



# Speaking Through Walls

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## Table of Contents

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	Dedication	7
<b>I</b>	Introduction and Background	9
<b>II</b>	About Security Council Resolution 1325	13
<b>III</b>	The Women We Met	15
	1. Bat Shalom	
	2. Jerusalem Center for Women	
	3. The Jerusalem Link	
	4. MEND	
	5. Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling (WCLAC)	
	6. Zahira Kamal	
	7. Amira Hass	
	8. Women's Empowerment Project, Gaza City	
	9. Women's Affairs Center, Gaza City	
	10. Rawya al-Shawwa	
	11. Women in Black	
	12. Coalition of Women for Peace	
	13. Sumaya Farhat Nasser	
	14. MIFTAH	
	15. Debbie Lehrman	
	16. Kav L'Oved (Workers' Hotline)	
	17. Tamar Gozansky (MK)	
	18. ASSIWAR	
	19. Naomi Chazan (MK)	
	20. New Profile	
	21. Women's Affairs Technical Committee (Gaza)	
<b>IV</b>	Jerusalem Link and the Right of Return: A Case Study	41
<b>V</b>	The Gendered Impact of War and Occupation	53
<b>VI</b>	Women's Contribution to Peace-Building	65
<b>VII</b>	Recommendations	67
<b>VIII</b>	Appendices	
	1. About the Mission Participants	71
	2. Security Council Resolution 1325	73
	3. Public correspondence between Bat Shalom & the JCW	77
	4. Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas and Terry Greenblatt Statements to members of UN Security Council	81
	5. Terry Greenblatt Keynote Address to Jewish Voices for Peace and Justice Conference, Toronto, June 2003	89
	6. Gila Svirsky address to the UN Security Council	93
	7. Report of UNRWA on the Impact of Israel's "Security Fence"	95
	8. About settlements	105
	9. A Joint Palestinian-Israeli Action framework for Peace	107
	10. The Divide Between Popular Israeli and Palestinian Narratives	109



## Dedication

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This report is dedicated to all the Israeli and Palestinian women who took the time to share with us their experiences and their insights, their hopes and their anguish, and most of all their vision for the future.



### ***I and You***

*I wept today and you will weep tomorrow.  
Maybe you've wept for your husband and  
Tomorrow you'll weep for your son.  
Let me tell you, I've already wept for both my son and husband.  
I wish I could walk into every house around carrying within me  
Anguish and heartache and mourning.  
Come, mother of Ibrahim and mother of Itzhak,  
Let's weep together, you and me.  
Longing for our loved ones unites us, you and me.  
Motherhood unites us, you and me.  
The heart aches.  
Let's remember if in life there is no place for us on this earth,  
We have place enough under it.  
Let's pray together, mother of Ibrahim and mother of Itzhak.  
I and you are the conscience.  
I and you are love and peace.  
I and you are the bridge to truth*

*An anonymous Palestinian mother*

*In the kingdom of death,  
Israeli children lie beside Palestinian children,  
Soldiers of the occupying army beside the suicide bombers,  
And no one remembers  
Who was David and who was Goliath.*

*Nurit Peled Elhanan, a bereaved Israeli mother*





In August 2002, a group of nine Canadian women travelled to Israel and Palestine to learn about the role of women as peace builders in the region and to understand the impact of war and occupation on women and families. While it is certainly not unusual for Canadians to travel to Israel and Palestine, or to document their experiences there, this Canadian mission was unique: the group consisted for the most part of women of Arab and Jewish heritage who are deeply committed to their respective backgrounds yet who also understand the pressing need not to remain trapped by culture, religion or history. The Arab and Jewish women in the group were Reem Bahdi, Kathy Wazana, Leilani Farha, Isabelle Helal, Audrey Macklin, Rula Sharkawi, Judith Weisman and Hanadi Loubani. We were joined by Kemi Jacobs, a Canadian of African-Caribbean heritage whose knowledge of and dedication to social justice knows no borders.

Some of the women who journeyed to Palestine and Israel were long-time friends and colleagues. Others met for the first time prior to travelling to the region. One team member went ahead of the mission to liaise with our partners on the ground, Bat Shalom (Israel) and the Jerusalem Centre for Women (Palestine) and coordinate our itinerary, and remained in the region for several months. Others were able to extend their stay and pursue meetings and videotaped interviews with key Israeli and Palestinian politicians and activists.

We arrived in Palestine and Israel with the hopes of bringing back to Canada written and visual documentation of our meetings with Palestinian and Israeli women who are engaged in peacebuilding efforts, be it on the political front or at the community level. Our visit proved to be both more far-reaching and more productive than we could have hoped.

The composition of the mission group itself was remarkable and as a result, opened up many more avenues for a multidimensional examination of the issues underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the short time we were there and in follow-up meetings that some of us have had and continue to have, we met with a good number of representatives from the Israeli and Palestinian peace landscape.

Some of the women we met have been successful in crossing the divides imposed on them by years of mistrust, fear and also by physical and legal barriers. Dr. Sumaya Farhat Nasser has travelled, at some risk to herself and those accompanying her, to share with Israeli audiences her personal experiences of the occupation and her relentless efforts to maintain a fruitful dialogue with Israeli women wherever the opportunity presented itself. Neta Golan, a Jewish Canadian-Israeli, has been living in the West Bank cities of Ramallah and Nablus for the last three years in an act of solidarity with the Palestinians living under siege.



Mission members meet  
Hanan Ashrawi





Bat Shalom staff member  
Liora Lopian  
and a Ta'ayush activist

Other women whom we met have been actively building links between the two communities through concrete joint projects and also working within their respective communities to broaden the debates on the possibilities for peace in the region. The women of Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Centre for Women have, in defiance of military, political and social pressures, continued to meet, to dialogue, and to try to hear and understand one another. Their joint projects are also aimed at bridging the gaps between Israeli and Palestinian women as well building trust. At the same time, some of the Palestinian citizens of Israel whom we met, like the women of ASSIWAR, expressed to us a sense of isolation from the Israeli, Palestinian, and international peace camps.

We also met with grassroots activists whose work has been instrumental in giving the voices of co-existence an international platform. Terry Greenblatt and Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas delivered an urgent call for peace in a joint statement to members of the UN Security Council last April (their statements are attached under Appendix 4). In follow-up meetings with UN and European Union officials, they have made some progress in lobbying for the creation of an International Women's Commission on Peace in the Middle East at the United Nations (see Terry Greenblatt speech to a conference of Jewish Voices for Peace in Toronto, June 8, 2003, attached as Appendix 5).

At the formal political level, Hanan Ashrawi, Zahira Kamal, Tamar Gozanski and Naomi Chazan stand out as steadfast interlocutors for peace: they continually lobby their respective government/authority to expand the definitions and institutions of democracy which is a building block in any attempt to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

Throughout this mission we felt both inspired and motivated. Inspired by the women whose courage is challenging dominant perceptions of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as essentially violent and as perpetual and interminable. These women are a living testimony that the road to a peaceful solution is both possible and open. We were witness to relentless efforts to break the stranglehold of the discourse of militarism inflicted on both the Israeli and Palestinian populations. During a recent visit to document the contribution of Canadian women to the International Women's Peace Service in the West Bank village of Hares, one of our members attended a groundbreaking gathering of the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps in Ramallah which, though not organized exclusively by women, was attended by many of the women we met including Hanan Ashrawi, Zahira Kamal, Tamar Gozanski, Wafa Abed Rahman, Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, Dorothy Naor from New Profile, and several members of Bat Shalom. These women were key signatories of the grassroots Joint Palestinian-Israeli Call for Peace and Joint Action that



Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas and  
Terry Greenblatt

was published in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* April 16, 2003 (attached as Appendix 8). They were also among the organizers and speakers at the Founding Conference of the Joint Palestinian - Israeli action framework that followed, on June 28, 2003, in Ramallah.

The women we met repeatedly told us that we had an obligation to return to Canada and tell others about their work and their vision for co-existence. They noted that men tend to dominate the Western media when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a result, the impact of the conflict on women and women's contributions to building the conditions for co-existence tend to be ignored. Accordingly, we have an obligation to disseminate the insights that we have gained, to retell the stories that we heard, and to share with the Canadian public the vision of peace that these women shared with us.

The following pages attempt to encapsulate our analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and women's place within it.

This is not a complete report. It cannot do justice to the work of the women we met, nor to our own experiences, either individually or collectively. There remain also a good number of individuals and organizations with whom we could not meet as a group because time or circumstances did not permit. At most, we offer a slice of our experiences and hope that this report will encourage others to seek out and understand the work of the women we met who struggle seemingly against all odds to maintain a space for "the other" in Israel and Palestine.

In addition to producing this report, members of the mission have participated in various conferences to help raise the profile, within Canadian society, of the women we met and the work that they do. We will continue to do so. Extensive videotaped documentation of interviews, dialogues, presentations and conferences conducted or attended by all or some members of our group, during and in the months following the mission, may be available for briefing and background purposes. (Appendix 1 contains brief biographies of the mission members and how to reach them.)



Mission members Kemi Jacobs and Leilani Farha



On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Security Council Resolution 1325. This was the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council which acknowledged the important role that women play in conflict resolution and recognized the impact of war on women. Resolution 1325 calls for “equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.” To that end, Security Council Resolution 1325 calls upon States, the United Nations and all those involved in conflict to adopt specific measures aimed at:

- Increasing representation of women at all decision-making levels within national governments;
- Increasing participation of women in decision-making within the United Nations including but not limited to the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace negotiations;
- Increasing respect by parties to armed conflict for the international legal norms that protect women and children during conflict;
- Increasing understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building, the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions.

The women we met in Israel and Palestine reaffirm the importance of including women in official and international negotiations. We hope that this report contributes in part to an increased understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women in both Israel and Palestine as well as stressing the role that the women we met can play in creating conditions for peace as articulated in Security Council Resolution 1325.

A copy of Security Council Resolution 1325 is available at Appendix 2.



Gila Svirsky and Cynthia Cockburn at Bat Shalom Succa, September, 2002.



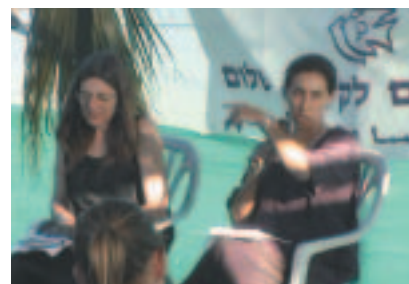


Our goal was to meet with women and women's organizations committed to dialogue and to seeing the "other" as a human being rather than as the enemy. We asked the women to tell us about their work, to give us their analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to comment on whether they felt women could make a unique contribution to peace-building. The following summaries of our meetings provide a glimpse into the efforts, frustrations, achievements and analysis offered by the women. Their framework is clearly different from that offered by mainstream political analysts. The overall message that emerged is that women can make a unique contribution; however, they need allies in their work and they look to the international community to support them.

### 1. Bat Shalom

Bat Shalom is an Israeli women's organization. The main office is in West Jerusalem, but there are members of Bat Shalom located in other parts of Israel. Although most of the 2000 members are Jewish, some are Palestinian citizens of Israel. The departing Executive Director is Terry Greenblatt. We also met with several other women active in or supportive of Bat Shalom, including Amira Gelblum and Chana Zohar. Most members and staff of Bat Shalom are active in other social justice and peace groups as well. For example, veteran social activist Deborah Lehrman is a member of the Coalition of Women for Peace, and Bat Shalom staffer Liora Lopian is an active member of Ta'ayush (Jewish-Arab Partnership) who participates regularly in solidarity convoys to Palestinian areas.

Although small in number compared to other political organizations, Bat Shalom's impact exceeds its numbers. Within Israel, Bat Shalom doubts its ability to change the Israeli political discourse. However, the organization sees itself as "keeping a sharp prod in the side of the liberal left of the political spectrum through its joint Israeli/Palestinian activities." They emphasize at every opportunity how Israeli society – especially women – pay a moral, social and political price for the occupation. Bat Shalom's international presence, however, resonates beyond its local impact. In April 2002, Terry Greenblatt joined Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas of the Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling in delivering an urgent call for peace in a joint statement to members of the UN Security Council. The Bat Shalom group in the Galilee, composed of Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women, was one of a few organizations featured in Cynthia Cockburn's *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (1998). Cockburn's book is a groundbreaking study of the process by which women from different (and opposed) groups can create meaningful collaborative projects by facing up to their differences and renegotiating the terms of their solidarity.



Israeli and Palestinian women at the Bat Shalom Succa, September, 2002



Nasreen Mazawi, Bat Shalom's political education coordinator in Northern Israel, at the Bat Shalom Succa, September, 2002

Bat Shalom's work has left it marginalized and the target of hostile segments of the Israeli public. It is generally ignored by Israeli media; its representatives are almost never invited to talk shows or, if they are invited, they are interrogated and attacked. Bat Shalom experiences significant budget strain because the usual source of funding for Israeli NGOs – the Jewish diaspora in North America and Europe – is relatively unsupportive of its activities and political stance after the events of September 11.

Because Israeli security is invoked as justification for all actions taken by the Israeli government toward Palestinians, Bat Shalom and other women's organizations attempt to take "security as buzzword" and explain how their work will do more to achieve security for Israelis than a campaign of violence, humiliation and segregation of Palestinians. One of Bat Shalom's main campaigns within Israel has been to convene gatherings of 60-100 Israelis at which a Palestinian woman will address the group about life in the Palestinian territories. As Terry Greenblatt explained, "nothing works better with women than having another woman tell her story and allow herself to be personally and politically vulnerable".

Bat Shalom does not have an official position on boycotts as a means of bringing international pressure to bear on Israel to end the occupation. They do support a weapons boycott, and their public education campaign in Israel calls for a boycott of products from the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. As an organization, Bat Shalom is mindful of the need to engage in dialogue with Israelis, and worries about losing its credibility if it takes a position against the viability of Israeli society.



## 2. Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW)

The Jerusalem Center for Women is a centre for Palestinian women located in Beit Hanina. Amneh Badran is the Executive Director. Accessing the JCW offices requires crossing an Israeli military checkpoint. JCW activities include education, counselling and political and social consciousness raising as well as participation in international events. Specific activities include the following:

- Civic Education and Democracy on themes such as Gender and Middle Eastern Culture, History and Development of Human Rights and the UN, Women and the New Palestinian Labour Law and Communication Skills and Advocacy;
- Young Women's Democracy and Human Rights Education and Training Program;
- A booklet on Settler Attacks in the Old City of Jerusalem. This booklet was part of a campaign by the Center to resist settler provocation and harassment of civilians in the Old City.



One program, entitled “Voice Therapy: Linking Suffering and Hope,” is designed to create a space in which women can explore the intersection between gender, socio-cultural and political factors which lead to increased family violence and oppression of women. Participants work on formulating alternative responses to abuse and violence. Voice Therapy sessions are also conducted in groups composed of wives and mothers of political prisoners, wherein participants share their specific experiences of loss, insecurity and absence and their impact on families and individuals. JCW also documents women’s narratives, and initiated a project to counsel and support eighteen mothers who lost sons in the first few months of the second Intifada. While these women are initially praised by some sectors of the community as “mothers of martyrs”, and encouraged (if not pressured) to adopt a defiant persona, they subsequently have to confront the overwhelming grief and suffering that comes with the loss of a child. JCW provides a safe space within which to voice their feelings, cope with their loss, and develop their own understandings.

JCW is also instituting a project on Intra-Palestinian Dialogue, whereby Palestinian women from the Galilee can meet with Palestinian women from the Jerusalem area. The purpose is to promote solidarity and cultural and personal relations between “two parts of the same people”. Because of checkpoints and closure, it is very difficult for Palestinian women in the West Bank to have contact with women in Gaza. Indeed, JCW mainly works with women in the Jerusalem district because even Jerusalemites are cut off from Palestinian women in the West Bank. JCW does not want to inadvertently become a ‘bridge’ to normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states. As Amneh Badran explained, normalization should happen when there is peace, not before.

JCW also engages in bi-national dialogue with the Israeli women of Bat Shalom through Jerusalem Link, discussed below.

### 3. Jerusalem Link

Jerusalem Link is the rubric under which JCW and Bat Shalom engage in a bi-national dialogue and develop joint projects. In the course of our meetings, we repeatedly heard from Palestinian women that they had been abandoned by the Israeli peace movement; they were cynical about the sincerity of peace activists, and the depth of those activists’ commitment to dialogue and meaningful solidarity at a time when Palestinian suffering under the occupation was reaching new levels of desperation. According to them, the Israeli peace camp had delivered nothing practical. On the Israeli side, we heard frustration from some women that they never seemed to be ‘doing enough’ from the Palestinian perspective, and were blamed for an inability to bring about change. A more critical



Amneh Badran at Canada Day reception hosted by the Canadian Representative Office in Ramallah, July 2003

*“The balance of power approach is Oslo, and Oslo is a failure”*

Amneh Badran



Terry Greenblatt of Bat Shalom

concern for some Israeli women was the difficulty of having a solidarity movement between occupier and occupied when Palestinian civil society had developed no effective non-violent strategy for ending the occupation. While they acknowledge that many Palestinians have advocated non-violent strategies for years to no avail, the Israeli women were nonetheless dismayed at how such strategies were being overshadowed by a resort to arms.

In the face of this sense of mutual disappointment, Jerusalem Link stands out as an achievement merely by the fact of its existence. Jerusalem Link was formed in 1994. It grew out of a rejection by women in Palestine and Israel of prohibitions on meeting imposed by Palestinian and Israeli authorities. Terry Greenblatt of Bat Shalom describes their work with JCW as the most exciting, challenging and radical work they do. Jerusalem Link proceeded from the conviction that each participant's interaction with the other should be measured according to whether it built or eroded trust.

One of the general issues Jerusalem Link confronts is the asymmetry of power between Israeli and Palestinian women. The latter live under occupation; the former live as occupiers. At the time of our mission, Palestinians could hardly move within Gaza or the West Bank, much less outside the occupied territories. Lack of mobility, both in the form of pervasive military checkpoints, roadblocks and debilitatingly lengthy curfews, meant that access to education, health care, and economically productive activity was virtually terminated for vast numbers of people. However insecure Israelis may feel because of the spectre of terror attacks, the rhythm of their daily lives, their social and economic circumstances, and their basic freedoms are dramatically less damaged. Nevertheless, the narrative of Israelis as victims and Palestinians as terrorists and the militarized construction of security reinforce the imbalance at a discursive level. Terry Greenblatt acknowledged the asymmetry of power between Bat Shalom and JCW, and added that they had not yet devised a means of addressing it in their processes of interaction.



Jerusalem Link begins from the position that a human rights agenda must be an integral component of any peace agenda, and that values such as equality, dignity, freedom, social justice and democracy constitute the standards an arrangement must meet in order to be just. At the same time, they acknowledge that a human rights agenda is a necessary but insufficient condition for a viable political agreement. They refer to their work not as 'negotiation', but rather as a political dialogue among equals, recognizing that their equality is moral, not political.

Jerusalem Center for Women relies on Bat Shalom to convey the message to Israelis that JCW is credible, and that dialogue is productive, and Bat Shalom relies on JCW to do the same. Although the process of creating trust is incremental and slow, the hope expressed

by Amneh Badran was that in crisis, Israeli women would run to their allies on the Palestinian side, not to the political right. Sadly, at the time of our mission, her sense was that the collapse of Oslo, the expansion of settlements and bypass roads, and the second Intifada combined to "drag Israelis to the right and Palestinians to despair". It was clear that the energy, morale and logistical ability of the participants of Jerusalem Link to persevere are vulnerable to the shifting constraints imposed by political and military actions of the Israeli government, the Palestinian National Authority, militant groups, and international events. As the situation worsens, it becomes harder for them to work together and to persuade their respective communities of the value of bi-national dialogue.

One of Jerusalem Link's first and most impressive achievements is the "Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles", issued on August 2, 1996. The Declaration sets out the organizations' joint commitment to certain principles, including recognition of the right of self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians, the sharing of Jerusalem as two capitals for two states, recognition of the illegality of Israeli settlements, respect for international law, and the involvement of women in the development of a just and viable peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Bat Shalom and JCW have not arrived at consensus on all issues, most notably the Palestinian Right of Return (discussed in chapter IV), but unlike the pattern of negotiations at the formal political level, they do not attempt to evade the issue or treat it as a way of demonizing the other side.

In addition to the Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles, Jerusalem Link initiatives include the following:

- **Public Correspondence Project:** The idea behind this project was that Bat Shalom would write a letter to be published in a Palestinian paper on a topic chosen by JCW, and vice versa. Bat Shalom began the experiment with an open letter in a Palestinian paper about the occupation. Bat Shalom then asked JCW to write an open letter in the Israeli media about terror attacks. (Appendix 3)
- **Women's International Peace Activists Network (WIPAN):** The concept of WIPAN is for Palestinian and Israeli women's organizations to work with international women's organizations, not only to achieve an end to the occupation, but to help create the conditions for a life of security and dignity for both peoples. In a call for participation in WIPAN submitted to the Canadian Embassy in Tel Aviv in October 2002, Amneh Badran and Terry Greenblatt wrote: "The purpose of such a network is to link hands, as we have done here in the Middle East, with women peace activists in other parts of the world. It is our intention to use our collective power, resources and moral force to build a model of mutual trust and support in the

*The Jerusalem Link is a political dialogue among equals who recognize that their equality is moral, not political.*





A Palestinian member of Ta'ayush

*"You cannot underestimate the power of people who have nothing to lose."*

Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas

face of the violence and ongoing harm to the lives of women and their families. Also, WIPAN's aim is to raise values of justice, respect for human rights, peace, and peaceful means to solve conflicts." Each partner country would nominate one representative to work with the Palestinian and Israeli branches to co-ordinate the efforts in the partner countries with activities in Israel/Palestine. The objective is to launch WIPAN with an international conference in Jerusalem. Amneh and Terry expressed interest in linking WIPAN to UN Resolution 1325.

#### 4. MEND (Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy)

Though we were unable to meet with senior program staff at MEND, we did manage to learn about some of their activities. MEND's mandate focuses on conveying techniques of non-violent resistance, tools of conflict management and resolution, and empowerment of girls through various programs.

MEND has two programs of non-violence that are specifically related to women. The first involves training a wide cross-section of women in the Bethlehem area in "active nonviolence and participatory video". The women are currently making a film on role models of women in crisis. The second project is in partnership with Search for Common Ground (USA) and the Truman Institute (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), and involves research into the history of women and non-violence in this region.

#### 5. Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling (WCLAC)

Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas is the Director of the Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling and Chair of the Board of the Jerusalem Center for Women.

Maha stressed the need for both Israelis and Palestinians to realize that the land can be claimed by two people and that it is better to learn to live with each other than to fight a bloody battle to the end. Israelis must reach an understanding that the Palestinians have equal rights with Israelis, while the Palestinians must reach an understanding that they cannot dismiss Israelis as colonialists who came to the land as descendants of Europeans. Such starting points simply breed insecurity for both sides.

Despite the tense political situation, Maha noted that the last 5 years has produced some important conceptual advances. For example, about five years ago, when the Jerusalem Link first proposed the idea of a conference concerning Jerusalem as two capitals for two states, the subject was regarded as taboo and few would participate. Now the idea is more popular. She cautioned, however, that major impediments remain to securing peace in the region. In particular, Israel's



heavy-handed policies are creating anger and a willingness to die amongst young Palestinians. As Maha so eloquently put it: "You cannot underestimate the power of people who have nothing to lose. This is where the Palestinians are at this moment. We have nothing to lose, we cannot accept control from others, we have to have our own rights, and if you want to kill us you can kill us, we are dead anyway."

She stressed the need to have a third party that is genuinely neutral to work with both sides. On a deeply pessimistic note, she observed that she did not see any signs of breakthrough in the near future, unless there is very aggressive outside intervention from the international community. Those who intervene need to understand that both Palestinians and Israelis have the right to security. Maha noted that as the political situation becomes more tense, political leaders who seek to negotiate a solution but produce little to improve the lives of Palestinians will increasingly be susceptible to being labelled "collaborators."

She explained that her work as a feminist involves helping to move the political negotiation process from the general and security matters to one more focused on human needs and rights: "I do not believe that peace is the silence of the guns," she said. Maha observed that woman can make a difference in Israel and Palestine but that at present it is unclear how far their influence can spread or how many women are involved in building civil society at a formal level.

Maha emphasized that women have a unique contribution to make towards peace building because woman understand the balance of power very well, and know how to deal with it better than men. In particular, woman understand that you cannot defeat a person and expect the person to come forward as a partner. This is the power of the weak. Women understand "the manipulation of power, and the wrath of power, because they have to live with it all the time."

The Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling is often asked to solve the day to day problems of women. This is difficult when there is no functioning legal system. Women feel very vulnerable in the current climate. However, she noted that despite the conflict with Israel, Palestinian society still retains elements that are very concerned and interested in the public good and they will take action on matters of principle. For example, the WCLAC will use shaming in cases of domestic violence.

*"You say 'you're a man and you hit a woman, how could you' or we bring other men from the society to shame them. Women must resort to these "social control agents," because there is no police."*

The Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling is involved in drafting legislation in anticipation of the day when Palestinians can live a normal life under the rule of law. Maha noted that women's

*"You cannot have peace if one side finds the very identity of the other threatening."*



*Peace will be achieved only when Zionism and Palestinian national consciousness manage to co-exist."*

Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas



*“Arab and Jewish women in the West must understand that they can play the role of interpreters and help generate real understanding of the situation for Israeli and Palestinian women.”*

Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas

groups were largely unorganized and unprepared when the Palestinian National Authority first came to power. The Palestinian women’s groups did not have the capacity to keep up with all the legislative changes. However, Palestinian women’s groups have worked hard, particularly since the second Intifada, to draft laws, educate the public about women’s rights and help ensure the role of women in policy building. In this regard, they have turned to the experiences of other Arab women, especially those in Morocco and Lebanon. One of the most important issues facing Palestinian women will come in the area of inheritance rights. Maha stressed that educating and empowering mothers will prove an important part of ensuring equality for women and girls.

