



STEPS TO THE  
CONCRETE  
UTOPIA OF A  
PEACEFUL WORLD

PEACE IS TOO  
PRECIOUS TO  
LEAVE IT TO  
THE POLITICIANS

-PEACE-  
MAKE THE  
IMPOSSIBLE  
POSSIBLE

***COURAGE  
FOR  
PEACE***

PEACE  
MUST GROW  
BOTTOM-UP!

"FOLLOW-UP"  
FOR FORMER  
"VACATION  
FROM WAR"-  
AND OTHER  
PEACE-ACTIVISTS

POLITICIANS  
CAN'T FIND  
PARTNERS FOR  
NEGOTIATIONS -  
WE FOUND  
1000!

ALTERNATIVE  
VOICES, JOINT  
ACTIONS AND  
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS  
CAN MAKE A  
CHANGE



# CONTENTS *COURAGE FOR PEACE*

Editorial	
Introduction: Why this brochure?	
Another way: Steps toward a peaceful world	
Partners for 15 years	
How do the encounters work?	
Solidarity with the victims? Who suffers more?	
Eli and two girls wrote after the seminars	
Crisis of the Israeli society?	
The Peace movement in Israel	
'Normalization' in Palestine	
Simulation: Coming home to Palestine	
Simulation: Coming home to Israel	
Peace doves on their way + Peace-Appeal	
First Follow-Up-Activities	
Bridges no Walls	
Thalita Kumi: Meeting after the seminar	
Objectors of military service	
Joint excursion in the occupied territories	
Difficulties in schools	
This happened in Hebron	
Secret Pride: Stav and Noa	
Hava Beller': In the Land of Pomegranates	
Aqaba, Impressions from an observer	
The other follow-up-program - Babies in Phantasialand	
Attachment 1 Some more joint activities	
Attachment 2 Comments of participants	
Attachment 3 To be close and far away	
Attachment 4 Under Jasmine Shade	
Attachment 5 Peace negotiations	

## Introduction: Why this brochure?

The message is simple, but the goal is hard to achieve.

**Steps to the utopia of a peaceful world.**

**The way is the goal**



*The morning starts with one-to-one conversations with a free topic and daily changing partners- here in the first women-seminar 2007*

In February 2018 we met in Frankfurt in order to summarize the previous work that we developed together in the frame of 'Vacation from War' in more than 15 years with more than 2.000 participants from Israel and Palestine. We also discussed the perspectives and decided to publish this brochure.

**1. The Near-East conflict is always viewed from above and from the outside,** international leaders meet wherever in the world and negotiate peace plans and roadmaps. This has not improved the situation since 50 years. On the contrary! In retrospect, doubts arise whether these negotiations were conducted seriously. Also under Rabin, peace negotiations were held on the front stage while at the same time new settlements were built. It seems, especially Peres played by double standards. As a member of the government, he was responsible for the occupation and separation. With his Nobel Prize foundation he promotes Dialogue-projects.

*This booklet is meant to convey an idea of what we mean **by a grassroots approach**. We hope that the idea will catch on, will ignite and a peaceful social movement beyond walls and borders forces the rulers to change. We don't expect to break down political barriers at once but the simulation of peace-negotiations are more than a game as you can see in the attachment 5.*

2. Israeli governments have always rejected bilateral talks on equal terms with Palestinian representatives. In all negotiations, international emissaries mediated. The arrogant credo of Israeli power politics for the last 50 years has been: **'There is no partner for negotiations on the other side'**. The Palestinians were treated as nonexistent, like air, even after the amendment to the PLO Charta for the recognition of the State of Israel. Many Palestinians see this as a personal affront.

On the other hand, the policy of the Palestinian leaders was ambiguous in that they officially recognized the state of Israel, but internally maintained claims to ancient Palestine -symbolically and ideologically- and did not distance themselves from acts of violence against Jewish civilians.

In addition to the failed high-level negotiations of politicians, there have been some meetings of selected opposition politicians, influential VIPs and civil society delegates from both sides, meeting at conferences for a few hours or days, agreeing on general peace appeals and off they went!

In the project "Vacation from War" **we proved that there is a dialogue-partner on the other side. Not one - but thousands.**

They came to Germany since 2002 in order to meet their supposed “enemies” for the first time. They are no delegates of a political party or ‘young leaders’. They came just via hearing the whispering of friends of friends of friends. They staid together for two weeks in a hostel with a demanding seminar program.

In the end of the seminar most of them are convinced:

**“WE CAN LIVE TOGETHER - EVEN UNDER THE SAME ROOF - THIS IS A PHANTASTIC EXPERIENCE “**

There is a great need for such meetings, but it is often overlaid by intimidation, prohibitions and fear of punishment.

*We studied the old reports and marveled at the many ways on which the groups, after the first encounters in Germany, tried to continue the dialogue and to take joint action after their return. **The continuous cooperation over the years, despite Intifada, Gaza-Wars and repressive laws in Israel is unique.***

*The reports should not be issued in the archive, but are recommended for imitation. **This booklet should help to make the impossible possible!** The acts of civil disobedience can be fun such as the uni-cycling of a former Israeli army pilot with Palestinian children on the forbidden A-Shuada Street in Hebron (see below).*

*On this basis, surprisingly concrete plans were negotiated in simulated **peace negotiations**. (See Appendix 5).*

*The booklet will support those who have "Courage for Peace". **But we can only do that with the help of many generous donors.***

3. Especially for **some young people from Israel** their values and believes are breaking apart. Many of them knew nothing of the everyday life under occupation,

nothing of the expropriations for the construction of settlements and the wall, nothing of the night raids and war crimes that were committed.

Really nothing?

*The brochure is intended to stimulate former participants, especially the soldiers, to **reflect on their own shares** or to engage in public debates.*

*Could they really not see or did they not want to see? Afterwards many Israelis have refused military service or made public the dark side of their own experiences as soldiers (Breaking the Silence) or participated in humanitarian aid committees (Tay'ush, Rabbis for Human Rights) or went on Fridays to the non-violent demonstrations in Bil'in. This was a result of the truthful and convincing dialogue and not of pre-formulated official statements and declarations of delegations.*

*But **also the participants from Palestine, put the question of their own shares** in the trivialization of violence, for example, when suicide bombers were idealized as freedom fighters.*

4. Among the participants are always some whose parents or friends may not be told that they have met "the others" in Germany, as they would risk being stigmatized as "**traitors** to the Fatherland" by their own families. They feel lonely and weak.

*This booklet is designed to help them to defend their decision with convincing arguments and pictures.*

***The simulation "Coming home"** gives an example of this situation (see below).*

*Those who are supported by their family and friends, can reinforce the positive impression and promote the project – eventually gaining more supporters and donators for the project.*

5. Most activists of the **peace movement in Israel** are involved in projects that promote the social integration of Oriental Jewish immigrants or the legal equality and social emancipation of the Palestinian minority (48<sup>th</sup>). Also, more recently, the fight against racism and for the decent treatment of African refugees, who massively languish in camps in the desert, has been one of the main issues faced by Israeli social movements. These domestic policies seem to be binding the opposition's energies in Israel right now. All these activities deserve great respect.

