

*Friends of  
the Neve Shalom  
Wahat al-Salam  
Educational  
Institutions*

# *Annual Report* **2025**



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# *A shared community devoted to peace, surrounded by war*

Never has the name "Oasis of Peace" felt more chillingly apt. As lives and families around us continue to be obliterated despite the "cease fires;" as the government plunges deeper into authoritarianism; and as despair threatens daily, we renew our common struggle. Our belief in a better future with security and equality for all compels us to continue; to teach a generation of children growing up in the shadow of war that it does not have to be this way.

To live and teach in this oasis of peace is to engage in struggle. We work with all of our strength to face, with our eyes wide open, the nature of our violent environment, while we endeavor, each day, to instill peace around us.

Throughout 2025, this hard work could be seen in the continuing activities of our educational institutions. Despite the hardships of the wars, our primary school managed to keep its classrooms full of children who love to learn, and our School for Peace brought together adults seeking genuine dialogue in a breadth of disciplines. The SFP alumni conference demonstrated the long-term benefits of building comprehensive shared networks, as did our Oasis Gallery, which is marking ten years of shared Palestinian-Jewish exhibits with the publication of a book this year. We found ways to push back against the wartime narratives by seeking hope in the news with the Peace Press, and by increasing our educational activities overseas even when travel was restricted.

This is not to say that the war has not impacted WASNS; of course it has. Enrollment numbers tell part of that story. But survival is a success story in and of itself, and our community has not only survived but we have grown stronger together. The following annual report tells how.

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## ***A note from Eldad Joffe*** **Chairman of the Municipal Society**



Dear Friends,

The past two years have been among the most turbulent and complex we have experienced. For many of us, they felt like one continuous period, with no "first" and "second year." The council's work was deeply affected by the war, and by its impact on morale, personal relations, and Jewish-Palestinian relations in Israel generally and in the village in particular.

Before the last council elections, we presented members with our guiding vision and goals — just weeks before October 6, 2023. We now return to those goals and evaluate our progress in their light, though under very different circumstances.

Our work unfolded across two main spheres:

### ***Work with External Bodies***

We identified four long-standing issues requiring resolution, including disputes with the Israel Land and Tax Authorities and gaining the necessary approval to expand the village.

### ***Internal Work – Strengthening the Community and its Resilience***

We also identified several internal areas requiring ongoing attention, all aimed at strengthening the community, safeguarding our shared future, and realizing the potential embodied in this unique joint project: This includes working to bring members further into our community through activity and promoting their involvement and sense of belonging. We also want to support the continued development of the hotel — a process begun several years ago — to work on managing such issues as ensuring renters in the village abide by our vision, improving and implementing bylaws and overseeing the construction of new homes.

Even under normal circumstances — before October 6 — our goals were ambitious. Of course, in times of crisis, such crucial but mundane issues are hard to tackle all at once, but we have managed to make some progress in each of these areas.

## ***Looking Back – Achievements and Challenges***

With the benefit of hindsight, we can say that in dealing with external issues, we made significant progress. We invested considerable time and resources, but today, we are close to having a clear and structured solution for each — something that will finally allow us to put longstanding disputes behind us and redirect energy and resources toward developing the village. Only in the issue of expanding the village can I say that we deepened our understanding but have not made real progress.

By contrast, progress on internal matters — within the community, between the Educational Association and community members, and among residents and neighbors — was slower, more delicate, and more complex. Such issues require dialogue, trust, and continuity, all of which were difficult to maintain under the conditions of the past two years.

Our guiding principle throughout was that choosing to live in Wahat al-Salam — Neve Shalom is a choice to take part in the struggle to build an alternative of equality and partnership. Just as choosing to live here expresses a deep commitment, the community's choice of the council, and our reelection, reflected a shared dedication to this path and to investing in the village and its community.

Collaboration between the Cooperative Society and the Association of the Educational Institutions of Neve Shalom — Wahat al-Salam grew stronger, including regular meetings between the chairs, reciprocal participation in council meetings, and a redistribution of responsibilities (the volunteer program will move to the Association; the Visitors Center will move to the Cooperative Society and the hotel).

