will continue to participate in the future. Our regular direct action programming is below.

Freedom March

Since November 2015, CFP has held regular Freedom Marches along Route 60 in the West Bank just south of Jerusalem, demonstrating with puppets, music, Theatre of the Oppressed and other creative expression that Israelis and Palestinians together seek an end to the occupation through nonviolence. Using creative methods of expression and more traditional nonviolent tactics of stopping traffic and marching together, we have declared our values of nonviolent resistance to the occupation to members of our CFP community, allies, and bystanders, including Israeli soldiers and settlers using the road.

In 2016, we held 11 Freedom Marches, with 300-400 regular participants and two larger events, marking our 10 Year Anniversary and one full year of freedom Marches with 700-800 participants. In 2017, we held special Freedom Marches marking 50 years of occupation and International Peace Day, and had a strong turnout from both Palestinians and Israelis. This march is categorized under our strategic goals of both opposing the occupation and building a community of bi-national cooperation. The consistent nature of the marches facilitates a sense of community and of shared values,



motivating activists and building our network. Special guests at the marches have included: activist Rabbi Noa Mazor (Rabbis for Human Rights), entertainers Mira Awad (singer), Tamer Nafar and Yossi Zabari; politicians Dr. Laura Warton (Jerusalem City Council, Meretz), MK Ahmed Tibi, MK Dov Henin, MK Aymen Odeh (Joint List) amongst others. In 2018, we intend to continue the Freedom Marches and change the format slightly, picking alternative locations that are

flashpoints in the conflict, in order to reinvigorate the community and enhance the impact of the activity.

Jordan Valley Coalition

Launched in 2017, Combatants for Peace has partnered with Machsom Watch, Taayush and other human rights groups to defend the Jordan Valley against systematic violence and displacement from Israeli forces and settlers. We have accompanied shepherds on their daily work, providing protection from violence against farming communities in the area, and led advocacy with the military court system and Israeli Civil Administration. We recently issued an [open letter calling for urgent international intervention](#) to prevent a massive forcible population transfer of Palestinians. Ongoing human rights violations from the State of Israel being actively challenged by Combatants for Peace include house demolitions; the denial of water supply; restricting access to farming land and health and education services; repeated confiscation of farming machinery, residential tents, water tanks and livestock; and increasing restrictive military checkpoints.

Sumud: Freedom Camp

Launched in May 2017, Sumud: Freedom Camp is an unprecedented coalition of Palestinian, Israeli, Jewish, and international justice seekers committed to peace, justice, dignity, freedom, and equality for all. Sumud: Freedom Camp is engaged in nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience in the South Hebron Hills. The Camp was established by local families and a coalition including the Popular Resistance Committees of the South Hebron Hills, Holy Land Trust, Combatants for Peace, All That's Left: Anti-Occupation Collective, and the Center for Jewish Nonviolence. Since May, the coalition has reclaimed homes for community members who were displaced by military and settler violence, rehabilitated and beautified the area, and established a community center for nonviolent resistance events and peace education. The coalition is currently sustained by At-Tuwani residents who lead the Popular Resistance Committee, supported by the original founding coalition. The Camp stands for an end to the systematic displacement of Palestinians and the rights for all to live free from violence, and to actualize human rights of home, livelihoods, and safety. Expected to last only a few weeks, subjected to consistent military and settler violence, the camp has sustained itself for almost a year as of April 2018.

Encounters

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

The Encounter program provides opportunities for Israelis and Palestinian to break from their narrow, militaristic narratives that feed into the cycle of fear, hatred and violence. Through three distinct activities that allow Israelis and Palestinians to encounter the "other," learn about the other's narrative, hear the personal transformation of someone from their "side," participants can begin to change their own understanding of the conflict and their role in it. Using the methods of personal storytelling, embodied personal transformation and experiential learning Encounter programs inspire hope and encourages participants to engage in demanding a peace process. These are designed to bring Israelis and Palestinians out of their own stories as

they see them, meet the other outside of their role as active participants in the cycle of violence and provide nonviolent alternative action.

The three activities in the Encounter program, chosen by the program host and developed in cooperation with the CfP coordinator are as follows. Each activity is always followed by a galvanizing session of Q&A and open discussion to maximize personal transformation.

Parlor meetings: We use the methodology of personal storytelling to begin the process of transformation in changing the conflict for participants. Our members share their personal stories, emphasizing their past involvement in the cycle of violence, and share the process of transformation they have made. *Educational Tours:* Full day events in which Israeli and/or international participants tour different areas of the West Bank to learn about the daily challenges of the occupation in that locality and to see the other side. The day ends with a meeting structured similar to the parlor meetings. These tours are tailored to the participants' interests and needs.

Disturbing the Peace movie screenings ([trailer](#)): We screen a documentary film in community venues across Israel and Palestine, and across the world, that portrays the history and current socio-political context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It inspires hope in the capacity to move from violence to nonviolence through telling the personal narratives and stories of CFP founding members, Israeli refuseniks and Palestinian former prisoners.

