



Bridging the divide: 12 groups working for Israel-Palestine peace

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Despite the awful escalation of violence, these grassroots groups remain committed to achieving peace. Here's how

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Peace has perhaps never felt so distant for Israel and Palestine as it does now. But amid the horrors of this war, it's easy to forget that out there – on both sides of the border – are ordinary people working tirelessly in their communities and across divides to achieve it.

Here are some of the grassroots groups striving for a peaceful resolution.

1. Standing Together, Israel

Since last weekend's terrorist attacks on innocent civilians in Israel by Hamas, and the Israeli government's subsequent and relentless bombardment of Gaza, Jewish and Palestinian volunteers living in Israel have united to help victims of the violence. They are part of the [Standing Together](https://www.standing-together.org/en) (<https://www.standing-together.org/en>) movement, reputedly the largest Arab-Jewish grassroots group in Israel. It mobilises Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel "in pursuit of peace, equality, and social and climate justice".

"The future that we want – peace and independence for Israelis and Palestinians, full equality for all citizens, and true social, economic, and environmental justice – is possible," reads a [statement](https://www.standing-together.org/en) (<https://www.standing-together.org/en>) on the organisation's website. "Where there is struggle, there is hope."

2. Combatants for Peace, Israel/Palestine

The ex-combatants who founded this joint Israeli-Palestinian nonprofit were once part of the cycle of violence that plagues the region. Now, they have put down their weapons to promote peace instead.

"For our movement, this is a crucial moment where we must all dig deep," said the organisation in a [recent statement](https://www.facebook.com/c4peace/?locale=de_DE#) (https://www.facebook.com/c4peace/?locale=de_DE#). "The only solution is ending the occupation, uniting Israelis and Palestinians and focusing our collective efforts on achieving peace. We call for non-violence, a renewed sense of humanity, and better days ahead for all of our children."

3. The Parents Circle – Families Forum, Israel/Palestine

Launched in 1995, the PCFF is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organisation (<https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcff-home-page-en/>) that brings together more than 600 families from both sides, all of whom have lost someone to the ongoing conflict.

The nonprofit uses educational resources, public meetings and the media to spread ideas of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. It is managed by a joint Israeli-Palestinian board and operates from two offices: the Palestinian office in Beit Jala and the Israeli office in Ramat Ef'al.



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The advertisement features a man with a beard and a cap standing in a field with horses. The magazine cover behind him has the title 'Positive News' and the headline 'REWILDING GOES GUERRILLA'. Below the headline, it says 'How one Israeli and one Palestinian are working to build new bridges. Are they right?'.

(<https://www.positive.news/product/magazine-subscription/>)

4. Women Wage Peace/Women of the Sun, Israel/Palestine

Israel-based Women Wage Peace (<https://www.womenwagepeace.org.il/en/>) (WWP) and its Palestinian sister movement Women of the Sun (<https://womensun.org/about-women-of-the-sun/>) empower women on both sides of the border to shore up support for peace in their communities and build trust across divides.

Founded in the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza War, WWP has around 45,000 Israeli members, reportedly making it the largest grassroots peace movement in Israel today.

WWP refracts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – and its resolution – through a gendered lens, and believes that women should be put at the heart of peace negotiations. Its members also work to dismantle ‘counter-productive’ arguments made by decision-makers that perpetuate the conflict.

5. EcoPeace Middle East, Israel/Jordan/Palestine

Last year, people living in Gaza enjoyed sewage-free swimming for the first time in years thanks to [a cross-border collaboration to clean up the strip’s coastline](https://www.positive.news/environment/life-returns-to-gaza-strip-wetlands-and-beaches/) (<https://www.positive.news/environment/life-returns-to-gaza-strip-wetlands-and-beaches/>).

It was thanks largely to the efforts of EcoPeace Middle East, an environmental peace-building organisation working across Israel, Jordan and Palestine to promote collaboration for the sake of the environment.

Its efforts led to Israel approving sewage treatment upgrades in Gaza, enabling the restoration of the Gaza Strip’s biggest wetland, the Wadi Gaza, a one-time biodiversity hotspot that had been choked with sewage for three decades.

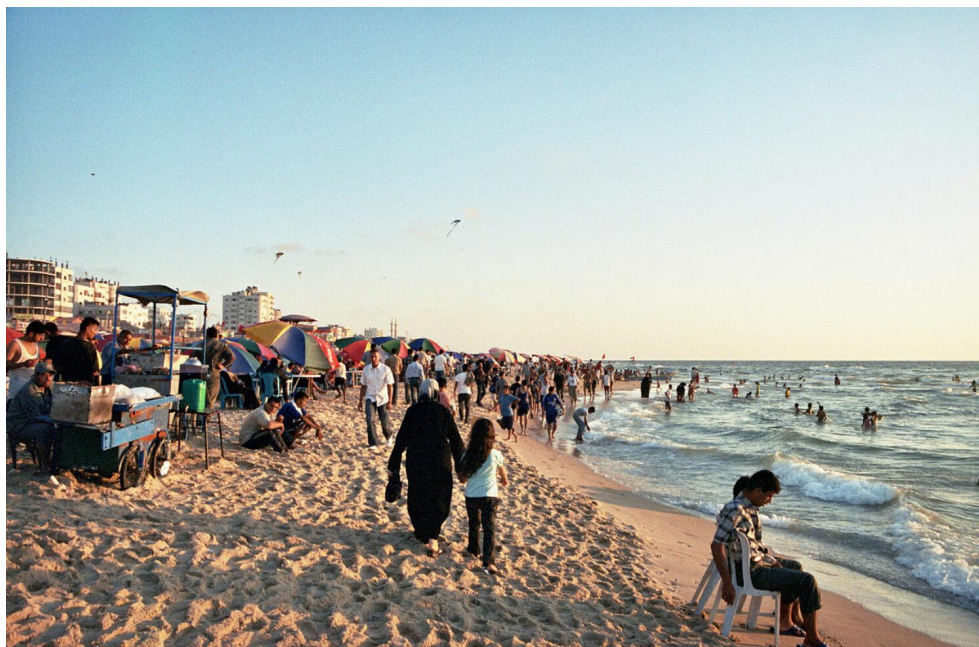
“The environment, shared water resources and increasingly the climate crisis are issues of common concern, they don’t respect borders,” EcoPeace Middle East’s Israeli co-director Gidon Bromberg told Positive News. “We are dependent on each other.”