In addition, five new homes were completed — a meaningful expansion for our small village. Four babies were born. Six village members were married. All of these are reasons to celebrate, even in the midst of chaos.

We welcomed several members of our Friends Association to the village at the end of the year, and we hope to see the flow of visitors resume in the coming year.

## ***Looking Ahead – Cautious Hope***

We hold onto hope that the agreement between Israel and Hamas will create an opening for change.

We hope for real relief for the people of Gaza, progress toward resolving the conflict, restraint on settler violence, and steps toward ending the occupation.



**Eldad Joffe**

***A note from Ariela Bairey-Ben Ishay***  
**Chairwoman of the Association  
of Educational Institutions**



Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe another year has passed, as I conclude my fourth year as chairwoman of the Wahat al-Salam — Neve Shalom educational institutions, alongside a dedicated committee of community volunteers. Despite the wars, destruction, and missiles — despite growing cynicism and animosity between Palestinians and Jews, and the despair that drives many to leave — there remains a determined minority, of which we are a steadfast part, continuing to strengthen bridges between both peoples.

It is deeply troubling to witness the increasing racism of this government, the passage of undemocratic laws, and the violence inflicted by settlers in the occupied West Bank, often met with indifference. As national elections approach, we feel an even greater urgency in our mission: to continue and deepen our work, strengthening the struggle for democracy, equality, and a just peace. Against this backdrop, our shared life here becomes ever more significant. By living and educating together, we affirm both our belief in partnership and the possibility of a shared future.

In the primary school, we bid farewell to Neama and welcomed Hanaa. Neama leaves behind a strong foundation, with enhanced language learning and innovative teaching. The forest lessons — integrating reading, writing, and arithmetic with nature, science, and the arts — continue to flourish thanks to our dedicated teachers. Our second-grade students, for example, are learning chess, developing strategic thinking and discovering how early choices shape future outcomes, both in the game and in life.

At the School for Peace, we have seen inspiring developments, including courses taught abroad and a workshop bringing together Palestinians from 1948, 1967, and Jerusalem — groups with differing realities yet a shared identity. In the midst of ongoing conflict, participants show deep commitment to seeking alternatives. This was evident at the Alumni Conference in December, attended by around 100 former participants. Through continued alumni programs, we aim to harness this experience, encouraging graduates to take active roles in shaping shared realities and implementing practical solutions in fields such as human rights and urban development.

The Spiritual Center, newly renovated and led by Hezzi, has become an increasingly vibrant space, hosting events, films, and encounters for both community members

and visitors. Younger village members, led by Bisan Tibi, have launched the "Courtyard Talks," fostering discussions with activists and public figures on pressing issues. The Oasis Gallery continues to showcase powerful exhibitions by Palestinian and Jewish artists, while Dyana is working on a book highlighting these works.

The Nadi is experiencing a welcome revival under Itay's leadership, offering a lively space for children and youth. Building on last year's renewed youth delegation program, a group of young community members participated in a leadership seminar with Reut-Sadaka, culminating in a summer delegation to Italy hosted by our Italian Friends. These experiences broaden perspectives, strengthen identity, and equip participants to represent the community and its mission. A new group is already preparing for the coming summer, and we hope similar initiatives will grow through other Friends Associations.

Our Communications and Development team continues to secure essential funding, supporting initiatives such as a three-year mental health program through the School for Peace, additional educational programming, and the Peace Press. They also ensure that you — our friends and supporters — remain closely connected to our work.

This year, we were fortunate to welcome several directors of our Friends Associations to the village, some of whom attended the Alumni Conference. These visits, along with ongoing communication in all its forms, are deeply meaningful. Through your engagement, our work extends far beyond this small geographical space, creating connection and impact across the globe.





Looking ahead, we anticipate several important events, including a GARIWO Gardens of the Righteous conference in May and our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November, both to be held in the village. We are also beginning to reopen our doors to volunteers, hoping to welcome a small group in the coming year, further strengthening our international ties.

Our work for peace remains ongoing. While a broader peace in the region may still feel uncertain, our efforts here are steady and resolute. This work is never simple and never complete, but our vision remains clear: justice and equality for all, healing from trauma, and a lasting, shared peace.

