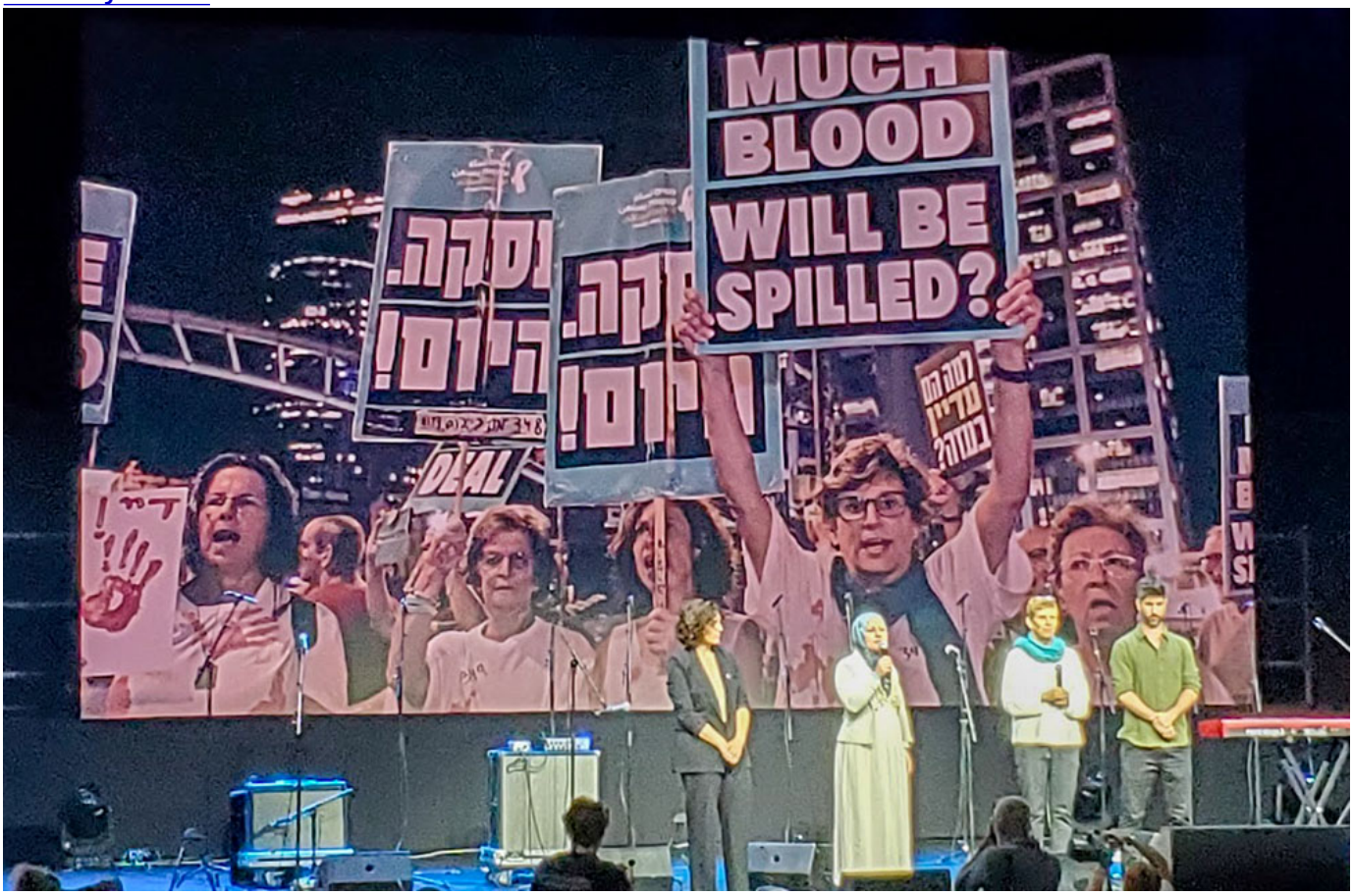
Voices of Sisters
Social Justice




Women Wage Peace leaders speak at the People’s Peace Summit 2025 in Jerusalem. (M.A. Kirk)



by Sr. Martha A. Kirk

Contributor

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## Join the Conversation

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A Jewish friend, Dianne Monroe, wrote a play called "Lost Recipes" based on interviews with Israeli and Palestinian women, including our doctoral student, Rolla Alaydi. Decades ago, women had been friends, even nursing one another's babies. I then wondered: How were the recipes for friendship lost? That play helped my students and me recognize the value of placing Israeli and Palestinian stories side by side — seeing that we are part of one shared human story.

A professor friend here is from Gaza. I have been blessed to be friends with the Alaydi family from Gaza since the 1990s and to have stayed with Norah, the grandmother, in Al-Maghazi refugee camp in 2002. We were showered with warmth and good food. Rolla, one of Norah's granddaughters, whom I encouraged as a student, wrote a cookbook, *Norah: From My Grandmother's Kitchen: Palestinian Recipes and Memories*. One can savor the wisdom as much as the food.

