



# DEMINE~REPLANT~REBUILD

## THE SACRED LANDS OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE



## A PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Presented By  
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ROOTS OF PEACE  
DEMINE~REPLANT~REBUILD™  
THE SACRED LANDS OF ISRAEL & PALESTINE

**Executive Summary:** On February 6th 2010, 11-year-old Daniel Yuval was playing with his family in the snow on the Golan Heights, when he stepped on a landmine and lost his leg from the explosion. Inspired by Daniel's courage and challenge to his country to remove all of its landmines, the Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel, led by Roots of Peace, has succeeded in bringing the long neglected problem of landmines to the forefront of public discourse and action.

Rallying people and organizations from all sectors, including the Government of Israel, Palestinian Authority, U.S. Department of State, landmine survivors, NGOs, military, media, decision makers and the private sector, Roots of Peace has built a broad consensus to begin humanitarian clearing of all non-operational minefields which have been holding hostage precious farmland and claiming lives and limbs for more than four decades. More than one million landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO), that serve no further military defense purpose, prevent access to more than 50,000 acres of productive land in Israel, the West Bank and the Jordan River valley.

Roots of Peace has an historic and precedent-setting opportunity to begin its innovative Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ work in Israel and the West Bank, where these minefields occupy agricultural and grazing lands and in some cases surround sacred sites like *Qasr el-Yahud*, near Jericho on the West Bank of the Jordan River—where Jesus was baptized—a place sacred to people of Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths alike. *Qasr el-Yahud*—Arabic for “Palace of the Jews”—is also the site of the Israelites' crossing into the land of Caanan, and the ascension of Prophet Elijah into heaven. In Islam, the site is on a route walked by the Prophet Moses, between Mount Nebo and Nabi Musa. Once the minefields are removed, Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious pilgrims and cultural tourists from Israel, Palestine, Jordan and around the world will be able to visit this sacred place, helping to build interfaith bridges of peace and tolerance throughout the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands of landmines and UXO remain within and surrounding Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank, putting innocent civilians at risk of injury and death. Since marking and fencing is poorly maintained and mine risk education virtually non-existent, most of the recent casualties have been children. During the past year, Roots of Peace has been working intensively with the Government of Israel, Palestinian Authority, U.S. Department of State, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and have now received approval with these groups to undertake the initial projects at *Qasr el-Yahud* and the *Fields of Bethlehem* at Husan village, a Palestinian community dating from the 3rd century A.D.

Roots of Peace with its Israeli and Palestinian partners is now ready to begin the first phase of Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ work at *Qasr el-Yahud* and the *Fields of Bethlehem* at Husan. The fact that both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority have signaled their willingness to support this effort, positions mine action and replanting as crucial tools to promote urgently needed cooperation between the two parties. The success of these high profile initial projects will establish the legal, geopolitical and socioeconomic support needed to carry forward this timely peace building work throughout Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

**Funding Needed:** The estimated budget to develop and implement these initial projects during the 3-year period 2011–2013 is **\$2.5 million**. Additional funding will be provided by the Government of Israel for their work on the project. Roots of Peace is preparing funding proposals for the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) for **\$2 million** to support the primary project activities described on the following pages. ROP is also seeking urgently needed immediate grant funding of **\$500,000** from individual donors and private foundations to assure that the implementation phase can begin right away in early 2011, while the longer-term USAID and other donor funding is secured.

## **Roots of Peace—Summary of 2010 Accomplishments**

### **Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel and Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ Sacred Lands**

**March**—The Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel was launched at the Israeli Democracy Institute who hosted a roundtable on the issue of landmines in Israel, with members of the academy, civil society, mine affected communities and the government. Guest speakers included landmine survivors Daniel Yuval and Jerry White, founder of Survivor Corps and recognized leader in the Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr., former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs and current Chair of the Stimson Center in Washington DC. As a result of the Campaign's outreach, then—Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chair, MK Tzachi Hanegbi, summoned Daniel Yuval, Jerry White and Ambassador Bloomfield to testify before the Knesset.

**May**—As a result of this special committee session and testimony, an unprecedented bill mandating the establishment of a mine action authority that will be responsible for demining all non-operational minefields within a short time frame was drafted. The legislation was introduced to the Knesset in May, in the presence of landmine survivors from across the country, and gained an overwhelming support of more than 90% of Members of Knesset from all parties.