The official **criminalization of contacts to Palestinians** (Arabs) becomes more and more common and many young people are afraid. of bottom-up dialogues. Only a few organizations support or practice it. Although the occupation is seen by most of the Peace-Initiatives as the key-political-issue, the abolition of occupation is expected more from outside.

*The small booklet is a plea for the fact that the occupation - as the central political and social cause- on both sides must be brought to collapse. Not explosively by military intervention from the outside, but rather imploding through the social dynamics inspired by a border-crossing peace-movement. Therefore **the brochure should make the project more popular in both societies** and also abroad because the ongoing bloodshed in the 'Middle East ' moves people all over the world.*

6. Most of the Palestinian Citizens Committees with their international supporters are against grassroots dialogues. They fear that the young Palestinians will be inevitably the losers in the debates and are coopted by Israeli propaganda and therefore "normalizing" their own oppression.

Encounters with Israelis (except official delegations) are called '**normalization**' and are therefore part of the

**boycott. (BDS – see below)** The social pressure on the young people, who want to meet ‘the others’ is becoming unbearable.

*The booklet shows that the Palestinian participants in no way were the weaker side in the seminars. Their strength is their authentic experience of the everyday life under occupation that they convey. In contrary to common preconceptions **they don’t need 'social control' to avoid 'normalization'***

*In this booklet we put the question: Why can’t one promote the boycott of goods (from the occupied territories) and at the same time explain his reasons in a personal way to Israelis in order to convince them?*

*We hope to initiate a debate on: BDS as a repressive decree versus open dialogues from below.*

7. Why not suggest for example a joint summer-camp for 20 politicians, 20 popular civil society representatives and 20 of our former participants?

Of course no one believes that Politicians in reality come to ask young people for advice. This is a little ironical. It is honest as well, because politicians will not solve this conflict without pressure from below. This could be a good opportunity to convey our mission to the public. **After 12 years of work with hundreds of participants it is now a main goal to spread the idea and find supporters – also in fund-raising.**

*We hope that the booklet helps for the next steps on the way to a peaceful ‘Holy Land’.*

8. **‘Courage for peace’ does not need victims or heroes.** Nobody should be endangered. Dialogue projects are controversial on both sides. The participants



being subject to denunciations, threats and attacks from their social environment. They should be supported when facing insults or attacks. Special training programs that focus on a non-violent way are key to strengthening peace activists on both sides.

*These **methods of non-violent resistance** should be trained- an issue that will be addressed in the next edition of the booklet.*

9. Most of the participants come back home motivated for further cooperation, some even burn to work for a change. They feel a 'mission' to share their experiences - with all the mentioned difficulties. But there is no network or infrastructure to encourage them. Many of them have become active in different peace- initiatives, others are still looking for direction, **because without a group in the background to be active in the tense situation is not advisable.**

Meanwhile three seminars in Aqaba /Jordan took place. (in February and September 2017 and March 2018. The next is planned for October 2018). **We hope for donations.** We are convinced that this effort is very productive.



*We hope that the reports in the booklet, especially Yaniv's impression (see below), who by chance was an observer from outside, will motivate many people to support.*

*Helga and Wolfgang went to Aqaba at own expense to get an impression how 'Courage for Peace' is working. One purpose of the brochure is to promote the collection of follow-up projects and network them with activists from other organizations and similar ideas.*

This is a 'Guide' but without instructions, just some ideas to promote 'Courage for Peace'. The booklet can help to search orientation or consolidate one's own point of view also to compare the concepts with other peace-groups.\*1)

But the brochure can't replace a central coordination office. The minimum is still a dream: There should be a small central office space on each side and a budget for a coordinator on each side.

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*\*1) After the handover of the 'Vacation from War' Project in a big celebration in November 2013, from Helga Dieter to a younger successor team, they wanted to do something completely 'new' and different. The result is now that all the initiatives and persons in Israel and Palestine, who had been building the project, since 2002 were dismissed or quit the cooperation by themselves. But the personal relationships are stronger. Many of them now continue to work together with renewed emphasis and advanced motivation for **'Courage for Peace'**.*

*We greatly regret, that the cooperation with the successor team of 'Vacation from War' is not possible. We suggested a joint seminar and several 'Follow-Up-Activities' because the two projects have the same roots and the same concept. They are built on each other and are not controversial. The offer was rejected very roughly.*

## **Another Way Steps toward the concrete utopia of a peaceful world**

Since 1994 -during and after the bloody Balkan-Wars- the Committee for Basic Rights and Democracy (Germany), started to organize summer camps for children and meetings for young people from the war zones, financed by private "Vacation-Sponsorships".

Helga Dieter coordinated the campaign 'Vacation from War' for 13 years voluntarily.

Altogether more than 20,000 children, youths and the adults supervising the seminars took part. Most of the participants were refugees and orphans. They have spent two weeks with their supposed enemies, eating at the same table, laughing, talking, and sometimes grieving together.



## **We found a partner on the other side.**

In 2001 Helga Dieter developed the plan to transfer this example of concrete peace work to another explosive zone of conflict. After the failure of the Oslo negotiations, the assassination of Rabin and Ariel Sharon's provocation in Jerusalem (Temple Mountain / al-Aqsa-Mosque), the conflict was escalating almost daily with suicide-bombers killing civilians in buses, markets or bars in Israel (Intifada) and bombing-attacks of the Israeli army, where mostly civilians were injured and killed. In this tense situation it seemed unlikely that we would be able to realize such meetings for young people from Israel

and Palestine. We met skepticism and rejection on both sides even among peacemakers. The time for speaking and negotiating was said to be past. Young people, especially, were taking a big risk, for they could be denounced by both sides for "collaborating with the enemy", with very serious consequences, especially for the Palestinians. Very few still saw any sense in the dialogue. (The only ones who kept encouraging from the beginning were Reuven Moskovic and the school for peace Neve Shalom- Wahat al Salam]. They still had contacts to Nablus and Azoun).

But then –out of a sudden- there were more young people who wanted such meetings with "the others" than we could finance, even though they were faced with great difficulties. Another contact with young people on both sides was arranged by the Willy Brandt Center in Jerusalem.

A girl from Israel and a young man from Palestine came to know each other on the Japanese 'Peace Boat'. They were amazed at their agreement in the non-violent struggle against occupation and in the establishment of a Palestinian state.

They shared their experiences with friends of friends of friends. This resulted in the initiative "Breaking Barriers". Without any background organization, in the next years they invited hundreds of young people in the snowball system to the seminars in Germany.

Between 2002 and 2014, more than 1,200 Israelis and 1,200 Palestinians in the ages of 20 to 30 participated in meetings with moderated dialogues in Germany.

All of them could escape their fear and misery for two weeks in order to meet their so-called enemies in a secure setting. They have lived under the same roof, listening, grieving, discussing and joking.