Most fondly and with deep appreciation,

Yours,

**Dr Ariela Bairey-Ben Ishay**

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# School for Peace

More relevant than ever



**Mental Health:** In addition to a Change Agents course for mental health professionals, alumni of SFP mental health courses became active in the face of a mental health crisis. This included lectures and dialogue sessions to help them deal with the new kinds of trauma they are seeing. In addition, a new group initiated by the School for Peace and the Ma'ana Center — Nazareth Hospital brings together Palestinian and Jewish therapists to examine how political realities shape therapeutic roles and to explore the creation of treatment spaces that confront oppression.

**Immersion:** Academic staff from 11 different institutions met for an immersive day to address the issue of how Palestinians and Jews can cooperate in an academic setting, in the current situation, to create an atmosphere of trust, equality and safety for all. This included a lecture on safety and identity and a discussion of an initiative at Hebrew University to make the situation in Gaza visible to Jewish students.

Three workshops were offered, in Germany and the Czech Republic, with artists, educators and advocacy groups, on the terminology that is used to talk about the "situation."

**Palestinians:** It is not only Jews and Palestinians who build bridges through dialogue, but different Palestinian groups among themselves. The Unified Palestinian Dialogue program brought together Palestinians from inside, outside and on the Green line to work on issues that separate them and bring them together.



**Courses:** The Facilitators Course that ended in July provided an intensive experience for the 23 participants who completed the course. In addition, participants finished the Change Agents for Climate and Environmental Justice course in 2025.

The fourth annual Alumni Conference, on the topic of "Life in an ongoing catastrophe — Between dispossession and erasure, and building influence", featured a panel discussion with journalist and activist Orly Noy and human rights lawyer and Arabic media specialist Amal Oraby; intensive dialogue sessions; a unique film and discussion with the director; and the presentation of alumni projects.

**Alumni:** A unique group — Politicians Building Partnerships — met four times in the Fall, with participants from six political parties.

# Primary School

Safety and continuity in the midst of change



At the end of the 2024-25 school year, principal Neama Abo Delu finished her term in the primary school. Among other things, she reinstated the Language Center in a fun, new format that made learning language exciting and enticing, for teachers as well as children. Abo Delu also introduced lessons intended to address the needs of the whole child, including mindfulness sessions and forest classes for the younger groups.

At the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, principal Hanaa Khariki took over the job.



**Language lessons for all:** Language is a part of every school day, whether it is navigating lessons in one language or the other, learning reading, vocabulary, spelling and grammar, or engaging in games and fun lessons in the Language Center; learning the second language introduces children to the joys of communication and finding out about other cultures first hand.

**Sports:** In addition to the soccer field, the school added a beach volleyball court in 2025. Sports during breaks or in lessons give the kids a chance not only to expend energy, but to learn the discipline of teamwork and cooperation, and even the history of the sport they love to play.

**Extracurricular lessons:** Forest lessons for the younger children, upcycling, woodwork, technology and more are ways to nurture the whole child. Music classes are attended by most of the children, and they are another way the school helps young brains develop and children learn to play together. In September, we added new instruments and are working toward a school orchestra, so that we can hear the music classes play together.





**Parents' Community:** The Parents' Community continued strong throughout 2025, including dialogue sessions and discussions as well as lectures and events in the school. Arabic lessons were added, as well, to help Hebrew-speaking parents whose children are learning the language. These efforts have proved crucial for supporting the school community throughout the period.



**Continued efforts:** For several years, the balance of Jewish students to Palestinian ones has been hard to maintain, and the directors are working to revitalize the school curriculum for a new era, without compromising the basic goals of binational, bilingual education.




# 2025


## Income and Expenses


**From Friends Associations**  
**\$1,636,469**


**From philanthropic donations**  
**\$222,424**


**Earnings**  
**\$860,252**


**Building**  
**\$407,486**


**infrastructure and maintenance**  
**\$537,210**


**Staff**  
**\$1,112,271**


**Projects**  
**\$570,878**


**Other**  
**\$296,573**

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**Total income**  
**\$2,719,172**