6. Hand in Hand, Israel

In Israel, a growing number of [integrated schools have been bringing Jewish and Palestinian children together](https://www.positive.news/society/education/part-of-a-mosaic-of-peace-the-schools-bridging-religious-divides/) (<https://www.positive.news/society/education/part-of-a-mosaic-of-peace-the-schools-bridging-religious-divides/>) to learn under one roof (Palestinians account for almost a quarter of Israel’s population).

"I think we are creating a model of what Israel can and should look like," said Lee Gordon, co-founder of Hand in Hand (<https://www.handinhandk12.org/about/>), which has six integrated Jewish-Arab schools in Israel, in a 2020 interview with Positive News.

Students learn Hebrew and Arabic at the schools. Hand in Hand also facilitates meetings between parents. "We organise discussions, picnics, integrated sports teams, community gardens, dialogue groups," said Gordon. "Parents are often not used to meeting each other."



Last year, people living in Gaza enjoyed cleaner water thanks to a cross-border collaboration to clean up the strip's coastline. Image: Gus

7. Jerusalem Peacebuilders, US

Jerusalem Peacebuilders (<https://www.jerusalempeacebuilders.org>) (JPB) brings together Israelis, Palestinians and Americans, and provides them with the skills they need to become future leaders for peace.

Posting while sheltering from the attacks in Israel, the nonprofit's founding director The Rev Canon Nicholas Porter wrote: "This attack shows the deadly futility underlying the trust in arms to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. War begets only war; hatred begets only hatred. Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druze do not wish to live like this.

“A new generation of leadership both young and old is required for a better future. JPB’s peacebuilding work with teachers, women, and youth trains leaders with the skills, confidence, self-awareness, and understanding to forge that future.”

8. Road to Recovery, Israel

Road to Recovery (<https://www.theroadtorecovery.org.il>) is an Israeli association of volunteers who drive Palestinian patients, primarily children, from checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza for life-saving treatments in Israeli hospitals.

(<https://www.theroadtorecovery.org.il/>)

Its members also help with the purchase of medical equipment, and organise holidays and outings for patients and their families. It has more than 1,200 volunteers, both Israeli and Palestinian, who “provide an opportunity for healing through one simple gesture – driving”.

9. Extend, US

Extend’s (<https://www.extendprograms.org>) on-the-ground learning programmes have connected American Jews with Israeli and Palestinian leaders fighting for democracy and human rights since 2013. Its tours bring participants to communities across Israel and Palestine.

The recent conflict is likely to impact such trips, which attempt to provide audiences with nuanced perspectives about the Israeli and Palestinian past, present, and future.



A commitment to peace: Jewish Voice for Peace's protest outside the International Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference last year. Image: Joe Piette

10. Jewish Voice for Peace, US

California-based Jewish Voice for Peace (<https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org>) is a multiracial, cross-class, intergenerational movement of US Jews who promote freedom for Palestinian people. The organisation has strongly condemned the massacre of Israelis by Hamas, and Israel's bombing of Gaza.

In a blog post it said: "To point out Palestinian oppression is not, as so many commentators have alleged, to justify the unjustifiable killing of Israeli civilians by Hamas. It is simply another way of asking that we treat Palestinians with the empathy and decency that we ourselves long for, and to actually take the steps necessary to ensure the only real and lasting peace – the kind that will come with Palestinian freedom, justice, and equality."

11. Solutions Not Sides, UK

Solutions Not Sides is an education programme in the UK that provides schoolchildren with critical-thinking skills to help them resolve conflict, promote dialogue and challenge prejudice.

Its [weekly newsletter \(https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/news-blog/newsletter-archive\)](https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/news-blog/newsletter-archive) provides fact-checked updates and diverse perspectives on the Israel-Palestine conflict, attempting to cut through the bias while giving voice to different groups.

12. Salaam Shalom Kitchen, UK

Recent events have lent poignancy to Wednesday dinner times at Nottingham's [Salaam Shalom Kitchen \(https://salaamshalomkitchen.co.uk\)](https://salaamshalomkitchen.co.uk). The joint Muslim-Jewish project in the English city every Wednesday serves hot meals to people who are experiencing food poverty and loneliness. It was founded to break down barriers between Muslim and Jewish communities, and boost community cohesion more generally.

"It's about bringing people together to show our joint commitment as communities to each other, but also to the city, to demonstrate our shared values of compassion, dignity and service," co-chair, Sajid Mohammed told Channel Four news.

Main image: Levi Meir Clancy

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