

# שורשים / جذور / ROOTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Bruce Shaffer

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A LOCAL PALESTINIAN-  
ISRAELI INITIATIVE  
for UNDERSTANDING,  
NON-VIOLENCE and  
TRANSFORMATION

[www.friendsofroots.net](http://www.friendsofroots.net)

Friends of Roots  
c/o Dave Paller, Treasurer  
4901 Libbit Ave  
Encino, CA 91436



Dear Friends,

As yet another tumultuous year comes to a close, we are proud to present you with a summary of our 2021 accomplishments.

In March 2020, just hours before our speakers were scheduled to fly to the USA, we were forced to cancel the Roots North

American spring speaking tour. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our local people-to-people programs were also forced into hibernation. We seized this extra staff time to focus on team-building, developing our virtual community infrastructure, and reaching thousands of people across the world through digital programming. **We enter 2022 with a powerful resurgence and growth in programming and activism.**

Considering all that transpired over the past year, from President Trump's 'Deal of the Century' to Israel-Gulf normalization deals, to the outbreak of civil violence last May in Israeli-Palestinian cities, we are reminded how quickly reality can change and why working towards lasting Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation remains as critical as ever. Our work takes place deep inside the level of identity, where there are no shortcuts, and it is fueled by a core belief that the more our work challenges us, the more transformative and lasting its impact will be.

As 2021 comes to an end, we feel full of gratitude for the revitalization of our activities. We have created new branches and community centers in the West Bank-Judea/Samaria, vastly increased our programming, and hired new talented staff. Our team is stronger and more dedicated than ever before. Please read on to learn about how our message is gaining recognition, and how our movement is growing.

**We thank you for all you have done to help Roots expand and deepen our work – the impact that we describe in this report would simply not be possible without you.** We have many projects lined up for the coming year, and we hope that you will be inspired to extend your continued support for our peacebuilding work. [Follow this link](#) to make a US tax-deductible donation.

Wishing you a peaceful and sweet beginning of 2022,

Khaled Abu Awwad

Shaul Judelman

# *Exciting Developments for 2022*

## **Development of the Jordan Valley and Ariel-Nablus Branches**

Our two satellite branches, each developed by a joint Israeli-Palestinian leadership team, are poised to increase Roots' impact and reach in 2022 and empower our leaders to design programs tailored to their local needs. We are raising funds to restore the Ouja natural spring in the Jordan Valley; this large project will impact the thousands of locals who visit the area every week, and bring Palestinians and Israelis together to take shared responsibility for the land.

## **Alumni Network**

Roots' Young Adults Program has produced a network of over 130 Israelis and Palestinians in their young 20's. This year, we surveyed past participants to gauge what they need from Roots, and our new Alumni Program staff are working hard to craft programs to utilize these "Ambassadors of Roots" next year. They have asked for:

- Peer leadership committees
- Ongoing reunion events to sustain the relationships they've built
- Monthly conversations for Israeli alumni to process how their national/army service fits with the work of Roots
- An entrepreneurial incubator to create meaningful employment opportunities for our Palestinian alumni

## **Staff Growth**

Roots has welcomed incredible talent to our team, as demonstrated at our recent staff workshop with fifteen attendees! Our Alumni Program is now headed by Ethel Melka, who interned with us all of last year, and Noor Awad (whom many of you have probably heard speak at Roots events). Amna Jabarin joined our team as the Palestinian Coordinator of our Women's Program. Amana Aharonreich joined Yoel Ilani as joint facilitators of our Young Adults Program. Amir Halawi has become a trusted translator and assistant to Khaled. Eran Avidor is working to advance programming in our Jordan Valley branch. Rachel Cohen, who was interning with us, became our Communications Manager, and lastly, Reuven Stone has joined the Roots team as our first-ever full-time Director of Development.

# 8 Key Accomplishments in 2021

## Engaging Local Communities

### 1. RUNS FOR RECONCILIATION

In 2021, we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Roots Runs for Reconciliation! On March 14 in the Jordan Valley and on October 17 in the Bethlehem/Gush Etzion area, over **80 Palestinian and Israeli activists** ran together, finishing with closing ceremonies that celebrated their work as partners for peace. Approximately 30 supporters around the world joined the runs as ambassadors for Roots, spreading our message in their home communities and fundraising for our work in London, Toronto, Shanghai, Los Angeles, Andhra Pradesh, Suldalsosen, and beyond.

