

In the late morning of September 1, an email arrives, the subject reads 'sad news from the village'. This was written by Samah Salaime, the director of the Communication and Development office of Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam; it is received by the friends associations', a dozen associations of friends that, from the United States to Great Britain, support this project.

In the body of the email, photographs of a fire and what remains after the fire has been extinguished. A few lines of text tell us that the classrooms of the Peace School burned down the night before.

The origin of the damage is not known, prudence asks not to elaborate hasty hypotheses. We are all familiar with those spartan buildings which since 1984 have housed the activities of the School for Peace and its propensity to invest more in educational activities than in facilities. A short circuit seems an acceptable explanation.

The days pass between the reopening of the bi-national and bilingual school (next door), the attempts to understand the extent of the damage and the move to the premises of the village library, a very large and underutilized building where, already in the weekend following the fire, the program is maintained with an in-person seminar.

A week later, on September 7, a new email arrives, saying 'another attack on our community'. In fact, another fire always broke out at night, in the Library, but it was equipped with an alarm system that went into operation, preventing serious damage.

The succession and geography of the two events discourage recourse to the justification of the case. And so were the results of the double investigation conducted by both the police and the insurance: traces of fuel were found at both sites, which allowed the activation of arson.

It is not the first time that Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam has suffered violent attacks. Years ago the tires were cut to about fifteen cars of the residents, then some insulting writings aimed at Arab school children. The village is easily accessible, physically indefensible from the fury of those who act their ideological and violent aggression. And we know well that the model of an equitable coexistence, of a just, equal, bilingual and binational education disturbs fanatics of nationalisms.

These are the words with which Nava Sonneschein, director of the School for Peace for decades, described the event: "The classrooms of the School for Peace were severely damaged. The roof and ceiling partially collapsed, the wood paneling of the walls was completely burned, the doors, walls, windows and furniture were destroyed. But luckily firefighters arrived quickly on the scene and stayed until the flames died out, so the flames spread to neighboring houses - a real possibility - and no one was injured in the fire. The offices of the School for Peace were not burned. We have not lost our computers, files or books. But as the fire damaged our electrical and water connections, we moved to the Fred Segal Peace Library. Our work will continue without interruption; we can't afford a break! A colleague, fellow activist and senior facilitator at SFP Samer Swaid of our partner NGO, the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, expresses very well what I, too, feel: "In this place I have spent hundreds or thousands of hours to facilitate groups of Arabs and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians; we conducted an equal dialogue so contrary to asymmetrical power relations outside the room. Although the building was burned, the idea is still alive and we will act to strengthen it. "

6 nights later a painful fire again at the Fred Segal Peace Library after SFP staff moved there. Luckily the sprinklers worked and the damage was small. Now we and the police know it was arson. People who don't like what we do for equality, justice, for a shared society.

After the arson we held two meetings of the 'Agents of Change' course for Jewish and Arab lawyers and political leaders of ethnically mixed cities ... The School for Peace is alive and well. Our work will go on. We will not let this disaster break our spirits. They can burn buildings, but not our work for peace, equality, human rights. "

The experience of this vulnerability, however, has struck deeply, the dull pain of those who cannot defend themselves, those who live in the village and those who appreciate its work, even from a distance.

And here we take a jump of 2,800 kilometers to find ourselves in Bergamo. In particular in via San Bernardino in the ACLI offices, where the 'WHO DOES WHAT' calendar has been published for eighteen years, dedicated to a social project that is heard on its pages and financed with revenues.

This year the ACLI have chosen the Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam School for Peace, which will actually have to face more than one expense.

The friendship between ACLI and NSWAS has deep roots, it feeds on shared projects such as Seeds of Peace in Kosovo at the beginning of the 2000s, then the tour of two women from the village here in the Province of Bergamo ten years ago, visits, exchanges and continuous dialogue.

But the Italian association of Friends of Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam nevertheless felt enormous and amazed gratitude.

It is not just any year, it is not for Bergamo, and the ACLI's ability to look up and know how to get in tune with what has value elsewhere is special.

They themselves, in the words of their president Daniele Rocchetti, recount this choice as follows: "Born from the idea of some families of friends who ended up one day with their children in a bookshop in the Black Forest, the family calendar in recent years has kept company to many. It has networked and given visibility to many associations, cooperatives, groups, at the concrete and often hidden service of the family and parenthood. (...). It is printed in 4,500 copies. This year we would like to help the Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam school ([wasns.org/-oasi-di-pace](http://wasns.org/-oasi-di-pace)), a village halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv where Jewish and Arab families live together. An "oasis of peace" that has endured for almost fifty years, a laboratory of coexistence in a difficult land. The school recently suffered two arson attacks, including one with serious damage. The villagers have decided not to stop and to continue building bridges of encounter and dialogue. We would like to thank them and tell them we don't forget them. "

This calendar is the sign of the ability to create bridges of recognition and closeness that go beyond the Mediterranean and contingencies, to bring what is needed where it is needed, in this case a strong message of friendship and generosity.