

FERIEN VOM KRIEG

DIALOGE ÜBER
GRENZEN HINWEG



CALL FOR DONATIONS 2023

Dear supporters,

for almost three months now, hundreds of thousands of people in Israel have been taking to the streets against a “judicial reform”, which for them is less of a reform and more an undermining of the separation of state powers and an attack on democracy. For left-wing activists, demands of protesters often do not go far enough: for them, democracy has not been at risk only since the November elections, but in their view, the situation of occupation excludes genuine democratic conditions by definition. Now Prime Minister Netanyahu announced a partial weakening of the reforms, and further decisions have been postponed. Many, however, see this as merely an attempt to debilitate the movement.

For Palestinians, the political atmosphere fueled by individual members of the Israeli government has very serious consequences, as recently demonstrated by the violent outrage in Huwara (West Bank).

In Serbia, President Vučić, too, continues

his attempts of an authoritarian restructuring of the state: A new police law aims to expand police powers and restrict democratic rights through, for example, legalizing biometric facial recognition and house searches in the absence of affected persons as well as prohibiting the filming of police actions by citizens. So far, civil society has successfully stood up against the enactment of the law and approval of the law remains pending.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, while elections in the fall of 2022 did bring a social democrat as Bosniak member to the state presidency, overall, nationalist and authoritarian tendencies remain on the rise. Recently, attacks on journalists have also increased, especially in Republika Srpska.

Democratic achievements must not only be fought for time and again, but also need to be defended against authoritarian attacks. Doing so requires, among other things, political dialogue and the creation of safe spaces, both of which we enable together with our partners.

SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH YOUR DONATION!

Brigitte Klauß
coordinator

Tessa Pariyar
coordinator

Katharina Ochsendorf
coordinator

Tom Jennissen
Board Committee For Fundamental Rights and Democracy

PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2023

Former Yugoslavia

February Supervision meeting for Team members, Tuzla

March Weekend visit, Sombor

May preparatory workshop for team members, Tuzla

July Peace Camp for YU-Peace members, Tuzla

August Peace Camp, Seget Donji

September Weekend visit, place tba

October Evaluation workshop for team members, Tuzla

Israel and Palestine

Dialogue seminar for Women

March activist weekend for former participants

April - July Political Tour in Jaffa, preparation meetings for new participants

July Dialogue seminar, Walberberg

September Follow-up meetings for seminar participants

Organization Seekers (*name changed*)

from December 2022 bi- and unination meetings and seminars for active members in Palestine and Israel

from April facilitation trainings

June joint weekend seminar for active members and team members in Thalita Kumi, Beit Jala

Autumn Launch of new Dialogue groups

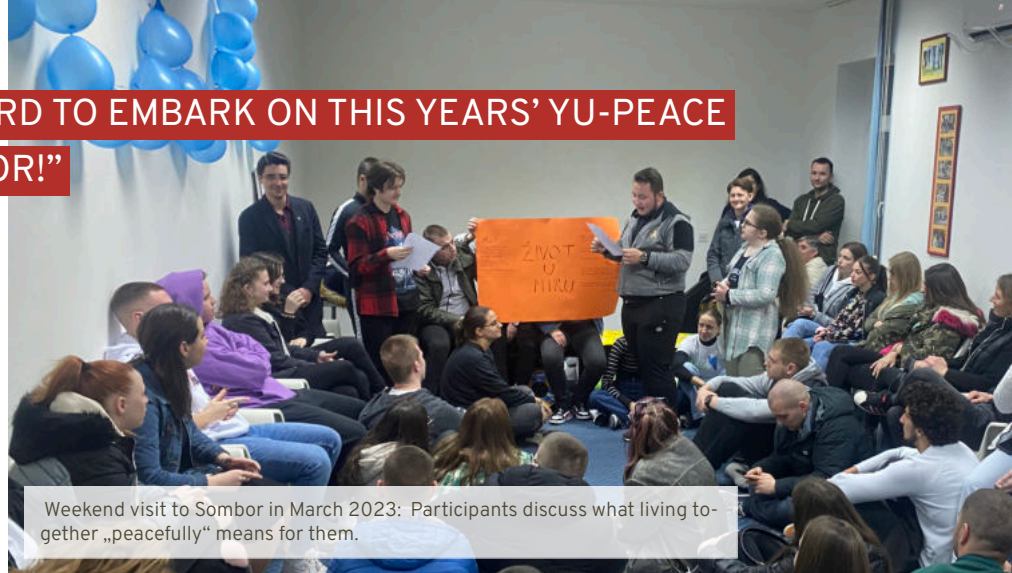
“WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO EMBARK ON THIS YEARS’ YU-PEACE ADVENTURE FROM SOMBOR!”

