

# TOMORROW'S WOMEN

Courage. Leadership. Change.

October 11, 2023

To our supporters,

I am sending this message to you in the midst of chaos, tragedy, and pain on the ground, a level of uncertainty in the region we have never known, and a profound commitment to continue our social justice and peacemaking work. We have been in despair as Hamas militants brutally murdered more than a thousand Israeli civilians and kidnapped innocent women, children, and the elderly, triggering an unprecedented wave of violence. And our hearts break once again, feeling like we are beholden to a never-ending conflict as the lives of so many innocent Palestinian civilians are taken in Gaza. I know you all are wondering how the staff, the girls, and their families are doing.

**The short answer is that no one is untouched by this war.**

Devastatingly, one of our 2010 Jewish alumna just lost her father. Another 2021 alumna is desperately trying to locate her grandfather who was kidnapped without his life-saving medications. Many have lost dear friends and are in shelters as we speak, hoping and praying for safety. Tragically, our TW Gazan Coordinator has lost three family members to the war already and is currently stuck in Egypt with four other Gaza Girl participants. Many of our Gaza Girls and partner organizations in Israel and Gaza have had to evacuate their homes due to the war.

**Our staff are safe and as far as we know, all of our Gaza Girls and Israeli Jewish and Palestinian alumnae are unharmed and accounted for.**

Thank you for your many messages of care and concern for the staff, our alumnae, and everyone suffering throughout Israel and Palestine, and from afar as they await word from loved ones. A true reflection of the humanity of the Tomorrow's Women's community, one that recognizes the suffering of all involved and the belief that our young women hold the key to a more peaceful future. This belief has been cultivated throughout 20 years of peacemaking together.

## **OUR VALUES**

We categorically condemn all forms of violence, human rights abuses, and any behavior that does not move us closer to a just peace in Palestine and Israel. And we are collectively distraught as we think about the staff, the girls, and their families and friends going through hell right now. At the heart of all of this though, we stand by our values as an organization, values that allow us to understand this conflict in all of its complexity:

- Respect the dignity of every human being and the right of all to live in peace;
- Listen with compassion to all points of view;
- Provide tools and opportunities that enable young women to realize their own unique power as individuals and as a collective;
- Summon the courage to speak authentically and act on behalf of peace, equality, and justice for all.

I take heart knowing that our work matters, it matters most in the darkest of times. Working for justice and peace matters, because we know from previous cycles of violence, the way each of our alumnae responds to this war, whether Palestinian or Israeli, reflects the courageous peacemaking journey begun at Tomorrow's Women. She will reach out across sides to connect with another girl that she knows and loves, she will caution her family not to make rash judgments, she will seek compassion over hatred and fear, and she will keep believing in a better reality because she lived it, even if it was only a few weeks at camp or a few days in a program back home, she knows what is possible. And that is who we are as an organization, that is our touchstone as we watch the destruction and trauma of war unfold once again. We have seen this firsthand and are inspired by what our graduates are willing and capable of doing.

#### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

We are asking ourselves what it means to do peacemaking in the middle of war. First things first, the war must end, then we must mourn for those lost, tend to the injured, and recalibrate to a new normal. For now, all of our programming has ceased. We have postponed an in-person regional staff meeting, the second seminar of the 2023 Young Leader (camp) cohort, and the Advanced Leadership Initiative skill-building and emotional resilience seminar in Beit Jala.

In this immensely traumatic period of time when sensitivities are at an all-time high, our staff are connecting personally with each alumnae on a continual basis and we will initiate uni-national meetings in the coming days and weeks to begin the work of repair and trauma healing personally and then interpersonally. **The rip in the delicate fabric that we have been weaving for decades now is deep, but we know the power of women to come together and we believe that compassion, love, and hope will resurrect us out of this nightmare and into the reality of justice and peace that we are all committed to creating.** It will take time, leadership, and courage to be the change.

**We had already opened registration for the 2024 Young Leader Program (camp) before the war and had received multiple applications. Even more inspiring, we received an application from a young woman on Saturday, October 7th...in the darkest of times, this young woman chose hope...may we all follow her lead.**

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Support our work, we are not stopping as these are the moments that test organizations and people. We choose the path of empowering the next generation of women leaders aligned with UN security resolution 1325 believing that women will lead the change. **Please dig deep and offer whatever you can so that we can keep our alumnae together, keep providing ways for them to stay engaged doing work on the ground, and bring another group of brave young women into the fold next summer.**

## DONATE

We will keep you updated as this situation unfolds. Until then, please pray for the safety of our girls, our staff in the region, for all who suffer, for calm to be restored, and for our important work to continue.

In service,

*Tarrie and the entire Tomorrow's Women Team*