



### CALL FOR DONATIONS 2024

Together, participants observe the Israeli historical narrative exhibition, summer 2023

#### Dear supporters,

In our 30th anniversary year, we are dismayed seeing one of our project regions at war. The unprecedented escalation in Israel and Palestine marks a break for our work.

In our Special Bulletin in November 2023, we hoped in vain for an early end to the war. The terrorist attack by Hamas and the subsequent war in Gaza have had serious consequences in both Palestine and Israel – albeit radically different ones – including for our partners personally.

In Israel, the militarization of society, (re-)traumatization, social rifts over views on the war in Gaza and state repression are all part of the picture. The war in Gaza continues unabated, the situation of the civilian population is beyond description. Less visible to many are the developments in the West Bank, where the situation is worsening at all levels: the presence of the Israeli army and attacks by radical settlers have increased significantly. There are more (mobi-

le) checkpoints and there is great fear of raids, arrests, repression and physical attacks. Impressively, our partners on the ground continue to work – in whatever way possible and sensible in this new reality (p. 2).

Our partners in the Balkans tell us that repression against political activists is increasing, democratic processes are being visibly undermined and nationalism of various political actors too often falls on fertile ground in their societies. In Serbia, civil society was constantly on the streets in 2023, first with mass protests against the rampant violence in the country, then against the fraud in the elections that President Vučić had called in December in response to the protests. Our partner organization Link was actively involved in the protests, some youngsters from Youth United in Peace (YU-Peace) were involved as election monitors and were brutally attacked because of it. More on this in the 2023 annual report.

Several Peace Camps will take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in 2024, including the camp for activists in Srebrenica in July and the Peace Camp in Seget Donji in August. The project anniversary will be celebrated in fall with a special weekend visit in Tuzla (p.3).


2024 is one of the most difficult years in the history of the project, especially for our work in Palestine and Israel. Instead of shying away from this, our partners want to further consolidate our work and develop new concepts.


Our solidarity and support for those who continue to oppose the cycles of violence and fight for a peaceful path to a just future remains unbroken.

To keep making this possible, we depend on your generous donation.

### SUPPORT THE COURAGEOUS WORK OF OUR PARTNERS IN ISRAEL, PALESTINE AND THE BALKANS!

  
Brigitte Kläß  
coordinator

  
Tessa Pariyar  
coordinator

  
Katharina Ochsendorf  
coordinator

  
Tom Jennissen  
Board Committee For Funda-  
mental Rights and Democracy

## “SOMETIMES, THE SITUATION STRIKES ME DOWN” – IS DIALOGUE POSSIBLE IN TIMES OF WAR?



The brutal incision of October 7th and the ongoing war in Gaza raise questions for 2024 as to whether political dialog is humanly possible and responsible? Politically sensible? Are personal encounters even logistically possible to organize given the current security situation? Our partners in Israel and Palestine have different answers to this situation.

From Israel, our partners report increasing repression against protests, journalists and restrictions on freedom of expression. The horrifying images from Gaza are virtually absent from the Israeli mainstream media; criticism of the military tactics of the Israeli army and calls for a ceasefire fall silent or are ostracized as “treason”. The rocket fire from Gaza into Israel has now subsided considerably, and in many places a kind of “everyday life” seems to have returned – but the state of war is still present: not only are slogans such as “Together we will

win” emblazoned on banners or posters in the public sphere, soldiers and reservists are now also required to carry their weapons in everyday life. In this new “normality”, people in civilian clothes are suddenly sitting in bars and pubs at the weekend with machine guns, violent attacks and sexualized violence are on the rise, shares Liron L., Israeli coordinator of the Women’s Seminar.