This year's activities have already begun in our partner cities in the Balkans. After a supervision weekend for staff in Tuzla at the beginning of the year, the first weekend visit of this year to Sombor in Serbia took place on the penultimate weekend of March.

Weekend visits are an important element of the work of the Youth United in Peace network. Youngsters who have already participated in a Summer Peace Camp visit their friends in one of the partner cities for a long weekend.

What makes the weekend visits special is the fact that the young people are accommodated locally in the families of participants from the host city. This has several effects: On the one hand, the youngsters get to know each other better, see each other's homes and can better empathize with their everyday lives in their city.

But above all, the concept of weekend visits involves the families of the participants and thus the work of the network can have an impact not only on the young people, but also on the generation of parents and, in some cases, grandparents: The families gain trust in the families of the “Others” who take in their children and during the visit the families get to know these children personally, which opens up the possibility of breaking down enemy stereotypes on this level as well and can stimulate conversations about the wars and the current



Weekend visit to Sombor in March 2023: Participants discuss what living together „peacefully“ means for them.

political situation even after the weekend.

In recent years, weekend visits could only take place to a limited extent; due to the pandemic, the young people were mostly accommodated in hotels. The visit to Sombor is the first one where again a large part of the participants can stay overnight in families.

Jelena Stulic from our partner organization Link in Sombor wrote to us in anticipation of the upcoming weekend:

“40 young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia will come to Sombor, while they will be welcomed by 30 people from Sombor, so I can proudly say that we have a total of 70 participants. The young people from Sombor are not only very happy to see their friends from the neighboring countries, but also have the opportunity to show them our city. To do this, we developed some exciting questions which will guide the youngsters in exploring the city. Two young people from Sombor will accompany small

groups of ten participants each through the city and explore important places in Sombor.

As with every weekend visit, there will also be a joint action for the host city: The young people will plant ten trees together and pick up trash around the business high school in Sombor. This way they do something for our community, and we also promote their environmental awareness.

This time, the weekend visit also has a humanitarian aid aspect, as all participants bring a toy with them. The collected toys from all participants will be sent to children affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. We will also show the young people the new premises of our organization and familiarize them with our work and the way we function all year round. (...)

The YU-Peace Network creates decades-long friendships, and along with other programs, the weekend visits go a long way in giving those friendships a special thread that makes them stronger and more beautiful. (...)

The weekend visit to Sombor is the first event for young people within the YU-Peace network this year, which is why we are very much looking forward to embarking on this years’ YU-Peace adventure from Sombor, which will bring many beautiful memories, many new friendships, many new faces, empathy, solidarity, and love.”



Action for a sustainable future: Participants plant trees in Sombor to leave a mark and set an example.

PALESTINIANS AT PROTESTS IN ISRAEL:

“THERE IS A SENSE OF NOT BELONGING TO THE DEMONSTRATIONS”

For 2023, we plan another dialogue seminar for Palestinian and Israeli women. The political omens are very difficult this year: it is unclear whether the escalating situation will strengthen or rather further weaken the willingness to engage in dialogue, especially on the Palestinian side.

At the beginning of the year, Banu D. (*name changed*) took over the coordination of Rana K. (*name changed*) on the Palestinian side. Banu D. is a lawyer and activist and has been active in dialogue work for many years. In recent years, she has headed a nonprofit organization in Jerusalem that, among other things, provides free legal assistance to persons experiencing racism. In March, she wrote about the current demonstrations in Israel in the wake of the judicial reform the new Israeli government is gradually adopting and implementing.

(Text: Banu D.) These days, demonstrations against the legal reforms promoted by the government are on the rise. Undoubtedly, the legal reforms have a severe impact on Palestinian society in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

At the same time, one thing is clear to both sides: in order for the Arab public¹ in Israel to join the mass demonstrations, they need to feel like a partner. A partner that has a place in demonstrations - with its symbols, with its slogans, with its protest. Of course, many Palestinian Arabs do not want the reforms to be passed, but at the same time they do not want the existing situation to remain as it is - a situation of injustice, discrimination and occupation.