To this end, the Center works with groups like the judiciary and the police to help educate them about women’s rights and to support them in their work with women. In focusing largely on the internal situation, however, Maha feels that the Palestinian women’s movement has not done enough to reach out to the global women’s movement which Maha characterized as a sophisticated, intelligent and sensitive audience. The Women’s Center for Legal Aid & Counseling has been trying to produce information about Palestinian women but feels that the information they are producing is still not enough as they would like to do more to generate a better understanding abroad of Palestinian women.

In response to the question of how women can contribute to building co-existence within Israel and Palestine, Maha made the following observations:

- Those in power must come to realize that women are not only victims they are also partners. However, women in Palestinian society must strive to become partners while still struggling with issues like the double victimization that comes from being both Palestinian and a woman.
- Arab and Jewish women in the West must understand that they can play the role of interpreters and help generate real understanding of the situation for Israeli and Palestinian women. By taking the issue on as a theme of their work, women in the West can help globalize the issue.
- Women who work on the question of Israel and Palestine need to tear away the emotions that are attached to this. There is so much raw emotion on both sides. I think that you do need to give a face to emotions, but you also need to help people deal with them.
- As feminists we have the capacity to humanize and globalize the conflict. If you are a true feminist, the whole issue of human dignity is very sacred.

### 6. Zahira Kamal

Zahira Kamal is considered by many to be a founder of the modern Palestinian women's movement. Zahira stressed that Palestinian women's resistance against Israeli occupation remains a central feature of women's struggle for equality within their own society. The political consciousness and empowerment needed to elevate women within Palestinian society was developed through women's committees which played a crucial role in the ability of Palestinians to resist occupation. Zahira Kamal and other progressive Palestinian women were not satisfied with the manner in which women's needs were being addressed under Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Union of Women's Work Committees was founded to ensure a more grass-roots approach to meeting women's needs. Members of the women's Committees would connect with women in towns and villages, determine their needs and then help mobilize other women to respond to those needs. However, it has become increasingly difficult for women to respond to each other in such a way with the heightened violence and closures of the last 5 years in particular.

Zahira has been actively involved in official negotiations with Israeli officials and participates in ongoing dialogue with Israeli civil society. However, she remains agnostic about the possibility of peace with Israel. She believes that one of the main impediments to peace or co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians can be found in the fact Palestinian children are growing up hating Israelis because they have been forced to live in circumstances of growing despair for over 30 years.

Zahira noted that Palestinians who were born in 1967 are now 35 years old, and those born in 1987 are now 16 years old. It is not that they are being instructed by family members to hate, rather it comes from their own lived experiences. Palestinians are demonized and dehumanized on a daily basis through the Israeli occupation. Palestinian children see their parents humiliated at checkpoints, their fathers imprisoned arbitrarily and their homes demolished. The children themselves are traumatized in their homes, schools and places of worship. In addition, children are often the ones who confront soldiers by throwing stones at them. Sometimes the soldiers respond by firing on the children. She said that the goal of the Israeli occupation is to capture Palestinian resources:

"We are borrowing electricity and water from Israel, although this is **our water**. Most of the water is in the West Bank, and they are using it and we are buying our own water. And Israeli person is using 21 litres per day, and they do not let us use more than 7 litres a day, which means that they are using three times as much as us, and when they want to cut it off they cut it off."

Zahira stressed that the struggle for women's equality is being eroded



*"Palestinian children have been forced to live in circumstances of growing despair for over 30 years."*

Zahira Kamal



*"Children are often  
the ones who confront  
soldiers..."*

Zahira Kamal

in the West Bank and Gaza for several reasons. First, Palestinian leaders have not been supportive of women's political participation. Second, Israel's occupation and military attacks have caused hardships for women ranging from sexual violence to home demolitions to the death and torture of family members. Third, the events of September 11 have been a disaster for Palestinians. "Security" [read: military and state security] rhetoric has made it easier for the Israeli government to justify its military policies against Palestinians, thereby adding to the general despair. As Zahira put it:

*"Since 9/11, it [the situation for Palestinians] has become a disaster. An economic disaster. There are people who are living off \$3 a day, which means [they are living on] nothing. 50% of these people have to borrow for their food. The food that is coming as humanitarian aid does not reach all these people. The majority of people are living in poverty, because 300,000 people are forbidden from going to work either on the Israeli side or the in West Bank."*

*"There is a 78% unemployment rate in Palestine. If this was the rate anywhere else in the world it would end the government. We hear in the news that a man that was fired from McDonalds took a gun and shot 17 people because he was unemployed. So what do these 300,000 people who do not have work and have families do?"*

## 7. Amira Hass

Amira Hass is a journalist for the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz. She has been reporting on Palestinian affairs for over a decade. During the 1990's, Amira lived in Gaza, the only Israeli journalist to do so. She currently lives in Ramallah. In 1999, she published *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*, an account of the years spent in Gaza. She was recently the subject of a documentary film, *Between the Lines*. We interviewed her in order to obtain her considered analysis of how Israelis and Palestinians arrived at the current dismal state of affairs.

Amira Hass's first comment to us was that 'peacebuilding' and 'peacemaking' are worn out and obsolete terms. In her view, the Israeli government, under cover of Oslo, only reconfigured occupation, they did not end it. As such, no meaningful peace agenda was actually pursued in practice. Amira singled out for particular criticism the policy of closure, which prevents Palestinians from entering Israel from Gaza or the West Bank for work or commerce, or to reach the other occupied territory. Closure began in earnest in 1991, accelerated and expanded under Oslo, and now includes mobility restrictions within each of the Occupied Territories through the network of military checkpoints. Contrary to popular belief, the most severe closures were imposed before the phenomenon of suicide bombers, which renders dubious the correlation between security and closure.

Prior to 1991, Palestinians were able to obtain general permits to



enter Israel as day labourers, or to conduct business, or to reach the other territory. On the eve of the Gulf War, Israel replaced the general permit with a personal permit. No Palestinian could travel without a personal permit, and obtaining such a permit was always arbitrary. In 1993, the permit system was expanded to include East Jerusalem, and in 1995, the West Bank became subject to the permit system. While the freedom of movement of Palestinians diminished drastically, Israelis penetrated further into the West Bank and Gaza via illegal settlements. Between the expansion of settlements, the construction of bypass roads to link settlements to Israel, and discriminatory regulation of access to land and water, Israel managed to perfect its enclave. Meanwhile, Palestinians literally could not move without a permit that may or may not arrive, which effectively disabled them from earning livelihoods, making plans, attending school, visiting family and carrying on other commonplace activities. Israel made exceptions for the Palestinian leadership, and their privileges neither endeared them to ordinary Palestinians, nor sensitized them to the hardship of ordinary Palestinians.

Although Amira regularly reported on the lives of Palestinians before and under Oslo, her sense is that Israelis remained impervious to her reports, alternating between not wanting to read bad news and growing accustomed to the cruelty of Israeli policies, rendering Palestinian suffering routine and therefore uninteresting. (She cautioned against any assumption that she or Uri Avnery, another journalist critical of Israeli policies, were representative of the Israeli media).

All this, stated Amira, happened before the second Intifada and was called the Peace Process. In her view, the term 'peacebuilding' was so bankrupted by what occurred under Oslo that it has no currency anymore among Palestinians: "There was no peace before the second Intifada. The Intifada broke out because everyone who participated in the [peace] process at a high political level was blind to its results".

Amira attributes part of the problem to the absence of any real education for peace by Israeli and Palestinian leadership. Israelis were not encouraged to seriously confront the Palestinian experience of dispossession, occupation, and lack of recognition. For Jews and Israelis, the Holocaust is the epitome of pain, and this conviction has prevented Israelis from recognizing Palestinian pain, much less their responsibility in inflicting it. Palestinians in turn have evaded their responsibility to Israeli civil society by homogenizing Israelis into one composite figure and failing to understand the meaning of the Holocaust: "Israelis do not understand Palestinian suffering as real, and certainly do not understand that they are responsible for Palestinian suffering; Palestinians do not understand

*"Israelis do not understand Palestinian suffering as real, and certainly do not understand that they are responsible for Palestinian suffering."*

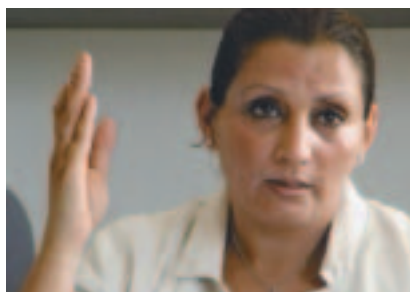


*"Palestinians do not understand the powerful role that the Holocaust plays in the Israeli psyche"*

Amira Hass



*There is only one point of entry into Gaza. It is controlled by Israeli soldiers. Few can get in or out of Gaza.*



Shadia El Sarraj

the powerful role that the Holocaust plays in the Israeli psyche”.

One of the many harmful effects of closure has been that a new generation of Palestinians only encounters Israelis as gun-toting soldiers or as settlers. She thought it might be helpful to promote more meaningful discussion between independent Israeli voices and Palestinians where possible. She stressed, however, that dialogue, like “peace” is also a term that is easily coopted by those who are not interested in real dialogue but simply want to perpetuate their power.

When asked to comment about women activists, Amira expressed the opinion that Israeli women activists have a stubbornness and endurance that Israeli men lack. Indeed, this helps account for why, after the failure of Oslo and the onset of the second Intifada, the mainstream, male-dominated peace groups within Israel, most notably Peace Now, adopted the discourse of Palestinian betrayal and duplicity, and effectively abandoned the struggle for a just peace in dialogue and co-operation with Palestinians.

As a journalist, Amira also found it easier to draw women’s attention – including that of female politicians’ – to issues of injustice. She gave the example of Israeli politician Yael Dayan, who intervened to assist a Gazan textile industry that was collapsing due to Israeli regulations and restrictions. Men tended to brush aside the ‘little stories’ and demanded instead ‘the big picture.’ In the process, they become more willing to work in the abstract, away from people’s pain. Such abstractions, however, often make it easier to dehumanize “the other side.”

## 8. Women’s Empowerment Project, Gaza City

The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme runs the Women’s Empowerment Project. The co-ordinator, Shadia El Sarraj, described elements of Gazan society that distinguish it from the West Bank. There exists a deliberate policy of segregation of the ‘original’ Gazans who lived in the region pre-1948, and refugees who arrived from what became Israel. Over 50 years later, native Gazans prohibit the latter from living outside refugee camps. Palestinian refugees are marginalized by class and status within Gaza society, even though everyone is Palestinian.

Compared to the West Bank, Gaza is smaller, more congested, even poorer, and tends to be more traditional in the area of gender relations. Gaza is very small (15 miles long and eight miles wide), and 20 percent of the most fertile land is occupied by settlements and is thus off-limits to Palestinians. The population numbers over one million, making it one of the most densely populated places on earth. The land border is encircled by a razor wire fence, and there is only one point of entry into Gaza. It is controlled by Israeli soldiers. Few can get in or out of Gaza. Our mission was accompanied by the

Canadian Representative Office in Ramallah, which may be the only reason we were allowed entry into Gaza.

Travel between north and south Gaza is obstructed by military checkpoints. The overcrowding, the extreme poverty and the palpable sense of enclosure elicit comparisons between Gaza and a prison, or a ghetto. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) raised the expectations of Gazans by making promises of a better life, with more economic security. Both refugee and native Gazans feel betrayed by the PNA's failure to deliver. The PNA is widely criticized in Gaza as corrupt, undemocratic, and more interested in accessing personal privilege than in serving the community. Palestinian youth increasingly gravitate toward Islam and Islamic organizations as a reaction to the corruption and impotence of the PNA.

The problems faced by Palestinian women in Gaza are exacerbated by these various factors [see Chapter V for a discussion of the impact of the conflict on women]. The Women's Empowerment Project undertakes various activities to address the social, economic and psychological toll on women of life and death in Gaza:

- A research unit established by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) trains women to gather data regarding social problems and domestic violence;
- A recent project focuses on mothers of suicide bombers, both documenting the circumstances before and after the bombing, and providing psychological counselling to the family;
- Literacy classes, and vocational training, including computer skills
- Legal or psychosocial counselling and child care;
- Food and relief distribution to those who have lost homes due to demolition, bombing or other causes

The Project employs women from the refugee camps in order to disrupt the hierarchy between them and the women who live outside the camps.

### 9. Women's Affairs Center, Gaza

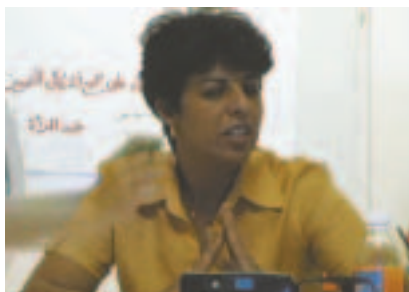
The Women's Affairs Center (WAC) was established in 1991. The Gaza office was part of the Nablus branch until 1993, when the Israeli policy of closure made travel between Gaza and the West Bank too difficult. The current director, Naila Ayesha, has worked for WAC since 1996. WAC's mandate is to empower Palestinian women by raising awareness of women's rights and creating employment opportunities. One of WAC's major projects is to train women to conduct research about women. The goal is to provide information

*"When an Israeli attack on Gaza is followed by a suicide bombing in Israel, it is not unusual for Gaza residents to celebrate and to keep a 'scorecard' of how many Israelis have been killed compared to the number of Palestinians. This response is symptomatic of the collective mental illness inflicted by the misery, desperation and impotence of life under occupation."*

Shadia El Sarraj



Gaza, August 2002



Naila Ayesh, Women's Affairs' Center, Gaza City

and analyses that can inform public policy, and to enable women to realize that they can influence public policy.

From 1995 to 1998, most of WAC's work concerned domestic violence, legal aid for women, and family law. WAC's current research focus is on the impact of the second Intifada and the occupation on women. WAC also engages in humanitarian work, such as hospital visits, support for families of the injured and dead in places such as Khan Yunis and Rafah.

Their vision is that "the nationalist struggle must be complemented by the struggle for social and political equality". Naila expressed disappointment at the low visibility of women during the second Intifada, which she attributed to the intensified militarization and violence as compared to the first Intifada. She noted that the history of Palestinian women's activism has been underappreciated and submerged in recent years, citing as one example the absence of any women on the nomination list of the various parties in the 1996 election. Though WAC participates in political demonstrations, Naila's view is that the role of women in the second Intifada has returned them to the more traditional activities of taking care of family and community.

Although Naila had worked with Israeli and international women's groups in the past, she felt a strong sense of betrayal by these women since the second Intifada. While acknowledging a personal desire on the part of some Israelis for a just and peaceful solution, she does not feel comfortable working or meeting with Israeli women at this juncture, given that they have failed to produce anything tangible in opposing the occupation. Having said that, Naila did not foreclose on the possibility of future dialogue, if circumstances change and she is satisfied of Israeli women's commitment at a political and institutional level. She also identified an urgent need to activate the peace camp in Israel, and to increase the pressure at the international level for observers and some form of protection for Palestinians from Israeli military aggression.



Independent PLC Member  
Rawya al-Shawwa

## 10. Rawya al-Shawwa

We were fortunate enough to meet briefly with Rawya al-Shawwa, an independent Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Rawya emphasized that women in the Gaza and West Bank are facing a serious humanitarian crisis as the political situation worsens and Palestinians generally live on the edge of starvation. However, she noted that Canada can best contribute towards building long term stability in the region by providing political support, not just economic aid. In other words, Canada can live up to its reputation for promoting human rights by condemning all acts of violence perpetrated against innocent civilians, including those committed by Israel. Canada must insist on an end to the occupation and must seek



to better understand the impact of the occupation on women and children in particular.

### 11. Women in Black

The members of the mission met with Gila Svirsky while attending a Women in Black vigil in Jerusalem. The weekly vigil attracts opponents who hoist placards and signs nearby, advocating, among other things, expansion of Israeli territory and expulsion of Palestinians from inside Israel and from Gaza and the West Bank. We observed passing pedestrians and motorists hurl abuse at the women, using sexist epithets and likening them to Nazis. Others ignored the vigil or occasionally indicated support. The vigil is silent, and while the participants will respond to questions or converse, they do not engage in confrontational interactions.

“At first they called us prostitutes,” says Gila Svirsky, a key organizer of the Jerusalem vigils and founding member of the Coalition of Women for Peace. “In recent years we have been promoted: now we are traitors and anti-Semites. For us this is significant, because first they related to us as women, and now as people with a certain political viewpoint, and that’s a big difference.”

Women in Black began in West Jerusalem in January 1988, one month after the first Palestinian intifada broke out, with a small group of women who carried out a simple form of protest: Once a week at the same hour and in the same location - a major traffic intersection - they donned black clothing and raised a black sign in the shape of a hand with white lettering that read “Stop the Occupation”. There was no chanting or marching; the medium was the message. The idea spread quickly and spontaneously to other places in Israel.

Women in Black was one of the first organizations to incorporate a feminist analysis into their opposition to Israeli occupation. Since its inception, the concept of women’s opposition to violent aggression and armed conflict has spread worldwide.

Several months after the first Women in Black vigil in Israel, “solidarity vigils” began in other countries: Initial reports came from the United States and Canada, and these later spread to Europe and Australia. Some vigils were primarily Jewish, while in other cities, the groups were mixed.

In the 1990s, Women in Black groups spread around the world and began to take on a life of their own. Many of these had nothing to do with the Israeli occupation. In Italy, Women in Black protest a range of issues, from the Israeli occupation to the violence of the Mafia and other organized crime. In Germany, Women in Black have protested neo-Nazism, racism against migrant workers, and nuclear arms. Women in Black in Belgrade and Zagreb set a profound example of

*“At first they called us prostitutes. In recent years we have been promoted: now we are traitors and anti-Semites.”*



*For us this is significant, because first they related to us as women, and now as people with a certain political viewpoint, and that’s a big difference.”*

Gila Svirsky

*“Is it not preposterous that not a single Israeli woman, and only one Palestinian woman, have held leadership roles at a Middle East peace summit?”*

Gila Svirsky



From left to right: Audrey Macklin, Orit Kamir & Gila Svirsky

inter-ethnic cooperation that was an inspiration to their country-women and men.

In India, Women in Black began in 1992. When the Babri Masjid, an ancient mosque, was torn down by Hindu fundamentalists and violence engulfed India, women were the main victims. Since then, WIB have stood in silent vigils in Bangalore every Thursday, on the streets, in the market squares and in the Gandhi Peace Park, protesting the wars against women.

Women in Black in the Philippines began in 1995. The Asian Women's Human Rights Council and the Lila Pilipina, an organization of former comfort women, gather often in front of the Japanese Embassy in Manila, dressed in black, demanding compensation for the wartime crime of sexual slavery by the Japanese army in World War II.

Though the women in all these vigils dress in black, symbolizing the tragedy of the victims of violence, each vigil is autonomous, setting its own policy and guidelines. What unites them all is their commitment to justice and a world free of violence.

Our group also met Luisa Morgantini, Member of the European Parliament and founding member of WIB Italy. She described Women in Black as an “international network of women who refuse every form of violence: war, terrorism, fundamentalism and the violation of human and civil rights.”

WIB Italy promotes non-violent protests as an instrument to resolve conflicts, and promote grassroots diplomacy and the participation of women in negotiations.

In Toronto the group most closely identified with the Israeli Women in Black, the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, holds a weekly vigil across the street from the Israeli consulate, together with Women for Palestine, the Coalition for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine, and Jewish Youth Against the Occupation. There are Women in Black groups elsewhere in Canada.

In 1991, the movement of Women in Black in Israel was honored by receipt of the Aachen Peace Prize. In 2001, the international movement of Women in Black was awarded the Millennium Peace Prize for Women, given by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In 2001, Women in Black Israel was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

## 12. Coalition of Women for Peace

Gila Svirsky is also the driving force behind the Coalition of Women for Peace, an umbrella organization of Israeli women's peace groups. The Coalition was formed at the beginning of the second Intifada to co-ordinate activities and maintain a strong voice for peace in the face of increasing violence. The members of the

Coalition are Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, who came together at an emergency meeting called by eight women's organizations: Bat Shalom, Women in Black, New Profile, and

- The Fifth Mother Movement: A social movement calling for the end of the occupation. The Fifth Mother was founded by women who were active in movements to withdraw the Israeli army from Lebanon – “The 4 Mothers” and “Women in Black”.
- Women Engendering Peace: Promoting a culture of peace in Israel
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Israeli chapter
- TANDI: Movement of Democratic Women for Israel
- Noga: Feminist Magazine
- NELED: An acronym for “Women for Coexistence”
- Machsom-Watch: Checkpoint monitors and rapporteurs

The principles of the Coalition reflect the consensus of its member organizations in calling for:

- An end to the occupation;
- The full involvement of women in negotiations for peace;
- Establishment of the state of Palestine side by side with the state of Israel based on the 1967 borders;
- The recognition of Jerusalem as the shared capital of two states;
- The recognition by Israel of its share of responsibility for the results of the 1948 war, and its obligation to cooperate in finding a just solution for the Palestinian refugees;
- Equality, inclusion and justice for Palestinian citizens of Israel;
- Opposition to the militarism that permeates Israeli society;
- Equal rights for women and all residents of Israel;
- Social and economic justice for Israel's citizens and integration in the region

Like many of the Israeli women with whom we spoke, Gila believes that a real barrier to peace is the military culture that permeates Israeli society and the absence of women from formal negotiations with the Palestinians. In this excerpt from her address to the members of the U.N. Security Council last fall (attached as Appendix 6), she calls for the full participation of women in any negotiations for peace:

“Is it not preposterous that not a single Israeli woman, and only one Palestinian woman, have held leadership roles at a Middle East peace summit? Instead, the negotiators have been men with portfolios of brutal crimes against each other - military men who have honed the art of war and who measure their success by the unconditional surrender of the other. Is it any wonder that we are still locked in combat?”



Israeli and Palestinian women meet at roadblock and strike up conversation

*"We all of us belong to this land. This land is big enough and has a big enough heart to include all of us if we say yes."*

Sumaya Farhat Nasser



*Palestinian women admitted to living in a constant state of fear generated in large part by the increasing discussions around "transfer" within Israeli society*

"Ultimately this occupation, like every other in history, will come to an end. The general parameters of that ending are already drawn and in agreement. What we need now is leadership committed to swiftly concluding this era awash in blood, leadership that understands the price we pay in death and destruction for every hour of delay. What we need now is leadership with expertise at reconciliation and rapprochement. What we need now is women."

### 13. Sumaya Farhat-Nasser

Sumaya Farhat Nasser is a founding member of the Jerusalem Link and former director of the Jerusalem Center for Women. She lives in Bir Zeit and is a Professor of Botany at Bir Zeit University.

Sumaya is highly respected within the global women's movement. She began the interview by observing that her family's roots in Bir Zeit date back to well before the 8th century. Yet, she says "We all of us belong to this land. This land is big enough and has a big enough heart to include all of us if we say yes." Her dialogue building activities date back to the 1986 when it was still illegal for Israeli and Palestinians to meet. She believed that if Israeli and Palestinian women could see each other as women, then walls might fall.

She stressed that dialogue is not something that anyone can simply initiate or meaningfully undertake. It is a painful process that requires preparation. She noted that there are certain conditions for true dialogue:

- One must be prepared to listen with compassion;
- One must learn to bear - but not accept - painful words;
- One must not force dialogue. One must accept that the time may not be right and be willing to delay meeting.

She noted that it took approximately 15 meetings before the women who initiated Jerusalem Link could bear to look into each other's eyes, accept the stories of "the other" yet still insist on their own equality. Since the initial formation of Jerusalem Link, Sumaya has worked hard and placed herself at significant personal risk to maintain dialogue with Jewish and Israeli women.

Sumaya indicated that the PNA has not been able to generate security for Palestinians because the Palestinian security apparatus are focused largely on creating security for Israelis. As a result, Palestinian society has increasingly turned towards traditional "tribal" structures such as villages and family connections for security. She noted that Israeli occupation has exacted a heavy social toll on Palestinian society. Paranoia and violence have increased at all levels. As a result, women are increasingly vulnerable to violence, both in public and in their homes. Palestinian women admitted to



living in a constant state of fear generated, in large part, by the increasing discussions around “transfer” within Israeli society and by the fact that women in Palestinian society are allowed less and less space to organize and help build civil society.

### 14. MIFTAH (Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy)

MIFTAH was founded by Hanan Ashrawi, a political and social leader in Palestinian society. It is staffed mainly by women. Several young women participated in our meeting with Hanan and provided a distinctive perspective.

Hanan explained that Palestinian women participated in informal dialogue with Israelis through the 1980s. She suggested that when women engage in political dialogue with each other, they have a willingness and ability to go straight to the tough issues. This stands in contrast to the paradigm favoured by the US and the mainstream political actors, which is to deal with minor issues first, leaving the tough issues hanging in the balance.

The women at MIFTAH noted that the current governments in the region made it difficult to find opportunities or incentives for dialogue. Hanan echoed the view of other Palestinian women that the second Intifada was hijacked as a popular movement by the prevalence of weaponry, and that women have been working more on social justice and equality issues than on a narrow nationalist agenda.

The obstacles to Palestinian women’s political participation are the same as for women all over the world, compounded by the conservatism of Arab society, the fact of the occupation, and poverty. Once again, during this interview, the occupation was identified as the primary obstacle facing Palestinians at present. The peace process allowed Palestinian women to relax somewhat with respect to the national agenda and allowed them to prioritize the social agenda. In other words, it allowed them to focus more on their quest for equality within society. This left formal politics almost exclusively to men, which in turn led to failure in achieving equality-seeking policies for women. When a social agenda was debated among the various political factions, perceived male interests prevailed.

The non-democratic structure of the Palestinian Authority presents another obstacle to women’s political participation. Women have in the past and continue to engage in various forms of non-violent resistance. These include candlelight vigils, demonstrations, hunger strikes by women prisoners, and vocally rejecting charges of encouraging their children to become suicide bombers. However, the brutally violent response of the Israeli army to non-violent resistance by women and men makes it a dangerous strategy. Moreover, the



*“That’s exactly where you will find women – in the corridors!”*

Hanan Ashrawi, when asked to address the topic of ‘women in the corridors of power’.



