

Guests and organizers are available for comment. Contact:

Natalie Hill  
Social Media and  
Communications Director -  
Peace it Together  
nhill@peaceittogether.com  
604 568 1413 / 604 363 3201 (c)  
  
www.peaceittogether.com/  
get-involved/events

## Renowned peace builders from Israel-Palestine to address peace work, opposition, at two-day symposium in Vancouver

**VANCOUVER, February 20, 2013** – Four renowned peace builders from Israel and Palestine are preparing to share their experiences from the trenches of controversial peace work, engage with oppositional perspectives of peace building programs, and help the next generation of Canadian peace builders wrangle with how to affect change from a world away. They will explore these topics and more when they converge in Vancouver February 27-28 2013, for ***Struggling with Peace: Grounding peace work in action and change***, a two-day symposium hosted by a local peace building organization, Peace it Together.

Special international guests for this event, include:

- Sulaiman Khatib, Co-founder: *Combatants for Peace and the People's Peace Fund* Ramallah, West Bank
- Yael Tsabari, Program Co-coordinator: Gemini Program at *Sadaka Reut* Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel
- Mahmoud Jabari, Participant: *Peace it Together, Seeds of Peace* Burlington, Vermont (originally from Hebron, West Bank)
- Rutie Atsmon, Co-founder and director: *Windows - Channels for Peace* Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel.

All four guests will be included at the symposium's feature panel discussion, ***A Critical Junction: New directions in peace building in Israel and Palestine***, taking place **Wednesday February 27 at 7PM, at the Royal Bank Cinema** (Chan Centre, UBC). This event is sure to include frank and challenging conversations about peace building and opposing ideas about how Palestinians and Israelis should engage (or not) with one another. During this panel, speakers will confront the criticism that the work they engage in constitutes "normalization," a position put forth by an increasingly vocal movement that contends when Palestinians talk to Israelis, it normalizes a conflict that is anything but normal.

While it is applied in a wide range of scenarios, the normalization critique often encompasses a sentiment that peace programs amongst Israelis and Palestinians only serve to maintain the status quo in the region and in fact, do not result in any real change or progress towards peace.

However, a contingent of peace builders who do bring together Israelis and a Palestinians – including Khatib, Tasbari, Jabari and Atsmon – have not shied away from such opposition. Rather, these peace builders find value in engaging with and learning from critiques in order to develop their practices, have engaged with these critiques head-on in order to create impactful programs that incorporate both dialogue and meaningful action, and are at the forefront of the next generation of peace work. These four speakers will explore these criticisms, how they have responded and learned from them, and more, during ***A Critical Junction***.

"This event will provide the rare opportunity to explore the impact of people-to-people peace building programs, with those individuals who are on the ground in Israel-Palestine," said Reena Lazar, Executive Director at Peace it Together.

"Not everyone agrees that people-to-people programs are an effective way to build peace," she added, "but we want to start a new public conversation about the next generation of peace building that takes the normalization critique seriously."

The panel is the initiative of a group of young Canadian peace builders who became involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through their experience in Peace it Together's unique dialogue and filmmaking program in 2011. This astute group of young leaders have organized the symposium so as to provide a public environment where people can hear from multi-generational peace builders from the region, and learn how they can best contribute to the peace movement from a Canadian perspective.

Tim Hall is one of the youth who initiated and helped organize the symposium. He says hearing from Israeli and Palestinian peace builders who have considered these issues is key to making an impact in the future, and helping Canadians best understand their role in this conflict.

"In order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, we need to have the wisdom, encouragement and the guidance of those living and working on the frontlines," said Hall.

To that end, the youth themselves have drafted a series of difficult and provocative questions for the symposium's feature panel, **A Critical Junction**. Questions will include:

- *Are dialogue programs all talk, no action?*
- *What impact can people-to-people programs really have?*
- *Can joint projects inspire political action?*
- *Do joint projects normalize a situation that is anything but normal?*
- *Do cross-border projects benefit one side more than the other?*
- *What will peace actually look like?*

This panel will kick off three public events, which also include a creative workshop on peace building, and an evening of art, film and live theatre. Tickets are free, but registration is required.

Event and ticket information:

- **A Critical Junction: New directions in peace building** (panel): <http://acriticaljunction.eventbrite.ca>  
Wed Feb 27, 7PM - Royal Bank Cinema (at the Chan Centre), UBC
- **TRACTION: Propelling dialogue into action** (workshop): <http://tractionworkshop.eventbrite.ca>  
Thurs Feb 28, 12-5PM - Segal Centre, SFU Harbour Centre
- **ART:WORK art and media in the pursuit of peace** (art event): <http://art-work.eventbrite.ca>  
Thurs Feb 28, 7PM - Segal Centre, SFU Harbour Centre

For more information about the symposium, visit [www.peaceittogether.com](http://www.peaceittogether.com).

### About Peace it Together

Peace it Together unites Israeli, Palestinian and Canadian young people for a unique dialogue and filmmaking program. Our participants converge on Canada's west coast for facilitated dialogue and collaborative filmmaking intensive. These youth produce high-quality short films, which are then published, distributed, and viewed by thousands of people around the world. After the summer intensive, each delegation is supported regionally as they take their compelling and challenging films back into their communities to renew meaningful conversations about the conflict and peace building. To watch the films, visit [www.peaceittogether.com/films](http://www.peaceittogether.com/films).

### Background

Struggling with Peace is the initiative of the Canadian delegation of Peace it Together's 2011 dialogue and filmmaking program. These young leaders and peace builders continue to remain engaged in dialogue and action related to building peace in Palestine and Israel, screening the short films they created with Israelis and Palestinians during interactive workshops and community screenings. Questions and issues that will be explored at A Critical Junction stem directly from the youth, their interactions with a range of audiences, and their individual interests in peace building in Israel-Palestine.

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