Many wonder where the Arab public is in the demonstrations inside Israel. On the one hand, the non-participation

of Palestinians in particular in the demonstrations stems from a basic sense of alienation and the relationship with

does not mean for them that they should not participate in the protests. They believe that they cannot watch from the



the ruling establishment in Israel.

There is a sense of not belonging to the demonstrations. The Arab public feels that they are not protesting the same things, not demonstrating for the same reasons as the Jewish-Israeli demonstrators: It is impossible to talk about democracy when the Israeli government destroys Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, when violence dominates Arab society (...). On the other hand, there are also many Arabs who decided to participate in the demonstrations anyway.

Even though they have a lot of criticism of the Supreme Court's behavior towards Arab society over the years, this

sidelines, they believe that they have to take an independent position, as a minority in the demonstrations and as a minority within the Arab minority in the country.

In my opinion, in this context, Jewish society must recognize the need to deepen its knowledge of Arab society. Familiarity with the people and their culture, as well as their language, are a necessary key to understanding, discussions and conversations that are required to build a true partnership between the two sectors of society in the country.

¹ When I write “Arab public”, I write it with the intention of letting each Arab decide their own nationality. There are Arabs who define themselves as Palestinians, some who define themselves as Israelis, and others who see themselves exclusively as Arabs.



VACATION FROM WAR BECOMES "SPEAK UP" - THE FUTURE OF DIALOGUES ACROSS BORDERS

Already in 2020, the circle of full-time and voluntary staff of Vacation From War began to reconsider the project name.

As we shared in our last annual report, the title "Vacation From War" repeatedly leads to confusion or even irritation, especially among those who are newly acquainted with the project as interested supporters or who are participating in dialogue encounters for the first time. In addition, it no longer reflects the core of our work, as it may suggest that it is primarily a matter of enabling adolescents and young adults to spend their free time together or to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

While the vacational aspect was a central element in the early years of the project when it organized children's camps, in both project regions the serious, often challenging political dialogue, the encounter with the "other" side has increasingly moved to the center of our work. After many rounds of talks with long-time activists, colleagues of the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy and partners in the project regions, it is decided: "Vacation From War - Dialogues across Borders" will become "Speak up - Dialogues across Borders", in German "Wi.e.ersprechen - Dialoge über Grenzen hinweg". Since political dialogue work across physical, political and emotional borders has been at the heart of our work for many years, the slogan "Dialogues across borders" continues to apply.

In German, the new name is a play on words with the verb "to contradict" and the words "to speak again" and contains the projects' most important elements.

It is about talking to each other again in contexts in which all too often conflictual social and political issues of the past and present are tabooed or distorted and charged with hostility in populist media and political opinion-making. Also, it is about hearing from the often downright demonized "others" in person, exchanging ideas, developing understanding and expressing one's own positions - in other words, to speak up (again) oneself. At the same time, the very decision to enter into political dialogue with the other sides is an act of contradiction, an act of resistance, and an act of political activism. It is an act of opposition against a political reality that only knows friends or enemies. Against perpetuating cycles of violence and populism, against the primacy of political-economic interests over peace and justice.

Not least, it is a contradiction to and resistance against the stereotypical dehumanization of the "others" and thus a re-encounter with the "others" as persons with feelings, fears and hopes.

This resistant counterpoint, which the dialogue encounters set, finds its continuation in the political activism of the participants, to which the encounters often motivate them. (...)

In English, the slogan "Speak up", while only a partial translation, intends to convey this same idea. It stands for exactly what we have already been doing for many years: in creating spaces of political dialogue, we enable young people to contradict, resist, speak up (again), to develop perspectives for a different, peaceful future and to set out together to achieve it.

DONATE AND SUPPORT

Strengthen our work through your donation!

We would love for you to take the opportunity to also tell friends about Vacation From War and invite them to support us!

Donation account

New account information
Grundrechtkomitee

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Donations to the project are tax-deductable. Please fill in your address as 'purpose of transfer' in the bank transfer, You will receive a donation receipt in January of the following year.

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On data protection in accordance with EU data protection regulation: We like to keep in touch with you: we have stored your data (postal address) for the sole purpose of sending you our project information (and, if applicable, a donation receipt). Of course, we will not pass on your data. You can revoke consent to receive information from us any time by email or post and we will subsequently delete your data. Upon request, we provide you with information at any time about what personal data we have stored on your person.

Editorial

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