MIFTAH staff member  
Rana Malki



MIFTAH staff member  
Wafa Abed Rahman

*"Be part of the international voice that says 'this is enough' and demand an international peace-keeping presence in the region."*

Debbie Lehrman

media tends to ignore non-violent modes of resistance in favour of bloody and violent confrontation, which in turn sustains the negative stereotyping of Palestinians.

Hanan Ashrawi was one of several prominent Palestinians to sign an open letter in 2002 which condemned suicide bombing. She was severely criticized for it by segments of the Palestinian community.

The meeting at MIFTAH was also attended by three young staff members. These women are clearly the next generation of leaders. They noted that their work has left them exhausted, physically and emotionally. Working for women in the Palestinian context proves difficult for several reasons. First, the day-to-day living conditions have deteriorated so that women now have less energy and time to devote to political or social causes because much of their effort is expended getting past check points, caring for family and tending to the mental health of family members. Moreover, few young women are focused on working for women's rights because they find it harder to gather with other women to discuss their political futures. This is in part because their education has been disrupted by check-points which make it particularly difficult for women to reach their educational institutions. Younger Palestinian women also see the social gains achieved over the last few years slipping away as Palestinian society becomes increasingly more conservative. Nonetheless, young women within Palestinian society remain dedicated to working towards equality.

Their vision is reflected in the work of Wafa Abed Rahman who met with us at the Miftah office and who participated in an extensive follow-up interview with mission member Kathy Wazana in 2003. In this interview, Wafa talked about her work with Palestinian youth, focusing on the need to empower young people and to instill in them a "culture of life" to counter the "martyr option" out of the daily violence perpetrated against them by the occupation. She also spoke of the need for Palestinian and Israeli youth to work together and called on the leadership of the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps to include young people in their strategy and decision-making meetings. (A transcript of this and other interviews with young Palestinian and Israeli women may be produced upon request.)

### 15. Debbie Lehrman

Debbie Lehrman is a founding member of Women in Black and the Coalition of Women for Peace.

Debbie stressed that Israeli women's organizations have learned to coordinate their activities as a means of conserving scant resources. For example, if they need to link to Palestinian women, Jewish women's groups use Bat Shalom as their contact.

The main message Debbie shared with us is that Israeli women's

groups are at a position now where they need to review and assess their strategies. They learned after the second Intifada that their work has had little impact on Israeli public opinion. While she recognized the difficulties of working with Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Debbie pointed out that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to work together.

Debbie was very critical of members of the Israeli left who abandoned their quest for peace after the Second Intifada. She recognized their disappointment with the outbreak of violence but noted that many members of the left wanted peace only on their own terms. That is, they wanted to keep as much of the Palestinian territories as possible. When this proved impossible through negotiations, many of them simply turned their back on dialogue, which for them was a way of forcing the Israeli agenda on Palestine. However, Debbie underscored that peace is not possible without justice.

Debbie stressed that there is still a peace movement within Israel and that the movement includes both Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel who are willing to listen and to understand the Palestinian narrative on contentious issues such as the right of return. This does not mean that the Palestinian narrative will prevail, only that there must be a willingness to listen and to try to understand as the starting point for any true negotiation process. However, those who continue to truly work for peace within Israel are silenced by the media, which does not attend anti-occupation demonstrations organized by groups within Israel regardless of how many thousands of Israelis might show up in support.

Debbie expressed real concern about what she saw as the looming “transfer” or ethnic cleansing of Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. She feared that the Palestinian citizens of Israel will be the next target. In our interview, Debbie was critical of Palestinian groups because they are not operating strategically. For example, she stated that it is important for all groups to condemn armed struggle and focus on mass civil disobedience instead.

When asked what Canadian women can do to help support the work of Israeli and Palestinian women, Debbie’s message was simple: Be part of the international voice that says “this is enough” and demand an international peace keeping presence in the region.

### 16. Kav L’Oved (Worker’s Hotline)

The Director of Kav L’Oved, Chana Zohar, also participates in feminist activism via Bat Shalom and Women in Black. The many hats she wears seems to typify the Israeli women we met. This has two important implications. First, it means that the total number of activists working for peace is likely less than the number of organizations



Debbie Lehrman and members of Kav L’Oved





might suggest, given the overlap in membership. Second, it indicates a likelihood of burnout.

In her capacity as director of Kav L'Oved, Chana described the impact of closure on Palestinian workers. In a single day in 1993, 120,000 Palestinian workers were thrown into unemployment by the imposition of new Israeli permits. They were effectively disabled from entering Israel to work. This became the catalyst for the importation of foreign workers to Israel, and Chana views the notorious exploitation and ill-treatment of foreign workers in Israel as yet another example of the corrosive effect of the occupation on the moral integrity Israeli society.

### 17. Tamar Gozansky (MK)

At the time of our meeting, Tamar Gozansky was a Member of the Knesset (MK) for Chadash, probably the most left-leaning party on the Israeli political spectrum. As an MK, Tamar was well-known for her commitment to social issues, and especially children. A political economist by training, Tamar elaborated on the relationship between the occupation and the erosion of civil rights and social welfare within Israel, as well as the rise of neo-liberal economic policies.

Tamar recounted the intensification of discrimination and hostility toward Palestinian citizens of Israel, especially following the shooting of thirteen residents of Nazareth who were engaged in a demonstration against Israeli policies toward Palestinians inside and outside the Green Line.

Palestinian citizens of Israel comprise 18% of the population of Israel, and a quarter are under the age of fifteen. Among Jewish Israelis, about 25% of children live below the poverty line; the number is double for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Of the 25 towns in Israel with the highest unemployment, 24 are Palestinian. Children's allowance was recently cut for children whose parents did not serve in the Israeli army, with an exception for Orthodox Jews. The target was Palestinians children, since Palestinian citizens of Israel do not serve. Obviously, these are socio-economic issues that have a direct impact on women.

Since our meeting, Tamar is no longer an MK. She remains, however, active in extra-parliamentary opposition to both the occupation and Israel's internal social and economic policies. She was recently part of a group of Israeli and Palestinian academics, journalists, politicians and activists who signed a declaration of peace and spoke at a follow-up meeting in Ramallah in June, 2003.

### 18. ASSIWAR



Tamar Gozansky at demonstration marking the second anniversary of the Intifada.

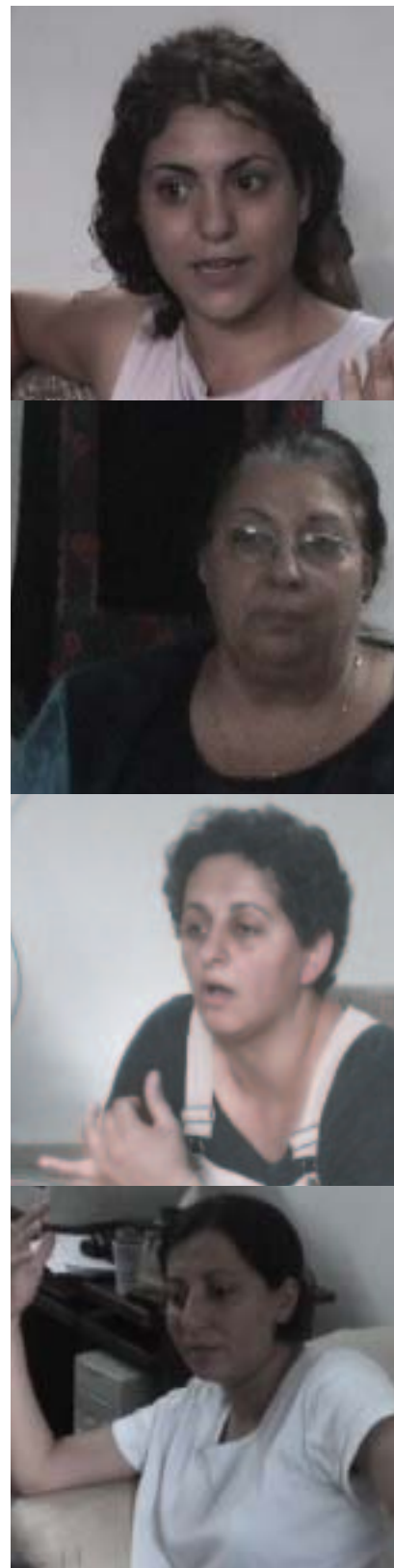


ASSIWAR was the only women's organization of Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) with whom we met. ASSIWAR's activities are focused on violence against women, including sexual assault, domestic violence, and 'honour killings'. It was established in 1997, emerging out of what had been a joint Jewish/Palestinian Israeli organization in order to address the specificity of the issues and perspectives of Palestinian women citizens of Israel. The PCI women felt that Jewish women viewed their culture negatively because Arab culture is generally more conservative around issues of virginity. Although ASSIWAR still co-operates with its Israeli Jewish counterparts, it was established to provide Palestinian women citizens of Israel with autonomy, and the space to build a relationship with Palestinian women in the occupied territories. Assiwar faces a continuous struggle to remain financially viable, and was in dire straits when we met with them.

Assiwar operates a hotline and a shelter, and arranges legal support and counselling for women where needed. The hotline treats all calls with confidentiality, and offers a safe space where a woman will be believed and supported. A lawyer affiliated with Assiwar undertakes public education in schools and elsewhere about 'honour killings'. The organization also works on raising awareness among women about the interaction of multiple oppressions, and educating women about their rights.

PCI women who are sexually or physically abused within their own community face a dilemma. Arab society tends to be conservative, which means an abused woman may not receive support or may be re-victimized if she reports abuse. On the other hand, PCI women do not trust the Jewish male police, especially after the killing of thirteen PCI demonstrators in 2000. The Israeli police also have a reputation for not intervening in domestic violence and honour killings, using the occasion as a rare opportunity to demonstrate 'respect' for Arab society by denying protection to women. Assiwar is often the only place women can turn.

The situation of PCIs has deteriorated since the collapse of Oslo. They have become more assertive in expressing their identity as a national minority, resisting their second-class citizenship status within Israel, and in expressing solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank in Gaza in the struggle to end the occupation. This in turn has deepened suspicion against them as 'traitors' by mainstream Jewish Israeli society, and brought to the surface even more explicit, unapologetic, and virulent forms of anti-Arab discrimination, racism and harassment. The open discussion of 'transferring' or expelling Palestinian citizens of Israel, the attempt to strip certain Palestinian Israelis of citizenship, and to bar a PCI MK from running for office, are some high-profile examples. One staff member described how, following a suicide bombing in Netanya, her Jewish supervisor told



The women of ASSIWAR



Palestinian citizens of Israel mark the second anniversary of the Intifada.

her she had no place in the company - where she had worked for many years - because her people were killing his people, and she was taking a Jewish woman's job.

Assiwar wishes to forge better relationships with Palestinian women in the occupied territories. They recognize that these women suffer a misery under occupation that is greater than the hardships experienced by Palestinian women citizens of Israel, and acknowledge that Palestinian women living under occupation feel disappointed by the fact that PCI women continue in their ordinary lives. Ironically, Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza actually have more experience in cultural expression, political organizing and activism than do Palestinian citizens of Israel. Despite their relatively superior material circumstances, Palestinian Israelis have historically been subject to Israeli surveillance and repression in the domain of political expression. Assiwar acknowledged that co-operation with Palestinian women in the occupied territories would allow for a mutual education. For the moment, however, Assiwar's work with feminist organizations in the West Bank has been frozen due to the closure.

### 19. Naomi Chazan (MK)

Prior to entering formal politics as a Meretz MK, Naomi Chazan was a political scientist. Even as an MK she, like Tamar Gozansky, remained active in civil society, including Bat Shalom. She did not win a seat in the most recent Israeli election.

Naomi believes that formal politics are more unpredictable than NGO/civil society activism. She increasingly resists separating the two, believing that without linkages between formal and informal politics, progress will never be made. She entered formal politics to see if she could make a difference working within the system. As of August 2002, seventeen women sat as Members of the Knesset, and there is variation among their views and their influence. For example, the minister of Education is a right-wing woman whose voice is listened to by the Prime Minister.

Naomi doubts the utility of economic sanctions on Israel, partly because they would not work, and partly because they would further weaken the left in Israel, which is already extremely frail. In her view, sanctions would "speak to an Israeli paranoia gene". Her vision is of a multinational, multicultural, multi-religious Israel.

### 20. New Profile

Although we did not have an opportunity to meet with New Profile as a group, a number of women with whom we met suggested that we provide some information on their unique perspective and activities. New Profile was founded with the specific objective of identi-



fighting and opposing the hyper-militarization of Israeli society and “to change the profile of Israeli society from a militarized society of war and might, to an actively peacemaking community.”

"We changed from being a state that has an army to an army that has a state," says Rela Mazali, one of the founders of New Profile. The organization also struggles for legal recognition of conscientious objection to army service.

New Profile's activities are clustered around five projects:

- Rethinking Conscription - efforts to change conscription laws to allow for conscientious objectors, and support to young Israelis who refuse military service.
- Advocacy for Demilitarization - raising public awareness of the effects of militarism on Israeli society.
- Educating for Demilitarization - educating the Israeli public and changing the education system itself to counter the effects of predominant militarism.
- Study Groups & Adult Curriculum Development - platforms for learning & discussion
- Partnership in Coalition of Women for Peace - joint demonstrations with Jewish and Palestinian women against the occupation.

In an interview with Kathy Wazana after the mission, New Profile member Dorothy Naor identified some of the ways in which military culture permeates all aspects of Israeli society. Soldiers in full uniform are used to sell “wholesome” foods like milk (implicitly conveying the message that both milk and the military are good for you). Soldiers are also used in children's mathematics exercises in children's school books. In such subtle yet all pervasive ways, the military is idealized and normalized to the extent that anyone who criticizes or questions its hegemony risks being labelled a traitor.

### 21. Women's Affairs Technical Committee (Gaza)

WATC is a coalition of women groups associated with various political parties within the Palestinian political spectrum as well as various human rights organizations and professional groups. WATC was established in 1992 as part of the Technical Committees formed to assist the Palestinian negotiation team in preparation for the peace negotiations. WATC organizations work together for the realization of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the pursuit of a well established, civic, democratic society that respects human rights. WATC headquarters are based in Ramallah. WATC has a branch in Gaza and regional coordinators throughout Palestine. Members of our group met with WATC in Gaza.

*“We changed from being a state that has an army to an army that has a state”*

Rela Mazali



Dorothy Naor of New Profile supports Palestinian olive farmers, October, 2002



Seeing the sea at Gaza

WATC has several objectives including: mainstreaming Palestinian women's issues within Palestinian society, lobbying for a more active role for Palestinian women in all aspects of political life, promoting gender-sensitive laws and policies, and self-assertiveness training for women.

WATC attempts to attain its objectives through various means including, but not limited to: educating the public about the achievements and challenges facing Palestinian women in their quest for equality; promoting networking and information-sharing among Palestinian women and women's organizations; lobbying decision-makers; training women on various topics such as communication skills and human rights, and organizing mass marches to allow women to publically express their demands.



Resolution 1325's operating premise is that women can make a unique contribution to peace building. Examining the process of discussion, debate and negotiation between a Palestinian and an Israeli Jewish women's organization provides evidence in support of this hypothesis. We have earlier described the work of Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom, both as autonomous entities and in their co-operative incarnation, Jerusalem Link. One of Jerusalem Link's achievements is the Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles, the culmination of careful, conscientious and committed dialogue. Here we want to focus on one aspect of the Declaration, that which concerns the most contested aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian Right of Return. We choose the Right of Return not because Jerusalem Link as "resolved" the issue between them with finality, but precisely because it has not. How the constituent organizations of Jerusalem Link approached the issue, how they articulated their differences, and how they still manage to continue talking and working together despite the lack of consensus is an object lesson in one facet of women's contribution to peace building.

*The following case study is adapted from a paper by Reem Bahdi published in volume 21(2) of Refuge: Canada's Periodical on Refugees in February 2003. The footnotes have been omitted but can be found in the full length version of the article which is available on-line at <http://www.yorku.ca/crs/Refuge/refuge.htm>.*

### The Palestinian Right of Return

Not surprisingly, the Palestinian Right of Return represents a hard case for Security Council Resolution 1325. Debate over the Right of Return have generated controversy and anger on both sides, and remains the most intractable of issues. In 1948, the first Arab-Israeli war (known as the War of Independence by Israelis, and The Catastrophe (Nakba) by Palestinians created some 750,000 refugees who were expelled and/or fled during the armed conflict in what became Israel. Over two-thirds were displaced to the West Bank and Gaza, only to be subject to Israeli occupation post-1967. Today, the refugees and their descendants are spread all over the Middle East and beyond, but most reside in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt. Estimates of numbers vary from 3.5 – 5 million.

The essence of the Palestinian Right of Return is the contention that Palestinians who resided within what became the borders of Israel were wrongfully dispossessed. These Palestinians, and their descendants, have a right to return to their homes from which they fled or were expelled.

Palestinians contend that refusal to recognize the Right of Return forms part of a consistent pattern of Israeli colonialization and deter-



*"Women understand the importance of narrative and that they may begin with at least two different narratives."*

Sumaya Farhat Nasser

*Women in both Israel and Palestine recognize that they are connected by motherhood even though they may be divided by nationality, religion, or other elements of identity.*

mination to deny Israel's responsibility for massive refugee suffering. Failure to recognize a Palestinian Right of Return derives from a failure to take seriously the injustice done to Palestinians. Israelis tend to argue that Palestinian insistence on the Right of Return represents a cynical plot to destroy the "Jewish character" of Israel by demographic means, thereby effectively destroying Israel. If women can help build the conditions necessary for peace and coexistence in the Israeli-Palestinian context, then they should be able to live up to the expectations of Security Council Resolution 1325 in other contexts.

Jerusalem Link's work with respect to the Right of Return suggests that, despite the odds, women can make and have made a unique contribution to shaping coexistence with and understanding of the "other." Jerusalem Link's efforts not only point to the possibility of an alternative framework for approaching the Palestinian Right of Return, but also suggest the efficacy of Security Council Resolution 1325.

### **Jerusalem Link's Unique Contribution Regarding the Right of Return**

**O**n August 2, 1996, Bat Shalom and Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) issued the "Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles." The Declaration sets out the organizations' joint commitment to certain principles, including recognition of the right of self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians, the sharing of Jerusalem as two capitals for two states, recognition of the illegality of Israeli settlements, respect for international law, and the involvement of women in the development of a just and viable peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people. In its original formulation, the "Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles" made no mention of the Palestinian Right of Return.

Inevitably, however, the two organizations embarked on the long, painful, and often frustrating path of discussing the Right of Return. Levels of trust between the Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom reached an all-time low in 2001 and early 2002, in part because the climate created by Israeli responses to the Intifada made dialogue logistically difficult and seemingly futile. Another source of tension was the fact that Bat Shalom and JCW initially agreed on a text regarding the Right of Return, which was then publicized by JCW. Bat Shalom subsequently resiled from this formulation when it became clear that the wider membership of the organization felt unable to endorse it. Although the two organizations maintained some level of communication, they came close to ending their long-standing relationship. Despite their best efforts, the women of Jerusalem Link were not able to come to full agreement on the Right of Return. Instead, they articulated their differing positions in the

“Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles.” The Declaration states the following with respect to the Right of Return:

**Palestinian:** Israel accepts its moral, legal, political and economic responsibility for the plight of Palestinian refugees and thus must accept the Right of Return according to relevant UN resolutions.

**Israeli:** Israel’s recognition of its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugees in 1948 is a pre-requisite to finding a just and lasting resolution of the refugee problem in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

While the Palestinian position clearly sets out the Right of Return as an aspect of corrective justice for a legal, moral and economic wrong, the Israeli formulation stops short of specifying the nature of Israel’s responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948. The Israeli position, however, does acknowledge that Israel had a role to play in driving out the refugees. Moreover, while the Israeli version acknowledges the need for a just and lasting resolution, it does not explicitly recognize the Right of Return as an appropriate remedy, let alone the appropriate remedy.

Although the Right of Return has challenged the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian women’s organizations, there are fundamental features of Jerusalem Link’s discussions that distinguish their stance from those adopted by their societies at large. Perhaps most obviously, “Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles” moves beyond the simplistic and politically convenient claim that all Palestinians want to “drive Jews into the sea” and seeks, instead, to see Palestinians as human beings with claims to equal rights and dignity. To this end, the Declaration acknowledges the wrongs done to Palestinian refugees in 1948 and further recognizes that the state of Israel bears some level of responsibility for those wrongs. In the same vein, the Palestinian formulation, while insisting on the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, simultaneously reaffirms the rights of both peoples to self-determination and peaceful coexistence. For example, article 1 of Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles recognizes “the right to self-determination of both peoples in the land, to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel on the June 4, 1967 boundaries.”

Seemingly, against all odds, members of Jerusalem Link have remained committed to continuing the dialogue and changing the current orientation towards violence that pervades the political and popular discourse within their respective societies. The commitment to reaching a just solution through words rather than weapons can be attributed in part to the sheer determination of the individual women involved in the process. The women of Jerusalem Link also



*“I do not believe that peace is only the silence of the guns.”*

Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas



*“Is it not preposterous that not a single Israeli woman, and only one Palestinian woman, have held leadership roles at a Middle East peace summit?”*

Gila Svirsky

insist, however, that their dialogue must be structured in ways that both reflect and reinforce the manner in which women tend to interact with each other. As Terry Greenblatt of Bat Shalom put it:

[w]omen's characteristic life experience gives us the potential for two things: a very special kind of intelligence, social intelligence, and a very special kind of courage, social courage. We have developed the courage to cross the lines of difference drawn between us, which are also the lines drawn inside our heads. And the intelligence to do it safely, without a gun or a bomb, and to do it productively. And most importantly, we are learning to shift our positions, finding ourselves moving towards each other, without tearing out our roots in the process. Even when we are women whose very existence and narrative contradicts each other, we will talk - we will not shoot.

Although they recognize that they have not always been true to these ideals in the past, the women of Jerusalem Link indicate a willingness to examine and re-examine themselves at the same time that they question their partners in dialogue. In particular, the women prove willing to examine themselves rather than simply or exclusively blaming others for breakdowns in both trust and communication.

In addition to their willingness to engage in introspection, the women of Jerusalem Link have recognized that a power imbalance characterizes the relationship between Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women. They have sought to identify how such an imbalance might interfere with their own negotiations and interactions. Accordingly, they do not seek to “negotiate” in the traditional adversarial, zero-sum model that stresses “your loss = my gain” Again, the path to this realization has not always been easy. Although they have not fully addressed the power imbalance that exists between them, the women of Jerusalem Link are increasingly aware of the way in which the power imbalance may inhibit the development of long-term, meaningful solutions. They understand the need to develop lasting agreements based on recognized principles that strive to have due regard for the common humanity of both peoples. Perhaps Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas expressed these points best when she reminded representatives of the United Nations Security Council that:

[t]he two parties, Palestinian and Israeli are not equal, and should not be left on their own, otherwise the imbalance of power will dictate the process, which characterized the Oslo negotiation process that we are now witnessing the bloody consequences of.



Honourable representatives, peace is made between peoples and not between leaders. A process that should lead to a political solution that is sustainable and consequently permanent should be just, and should not be left to the confines of generals...

When seen in light of their willingness to examine themselves and the power imbalances that exist between them, the fact that Jerusalem Link's Declaration of Principles includes two principles, one Israeli and the other Palestinian, represents an expression of strength, commitment, and perseverance rather than an admission of despair. The two formulations reflect an understanding of the importance of accepting the other narrative as a starting point for authentic dialogue and meaningful negotiation. As Sumaya Farhat Nasser explained:

[w]omen understand the importance of narrative and that they may begin with two different narratives. They have learned to listen with compassion and understand that others have the right to make mistakes. They have learned to bear (but not accept) painful words. Women do not force dialogue.

Women's ability to continue discussions around the Right of Return is neither a chimera nor is it an inexplicable phenomenon. On the contrary, it has both theoretical and practical roots that are inextricably linked and sometimes difficult to disentangle, but that are nonetheless knowable and worthy of analysis. Anyone interested in finding a just solution for Palestinian refugees must ask how women can remain committed to continuing dialogue in the face of rising violence and intransigence around the Right of Return. The women of Jerusalem Link begin their discussions around the Right of Return with a few key, shared assumptions.

### Shared Assumptions

#### *i) Human Rights Framework*

First, the women of Jerusalem Link adopt human rights and justice as their prevailing metaphors. Their discussions, therefore, take place within a framework that recognizes justice as a prerequisite to any lasting peace and that further requires individuals and states to take responsibility for their actions. In this regard, women see the importance of giving effect to human rights claims even though they may not necessarily or immediately agree on the substantive content of those claims. Accordingly, "Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles" recognizes that:

[t]he realization of political peace will pave the way for mutual understanding, trust, genuine security, and



Neta Golan, a Canadian-Israeli living in Nablus, is a founder of the International Solidarity Movement.



Terry and Maha



constructive cooperation on the basis of equality and respect for the national and human rights of both people.

Women understand that human rights represent those things that recognize, respond to, and protect dignity and equality, and that these qualities are dialogical in nature. Any attempt to suppress the rights of others ultimately amounts to a personal tragedy and a devaluation of human rights generally. Thus, although the women's groups may not have developed a shared set of principles in relation to the Right of Return, they nonetheless remain committed to continuing their efforts in light of the simple fact that they are committed to negotiating towards justice, not injustices.

Significantly, the women of Jerusalem Link refuse to isolate the question of Palestinian refugees from the larger context of human rights issues that have plagued the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bat Shalom expressed this point in a public letter to the Palestinian people published in *Al Qud's*, a major Palestinian newspaper, on June 4, 2002:

We call for the removal of Israeli settlements, for Jerusalem to serve as two capitals for two states, and for the acknowledgement by Israel of its part in creating the refugee problem and a mutually agreed upon resolution of the problem grounded in relevant UN resolutions. We insist that our humanity and commitment to justice not only connect us, Israelis and Palestinians, but also impel us to jointly continue our struggle for a just peace.