In 2016, the Encounters program has reached over 2,800 Israelis and around 260 Palestinians. In 2017, we reached approximately 3,000 Israelis: 1,600 Israelis attended 40 parlour meetings, 400l joined educational trips, 1,000 viewed the movie; and more than 350 Palestinians joined in 24 house meetings. Again recognizing the asymmetry of the conflict and the privilege Israelis have, the Encounters program is primarily geared towards an Israeli audience, explaining the differential in participant demographics numbers. While some of the programs are open to the general Israeli and Palestinian publics, others are directed specifically towards the target audience of educating Israeli youth in high schools and pre-army preparatory schools before they are indoctrinated by the military.

Disturbing the Peace

The film *Disturbing the Peace* tells the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and inspires hope in the possibility for change by featuring founding members of CfP and their transformation from active participants in the cycle of violence to nonviolent activists. This powerful film is used both as part of the Encounters project and is a project on its own. The film was debuted in June 2016 in Jerusalem and since then has toured the globe. *Disturbing the Peace* was featured at the Traverse City Film Festival, hosted by Michael Moore; Boston Jewish Films Festival, and Hamptons International Film Festival and has screened in private spaces and theaters in London, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin and more. Currently the film is on tour in Israel and Palestine, with screenings in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah and more. In 2017, CfP and Reconsider coordinated at least 10 screenings followed by a Q&A per month in Israel and Palestine, additionally, in June 2017, the movie was made available for streaming on Netflix, to reach ever-growing audiences. The film publicizes CfP's work, as well as spreads our

values, portrays a model of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, and inspires hope in large quantities of viewers. This directly contributes to our strategic goal of catalyzing a mass change in public opinion, as it moves people from despair and apathy to hope.

Nonviolent Communications (NVC) and Nonviolent Action Trainings



“Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.” -Mahatma Gandhi

Nonviolence is a central tenet of the Combatants for Peace movement. Most CfP founders and members came to nonviolence after having been active perpetrators of the cycle of violence. Members came to

nonviolence through studying Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in prison, experiencing trauma from participation in the cycle of violence, recognizing the negative impact the cycle of violence has had in their own life, loss of family and friends, concern for the future of their children and families, recognizing the mutual humanity of the other, and more. CfP recognizes the importance of connecting with other nonviolent peace and liberation movements and learning from them, as well as from experts in the field.

In July 2016, 10 Israeli and 10 Palestinian CfP steering committee members travelled to Aqaba, Jordan, to participate in a week-long nonviolence action training program. The program, led by Stellan Vinthagen and Paula Green of the Karuna Center, taught history, methodology and skills in nonviolence and provided space for brainstorming, strategizing and planning nonviolent activities and movement building. This seminar allowed us to deepen our understanding of nonviolence, and strategize nonviolent tactics and methods to assist in our movement opposing the occupation. In 2018, we plan on further incorporating nonviolent theory and models from other struggles into our work. We will hold an intensive training series in collaboration with Holy Land Trust to train more members of CfP and pivotal community leaders in the peace, anti-occupation movements. We also aim to host train the trainer workshops, and give participants the skills to lead nonviolence workshops in their own communities.

Plans for 2018: International Development

In 2016, CfP established an American counterpart to raise awareness about CfP, disseminate our values, recruit supporters and advocate for nonviolent solutions to ending the occupation. We are building relationships with organizations, foundations and individuals in multiple other locations, including Berlin and London. Through the movie and these relationships, we hope to expand our network.

American Friends of Combatants for Peace launched officially on September 5th of 2017 when we received our 501c3 status from the State of Delaware. Our Board of



Directors consists of eight members, including: Joe Montville, Chair & founder of two-track diplomacy; Kathleen Peratis, co-founder of J Street and human & women's rights advocate; Mubarak Awad, the first Palestinian leader of Nonviolent action; Nizar Farsakh, Middle East expert, and senior advisor to the PA leadership; Maya Berry, Executive Director of the Arab American Institute; Don Raphael, executive chapter member of J Street Bay Area; Steve Apkon and Marcina Hale, film-makers.

Our Advisory Board consists of: Jim Zogby, Founder and Director of the Arab American Institute; Letty Pogrebin, Author and co-founder of Ms. Magazine; Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary; Amy Eilberg, first female Rabbi in the Conservative Jewish movement; Aziz Abu Sarah, co-founder of Mejdi Tours; and Sidney Topol, Innovator, Entrepreneur and peace activist.

AFCFP activities include USA speaking tours, where we bring the Combatants for Peace to speak to communities in the USA. We held two tours at the end of 2017 and are planning four more tours are for 2018. During these tours we will reach California, New York, Colorado, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Florida. These speaking tours serve to educate the American public about the nonviolent efforts being made on behalf of Peace and justice in Israel and Palestine. They also serve to advocate for human rights - and for hope. We are also launching a series of trips for Americans to visit Israel and Palestine, which will allow Americans to see and experience the Combatants work on the ground. Our first trips are scheduled for November, 2018.

In 2018, CFP hopes to create a grassroots culture of nonviolence and peacebuilding in Israeli and Palestinian societies through community building, direct action, education and advocacy. We see the ever-increasing militarization and violence of our societies as begetting even more violence. Bringing nonviolence to the public conversation, through training and educational workshops, and embedding all of our activities with intentional nonviolence will provide a counter to the pull of our societies to more violence and may shift our societies towards peaceful resolution of the conflict. In our struggle for a different future, we must implement the norms that we wish future to hold in our movement of today. Our unique position of being a nonviolent bi-national movement can transform both Israeli and Palestinian society, and provide a replicable model of peacebuilding for conflicts all over the world.

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