Rolla invited Dianne to write the introduction, which described her Jewish grandmother being displaced by the Nazis in Holland, while Rolla's Bedouin grandmother was forced into the refugee camp, where I had visited her. Trauma can echo across generations, yet Rolla and Dianne show how it can be transformed into compassion instead of violence.

Rolla's efforts for her family in Gaza have been reported by The New York Times. Now, Rolla and Dianne share the Instagram posts of Salem, Rolla's teenage nephew in Gaza. Salem's father had also helped host me so graciously. The collection of Salem's postings, *Shadows of Gaza: Stories I Couldn't Let Die*, can stand next to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, as Anne and Salem are among the many voices of young people trying to hold on to love and hope as thousands are being killed. As I receive stories from Salem, I feel compelled to share stories inviting compassion.

While Dianne and Rolla share stories, an Israeli mother, Yael Admi, a leader of Women Wage Peace, and a Palestinian mother, Reem Al-Hajajreh, a leader of Women of the Sun, led the "Barefoot Walk: Mothers' Call for Peace" together in Rome on March 24 in a symbol of vulnerability while crying out for protection for all the children of their violence-torn area. Vital Voices is working with them to proclaim, "No child should be raised to kill or be killed." These women are inviting people worldwide to sign the Mothers' Call petition.

On the eve of the feast of Mary becoming a mother, the Annunciation, hundreds walked with them, joined by participants in local marches in more than 40 countries. The next day, the leaders spoke with Pope Leo XIV, thus making the peace movement more visible.




Participants in the Barefoot Walk: Mothers' Call for Peace in San Antonio on March 22, 2026 (Lio Murillo)

In May 2025, the Rev. Julie Brenton Rowe, a Lutheran minister who had served in Jerusalem, and I had been with both Palestinians and Israelis searching for a just peace. Our friends there invited us to have a local Barefoot Walk in San Antonio. We concluded our March 22, 2026, walk at the Padre Margil Center by Mission Concepción, my parish and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A co-host of the walk, Binisa Zentella noted the Spanish Andalusian period when Muslims, Jews and Christians shared and flourished together. Judy Lackritz, former director of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio, read a Hebrew prayer for peace. Maurilio Cruz covered our walk for UIWtv, the student-run TV station at the

University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio.

These Palestinian and Israeli groups had been furthering peace, but their work became critical on Oct. 7, 2023. On that day, Hamas invaded Israel, took about 250 hostages, and killed about 1,195 people, among others, the Women Wage Peace leader Vivian Silver. Israel retaliated, and more than 73,000 Palestinians have been reported killed since then. About 2,000 Israelis have been reported killed.

My heart breaks as I think of the suffering for all. I worked with the Charter for Compassion to create Artistic Bridges to connect young people globally. I invited Avital Brown of Women Wage Peace to speak virtually. I joined the monthly online gatherings with Women Wage Peace supporters. I invited Women Wage Peace friends to present at one of our weekly citywide meetings @TheIntersection of faith and civic engagement. The National Council of Jewish Women San Antonio worked with me to learn about these courageous Israeli and Palestinian women working together who have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Leo's frequent comments about current wars constantly remind me of the Vietnam War, which was raging when I was a theater student at Incarnate Word. My classmates were being drafted, and some were killed.

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This year, our theater department performed "The Trojan Women"/"Hecuba," stories of war bringing overwhelming suffering, not glory.

For the play, I had a display about the Mothers' Call, including my photos with Israeli and Palestinian women. A student actress wept as we discussed the Mothers' Call, where the ancient and the modern felt painfully close. The students' deep care gives me hope.

Though Julie and I could not attend the 2026 People's Peace Summit in Tel Aviv, we hosted a "watch party" in the retirement center for our sisters and others. We were given hope as we watched thousands gather for the summit sponsored by 80 Israeli groups. The hosts wrote:

> *It Must Be.*

*It Can Be.*

*It Will Be.*

*Peace.*

A friend and founder of Women Wage Peace, Rabbi Donna Kirshbaum, shared a Jewish North African folktale in our meeting: A king promised his kingdom to the child who could best fill a small house. His sons failed, as the dirt and feathers they used eventually settled or dispersed. His daughter, however, simply lit a candle, filling the room entirely with light. Impressed, the king declared, "To you, my dear child, I give this kingdom. May it always be a region filled with light."

Like that daughter, those advancing the Mothers' Call lead with the light proclaiming, "No child should be raised to kill or be killed." While arms dealers insist peace is impossible, our faith calls us to be the peace we seek. Since before the time of Moses, women across cultures have nursed each other's babies and have shared the "milk of kindness." Love prevails over the forces that seek to divide us.

You are invited to the Women Wage Peace supporters meetings. Write mcp.marcom@gmail.com and kkisos8@gmail.com.