In the West Bank, as well as in East Jerusalem, cell phones are now searched and messages and social media posts are checked as standard procedure at the many newly established checkpoints. “If you try to delete the app, they check and find out which apps you have downloaded before”, reports Salma F. (*name changed*), Palestinian coordinator of the Women’s Seminar. People are afraid to go outside; checkpoints and inspections make journeys unpredictably long. The number of arrests and deaths has skyro-

cketed since October 7th. The economic situation is also getting worse. Emotionally, this is very challenging: “Sometimes the situation strikes me down, and I accept this feeling”, says Salma F., “I have strategies to deal with these feelings. I deeply believe in human rights (...). I believe in change (...) and that in the end, we will live together as Palestinians and Israelis.” But there are also activists who no longer want to continue, she reports: “I have heard of Palestinians who gave up their dialogue and human rights work during the war because they could not stand what the Israeli and Palestinian participants were saying to each other and the facilitators were not able to create a space where all voices could be heard – the conversations were just so full of anger.”

But what can political dialogue work look like at the moment? Our partner organization Seekers (*name changed*) mainly holds uni-national meetings. At the same time, long-standing active participants, team and board members come together in various constellations, exchange views on the current situation and, above all, talk about their feelings. While Seekers is planning a structured program for alumni and the launch of new triangle dialogue groups this year, the devastating developments remain a crisis for their work. “Right now, the situation is this: People are half in, people are leaving, but they are also coming back. The most important thing now is:

Stay together!” says Sarah T. (*name changed*), a founding member of Seekers. And Karim A. (*name changed*), Palestinian coordinator, in February 2024 adds: “Two months ago, I had lost hope. But the war continues and the occupation is ongoing. We need new methods for the time after the war. We are back to square one. It’s a new reality and we have to learn how and with whom we can continue.”

The Women’s Seminar team and former participants have a different approach to the situation. Initially, there were only uni-national meetings and some team members were unsure whether it would be fruitful to bring the two sides together at this time, especially because it was only possible in the digital space due to the political situation.

In mid-March, they then invited past participants to a binational exchange online. There was great interest on both sides and the meeting planned for two hours for 10 participants turned into a four-and-a-half-hour exchange with 26 participants. First, everyone was invited to share their feelings and thoughts since October 7th with the group. On the Israeli side, shame, fear and anger were the feelings most present in the group. The Palestinian group also had much fear and anger, but the participants also spoke of exhaustion, traumatization and despair. “This first binational meeting started with a focus on the feelings of the participants. It was a success and we now want to organize more digital meetings that also raise deeper political discussions”, said Liron L. after the meeting. “We were worried that the meeting would be very aggressive, but that

wasn’t the case. What became clear is that since the seminar in Germany, over the past few months, participants had mainly seen each other’s posts on social media, but never talked to each other about them. Now they were able to ask what one post or another meant and reflect on it”, adds Salma F.. The work with the 2023 group continues.

This summer, the Women’s Seminar team is planning an alumni and concept-building seminar in Germany. The aim is to update the seminar program and build a strong team that is up to the challenging dialogue work for the coming years.

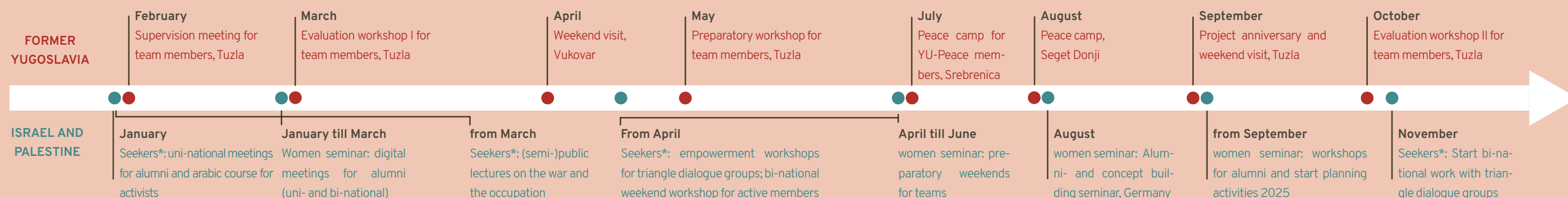
## 30 YEARS OF DIALOGUE WORK IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA – DEFINITELY A REASON TO CELEBRATE!

