

Zochrot Annual Report 2005

Background on Zochrot

Zochrot's purpose is to involve the Jewish public in Israel in remembering and talking about the Nakba. The memory of the Nakba is an alternative memory that opposes the hegemonic Zionist narrative of history. The Nakba is the catastrophe experienced by the Palestinians in 1948 — the destruction of their villages, the expulsion and killing — but it is also an integral part of the history of the Jews who live here. It is a history that has been silenced and almost completely erased from the physical landscape of the country. Zochrot supports the right of return of the Palestinian refugees which is the personal, civil right of all uprooted people who were expelled from their homes. The right of return is also a collective right that was recognized by international law, particularly by U.N. Resolution 194 of December 1948, which has been re-approved tens of times since then.

Zochrot conducts various activities to these ends: touring and posting signs at destroyed villages; printing study materials and testimonies about the Nakba in Hebrew and Arabic; conducting seminars with teachers and students; operating an internet site that contains a wealth of information about the Nakba in Hebrew, including a database of maps; participating in legal struggles; and hosting encounters between uprooted Palestinians and Jews residing on their lands. The common denominator of all these projects is for Jews in Israel to learn about the Nakba, to reveal and cope with the history that has been obscured, and to take responsibility for what happened in 1948. This goal is based on the understanding that the Nakba and its ongoing consequences are an inextricable part of our lives. Zochrot also aspires to create a space in which the voices of Palestinian women who experienced the Nakba will receive significant attention.

General Summary of the Year 2005

2005 was a year of growth and establishment for Zochrot. There is a sense that Zochrot is a fact that exists and is taken for granted on the landscape of organizations in the country. The level activity rose compared to 2004, the organization went through significant structural changes and the scope of financial support and number of funders grew. Zochrot held tens of public events including tours, lectures and meetings with different groups and organizations from the country and from overseas. A staff of 6 workers was established (one full time and 5 part-time). In March the Learning Center on the Nakba was opened in Tel Aviv, which is used also as the offices of Zochrot. Zochrot's Haifa group met regularly and organized a number of events. A promising connection was made with an organization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The number of letters/contacts to Zochrot increased and Zochrot receives periodic media attention.

Summary of Activities

Public activities increased significantly, particularly as a result of the great number of evening lectures that took place in the Learning Center on the Nakba which was opened by Zochrot in Tel Aviv in March 2005. 27 lectures open to the public were conducted (as compared with 9 in 2004). 19 evening lectures were conducted at the Learning Center on the Nakba in Tel Aviv, 3 in Haifa and the remaining in Lod, the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, the Women's Feminist House in Tel Aviv, the Arab Association of Jaffa and in Miske. About 820 people took part in the evening lectures.

There were 29 tours to Palestinian sites destroyed in 1948, of which 7 were open to the public, in which signs were posted and special booklets were produced on Lod, Deir Yassin, Suhmata, Acre, al-Haram/Sidna Ali, and Lifta. Another 22 tours were for different groups from the country and overseas. In total 1,650 people participated in the tours.

In total 5 commemoration events to the Nakba took place with the participations of 750 people.

Two unique public events took place in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv to commemorate the Nakba and in the destroyed village of Miske in the opposition to the fencing of the school of the village. In Rabin Square an event was held under the title "Fill in the Square" to commemorate Nakba Date on 15 May 2005. We constructed a 1,000 square foot map of the land on which the Palestinian villages that were destroyed were restored by 300 participants at the event. Among the participants were internally displaced persons who told about their villages and posted them on the map.

[photo]

In June 2005 the Israel Lands Authority constructed a fence around the structure of the school of the village of Miske in order to prevent the displaced residents of the village from meeting at the place. In responses to this Zochrot held a participants event in cooperation with tens of artists who contributed their creations. The fence was covered with a white sheet on which the creations were hung, paintings were drawn and video art was screened.

[photo]

Zochrot participated in seven conferences and festivals locally and overseas, appeared at two planning committee meetings, in which it expressed its opposition to building plans in Lifta, and submitted a High Court petition on the matter of Canada Park. 1,740 people were exposed to this.

Eitan Bronstein participated in a lecture tour in France together with Leila Alali, direction of the al-Najdeh organization, an organization of Palestinian women in Lebanon. There were meetings with different groups and lectures in Paris, Lyons, Dijon and Marseille. A promising connection was made with al-Najdeh and there are plans for a joint project on the village Ras al-Ahmar for 2006.

Zochrot held 18 educational activities for groups of teachers, high school students, university students, and women's groups, in which 440 people took part. The first teachers' group in a high school and in seminars in the north with the aim of developing a learning curriculum on the Nakba.

About 40 meetings were held with representatives of different organizations locally and abroad. Students and interested people visited the Learning Center in Tel Aviv to look for material relevant for them.

Zochrot produced a film on the organization (directed by Liat Sabin Ben Shoshan). A project was begun to collect testimonies on video and edit them. The goal is to film testimonies of internally displaced refugees, to edit them and translate them into Hebrew. Until now 25 testimonies have been filmed.

Work began on a multimedia presentation on the Nakba which will be in Hebrew, Arabic and English.

Work began on a guide book to the villages that existed in Tel Aviv until 1948.

Six concentrated discussion days took place of Zochrot in addition to the regular ongoing staff and board meetings.

There were attempts to organize ongoing encounters between internally displaced persons from particular villages and the Jewish residents who now live on the lands of those villages, but without success. One meeting was held between members of Kibbutz Ramat Yochanan and the displaced people of Hawsha and Qusayr, on meeting with members of Beit Haemek to examine the possibility of meeting with the displaced people of Kuwaykat and preliminary ___ at Kerem Mahal in order to try to meet with the displaced people of Ijzim. These attempts did not ripen into deepening encounters.