**June**—Roots of Peace and Survivor Corps released the first report and map of minefields in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, presenting it to Palestinian Prime Minister, Salaam Fayyad, who has endorsed the campaign, and to Israeli Deputy Minister of Defense, Matan Vilnai, who declared in a public reception in honor of Daniel Yuval, the support of the Israeli government to the legislation. Also in June, Members of Knesset went on their first field trip to the mine-contaminated Baptism Site of Jesus on the Jordan River, where they joined Roots of Peace Founder, Heidi Kühn, in planting a tree to symbolize the vision of Demining and Replanting Sacred Lands. (See Map in Report Annex and the full report at the Roots of Peace website: <http://www.rootsofpeace.org/blog/2010/11/deminereplant-sacred-sites.html>)

**July**—The mine action legislation received unanimous support from the Israeli Government and passed the preliminary reading, the first out of four rounds of votes a private bill has to pass in the Knesset before becoming a binding law.

**September**—At the beginning of the Jewish high holidays, the largest bank in Israel sponsored the placement of bill boards along the roads leading to mine affected nature reserves and parks in the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley and the Arava.

**November**—Daniel Yuvall, Youth Ambassador for the Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel, called for international support to make Israel and the Middle East free from mines at the opening of the United Nations Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty in Geneva on November 29. Daniel's appeal drew the attention of delegates from several Middle East countries, who expressed their interest in supporting the campaign. This included HRH Prince Mired Raad, Chairman of Jordan's National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation, who spoke at a reception co-hosted by Geneva supporters of the campaign and Roots of Peace.

**December**—A Roots of Peace delegation, including CEO, Heidi Kühn, Israel Country Director, Dhyan Or, Jerry White, Daniel Yuval and his parents, together with Israeli Deputy Minister of Defense Vilnai, Israeli Defense Attaché and Embassy representatives, traveled together to Washington DC to secure U.S. support and further international momentum to help pass mine action legislation in Israel, to mobilize resources to demine, replant and rebuild sacred lands, and to introduce selected Roots of Peace pilot demining projects to be launched in 2011.

The Roots of Peace and Government of Israel delegation met with key officials at the US State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, who are responsible for supporting mine action programs internationally. As a result of this meeting, the State Department decided to send a technical assessment team to visit Israel in February 2011 and explore potential mine action cooperation, and Deputy Minister Vilnai said he will endorse the demining of the Baptismal Site on the Jordan River as a pilot project, in coordination with the Kingdom of Jordan, and for the benefit of cultural tourism and religious pilgrims of all faiths of the world.

After the State Department briefings, the delegation met with senior advisors of Senator Patrick Leahy and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi on Capitol Hill, to encourage US appropriations for humanitarian demining in Israel. The delegation was then hosted by Ambassador Bloomfield at the Stimson Center, together with speakers from the State Department and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), for a panel discussion on demining in Israel, where, among other things, the concept of public-private partnership, involving the Israeli and US Governments, Roots of Peace, Israeli private demining companies and UNMAS was presented.

After the Washington DC meetings, the delegation traveled to New York City where the Israeli Consul General in New York, Ido Aharoni, together and Roots of Peace co-hosted a reception with supporters and friends of the campaign, including US Representative to the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Rick Barton, and the Head of Ministry of Defense Mission to the USA, Gad Dovev. The delegation was concluded by a meeting at UNMAS headquarters in New York, to begin planning for the Roots of Peace 2011 programs in Israel and the West Bank.

### **Roots of Peace Goals and Program Summary for 2011**

In 2011, Roots of Peace and their partners find themselves at the cusp of real change and a paradigm shift in Israel regarding landmine policy and clearance. Israelis have finally realized that landmines are not a security mechanism, but a humanitarian problem that threatens its own citizens and their livelihoods. The following summarizes Roots of Peace priorities for 2011.

- Continue public outreach through the Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel working with Israeli Knesset members and key government ministry representatives to ensure the mine clearance legislation is drafted in accordance with international standards, passed during the current Knesset term and then implemented with strong leadership.
- Advocate with policymakers to secure funding for mine clearance in the 2011 national budget, and engage international partners, including the US government to support these efforts.
- Draw on the experience of other nations, like neighboring Jordan, who have successfully cleared their minefields along their border with Israel, and offer technical advice to monitor the implementation of the first professional, efficient and effective national demining plan in Israel.
- Begin implementation of the Roots of Peace Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ Sacred Lands initiatives at the *Qasr el-Yahud* baptism site and the *Fields of Bethlehem* at Husan village.

