



from the April 03, 2006 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0403/p04s01-wome.html>

## Mission ends in symbolism

**After crossing deserts, an expedition including Jews and Muslims planted an olive tree Friday at Mount Sinai.**

**By Rafael D. Frankel** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

**MOUNT SINAI, EGYPT** - The Breaking the Ice peace mission that made its way across deserts in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Egypt completed its journey last Friday by planting an olive tree at the foot of this mountain believed by Jews, Christians, and Muslims to be the place where Moses received the Ten Commandments from God.

A symbol of peace since biblical times, the olive tree from Jerusalem was meant for the soil of Tripoli, but the group decided to plant it at this ground deemed holy after Libyan officials refused to allow the three Israelis in the peace mission entrance into their country.

The "message to the world is a simple one," says Neda Sarmast, reading a declaration written by the group at the tree-planting ceremony. "If not me, then who?" The eight that finished the mission took turns shoveling mounds of dirt onto the tree, which they named "Oliver."

The Monitor first covered the expedition on March 24 after the full mission was refused entrance to Libya because the group included Israeli citizens.

The 24-day expedition through the desert, covering 2,850 miles, was a grueling affair with long days of driving and living in tight quarters.

Afghan participant Yahya Wardak left early and another, Iraqi Latif Yahia, took a personal two-day break from the expedition. Personal and cultural conflicts contributed to the dissension.

In the end, eight of the nine people - from Israel, the Palestinian territories, the US, Iraq, Iran, and Ukraine - were on hand for the final act of peace. Considering everything the group endured, says group leader Heskell Nathaniel, that unity is a powerful symbol of what cooperation and understanding between cultures can achieve.

"Those who were inspired now need to put their own drop in the ocean," Mr. Nathaniel says. "If we've been able to encourage 1,000 people around world to stand for a change and every one of them is touching other people's hearts, in the long term you can create a critical mass of positive energy."

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

---

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

For permission to reprint/republish this article, please email [Copyright](#)