**Total expenses**  
**\$2,627,848**

## Other numbers

# 350

Participants in  
the School for  
Peace

# 53

Youth  
in NADI

# 20

Parents  
Community  
events

Over

# 1,000

People using the  
Spiritual Center

# 205

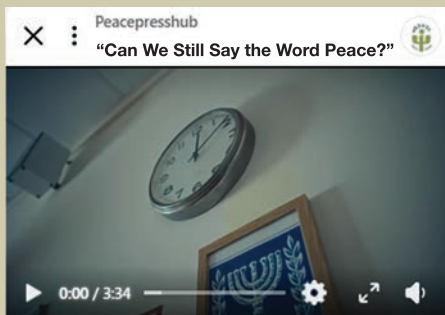
Children in the  
primary education  
system

# 250

Participants in  
Parents Community  
events

# 1,1M

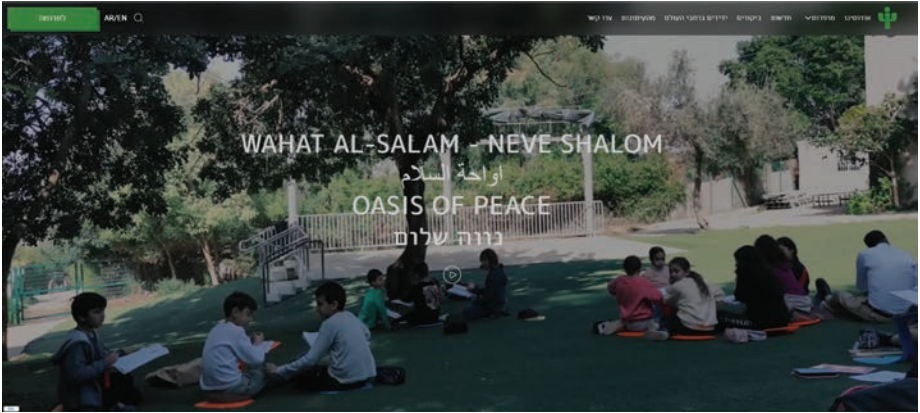
Impressions of the  
short video **Can We  
Still Say the Word  
Peace?** on Facebook



# Communications and Development



**Website:** Creating a website in three languages is no small task. The Arabic and Hebrew versions of the website are now online, and the C&D team, together with language editors and web developer, are working to upload content and create a format for translation and writing in all three languages. First pieces to be uploaded: The rescuers' stories, which will soon be accessible via QR codes attached to new signs in the Garden of Rescuers.



**Fundraising:** We are in the process of streamlining some of the financial procedures. Through personal visits and continued fundraising efforts, we have had a number of successes in obtaining new supporters and funding, as well as in maintaining our ties with existing ones.

Our friends, as usual, have stood by us through war and not-quite war, and we are grateful for their support. At the end of the year, several of the heads of Friends Associations were able to visit the village, and we felt the renewed energy on both sides.

**Volunteers:** The volunteer/intern program is currently operated by the C&D office. We are preparing the volunteer housing and entering into contact with potential volunteers and interns, as well as applying for a Quality Label from the ESC that will enable us to accept volunteers through European organizations.

**Continued efforts:** Through volunteers, our Friends Associations, our website and social media, we will seek to renew the network of supporters who adopt our message of shared struggle and work with us toward peace.

Samah Salame, educational codirector responsible for C&D was studying in London for the last quarter of the year, and she has been very active in working with the British Friends Association, setting up connections that will continue into the future.

# Peace Press

By the end of 2025, the Peace Press Hub, created for the Peace Press initiative the year before, included 509 partner organizations. This is a collaborative platform bringing together journalists, media professionals, and peace activists committed to advancing peace, democracy, and humanitarian values.

Since the People's Peace Summit held in Jerusalem in May, weekly Zoom meetings have brought together approximately 120 organizations, with updates shared across 11 activist groups of around 800 participants each. Samah Salaime, who heads the Peace Press, is part of the core steering group and media team, contributing actively to strategy, coordination, and decision-making.

