



Courage for Peace

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Hava Beller *'In the Land of Pomegranates'*



It was not easy for Hava Beller to produce this documentary film because the young people from Israel and Palestine rejected strictly all photographs and tapes. Coming back home they fear to be branded as traitors on both sides. It took Hava more than two years to build trust before she and her team could start working.

It is hard to believe, but the Palestinian

Coordinator Mohammed from Qalquilia, a city on the West Bank, enclosed by the Israeli Separation Wall, and the Moderator Shulti from a kibbutz in northern Israel are still working together as a tandem. – against very many difficulties. The initiator of these encounters Helga Dieter from Frankfurt Germany, has just developed a new follow-up project with them.



Hundreds of former participants of the first encounters in Germany since 2002 have come back home motivated for further cooperation. But there was no network or infrastructure to encourage them. In order to change this, a new concept is growing. In February and September 2017, follow-up seminars took place in Aqaba/Jordan for former participants who want to take part in joint activities. Most of the peace projects in the Middle East” do a great work in humanitarian

aid, but there are just very few dialogue projects on an eye-level. This is our focus. Please support the encounters of young Israelis and Palestinians from the occupied Westbank.



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Against the official slogan 'There is no partner on the other side', we experienced:

“We found 1000 partners on the other side!”

The New York Times

MOVIES-Review:

'In the Land of Pomegranates' Asks if Mideast Peace Is Possible

Directed by Hava Kohav Beller • Documentary • 2h 0m

By **KEN JAWOROWSKI**

JAN. 4, 2018



Ayana Lekach and Rotem Dar in the documentary "In the Land of Pomegranates."

"This inhuman world has to become more humane. But how?"

A version of that quote, attributed to the playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt, opens "[In the Land of Pomegranates](#),"

and its question hangs over each scene. Everyone interviewed in this sobering documentary — Israeli or Palestinian — agrees that something must be done to stop the bloodshed in their land. But even talking about solutions proves problematic.

The film centers on "**Vacation From War**," retreat in Germany that brings together young Israelis and Palestinians. They live and travel together for a few weeks, often gathering for discussion and debate in the hope of fostering tolerance.

Intercut with excerpts from their meetings is bloody footage of violent encounters in Israel and the occupied territories and conversations with a handful of residents, including a bus passenger who was severely injured in a suicide bombing attack and a Palestinian mother whose ailing child is being treated by an Israeli physician.

Like several recent films on Israel, including "[Wrestling Jerusalem](#)" and "[Rabin in His Own Words](#)," "In the Land of Pomegranates" holds no illusions about a quick end to the conflicts there. Hava Kohav Beller, the director, avoids false optimism and feel-good moments. Though the young people she interviews at least attempt to speak with one other, their rage runs deep, and few find common ground with those who hold opposing views.

"Our goal is not to make people love each other," says Mohammad, an organizer of the retreat. "If only five of the 60 participants from each side experience a change, I would be happy." For him and for Ms. Beller, hope is tempered and expectations are restrained. They and the others deliver a tough and clear-eyed look at how things are, rather than how we want them to be.

A SHORT Video about the backgrounds of 'Vacation from War.' Deutsche Welle (dw=German wave) www.dw.com/de/reporter-sandra-havenith-macht-mit...und.../av-5855829
english:

<http://www.dw.com/en/reporters-sandra-havenith-joins-young-israelis-and-palestinians-as-they-take-a-break-from-the-middle-east-conflict/av-5855958>



Courage gegen Rassismus e.V.
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Hava Beller spent visits to participants in Israel + Palestine

(shortened by Helga Dieter)

In spring 2004 Hava Beller heard about the project "Vacation from War". She was very much interested to make a film about the Israeli-Palestinian encounters. It took 2 years to build trust because these young people are afraid that they are regarded as traitors with harsh consequences in social life. For many Palestinians the situation could become really dangerous because of fanatic neighbors



But Hava didn't give up. In autumn 2005 she visited Israel and Palestine and met many participants and facilitators on both sides-

My meetings with former participants

It was a brilliant Autumn day in October, We were driving on a tree-lined street with white-washed, red-roofed houses, Bougovilias, Red Hibiscuses. Suddenly a terrain of huge sun-bleached rocks rose before us - a checkpoint. A young soldier offered me a chair. Soon, my cell phone rang: "Where are you?" "Here, I said and where are you?"

"Here" he answered. We were both "here", but we couldn't see each other. I walked around the curve

where Mohammad was awaiting me. Thus began the journey that took me to Ramalla and Jenin, to Kfar Cara, Tuval, Tivon, and Jerusalem, where I met with former participants from the "Vacation from War". They spoke of the surprises, but also the disappointments, the great moments of discovery each other, the most difficult times, have they learned from one another, the impact of opening up to a sometimes painful scrutiny. How did they feel after coming back home? What remained?

I am enclosing here a few quotes from my conversations with them.

