



JFNA Condemns Attack on Jewish-Arab Bilingual School December 2, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

We were outraged to learn that the Max Rayne Hand in Hand Bilingual School in Jerusalem, where Jewish and Arab-Israeli children study together, was vandalized and attacked by arsonists on Saturday. JFNA condemns this act of hate and destruction and hopes that the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

The State of Israel is a democracy premised on our most cherished Jewish values and is committed by its Declaration of Independence to "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex." Institutions that work to build a just and inclusive society by promoting better understanding between Jews and Arabs help strengthen Israel for the benefit of all its citizens. To better provide philanthropic support to institutions engaged in this work, JFNA has created an ongoing partnership of Federations, private foundations and individual philanthropists known as the JFNA Social Venture Fund for Jewish-Arab Equality and Shared Society (SVF). Over the past seven years, the SVF has allocated more than \$5 million to a variety of such institutions, including Hand in Hand.

Just hours after the arson attack, police, parents and volunteers worked to make sure the school would be able to open as scheduled. Below is a comment from one of our colleagues in Israel, describing the outpouring of support Sunday morning at the Hand in Hand School.

At 8:00 this morning, the entrance to the Jerusalem [Hand in Hand] bilingual school was packed with parents, kids, journalists and just regular folks who wanted to express their grief and outrage over the deliberate arson-burning of the school's first grade classrooms. Amid all the supporters what moved me to tears was the amazing solidarity by Jerusalem's school children. The Keshet School, which is a joint religious-secular Jewish school, sent the entire school for a solidarity visit. They came in chanting, "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies." Kids from the Kidma School, also in the neighborhood and specializing in educating and empowering Sephardic kids from Katamonim, held signs with the same

sentiments. Then, to top it off, a large group of teenage religious boys from Hartman High School stood outside singing songs of peace from the tefillot. Their presence reinforced the fact that the bilingual school is part and parcel of Jerusalem's educational system. It does not operate in a bubble. Through its living example of shared education, the school is having a much broader impact on Jerusalem's school system. May their example continue to shine on.

JFNA invites anyone who wishes to learn more about or support the work of Hand in Hand or the SVF to contact your local Federation.

Sincerely,

Michael Siegal

Chair, JFNA Board of Trustees

Dede Feinberg

Chair, JFNA Executive Committee

Jerry Silverman

President and CEO, JFNA

www.JewishFederations.org
The Jewish Federations of North America
Wall Street Station
PO Box 157
New York, NY 10268
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