

Reconciliation, Not Revenge

by John M Repp

Maoz Inon's parents were killed on October 7, 2023 when Hamas attacked their kibbutz in Israel. Hamas burned down their house while they were still inside. That kibbutz was very close to Gaza. Maoz was emotionally devastated, as were his three sisters and a brother. However, while in mourning, the family agreed that they did not want the violence to continue and decided they wanted to work **for reconciliation** between the Israelis and the Palestinians, **not revenge** against Palestinians. There is enough violence and grief in the region.

A few days after his parents were killed, Maoz was contacted by Aziz Abu Sara, a Palestinian. Aziz wanted to express his condolences on the death of Maoz's parents. The two had met once before briefly. Both were in the travel business, for people who wanted to visit the ancient sites in the holy land, especially Jerusalem, with sacred places for three religions.

Aziz himself was ten years old when his older brother died after being tortured in an Israeli prison. That brother was accused of throwing rocks at Israelis. Aziz himself threw rocks several times when he got older. His older brother had been like a parent to him in his early years, and Aziz was very angry when that older brother died.

However, when Aziz became eighteen years old, he realized his anger was not helping him. He broke through the emotional trap of anger when taking Hebrew with a teacher that treated him well.

After Maoz was contacted by Aziz, the two **started working together for reconciliation between their two peoples**. They made an appearance on [a TED talk event in 2024](#). More recently, they wrote a book together entitled [The Future is Peace: A Shared Journey Across the Holy Land](#) (New York: Crown, 2026) which was just published. They also appeared with Jon Stewart on The Daily Show and [that interview is worth a watch](#). [Democracy Now](#) featured the two during one their reports. [Forbes magazine also wrote an article about the two peacemakers](#). That article was written before the book came out.

We need to remind ourselves of the big picture and historical context of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians. I did a computer search in which I asked the question: how much of the land of current state of Israel was purchased and how much was taken in war through the course of the almost century that the Zionist project has been working in the Middle East. Here are results of that search:

“As of 1948, Jews privately purchased roughly 7% to 9% of the land that became the state of Israel. The majority of the territory (over 70-80%) was state land passed from the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate, which subsequently came under Israeli control, with Arab-owned land decreasing significantly through 1948 war actions.”

The two main issues for the Palestinians are (1) the right of return for the refugees after their ancestors were expelled in 1948 and 1967 and (2) the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Palestinians want equal rights to the Israelis in a single state or a confederate state.

Peacemakers are usually dismissed as dreamers and thought to be naïve. But Aziz and Moaz think of themselves as **realists**. They know that bombs will not bring justice or peace and walls will not protect people. Walls separate people. War does not bring security for either side.

They do not agree on every issue. The last pope, Pope Francis, told Aziz and Moaz that there will always be disagreement and conflict whenever there are humans present. Even within a family or a group of friends, there will be disagreements and conflict. He said only in a cemetery would there be no conflict.



Above is a picture of Pope Leo XIV with Aziz and Maoz. As travel guides, in the last year or so as they had been working for reconciliation, they developed what they call “the dual-narrative tour” where the tourist hears a Palestinian version of what the site means and then an Israeli version. Their book is laid out the same way, Maoz writes and Aziz writes as they take of a journey across the holy land, speaking, from the Kibbutz Nir Am, to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth and many other places.