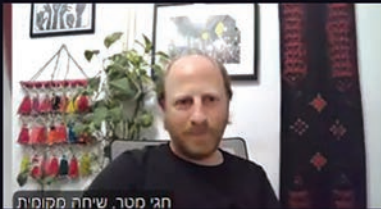
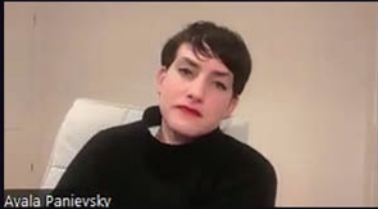
The project strengthened its media channels, with the Facebook page growing rapidly to approximately 7,000 followers and the Instagram account reaching nearly 1,000 followers. These channels now successfully reach broader and more diverse audiences, engaging increasing numbers of people in discussions about peace and human rights.

One of the project's central creative outputs was a short satirical video that invited viewers to imagine a reality in which the word "Shalom" becomes illegal. The clip was launched as a public awareness campaign on Facebook and Instagram, and achieved approximately 1.1 million impressions and over 10,000 one-minute views, asking viewers with the final frame: "What have you done for peace lately?"

The video was presented at the online Peace Press conference "Journalism, Civic Responsibility, and the Discourse on Peace" (October 30, Zoom). In the discussion among media professionals and academics, a number of thought-provoking issues arose around the title subject, and these will provide focus issues for further outputs of the Peace Press.

**To access the Peace Press sites:**





# Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center



For the Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center (PSCC), 2025 was a year for renewing and reimagining community as well as for renewing the Center, itself. Over the summer, the building and grounds underwent a major renovation that not only solved issues of drainage and aging facilities, but, in the words of PSCC director Hezzi Shuster, “transformed the space into a bright, welcoming, and fully equipped venue.” Among other things, the Doumia “dome of silence” that had weathered and been stained pink by fire retardant during a wildfire in May, was restored to its original brilliant white.

PSCC activities were crucial to keeping the community vital and connected as the war continued into autumn, and, as the country transitioned into both ceasefire and increasing tensions, it provided thought-provoking lectures, events and films that brought village members into lively discussions. Of note was an evening of “protest and rap” held in the summer.

## **Two series of activities stood out**

**Films:** In the PSCC, the monthly film evenings are a chance to see films by Palestinian and Jewish Israeli filmmakers that deal with subjects ranging from threats to Palestinian culture to the family of a woman taken hostage on Oct. 7. The films are followed by discussions with the filmmakers and subjects of the films.

**“Courtyard Conversations”:** These are a series of lectures, some in the courtyard of the library building, others inside the PSCC. Beginning with Ze’ev “Shoshka” Engelmayer, an artist and cartoonist who used his skills to highlight the hostage situation, through Ayman Odeh, head of the Hadash political party, which is under siege in the right-wing government, the lectures included historian Dr. Lina Dalesh and Prof. Nihaya Daoud. These lectures, accompanied by drinks and snacks in an informal atmosphere, spark intensive discussion. They are the initiative of members of the village younger generation, and are attended by people of all ages.



In addition, the PSCC hosted holiday celebrations, performances and, coinciding with the opening of the renovated building at the end of September, the Master’s program in Religious Studies in Tel Aviv University invited the general public to an evening event entitled “New Beginnings.” Prof. Barbara Meyer lectured on “Bruno Hussar and Interfaith Dialogue”; and Prof. Nehama Verbin spoke on “Beginnings.” This was an emotional event for many, and a reminder that dialogue is a continual process of renewal and reimagination.

# Nadi Youth Club



During the school year, the Nadi clubhouse is open two afternoons a week. Some afternoons are devoted to play: pool and ping pong, basketball and soccer. Other days involve planned activities: art projects, sushi rolling, preserving olives and baking cookies. Orienteering in the forest near the village, including a campfire, tea from local plants and roasted marshmallows, takes place on a regular basis.





**Holidays:** Over the year, the Nadi kids took part in holiday preparations, making Hannukah menorahs and a Christmas tree from found wood, creating decorations for the Ramadan Iftar meal and more. Over the summer holidays, the kids continued to meet, and they had special pool parties and fun-filled outings. This summer, the older kids also had a camping trip.

**Helping kids in troubled times:** At the end of May a wildfire swept through the area and the entire village was evacuated for a day, during which the neighboring village of Tal Shachar hosted everyone from the morning until late at night. Thankfully, the fire stopped just short of the village homes, but the Nadi kids had an intensive lesson on friendship and gratitude. To thank the members of Tal Shachar, they made a large sign to hang on their notice board.