Tamar Gozansky

By contrast, the mainstream discourse around the Right of Return tends to trivialize the rights claims of Palestinian refugees. At least some Israelis invoke Palestinian refugees as objects of sympathy rather than bearers of rights. Others weave the Palestinian Right of Return into a more hardened political discourse that aims to dehumanize Palestinians and their quest for self-determination. The possibility that the human rights of Palestinian refugees might have been violated and that the refugees have valid human rights claims barely enters into either of these calculations if at all.

Bat Shalom's position on Palestinian refugees stands in marked contrast to both the official and mainstream Israeli discourse on the Right of Return because it acknowledges the plight of the Palestinian refugees while invoking concepts of "humanity and justice." For this reason, a letter by Bat Shalom to the Palestinian people was well-received by the Jerusalem Center for Women even though it may have fallen short of meeting the Center's full expectations on the Right of Return. Bat Shalom's letter ultimately reflected the organization's willingness to understand the refugee issue as a long-standing and real human rights tragedy rather than a "faux" issue that

Palestinian's representatives invented to circumvent the negotiations with Israel.

### *ii) Gender and Security*

Jerusalem Link adopts a gendered, holistic definition of security that informs initiatives across issues, including the difficult question of the Right of Return. The women of Jerusalem Link implicitly reject the conventional theoretical assumptions about the meaning and nature of "security" that inform much of the popular and political debate in the region. Security, especially in Israeli society, is traditionally understood as military security and freedom from foreign threats, both real and perceived. Indeed, to the extent that they recognize Palestinian refugees were driven from their homeland, Israeli historians tend to justify the expulsion of Palestinian refugees in the name of Israeli state security.

Women who find themselves embroiled in wars and conflict across the globe have adopted an increasingly skeptical stance towards the military's ability to provide security in any meaningful sense. This is true for several reasons. In the first place, women understand that "security" means more than freedom from foreign attack. "Security" also encompasses such things freedom from domestic violence, the ability to feed one's children, and the right to adequate, affordable housing. Israeli women, for example, question whether the military will in fact generate greater security for Israeli society when, as the Israeli military budget spirals out of control, women are effectively told that there is no money in the budget for social services because the military has eaten it all. The emphasis on military security actually undercuts women's security in other important spheres. They reject the fallacious calculus that pretends one can 'buy' so many units of security by 'trading away' so many units of human rights. Security is not a commodity, but rather a relationship we experience with the world around us. In this sense, the conception of human security developed by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) resonates with the actual practices of Jerusalem Link.

For the women of Jerusalem Link, this shift in perspective requires them to tackle seemingly intractable political and social issues, like the Right of Return, by first recognizing the logic and efficacy of cultivating lasting relationships with the individuals and communities that affect one's life. Increasingly, the women of both Israel and Palestine recognize that their fates are intimately linked with the fates of Palestinian refugees, most of whom live in squalid refugee camps sprawled across the Middle East. While the current Israeli leadership aims to build a security wall between the two peoples, the women of Jerusalem know that Israeli and Palestinian lives cannot be segregated in this way because in the end, security is built,



*Women who find themselves embroiled in wars and conflict across the globe have adopted an increasingly skeptical stance towards the military's ability to provide security in any meaningful sense.*



not with bricks and mortar, but through negotiated agreements that respect the dignity and worth of all parties involved. To this end, “Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles” acknowledges that any agreement that dismisses the suffering of the Palestinian refugees is neither legitimate nor sustainable in the long term.

Jerusalem Link’s normative shift around the meaning of security also challenges the premise that security analysis should remain specialized in the hands of the military and intelligence services that have a bias in favour of military-style solutions. Women peace-builders around the globe appreciate that military-style solutions may aggravate security threats rather than ameliorate them, and that such professed solutions limit the national capacity to consider creative responses to crises. Fearful of the rising spectre of “transfer” (expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and even from Israel itself) and escalating violence, both Israeli and Palestinian women have rallied around the slogan, “We have tried war already.”

Globally, women’s commitment to solutions beyond the military derives from their knowledge that they have been and will continue to be excluded from decision making when the military steps in. Some Israeli and Palestinian women, at least, have arrived at the same realization. In Israel, a movement called “Women Refuse!” aims for the demilitarization of Israeli society and calls for women to stop co-operating with the Israeli military government and its policies:

Women Refuse calls upon all women to stop being traditionally silent and to dare to raise their voices by opposing their loved ones’ participation in military action. This new form of protest opposes a deeply rooted national tradition of unquestioned support for the Israeli military...It calls on the Israeli public to refuse to be the enemy and to develop a new national dialogue. By starting within our homes and then moving out into wider public domains, Women Refuse is attempting to create a new national agenda.

Palestinian women find their political participation has diminished in the wake of the second Intifada in part because this Intifada, as opposed to the first, regards armed struggle as the source of freedom. While Palestinian women remain divided on the efficacy of adopting a military-style form of resistance to Israeli occupation, they nonetheless tend to recognize the move to militarization excludes them from public or political participation.

Feminist advocates around the world know that although they may appear unrelated, forms of structural violence may be intimately connected. In Israel and Palestine, the violence of occupation, the Intifada, and Israeli military repression merge with the violence



Mission members at MIFTAH

visited upon women in the so called “private” sphere and thrive upon each other. As Maha Abu Dayah Shamas explains, women, because they are most vulnerable to violence, tend to see the spectrum of domination more readily and tend to appreciate that domination cannot produce lasting coexistence:

Policies based on mistrust and domination are not sustainable, and we women know this – we know it too well. Such policies are not sustainable in the private sphere, nor are they sustainable in the public sphere.

Because women have experienced structural violence, women are more willing to see and question the structural violence committed against Palestinian refugees in the name of state security. They tend to be skeptical about the claim that it was necessary to drive the refugees from their historic homes in the name of Israel’s national security. They know that the violence that was visited upon the refugees decades ago continues to haunt the state of Israel, and continues to affect the lives of both Israeli and Palestinian women who live in the region in tragic yet ultimately predictable ways. In short, women understand that the violence favoured by politicians and military against the “other” rebounds onto their own societies and that women, as a result, are disproportionately disempowered and harmed. In the end, though the Palestinians refugees may have been driven out of their homes to foreign lands, the violence that drove them out remains and continues to haunt those who live in both Israel and Palestine. Neither religion nor nationality acts as a complete shield to the violence born of past wrongs.

Linked by their gender and through their vulnerability to violence, the women of Jerusalem Link also understand that the bonds of gender can prove a source of creativity, energy, humanity, and hope. In this regard, Jerusalem Link represents a microcosm of a larger movement within Israel and Palestine, which seeks to construct gender in general and motherhood in particular as a bridge to help span divides, including those built on nationality and religion. As women throughout the ages have turned to their motherhood status to help subvert the status quo, individual women in both Israel and Palestine recognize that they are connected by motherhood even though they may be divided by nationality, religion, or other elements of identity.

### Gender and Peace-Building: Challenges and Prospects

Women’s groups in Israel and Palestine face formidable obstacles. Women peace-builders represent voices in the wilderness in an increasingly polarized political and popular landscape. Both Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women oscillate between maintaining legitimacy within their own societies and seeking to



Mission members at Women in Black vigil



press the public discourse. They cannot stray too far from their respective public opinion or they risk alienating most of their supporters. Yet, as agents of change, they must seek to challenge popular perceptions and point to barely imaginable alternative ways of seeing and doing. As Terry Greenblatt of Bat Shalom put it, “women’s groups dance between acceptance and challenging our own societies.”

Some might dismiss “Jerusalem Link Declaration of Principles” as unimportant because it was not drafted by those with the power to implement the principles. They might argue that the dialogue nurtured between Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women represents an easy accomplishment because not much rests on such dialogue. This objection, however, misses the mark. The relationship between Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for women has proven to be anything but easy. The women of Jerusalem Link place themselves at personal, professional, and political risk by signing the Declaration and taking a public stance in support of the values articulated therein. They have been personally threatened and denounced as traitors in their own societies. Terry Greenblatt reports receiving threatening e-mails that read like the following: “I know you are an enemy of Israel and Jews everywhere. As the God of Israel has promised, your bones will be crushed, and your name will be forgotten. Blessed is the God who crushes the enemies of Israel.” She goes on to say:



Neta Golan visits families under siege in Nablus.

We are scared as we protest in the streets of Tel Aviv and in Palestinian villages under siege. We have stood huddled in small groups of 6 or 7, as well as with the thousands of women and men in 150 cities and towns around the world who stand in solidarity with us. We are harassed and cursed, spat upon and arrested.

The speech also describes how women exchange emergency phone numbers knowing that they put their lives at risk when they participate in practices like monitoring. Israeli women in particular saw many of their allies within the mainstream peace movement and political parties, including some women, take a dramatic turn to the political right with the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Women’s peace groups have also seen funding from progressive Jewish organizations around the world dry up since September 11. Palestinian women, for their part, face increasing political isolation in the face of rising violence associated with the Second Intifada.

Moreover, as the Oslo process has demonstrated, the solutions of military and political leaders must have some resonance within civil society. Accords cannot lead to peace or coexistence without a commitment from the affected constituencies. One must also be attentive to the reality “on the ground.” The women of Jerusalem Link clearly appreciate that peace-building must take place at the level of



civil society. They are neither idealists, nor naive. They do not pretend to have ‘transcended’ or ‘abandoned’ their identities, or their rootedness in their respective histories. They are advocates who are intimately connected to and concerned about their societies. Terry Greenblatt of Bat Shalom emphasized, “We are struggling to maintain credibility in an increasingly divided political situation. The key question for us is ‘how do we as women provide direction out of here?’”

Yet, the women of Jerusalem Link cultivate empowerment rather than power. This fact should emphasize their political legitimacy and underscore the viability of their efforts to develop an alternative political discourse. In the end, the official negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians failed in part because the leaders proved more concerned about securing power through elections than remaining adequately attentive to those voices muted by the political process. The women of Jerusalem Link have demonstrated that it is possible to frame discussions around the Right of Return that recognize the narratives, hopes, and fears of both the Israeli and Palestinian people. While they have yet to reach full consensus, their efforts at developing an alternative discourse around the Right of Return bring into the realm of the possible what has, until now, been consigned to the domain of the inconceivable. In so doing, they generate ideas that encourage a weary and skeptical public – and even politicians – to revise their notions of what is imaginable.

Undoubtedly, there are lessons to be drawn from Jerusalem Link’s Declaration and the difficult path of dialogue around the Right of Return. Jerusalem Link’s activities prove significant in part because they help shed light on the conditions necessary to promote women’s contribution to peace-building as contemplated under Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution draws upon diverse and sometimes contradictory strands of feminist theory including cultural feminism, dominance theory, and liberal feminism. It has only just begun to attract significant attention from feminist scholars. Yet, the women of Jerusalem Link have been putting the principles of Resolution 1325 into practice for close to a decade. The very process in which they engage with one another has an impact on who they are, and who they understand the ‘other’ to be. They are not simply thinking their way into a new way of acting; they are simultaneously acting their way into a new way of thinking.

Jerusalem Link’s experience suggests that Security Council Resolution 1325 cannot imply a simple “add women and stir” approach to peace building. Simply seating more women at negotiating tables or within the ranks of the military will not necessarily lighten the path to coexistence and understanding. Women are already included in the military and government decision-making processes, albeit in relatively small numbers. As Hanan Ashrawi wrly



remarked when asked to address the topic ‘women in the corridors of power’, “That’s exactly where you will find women – in the corridors!”. When they are included in the institutions of power as currently constituted, women almost inevitably come to share in the masculine military culture. The need is to recast the military culture and recast the national military metaphors.

Second, negotiations must start with an understanding of the present lived realities of the refugees and an agreement over the historical context that produced the refugee problem. This need to understand history does not amount to some nostalgic desire to turn back the hands of time, but acknowledges that true understanding cannot be had without understanding of context and narratives. Third, negotiations are not successful when “the winner takes all.” Rather, they must aim to produce just and lasting solutions that are attentive to the stories that have been papered over and silenced by official accounts of history just as women’s voices have been silenced. Finally, women are victims of war and occupation, yet they are not helpless. On the contrary, women are leaders in their communities. During times of war and conflict, they help preserve a degree of civility and their work can affirm the need for recognition of the “other’s” common humanity. Resolution 1325 must not simply bring more women to the negotiating table. It must instead bring the brokers of power who sit at the negotiating table to understand the lived realities of Palestinian refugees, those whose individual and collective lives are torn asunder by conflict.



Terry Greenblatt and Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas meet between East and West Jerusalem

### Conclusion:

Jerusalem Link’s success in charting a just agreement on the Right of Return is by no means guaranteed. Women have found themselves on the edge of the precipice on several occasions but nonetheless found their way back to firmer ground. They have learned that one cannot address the Right of Return unless one adopts a broader framework based on the principles of justice and recognition of the common humanity of Palestinian refugees. While others talk of putting more distance between Palestinians and Israeli Jews, and building walls and roads to keep them apart, the women of Jerusalem Link are forging relationships and breaking down thick walls of mistrust. As Canadians concerned about security in Israel/Palestine, our biggest contribution may be to offer our political, personal and material support the ongoing, grassroots work of creating human security through practice.

The members of the mission were interested in the particular impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on women in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza. We asked every person we interviewed to offer her insights and experiences, and our record reflects their observations and analysis. One consistent theme that ran through all our discussions with both Palestinians and Israelis is that actually ending the occupation, as opposed to merely talking about it, or re-configuring it through Palestinian proxies, is a pre-condition to ending Palestinian violence toward Israel, and a necessary condition for peace.

### Israeli Citizens

#### Suicide Bombings

It goes without saying that indiscriminate attacks on civilians can create a collective psychological trauma. This trauma is heightened within Israeli society by the experience of the Holocaust. Ultimately, suicide bombings only feed the popular conviction within Israel that the country remains in an existential battle for its very existence, regardless of whether this is in fact true.

The impact of a terrorist attack on Israelis is immediate, hideous and tragic. Men, women, children, Jews, Muslims, Christians, recent immigrants, foreign workers, have all been killed or wounded. The trauma inflicted on the survivors, the families and the communities is terrible and can never entirely heal. The media report extensively on every terror attack in Israel, and since most of the victims are Jewish and the perpetrators are always Palestinian, the public is familiar with the terrible harm inflicted on Israelis by Palestinians. Although the number of Palestinians who carry out attacks is extremely small, their impact is disproportionate to their numbers, for several reasons. First, they kill and/or injure many people at once in a single location. Second, they generate a climate of generalized insecurity and fear. Third, the suicide bomber has become the stereotype used to characterize (if not vilify) all Palestinians. Yet suicide bombing is a recent phenomenon, and did not characterize the first Intifada. Although bombs do not discriminate between rich and poor, buses are frequent targets and happen to be used most by women and people of modest means.

Debbie Lehrman described the impact of suicide bombings on the Israeli people: "People are afraid, and this fear and hysteria makes it difficult to speak rationally when people are saying: 'Well, I have to protect my children'. So they are not thinking about the best solutions... This is a very dangerous state of mind. Polls will tell you that Israelis want peace, but if a bomb hits today, then they will say: 'Go and bomb them; I do not care how many children will die, I want my children to live.'"

*"Polls will tell you that Israelis want peace, but if a bomb hits today, then they will say: 'Go and bomb them; I do not care how many children will die, I want my children to live.'"*

Debbie Lehrman

*"The people I count as 'my side' are ... all the parents in the world who would not dream of avenging the death of their children by killing the children of others."*

Nurit Peled El Hanan

Suicide bombings have also served to weaken the already small Israeli peace camp. One Israeli woman told a mission member that she had been a "radical peace activist" until she was severely injured in one of the Jerusalem bus bombings. This same woman had also lost friends and colleagues at the Hebrew University bombing. "My politics have not changed," she said. "But you won't see me out there fighting for Palestinians anymore."

Nevertheless she, like all the women we met, believes that ending the occupation, not more violence, will put a stop to suicide bombings. As Gila Svirsky put it:

*"After the terrorist bomb in the Dolphinarium, we went out and demonstrated, and someone said to me, 'Traitor, how dare you demonstrate when everybody is in mourning?' I said to him, 'I demonstrate because I want to prevent the next bomb.' I believe that violence only begets more violence. I also mourn the terrorist attacks, but when one happens, it only reinforces me in my beliefs. It's clear to me that they are trying to kill us because we have been in their faces for 34 years."*

For Nurit Peled El Hanan, who joined a Palestinian-Israeli bereaved parents' group after her daughter was killed in a suicide bombing, a suicide bomber is as much a victim as those he kills. In an open letter entitled "We have betrayed our children," she wrote:

*"After my daughter, Smadari, was murdered for being an Israeli girl by a young man desperate and distorted by humiliation and hopelessness to the point of killing himself and others, just because he was a Palestinian, I was asked by a reporter how I could accept condolences from the other side."*

*My very spontaneous response was that I did not accept condolences from the other side, and when the mayor of Jerusalem came to offer his condolences I shut myself in my room.*

*Because the people I count as 'my side' are not defined by any religious or national criteria. When I say 'we', I do not necessarily mean the Jews or the Israelis. I mean the people who see life as I see it. When I say 'we', I mean my Israeli friends who swore before the open graves of their sons that although they had lost their children, they would never lose their heads.*

*I mean Prof. Gazawi from Bir Zeit University, my co-laureate of the Sakharov award who, after being confined in a solitary cell for his wish to be a free and dignified man in his homeland, after seeing his 15-year-old son shot in his schoolyard while helping a wounded friend, still refuses to think of man as evil, and says we must create the myth of hope for those who have none.*

*I mean the young Palestinian mother, Najakh, who traveled with me to New York in order to speak of peace after watching her 10-year-*



*old son being shot, and who had nothing but affection for my 10-year-old son.*

*I mean Khaled, a Palestinian school principal who found his eldest son with 50 bullets in his body without ever being told why or how, and who, 20 days after that, called his wife and told her to stop crying for her child and start crying for mine.*

*I mean all the parents in the world who would not dream of avenging the death of their children by killing the children of others."*

Many of the women we met held the Israeli government and military establishment responsible for the descending spiral of violence, though perhaps none would express it as bluntly as Ze'ev Sternhell, a professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who wrote in the September 12, 2003 issue of the Israeli paper *Haaretz*:

*"... Indeed, the people who are deciding Israel's future know that they are not eliminating terrorism but heightening it, but they believe that this is the heavy price to which we have to agree in order to destroy the Palestinians' capability to maintain national existence. In their view, the breaking of the population's resistance and the ghettoization of the territories are a sine qua non for the consolidation of Israel's future. They are not naive, they are not stupid, and they don't think that liquidating the leadership of Hamas will bring about a peaceful solution - or any other solution, for that matter - but that doesn't exactly bother them, because that's not what they're after..."*



A mother's pain.

### The Social Costs of Occupation

Terror attacks on Israelis emerge out of the context of occupation. Feminists in Israel are now bringing greater attention to the social cost of maintaining the occupation. Child allowance, benefits for the disabled and many other forms of social assistance have been reduced, withdrawn, or denied because the money used to pay for a social safety net is allocated to intensification of the occupation. The discourse of security in Israel has always been over-determined by the militarization of Israeli society. Indeed, those who challenge it – mainly women – in favour of what, in Canadian terms, might be called human security, are often accused of disloyalty and selfishness. Just as the invocation of [Israeli] security is meant to trump [Palestinian] human rights, so too does it silence those who argue that the militarization that sustains the occupation does so at the cost of social, economic and human security of Israeli citizens. Indeed, anecdotal reports suggest an increase in the rate of domestic violence in Israel, which some believe is linked to Israeli soldiers' habituation to violence and desensitization to cruelty.





### The Palestinian Citizens of Israel

Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) have been particularly affected by the recent violence. On the one hand, they too have been killed and injured, and are as apprehensive as anyone. On the other hand, they have also become the targets of suspicion, hostility, violence, and renewed allegations of 'disloyalty'. This is partly due to the mere fact that they are Palestinian. It is also partly due to the fact that they have become more vocal in recent years in challenging Israel's systemic racism against Arabs, and in expressing their solidarity with Palestinians living under occupation. In addition, one of the indicators of Palestinian citizens' disadvantaged status is their relatively higher rate of poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Reductions in social welfare spending thus affect them disproportionately. This, in turn, has a gendered impact.



### Palestinian Women in West Bank and Gaza

#### Confinement: Closures and Checkpoints

The physical and psychological impacts of terrorist attacks on Israeli have been well documented in the media. They rightly elicit horror and sympathy internationally for the victims. The structural violence of the occupation and the consequences for its Palestinian victims is rather less well publicized. Sometimes the harm of occupation is acknowledged in one breath, only to be dismissed in the next as regrettable but legitimate in light of Israel's need for 'security'. Ultimately, Palestinians are often blamed for the various human rights violations inflicted upon them by Israeli forces, which, it must be recalled, is an occupation army engaged in an illegal occupation under international law.

The West Bank and Gaza are under closure. It is extremely difficult and often impossible for non-elite Palestinians to enter Israel. For various reasons and in various ways, the indigenous Palestinian economy has never been permitted to develop under occupation, but Israel did allow Palestinians to enter Israel as cheap labour to do the work that Israelis would not do themselves. Day labour became the main source of livelihood for most Palestinians. Beginning in the early 1990s, Palestinians were denied entry into Israel and eventually replaced by foreign workers. Since the second Intifada, the closure of the West Bank and Gaza has been exacerbated by the immobilization of the Palestinian population within the territories. Israeli military checkpoints abound, making movement beyond one's village unpredictable, excruciatingly slow, and often impossible. The extensive military assault by Israel on the Palestinian territories have wreaked havoc on availability of public services such as water, electricity, and sanitation, all of which render traditional household tasks even more wearying.



Dalal Salame, PLC Member for Camp Balata

Checkpoints are also the site of ritualized humiliation of Palestinians by often young Israeli soldiers heavily armed with guns, sound bombs and tear gas. For example, men are often forced to strip naked at checkpoints. This humiliation is aimed at the spouses and children as much as it is intended to belittle the men themselves. It reinforces the helplessness that pervades Palestinian society and reminds the women and children that their spouses and fathers cannot protect them from arbitrariness or despair.

When we passed through the checkpoint leading to Bir Zeit (the village where the university is located), scores of Palestinians had been waiting in line under the midday sun for hours. Prior to our arrival, there was an altercation between one of the soldiers and a Palestinian youth. As we passed the checkpoint on foot, we walked by the young man who was hooded and forced to crouch on the ground under the hot sun, detained by the Israeli soldiers. Between checkpoints, curfews and closure, Palestinian existence is confined to a degree that makes the performance of ordinary life-sustaining activities arbitrary and intermittent at best. It wears people down and reinforces a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and anger.

Often, it is the women who attempt to overcome this helplessness by actively negotiating with the soldiers who control the checkpoints. In many ways, this role falls to them because a Palestinian man who approaches a soldier is more likely to be regarded as a threat by the Israeli soldiers. Hence, the women take on the role of mediators. On the day we went to Bir Zeit, a group of women were kept waiting for several hours before being allowed to cross the checkpoint to attend the funeral of a baby who, along with her mother, had been killed the day before in a domestic violence incident. Eventually, the soldiers at the checkpoint allowed the women to choose three or four from their group who would be allowed to pass but refused to allow the entire group to attend the funeral.

Not only do checkpoints and curfews create intense psychological uncertainty that can ultimately be traumatizing, they also make it extremely difficult for women to continue participating in the civil and political life within Palestinian society. The Palestinian women we met repeatedly told us that they felt exhausted and often defeated by the need to balance their double load of work and family life while having to negotiate the traumas and tribulations associated with checkpoints and curfews.

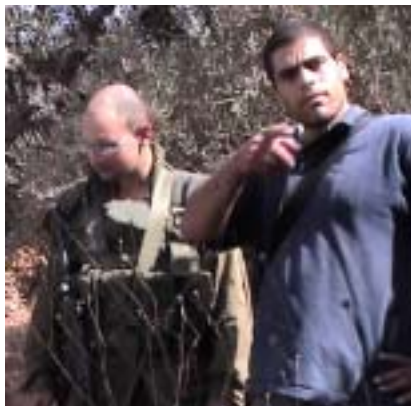
The pervasive restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement are the major, though not the only instrument of controlling and disciplining Palestinians. This initial violation contributes to a range of other violations and deprivations. We focus here on the forms that affect women specifically or disproportionately.

It is important to mention in this context the so called "security wall"



A Palestinian mother waits at Yassouf roadblock to take her child to the hospital.





Soldier and settler

that is being constructed by the Israeli government. We saw portions of the wall under construction in August of 2002. Over the last year, however, construction has intensified. The full impact of the wall on both the Israeli and Palestinian people is yet to be fully determined. It is clear, however, that the wall will contribute to the growing levels of despair and poverty among the Palestinian population.

For example, Israel's wall cuts deep into Palestinian territory, contributes to the isolation of Palestinian villages from each other, and has deprived many Palestinian families of their livelihood (the building of the wall has upturned thousands of Palestinian olive trees), as well as adding to their daily hardships and fanning their sense of insecurity

The United Nations Relief Work for Palestinian Refugees has documented the devastating impact of the wall on Palestinians in its recent report entitled "Impact of the First Phase of the Security Barrier on the Qalqiliya, Tulkarm and Jenin districts" (Appendix 7). In addition, Kathy Wazana spoke with a family in the West Bank who was prevented from harvesting their olives because of a "security fence" constructed by Israeli settlers. The Palestinian family is not permitted onto their land by the settlers. Kathy Wazana has documented the impact of "security walls" in a short 3-minute video entitled "Kan Ya Makan/There Was There Was Not".

One cannot ignore the fact that the checkpoints and the so-called security fence exist within Palestinian territory because the settlements exist.

"The settlements are spreading like a tangled web, getting longer, wider and more populous," says Ellen Flanders, a Toronto filmmaker who was raised in Canada and Israel. "They surround the nearby Palestinian villages and towns, cutting them off from their fields and taking the surrounding agricultural land as their own. This then impoverishes the Palestinian villages/towns, as they now have no means of income. They take the water, 80% of it, and control whatever flows in and out of the Palestinian towns. And the electricity. Visually, when you stand high above the settlements you can see them virtually strangling these places. It is quite clear. And then we passed the outposts and the new settlements being built. What? You say there has been a halt on settlement activity? No fear! They are growing rapidly, often attaching the new settlement to one right next to it, so hence now it is a "suburb" of the former settlement. Using its name allows the Israelis to claim that no new "illegal" (although all are in fact illegal) settlements are being built. Then there are the ones that we don't even talk about, as they slip under the radar screen of all press and media, not to mention general public interest." Ellen Flanders' eyewitness account of life in West Bank villages surrounded by settlements, is attached as Appendix 8.



