



Decision and Statements of the Jury “Political, Socio-Economic Projects”

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Project no. 97

“Peace Week in Beit Jala” – Palestine Nat. Authority

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The Peace Week in Beit Jala next to Bethlehem, PNA, took place from 6th to 10th July 2009. It was planned and realized by “The Children of Abraham”, a movement that developed from the 1st peace march in 2008 under the leadership of Pastor Jadallah Shihadeh. Christians, Jews and Muslims have been organizing various projects for reconciliation and dialogue in the West Bank. Their work is inspired on the visions of Micah 4 1-5: “They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

Program items of the peace week were, among others:

- as a sign of peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine, three olive trees were planted in a village near Beit Jala, representing the three religions Christianity, Islam and Judaism.
- a march to Wadi Ahmad, where the border between Israel and the PNA is marked by barbed wire. Here peace and life symbols were exchanged between Palestinians and Israelis across the wire.
- a visit to the refugee camp Aida, where 5000 people have been living for generations, without any prospect of change. Visits of this kind are very important to them as they make it their hope that the participating foreign nationals act as ambassadors for their cause and that they are not forgotten by the rest of the world.
- the peace march through Beit Jala with representatives of the 3 religions highlighted this peace week. Muslims, Jewish and Christian clerics walked arm in arm through the streets and speeches were held by all religious groups. On this occasion it became very clear that if something does not work on a political level, it may very well work on the personal level within great parts of the population.

The peace week in Beit Jala has shown that reconciliation is possible, even under extremely difficult situations as represented in the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Here in the Middle-East, where different cultures meet directly, a peaceful coexistence would have a positive impact world-wide.