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CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS	415-356-8383 x 244	voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	lugo@negia.net
Cara White	843-881-1480	cara.white@mac.com

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For more information about the program, visit the companion website: pbs.org/globalvoices/bridgeoverthewadi

**GROUNDBREAKING SCHOOL IN WEST BANK
UNITES JEWISH AND ARAB CHILDREN
“BRIDGE OVER THE WADI,” REVEALS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
TWO SIDES SET ASIDE DEEP-ROOTED HISTORY OF CONFLICT**

*Film to Premiere on Global Voices Series on PBS WORLD Channel
Sunday, May 4, at 10 PM*

(San Francisco, CA)—In 2004, a group of Palestinian and Israeli parents began an experiment in Israel’s Wadi Valley: a school called Bridge Over the Wadi, which educates 50 Jewish children and 50 Arab children. The school’s purpose is to create meaningful interaction amongst the town’s Arab and Israeli residents, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. Filmmakers Tomer Heymann and Barak Heymann capture the events of the school’s first year through the eyes of parents, teachers and children, providing an unforgettable lesson about the current history of the conflict. **BRIDGE OVER THE WADI** will have its U.S. premiere on Sunday, May 4, 2008, at 10 PM on *Global Voices*, a new series produced by ITVS International airing on the PBS WORLD digital channel (check local listings).

At the groundbreaking Bridge Over the Wadi primary school, all classes are bilingual with an equal number of Israeli and Palestinian teachers. All students are required to learn both Hebrew and Arabic; the school has both a Jewish principal and an Arab principal; and regardless of faith, all the children are invited to participate in all religious celebrations. Teachers stress mutual respect and arrange field trips to the mosque as well as to the Wailing Wall. The students happily learn one another’s language, culture and history, and many began to form strong friendships. But three months into the school year, tension begins to build as the parents and even teachers have difficulty putting aside their deep-rooted cultural differences.

Some parents have second thoughts when students are asked to participate in each other’s religious festivities. “I’m a total atheist,” says one parent. “But I’m Jewish. Why should my child have to pray to Muhammad?” She adds that Arab parents must think she is “a sucker” for letting her Jewish kids say, “Allah is great” and soon removes her child from school. On the anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, the two groups simply retreat to their corners. This day of celebration for the Jewish community is a day of mourning for the Arabs.

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But in addition to the setbacks, **BRIDGE OVER THE WADI** captures the school's steady progress. We see the children at a sleepover playing in a completely bilingual way. At the end, it's the children's cross-cultural friendships that forge the path toward political peacemaking despite the complex negotiations among and deep-rooted hostility of the adults.

Filmmaker Background

Tomer Heymann is an Israeli-born documentary filmmaker. After completing film and television studies at the Camera Obscura Art School in 1997, his short film *I Brought You Candy Because Flowers Wilt*, which earned high praise from critics, was broadcast on Israel's Channel 2, followed by numerous rebroadcasts. A year later, his second film, *Laugh Till I Cry*, screened at the DocAviv Festival and was also broadcast on Channel 2. In 2001, his much acclaimed film *It Kinda Scares Me* won first prize in the competition of the Israeli Film and Television Academy and first prize at the Haifa Film Festival. The film was sold to television stations around the world, screened at dozens of film festivals, and won awards in New York, Taipei, Torino and Melbourne. In 2003, Tomer's fourth film, *Fucked-Up Generation*, screened at leading festivals, including HotDocs in Canada and festivals in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago and more. The film enjoyed a theatrical release in Israel, where more than 50,000 filmgoers saw it. In 2006, Tomer won first place at the Berlin Film Festival for his film *Paper Dolls*. The film also won the Audience Award and three other awards at the Pink Apple Film Festival in Los Angeles and Manila. In November 2006, the film **BRIDGE OVER THE WADI**, a joint project with his brother, Barak, screened at the IDFA. The film won the Jury Award at the International Film Festival in the Ukraine, the Audience Award at the Human Rights Festival in Prague and the Magnolia Award at the Shanghai Television Festival.

Barak Heymann has worked with his brother Tomer Heymann for more than seven years. Together they co-directed **BRIDGE OVER THE WADI**. Over the past few years, Barak has produced documentaries for television in Israel, including the critically acclaimed *Zorki*, broadcast on the Yes Doco satellite channel, and *The Lady of the Arabs* directed by Ibtisam Mara'ana (*Paradise Lost, Badal*), slated for broadcast on Israeli cable's Channel 8 and *Stalags: Holocaust and Pornography in Israel*, directed by Ari Libsker, which was an entry in the Jerusalem Festival's competition. Simultaneously, Barak has been directing *Dancing Alfonso*, about a group of senior citizens who formed a flamenco dance troupe in one of Tel Aviv's suburbs.

About Global Voices

Global Voices is a new series produced by ITVS International to air on the PBS WORLD digital channel beginning Sunday, March 30, 2008, at 10 PM (check local listings). The first original series to launch on PBS WORLD, the 26-week series will bring to a national audience internationally themed documentaries made by U.S.-based and international filmmakers. *Global Voices* will feature the U.S. premieres of five documentaries funded by ITVS International as well as encore broadcasts of other acclaimed ITVS programs. Encore presentations include the Academy Award nominee **DAUGHTER FROM DANANG**, the Emmy Award winner **A LION'S TRAIL**, and the Independent Spirit Award Winner and Emmy nominee **LOST BOYS OF SUDAN**. In addition to the PBS WORLD broadcast, the content of the series will later be available via online distribution platforms, such as Joost, YouTube, Bittorrent and Vuze. For more information about *Global Voices*, visit www.pbs.org/globalvoices.

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About ITVS International

ITVS International is a division of Independent Television Service that promotes an international exchange of documentary films made by independent producers, bringing international voices to U.S. audiences and American stories to audiences abroad. Through a unique public-private partnership called the Global Perspectives Project, ITVS International administers the International Media Development Fund (IMDF) and *True Stories: Life in the USA*. The IMDF funds international producers and supports the American broadcast of their programs. The series *True Stories: Life in the USA* promotes selected American independent films to audiences around the world. ITVS created the Global Perspectives Project in 2005 with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the U.S. Department of State. For more information, visit www.itvs.org/international.

About PBS WORLD

PBS WORLD is a new channel featuring documentary and public affairs programming from public television's award-winning signature series and acclaimed independent filmmakers. Produced and distributed by PBS, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York, in association with American Public Television and the National Educational Telecommunications Association, PBS WORLD launched on 55 stations across the country, representing 24 licensees and reaching more than 27 percent of U.S. households. In most markets, PBS WORLD programming will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information about PBS WORLD is available at pbs.org.

About WGBH Boston

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster, producing such celebrated national PBS series as *Masterpiece*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Frontline*, *Nova*, *American Experience*, *Arthur* and more than a dozen other award-winning primetime, lifestyle and children's series. WGBH is also Boston's last remaining independent television station. Its local productions, which include *Greater Boston*, *Basic Black* and *Maria Hinojosa One-on-One*, focus on the region's diverse community. WGBH 89.7 FM is Boston's NPR Arts and Culture station, offering a rich menu that includes classical, jazz, blues, and news programming and more. In addition, WGBH is the leading producer of online content for pbs.org—one of the most-visited dot-org sites on the Internet—and a major producer for public radio. It is also a pioneer in developing educational multimedia and new technologies that make media accessible for people with disabilities. For its efforts, WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors, including Oscars, Emmys, Peabodys and duPont-Columbia Journalism awards. Visit WGBH on the Web at wgbh.org.

About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K–12 teachers and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS's premier kids TV programming and kids Web site, PBS KIDS Online (pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

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