A Palestinian farmer explains that land they're on has been in his family several generations.

### Reproductive Health

Israeli military checkpoints are not mere gates with armed sentries. The road leading to them on either side is ripped up for a couple of hundred metres or more to prevent any access to the checkpoint by Palestinians other than on foot. The transport of goods in general is rendered extremely difficult, especially perishable food. As noted above, delays at a checkpoint can be short, or can last hours, making it impossible to plan any activity that requires crossing a checkpoint. These constraints apply to ambulances as well. Miftah reports that between October 2000 and November 2002, 26 men, 22 women and 16 children died at checkpoints. Forty-three births and nine still births also occurred at Israeli checkpoints because pregnant women could not access appropriate medical treatment in time.

As we approached the Bir Zeit checkpoint, we witnessed first hand the attempt by a Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance to cross the checkpoint to reach an injured person on the other side of the checkpoint and bring him back on a stretcher and then load him into the ambulance. This activity, which could have easily been completed in minutes, took close to an hour as a result of the Israeli soldiers' reluctance to allow the ambulance to carry out its work..

### Sexual Harassment and Violence

According to Assiwar, there were reports of rape by Israeli forces during the first Intifada, but they have not received reports of rape during the second Intifada. Gila Svirsky of the Coalition of Women for Peace told us that she commissioned an informal study and found cases of sexualized verbal abuse, but no reports of physical sexual abuse. We were not able to determine whether rape occurs because it is so stigmatizing. Zahira Kamal related an incident in Hebron where Israeli soldiers forced women to undress and 'pose' while the men masturbated. Veiled women have been forced to remove their veils, a shaming and denuding experience. They have also been subject to inspection by security dogs, which is seen as 'polluting'.

Sexual harassment, sexual violence and the reluctance of Palestinian women to report incidents of sexual violence must be understood in their political and social context. Israel has created a network of spies and informants within Palestinian society. Israeli agents sometimes seek to force women into becoming informants by threatening to expose or to spread rumours about their lack of "honour" and virginity. Assaults on women's reputation thus represent a means by which women are forced into betraying their national cause. If a woman agrees to provide information to spies out of fear that her sexual behaviour will be exposed or compromised, she may save herself from becoming a victim of an "honour crime"; however, she nonetheless risks being killed as a collaborator. The link between



sexuality, “honour” and the nationalist struggle suggests that Palestinian women who are victims of sexual violence may be highly reluctant to bring the matter to light.

Sexualized abuse can also be inflicted secondarily on women through de-masculinizing forms of humiliation inflicted on men. One woman recounted a chilling story about the siege of Jenin by the Israeli army. Israeli soldiers encircled a community centre and ordered all the men to leave the building with their hands in the air. They then ordered all the women and children to leave the building in a separate group. However, the Imam of the community remained behind with the women and children so that he could assist his disabled elderly mother exit the building. Upon seeing the Muslim cleric, a number of Israeli soldiers began to laugh and joked that he clearly did not know if he was a man or a woman. They ordered the cleric to strip naked and then forced him to carry his elderly mother out of the building into a waiting vehicle that was full of women. This intentional infliction of mental anguish and humiliation upon the cleric amounts to psychological torture and has produced untold anguish for the cleric and his family. His wife, who was forced to witness the incident, remains traumatized.

### Women’s Status in Palestinian Society



The occupation did not initiate the oppression of women in Palestinian society. The Palestinian women we met did not refrain from criticizing the social, cultural and religious dimensions of sexism in their communities. Among other things, they reported that the advent of the nominally secular Palestinian National Authority did not afford them greater opportunities to participate in legal reform in the areas of family, inheritance and property law that would enhance women’s equality. On the contrary, they found themselves more marginalized than before, as the PNA restored clan-based systems of governance that excluded women, and relegated women and women’s issues to the lowest priority. In addition, the greater militarization of the second Intifada has also reduced women’s political participation (compared to the first Intifada). The second Intifada is more violent, makes greater use of weaponry, and is thus more masculinized.

As Hanan Ashrawi has said:

*“[Women have] either been excluded or excluded themselves. In the first Intifadah women took the initiative, leadership role. This Intifadah has been hijacked. It started as a popular uprising. We were met with such tremendous violence ... to the point when people who had arms said we cannot stand by the sideline. They started using their weapons. The moment you use weapons you exclude women (as a collective, not individually). The women tried very hard to keep*



*it as a non-violent popular movement of resistance to the occupation but the Israeli assaults were so brutal and comprehensive that it left no room for non-violent resistance. Women therefore accepted the fact that their work was to be more focused on issues of social justice -internal rather than political. We're trying to reorganize the women's movement, to come up with an agenda that would be committed to peace in a way that would not say you've succumbed to the occupation but you are not using their methods. We need to make sure that Palestinians don't lose the right to resist and the right to resist doesn't include violence."*

The Palestinian women we encountered also emphasized, however, that the occupation exacerbated Palestinian women's diminished status in various ways. In Gaza, Shadia El Sarraj described how prior to 1948, honour was primarily tied to land-holding. With the occupation, and its attendant expropriation of land and general impoverishment of the population, women's 'virtue' has become the repository of family honour and cultural integrity. In both Gaza and the West Bank, we heard of the increase in early marriage for girls. The minimum age was seventeen, but that age is dropping to fifteen. Early marriage relieves the family of concern about a girl's virginity (and thus, family honour), and introduces another man who is responsible for supporting and protecting her. Meanwhile, divorce rates have increased, especially in the first two years of marriage.

Military checkpoints disrupt education, as students at all grade levels are frequently unable to access schools. For example, when we visited Bir Zeit University, students were still writing final exams in August because the school year had been so disrupted. In Gaza, checkpoints between north and south made it impossible for young women who lived in the south to make a return trip to the only university in a single day. It is socially unacceptable for an unmarried woman to live away from her family. Moreover, the intense overcrowding in Gaza makes accommodation extremely scarce, and the money to pay rent even scarcer. The result for some women is the loss of access to post-secondary education.

The loss of gainful employment by men, due in large measure to closure, has created such economic desperation that some Gaza women resort to prostitution, according to Shadia. In a very conservative society like Gaza, prostitutes are ostracized as pariahs. In the past, the identities of prostitutes were known, but today not everyone knows who engages in prostitution. However, in order to work as a prostitute, women with children must keep the children out of the house while she works. Shadia recounted one case of a woman whose son died while she was working. Both she and her community blame her for the death of her son.

*With the occupation, and its attendant expropriation of land and general impoverishment of the population, women's 'virtue' has become the repository of family honour and cultural integrity.*



Palestinian homes and infrastructures have been routinely destroyed throughout the West Bank and Gaza since the second Intifada broke out.

### Housing

The West Bank and Gaza are overcrowded. It is not uncommon for families of ten to live in a two or three rooms. Homes are demolished by Israel on the pretext of lack of a permit to build (which Israel almost never grants to Palestinians), or as collective punishment (a practice that is illegal under international law). The destruction of the home, the focal point for family life and traditionally the woman's domain, has an especially devastating psychological impact on women, in addition to the obvious material consequences.

Palestinians often lack resources or ability to build or rebuild. The physical congestion, in tandem with unemployment, poverty and confinement, creates an extremely stressful home environment. Women bear the burden of this environment.

### Domestic Violence

Palestinian men experience frustration at their inability to support their families, and many also have been physically and psychologically abused and tortured inside and outside prison. Indeed, casting doubt on wives' fidelity is reportedly one method used by Israeli interrogators to break down Palestinian male prisoners. Many Palestinian women we interviewed remarked on an increase in domestic violence since the onset of the second Intifada. The correlation between domestic violence and the risk factors identified would be consistent with general trends in the incidence of domestic violence worldwide. Violence against women did not begin with the occupation but it is a factor that exacerbates the problem.

### Mental Health

In the course of describing the work of the Gaza Mental Health Programme's work with mothers of suicide bombers, Shadia El Sarraj commented that when an Israeli attack on Gaza is followed by a suicide bombing in Israel, it is not unusual for Gaza residents to celebrate and to keep a 'scorecard' of how many Israelis have been killed compared to the number of Palestinians. For Shadia, this celebratory response is symptomatic of the collective mental illness inflicted by the misery, desperation and impotence of life under occupation. (Indeed, the collective mental illness Shadia describes about Palestinian society under occupation might find its mirror image in the apocalyptic paranoia that grips Israeli society enough to make talk of "transfer" seem legitimate and imprisoning Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza behind walls seem plausible).

For the young men (rarely women) dispatched to blow themselves up in a crowd of Israelis, killing oneself along with Israelis becomes a way of empowering themselves through death as they could not in



life. The bombers are honoured as ‘martyrs’, and the mothers are pressured by influential segments of the community to publicly exult in their child’s martyrdom. There is no doubt that the mothers are traumatized by the loss of their children, usually their sons, to suicide bombing missions. The trauma is aggravated by the fact that Israel’s policy is to not return the bodies of suicide bombers to their families. The inability to confirm the identity of their children and to give them a proper funeral adds to the mother’s grief.

While one mother interviewed by the Women’s Empowerment Project did admit to encouraging her son to ‘martyr’ himself, she was utterly atypical of other mothers, though her story was highly publicized. In any event, this woman, like all other mothers, eventually succumbed to the inconsolable grief of losing a child. The depression and anguish that these women feel is compounded by the expectation that they rejoice in their child’s martyrdom for the glory of the Palestinian national cause. They are sometimes meant to feel ashamed of, and therefore conceal, their grief. Moreover, to the extent that mothers understand their task as protecting their children from harm, women often blame themselves for the circumstances leading up to the death of their children. Of course, no single individual can insulate a child from the myriad forms of physical, psychological and emotional damage inflicted by living with the structural, and literal violence and insecurity of occupation. Malnutrition, childhood depression, symptoms of trauma, lack of education are some of the main impacts on children.

According to Shadia, despite the cult of martyrdom surrounding the phenomenon of suicide bombing, Palestinian mothers do understand that the death of a child is as horrible for an Israeli mother as for a Palestinian mother. The shared experience of maternal love and maternal grief has provided an empathic bridge between Palestinian and Israeli mothers, as the two poems that open this report illustrate.





Clearly, women face tremendous hurdles in their quest to model possibilities for co-existence in Israel and Palestine. The rising levels of violence and the growing discourse of despair in both Israeli and Palestinian society have made it more difficult for women to continue to seek human rights and equality.

Nonetheless, women can make a unique contribution to building the conditions for peace in Israel and Palestine. They need the ongoing support of the international community just as much as the international community needs them to continue with their work. Our mission has confirmed for us that women and peace belong together not because men are nasty and women are nice. Women and peace belong together because women and peace need each other. Women are disproportionately affected by war and occupation, often in ways that are not recognized by decision-makers or analysts.

The women's groups in the region have committed to working on developing common goals and continuing to try to open themselves to better understand the "other" where the political leaders have turned away from understanding. If non-violence is to flourish in the region, the women's groups we met and others like them must be given support for their work.

The women's groups we met with told us that there is a positive inter-relationship between women and peace because:

- Women are disproportionately affected by occupation. Since they often bear the social costs of military conflict, women know the true price of military conflicts;
- Women are socialized to understand the other;
- Women understand the importance of respecting the human rights of "the other" because women's own human rights are so frequently violated;
- Palestinian and Israeli women understand the need for more than just dialogue. They understand the importance of recognition: recognition of past wrongs, of pain, and of common humanity; and that these recognitions are the first step towards co-existence;
- Women understand that peace does not mean simply the silence of the guns but involves creating conditions for all to live in security;
- Women understand that security includes a range of rights and freedoms such as housing, freedom of movement, and education;



Neta Golan is a Canadian Israeli living in Nablus.





- Women are used to working on the margins of society because they generally do not make claims to social, political or economic power. Women therefore seek empowerment, not power. Power comes from dominating the other while empowerment comes from acting together;
- Finally, as Sumaya Farhat Nasser explained, women understand the importance of narrative and recognize that they may begin with two different narratives. They have learned to listen with compassion and understand that others have the right to make mistakes. They have learned to bear (but not accept) painful words. Women do not force dialogue. In the first 10 years of the relationship between Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women, Sumaya noted that the women engaged in dialogue only once spoke of the events of 1948.

### Recommendations aimed at Canada's government with particular emphasis on the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade:

- 1 Canadian policy within the region should begin with an understanding that both Israelis and Palestinians have a right to security and that security includes social and economic dimensions;
- 2 Canada should use diplomatic and other efforts to ensure that governments in the region respect the full rights of both the Israeli and Palestinian people to live in peace and security in accordance with international human rights law and the rights to equal dignity and worth of both peoples;
- 3 In light of the rising violence in the region and the particular vulnerability of civilians -- especially women and children -- to such violence, Canada should support the creation of an international monitoring force in the region which would ensure, at minimum, the safety of civilians at check-points;
- 4 Canada should support the on-going efforts of Palestinian women in promoting democracy and civil society within their territory. To that end, Canada should develop programs and policies aimed at supporting Palestinian women, including young Palestinian women, as political and civil leaders;
- 5 Canada should develop programs and policies aimed at supporting the on-going efforts of organizations like the Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom that have developed shared principles of understanding and which promote meaningful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians;
- 6 Canada should provide financial and other support for the efforts of Israelis and Palestinians to speak to each other's communities and to generate understanding of "the other" within their own communities. Examples of efforts worthy of support include video-conferencing projects, newspaper articles, television ads, and exchange of "open letters" in the media;
- 7 Canada should support policies and programs that aim at understanding and addressing the full impact of closures and occupation on vulnerable segments of Palestinian society, especially women and children;
- 8 Canadian officials who travel to the region should make special efforts to meet with the women's organizations identified in this report, and others like them, so that they can develop a better understanding of the gendered impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and recognize the work of women's groups that are working to replace conflict with co-existence;
- 9 Recognizing that women and children are disproportionately represented among the poor, Canada should use diplomatic and other effective means to encourage Israel not to adopt closure policies that strangle the Palestinian economy and drive individuals into poverty;
- 10 Canada must monitor the social, economic, and political status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. This includes ensuring that gendered forms of violence such as domestic assault and sexual violence are recognized and appropriately addressed;
- 11 Canada should take a clear position against policies and practices that aim, directly or indirectly, at the "transfer" of the Palestinian people or at enclosing them within "security walls." The special vulnerability of women and children to poverty imposed by closures, and the use of poverty as an instrument of "transfer" should be recognized;
- 12 Canada should dedicate financial and other support to individuals and organizations that research, monitor and address the gendered impact of occupation on women within Israel and Palestine;
- 13 Canada should provide financial and other support to organizations that research, monitor and counter the growing militarization of society and politics within the region;

**14** Canada should amend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to require that goods emanating from Israel are labelled so as to identify those items that are produced within Israel (as defined within its 1967 borders) and those that are produced outside its 1967 borders (including settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip). Goods produced in the settlements should not be granted the privileges of free trade;

**15** Canada should develop greater awareness of the peace-building efforts of organizations like Bat Shalom in Israel and the Jerusalem Center for Women in Palestine. Canada should support the peace-building efforts of such organizations in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325. In assessing the work of these organizations, Canada must develop and apply criteria that recognize the crisis conditions within which these organizations work;

**16** Canada should support the on-going efforts of Canadian women, especially Arab and Jewish women, who seek to use gender as a bridge in bringing together communities within Canada and in bringing the experiences and ideas of Israeli and Palestinian women's organizations like The Jerusalem Link to the attention of Canadian policy-makers and Canadian public opinion.

#### **Recommendations aimed at Canadian civil society and individual Canadians**

**17** Individual Canadians can aim to become better informed about the Israeli Palestinian conflict and more aware of the lived realities of women in the region. Canadians can use existing educational tools such as the Internet and this report to help them develop a better understanding of the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on women as well as women's attempts to encourage co-existence in the region;

**18** Individual Canadians can insist that the Canadian government amend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to require that goods emanating from Israel are labelled so as to identify those items that are produced within Israel (as defined within its 1967 borders) and those that are produced outside its 1967 borders (including settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip). Such "truth in labelling" policy will allow individual Canadians to make informed choices about the goods they purchase from the region;

**19** Individual Canadians can write to their local and national media outlets and ask them to seek out Israeli and Palestinian women identified in this report when they interview political and civil society leaders in the region so that women's lives and perspectives are better reflected in public and policy debates within Canada;

**20** Individual Canadians can write to their Members of Parliament, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and request that they seek out and support women's peace-building efforts in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325;

**21** Individual Canadians can insist that Canada adopt gender sensitive laws and policies in relation to all matters concerning Israel and Palestine. As a starting point, this would require decision-makers to identify and explain the impact of their proposed laws and policies on the women of the region.

**22** Individual Canadians can travel to the region, witness the impact of occupation for themselves and report back to their respective communities. Alternatively, they can sponsor and coordinate speaking tours in their communities for Palestinian and Israeli women and members of organizations like those identified in this report;

**23** Individuals Canadians can provide financial support to organizations like those highlighted in this report.

# **Speaking Through Walls**

## **Appendices**





### About the Mission Participants



**Reem Bahdi** is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Windsor. Her work focuses on international human rights law, feminist theory and Security Council Resolution 1325. She has researched, published and lectured extensively about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Reem worked with Defence For Children International/Palestine Section on several projects related to child labour, children's rights to mental health rehabilitation and the girl child. Reem may be available to comment about Security Council Resolution 1325 and the contributions of women in Israel and Palestine generally. She can be reached at [rbahdi@uwindsor.ca](mailto:rbahdi@uwindsor.ca) or [rbahdi@aol.com](mailto:rbahdi@aol.com).



**Kathy Wazana** is a writer-documentary filmmaker whose current work focuses on Jewish-Arab relations in Morocco and in Israel-Palestine. Kathy was formerly a communications and media relations specialist. As a peace activist and educator, Kathy has worked with women's groups in Canada, France, Morocco and the Middle East. She has spearheaded several joint Jewish-Arab community-building initiatives, including the Playgrounds for Peace Fund, the Just Peace Seder and Mimouna, and Cooks for Peace. She can speak about the role of women in Israel and Palestine and can also show some video footage. Kathy can be reached at [bicom@web.net](mailto:bicom@web.net).



**Leilani Farha** is a human rights lawyer and the Executive Director of the Center for Equality Rights in Accommodation. Leilani's work focuses on women's rights to housing and a broad range of social and economic rights. She has worked with several national and international projects relating to women's rights and Palestinian rights, including the Palestinian Human Rights Information Center. Leilani can speak about the mission generally and about Palestinian housing rights. She can be reached at [Leilani@equalityrights.org](mailto:Leilani@equalityrights.org).



**Isabelle Solon Helal** is a human rights lawyer who works with the Center for Rights and Democracy in Montreal. Her expertise and experience includes war crimes against women in Rwanda. She has also worked on projects related to women in Afghanistan. Isabel can speak about the mission generally and about the gender dimension of war crimes. She can be reached at [ihelal@ichrdd.ca](mailto:ihelal@ichrdd.ca).



**Audrey Macklin** is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Toronto. From 1994-96, she served as a member of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board, Refugee Division. Her areas of teaching, scholarship and advocacy include migration and refugees and human rights in conflict zones. This work has taken her to Bosnia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. In 2000, she lived in Jerusalem, where she researched foreign workers and participated in various feminist and peace-related activities. Audrey can speak about Israeli and Palestinian women generally. She can be reached at [audrey.macklin@utoronto.ca](mailto:audrey.macklin@utoronto.ca).

## Appendix 1

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**Rula Sharkawy** is a communications specialist who, at the time of the mission, was employed with Ontario Cabinet office. Rula has worked with Bir Zeit University in the West Bank as well as MIFTAH. She can speak about the role and status of women in Palestinian society and can also discuss MIFTAH's work. She can be reached at [r\\_sharkawi@yahoo.com](mailto:r_sharkawi@yahoo.com).



**Judith Weisman** is a psychotherapist, peace activist and longstanding member of the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation (Toronto). Judith is currently working on a one woman show relating to her experiences with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Judith can speak about her work in the Canadian women's peace movement. She can be reached at [judith@ca.inter.net](mailto:judith@ca.inter.net).



**Kemi Jacobs** is the Executive Director of Culture Link Settlement Services in Toronto and President of the Canadian Council of Refugees. She is an anti-racist educator and activist and a widely respected community leader. Kemi can speak about how to respectfully situate oneself in relation to work done by other communities. She can be reached at [kjacobs@culturelink.net](mailto:kjacobs@culturelink.net).



**Hanadi Loubani** is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at York University in Toronto. Her research focuses on The Politics of Memory. She is a member of several organizations including Women for Palestine. Hanadi can speak about the mission generally and the politics of memory. She can be reached at [hanadir@hotmail.com](mailto:hanadir@hotmail.com).

### Security Council Resolution 1325

The Security Council,

**Recalling** its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, as well as relevant statements of its President and recalling also the statement of its President, to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace of 8 March 2000 (SC/6816),

**Recalling** also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict,

**Bearing** in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

**Expressing** concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognizing the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

**Reaffirming** the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

**Reaffirming** also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

**Emphasizing** the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

**Recognizing** the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard noting the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

**Recognizing** also the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

**Recognizing** that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,

Noting the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,

1. **Urges** Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;
2. **Encourages** the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

## Appendix 2

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3. **Urges** the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;
4. **Further** urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;
5. **Expresses** its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;
6. **Requests** the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures, invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment and further requests the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;
7. **Urges** Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;
8. **Calls** on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;
9. **Calls** upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention Security Council - 5 - Press Release SC/6942 4213th Meeting (PM) 31 October 2000 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
10. **Calls** on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;
11. **Emphasizes** the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;
12. **Calls** upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998;

13. **Encourages** all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;
14. **Reaffirms** its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;
15. **Expresses** its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;
16. **Invites** the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;
17. **Requests** the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;
18. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter."





## **Public Correspondence between Bat Shalom and The Jerusalem Center for Women**

In June 2002, Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women initiated a "Public Media Correspondence". Several times a year, one organization will publish a Public Letter in our sister organization's national newspaper. This is our joint attempt to provide an alternative voice in the media that allows women on each side to publicly claim that only mutual recognition and respect of each other's individual and collective rights will pave the way for peace making, as well as to challenge the notion that political partnerships are impossible at this time.

**June 4, 2002**

**Published in *Al Quds***

### **A Public Letter to the Palestinian People**

This week marks 35 years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land. Over the past year, Israeli government policy has made unambiguously clear both its aim and the range of methods it is willing to employ to achieve its goals. Under the slogan of fighting terrorism and bringing security to our people, the Israeli government has intensified its use of brutal and immoral measures in the pursuit of a Greater Israel - that is, the endless domination over your people and your land. The cost in life and property, in emotional and mental suffering, to you as well as to us, is overwhelming.

Despite the inequality in power between us, Israel cannot achieve security at the expenses of Palestinian national existence.

Sooner or later Israel will be forced to give up its illegal occupation. In the first place, because you have taught the world the meaning of the word 'sumud', in the face of siege, violence and cruelty. Your determination has challenged the international community to find ways to intervene more actively on both the humanitarian and political levels. And at the same time that the Israeli government has adopted an increasingly violent strategy approaching war, there still remain Israelis who are steadfast in their opposition to our government's methods and goals. We continue to demonstrate in the streets and speak up and out, locally and internationally, for peace, for justice, and for an end to the occupation.

We Israeli women members of Bat Shalom mark this occasion to reaffirm our commitment to continue the struggle to end the occupation of your land. We see the foundation for security for our two peoples in final status negotiations that begin with recognition of the right of Palestinians to a viable sovereign state next to Israel. We call for the removal of Israeli settlements, for Jerusalem to serve as two capitals for two states, and for the acknowledgement by Israel of its part in creating the refugee problem and a mutually agreed upon resolution of the problem grounded in relevant UN resolutions.

We insist that our humanity and commitment to justice not only connect us, Israelis and Palestinians, but also impel us to jointly continue the struggle for a just peace.

The Women of Bat Shalom

## Appendix 3

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**5th June 2002**

### **Response From the Jerusalem Center for Women**

Dear friends and allies,

Attached you can find a copy of a public letter Bat Shalom has published today in Al-Quds Arabic newspaper. I believe it is a good start and we should give credit to those women who dare to speak out loudly during these times of abyss. The letter addresses Palestinian people on the day that marks 35 years of Israeli military occupation of 22% of historical Palestine on which we, Palestinians, strive to build our independent viable state beside Israel. This letter is very important for a number of reasons:

- The timing and occasion
- The symbolic and political significance
- It is an alternative public voice of political dialogue, incorporating the values of justice and common humanity.

This letter won't be the first, nor the last. Many, from both the Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom, will follow. Together we aim to create a public atmosphere of dialoguing through speaking/addressing each other by newspapers, radio and if possible TV. We will do that because we believe that we should tell each other that there are people who care about and feel with the other, there are people to speak to and there is a partner on the other side. Also, we want to stress that peace is possible but only between equals, not between oppressed and oppressor. Justice, responsibility, respect for human rights and transparency are crucial elements in this conflict and we dare to speak about them. We also dare to say that without these elements, both our peoples are doomed to a present and future of killing, destruction and humiliation. We believe civil society has a role to play during this time of crises and can contribute to a genuine process of peace building. Women are ready to come forward and we are committed to do our share.

Amneh Badran  
Jerusalem Center for Women

**October 1, 2002**

**Published in Ha'aretz**

**An open letter to the Israeli public**

**A Palestinian Women's Perspective on the Security Problem**

It is difficult to comprehend the bloody era in which we now find ourselves. What began at the 1991 Madrid conference as an attempt at parity and historical compromise, establishing international law and United Nations resolution 242 as the peace process terms of reference, was implemented in such a way as to destroy the very concept of "land for peace." Only the need to provide security to Israeli citizens was considered, while the need to guarantee security to the Palestinian people has been ignored. This, we believe, is one of the gravest problems plaguing the peace process and one that continues today.

