

## **REPORT FROM THE GROUND:**

### **Brit Tzedek's Grassroots Respond to the Mideast Crises**

8.10.2006

*We send our deepest condolences to Washington, DC Brit Tzedek chapter activist Judith Lelchook, whose brother, David was killed by a Hezbollah missile on Kibbutz Saar, on August 2, 2006. May his memory be for a blessing.*

*Grassroots activism among chapters across the country has swelled in response to the current Mideast crisis. Our voices have been and continue to be essential during this challenging and difficult time.*

- *in homes and in synagogues we have organized numerous discussion groups; given talks and facilitated resource sharing about the crisis;*
- *in the Jewish and mainstream media our grassroots leaders are regularly cited for their alternative pro-Israel perspective;*
- *through the internet our grassroots have sent thousands of messages to the Administration, urging diplomatic intervention and a ceasefire;*
- *by phone and email many of us are reaching out to support family and friends in the affected areas.*
- *at Jewish community rallies our pro-Israel, pro-peace signs open up an important dialogue: "No More Civilian Deaths: Ceasefire Now!" "For Israel's Sake: US Engagement Now"; "Enough Bloodshed; Enough Tears; Enough"*

We are proud of our grassroots and pleased to share with you some of our recent highlights.

#### **Facilitating Conversation; Providing Resources**

- Brit Tzedek members across the country have opened their homes in unprecedented numbers as a forum for community members to learn about the situation and share their thoughts and feelings in open and respectful environments.
- Several members of our Rabbinic Cabinet and Brit Tzedek leaders have given talks and facilitated open discussions about "the situation" in their synagogues.
- Brit Tzedek's Los Angeles chapter co-sponsored a public forum with Americans for Peace Now (APN) and Progressive Jewish Alliance that brought out over 300 attendees. Speakers included Brit Tzedek President Marcia Freedman, alongside APN's Arthur Stern, and Prof. David Meyers, Director of the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies

- Many chapters have organized meetings around listening to Brit Tzedek town-hall conference calls, followed by discussion and local program planning.

In those areas without chapters, Brit Tzedek has been supporting the creation of networks for people to come together and discuss the current Mideast crisis.

### **Taking the Brit Tzedek Message to our Communities**

Brit Tzedek chapters from Rhode Island to Los Angeles and from Western Massachusetts to Seattle have participated in Jewish community rallies. Wearing Brit Tzedek t-shirts and carrying signs with our message, our chapters are seen as an alternative pro-Israel voice at this critical time.

### **Taking Our Message to the Media**

Brit Tzedek chapters have been covered in the local and national media across the country. Our Philadelphia chapter was on Fox News filmed during a local Jewish community rally. Leadership of our Boston, Washington, DC and Seattle chapters were quoted during their community rallies. The Boston chapter was also on the New England Cable News Network.

Many of our activists have also taken up the call to write Letters to the Editor, in both the Jewish and national press, engaging readers with our message for an immediate ceasefire in papers across the country

### **Reaching out to Israelis, Lebanese, and Palestinians**

On an individual level, many chapter activists with family and friends in the impacted areas have played an important role in supporting loved ones. Our commitment to their well-being has been very important in demonstrating our care and concern about the people being affected by this war and breaking their isolation during these difficult times.

*In these difficult days, our message remains the same: We stand for peace, because we stand for Israel. Thank you for all that you do!*

### **Recent Brit Tzedek Town Hall Calls on the Mideast Crisis:**

Naomi Chazan on getting from the crisis to ceasefire (8/6/06)

Stephen Cohen and James Zogby on the US role in the crisis (7/27/06)

Rabbi Arik Ascherman on the humanitarian situation (7/23/06)

Daniel Levy on the Mideast Crisis (7/16/06)

Brit Tzedek's Resource Page on the Mideast Crisis includes action alerts, talking points, and regularly updated materials.