Zochrot estimates that the number of people who directly took part in Zochrot activities in 2005 was over seven thousand (about a thousand internationals and the remainder more or less evenly split between Jews and Arabs). This is almost twice as many people reached by Zochrot in 2004.

Organization

The Learning Center on the Palestinian Nakba, which also serves as Zochrot's offices, opened in March 2005.

A staff of six workers was established in Zochrot. Eitan Bronstein is the director, working at a full-time salary since February. Norma Musih, Talia Fried, and Raneen Geris joined Zochrot at half-time positions in March 2005, followed by Eitan Reich and Iris Bar in July 2005.

Toward the end of the year an ideological dispute arose in Zochrot regarding whether army reservists could be members or position-holders in Zochrot. The question touched on long-standing ideological differences within the organization, and in the final outcome [number] members and [number] staff (Iris Bar), left the organization. The discussion and the organizational changes that ensued were detailed in an open letter to friends and partners in [month].

Media Exposure and Public Response

In 2005 Zochrot is better known to the wide public. There was not a significant increase in the breadth of media exposure, perhaps because Zochrot's existence is taken as a matter of fact. The media turns to Zochrot as an important and reliable source of information. [Examples?]

Zochrot received 160 emails to the website asking for information on particular places, wanting to join the mailing list, comments on the website, offered help and support, expressed derision and opposition. Different articles that were published on Zochrot in different websites received hundreds of responses, usually hostile, to the activities and the position of the organization.

MSN published an article under the headline “A Palestinian Village in the Heart of Tel Aviv?” which reported on an colloquium at Zochrot and which received more than a hundred responses. Click here for the [original article in Hebrew](#).

An article was published in Haaretz on the upcoming signposting in Canada Park under the headline “The Palestinian Past of Canada Park is Forgotten in JNF Signs” (June 12, 2005). Click here for the [original article in Hebrew](#) or Zochrot’s [English translation](#).

Ben Dror Yemini, a journalist with the Israeli daily Maariv, is a good example of the shock that Zochrot causes in the Jewish public in Israel. In the headline to his article he called Zochrot “ Hamas Propagandists”; here is an excerpt from his article on a conference in which Zochrot activists took part:

<http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?id=404>

[Link to online article](#)

The issue is that there are those among us who willingly apply themselves in service of the enemy. At one of the breaks, members of the organization “Zochrot” approached me. This is a group of Israelis, it is hard to believe, that deals with the commemoration of the Palestinian names of different villages in the country and in promoting the right of return. Why do you call us Hamasniks, they asked me. Because you are collaborators with those whose aim is the annihilation of the State of Israel, I told them. There is no difference between them and those adherents of the right of return of Jews to the Kasbah in Nablus, and between them and those adherents to the right of return of Palestinians to Sheikh Muwannis. Both are enemies of the one sane solution: two separate nation-states. Exactly like Cyprus. The right of return exists – for Jews to Israel and for Palestinians to Palestine.

The phenomenon of “Zochrot” is not only sick. It is primarily destructive. It perpetuates the memory of Palestinian and Israeli suffering, since it encourages the Palestinian refusal front. If among Palestinians there are many who understand that the demand for the right of return is unrealistic, as in the more than 150 thousand Palestinians who have already signed the Ayalon-Nusseibeh document, people from among us come and clarify to them that they must be obstinate. Will the Palestinian suffering come to an end this way, or will it merely be perpetuated?

And with Israelis like these, who needs enemies?

An article by Eitan Bronstein was published in the book by Nur Massalhah “Catastrophe Remembered,” and a section of the book by Susan Nathan, “The Other Side of Israel,” related the story of the founding of Zochrot and its

activities. A number of academic studies were also conducted with the assistance of Zochrot.

Support for Zochrot

The following individuals and organizations supported Zochrot in 2005:

Kerkinactie / Global Ministries PCN
 Mennonite Central Committee
 EPER Entraide Protestante Suisse
 ICCO
 CCFD
 CIMADE
 Broederlijk Delen
 Oxfam Solidarity
 Misereor
 Medico International

Important financial support for activities came from participants, who bought village booklets and t-shirts and donated money to cover the costs of the events.

Special Responses to Zochrot Activities

On November 12, 2005, Zochrot conducted a tour of the destroyed village of al-Haram/Sidna Ali, which is on the beach of Herzliya. The refugees of the village told about their experiences and an Israeli woman named Dana, who took part for the first time in a Zochrot tour. She asked to say a few words and she told the gatherers that she had lived for years next to the village without ever knowing that it existed. She asked for their forgiveness for their expulsion and for her ignorance of their existence.

I just want to give my appreciation (again) to the work you are doing. I read in Haaretz about the fight in Park Canada and wanted to express my support.
 Adi Avivi

Warm blessings for the achievement at the High Court of Justice. Clearly it is just the beginning of the path (remember when I suggested to you before the beginning to prepare ahead of time a few signs for every village...)
 Good for you.
 Shuli Dichter

In response to the fence event at Miske:

I am filled with admiration for you and for the amazing organization you founded! I was sorry that I could not be with you at the event at Rabin Square, which... seemed to me to be an amazing civic act.
 Ariella Azoulay [sp.?)

Future Directions for Development

Zochrot will continue to grow and develop in terms of public exposure, breadths of activities and growth of the organization and the staff. In 2006 we will move to a new address in the heart of Tel Aviv where we will enjoy more space for evening events and for the staff. In 2006 for the first time we will emphasize activities in the south of the country in the context of the Nakba. Zochrot intends to establish a group of activists in Jerusalem. Another group of teachers will join and will develop a learning curriculum on the Nakba. The projects on guidebook to the villages of Tel Aviv that were destroyed in 1948 and the presentation on the Nakba will be completed. [as well as the English choveret?]