30 years ago, in the summer of 1994, the first encounters took place in the former Yugoslavia under the name “Vacation From War Campaign”. While Klaus and Hanne Vack’s original idea was to give children of internally displaced persons a two weeks’ rest at the seaside during the war and at the same time ensure that they met the “others”, these camps for children have evolved over time into Peace Camps, political encounters for youth. A lot has happened in the last 30 years: While in the early years of the project,

camps were organized and led by volunteers from the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy in Germany, a local team of several generations of volunteers and a full-time local coordinator do the work since more than twenty years now. They build the content and implement the Peace Camp and other dialogue-centered activities. Most of them took part in the seaside camps as children or youngsters and grew up in the project. In 2014, local active members founded Youth United in Peace (YU-Peace), which

connects the various initiatives, groups and organizations in the partner cities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia forming a cross-border network. This is the umbrella under which most of the annual activities take place. Not only partnerships, but also numerous friendships have developed in the course of joint activism; most activists describe YU-Peace as their “second family”. For many, their commitment gives them hope and motivates them to continue working for change in the region instead

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2024







Together for political change: Youth at the camp for activists in Tuzla in July 2023

## DONATE AND SUPPORT

Strengthen our work through your donation!

### Donation account

Grundrechtekomitee

IBAN DE30 3702 0500 0001 7873 02

BIC BFSWDE33XXX

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.

### Digital newsletter

Want to stay updated? Sign up for our digital newsletter through our homepage! And receive recent news and more information on a regular basis!

### Data protection

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



Brigitte Klaß, Katharina Ochsendorf,  
Tessa Pariyar

GRUNDRECHTE **KOMITEE**.de

### Project Speak up

Aquinostraße 7-11 | 50670 Köln | Germany  
phone +49 (0) 221 97 26 918

info@speakup-dialogue.org  
www.speakup-dialogue.org

 Wi.e.ersprechen.Speakup  
 speak\_up\_dialogue

of for example emigrating, like many other people do. While the project has achieved a lot in its sphere of influence and at an organizational level, many of the socio-political challenges remain: Nationalism, corruption, nepotism and the poor economic situation, to name but a few.

Despite these challenges, our partners are convinced that it is still worth fighting together for a better society. It is essential not to lose sight of the social and political utopia, but also to celebrate the small successes along the way. And 30 years of dialogue work are definitely a reason to celebrate!

On September 22, 2024, this anniversary will be celebrated during a weekend visit in Tuzla. Active YU-Peace members from all three countries, former participants and staff from different generations will be invited. For Vlasta Marković, who is now coordinating the project, it is important to create positivity and highlight what the project has achieved over the past years, more so when looking at the current global situation, which is characterized by numerous wars and conflicts.

In their own short talks based on the concept of "TED Talks", present and former YU-Peace activists will talk about various aspects of the project: e.g. how participation in the Peace Camps has changed them, about the friendships and joint projects that have been created through

YU-Peace, or what motivates them to remain active, even if the hoped-for changes sometimes fail to materialize. Another item on the program of the celebration will be the presentation of the "YU-Peace Award", a nominal peace prize that will be awarded this year for the first time by the network to groups, initiatives or individuals who have rendered outstanding services through their commitment to peaceful coexistence within the three countries. Last but not least, the event will also offer plenty of space to exchange ideas, network and, of course, have fun.

There will be a special public relations concept around the anniversary, which Vlasta Marković has developed together with Vanja Smiljić, who will be supporting her in this area on a freelance basis from April.

In addition, an anniversary film is to be produced by a professional filmmaker. The film will tell the story of the project in the Balkans over the past 30 years with various voices of active and former participants and staff, as well as their parents. The film will be rather serious, but also motivating and hopeful.

All these activities in the anniversary year are aimed, among other things, at drawing more public attention to the project, making it more visible locally and possibly also attracting local donors.