**The fundraising campaigns for these two events together brought in a stunning \$130,000.**



**2. ROOTS RAN A SUCCESSFUL SIX-MONTH PILOT PROGRAM FOR 35 STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS** in the southern

Jordan Valley. This group met consistently on a bi-weekly basis, and held a powerful joint vigil for the victims of the fighting last May.



**4. AS INSTANCES OF EXTREMIST SETTLER VIOLENCE BECOME MORE FREQUENT, ROOTS' ISRAELI ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN WORKING WITHIN ISRAELI COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS THIS HORRIFIC**

**PHENOMENON.** Actions have included work with local leaders, engaging with social services, supporting a network of citizens willing to intervene, and advising the military on the prevention of violence. During the outbreak of violence in May, Roots activists successfully prevented several instances of violence on the part of both Palestinians and Israelis.

**3. THIS PAST RAMADAN, ROOTS RAISED OVER \$12,000 TO SUPPORT MORE THAN 100 PALESTINIAN FAMILIES IN OUR NETWORK UNDER FINANCIAL STRAIN.**

Along with the over 600 participants in our series of Iftar (break-fast) meals, these actions helped strengthen the Roots community in accordance with the traditional values of the month of Ramadan - sharing with those in need.

**5. THIS YEAR SAW THE BIRTH OF OUR PALESTINIAN LOCAL LEADERSHIP BOARD, WHICH MEETS MONTHLY AND HAS APPOINTED**

**BOARD OFFICERS.** The board serves as a platform to bring issues and initiatives to the attention of the joint Roots leadership, as well as to empower Roots members within their home communities.



## *Strategic Partnerships and Development*

**6. ROOTS' LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN INVITED TO VARIOUS THINK-TANKS AND INITIATIVES THAT AIM TO REFRAME AND STRATEGIZE AROUND THE CHANGING REALITY ON**

**THE GROUND.** Roots leaders are active members today of Bridging Insights, Van Leer Institute's "Expanding the Imagination of Peace," Friedrich Herbet Fund, Forum for Regional Thinking, and A Land For All. We also participated in the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) Alumni Forum with other youth programs to develop common strategies. Additionally, our leadership team worked with Amal-Tikva to develop our Strategic Plan, which refined our vision and theory of change.

**7. ROOTS PARTNERED WITH TOGETHER BEYOND WORDS**

to create an intensive long-term identity and trauma workshop for many of our Israeli and Palestinian staff and core activists.

## Engaging International Audiences

**8. OUR ONLINE PRESENTATIONS AND RECENT SPEAKING TOUR BROUGHT ROOTS' WORK BEFORE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ACROSS THE WORLD.** We held forty events on our most recent speaking tour, and our next two speaking tours – in February-March 2022, and October-November 2022 – are already filling up! [Click here](#) to learn more about the tour and contact **Rav Hanan** to bring us to your community.



# 500

Israeli and Palestinian adults are currently involved in ongoing programs across our three branches!



# 55

Israeli and Palestinian towns are now represented in Roots network of associated communities, 25% growth since 2019!



# 2,350

Israeli 16-18 year olds participated in our seminars for pre-military academies and high schools

# 210

young Israelis and Palestinians are currently engaged in ongoing Roots programs





Dear Friends,

I am overwhelmed by what we at Roots have built and accomplished over the course of almost eight years. It brings tears to my eyes to think of how we began with nothing, and now our Dignity Center is filled daily with Palestinians and Israelis meeting each other and working together to create a better future for both peoples.

Today I find myself surrounded by Israelis and Palestinians whose perspectives, lives, and even families have been transformed by the groundbreaking work of Roots. Gratified and humbled beyond measure, I turn to you our partners and ask that you take a moment to reflect on the momentous strides you have enabled us to take. Do not for a moment belittle your agency...or your responsibility. We must continue to grow and develop programs and actions that will reach more and more Israelis and Palestinians until enough agents of change are created to make collective reconciliation a reality.

On our part, we will continue to invest days and nights – all our time and energy – to make this happen. Please consider deepening your own investment in our unique, transformative work. Through our investment and yours, a better future will take root.

Sincerely,

Rav Hanan Schlesinger  
Director of International Relations  
Roots/Shorashim/Judur

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