The feedback comments often tell in moving words how important and unique this experience has been. Criticism

and rejection of this very special "enemy contact" can be counted on one hand among all the participants.

Unfortunately, in the last years criticism is increasing from the outside, accumulating in threats and attacks lately. This brochure is therefore intended to convey a picture of the preparation, the course and the objectives of the joint seminars and activities.

In the first days of the first encounter in summer 2002 the fragile opening mood was shattered by the news of the Israeli air attack on a Hamas leader in Gaza, in which fifteen children and adults were killed; among them, acquaintances of some participants. The Palestinian group set up a mourning room and withdrew to it while the Israelis sat there at a loss being deeply moved. Two Palestinians who live in Israel contributed most to overcoming the paralysis.

The Israelis went to the mourning ceremony looking very insecure. The Palestinians accepted them, and the initially somewhat tense mood gradually dissolved into an intimate, sympathetic gathering. For all involved it was a stirring entry into the discussions, which then became a sincere effort to understand each other.

In the second week of the seminar came the revenge for the attack in Gaza, namely the suicide bombing in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Some of the Israelis and Palestinians were students there. This cafeteria is also a meeting point for Arab students. "Why there, of all places?" asked a Palestinian from Israel. "Why do these suicide attacks only frighten you when Palestinians may die in them?" asked the dismayed Israelis in reply.

The tension between these two gripping events brought about – despite many differences of opinion – a close atmosphere between the participants. Most of them enjoyed contact with their counterparts in their free time and on excursions.

## Partners for 15 years

Shulti (from a Kibbutz in Northern Israel) and Mohammed (from a Palestinian town in the West Bank enclosed by the Israeli Separation Wall) will describe some aspects of their long-term-cooperation as peace educators in meetings of groups from both sides. A cooperation such as this may sound simple and



trivial, but it is extremely rare, if not unique. They want to give some information about a spontaneous and exciting cooperation in a grassroots-project that has lasted for 15 years without an institutional framework (since 2014 they continued their work independently from the campaign "Vacation from War").

The drawback of the project from the beginning was, that almost 200 participants returned home each year, and were confronted with misunderstandings and rejections in their environment. Most groups set out to become active together, but without reference or networking, this was impossible.

We want to summarize the work and consider in perspective whether we can initiate a "follow-up project" with former participants who experienced the first encounters in the project "Vacation from War" in Germany and want to become active together.

Three seminars have already taken place in Aqaba / Jordan. They are encouraging despite the repression that peace activists face in both Israeli and Palestinian society.

## How do the encounters work?



**“WE CAN LIVE  
TOGETHER  
EVEN UNDER  
THE SAME  
ROOF”**

Joint Confidence games in the German jungle

The methodology that we developed together with others is that young people from both sides meet for two weeks in a calm surrounding and get the opportunity to explore the other side with the help of professional facilitators and interpreters as well as in personal contact.

1. The first day begins with a warm-up phase with social psychological confidence-games and a juggling workshop. In this positive atmosphere they come to know each other on the same level: face to face, the names, the family, the daily life, things they like to do or don't like.

The participants talk in their own mother language because, first, they can express their feelings better than in a foreign language, and second, language has the strong implication of power, rights and identity. The interpreters mostly are 48th Palestinians from Israel. They speak Arabic, Hebrew and English fluently.

Another reason we enable the **participants to** talk in their motherlanguage is that otherwise we would exclude many parts of the population, who do not speak English, from participating in our seminars.

2. In our project, we do not primarily focus on having “48-Palestinians” as participants, because they have many



other opportunities to meet. There are peace-organizations like Givat Haviva or Neve Shalom-Wahat al Salam, who fight for the equal rights of the 48<sup>th</sup> Palestinians in Israel and offer joint workshops and activities. They can take part in dialogue workshops at home. In addition the Palestinians from the occupied territories might sometimes feel dominated from two sides since 48<sup>th</sup> Palestinians are in comparison more privileged, having better access to travel, education and material goods.

3. The young people pass through a process of deep acquaintance and mutual trust. Gradually, they see the humanity inside the supposed enemy and recognize the stereotypes in their own eyes, the hostile picture they were taught to see.
4. The next step is to watch oneself through the other side's eyes. The ability to change perspectives for a certain time develops spontaneously in the dialogue; it can also be promoted through role-games. This often is a process in which the emotions are turned upside down like in a whirlpool and the stable picture of an orderly world view gets out of hand. Above all the moral



certainties of the national myths become questionable.

5. This is the prerequisite for understanding the political mechanisms and machinations, in essence why and how



these kinds of things happen. Both sides are victims of the circumstances, but might also be responsible for an escalation.

6. It more and more becomes clear that “you can't be safe without me and I can't be safe without you”. Both sides need each other to find a way out of this black-box and get rid of this situation that all are living in.
7. After building a basic relationship on confidence and trust, the facilitators want to strengthen and empower the young people in a process of liberating themselves from hatred and fears. The insight that the occupation is harmful for all, means that the Israeli side should act strongly in every-day- life against the occupation - not to help the Palestinians in a paternalistic attitude but also to free themselves from fears and mistrust.
8. The Palestinian participants more and more lose the depressive feeling of weakness and feel stronger when they experience that they can shatter the seemingly superior world view of the other side.  
They believe in themselves and improve their capacity and ability to liberate from obeying and doing whatever they are asked to do.
9. The groups bring along their own facilitators, who primarily are responsible for the seminar-contents and the group- process. This always is very difficult and demanding. For 15 years we worked intensively together and the facilitators became more professional. The German team observed and supported this process.
10. First and foremost the young people are approaching the goal when they liberate themselves from national and religious myths and reach a rational enlightenment and



emotional self-control. Both sides start to tell their stories in an open way. They confess their own guilt or responsibility, individually and as a national group, but also discuss and criticize the mistakes of the other side. We step by step aim to change the reality by this kind of meeting. If the point of view turns upside-down, the young people can create other personal feelings and attitudes with strong beliefs, and the self-conviction that they are doing the right thing – this is our goal.



***Palestinian cultural night***



## **Solidarity with the victims?**

### **Who suffers more?**

The aim of the first encounters in Germany is changing personal attitudes of very many young people to get over psychological, educational and social barriers.

Their mission in the social environment is hopefully to find humanity for the oppressed as well as for the occupiers. For the Israeli side it is not easy to understand what happened to them and their society. The permanent fear, the feeling of being surrounded by enemies, the distrust of strangers, the constant "Be-careful-attitude", the social misery as a result of the extremely high expenditure on armaments etc. In fact also the strong side is suffering. They need courage not to close their eyes again.

They hear biographical stories and see photos from the daily life under the occupation, as authentic documents from friends: The decades of misery in the refugee camps, the daily humiliations at the checkpoints, the helplessness against land grabbing and house demolitions, the lawlessness under the military dictates, the nocturnal raids, the arbitrary arrests - even of children, the bombing of entire neighborhoods to kill a suspect person, the years of imprisonment of democratically elected deputies etc. Almost all Palestinian families are affected in daily life by this oppression. The personal narratives and documents help to develop a clear view, instead of the pictures from the official propaganda.