While the war continued for most of the year, the country underwent two weeks of intensive shelling during the operation with Iran, which closed schools and kept children at home. To help the families, the Nadi was opened, and parents took turns working with the kids and even teaching them how to make short videos or a plaster cast.

**Youth leadership:** Together with the organization Sadaka-Reut, the older kids underwent a youth leadership course. The course included a project: making a film about the village, including interviewing members and learning to speak in front of a camera. The film was shown in Tel Aviv in December, as part of the Solidarity film festival. They also traveled to Italy in the summer to meet their Italian counterparts and to be hosted by the city of Cava de' Tirreni, near Naples.

# Oasis Art Gallery

Art, despite everything



An exhibit carried over into the first months of the year was on the community of artists inspired by Nihad Dabeet, a dear friend of the Oasis Art Gallery who had passed away suddenly the year before. Nihad, known for his wire and copper sculptures, was a generous artist who helped others realize their potential. It was clear from the exhibit that Nihad, while sorely missed, has managed to leave a gentle, loving mark on the world.

In February, an **“Artists Hosting Artists”** event took place in the Gallery courtyard. Twenty artists met to meet one another, talk, and start working on a new mosaic for the courtyard.

**“Heartache”** was the name of the exhibit that opened in June. Each of the eight artists who participated in the exhibit deals with issues of despair, identity and hope through their artwork. For curator Dyana Shaloufi-Rizek, the exhibit — the show was about both suffering and the possibility of healing through art.

**Continued efforts:** This is the tenth year of the Oasis Art Gallery. We are searching for ways to expand the team, as well as celebrating the rich decade of culture the Gallery has brought to the village and a steady stream of visitors.



# Community

Resilience and action



In the beginning of the year, Israel and Gaza were still at war, the casualties were mounting daily, hostages were still being held and there was no end in sight. For the village, as individuals and collectively, the most crucial activity was pushing, in any way possible, for an end to the war. For many, that meant protesting, whether on a nearby road or joining massive protests around the country.

By the end of the year, a fragile ceasefire was holding, even as hostilities continued. And yet, our message of peace is heard around the country and around the world, whether in the film *Coexistence my Ass*, a documentary on Noam Shuster, who grew up in the village, through the words of village member Dr. Nasreen Haddad Haj Yahya speaking in hostage square, or members Nir Sharon, Samah Salaime, Hezzi Shuster and others talking to groups in other countries. Our young people were even ambassadors for peace this year, meeting with Italian mayors through their youth leadership program.

Despite the challenges, the community held ten dialogue meetings, with strong participation and in an atmosphere of honesty and friendship. The village also organized or took part in five solidarity events, including a condolence tent, a testimony reading evening, and marches calling for an end to the war.

The village resilience team had some real-time tests of their abilities when fires broke out in the next-door forests as well as through the missile attacks during the two-week operation against Iran. This team trained throughout the year, including six sessions with the regional council and fire services. According to Municipal Society Chairman Eldad Joffe, "the team performed flawlessly.

Evacuating the schoolchildren — and later the entire village — was done quickly and orderly. Residents assisted in fire suppression efforts, and communication throughout the village helped maintain calm."

During the height of the war, the team ensure the public shelters were open and equipped, and they organized activities for young children.

**Continued efforts:** In addition to the day-to-day work of running a community, the addition of the visitors center will entail investing in bringing old and new friends to the village.



## ***Contacts and Support***

### **Contact us:**



**Email:** [info@wasns.info](mailto:info@wasns.info)

### **Online donations:**

<https://wasns.org/direct-donations/>

### **Web and Social Media:**

**Web:** [wasns.org](https://wasns.org)

### **Bank Information:**

Association of Friends  
of Educational Institutions  
Acct No. 12-690-454444  
IBAN:  
IL 92-0126-9000-0000-0454-444  
Swift code: POALILIT



**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/oasisofpeace>



**X:** [oasis\\_of\\_peace](#)



**Instagram:** [was\\_ns](#)



**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/@OasisofPeace>

### **Friends of Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom**

in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands,  
Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and the US:

<https://wasns.org/category/friends-worldwide/>

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التّور الدّاهلي  
האור שבי

