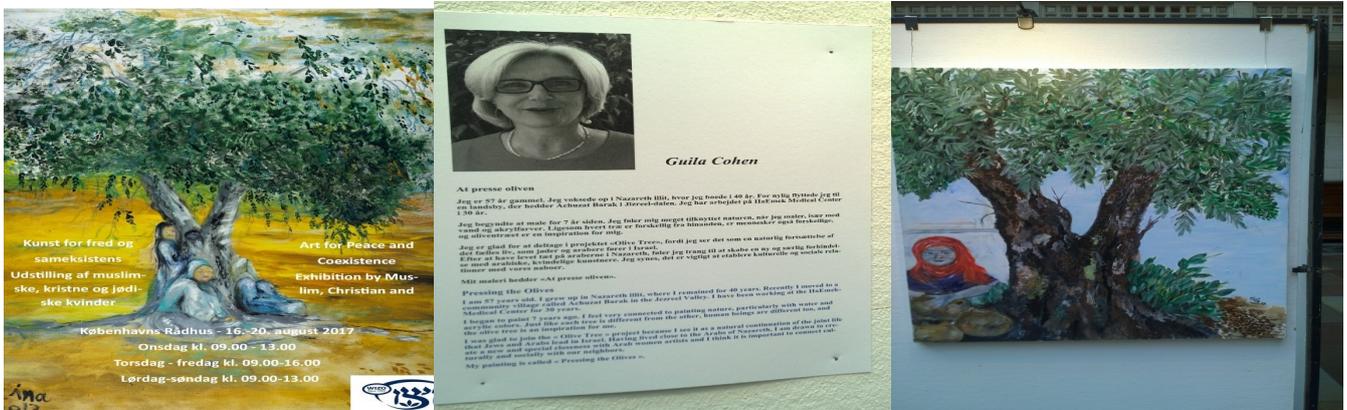


Report on” Women and their Olive Trees” exhibition in Denmark 2017

It took 3 years for WIZO Denmark to be able to present the unique peace project from Afula and the nearby villages “Women and their Olive Tree” to the Danish public, after Manuèle Amar, WIZO France, presented the project to the European WIZO federations. Personally, I immediately saw the important impact this project could have in our attempt to fight back against BDS followers and other people, who are ready to paint the worst possible picture of the state of Israel and the Israelis. But it was hard work to convince someone to donate the cost of it and to find a place to exhibit the paintings. When WIZO asked for donations, people were used to the fact that donations to WIZO would fund social projects focusing on Israeli children or women in need. They did not connect a peace project with WIZO. Nevertheless, we received a positive answer to our application a year and a half ago and more or less at the same time Copenhagen City Council offered us the city hall for the exhibition in August 2017. Planning of the exhibition was then started.



Under the guidance of an experienced Danish painter, who is also a WIZO member, and with the help from municipality employees plus Manuèle Amar and Dudu Moatty, we put up the paintings and presentation signs in Danish and English at the beautiful City Hall on 15 August this year. We also prepared a place for children to make their own paintings.



On the next morning, pupils from two 6th grade school classes of a public school came to see the paintings, learn about the project and finally make their own drawings. To conduct this session, we had priceless help from Dudu, and it was an important success. Not only did the pupils learn about the first known peace symbol, “the olive branch”, from the bible but they were also introduced to Israeli women’s efforts for peace in Israel. They also had a wonderful time making their own drawings, which we exhibited too until the exhibition ended 5 days later. They then got the drawings back to use in class. The impact of exhibiting the children’s drawings was very positive, as their parents and grandparents came to see their own child/grandchild’s drawing and while they were there, they took interest in seeing the paintings as well as hearing about the project. Also, two school classes – a 4th and a 5th grade – came from the Jewish School to the exhibition. Again, it was the same experience as with the previous pupils, except they already knew the story about the olive branch from the bible and they were already used to working with projects concerning Israel. So here we put more stress on the fact that it is a WIZO project. Later I was invited to the Rosh Chodesh event at the school to talk about WIZO, and in November we are going to have our annual bazaar at the school.



At the opening speeches were given by a representative of the City Council (as the mayor was ill). Consul Einav Schneller represented the Israeli Embassy as the ambassador was at his daughter’s wedding, Bella Danowsky, represented WIZO Sweden, Dudu Moatty informed about the project and I myself gave a short speech. A choir from the Henrik Goldschmidt music school for Jewish, Christian and Muslim children entertained the attendees with songs related to all groups accompanied by a guitar player and an oud player. More than one hundred people came to attend the opening and were invited by the City Council to have a glass of wine and some of their famous pancakes, while seeing the paintings.





More than 1000 people came to see the exhibition each day during the 5 days. Not all of them came because they knew of the exhibition, but when they by chance saw the paintings they became interested and asked about the project. Our guides were busy all day long telling people about the project, and many took the opportunity to make their own drawings like the children had done. All of it happened whilst we had interesting talks about peace and about the state of Israel. A lot of people from around the world – including from Israel – came to get married at Copenhagen City Hall's beautiful wedding room. The couple from Israel were gay people and had many family members with them. Of course they took a special interest in the Olive Tree project, because it came from Israel. Other visitors came from Canada, USA, Korea, China, Tunis and countries around Europe and showed a profound interest in the project and asked about the possibility of having the exhibition take place in their home country. A Korean woman stated that she would start a similar project for solving the aggressive conflict amongst divided families in her home country. A Chinese family showed us how to write the words "peace" and "coexistence" in Chinese. Many shared their wish for a better world with us. Luckily, many Danes also came to see the paintings and talked about the situation in Israel with us. There is no doubt that the exhibition will have the impact of a greater number of the Danish people seeing Israel as a democratic state trying to solve the conflict amongst the different communities, alongside the Palestinians. The general view was that they were genuinely impressed by the women behind the Olive Tree project, an aftermath we still feel and see around us.



Thank you to Dudu Moatty and Sheila Casdi for having initiated and lead this project and to the women behind the paintings for having taken part in it. Thank you to Manuèle Amar for having brought the paintings to Europe. Finally, thank you to the managers of World WIZO for having included the project in the organization as well as also recognizing the subsequent project "Pathways together". My special and heartfelt thanks goes to Manuèle Amar and Dudu Moatty for coming to Copenhagen with their spouses to participate in the exhibition here.

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WIZO Denmark

Links: A video from the exhibition is available on our website:
www.wizo.dk/da/kvinder-deres-oliventraeer