In the first years in the seminars the Holocaust was not on the program as a special subject. But in the discussions it always was a controversial issue in the background, especially when a Palestinian disbelieved in the horrendous number of victims. Sometimes the German team was asked for testimony.

Therefore we decided that in the country of perpetrators it is the task of the Germans to inform about the worst

part of their history. In some seminars the Palestinian participants expressed the desire to get more information about the Holocaust by visiting a memorial place. (LD-house in Koeln). A Palestinian member of staff said: "As the subject of the Holocaust is often denounced as Israeli propaganda their demand demonstrates that the participants understand just how important it is to question their own certainties and to look for their own answers."

During the seminars sometimes Palestinian participants compare the suffering of their peoples in Gaza with the Jewish suffering in the Holocaust. The Israelis are shocked. But it is hard for them to explain why such a comparison is not possible. Helga worked out a lecture with personal and historical documents from which a short excerpt is included here:

"The Nazi-ideology was a unprecedented totalitarian racist ideology that especially focused on the Jewish people. At the same time the Nazis started the second world war, they pursued their persecution of the Jews. The goal was not land-robbery, because the Jews had no land. Also the confiscation of money or art does not explain their oppression since the majority of the Jews were very poor. On the one hand the Nazis needed forced labor for their armament. On the other hand it seemed contra-productive to use trains, trucks and thousands of soldiers for the deportation of a peaceful minority in a moment the army was beaten in Stalingrad and thousands of German soldiers died or were wounded. Their eliminatory racism was even stronger than the military logic.

Millions of Jews were killed in the gas-chambers, which worked like a factory. It was an industrial logistic behind the genocide. This never ever happened in men's history before and hopefully will never happen again.

Therefore you can't compare the Holocaust and the suffering of the Palestinians.

Concerning the 2nd world-war it is no question that the Germans were guilty, responsible and to blame.

Nevertheless many Germans feel as victims because of the loss of their beloved ones and their properties.

Many of the Israeli participants now expect solidarity with their collective fate from the German hosts. Some of them have sworn never to set foot on German soil. Now they came to meet their ('enemy') neighbors in Germany for the first time.

But also many of the Palestinian participants expect solidarity with their point of view because they are the victims of military force, of land-robbery, arbitrariness and loss of Human Rights.

This is a difficult aspect to balance for the German team. Most of the participants favor a Palestinian state in the borders of 67, equal rights and a peaceful life, side on side with the Israeli state. But often there are national symbols like stickers or pictures with the "Old Palestine".

If you ask them: "Where is Israel on your map? You apply for two states but I just see one," they are irritated.

Even with the Israeli participants, there is sometimes a plea for living together in one state. When asked, however, it sometimes turns out that they mean 'Eretz Israel' and justify the claims with the over 2,000-years-old Holy Scriptures. Solidarity refers to persons and groups who share our ideas and goals, not in general to nations or peoples. The basis for supporting the fight for Human Rights is non-violence: Also the way is the goal!

This experience brought us to the conclusion that after the first dialogue meeting the young people need to be instructed with historical narratives and facts as well as strengthened and trained in order to become 'graduates' in the peace-activities.



### **Eli wrote 4 weeks after the seminar**

'I learned as a child that when the state of Israel was established we vowed. "Never again we will be weak and fragile like our ancestors were. We were raised to become the strong and proud people of Israel, who can triumph over multiple invading armies, who win impossible battles. It seems that our whole narrative is based on defeating our past, proving to the world that we are the chosen people, conquering the demons of the holocaust who claim that we are weak and want to wipe us off the face of the earth. We are a very combatant state, because we have to be, because we are forced to be, because we will never go back to being a beaten down minority. It seems that we have become victims of the pursuit never to become victims again, and in that process, we have created other victims. In Germany, I found myself both facing the people who made us into victims and facing the victims that we made because of that.

I would like to get one thing straight; I will never compare the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to what the Germans did to us. Whoever thinks that there is any resemblance between the two is either completely unaware of what is actually happening in the occupied territories, or is unaware of what the Nazis did, or is just lying to himself. But then again, we don't deserve a prize for not being like the Nazis, and there is really no point comparing ourselves to the worst example of humankind that ever existed. Why I am in a situation where I need to fly to Germany so I could talk with Palestinian students. How did this happen that we of all people need to be lectured about human rights???"

**A girl wrote down**, how she and her seminar-friends looked for a peace-group to join.

I came back pretty confused. What shall I do? Should I enter a political party? Should I start a new left-wing organization or join an existing organization? Twelve participants from our delegation went to two peace demonstrations organized by "Peace Now", we attended a meeting of the "Combatants for Peace" and the "Geneva Initiative", also a project of the New Left Wing movement "Efshar Acheret". We participated also in a tour of the West Bank to talk to Israeli settlers about their attitude.

When we came to a gathering of 20 people, we made half of the participants! The organizations were pretty astonished when they saw what a large group of new young people were interested in their activities.

We also started to organize our own meetings: discussion with left activists, lectures by a lawyer, bilateral meeting with the Palestinians of our group in the West Bank (Zone C). We are at least 30 people, and there are many others who want to join us.

In short, we have a lot of motivation, we have a group of talented, intelligent and charismatic young men and women, and we are ready to spend time and energy to show that there is another way.

**Another girl from Israel** told us, what happened to her on the way home.

From the airport she went home in a public bus. She was very excited and called her best friend with the cell-phone. She described the process of her deep changes and the activities she wants to develop with the new friends from Palestine. Suddenly the bus-driver stopped and shouted at her: "Get out of the bus immediately. I don't transport

traitors". He took her bag and threw it out. She stood on a road in the middle of nowhere.

## **Crisis of the Israeli society?**

In our encounters the Israeli participants become more aware about the structure of Israeli politics. They are upset, when they realize, how high the costs are that Israeli people pay for being colonizers for more than 50 years.

More and more investments go to the military sector. Security and defense devour the taxes. They invest in methods to control the civil population, to keep it quiet and to prevent people from achieving their interests. The government tries to hide the instable situation.

Social needs become more and more obvious: in the health sector, the education system, lack of payable housing, no idea of social welfare, no support for children with special needs etc. So Israelis must take care of their inner needs in the society.

The gap between enormously high expenses for the army and social hardship becomes more and more obvious. But the political propaganda obscures the minds of people.

The consequences of the military service changed the social life in a deep and painful way.

In the Occupied Territories the soldiers lived in a space without laws. Coming home from the service quite a number of men are traumatized. Very many of the dismissed soldiers flee immediately into another world, retreat to Buddhist monasteries or plunge into the vibrant life of a city far away.

