

SPIRIT OF GENEVA CAMPAIGN UPDATE #1
From Steve Masters, Chair and Diane Balsler, Co-Chair
Advocacy and Public Policy Committee

February 2004

This is the first in a series of regular updates on Brit Tzedek's National Campaign in support of the spirit of Geneva.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Yossi Beilin and Yaser Abed Rabbo have established a non-governmental organization known as Education for Peace to spearhead the promotion of the initiative in Israel, the Palestinian territories, and abroad. The grassroots campaign got a kick start with the opening of Education for Peace's Israeli office in Tel Aviv and Palestinian office in Ramallah. They have also opened offices in Paris and the United States.

The mass mailing of copies of the Accord was a tremendous success – over 1.9 million Israel households received a copy. Sixty percent of Israelis claim to have read the agreement. On the Palestinian side, the terms of the Accord were printed in major newspapers and there is high awareness of the Geneva Accord as well.

The Geneva Campaign in Israel kicked off with grassroots meetings led by Yossi Beilin in the northern and southern border towns of Kiryat Shmonah and Eilat. The emphasis is on winning over the Israeli street. To that end, they have sponsored numerous house meetings and sponsored public events attracting hundreds of people in cities and small towns alike.

Palestinians are organizing small meetings with moderates which they expect to parlay into public gatherings. There is a Knesset visit planned in which the Members of Knesset (MKs) supporting the Accord will host Palestinian leaders.

Finally, the Geneva Accord continues to have a profound effect in redefining the political landscape in Israel. Sharon's proposal for unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip came in direct response to his government's failure at marginalizing the architects of Geneva and its realization that it could only counter the popular appeal of the Geneva Accord by proposing to take action. While this strategy for unilateral withdrawal cannot be called a plan for peace, Sharon got the message that maintaining the inertia of the status quo is simply no longer acceptable to the Israeli public.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Education for Peace is opening three offices in the United States – in New York City, Washington, DC and the San Francisco Bay Area – and has committed to working with Brit Tzedek in our grassroots work in support of the Spirit of Geneva.

Brit Tzedek has participated in several meetings of Jewish organizations brought together

by Education for Peace since December to explore collaborative opportunities in support of the Geneva Initiative in the United States. Last week, Brit Tzedek's President Marcia Freedman and Vice President Diane Balsler were among representatives of various American Jewish peace organizations who met with MK Avshalom Vilan (Meretz), Daniel Levy (the Israeli drafter of the Accord), Gadi Baltianski director of the Israeli office, Martin Kace head of the U.S. operation along with Education for Peace's newly hired U.S. staff.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo have been traveling across Europe to drum up political and financial support from the European Union (EU). Their efforts paid off in early February when the EU announced their support of the Geneva Accord as an important step in bringing the two embattled nations together to advance a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Now Beilin and Abed Rabbo are turning their sites on the Arab League and campaigning for support of Geneva at the upcoming Arab League Summit to be held in Tunisia in early March. If their efforts are successful, they hope to demonstrate that the countries of the Arab world, not just the Palestinians, are partners in a negotiated settlement.

NEWS FROM BRIT TZEDEK

Our chapters have been buzzing with activity around our Spirit of Geneva campaign. Boston, Northern New Jersey, and New Haven have cumulatively held over 20 house parties . . . Vermont and Atlanta featured the Geneva Accord in Chanukah events . . . Portland sponsored a panel on Geneva with Israelis and Palestinians and followed up with a showing of the Mitzna video . . . Louisville published an article in their local Jewish newspaper summarizing Amram Mitzna's keynote speech focusing on Geneva. . . New Haven held numerous home district meetings with the Connecticut Congressional delegation – a few days after meeting with Senator Christopher Dodd, he became the latest Senator to co-sponsor the Feinstein/Chafee Resolution supporting the Spirit of Geneva . . . Chicago has been meeting with area rabbis to bring the Spirit of Geneva into synagogues. . . Seattle and Olympia activists successfully passed resolutions in favor of Geneva at several Democratic caucuses . . . Philadelphia has provided a speaker on Geneva to 8 area synagogues, universities and local secular Jewish organizations.

We are still looking for members and supporters to host house meetings for the Spirit of Geneva throughout the United States. Please let the office know if you would like to host a meeting by e-mailing info@btvshalom.org

POLL OF AMERICAN JEWS AND ARABS ON GENEVA

Americans for Peace Now and the Arab American Institute recently released the results of a poll commissioned by The Arab American Institute and Americans for Peace Now on the attitudes of American Jews and Arab Americans on the Geneva Accord and the Bush Administration's handling of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

The survey found that 42.2% of Arab Americans and 43.2% of Jewish Americans strongly or somewhat support the Israeli-Palestinian joint effort. Just 4.9% of Arab

Americans and 8.9% of Jewish Americans said they did not support the initiative. However, a significant segment of both communities (50.5% of Arab Americans and 44.4% of Jewish Americans) said they were not familiar enough with the initiative to make a judgment. Learning details about Geneva increased support on both sides, although more so among Arab Americans, while it also significantly increased opposition among a minority of Jewish Americans. Among Jewish Americans, 50.2% said they were more likely to back the initiative, 22.4% said they were less likely, 16.7% said the description made no difference, and 10.7% said they were not sure. Among Arab Americans, 73.5% said they were more likely to support Geneva after hearing a description, 7.9% said they were less likely, 12.6% said it made no difference, and 6% were not sure.

President Bush got extremely low marks from both sides for his handling of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among Jewish Americans, just 21.9% gave the President a positive review (4.2% said excellent and 17.7% said good), while 76% rated his performance as negative (37.9% said fair and 38.1% said poor) and 2.2% were not sure. Among Arab Americans, only 22.4% gave President Bush positive feedback (8.9% said excellent and 13.5% said good), while 75.3% gave him negative reviews (20.7% said fair and 54.6% said poor) and 2.3% were not sure.

To make a donation: [HYPERLINK](#)

"<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?id=1719&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Ebtvshalom%2Eorg%2Fjoin%2F>"

<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?id=1719&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Ebtvshalom%2Eorg%2Fjoin%2F>

To update your personal information in our database: [HYPERLINK](#)

"<mailto:update@btvshalom.org>" update@btvshalom.org

To sign the Call to Bring the Settlers Home from Israel: [HYPERLINK](#)

"<http://bringthemhome.btvshalom.org/>" <http://bringthemhome.btvshalom.org/>

Brit Tzdek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

PO Box 180175

Chicago, IL 60618-0175

Ph: (773) 583-5747

Fax: (773) 583-5772

Email: [HYPERLINK "mailto:info@btvshalom.org" info@btvshalom.org](#)

Web: [HYPERLINK "http://www.btvshalom.org/" www.btvshalom.org](#)