- I felt that they are not on the side of their government."
- "Vacation from War" certainly brought a change in me, in the way I think, the way I perceive, the way I notice things, see things."
- "The most difficult moments? From the moment we had arrived till we left, throughout the whole time there were some very gruelling confrontations, but the moment we went outside, it changed. The discussions were fierce, painful, we had very different point of views, but outside the discussions we formed really deep and real friendships.
- In the first couple of days everyone felt so far from each other, like we could never be close, and we were really closed-off from one another. It was hard. They were angry with us. We could feel it very strongly. Then we started to talk about things. It became more human. Some became friends, real, authentic, and that was amazing."
- From what I understood, there were some harrowing confrontations that inflicted great pain and rage. My admiration for the youngsters who were willing to go through these moments of "pergatory" and not succumb.
- On Television they're always showing, when thousands of people marching with Hamas. I sit at home and I think these people want to kill me. It is just working on your fears. But if you know Palestinians personally by their names, it is a whole different experience.
- From what I understood, there were some harrowing confrontations that inflicted great pain and rage, as it was bound to be. My admiration for the youngsters who were willing to go through these moments of "pergatory" and not succumb.

- I understood our side and their side in more depth. The most important discovery was the realization that they are not enemies, that they are partners. That we need to go with them, and not against them. This is the only way we will be able to find solutions."
- Also striking is the love and gratitude for the Counselors who seemed to have handled these conflict with great sensitivity, wisdom and care.
- The Seminar made a difference to me, a big difference. Now, I feel a responsibility about the situation. About what is going on in my country. Before, I was standing on the side, not understanding what's going on. Now I feel a responsibility."
- They should take all the Israelis and all the Palestinians into these seminars, so they could talk to one another."
- "I felt that I am speaking with my partners, partners for peace. Partners for a different way. At the beginning we felt that we are sitting and talking with our enemies. Afterward we felt that they are partners, they are with us. **And I think that this was the most important moment, that they are partners**, committed, with us, to something different, to a new way. "
- The counsellors were great. They knew what to do. They had calmed us down."
- And finally, my thanks to Helga and her friends for creating "Vacation from War", where, through working out the conflicts, love prevails.

2006

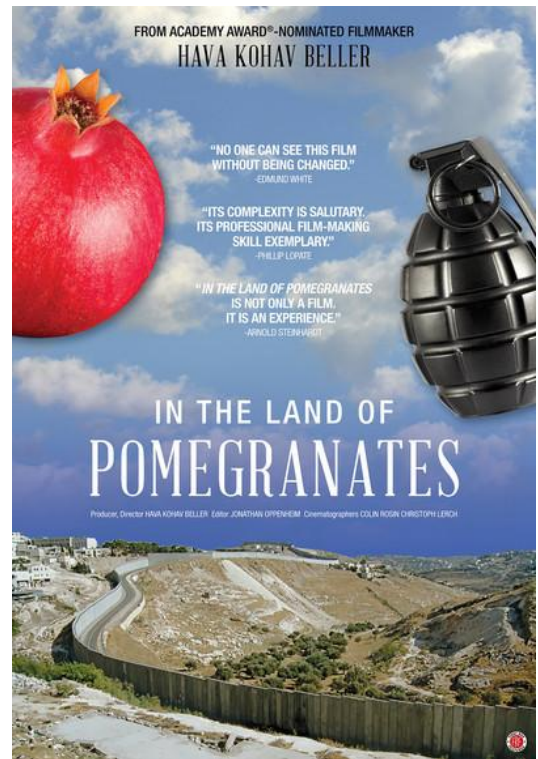
Impressions from an Israeli-Palestinian summer-camp in Germany (Aug. 2006)

By Hava Beller (documentary filmmaker from NYC)

"Vacation from War" is a place where young people who come from the opposite sides of the Divide, can speak up, openly, candidly, and experience each other as human beings, rather than the destructive images of "Terrorists" and "Soldiers". Cynics may ask, "What can be achieved in 12 days?" Sitting in the plane, with the sounds of bomb explosions from the tragic flare-up of war across the Lebanese/Israeli border still ringing in my ears, I was incredulous that the "Vacation from War" was actually taking place as scheduled..

I flew directly into a large circle of young people talking quietly, though passionately, to each other. They understood the urgency of having to come to terms with, and find solutions to, the crucial life-and-death conflicts of their region that affects their lives. There was a sense of comradery, of shared purpose, even affection, in the room. I was very moved.

In the ensuing days, while attending various meetings, I was impressed as well by the wisdom, compassion, and agility of the councilors/ facilitators, who diffused potential eruptions, giving directions by asking questions, making suggestions, being closely attuned to the young participants. The seminars and meetings were already going on for several days when I had arrived. As I understood, the first few days were quite tense. But the tension and distrust eventually gave way to a serious dialogue, and it was apparent that good will prevailed, no matter how volatile or unsolvable were the problems.



Premiere: The film will be opening on Friday, Jan. 5th, 2018 and will run for two weeks at the Lincoln Plaza Cinemas at 1886 Broadway NYC

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Please support these encounters. account: Courage / Evang. Bank/BiC GENODEF1EK1

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