Throughout the entire post-Oslo period, the building of illegal settlements continued. Bypass roads linking those settlements sliced up the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, destroying the territorial continuity of the Palestinian land that was to become the state of Palestine (the June 4, 1967 borders). Subsequent Israeli governments placed the political responsibility for safeguarding these illegal settlements and the settlers on the Palestinian security services, while at the same time offering the Palestinian Authority security and civil control solely over Palestinian population centers (Areas A). In practice, the situation has been impossible, but even more significant was its demoralizing effect. There was, of course, no comparable safeguard for the Palestinians in their villages and on their land.

By implementing this one-sided vision of security, the Israeli government sought to protect the personal safety of its citizens and to control as much Palestinian land as possible. But the result was that Palestinians lost faith in the credibility of the peace process. Palestinian despair increased as our daily conditions worsened. The loss of more land; the demolition of more homes; and the closure of our towns coupled with the experience of daily humiliation at the surrounding Israeli checkpoints led to frustration, anger and a loss of faith in the peace process—and finally to the eruption of the Intifada for Independence.

Security for Israelis will not be achieved by shelling residential areas, destroying homes, killing innocent civilians, tightening closures, harshening economic realities, subjecting 3.5 million Palestinians to siege and curfew, humiliating Palestinians at checkpoints and assassinating activists. Nor will security for Palestinians be achieved by killing Israeli civilians. But there will be no end to these great losses until the concept of security is revised to serve Palestinians as well as Israelis.

Experience has proved that only a just peace is the way to security for both sides. We call upon Israeli society, and Israeli women in particular, to pressure their government to end the occupation, and to join our quest to work together to build a new concept of security. Through negotiations that have a clear timetable for ending the occupation—in line with international law and backed by international guarantees—both sides can live securely and in peace. We are confident that the majority of Palestinians are behind this vision for security. We are actively working for, and anticipating a day when a just peace will prevail and both sides may enjoy its many fruitful results.

Jerusalem Center for Women

Tel: 02 - 2347068

E-mail: jcw@palnet.com





## **Terry Greenblatt and Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas Remarks to Members of the UN Security Council**

**May 7, 2002**

### **Terry Greenblatt, Israel**

I represent Bat Shalom (Daughter of Peace), an Israeli feminist peace organization. I also represent Israeli women and mothers who are famished for peace. We are women working for a genuine peace grounded in the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, respect for human rights, and an equal voice for Jewish and Arab women within Israeli society. Since 1994, Bat Shalom has been part of a bi-national institution called The Jerusalem Link, and the joint declaration that I will read at the conclusion of my talk was developed with our sister partner, a Palestinian women's NGO, the Jerusalem Center for Women. We work in coalition with more than one hundred women's peace and anti-occupation initiatives around the world that have mobilized in response to the insufferable situation in our region. I stand before you this afternoon, in the presence of the enormous power you represent, and with the terrible awareness of how dangerous that power can be. As a woman I know that anyone, with even the smallest advantage over another, is capable of abusing or misusing that power. I stand here as an ally and advocate of those women in Israel, Jewish and Arab, who ask of you to use your power wisely and with a moral compass whose needle is uncompromisingly pointed toward justice.

We ask that you fulfill your responsibility as set out in the United Nations Charter.

You are mandated to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war—for until you do, we women living in a militaristic society are destined to continue raising our children to perpetrate war and become messengers of hatred, and of racism, and of destruction.

You are mandated to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights—for until you do, the soul of our society will never heal, neither from our fear of global anti-Semitism, nor from the inhumanity of our subjugation and dehumanization of the Palestinian people. For until you do, the extremists on both sides will rejoice, both those who talk of the transfer of indigenous populations and an eternal occupation, as well as those who walk into a coffeehouse or a supermarket, and blow themselves and others up, leaving our joint future smoldering in the rubble. For until you do, those of us who are struggling to promote a human rights agenda inextricably embedded in an effective political solution cannot possibly further our mission.

You are mandated to establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained. This includes ensuring the security and well being of Israelis. But it also includes insisting on a standard of behavior and compliance to international law on the part of Israel, be it a fact-finding mission to Jenin or the dismantlement of illegal settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. For until you do, we Israelis will continue to be driven by our fear and mistrust, and insist that this war we are waging is for our very survival as a nation, even though it is not.

And lastly, you are mandated to promote social progress and better standards of life, for until you do, until there is the degree of humanitarian aid for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the devastation of Palestine and her people, until the Israeli people can fully trust that international bodies are committed to ensuring our survival, neither nation will be able to begin to address the ultimate challenge of creating a culture of peace in our region.

Next year we will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Oslo Accords. Few remember anymore the

## Appendix 4

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exhilaration of daring to believe that we could possibly be nearing the end of this hundred-year conflict. For us, Israeli and Palestinian women, and the international community of hundreds of thousands of women who along with us have remained steadfast in their solidarity for and commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, there will be no celebration of this anniversary. There will be no candles lit in jubilation—rather, a collective global mourning for a region that is burning, wreaking destruction on a magnificent land and her 2 peoples, and leaving the most dangerous ashes in its wake—ashes of profound fear, hopelessness and despair.

This month Israeli and Palestinian women have once again jointly declared what a just and sustainable peace must look like. I look around this room and, but for ourselves, I do not see any women/see too few women. And I cannot but be aware of the failure of both our local leadership as well as you, the international community, to productively navigate our peoples on a path towards peace. How much of the reason for this is the absence of women in this room, in the countless rooms where decisions are made that affect the daily lives of Israeli and Palestinian men, women and children? I cannot help but be aware that the slim glimmers of hope in this terrible situation have consistently been provided by the grassroots women's peace activists on both sides. Given this dismal history of past performance, it is unthinkable not to include women, large numbers of women, in the upcoming peace process.

You need us, because if the goal is not simply the absence of war, but the creation of a sustainable peace by fostering fundamental societal changes, we are crucial to everyone's security concerns.

You need us, because wars are no longer fought on battlefields. You have brought the war home to us. Many more civilians than soldiers are being killed in ours and other conflicts around the world. The wars are being waged now on our doorsteps and in our living rooms and in our sacred houses and ceremonies of religious worship, and women have a vested interest in keeping families and communities safe.

You need us, because to honorably comply with your own legislation, Resolution 1325, we must be included.

You need us because we continue to hold human rights and the sanctity of life as paramount values, and unfortunately today, they are too easily being bartered away as either obstacles to security policies or as incongruent with national liberation aspirations.

You need us because we have developed a process and socio-political fluency that keeps authentic and productive dialogue moving forward, even as the violence escalates and both sides continue to terrorize one another. Women's characteristic life experience gives us the potential for two things: a very special kind of intelligence, social intelligence, and a very special kind of courage, social courage. We have developed the courage to cross the lines of difference drawn between us, which are also the lines drawn inside our heads. And the intelligence to do it safely, without a gun or a bomb, and to do it productively. And most importantly, we are learning to shift our positions, finding ourselves moving towards each other, without tearing out our roots in the process. Even when we are women whose very existence and narrative contradicts each other, we will talk—we will not shoot.

You need us because we women are willing to sit together on the same side of the table and together look at our complex joint history, with the commitment and intention of not getting up until—in respect and reciprocity—we can get up together and begin our new history and fulfill our joint destiny.

There is much talk now about an International Peace Conference. Colin Powell has already prepared us for the outcome, when he said this week that no one should have high expectations from the conference. Women in the peace and anti-occupation movement in Israel are recommending that expectations must remain higher than ever before, because we cannot afford them not to be. We suggest

now just might be the moment to realize how critical our contribution is. We have never had a voice or power at these tables, and quite possibly we will get it wrong the first few times. But we would come with what we believe are innovative and creative strategies, grounded in democratic and feminist ideology and experience, and exemplified by what women have managed to accomplish in civil society with little resources and insignificant power.

We would change the discourse from the "for or against" model, pro-Israeli/anti-Palestinian or pro-Palestinian/anti-Israeli. This kind of inadequate and restricted thinking would be appropriate if we were rooting for a football team, but we are not playing a game any more. More than 2000 people have been killed during the past 20 months, and countless more disabled. Positions, conditions, policies, and decisions must be evaluated as being pro-justice, pro-life, and pro-dignity. Participating partners must be challenged to conduct a moral impact analysis of their positions, and a new and critical dimension of transparency must be introduced into the negotiation process. What gets said and decided upon in the sessions gets documented, and what gets documented gets disseminated to both peoples, to be discussed and debated in uni-national town meetings, and then to serve as a the basis for civil society bi-national dialogue.

The upcoming peace conference, if it is to be held, must be international, not regional. The international community shares responsibility for the deterioration of the situation, and must be our partners in fashioning and implementing a solution. My country, Israel, has a long-standing fear of international intervention, because we Jews have had a long and bitter experience of suffering as the world stood by, not noticing. Now the Palestinians, unfortunately, have come to share that kind of experience. My government fears that international intervention will prevent it from carrying out its agenda. We, the peace activists of Israel, are insisting that you do just that.

We women would determine that the ultimate goal of the peace conference is a final status agreement and an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A long-term intermediate agreement can translate into only one thing—continued occupation and prolonging the status quo. Both sides must commit to a series of meetings, with the understanding that while 100 years of conflict cannot be satisfactorily resolved immediately, each stage of the agreement gets implemented without delay. Changes in the realities on the ground will serve as "acts of honor", each side demonstrating to the other that while each is most certainly paying a "price" for peace, each also most certainly has a trustworthy partner for peace. These "peace facts" on the ground are a necessary condition for re-building trust, for creating the climate in which the people on both sides will choose and support leaders who can bring them to peace and not to war.

We in the Jerusalem Link don't have all the answers. In fact, all we have is the next step, a step that might potentially move us forward rather than backward, one that comes with demonstrated efficacy, durability, and integrity. But at this point, that does seem to be a lot more than your various governments have. So, if this body is genuinely committed to bringing some sort of peace and security to the Middle East, you need to bring us women to the center of all your deliberations.

Should we continue to be ignored (which is quite different than ignorance, because one really has to work at it), we shall all be held responsible for the evil we may have prevented.

I thank you for your time, and your attention. I would like to leave you with the Bat Shalom & Jerusalem Center for Women Joint Declaration, published 3 weeks ago in Israel and in Palestine.

## Appendix 4

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### **Palestinian and Israeli Women Demand Immediate End to Occupation**

Israel has launched a war against defenseless Palestinian communities. The terrorization of innocent civilians, the unlawful killings and arrests, the siege imposed upon President Arafat, and the destruction of property, infrastructures and institutions, can only lead to further escalation, prolonging the sufferings of both nations and destroying any prospects for peace. The climate of fear and the obsession with reprisals that grips our two peoples obscure the true cause of this cycle of violence—the continued and unlawful Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people and their land.

It is our role, women on both sides, to speak out loudly against the humanitarian crimes committed in order to permanently subjugate an entire nation. Right now, in the face of uncontrolled military turmoil, we jointly ask the international community of states to accept its duty and mandate by international humanitarian law to prevent abuses of an occupying power, by officially intervening to protect the Palestinian people.

Beyond the immediate crisis, we know that there is one future for us both. The deliberate harming of innocent civilians, Palestinian or Israeli, must not be condoned. By working together we improve our chances for a better future. We believe that women can develop an alternative voice promoting effective peace initiatives and sound approaches. We undertake to work for this goal together.

Women have already begun to give substance to the recognition that a just peace is a peace between equals. When we call for a Palestinian state (on the territories occupied on 4th of June 1967) alongside the state of Israel, we envision true sovereignty for each state, including control over land and natural resources. We envision a settlement based on international law, which would endorse sharing the whole city of Jerusalem, the dismantling of the settlements, and a just solution to the question of refugees according to relevant UN resolutions. In continuing our joint work together, we want not only to achieve an end to the occupation; we want to help create the conditions for a life of security and dignity for both peoples.

We call upon all women and men, young and old, to join us in our sincere quest to preserve life, human dignity and freedom in our region. Dehumanization, hatred, revenge, and oppression contribute nothing to the resolution of a century of conflict. Mutual recognition and respect of each other's individual and collective rights will pave the way for peace making.

The Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom

Terry Greenblatt is director of Bat Shalom, a feminist peace organization that is the Israeli half of the Jerusalem Link. She delivered the above remarks to the UN Security Council, May 7, 2002.

### **Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, Palestine**

First I would like to thank you and particularly Ambassador Kolby from Norway for giving us this opportunity to meet with you, and we would also like to thank Equality Now for making that opportunity possible. We come from two communities that have very much been shaped by action or inaction of the U.N. through its various resolutions and their implementation or lack of implementation.

The U.N. was created specifically to coordinate international efforts to promote world peace. It was created so that various nation states will take responsibility to ensure global peace and security and consequently stability. This body has translated the diverse human experience in conflict and conflict resolution into an intricate body of laws and related instruments for implementation to control behaviour of governments and ensure the much highly regarded global security.

In the body of the U.N. there is no shortage of laws and regulations that deal with conflict and conflict resolution, and in the context of the Middle East there is no shortage of resolutions that have been adopted to guide the resolution of the conflict. What is left is really the political will of governments to undertake their responsibility according to their mandate within the body of international law and international humanitarian law. The absence of political will has kept Middle East societies and particularly the Palestinian society lingering too long in a situation of perpetual fear and conflict that has and is still causing loss of dear lives, and the perpetuation of pain and suffering. The Palestinian society has been yearning for too long for peace and security. We have been yearning to be able to move around freely without having to ask permission from young gun-toting Israeli soldiers who are placed practically at our doorsteps. We have been yearning for too long for the time when we do not have to worry about our children and particularly our teenaged male children going back and forth safely to school. We have been yearning for too long to be able to run our political and economic lives without the constraints of occupation. We have been yearning for the need for security where we do not have to worry about being thrown in jail for exercising our right of self-expression and self-determination. All the things that are taken for granted in other societies we cannot even begin to dare to think what life would be like exercising those rights.

In spite of all the constraints we have been living under due to the occupation, our hopes and aspirations did not stop us from trying to struggle for issues of social justice within our own society. As a representative of Palestinian civil society and the women's movement, I can say that in spite of all the handicaps, with a lot of support from the various UN bodies and bi-lateral aid we have gone a long way in developing our various institutions in order to address social needs, from health, education, legislation etc. with the hope that whenever the Palestinian state that is much hoped for and talked about comes about we will be well set in the process of development of our various political, economic, social and cultural institutions. The Palestinian women's movement has succeeded in making inroads in addressing cultural values and attitudes particular to the Arab world that handicap the healthy development of girls and women. We Palestinian women were in the process of engaging ourselves in legislative development at the local as well as the international levels. Our representatives participated in the various U.N. conferences and other international conferences related to women. We were witnessing the development of a budding but vibrant young feminist movement, an essential sector for democratic development within the Palestinian society.

However, the last so-called Israeli re-occupation of Palestinian controlled areas has manifested itself in the systematic destruction of all that we have been able to achieve in the last ten years at the level of infrastructure development with the aim to dash any hope for a coherent Palestinian state and identity. Honorable representatives, our society is a vibrant society. We have managed to sustain ourselves and survive extreme hardships for over fifty years. The last onslaught has done nothing but to strengthen the determination of the national collective not only to survive but also to overcome the present hardships. Survive as a nation we will, however, the short and long term consequences of the last military onslaught is yet to be evaluated and assessed. The negative consequences of the prolongation of this conflict will not only be felt by our society, but by the Israeli society as well because we are living at such proximity to each other.

In the eyes of the average Palestinian, our society was effectively left at the mercy of a hostile state that continually violated, and with impunity, almost every law in the book regarding the behaviour of states in armed conflict throughout the Israeli illegal and endless occupation. They did that through the continued confiscation of land, building of settlements, transfer of their own civilian population into the occupied territories, willful destruction of property, illegal removal of prisoners from their own territories, and the list goes on. You probably have long detailed reports of the various systematic abuses



## Appendix 4

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and violations. Having no effective Palestinian state to defend our interests, nor an effective international third party to ensure the respect of the law, desperate elements in Palestinian society felt they had no choice but to resort to their own means for self-defense. The continued violations of every principle and law that deals with the conflict by the state of Israel have resulted with a likewise violent and illegal response by Palestinian non-state actors. This cycle of action and reaction has allowed the Israeli state in the name of self defense to use formal state military strategies and means against non-state actors, leading to a level of violence that must be contained if not to preserve life, at least to ensure regional and global stability, because the Palestinian community feels at present that it has nothing more to lose, besides the clear understanding that the political objectives of this military campaign is to break the spirit of the Palestinian community and accept an imposed agreement which is not an agreement at all.

In the face of the high cost to life, and the concern of even worse scenarios of blood letting and destruction, to the point of concern that the extreme right wing elements within the existing Israeli Government will seize the opportunity of a regional conflict to carry out their widely spoken-about transfer of the Palestinian population to Jordan, strong elements in both our societies, some of which we represent, urge you to take immediate action to save life and give hope to the young generation. Tomorrow the U.N. will be undertaking the Children's Summit and children of the Middle East have the right to hope for a better future. Young Palestinian teenagers are increasingly turning their bodies into walking bombs believing that this will advance the cause of their community, and by the same token we also see one generation after the other of young Israelis having to serve in the army because their consequent governments have lead them to believe that holding on to the territories, maintaining the illegal occupation and controlling the lives of the Palestinian population is necessary for their own security. Young people should not be subjected to an environment like this, which makes them feel they have no future and no alternatives.

The Security Council in its mandate has a responsibility for direct intervention, and has responsibility to ensure the enforcement of the various U.N. resolutions. By acting on its mandate, the Security Council will give some hope for a better future, some hope to lead towards constructive dialogue. For the sake of preserving life, and for the sake of making political negotiations possible, it is essential to create an environment of hope by sending immediately international peacekeeping forces with a mandate of protection. Any future negotiations must remain under international auspices to ensure the respect of the international frameworks. The two parties, Palestinian and Israeli are not equal, and should not be left on their own, otherwise the imbalance of power will dictate the process, which characterized the Oslo negotiation process that we are now witnessing the bloody consequences of.

Honourable representatives, peace is made between peoples and not between leaders. A process that should lead to a political solution that is sustainable and consequently permanent should be just, and should not be left to the confines of the generals, and should be transparent to the relevant societies. We have to address and understand each other's history with an open mind. If we leave it only to men we get Israeli generals and Palestinians who will not be defeated and there is no room to negotiate. Our leaders have a responsibility to educate as a matter of policy each other's societies about the other. Through the suggested forthcoming peace conference, the U.N. must take an active role to ensure that there is sufficient representation of civil society and particularly representatives of peace groups within both societies as they will have a vested interest in thinking of creative means to overcome obstacles.

The participation of women in any future peace process is essential to maintain connection to the realities of the relevant societies and their yearnings for peace and security. Women have proven themselves to be more dedicated to the process of reaching out which is essential to peace making. However, women need to be empowered to be able to participate in such processes, and frameworks must be developed to ensure their participation.

In the planning of the forthcoming peace conference we call upon you to ensure the participation of representatives of civil society as well as women's groups at both the parties of the conflict level as well as the third party level. We cannot afford to waste any more time, or any more lives. We need to think of a new approach. We as women want to bring a new understanding to the situation in the Middle East. We want to approach peace-building in a way that will promote long-term stability. We want to explain to each other what it is like to live in Israel and Palestine, to develop transparent procedures so that any peace will be one between individuals and not politicians. But we cannot do it alone. We are asking for your help and the help of the international community both to give us a chance to contribute our expertise and our knowledge and to support us in our efforts. Women are a strong and resourceful people. We want to use our strength and resourcefulness to help bring peace to the Middle East.

Finally, I would like to conclude that despite all the disappointments and setbacks experienced lately, it is important not to give up on the region and to capitalize on the strong desire and need that exists in both societies for security and stability to take bold actions that give hope. We have witnessed even in our recent history societies that were bitter enemies, who were able to work out their relationship and live with each other or next to each other in peace and harmony. If peaceful co-existence has been successful in other societies it should be possible in the Middle East as well. The rule of law is essential for this peace and harmony. We have to replace the rule of force, which has governed our region for too long, with the rule of law, and this is your challenge. Women know instinctively that the use of force will never lead to peace, justice or even security.

We hope you will think about creative ways in which you can bring women in to the process. 50% of the representatives of all parties to peace negotiations should be women, and we urge you to explore other means as well—perhaps the creation of a women's commission, for example. We leave it to you—there are many ways in which this could be done.

Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas is the founder and director of the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling in East Jerusalem. She delivered the above remarks to the UN Security Council, May 7, 2002.



### Jewish Voices for Peace and Justice Conference

Toronto, June 8, 2003

#### Terry Greenblatt, Keynote Address

Good Morning and thank you for bringing me here from Jerusalem to speak to and with you today.

All week I have been thinking about what I have to contribute to today's conference. I've spent the last few years speaking before audiences in Israel and abroad, before the UN Security Council and in European parliaments, in kibbutz clubhouses, at international conferences, symposia and think tanks, on the floor of my office with young women activists, sitting over coffee in the King David hotel with wealthy progressive Jews or over mint tea in the American Colony hotel with the American actress Jane Fonda, with Winnie Mandela, with countless women leaders, groups and individuals who keep showing up to let us know that we do indeed have allies. I advocate for the political positions and desires of thousands of Israeli women and for the hundreds of women's peace and anti-occupation initiatives around the world who remain committed to a just, viable and peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and who believe that Israeli, Palestinian and international women have an exceptional contribution to make and part to play in peace-building. I talk about what it is exactly that we Israeli and Palestinian women are doing, how we are doing it, what we have accomplished, and what kind of assistance and support we need. So I'd like to share some of that this morning with you as well.

I'd also like to use some time to talk about what doing this work feels like. We feminist women do our politics from our heads and our hearts and our kishkas, (yes, my Palestinian colleagues now know what kishkas are) and it is a consistent struggle to resist cutting down our work and our world into that which we do not fear. To engage in the social and political work that we do, our very real fears and anxiety are relentless, and then acknowledged, and challenged.

Lastly, I would like to reflect a bit about how it comes to pass that because of who I am, what I believe in, and the peace and justice work that I do, I have become a disobedient, illegitimate and dangerous voice in the global Jewish community. I hope that we can have this honest and critical conversation during the question and answer period or later this afternoon in the workshop session. For as Susan Sontag so eloquently articulated last month, To fall out of step with one's tribe, if alienation or dissidence is not your habitual or gratifying posture, is a complex and difficult process. It is hard to defy the wisdom of the tribe, the wisdom that values the lives of its members above all others. It will always be unpopular, always deemed unpatriotic, to say that the lives of the members of the other tribe are as valuable as one's own. It is always easier to give one's allegiance to those we know, to those with whom we are embedded, to those with whom we share a community of fear.

I am not a politician, nor a political analyst, nor a Middle East expert, an academic or human rights advocate. I am no more, and no less, than an Israeli feminist political activist who is doing her part in developing the kind of transformational politics that many of us believe will prepare our society for the changes that a just peace will require of us, and in serving as a trustworthy partner to the Palestinian women we work with.

Much of what we Palestinian and Israeli women do, what political feminists have historically seen as our mission, is to challenge and re-frame reality. And so, from the uncomfortable margins where so many of us live, we introduce joint political positions and values into the public discourse of both societies, propose alternative formulas for moving out of the current paralysis, as well as ensure a consistent joint condemnation of the individual and collective abuses of individual and national rights. We have

## Appendix 5

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developed the foundations of an authentic political dialogue grounded in transparency, feminist ideology and politics, and honorable intention that have remained sustainable and productive as the turmoil and violence escalate all around us. We understand that peace is built through dialogue, but in respect and affirmation of justice and law. And we know that only a just resolution to the conflict in our region will provide a sustainable foundation upon which we may begin to build a culture of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction for both nations.

I'd like to try and give you a sense of what we actually do, so I pulled out my pocket calendar and looked at this past month, May 2003, and found that 2 of the pages were so scribbled on and wrinkled that they begged to be noted. The first week of May was the anniversary of our Jerusalem Link Israeli-Palestinian presentation of our vision for a just peace before the UN Security Council. It was an occasion not only to convey our joint political positions (which appear in the brochures I left for you on the tables outside) but was also an exquisite opportunity to challenge the Security Council to courageously and honourably comply with its own resolution 1325. We urged for the prompt establishment of a commission of women peace activists from Israel, Palestine and the international community to be convened and mandated with an oversight and advisory mission:

- To provide women's perspectives, voices and experiences to the Quartet and to all formal peace planning and peace making negotiations
- To include our shared understanding of the human dimensions of the legal, security and political questions that must be addressed for a durable resolution of the conflict.
- To provide measures and principles to enable and facilitate constructive engagement and sustainable political dialogue and
- To ensure that the needs and issues of women impacted by the conflict are raised and effectively addressed.

And so for exactly one year we advocated for, promoted, and worked with our international allies on developing and lobbying for an International Women's Commission. And, lo and behold, we received a call during the first week of May informing us that Mr. George Papandreou, the EU delegate to the Quartet negotiations, was coming to Jerusalem and Ramallah the following day to meet with Sharon, Arafat, Abu Mazan, and us.

And so we sat with Mr. Papandreou and discussed our perspectives on the conflict, and shared our fears and concerns regarding the Road Map. While a quick read of the Map indicates some critical improvements over the Oslo Accords (for example it has a clear objective a 2 state solution -, it talks about ending the 1967 occupation (which for the first time is mentioned in an official document), it is an objective-driven rather than a parallel process, and it does mention the need for international intervention and monitoring.

We talked to him about the fact that human security issues were absent from the Map, as were clear measures of enforcement. We talked of our disappointment that there was no human rights agenda integrated into the process. There was a discussion about the lack of detail regarding the permanent status issues such as borders, Jerusalem, settlements, and refugees, as well as regarding the issue of international involvement and defined roles for third parties.