Those who stay at home often need medical treatment and psychological assistance. The family life is more and more destroyed by domestic violence. In the public there is a lack of patience and empathy but more and more violence, an atmosphere based on aggressions is growing. All these phenomena influence the Israeli society: people don't



respect the laws, corruption becomes accepted, and sexual violence is common even among high politicians.

## **The Peace movement in Israel**

At the beginning of the children's 'Vacation from War' in the former Yugoslavia the Representatives of the UN and EU were positive about the encounters as an "ideal", but always warned of their realization none the less. We heard the same warnings from peace activists in Israel and Palestine. To put the enemies at the same table was a thought they could only imagine in the official political setting with prominent and professional representatives at official conferences under international protection. Simple people, especially teenagers, in their eyes, were deemed too emotional and after some days, so they feared, there would be a violent disaster. Therefore in 2001 –during the Second Intifada- it was difficult on both sides to find partner organizations.

Looking back at all the encounters with the presumed enemies in the summer camps of 'Vacation from War' with more than 20.000 participants, there has not been a single violent conflict between youths from politically conflicting groups. Here is thus some concrete evidence that, in all crisis and war regions, there are young people who seek understanding and are prepared to make compromises to secure a peaceful future. There are great projects in Israel that are primarily related to the internal social contradictions. The social discrimination of the Mizrahim, and even more serious the third-class citizenship for the minority of the 48th Palestinians as well as the total lack of rights of the refugees are grievances against which many Israelis are involved in anti-racist projects. They are against the occupation and the settlements, but they believe that this problem has to be solved within Israel and with international support.

In this point of view the Palestinians themselves are too weak to influence the peace-process. Many courageous Israelis are active against the occupation, helping the Palestinians to defend themselves against the demolitions of their homes or preventing the settlers and the military from uprooting the olive trees, endangering life and limb. They support non-violent resistance in the Friday demonstrations in Bil'in etc.

Among the former participants there are more and more soldiers who are "Breaking the Silence" and make public the mental and physical maltreatment of the Palestinian population up to sadistic excesses - also burden or relieve themselves by confessing atrocity during their army-service. This requires immense courage within the society, for the reputation of the army in Israel is beyond any criticism. But that does not require direct relations with Palestinians.

In the "Parents` Circle" on both sides relatives who have lost children in the violent clashes, have been in contact for a long time. The best-known dramatic example was when the Khatib family allowed to transplant the organs of their child -shot by Israeli soldiers- to Israeli children.

The "Combatants For Peace" have a dialogue approach with long-term contacts between equal partners. They try to intensify this with non-verbal, theatrical means. At the seminar in Aqaba, members of this group participated and wrote a very enthusiastic report. (see below: Yaniv, Aqaba)

A well-known peace-organization with many German donors doesn't see a problem when they offer a program 'equality' in order to "enhance Hebrew language skills of Arab students, advance the status of Arab women, contribute to economic development in Arab towns and villages, and provide civic awareness training for leaders in Arab communities". No doubt that these programs are for the Benefit of the Palestinian minority in Israel, but equality is

more than skills for adaptation to prevailing conditions. Even the name 'Arabs' instead of Palestinians, corresponds to the Israeli language-rules. It seems like paternalistic conviction, similar to some NGOs. The most Israeli peace-groups offer an empathic humanitarian help or support for emancipation, while the superiority of the Israeli language and culture is not questionable.

### **‘Normalization’ in Palestine**

(short-cut of an article in the brochure ‘Vacation from War 2013”).

Most peace activists in Israel but also the Palestinian Citizens' Committees with their international supporters are opposed to bottom-up dialogues. They argue that in an asymmetrical conflict this means obscuring the real power as well as the power relations. After the end of the occupation, personal contacts could develop, first of all through delegates from youth organizations and parties. The non-binding open talk in the seminars -and still worse- the “small talk” in the free time- in their eyes serves the ideological delusion. For them Peace negotiations are a matter for politicians, and in the end only ‘humanitarian intervention’ by the international community can prevent bloodshed. But we are convinced that peace requires individual and collective learning processes. To meet in these days asks for courage on both sides, which is a form of resistance.

Convinced of the peacemaking sense of encounters, our moderators trust the dynamics of dialogue processes. But only open-ended dialogues make internal developments possible. Young Palestinians know the occupying forces only armed and in uniform. Their burning desire is to confront them and to tell them their opinion in the face - not the Israeli peace activists, but the soldiers and settlers. If this experience is

denied paternalistically, in our eyes this is not a step to liberation, but bears authoritarian structures.

The question: "How should the young people at the end of the occupation suddenly be competent, dedicated, unprejudiced democratic personalities -if they were not previously enabled" - remains unanswered.

So if the normalization promoters in Palestine admit only meetings under the condition that the Israeli interlocutors already took over the Palestinian positions without any ifs and buts, a serious trustful dialogue is not possible.

This makes the possible outcome of social learning processes to its precondition. The repetition of prefabricated slogans by 'delegations' seems accepted, but not the formation of opinions in an experimental, ambivalent, inter-active learning process.

Only those who have ever enjoyed a touch of freedom and equality know what they want to fight for. One can't rebel against the externally imposed borders and submit to authoritarian-patriarchal prohibitions. The team members understand their cooperation as a form of co-resistance. They come to the conclusion that the allegations of normalization do not apply in this important peace work. They are working to enhance the effect of the seminars by building a network over the wall in order to develop a non-violent Co-Resistance with many creative ideas (including civil disobedience).

### **Comments from participants:**

- *I'm not afraid of being reproached of "normalization". I know I am doing the right thing.*
- *Somehow it is strange first only to conquer a country and then say: 'Come on let's talk'. But anyhow, I prefer to choose the non-violent way of talking.*
- *For me this is not normalization, I can express my opinion, in the group and outside, everywhere.*
- *Either side tries to separate us from each other. It is courageous to meet. And it is a kind of resistance.*
- *After some days a participant does not want to sit in the circle. She runs around, takes photos, etc. She is reported to be put under pressure by her girlfriends via facebook. They threaten not to talk to her, because she here enacts normalization with the Israelis.*
- *I had taken part in another project before. When I returned to college, I was regarded as a traitor, some have stopped any contact to me. I asked what "normalization" means and they said, any kind of contact with the Israelis. Until today I have not understood it completely. Sometimes I cannot stand this inner conflict (weeps) I ask myself all the time if I'm doing the right thing for Palestine.*
- *I'm afraid of having fun with them, to act as if nothing had happened and then come back and be treated as a traitor. Sometimes I think I can hardly stand it.*
- *I'm not here to make friends, not to support normalization, but to talk about the matter.*

## Simulation: Coming home to Palestine



***N. is Palestinian and missed her friend M.***

***M. is Palestinian and was in Germany secretly***

M. Before I tell you where I've been, I first want you to understand something so that we can discuss in a constructive way.

N: Make the long story short! Where have you been?

M: I've been to Germany

N: What have you been doing in Germany? How did you even get there?

M: A journey that was very important and interesting for me.

N: Who was with you?