The legal, geopolitical and socioeconomic precedents established with these initial projects will lay the foundation for the longer-term Roots of Peace Initiatives for the entire 50,000 acres of land and sacred sites for Christian, Jewish and Muslim people alike within 10 years. Assessments are underway now to determine the costs and time-frame to complete humanitarian demining in the West Bank and Israel and based on the experience in Jordan, who have successfully demined their border with Israel, initial estimates are that the Palestinian Authority and Israel can be mine-free within 10 years for a cost of approximately \$70 million.

## Roots of Peace Demine~Replant~Rebuild™

### Sacred Lands of Israel & Palestine

#### **Project Description: *Qasr el-Yahud* Baptism Site of Jesus and the *Fields of Bethlehem***

For the initial 3–year project during 2011–2013, Roots of Peace and its partners will design and implement two precedent-setting Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ projects at the *Qasr el-Yahud* baptism site and the *Fields of Bethlehem* project at Husan village near Bethlehem.

**Qasr el-Yahud Baptism Site of Jesus:** Located on the western bank of the Jordan River, just before it flows into the Dead Sea, *Qasr el-Yahud* is sanctified as the place of Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist. After the Holy Sepulcher and the Nativity Church, this is the third-most sacred site for more than two billion Christians worldwide. This is also the site of the Israelites’ crossing into the land of Caanan, and the place of the Prophet Elijah’s ascent into heaven. In Islam, this site is on a route traveled by the Prophet Moses, between Mount Nebo and Nabi Musa.

**Demine:** Today, areas around the Baptismal Site compound are littered with several thousand antipersonnel and antitank mines covering an area of approximately 750 acres that prevent access to many historic monasteries and chapels, some dating back to the 4th century A.D. and representing Greek Orthodox, Franciscan, Roman Catholic, Coptic, Syrian Orthodox, Ethiopian, Romanian, and Russian Orthodox. In the late 1960s, the Israeli army mined the area and booby-trapped the monasteries, in order to prevent terrorists from crossing over from Jordan. The site is situated within “Area C” of the Palestinian Territories, which according to the 1993 Oslo Accords, is under the administration of Israeli authorities.

**Replant:** Once the landmines and UXO are removed, the native landscape surrounding the baptism site can be restored and enhanced to accommodate pilgrims of all faiths and cultural tourists. Agricultural replanting will include the seven “sacred” crops associated with the site—barley, dates, grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates and wheat—that will also generate revenue and jobs for local farmers.

**Rebuild:** The Israeli Government, National Parks Authority, Ministry of Tourism and the private sector are planning multi-million dollar tourism infrastructure investments for religious and cultural tourism at the site once the mines are removed and that will generate significant revenue and employment for local communities. The Roots of Peace budget for its work at the *Qasr el-Yahud* baptism site is estimated to be \$1.25 million for the initial 3–year period, 2011–2013.

**Fields of Bethlehem—Husan Village:** Located 4 miles west of Bethlehem, Husan, which means “beauty” in Arabic, dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. Today, nearly 6,000 Palestinian residents live in the central village area of 55 acres, with surrounding arable land of 900 acres. The village suffers from high rates of unemployment, a shortage of drinking water, no public sewage system and the presence of a minefield within its residential area.

**Demine:** An Old Jordanian minefield of about one and a half acres in the midst of the village is preventing farmers from accessing their lands and homes, and putting the lives of dozens of Palestinian children at risk, who pass by it daily on their way to school. Fences and signs that had been installed in the past have disintegrated long ago, and this minefield, open and unmarked, has claimed the lives of four people and injured more than ten people, mostly children who pass through this minefield on their way to kindergarten and school and are constantly under risk of losing limbs and lives. According to the Oslo Interim Agreement, Husan territories are part of “Areas B and C,” and clearing this minefield will require close cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces, who have both signaled their willingness to support this effort, which positions mine action and replanting as a precedent setting peace-building initiative.

## Summary Timeline of Roots of Peace Programs in 2011

**January 2011**—Building on the momentum of the campaign’s achievements in 2010, and as a result of the “Diplomacy & Demining” Delegation, Roots of Peace will accelerate preparations for passing the mine action legislation in time for the first anniversary of 9 year-old Daniel Duval’s landmine injury, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, by raising local and international awareness to the campaign, engaging the Israeli public and exerting pressure on the government and the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, with the help of the new Mine-Free Israel Campaign Chair, former Committee Chairman Hanegbi.