I told him that the morning the Road Map was presented, Jaffa Road in Jerusalem was plastered with butter-lemon posters (the identical yellow of the Magen David stars worn by concentration camp inmates) with the words Road Map to Auschwitz written above an original photograph of the camp gates. We told him that we are anxious that the implementation of the Road map would necessarily be



informed by the post-September 11th, post-war on Iraq realities a world in which a fundamentalist notion of a godly and divine good and evil prevails, a world in which there is an unprecedented arrogance of power lacking any mechanism of accountability, and an erosion of legal, political and human standards that have been bartered away in the name of something called global security and reform. We talked about the lack of civil society involvement in the negotiation process, which we consider a critical component, because we believe that peace is made on the ground, through the creation of a climate in which both peoples feel safe to choose the leaders who can lead us towards peace and to create the conditions for a life of security and dignity for all.

And we together mourned the invisibility of responsible leadership, one in which I can turn on my radio, and hear an enthusiastic and inspirational prime minister say, People the Road Map may not be perfect, but it is the only game in town and we are going to give it a chance, because either we go in with serious and responsible intentions to make this work, as painful and as expensive as it might be for us, or we are dooming ourselves to live in the darkness of our souls, in the darkness of our identity as an occupier, and without the grace or humility to know that we turned out the lights ourselves.

And so the first thing that happened for us in May was a commitment from Mr. Papandreou to present the concept of an International Womens Commission at the next Quartet meeting, after having already presented it before the EU Council of Foreign Ministers at their meeting last week in Crete.

The other date that caught my eye was three weeks ago, on May 17th. when the board of the Jerusalem Link met in the Notre Dame Center on the seam between East and West Jerusalem for a ten-hour intensive to discuss the necessary next steps in developing an authentic and effective joint Israeli-Palestinian womens leadership. We met to refine our shared political analysis and vision, and to discuss local and international strategies for the future. Thirty six women, Palestinian and Israeli grass roots activists, political leaders, womens NGO directors, educators and community spokeswomen, met together to examine and evaluate where we had succeeded in building authentic trust, what still remains unresolved between us, and to update each other on the current realities and moods in each of our societies.

Palestinian Legislative Council member Hanan Ashrawi shared her perceptions of the atmosphere in Palestine under occupation. She applauded the resiliency and humanity of her people, even as they suffer the sense of scepticism and anger at feeling betrayed by their leadership, by the Americans, by the peace camp in Israel and by the Arab world. She talked of the interdependence between the end of occupation and the evolution of Palestinian statehood and said that Palestinians will not be able to move from a culture of revolution to a culture of a state until the 36 year long overdue end to the military and civilian presence of Israel on Palestinian land. And with a most genuine expression of faith in our joint work, said that to remain human and fully alive inside this insanity, we must all keep open the window of hope and of possibility, and continue to believe that reason, intelligence and humanity will ultimately prevail.

Former member of Knesset from the Meretz party Naomi Chazan gave the Israeli overview. She talked about the fact that not only is the current government the most right-wing Israel has ever known, but that it is the most stable government that we have ever had because should it become necessary, there are at least four or five options the Likkud has in constructing alternative coalitions. She is one of many who believe that it will be impossible to unseat Sharon for as long as he is able to serve. She talked about the socio-economic crisis in Israel, and the ideological battle to preserve some notion of a safety net for the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and the disenfranchised that was waged and lost with the recent passage of Netanyahu's economic plan and budget. She addressed the nature of this governments policies their talent at diversion and delay, the escalation of human rights abuses and flagrant disregard

## Appendix 5

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for international law, the pre-meditated exacerbation of the rifts between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel which split the capacity for strategic unification on the conflict resolution issues, and finally, gave her assessment of the total collapse of any meaningful and productive political opposition to the Sharon government.

The result of our meeting was a re-commitment to continue and intensify our joint work because we acknowledged that our model of working together challenges each sides notion that there is no partner for peace. We will be increasing our visibility locally through public service announcements in the media, joint protest demonstrations, town meetings in each others community centers, and of course further deliberations on the potential future and efficacy of the International Womens Commission. In addition, we will continue our Womens Emergency Network, in which we are documenting Palestinian womens testimonies on the effects of the separation fence on their and their families lives, and continuing our Public Correspondence campaign in which we publish public letters in each others national press. Three days ago there was the first of an on going joint womens protest demonstration on either side of the Kalandiya checkpoint under the banners Women want peace with dignity for all and Build a future, not a separation wall.

I have been a social and political change feminist activist in Israel for many years. I and others are currently doing this work in a culture in which racism and dehumanization of our Palestinian neighbors and Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel, is rampant and legitimized. The threat of transfer, once considered an extreme and dangerous notion, is creeping towards the center of the mainstream public discourse. A survey conducted last month by the Institute for Democracy shows that only 47% of Israeli Jews support full and equal rights for Israeli Arabs, and 57% think the government should encourage them to emigrate. It should be noted that this survey was conducted among Jewish Israelis living inside of the Green Line.

We in Bat Shalom are exposing the difficult issues to the light, believing that it is only in the dark silence that racism, Arab and Jewish fundamentalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism grow their poisonous tendrils. The individual and collective fears that accompany us along the way are inevitable and sometimes overwhelming. When an Israeli woman from the Labor party tells a room full of Palestinian women that she continues to do this joint work because she believes them when they say that challenging her to understand and acknowledge the right of return does not mean that they want to destroy her state of Israel, or when a Palestinian woman from Ramallah spends 2 and a half hours crossing 3 checkpoints to participate in the meeting, and as she dabs tissue at the sweat and the dust caked deep in the lines of her face says that she still believes there is a place beyond hate, beyond the anger and pain of occupation and oppression where we will one day be able to meet then I as an Israeli Jewish woman believe that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing.

I also believe that we all, you and I both, are living in a time in which the winds of fear and despair are threatening to wipe out the culture of democracy and the legitimacy for resistance, and one of the places I feel this most intensely, most personally, is in the Jewish community.

For I seem to have at some point, crossed over some line and became Treyf. And the gods honest truth is, I have no idea where that line was or when it happened. I know it is there because I feel the distance, because I know what the spit rolling down the side of my cheek feels like. I know it is there because I am exhausted and spent from investing so much energy in trying to stay as close to the line as possible to remain connected and identified and part of. These days there are concerted and vigorous efforts, in Israel and more profoundly throughout the Diaspora, to crush and silence Jewish voices of dissent, and to disallow a critique of Israeli government policies and behavior. And while I still do not know exactly where and when I crossed that line, I have accepted that I have no alternative but to remain in this contorted and sometimes painful posture, and to try and make it home for as long as it will be necessary. I know that there are and will always be others who will choose to live there with me.

### Address to Members of the Security Council of the United Nations

23 October 2002

**Gila Svirsky**

**Women in Black and Coalition of Women for Peace**

Your Excellencies,

Allow me to begin by telling you about the secret meetings held between Palestinians and Israelis that began 15 years ago. These meetings were secret because it was illegal for Israelis and forbidden for Palestinians to meet in those years. A number of groups were then getting together, but only one group persisted over time - resolutely grappling with the most difficult issues - and crafted an agreement that was signed and publicized several years before the Oslo Accords. Above all this agreement declared establishment of a free, independent and secure state of Palestine side-by-side with a free, independent and secure state of Israel as the core of a political settlement.

As profound as this moment could have been in the history of the Middle East, very few people heard about it. Why? Because the agreement was written by women. You may wonder whether the agreement was rejected for other reasons, perhaps because it was a radical statement dreamed up by utopians or marginal people. But these women were neither marginal nor radical. Each delegation included prominent political leaders - members of parliament, government ministers, an ambassador, and a party head.

As for the content of the agreement, most of its principles have now become matters of consensus among both Israelis and Palestinians. Despite the current magnitude of brutality - or perhaps because of it - surveys consistently show that a decisive two-thirds of Israeli Jews would support a peace agreement that includes Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories, evacuation of most Israeli settlements, and creation of a Palestinian state. Most Palestinians hold the very same views. Indeed, only extremist political leaders on both sides fail to understand that these principles will ultimately set the terms of peace between our nations.

Clearly, the agreement was both pragmatic and moderate. In fact, had the women who wrote it been internationally recognized negotiators, the two Intifadas that followed might have been prevented. This is but one example of the need to implement and enforce Security Council Resolution 1325.

At the grassroots level women have also been at the forefront of peacemaking. In 1988 women in Israel founded the movement now known as Women in Black.

Dressed in black to mourn the victims on all sides, Women in Black has kept a one-hour vigil every single Friday for the past 15 years. On street corners throughout Israel, Arab and Jewish women hold signs demanding an end to the Israeli occupation and pursuit of a just peace. The Women in Black movement quickly and spontaneously spread around the globe as a public forum for women to say "no" to war and injustice. In Italy Women in Black protest the Israeli occupation and the violence of organized crime. Women in Black in Bangalore, India call for an end to abuse by religious fundamentalists. During the war in the Balkans Women in Black, Yugoslavia set an inspirational example of interethnic cooperation. Today, Women in Black throughout the world are engaged in a struggle to prevent a war from being launched against Iraq. For their remarkable work, the international movement of Women in Black, represented by

## Appendix 6

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the movements in Yugoslavia and Israel, were nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace and won the Millennium Peace Prize awarded by UNIFEM [the UN Development Fund for Women].

In Israel, the women's peace movement extends well beyond Women in Black. We are Bat Shalom, the organization formed to promote the principles of the pre-Oslo peace agreement described earlier. We are New Profile, women seeking to end the militarization of Israeli society. We are Machsom Watch, women preventing human rights violations at checkpoints. We are the Movement of Democratic Women, Jewish and Palestinian women citizens of Israel struggling for peace and justice. These and other organizations, joined together in the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, are united in relentless effort to bring the bloodshed to an end.

The women's peace movement in Israel is absolutely breathtaking: It is alive with new ideas, indefatigable as women have always been, and at the vanguard of creative thinking about how to get to peace. Israeli and Palestinian women march together under the banner "We refuse to be enemies". Indeed, the Israeli and Palestinian women's peace movements have already made peace: on paper, in our hearts, in the lessons we teach our children, and in the behavior we model. We are allies for peace, united in our struggle against extremists and warmongers on all sides.

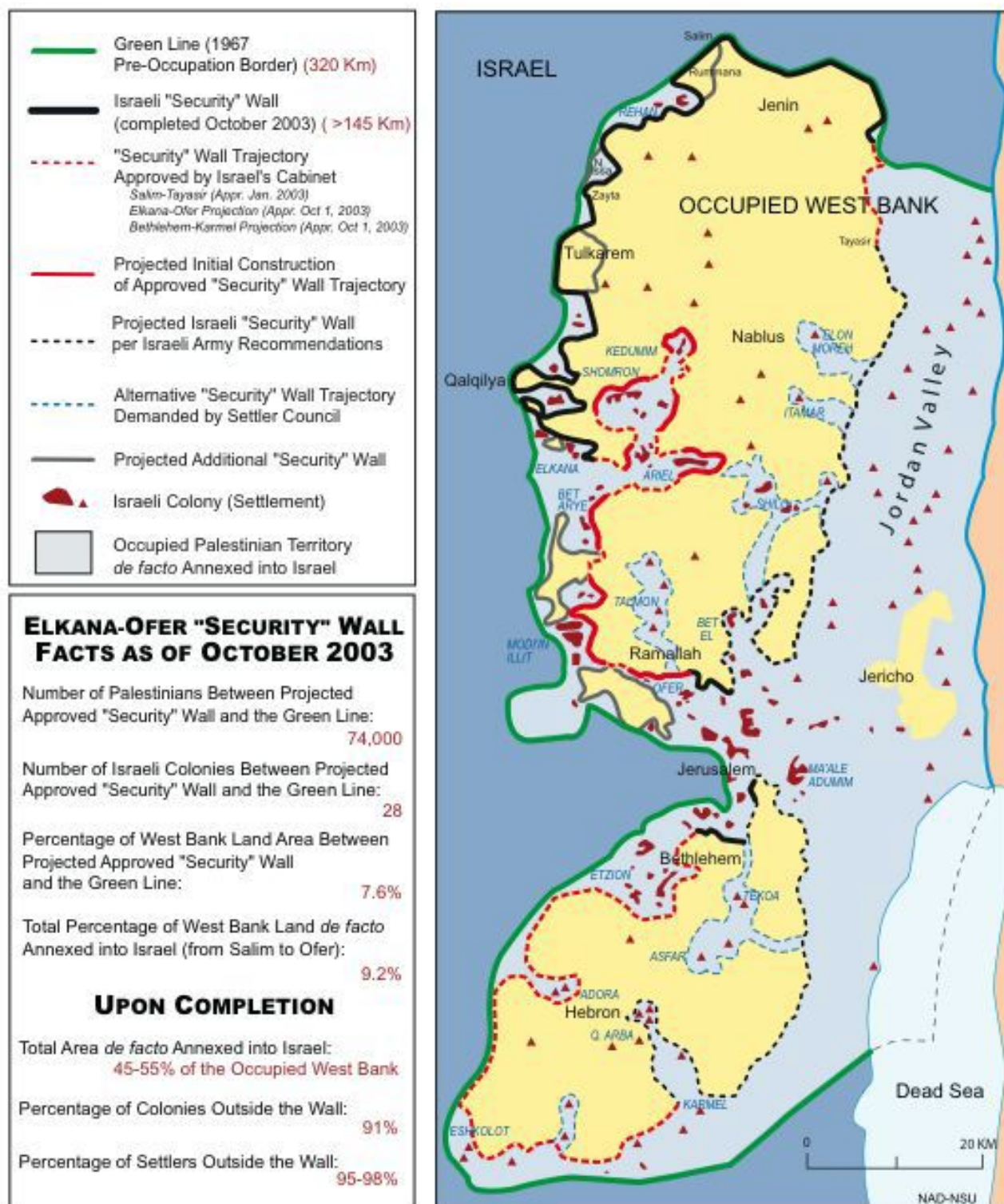
Is it not preposterous that not a single Israeli woman, and only one Palestinian woman, have held leadership roles at a Middle East peace summit? Instead, the negotiators have been men with portfolios of brutal crimes against each other - military men who have honed the art of war and who measure their success by the unconditional surrender of the other. Is it any wonder that we are still locked in combat?

Ultimately this occupation, like every other in history, will come to an end. The general parameters of that ending are already drawn and in agreement. What we need now is leadership committed to swiftly concluding this era awash in blood, leadership that understands the price we pay in death and destruction for every hour of delay. What we need now is leadership with expertise at reconciliation and rapprochement. What we need now is women.

Thank you.



## Impact of the First Phase of the Security Barrier on the Qalqiliya, Tulkarm and Jenin districts



Source: B'tselem

Israel's "Security" Wall: October 2003



## Appendix 7

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In June 2002, the Israeli authorities began construction of the first phase of a 350-kilometre 'security barrier' to physically separate the West Bank from Israel. This phase - from Zbuba in the north west corner of Jenin governorate, through the Tulkarm district, to Elkana settlement in the southern Qalqiliya governorate - will extend some 140 kilometres in length.

The cost is estimated at NIS 10 million per kilometre and is expected to be completed by July 2003.(1) The Government of Israel maintains that barrier is not intended to mark a political border but to prevent Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians. However, at no stage does the barrier follow a course on the Israeli side of the Green Line: on the contrary, it deviates many kilometres into West Bank territory, up to six kilometres in the case of Jayous. When complete, some 160,000 dunums (one dunum is equivalent to one quarter of an acre) of fertile farmland will be isolated on the Israeli side of the barrier, 2.9 percent of the land area of the West Bank.(2)

The three northern governorates affected have a 2003 estimated combined population of about 500,000 - representing about 25 percent of the West Bank population. Qalqiliya is home to 90,000, Tulkarm 163,000 and Jenin, 247,000. Population figures for the main towns are Qalqiliya, 41,000; Tulkarm, 43,000; Jenin, 34,000.(3) In total, nearly 70 towns, villages, hamlets and refugee camps in the three governorates - over 200,000 Palestinians - will be impacted to some degree in the barrier's first phase. (4)

UNRWA carried out field visits to examine the effects of the barrier on the livelihoods of local residents, with special emphasis on registered refugees. Most of the northern Green Line towns and villages accommodate refugee families. Certain villages, in particular - Atil, Baqa esh-Sharqiya, Barta'a esh-Sharqiya, Taibeh, Rumana and Zububa - contain significant, even majority, refugee populations.(5) Qalqiliya town, contains 4,000 refugee families, the UNRWA hospital and other facilities, and will be hermetically sealed.

Tulkarm town (3,700 refugee families) will have a wall constructed on its western side and a 'depth barrier' to its east which will seal in most of the town's immediate hinterland, including Tulkarm camp (15,600 registered refugees) and Nur Shams (8,000 refugees).

In the north west Jenin district, Rumana, Khirbet Taibe and Anin villages all have large numbers of refugee families and include an UNRWA school; another 'depth barrier' will isolate this enclave. Although refugees will not necessarily suffer more than the general population from the effects of the barrier, the resultant decline in living standards will increase humanitarian needs and inevitably add to the Agency's already over-burdened caseload.

### **Izbat Jal'ud, Qalqiliya**

The inhabitants of Jal'ud (also known as Sheikh Ahmed) are refugees from the village of Zakur, whose remains lie just across the Green Line. Some six families, about 36 persons are registered refugees, out of a total population of 100. The barrier will cut off 250-300 dunums in the village as a whole, despite the owners possessing Ottoman and British title deeds. In addition, there is a demolition order for three homes and a mosque erected without a permit: no building permit has been issued in the village since 1978.

Abdallah Said Jal'ud, an UNRWA-registered refugee, will lose approximately 125 dunums in Jal'ud and possibly more land in Hable and Izbat Salman once the course of the barrier there is clear. Various fruits and vegetables, an apple farm and a water reservoir are affected. Access to the land is forbidden while work on the barrier is in progress and there is no indication as to how access will be granted once construction is complete.

### The barrier, 'depth barrier' and enclaves

The barrier will be some seventy metres wide on average but will extend up to 100 metres in some areas. It is commonly referred to as a 'wall' but for most of its path the barrier comprises a number of different obstacles and hurdles.

At its most extensive, it will consist of an electronic 'smart fence' in the centre to warn of any attempt to cross; on the eastern side of this fence, a trench, ditch or other obstacle to act as a barrier against vehicles; another fence for delay purposes; a paved service road next to this delay fence. West of the 'smart fence' are a number of paths: a trace path to disclose the footprints of anyone crossing; a two-lane patrol road; a road for armoured vehicles and another fence. (6)

The barrier will also include watchtowers and entry gates at various intervals and an exclusion zone of undetermined length. On those sections which for topographic reasons the barrier will be less than 70 metres wide, only some of the components that support the electronic fence will be constructed. In various areas, locals have been informed that a 'no go' or buffer zone of undefined extent on the 'Palestinian' side of the barrier will also be imposed, although there is no official confirmation of this.

In areas containing large Palestinian communities close to the Green Line where the path of the barrier will follow the 1948 borders, the Israeli authorities will erect an additional 'Depth Barrier' a few kilometres east of the main Barrier. 'This is a barrier without a fence, whose objective is to channel movement in those areas to a number of security monitoring points.' (7)

Although no official map showing the course of the barrier has been authorised by the Israeli authorities, the Tulkarm District Coordination Liaison (DCL) office of the IDF confirmed that such a trench will surround Tulkarm town, extending eastwards to include Nur Shams camp. (8) (See Part 2, Tulkarm section and Map 3). A similar 'deep trench' will be constructed in the north west Jenin district, running from Salem to Araqa villages, to include Rumana, Khirbet Taibe, and Anin. (See Part 2, Jenin section and Map 4). Both areas will become enclaves, isolated between a barrier on the Green Line and a trench to the east.



Only the land directly under the course of the barrier has been formally confiscated; ownership of land behind the barrier remains in the hands of the owners, to which the Government of Israel has promised continued access. (9) According to the Israeli State Attorney's Office, five main crossing points and 26 'agricultural crossings' will be established along the length of the barrier; (10) however, it appears that in the 2003 budget insufficient funds were allocated to erect the main crossing points. (11)

No official notice has been issued concerning the workings of these crossing points nor the criteria for obtaining permits. Officials in the Tulkarm DCL confirmed that farmers would be given permits for access through the nine gates in the Tulkarm governorate, 'two or three times a day' and that one of these planned crossing points would be at Qafin. However, according to the mayor of Qafin, there are no openings in the completed concrete part of the barrier for a crossing point in the Qafin area. (12) There

## Appendix 7

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are unconfirmed reports from Palestinian newspapers that pedestrians and vehicles will be charged for crossing.

In the majority of cases, the first indication to local farmers that their land will be requisitioned is when plans and maps are dropped on their land or posted on trees: the local municipality or village council is rarely officially notified. This is often followed by a notification that the DCL will make a tour of the affected areas to meet with the landowners (see inset box, Part 2, Jenin section).

The legal instrument chosen to achieve confiscation is the issuing of 'requisition for military needs' orders, signed by the Military Commander, Central Command, Moshe Kapilinsky. Most of these orders are in effect until the end of 2005; however, they may legally be extended indefinitely. Furthermore, although some farmers have appealed the requisition orders - either individually or collectively through the municipality or local council - none of these hearings has resulted in a reversal of the requisition order. (13)

Owners of requisitioned land are entitled to claim compensation but few have done so, because they believe it would be seen to legitimise the confiscation. Furthermore, the amounts offered are well below the real value of the land: in Qalqiliya the amount offered was only 10 percent of the actual value. (14)

In the most severe cases, entire localities will be consigned to a no man's land between the barrier and the Green Line. It is unclear what arrangements will be made to grant these residents - fifteen communities, with some 13,500 residents in the northern governorates alone (15) - access to the rest of the West Bank. Three of these communities have urban links with sister villages within Israel from which they were separated in 1948. Although these will now be 'reunited' on the Western side of the barrier there is no provision to grant residents special permits to enter Israel. On the contrary, the area between the barrier and the Green line will be declared a Closed Military Zone, although, according to the State Attorney's Office, this designation will not apply to residents of this undefined zone. (16)

The Israeli Civil Administration has stated that permanent crossing permits will be issued to residents of these enclaves but those outside will not be able to enter unless they apply for a special permit. (17) The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem fears that these enclaves will suffer a similar fate to Al-Mwasi area of the Gaza Strip, where special permits are needed for the residents to exit, searches and long delays are common, the sole checkpoint is only open for certain periods and is often closed without warning. (18)

### Impacts: Land, Jobs, Water, Health and Education

Prior to the current intifada, the northern Green Line towns and villages fared relatively well economically compared to other West Bank localities, due to easy access to the Israeli labour and consumer markets and because large numbers of Israelis, especially Israeli Arabs, visited Qalqiliya and Tulkarm. Access to the Israel labour market has virtually disappeared in the last two years and Israeli citizens are forbidden to enter 'A' areas under Palestinian Authority control. (19)

The barrier will seal the end of Palestinian migrant labour in Israel while also isolating affected communities from each other, compounding acute unemployment and poverty levels. In Baqa esh-Sharqiya, which will soon be isolated between the barrier and the Green line, there are some 420 commercial enterprises but the owners of 250 of these live outside the town, east of the barrier. (20) In Nabi Elias, 15 merchants and their families moved from nearby Qalqiliya town because of movement restrictions through the town's sole access point. (21) Both town and village will soon be reunited, surrounded on three sides by the barrier, but there will be only one access point for both through a gate several kilometres east of Nabi Elias.

By severing thousands of dunums of some of the West Bank's best land and water resources the barrier will have grave implications for agricultural productivity. The northern governorates have a disproportionately large share of the West Bank's agricultural and water resources, accounting for 80 percent of wells. Employment in these two activities is also disproportionately high, with the northern governorates accounting for 42 percent of West Bank agricultural and 53 percent of water-sector employment.(22)

The importance of agriculture has grown during the intifada, acting as 'a shock absorber' for many newly unemployed. In Jayous, 400 out of 550 families are now totally dependent on agriculture, up from 250 before the intifada. In Qalqiliya town, 22 percent of the city's pre-intifada economy was based on agricultural produce: this number has risen to 45 percent with 2,000 agricultural workers supporting approximately 15,000 residents. Agriculture is dominated by small, family-based farms that depend on high-intensive family labour at specific times, especially during the olive harvest. It is unclear how these traditional ways can be adapted to the proposal by the Israeli authorities to issue permits which will limit the number and times which farmers can use the agricultural crossing points.

The first phase of the barrier has already resulted in the confiscation and razing of 10,000 dunums of privately-owned land, the uprooting of over 80,000 trees, the destruction of 35 kilometres of water pipes and the demolition of dozens of greenhouses.(23) Because of its position atop the western groundwater basin the barrier will also have a severe impact on water access, use and allocation, with a number of the villages concerned losing their only source of water.(24)

The Palestine Hydrology Group has listed 30 wells in the Qalqiliya and Tulkarm districts which will be lost in the first phase of construction. Qalqiliya town will lose nineteen wells, representing approximately 30 percent of the city's water supply. In comparison, according to the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, only five of 52 locations targeted in the first phase of construction are connected to the Israeli national water network.(25) Households in some 300 localities across the West Bank store rain and spring water in cistern in the wet winter months and buy from water tankers in summer. Movement restrictions have already led to an 80 percent rise in the cost of trucked water since the start of the intifada.(26)

In addition to undermining business and family ties, the barrier will also imperil health and educational services. Nine of the 15 communities in the enclaves west of the barrier lack a medical facility entirely.(27) Many other affected localities provide basic preventive and primary services, but rely on the three main cities for specialised and emergency care, and for regular dialysis and chemotherapy treatments.

Regular preventive services are already undermined by existing mobility restrictions: UNRWA reports a 52 percent decrease in women attending post-natal care. Prior to the intifada, 95 percent of women gave birth in hospitals. This has fallen to 50 percent in some areas, and there are at least 39 documented cases of women giving birth at checkpoints.(28)

Medical personnel also face difficulties in reaching their workplaces. In Qafin, the most northerly locality in the Tulkarm district, health workers from Tulkarm reach the clinic late and leave early because of delays at checkpoints. The barrier will only compound these and other problems, interrupting routine immunisation programmes, delaying mobile clinics, ambulances and the distribution of medical supplies and vaccines. It will also increase the strain on public health providers by further dispersing facilities, staff and resources and adding to the burden and cost to village health centres.