M: I was at a meeting with a Jewish Israeli group

N: You went to Germany to meet Israelis? From Israel? Our enemies? Soldiers from the checkpoints?

M: Yes...enemies and neighbors!

N: What happened to you in Germany? They kidnapped and brainwashed you? Two weeks meeting them and now they are our neighbors? We are not neighbors! We have checkpoints, we have walls, do you have walls between your neighbors? What are you talking about?

YOU are my friend, YOU are my neighbor. And we are sharing this life here in Palestine – we are occupied, we have settlers, we have soldiers, we have the checkpoints – your uncle is in jail! We have the same reality, so what happened to you? You are coming back after 2 weeks in Germany bullshitting and eating humus with your Israeli friends, normalizing and talking to me about reality! What happened to you? Where is Mohammad my friend I've known since childhood?

M: First I still want to be your friend, second...

N: I don't want to be your friend anymore!

M: You say my uncle is in jail. I was in jail too. I know your brother has also been in jail...

N: but it seems like you forgot it.

M: We lost almost everything, we are occupied – we are under the army, under the enemy control for 70 years. We lost land. We lost...

N: friends

M: we lost family! At the same time we can't, we have to do something! Take a step forward.

N: So your step forward is eating humus with the Israeli in Germany? Now I want to visit my uncle, there's no checkpoints, now they are not going to uproot my olive trees.. You told the Israelis this?

M: Yes, we did. We did it as a group! Not only me.

N: And what happened?

M: We were reasonable people, talking eye to eye to understand the pain.

N: What did the Israelis promise you?

M: It's not about promises. At least when you sit with your enemy you can somehow understand his point of view and how he sees you. This is the first step.

N No, no you will not talk to me about how I need to see his point of view. I have no freedom of movement. I can't live my life, I'm suffering every day! They need to see me first! Did they see you? Are they talking about ending the occupation, do they stop sending the army and stealing our land?

M They recognize your pain, that they are occupiers.

N: They said they are occupiers? Did you mention the Nakba in the seminar?

M. Yes, we talked about everything and they listened. It was very much like our talk here. They came in and were confronted similar as you attack me now. They didn't know what the Nakba is, we explained it to them. We shared and talked to them. Not only in a rational way. And in these moments I decided that I have to change myself.

N. To change what? We are the weak side in this game!

M First of all we are not weak. We are struggling in another way, not with weapons. We have no army but we are struggling with our humanity. If I try to fight with Israelis with weapons I will lose. If I fight, or struggle, for my independence on another level, on the level of humanity, maybe there is another way.

N: They served in the army- the Israelis you sat with? Even killed Palestinians, maybe your family?

M: At least it was one of the subjects we raised, and I'm not sure if they did or not...

N: And you still agreed to stay together with them?



M: Dear friend I believe in peace in the borders of 67, I'm not ready now after 70 years of pain to keep attacking or "drive the Israelis into the sea".

N: You lost your mind completely. You are talking to me about their peace, they keep saying „we have no partner (for negotiations)“ - yeah of course now, it's our fault (ironic voice) – they are occupying, they have checkpoints, they have an army, all we don't have.

We want our freedom, we want our land. We want this wall to be demolished. We want our lives back. I don't understand how meeting the Israelis in Germany helps us to stop this, so what results do you have?

Next time you're at the checkpoint you are going to wave at them and say „Heeey, I was in Germany, want to let me pass?“

M: First, that's not how it was – we were not doing “normalization”... We acknowledged all of us that we were brought up to be enemies, but we have to find any way to save our future generations. So if we keep saying ‘no’ forever we're going to lose everything, we actually lost almost everything already! Nobody of your „Arab“ regimes wants to support you, the whole world seems against you. At least you have to be yourself, the Palestinians have to decide what to do and where to go.

Understand that I want to live in my free state of Palestine. The borders the PLO recognized are acceptable for me.”

You should read in our report about the Peace process. In the end most of the groups simulate negotiations between the parties. The plan for a process of 15 years is incredibly detailed and

concrete. It becomes evident that the conflict could be solved if both sides really wanted it.  
(Attachment 5: 'The Middle East conflict is solved!')

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### ***An example for the difficulties coming back home***

*In Ramallah, after our meeting, Hassan urged me (Helga) to visit another colleague in the area, because there were a few participants of the seminars. They celebrated the birth of a baby. When I came in, they greeted me warm heartedly. I was repeatedly asked: "Do you remember me?" which I negated. Mothers and fathers were introduced to me, seemingly a great family celebrating a birth. I could not enjoy the festival and not reciprocate the many expressions of sympathy. Inside, I was annoyed: "They pulled me over the table pretty nicely. The whole clan was at our expense in Germany. This nepotism is actually excluded by contract". Sweet and sour I went off. In the car I asked Hassan about the people I met. I learned: No one was related to another. They didn't know each other before the seminars. After the return, they felt so misunderstood, discriminated and isolated that they formed a circle with participants from different meetings in Germany who meets weekly. I was ashamed because of my constant suspicion and control delusion.*

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## Simulation: Coming home to Israel



**AVI** is Israeli and a participant of the seminar in Germany (Shulti)

**Ben** is a friend of AVI and stayed at home in Israel.

**BEN** Shalom, it is not easy to meet you.

**AVI** I disappeared for two weeks and I haven't said you where I go to. I have seen on my cellular phone that you called me. I saw you are starting boiling.

**BEN** I was worried about you

**AVI** I decided to meet you face to face and I would like to share with you something very, very strong that happened to me. It was the first time when I met our neighbors, 20 km eastern from Tel Aviv, from Bil'in.

**BEN** On the other side? You spent two weeks in Bil'in? Together with Arabs?

**AVI** No, no, I was in Germany, together with Palestinians. I met Yasir from Bil'in.

**BEN** You met Yasir from Bil'in in Germany? Why?

**AVI** Because I want to change myself, and I want to meet the other side as real human beings. What I hear from the newspaper and from the television, I don't believe any more.

**BEN** AVI you left us for two weeks to go to Germany to meet Arabs from Bil'in and elsewhere?

AVI Not Arabs, Palestinians, I met Palestinians, it is not the same.

BEN What is the difference?

AVI This is something I have learnt. I met real people. This is something else!

BEN How do they look like and how did they bring their knife there?

AVI Are you kidding? We all had a knife in the dining room, where we met and ate together. We don't eat each other. We have learned to sit side by side.

BEN What have you talked there?

AVI That was something which is hard to explain, something what you have to experience.

BEN Are they acknowledging our rights as a state?

AVI At the beginning I thought it will give an explosion, but then step by step we have removed the walls between us. But then we reduced our fears and anger.

BEN But your new friend Yasir, will he come to Tel Aviv?

AVI You know that he strictly is not allowed to enter Israel.

BEN But he lives in Israel.

AVI Are you crazy? You know that it is Palestine by international law. But the Israeli politics ignore the law since 50 years. There is no sign to end the occupation. The IDF with all the power of weapons protects the settlers. The Palestinians are in a fainting rage against the land-grabbing. Thanks God, that they now stopped with the missiles and suicide-bombers and look for non-violent strategies. We all kill each other. In Germany we were looking for a way to come out of this.