On January 18, the eve of Epiphany according to the Orthodox Church, more than 20,000 pilgrims passed through 3,000 landmines scattered on both sides of the path leading to the Baptismal Site of Jesus, in order to perform the traditional rites at the Jordan River. Roots of Peace engaged church leaders and international media to call for immediate demining of the whole site, in accordance to international standards, and with respect to its religious and cultural importance. ( See APS / MSNB News Story—<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41138212/ns/travel> )

On January 21 the campaign organized a “Demine Israel” Day, with volunteers spreading “Danger Mines!” signs across Tel Aviv and inviting the public to join a petition calling on the Knesset to pass legislation, establish a mine action focal point, and implement a national demining policy.

**February**—A symposium on humanitarian mine action and international cooperation will take place at the Begin Sadat Center in Bar Ilan University, inviting guest speakers from the US State Department and UNMAS. Depending on developments in the mine action program in Cyprus, a delegation of deminers and Government of Israel representatives will visit the UN demining program there for a hands-on tutorial on methodology and demonstration of demining procedures.

On February 6, the 1-year anniversary of the day young Daniel Yuval lost his leg to a landmine in the Golan Heights while playing in the snow, Survivor Corps Founder and Nobel Peace Prize corecipient, Jerry White, and other fellow landmine survivors, will be joined by Roots of Peace CEO, Heidi Kühn and interfaith representatives to meet in Israel with the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. The meetings will focus on the goal of bringing the humanitarian mine action legislation to the Knesset plenum for a first reading and to urge Knesset members to vote in favor of the legislation.

**In March–June**—the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of National Mine Action Program Directors will take place in Geneva, with the prospect of having an national director appointed in time to be the first to represent Israel at this operational conference. Also in March, the President and the Secretary General of the Mine Ban Treaty plan to conduct an official visit to Israel in order explore potential for international cooperation in mine action. In order to help Israeli deminers and decision makers better understand humanitarian mine action, international standards and procedures and operational and funding mechanisms, Roots of Peace will coordinate, together with UNMAS, Bar Ilan University, the Milken Institute, the Van Leer Institute and/or others, a series of tutorials, workshops and symposia, involving all relevant stakeholders, where these issues will be discussed, demonstrated and experienced.

**March–December**—In parallel to the advocacy campaign, Roots of Peace will demonstrate in 2011, through pilot projects, how humanitarian demining is done, safely, efficiently and effectively. Together with the world’s best deminers, agricultural advisors and cultural experts, Roots of Peace will begin its Demine~Replant~Rebuild™ work at *Qasr el-Yahud* and the *Fields of Bethlehem*.

# Roots of Peace—Report Annex



- 1 Corazin (Mt. 11:21, Lk. 10:13)
- 2 Land of Gadarenes (Mt. 4:28-34, Mr. 5:1-20, Lk. 8:26-39)
- 3 Abraham's Path  
Jesus' Path
- 4 Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35)
- 5 Baptismal Site  
Crossing of the Jordan point of the Israelite and Joshua
- 6 Mamre of Abraham (Gen. 18)
- 7 Strongholds of King Solomon  
Byzantine Churches  
Byzantine Desert Monasteries
- 8-11 Itinerary of Exodus  
The Frankincense Road  
Ancient copper mines



*Jerry White, Nobel Peace Prize corecipient, Founder of Survivor Corps and Daniel Duval, 9-year old Israeli landmine victim are Roots of Peace advisors.*



*Roots of Peace Founder & CEO, Heidi Kühn and Tzachi Hanegbi, Chairman of the Knesset Defense and Security Committee plant an olive tree at the baptism site of Jesus on the Jordan River in 2010.*

**Roots of Peace Demine~Replant~Rebuild™**  
**Sacred Lands of Israel & Palestine**



*Pilgrims on the road to the Baptism site surrounded by minefields*



*Israeli minefields on the Jordan River at the Batism site of Jesus*



*The Jordan River today, near the Baptism site*



*The Baptism Site on the Jordan River is one of the most important recent discoveries in biblical archaeology. Excavations only began here in 1996, following Jordan's peace treaty with Israel in 1994, but have already uncovered more than 20 churches, caves and baptismal pools dating from the Roman and Byzantine periods. Archaeology has shown that the area known as Wadi Kharrar has long been believed to be the biblical "Bethan beyond the Jordan," where John the Baptist lived and Jesus was baptized. This area is also associated with the ascension of the Prophet Elijah into heaven and the place where the Israelites crossed the River Jordan and entered the land of Caanan. In Islam, the site is on a route traveled by Prophet Moses, between Mount Nebo and Nabi Musa.*