The barrier will also have a harmful effect on education, again by compounding existing difficulties caused by movement restrictions. As with health providers, teachers already face problems in reaching

## Appendix 7

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their work places and many have had to be reassigned to schools near their homes.

Across the three governorates, an estimated 7,400 students will be directly affected by the barrier.(29) Dab'a, which will be completely encircled, has a school only to the grade 7; for grades 8-10 pupils must travel to Ras Atiya and for grades 11-12 to Hable; tertiary education in available colleges in Qalqiliya or Nablus, and trips to the latter can take up to six hours. Educational facilities and services will be especially affected in Azun Atme and Ras Atiya.

### **Ras Atiya, Qalqiliya**

In Ras Atiya (pop. 1,400) villagers worked in Israel prior to the intifada, but are now very dependent on local agriculture. Some 1,400 dunums are being lost to the barrier itself and 9,000 dunums will be isolated, 75 percent of the villagers' lands, affecting some 220 families. The barrier will pass within 10 metres to the north and east of the local school, a coeducational institution of 450 students, constructed through Swiss funding. Requests to move the barrier to a more reasonable 100 metre distance were refused on 'security grounds'. Teaching has been disrupted because of explosives used in blasting rocks, and the dynamiting caused cracks to appear in the outer wall. Sixty pupils and 20 out of 25 teachers are from outside Ras Atiya and the barrier, which will cut the road to Dab'a and isolate nearby khirbets Tira, will make access difficult for all concerned.

### **The greatest change in the landscape since 1967**

The hardship brought by the security barrier will affect an already impoverished population. Many affected communities lost land in 1948 - including many not formally registered as refugees - and many localities have been steadily losing additional territory to settlements over the last thirty years.

The Oslo Accords provided little protection in this regard: most West Bank residents live in Areas 'A' or 'B' under Palestinian Authority administrative jurisdiction although most available building land lies on the edges of towns and villages in Area 'C' - currently some 60 percent of West Bank land. Permission to build requires Israeli authorisation. Between 1996 and 1999 only seventy nine such permits were granted, leaving residents no choice but to build 'illegally'. (30)

Recent months have seen a surge of demolitions and demolition orders served upon 'illegal' buildings along the path of the barrier. The barrier will isolate predominantly Area 'C' land, and further diminish natural expansion for many communities, leaving young homebuilders no alternative but to leave. There is already evidence of internal migration from some affected areas. Some 6-8,000 residents have left Qalqiliya town since the beginning of the intifada. (31)

### **Zbuba, Jenin**

Zbuba in the Jenin district has a population of 2,000 and 240 of its 280 families are registered refugees. Under the terms of the 1949 Rhodes Agreement, the village lost some 18,000 dunums across the Green Line. An additional 2,000 dunums was lost in 1959 and 26 dunums was confiscated in 1999 to construct the Salem DCL and military base. That same year, thirty-three dunums was also confiscated to build a trench, one and a half metres wide and two metres deep along the Green Line.



In December 2002, documents and maps were strewn about on village land disclosing that some 250 dunums of village land would be confiscated, some 50 to 80 metres on the Zbuba side of the Green Line. Nothing official was conveyed to the village council. A letter was also dropped on the ground saying that the landowners could apply for compensation and should send a fax to the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv, with relevant details of title deeds for possible compensation.

The villagers subsequently rejected this. The DCL called a meeting for affected landowners on 18 February, when it was explained that the confiscation order was from a 'high level' and could not be altered. On 10 March the bulldozers arrived to begin levelling land and orchards.

Despite Israeli assurance of gate passes most of those interviewed appear resigned to losing effective access to their land once the barrier is complete, given their experience of the existing permit system.

In the long run, most worry that the Israeli authorities will justify confiscation on the pretext of under-use, in particular using a provision of Ottoman law, in which if an owner of miri land – those situated close to places of settlement and suitable for agricultural use – fails to farm the land for three consecutive years, the land reverts to the State. (32)

In most areas, security personnel and Border Police are already preventing local farmers from crossing or approaching the route of the barrier, although no Closed Military Zone order has been issued. Many farmers interviewed visit their lands only on Saturdays when the bulldozers and security personnel are absent. Others have dismantled green houses or ceased cultivating their land. (33) Parallel with the fragmentation of land and economy comes feelings of being besieged and disempowered, of no longer having any real control over one's destiny: 'we feel like refugees on our land,' the mayor of Qafin declared.

### **Atil, Tulkarm**

The family of Rathab Ali Awad Said Dameiri, UNRWA refugee, originally came from al Aqdera, just over the Green Line. Mr. Dameiri has been renting some 22 dunums of land for 15 years which he can now only access on foot. He is therefore trying to re-establish what he can of his greenhouses and crops on 25 dunums he has now rented on the 'Palestinian' side of the barrier. Mr. Dameiri claims that although he is allowed to visit his land on foot he is forbidden to cultivate anything. Nevertheless, he goes on Saturday when the contractors and IDF are absent. Mr. Dameiri has not been informed of access arrangements for after the barrier is built.

The Yesha Council of Settlements, the body which represents Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory, has proposed an alternative route for the security barrier which would leave dozens of settlements and more than 100,000 Palestinians on the western side of the barrier. Pressure from settlement heads has already altered the original route of the Barrier in the Tulkarm and Qalqiliya districts with the result that Salit, Avnei Hefez and Alfei Menashe settlements now lie west of the Barrier. (34)

## Appendix 7

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The Defence Ministry has seemingly adopted many of the Yesha's suggestions and recently made recommendations which would extend the barrier far eastwards into the Qalqiliya governorate, bringing the major settlements of Kedumim, Karnei Shomron, Immanuel and Ariel inside the Barrier, encompassing some 40,000 settlers and 3,000 Palestinians.(35)

It is now reported that an eastern barrier is also planned down the Jordan valley from Mekhola in the north east to Ma'ale Adumim near Jerusalem, and then south to the Judean Desert. Whatever the final boundaries of the barrier it will effectively place much of West Bank land out of bounds for Palestinians and constitute the greatest change in the landscape since 1967.

For the complete report see:

<http://www.un.org/unrwa/emergency/stories/barrier/part01.html>

### FOOTNOTES:

1. B'Tselem: The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, (Draft copy), March 2003, p.7
2. B'Tselem, The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, March 2003, p.8.
3. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Projected population, Selected Years, Medium Series 2003.
4. The World Bank defines 'impacted communities' as 'those that: (a) find themselves on the western (interior) side of the Wall; (b) lose land or infrastructure to its construction; (c) are located less than 1.3 km. From the Wall; or (d) have a main/only access road cut by the Wall. It should be noted that this term is used only as a rough guide and may underestimate the total impact of the Wall on neighbouring communities.' The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, (Draft copy), p. 22. B'Tselem comes up with a similar figure regarding affected communities and population: 'the barrier will likely cause direct harm to at least 210,00 Palestinians residing in sixty-seven villages, towns cities.' The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, (Draft), March 2003, p.3.v
5. According to the World Bank, some 25-30 percent of the population in affected communities are registered refugees, although it is not clear how this figure is determined, which appears to be an overestimate. World Bank, The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p. 25.
6. B'Tselem, Separation Barrier: Update, October 2002.
7. B'Tselem, Separation Barrier: Update. The quotation is from the response of the Israeli State Attorney's Office to a petition filed in the High Court of Justice by Palestinians against the proposed route of the Barrier. However, according to B'Tselem's latest position paper, p.7, the depth barrier will in fact have a barbed-wire fence alongside it.
8. Meeting with Lieutenant-Colonel Khalil, Tulkarm DCL, 19 March 2003.
9. According to the State Attorney's Office, 'Reasonable crossing arrangements will be made that will take into account the need for the movement of labourers and suitable work implements. On the one hand, and the ability to transport the produce from the farmland to villages lying east of the barrier, on the other hand.' B'Tselem, The Separation Barrier: Update
10. B'Tselem, The Separation Barrier: Update
11. B'Tselem, Separation Barrier: Position Paper, (draft) March 2003, p.13.

12. Interview, with mayor, Mr. Tayseer Harashi, 12 March.
13. 'Past experience .... Indicate(s) that presenting objections to the IDF is nothing more than a formality which, in most cases, has no effects on decisions that have already been made' B'Tselem: The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, September 2002, p. 13.
14. Interview with mayor of Qalqiliya, Mr. Marouf Zahran, 1 March 2003.
15. World Bank: The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p.2
16. B'Tselem, The Separation Barrier: Update.
17. B'Tselem: The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, March 2003, p.12.
18. B'Tselem: The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, March 2003, p.7.
19. Some 4,000 residents of Qalqiliya possess Israeli IDs through marriage and other family connections but are now officially prohibited from residing in the town.
20. Interview with mayor, 6 March 2003.
21. World Bank, The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p.27.
22. World Bank: The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p.13.
23. PENGON, February Update. PENGON is the Palestinian Environmental NGO network, which includes the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC), Land and Water (LAW) and the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, (UPMRC).
24. PENGON: The Apartheid Wall Campaign, Report # 1, November 2002, p.21.
25. PARC: Needs Assessment Study & Proposed Intervention for villages affected by the Wall in the districts of Jenin, Tulkarem and Qalqilia, February 2003, p.3.
26. Oxfam: Forgotten Villages: Struggling to survive under closure in the West Bank, September 2002, p. 26.
27. B'Tselem: The Separation Barrier: Position Paper, (draft), March 2003, p.17.
28. Oxfam, Forgotten Villages, p.24.
29. World Bank, The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p.26
30. B'Tselem: Land Grab, Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank, May 2002, p.87.
31. World Bank, The Impact of the West Bank Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities, p.31.
32. B'Tselem: Land Grab p. 52.
33. 'The dominant feeling of fear and uncertainty is negatively affecting the amount of time and resources farmers are investing in their lands near the wall area or west of the wall, especially in types of farming that require expensive inputs such as green houses and irrigated trees and vegetables.' PARC, Needs Assessment Study, p.5.

## Appendix 7

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34. Ibid.

35. 'Defence Ministry wants fence moved deeper into West Bank,' Ha'aretz 23 March 2003. However, Prime Minister Sharon has delayed authorising the Defence Ministry's recommendations, due to pressure from the US administration and because of the increased cost. 'Sharon delays final decision on position of separation fence', Ha'aretz, 6 April, 2003.

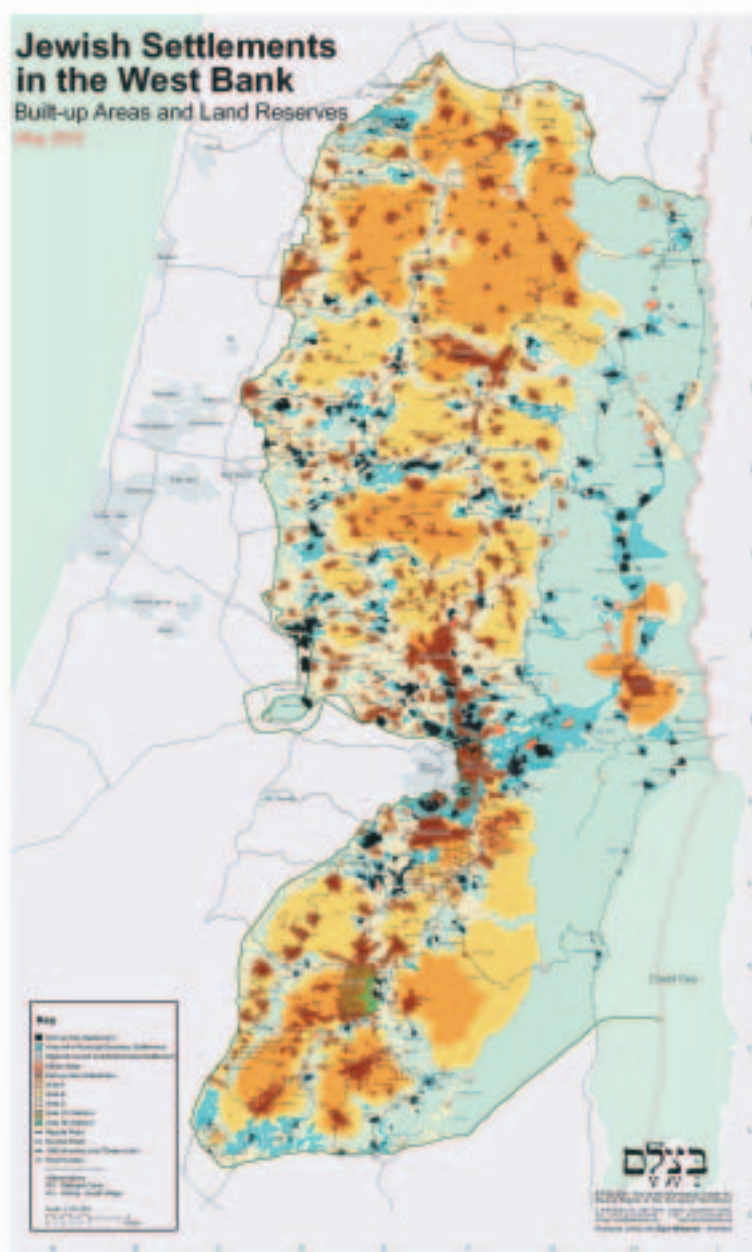
### Settlements: An Eyewitness Report by Ellen Flanders

Israeli settlements occupy 1.7% but control 41.9% of West Bank land, according to B'tselem, a respected Israeli human rights organization. In a report entitled "Land Grab: Israel's Settlement Policy" and published in May 2002, B'tselem's researcher, Yehezkel Lein documents the mechanisms by which successive Israeli governments have taken control of Palestinian land in the West Bank and encouraged Israeli citizens to move to settlements. The report is available on B'tselem's website at: [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org).

While in the West Bank recently to document the conflict through the lives of Israeli and Palestinian gays and lesbians in relationships, Ellen Flanders, who was raised in both Canada and Israel, observed the far-reaching impacts of the settlements on the lives of the Palestinians whose lands they have taken and continue to encroach upon. Shocked by what she saw as a terror campaign by the settlements against the Palestinian villagers and their families, she shared her frustration and pain with mission member Kathy Wazana:

*"We leave Ramallah via the Kalandia crossing and it takes us an hour to cross. We sit in the car with the smell of garbage all around, the dust flying and a view of the new fence cordoning off Ramallah. The soldiers are rude by the time we get to the checkpoint and wave us through. We were lucky, some people saw that we had a camera and obviously wanting this documented, told us to go ahead of them. It is bedlam and it causes such frustration that you think you are going to lose it. But here, everyone does this daily. Humiliation does not begin to describe what it is like to be at the mercy of these 18-year olds who decide whether you pass or go back.*

*[...] has been working with this one tiny village that has had their access to the nearest Palestinian town completely cut off. He helps them to remove roadblocks, only to be replaced the next day. The villagers can't get to the schools or the medical centers. They are surrounded by settlements, extremely aggressive ones, and are not allowed to travel on the Jewish roads. Yes, the Jewish roads. Palestinians are not allowed to travel on the road that goes right past their*



Source: B'tselem



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*own villages and towns. They are also not allowed to use their own roads as they have all been blocked. No passage. No movement. If they are caught driving on the Jewish roads, they are fined, jailed or beaten. Sometimes all of the above. They cannot get to work, they cannot get to hospitals, schools, etc. There were hundreds of men walking along the road as we drove, they were walking because they cannot drive and there is no transportation for them. Coming back from what work they manage to keep. They are walking because their roads are blocked and they cannot use the Jewish roads.*



*We got to the village to help open one of the blockades by removing a steel highway barrier and by removing enough of the mound of dirt that had been piled high to cut off access, to get one car through. [...] says this is the third time in a week he has done this as the army or the settlers come and reblock it daily. We worked at night, in the dark mostly, with the hood up on my car, pretending whenever a settler or army jeep passed that we were having car trouble. If anyone from the village is caught doing this, they are severely punished.*

*Ta'ayush, a Palestinian-Israeli peace group, brought a tent to the village where they set-up activities for the kids (as they couldn't get to school). They were chased from the tent and told, the children that is, by settlers and army, that if they have anything to do with peace groups or go near that tent again, they will come in the night and chop their heads off. Needless to say, the children did not return. I was talking to a little girl who was about three and was asking her about her sisters etc. She turned to her mum after our chat and asked her if the army would come and slice her head off that night because she was speaking with me. They sleep on the roofs of their houses in the summer because of the heat and the ants. The settlers come by at night and throw rocks as they sleep. They have torn down some of their few olive trees, destroyed their few vegetable patches, drive their jeeps through the village, terrorizing them, especially as they have now had contact with peace groups. Let's talk about terrorism!*

*The village has no electricity or water because the settlements will not allow them to run a wire or a pipe. The village has about 20 houses.*

*Again, I read these stories as you must as well, from others who are spending time working here, but truly words are insufficient to describe how horrific it is. When you are sitting there, listening, you are also trying to figure out what these people have done to deserve this lot? To be treated as less than human, as people without children, without elderly or illness, without any needs. I am sitting by the light of the kerosene lamp under the most incredible desert sky and I am paralyzed. I am helpless and my rage surges. I can see how easy it is to want revenge, to want to take a machine-gun and terrorize these bullies back, to take away their rights and dignity. I climb down the stairs to my car, the dogs of the settlers are barking in the night and their towns glow from above in the most menacing of ways. I try not break-down and leave most reluctantly, both wanting to stay and help and flee at the same time.*

*That was just one day, and I get to go home."*

### **A Joint Palestinian-Israeli Action framework for Peace**

**We**, Israelis and Palestinians, wish to state at these critical moments, that war is always a tragedy by itself. However, the present illegal American war on Iraq and its consequences can seriously impede the realization of our hopes and expectations of a just Palestinian-Israeli peace. Especially so, when the extremist Sharon government which strongly supports this war, makes use of this opportunity to undertake additional unilateral measures of oppression against the Palestinian people living under the Israeli occupation.

**The** experience of more than 50 years of conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people proves, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the problem cannot be solved by force. The continued occupation creates resistance to it in various forms. It is responsible for the suffering of both Palestinians and Israelis, condemning them to a life of physical insecurity, economic crisis and social disintegration.

**At** the same time, we wish to express our profound concern about the incidents of extreme violence, resulting from the intensification of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territories and of the Palestinian attacks inside Israel.

**We** condemn the brutal policy of the Israeli government aimed at destroying the Palestinian society, the Palestinian economy and the elected Palestinian leadership Headed By President Yasser Arafat. The erection of the 'apartheid wall' is a further device to help the ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people.

**Therefore**, we believe that there is no way to put an end to the acts of all forms of violence, without a just peace based on ending the occupation and the co-existence of two states for the two peoples, based on the June 4, 1967 borders, with two capitals in Jerusalem, the evacuation of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and a just solution to the refugee problem by agreement between the two sides and cooperation between them and the international community, based on the relevant UN resolutions.

**We** emphasize again our call for complete termination of all attacks on civilians, both on the Israeli and Palestinians sides. We believe that on both sides there are forces that are willing to reopen the way to peace. We call on the international community to urgently intervene in the interests of ending the violence on both sides and concluding a final peace agreement.

**We** finally call on everybody who supports these ideas to speak out now in support of an Israeli-Palestinian peace alliance against the occupation, for mutual recognition and peace between the two nations.

**In** order to facilitate cooperation between the supporters of peace on both sides and their joint efforts on a day-to-day basis, we hereby establish the: 'Joint Action Group for Israeli-Palestinian Peace' and invite you to join us.



## The Divide Between Popular Israeli and Palestinian Narratives

On September 13, 1993, Israeli and Palestinian authorities signed The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government (“Declaration of Principles”) and agreed “that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity...” Yet, the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians has been deteriorating almost since The Declaration of Principles was signed. The outbreak of the “Second Intifada” in September 2000 represented the culmination of increasing hostility and mistrust between the Israeli and Palestinian people at both the official and popular levels. Mainstream Israeli opinion tends to explain the demise of the peace process and the outbreak of the Second Intifada as the Palestinian rejection of peace. Israelis point to Yasser Arafat’s alleged refusal of Ehud Barak’s offer at Camp David in 2000 as the sabotage of the peace process. Israelis’ impression of the peace process was that it was ‘working’, in part because their daily lives seemed calmer. Political violence had diminished, Israelis believed their country was edging toward acquiring/resuming a status as a ‘normal’ country among the community of nations. Ordinary Israelis began to engage in tentative but symbolically important personal interactions with Palestinians.

Few Israeli Jewish journalists reported on developments in the West Bank and Gaza indicating that the putative benefits of ‘peace’ were not touching the daily lives of ordinary Palestinians. Indeed, social and economic conditions were deteriorating for Palestinians as Israel hardened its closure measures and continued to expand settlements. Over time, the Palestinian Authority disappointed large segments of the Palestinian population through a lack of commitment to democratic, open and honest governance. Most Israelis were not interested in bad news just at the moment they were experimenting with hope.

It is worth citing the disparate accounts of ‘what went wrong’ at Camp David as yet another chapter in the ongoing discordant narratives. In June 2002, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (interviewed by Israeli historian Benny Morris) and former Clinton Middle East advisor Robert Malley (and journalist Hussein Agha) presented their respective accounts of the process in an exchange printed in the New York Review of Books. Although Malley is not Palestinian, he was present throughout the negotiations and his recollection reflects a perspective more attuned to the Palestinian position:

BARAK/MORRIS	MALLEY/AGHA
<b>JERUSALEM</b>	
...the establishment of the sovereign Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, in which some Arab neighbourhoods would become sovereign Palestinian territory and others would enjoy "functional autonomy"; Palestinian sovereignty over half of the Old City of Jerusalem (the Muslim and Christian quarters) and "custodianship", though not sovereignty, over the Temple Mount;	On Jerusalem, the Palestinians accepted at Camp David the principle of Israeli sovereignty over the Wailing Wall, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, and Jewish neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem – neighborhoods that were not part of Israel before the 1967 Six-Day War – though the Palestinians clung to the view that all of Arab East Jerusalem should be Palestinian. The ideas put forward by President Clinton at Camp David fell well short of these demands.

### BARAK/MORRIS (cont.)

### MALLEY/AGHA (cont.)

#### BORDERS

The proposals included the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state on some 92% of the West Bank and 100% of the Gaza Strip, with some territorial compensation for the Palestinians from pre-1967 Israeli territory; the dismantling of most of the settlements and the concentration of the bulk of the settlers inside the 8% of the West Bank to be annexed by Israel;

On the question of question of the boundaries of the future state, the Palestinian position, formally adopted as early as 1988 and frequently reiterated by Palestinian negotiators throughout the talks, was for a Palestinian state based on the June 4, 1967, borders, living alongside Israel. At Camp David, ... Arafat's negotiators accepted the notion of Israeli annexation of West Bank territory to accommodate settlements, though they insisted on a one-for-one swap of land "of equal size and value". The Palestinians argued that the annexed territory should neither affect the contiguity of their own land nor lead to the incorporation of Palestinians into Israel.

The ideas put forward by President Clinton at Camp David fell well short of these demands.

#### PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF RETURN

... a return of refugees to the prospective Palestinian state though with no "right of return" to Israeli proper; and the organization by the international community of a massive aid program to facilitate the refugees' rehabilitation.

What they [Arafat and his colleagues] want is a Palestinian state in all of Palestine. What we see as self-evident, [the need for] two states for two peoples, they reject. Israel is too strong at the moment to defeat, so they formally recognize it. But their game plan is to establish a Palestinian state while always leaving an opening for further "legitimate" demands down the road. ... [These demands] would not necessarily involve kicking out all the Jews. But it would mean the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. This, I believe, is their vision. They may not talk about it often, openly, but this is their vision. ...

In contrast to the issues of territory and Jerusalem, there is no Palestinian position on how the refugee question should be dealt with as a practical matter. Rather, the Palestinians presented a set of principles [recognizing the refugees' right of return and Israel's responsibility for creating the problem of the refugees, and acknowledging] that Israel's demographic interests had to be recognized and taken into account. ... Indeed, in one of his last pre-Camp David meetings with Clinton, Arafat asked him to "give [him] a reasonable deal [on the refugee question] and then see how to present it as not betraying the right of return. ...



**BARAK MALLEY (cont.)**

**MORRIS AGHA (cont.)**

**CONDUCT DURING NEGOTIATION**

Arafat said “No”. Clinton, enraged, banged on the table and said: “You are leading your people and the region to a catastrophe”. . . .

[In December 2000, h]ad the Palestinians, even at that late date, agreed [to Clinton’s follow-up proposals], there would have been a peace settlement. But Arafat dragged his feet for a fortnight and then responded to the Clinton proposals with a “Yes, but . . .” that, with its hundreds of objections, reservations, and qualifications, was tantamount to a resounding “No” . . .

They are products of a culture in which to tell a lie . . . creates no dissonance. They don’t suffer from the problem of telling lies that exists in Judeo-Christian culture. Truth is seen as an irrelevant category. There is only that which serves your purpose and that which doesn’t. They see themselves as emissaries of a national movement for whom everything is permissible. There is no such thing as “the truth”. . . .

There is little doubt . . . that the ideas put forward by President Clinton in December 2000 were a significant step in the direction of the Palestinians’ position. It is also beyond dispute that while the Israeli cabinet accepted Clinton’s “parameters,” Arafat took his time, waiting ten days before offering his response – a costly delay considering the fact that only 30 days remained in Clinton’s presidency.

When he finally met with Clinton, . . . Arafat explained that he accepted the President’s ideas with reservations . . . . It is clearly an overstatement to claim that Arafat rejected “every one of the President’s ideas”, and it is certainly is not the message Clinton delivered to Barak. . . .

In his account of why the negotiations failed, Barak focuses only on the Palestinians’ deficiencies, and dismisses as trivial side shows several major political decisions that are crucial to the understanding of that failure. When he took office he chose to renegotiate the agreement on withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank signed by Benjamin Netanyahu rather than implement it. He continued and even intensified construction of settlements. He delayed talks on the Palestinian track while he concentrated on Syria. He did not release Palestinian prisoners detained for acts committed prior to the signing of the Oslo agreement. He failed to carry out his commitments to implement the third territorial redeployment of Israeli troops and the transfer of the three Jerusalem villages.