BEN Which way did you find?

AVI We don't have simple answers and of course the change will not happen in a few days. This is a process. This is what we have to try together.

You have to come with me to Bil'in.

BEN What difference is between Bil'in or Nablus and the other cities?

AVI No difference! By chance I became friend with a guy from Bil'in. But we can go everywhere and you can see that there is a partner. People on the other side simply want to have a family, to arise children. They want to live normal.

BEN These are partners for you? I don't want to have such kind of partner. You came to me to tell me all this bullshit things. In my eyes you are a loser.

AVI Just two weeks ago I was in the same position as you have just now. I will go there again, also with my children, again and again. The way is the goal and the goal is the way. The ways come from different directions.

BEN How many people were there?

AVI 30 Israelis and 30 Palestinians.

BEN I still have a delicate question: our Holocaust.

AVI We asked all the questions –also the hard ones. And they have listened to us and we to them. Remember: It was in Germany and initiated by Human Rights activists. They gave an impressive lecture about the Holocaust.

BEN What is the result?

AVI You can't measure the results of such a process in a test. But there are hundreds of feed-back comments and very many joint activities already happened afterwards.

The first step now is to meet each other. This is complicated. But there are some places to arrange a workshop. Some participants were travelling in the Westbank and visited Palestinians. They came back with a lot of good feelings. But as a group to go there for two weeks is impossible.

BEN Did you think we can change anything?

AVI We already started- both of us- You became curious and I made sure that I can convince.

We fight and cry and laugh together and in the end it's painful to say Adieu. In Germany they say 'Auf Wiedersehen' what means 'See you again'. This is what we want.

BEN Really?

## Peace doves on their way



*In the women-seminar an Israeli peaceactivist meets a settler woman - in a role-game.*

Right after the wars in the former Yugoslavia hundreds of children and youth were invited to recover together with their so-called enemies in summer-camps.

At the end of the meetings, each participant received the linen bag with the printed peace dove as a gift. Usually all friends sign it for remembrance. We have continued this tradition in the encounters of young adults from Israel and Palestine. **We think a joint symbol or logo is important**—especially in a group with the goal to overcome boundaries.



In the Middle East conflict, this simple international symbol is suspected. Some Palestinians objected that the blue of the dove corresponds to that of the star on the Israeli flag and suggested a red dove on the bags. We tried to explain why we rejected this idea.

## Some anecdotes



Mira took part in a women seminar. She now learns the Arabic language. She mailed the Palestinians her congratulations to the end of Ramadan and the Israelis congratulations to the New Year. She wrote the text behind her

selfie in Arabic and Hebrew on the wall.

In 2004 Helga was on a market in Bethlehem /Palestine. An old woman had a white shopping bag with a peace dove on it. Helga had a look at it. The woman felt endangered and defended her bag. Helga pointed on her name, which was – with many others - written on the bag. Both women hugged and had coffee.

Some group-members visited a former participant near the



market working in a pharmacy. The bag was in the store window. They were wondering. The pharmacist explained that she had. hardly any medical products to offer in the pharmacy. Because of the Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces had not allowed the import. The bag now is her decoration and a visible protest against the violence on both sides.

**In Macedonia** the fight between the Slavic and Albanian population flamed up. While the fathers in the North of the country shot at each other, their children took part in the “Vacation from War” in the southern part of the country.



In this absurd situation **the youngsters wrote a peace appeal to the grown-ups.**

We translated it in seven languages and former participants from Kosovo till Palestine signed it at home, in schools, youth-clubs and families.

I took part in a trip to 'Palestinian civil

society' organized by a German newspaper 'taz'. We visited a new oil mill near Jenin. The two female guides spoke an excellent English and were dressed very elegant. When we went back to the bus they approached me: “We know you from the peace seminar”.

1000 young people in a small country could make a change - together with 1000 from the other side.

I dream of a peace festival on both sides of the wall with transmissions on screens, balloons, pigeons, a lot of celebrities and the media, so that the army holds back. But after we have seen how soldiers threw teargas in a harmless situation, we from outside can't ask people to go there.

The Palestinian guards against "normalization" may also feel called to attack. The responsibility is not calculable. And in general, we do not make politics of representation acting as a proxy.



More than 15.000 children and youth from Bosnia to Palestine (Nablus) signed the peace-appeal.

 <p><b>Children's Message YOU ADULTS: GET SMART !</b> Why do you abuse our faith? We children do not know anything about segregation or separation, neither by nationality, ethnic group nor religious determination. We know the language of friendship by which we play and learn and come together. We all share the same fate. We are all children from crisis areas or war zones We want to live and play together. We know no boundaries.</p> 	 <p><b>Poruka djece</b> Vi, odrasli: Urazumite se već jednom! Zašto zloupotrebljavate naše povjerenje? Mi, djeca, ne znamo što znači dijeljenje i odvajanje, bilo prema nacionalnom, etničkom ili vjerskom predodređenju. Mi znamo jezik prijateljstva, na kojemu se želimo igrati, učiti i družiti se. Svi mi dijelimo istu sudbinu: Svi smo mi iz kriznih i ratnih područja. Mi želimo živjeti zajedno i zajedno se igrati. Mi ne poznajemo granice.</p> 
 <p><b>מסר של שלום, מילדים הבאים מאזורי מלחמה ומשבר:</b> המסר של הילדים הוא, שאתם המבוגרים צריכים להתמקח! מדוע אתם מנצלים לרעה את האמונה שלנו אנחנו הילדים לא יודעים דבר על הפרדה גזעית לא ע"י לאום ולא ע"י שבטיות, דת או הגדרה. אנו יודעים את שפת החברות באמצעותה אנו משחקים, לומדים ונפגשים. כולנו משותף אותו הגורל. כולנו ילדים מאזורי מלחמה. אנו מחייב ונשחק ביחד. איננו יודעים גבולות.</p>	 <p><b>رسالة الأطفال</b> ! يا أيها البالغون في السن: أصبحوا عقلاء لماذا تسيئون استعمال ثقافتنا؟ نحن الاطفال لا نعرف شيئا عن التفرقة والفصل على أساس الانتماء الموروث سواء كان قوميا، عرقيا أم دينيا أنا نعرف لغة الصداقة التي نودّ استخدامها في ألعابنا ودراستنا وتواجدنا معا أنا جميعا نواجه نفس المصير. أنا أتون من مناطق حرب ونزاعات نريد أن نعيش وأن نلعب سوياً أنا لا نعرف أية حدود</p>
 <p><b>Porosia e fëmijëve Ju të rriturit:</b> Bëhuni më në fund të mençur! Pse e keqpërdorni besimin tonë? Ne fëmijët nuk dijmë asgjë për ndarje ose klasifikime as në baza nacionale e as në baza fetare. Ne e njohim vetëm gjuhën e shoqërimit, në të cilën luajmë, mësojmë dhe duam të jemi së bashku. Ne të gjithë e ndajmë fatin e njëjtë. Ne të gjithë vijmë nga regionet e luftës. Ne duam të jetojmë së bashku dhe të luajmë së bashku. Ne nuk njohim kufinj.</p>	 <p><b>Порука деце</b> Ви, одрасли, уразумите се већ једном! Зашто злоупотребавајте наше поверење? Ми деца не знамо шта значи дељење и одвајање, било према националном, етничком или верском предодређењу. Ми знамо језик пријатељства, на којем се желимо играти, учити и дружити. Сви ми делимо исту судбину. Сви смо ми из кризних и ратних подручја. Ми желимо живети заједно и заједно се играти. Ми не познајемо границе.</p>

Till Dec. 2006 more than 15.000 children and young people from conflict-areas and war-zones signed this peace appeal.

