

BRINGING JEWS AND PALESTINIANS TOGETHER

JERUSALEM FOUNDATION'S MATI-JERUSALEM BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER AIMS TO IMPROVE LIFE IN EAST JERUSALEM

By MIKE COHEN

We see so many negative headlines about the conflicts between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. But there is something special that is occurring in East Jerusalem thanks to The Jerusalem Foundation, established in 1966 by the legendary Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek. Over the last five decades, it has touched the lives of all of Jerusalem's almost one million residents, in all spheres of life and in all the city's communities. The organization advances communal strength, fosters creative culture and develops future leadership to ensure a flour-

ishing city that inspires people around the world.

The Jerusalem Business Development Center (MATI), founded in 1991 by the Jerusalem Foundation, is one very special project and the female leaders from this initiative criss-crossed Canada, including Montreal and Toronto, to tell their story.

MATI-Jerusalem Business Development Center drives economic growth and social equity throughout Jerusalem by helping thousands, men and women, Jews and Arabs, secular and religious,

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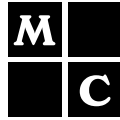
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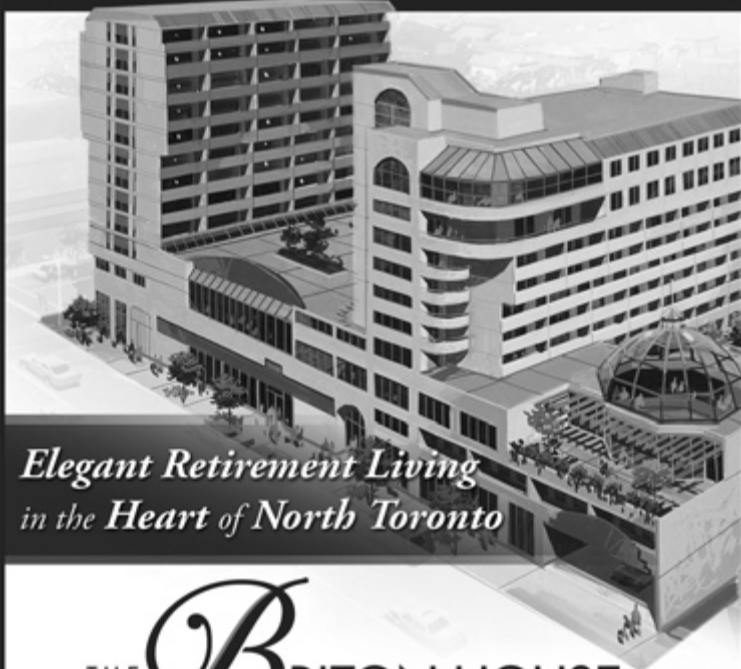
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acquire the skills and know-how to successfully build small-to-medium-sized businesses and thereby gain economic independence for themselves and for their families. Small and medium-sized businesses have been recognized globally as offering a solution to endemic poverty, driving local growth, social mobility, and generating job creation.

East Jerusalem is one of the poorest, most difficult regions in Israel. The poverty rate is overwhelming and to a large extent a result of the significant barriers impeding East Jerusalem residents, especially women, including cultural barriers, language barriers and others.

“As part of our commitment to its economic development, we launched MATI’s East Jerusalem initiative which is run by local professionals,” said Deputy CEO Michal Shaul Vulej. “We gained the trust of this community and established a branch in East Jerusalem.”

In 2022 alone, MATI had 2,740 participants, 1,280 hours of business consultations and saw 350 businesses and 600 jobs created. The visit to Canada was sponsored by The Asper Foundation and of course one of the goals was to generate some fundraising.

Besides Shaul Vulej, I also connected with East
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Jerusalem Manager Reham Abu Snineh, CEO Zvia Shelly and Jerusalem Foundation of Canada Executive Director Nomi Yeshua.

Reham Abu Snineh, a Palestinian, indeed has an interesting backstory. She's headed MATI East Jerusalem since 2016. As part of her work, she established a network of senior-level contacts with governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations between East and West Jerusalem. "I love the work itself," she says with obvious joy. "I feel very much connected to the vision of MATI and to its work model.

I recruited and built a local team, established a branch of MATI in East Jerusalem and increased the capacity of the initiative."

MATI is supported by the central Israeli government and the City of Jerusalem. If only the story of Rihem and other Palestinians working hand in hand with Israelis could serve as an inspiration for all residents normally in conflict to follow harmony might yet come to the area.

For more about the Jerusalem Foundation and how to contribute, log on to www.jerusalemfoundation.org.

WORLD IN REVIEW

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The ruling came after the movement updated its recent Passover guide. Conservative Jews are now allowed to purchase gluten free-products for the holiday as long as they are oat-free.

British Labour Party Changes Policy

Under former leader Jeremy Corbin the British Labour Party advocated the "immediate" recognition of a Palestinian state. Dropping this pledge from its election manifesto is part of a streamlined document "for a party fit for government rather than one wishing to remain in opposition".

The 86 page draft document still includes re-

ferences to Labour's "support" for recognition of a Palestinian state but one that is "alongside the state of Israel, as part of its effort to contribute to securing a negotiated two state solution".

According to Labour insiders there may still be "nothing at all about Israel and Palestine in the manifesto" and "Let's be honest. The issue of Israel and Palestine is not coming up too often in our focus groups".

The actions of the Netanyahu government have angered some sections of the party but leader Keir Starmer remains determined to be an honest broker in the region and to root out the antisemites within the party who remain loyal to the former leader.

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brings peace to the Middle East.**

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