

13/5/2021

שלום עכשיו
PEACE NOW

Dear friends,

We are writing to you today, from Peace Now, with a heavy heart and tired eyes after a difficult week. We have been standing for years with the residents of East Jerusalem, of Silwan, Batan al Hawa and Sheikh Jarrah, whose homes are at risk of imminent eviction. The escalation of violence in Jerusalem, over-policing of Ramadan prayers and gatherings, and increased violence towards the non-violent protesters in Sheikh Jarrah have been causing us much anxiety. It was clear we are reaching a melting point, and nevertheless police brutality only increased including stun grenades in Al-Aksa mosque during the last weekend of Ramadan. On Monday, "Jerusalem Day", which celebrates the unification of Jerusalem in 1967, right wing extremists and their leaders, such as Itamar Ben Gvir, provoked the Palestinians of Jerusalem in nationalistic flag parades. All this was taking place under the premiership of a Prime Minister who no longer has the mandate to govern, and is holding every last straw in order to save his power.

We, at Peace Now, offered an alternative vision for Jerusalem on that day, under the heading "Jerusalem for us all"—a conference in the Knesset co-organized by MKs Mossi Raz (Meretz), Emily Moati and Gilad Kariv (Labour). Among the guests were community organizers from Palestinian communities in danger of eviction from Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, who received a rare opportunity to speak to Israeli MKs.



However, later that same evening, we found ourselves in the Knesset shelters, shielding from a barrage of missiles launched towards Jerusalem. The reality of the volatility of the conflict has never been more apparent. This has been the daily reality of residents in Sderot and in cities around Gaza, where children are used to living with sirens and rushing into shelters. This is unlivable reality and must stop.

The bombardment of Palestinian civilians, a horrible routine which had become part of Netanyahu's violent strategy had recommenced. Dozens of innocent civilians, including children, have been killed in heavy bombings. At the same time, Hamas missiles have created a state of emergency all around Israel. Throughout this week we, the Peace Now staff, rushed like all Israelis to our respective shelters, hiding with our loved ones and our pets, worrying for our families and friends.

In addition, we are deeply concerned by the escalating violence between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. This violence is unsettling our most delicate fabric of society. This violence is inextricably linked to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, where extremists on both sides gained disproportional influence and violence had become normalized. We know that we have a lot of work to do; we must rebuild trust that has been severed by years of violence going unchecked. We are angry. We are angry at being forced to live in circular violence, of being forced to live in fear and of being used and abused to further conflict management.

This is the time to raise our voices say loud and clear: **there is no military solution to a political conflict.** There is no other solution but the two state solution, ending the occupation and allowing all people to live in peace. We know well that most people on both sides of the border reject violence and prefer to live in peace. Now is the time to speak up and demand a new leadership which will oppose extremists on both sides and to call for an immediate ceasefire and to move to political solutions.

We are here, today, back at work, listening out for an alarm, because we truly believe this is the time to kindle hope and insist on our agenda. We are grateful for all your support that enables us to continue our work.

In Peace, Shalom Achshav

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