

THE HOPE: COEXISTENCE

Over the past few weeks, the barrage of rockets on Israeli towns from Hamas in Gaza, and the IDF's response with military force, has been dominating the news media.

There were casualties on both sides and widespread devastation. We have seen this scenario a few times before, and it shall eventually pass. But perhaps the most jarring, this time around, are images of communal violence inside Israel—scenes of attacks by mobs mostly in mixed Arab/Jewish cities, instigated by both Arab and Jewish extremists. The very delicate balance of Arab/Jewish coexistence that so many, on both sides, have been working hard to maintain, has been tested.

But amidst it all, we are witnessing some rays of light. Jews and Arabs are reaching out to each other, helping each other, sheltering each other, demonstrating together, and calling for an inter-communal peace. The majority of Israelis are aware that solidarity and coexistence are the only way to live peacefully in Israel, and to be a truly democratic state.

Israeli artists have responded to the *matzav* (מצב), literally the “situation,” by giving their interpretation of this goal. Here are a few examples:

1. MIRA AWAD

Mira Awad, an Arab-Israeli singer, actress, and songwriter of Palestinian descent, launched a project on Facebook with her own positive message.

In her words:

“Yesterday I watched as digital platforms once again got flooded with words of hate and incitement. Then I watched the news and saw how all that hate and anger manifested itself in actual reality. At some point yesterday I stopped sifting through my own pages because the words there simply poisoned my soul and suffocated me. Words have so much impact. More than we consciously know. So I chose to answer back with



Mira's message and song: [Watch here](#)
In 2009, Mira Awad represented Israel at the Eurovision Song Contest along with Jewish-Israeli singer Achinoam Nini, singing “[There Must Be Another Way](#),” a song about peace and the respect for the humanity of one another.

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words of mine. I'm hereby launching the #goodwordproject: words that I hope will bring some positivity. Let's start with "life," a good word by all means, ain't it? We can agree on that, can't we? If you have a good word, write it to me, and I'll try to wear it and post it here too. Stay safe, and use your words to make the world a better place."

2. SHOSHKE ENGELMAYER

Ze'ev Engelmayer is a famous Israeli illustrator. But when he wears a pink bodysuit, yellow foam wig, and red high heeled shoes, he becomes "Shoshke," a defiant protest artist—perhaps his alter ego. Shoshke wrote on Facebook recently that there are reports of some Arab homes being marked so Jewish extremist vandals would target them. It reminded her of a very dark period in our history when Jewish homes and businesses were marked just like that. She couldn't remain silent. She created new markings for doorposts in the form of stickers, but instead of incitement they offer love. Most of them say: "Human beings live here" and in order not to exclude our beloved animals there are also "Humans and cats live here" and "Humans and elephants live here." Shoshke hopes to have ten thousand homes marked with these to show that it is impossible to mark Arabs, it is impossible to mark Jews. We're all humans. In Hebrew: *Kulanu B'nai Adam* (כָּלֵנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם, "We are all descendants of Adam, our ancestral father").



3. OVER THE WALL — A SHORT FILM

A Palestinian boy and an Israeli boy meet by coincidence from both sides of a border wall between Israel and Gaza. They both discover that reality and perception of the other is not black and white. The twelve-minute film, made in 2018, is thought-provoking and raises many questions that continue to be relevant to the ongoing situation in Israel. According to the producer, Mor Cohen, since the recent round of conflict erupted on May 10, 2021, interest in the film spiked with more than 350,000 views.



Watch [Over the Wall](#)

Let us hope that these and countless other coexistence initiatives continue to make change in Israeli society and across the region. We all have at least one thing in common—we are all humans.