**Already 2005 Israeli and Palestinian group members toured in Germany to give lectures.**



The trip was organized by Katrin Vogler. She now is deputy for the left party in Berlin. The girl on the picture later became our coordinator for groups from Israel.

Shira from Israel and Imad from Palestine received an invitation from a Palestinian women-organization in Germany, to give lectures in many German schools and cities for two



weeks. Together with our teamer Rose they toured from Hamburg to the Bodensee and reached in peace groups and schools more than 1000 listeners. They had a great impact on the audience with their very different personal stories. The echo in the media was also very gratifying.

"This tour is a sign, a symbol that there is another way in this conflict." Imad said he could never have imagined in his life to speak to an Israeli at all. Today his friend is an Israeli..

# The original olive oil

The olive oil picking is on its end these weeks. The Palestinian villagers, that make their main living from their olives, are struggling to continue their lives under the occupation, the limitations, the checkpoints and the daily threats and attacks by the settlers during the harvests.

Many villagers are also facing difficulties distributing their oil. We're calling you to join your voice to solidarity

and to buy olive oil from villages near Nablus.

1 liter: 20 NIS

1 Jerican (17 liters): 320 NIS

Thank You



**A remarkable follow-up-activity** from “Breaking Barriers” was already in 2004 to help the Palestinian farmers picking olives and sell the oil.

**14 years later the Aqaba group** meets in the Westbank in order to help a Palestinian farmer -who is member of the group- in a joint olive-harvest.





**We want to build bridges – not walls**



**Wir wollen Brücken bauen und keine Mauern**



**Who comes from where?**



Mohammed and Shulti with former participants in front of the Wall



### ***Follow-up-excursions to the Separation wall***

The Israeli Wall and Fence for separation is mostly built on Palestinian land. In the picture participants refuse to be separated by the wall.



## Thalita Kumi: Meeting after the seminar



Most of the groups meet after some weeks or months in "Thalita Kumi". A hundred year old school with guest-house, run by a German mission. It is situated in Beit Jala near Bethlehem. Nowadays it is located right on the border and has entrances from both sides. They can go there without special permit.

30 young people came, 11 Israelis and 19 Palestinians. At first they talked about their feelings and experiences after their return from the encounter. Many reported how hard it was to bear the reproaches and accusations of their friends, families and neighbors because they had met with 'the enemy'. They also talked about how much they missed the group, and how they liked to remember great, happy moments, their 'honeymoon'. In the evening they went to an Arabic restaurant. The Israelis were surprised that they could find amusement together even in the occupied territories.

Some participants wanted to bring friends or cousins along which we regretfully had to decline. It is a great pity if, despite all the difficulties, young people seek a possibility to come involved in dialogue and we must reject them for lack of funds and staff.



## Follow-Up-Activities: Objectors in Israel



**Yuval (2008)**



**Shir (2011)**



**Udi (2013)**

Some 'Refuseniks' were sent to jail for several times.

Already in the first group in the summer 2002 Jonathan decided to stay in Germany. He was very afraid to be jailed in Israel as a conscientious objector. His mother was very worried and frustrated because he couldn't return for 10 years. Even as a member of an anti-militaristic group she asked me to convince him to go back to his family but he stayed.

The next summer (2003), Yossi another participant had his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in the Walberberg camp. He decided not to serve in the Israeli army. Since then he lives in Berlin and is very active in the group "Jewish voice for a just peace".

Most conscientious objectors in Israel, who are known in Germany through lectures or because they received a peace prize, were reservists from "Breaking the Silence", "Courage to Refuse", "Combatants for Peace". They have completed their military service. Repulsive experiences led many of them to despair. When they are called up for annual service and reservist or are threatened to be recalled because of the severe crisis in the Gaza-Strip or Lebanon, they refuse to do their military service. Through



them, anonymously or openly descriptions of human rights violations are being spread - leading to thoroughly breaking the myth of the most moral army in the world. The number of professing objectors at the recruit level is relatively low due to social isolation and uncertain long-term consequences. Cases are known, where recruits have been imprisoned ten times. In the last few years three of the objectors were participants in the dialogue seminars and had the opportunity to meet Palestinians face to face for the first time in their lives. Those of the recruits who are conscientious objectors are generally 17-19 years old and often find themselves isolated in a hostile environment. They are regarded as troublemakers and traitors. Friends turn away from them; even many parents are against the idea, because in Israel the military service earns a high social status. In addition, the professional future of the young objectors could be at stake, for example applying for an occupation as civil servant. Also some BEN efits and employment depend on an impeccable military assessment.

Most of the 'refuseniks' (objectors) who do not want to do military service in the occupied territories therefore claim to have mental or physical health problems in order to be written off sick by doctors. This passive refusal is quite wide spread and tolerated at some level. In the seminar 2013 were Rafat and Maysan, Druze from the Galilee. Unlike the Palestinian minority in Israel (48th), the Druze must become soldiers in the Israeli army. Rafat and Maisan are the first Druze Resisters



## **Follow-up-activities:**

**Israeli group members tour around in the occupied Westbank with their Palestinian guides**



*Two weeks after the seminar 0 participants from both sides met to take part in the weekly Friday demonstrations against the separation wall in Bil'in, together with a participant from the village. They listened to activists about their miserable living-conditions and the violations of the occupying forces against their village.*

*Several groups meet in the occupied territories in order to **plant olive-trees** – a protest against settlers and military who uprooted thousands of old trees and destroyed the living conditions of Palestinian farmers. This is a very courageous step for Israelis.*



*At Christmas time Jews, Muslims and Christians visited together the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem*



A local official shows the guests from Israel the land-grabbing of the settlers and the wall.





## Follow-up-activities

### A difficult exchange of ideas in schools

One of the ideas was from the beginning to go into schools on both sides and give the students a picture about the process in the seminars. But this is extremely difficult, nearly impossible. It needs a special permit which very few teachers dare to apply for. And often it was rejected.



But in 5 schools in Jerusalem, one of them very elite, the facilitators were allowed to offer seminars on three days (as seen in the picture). However - this does not really fit to our grassroots concept, we will be aware that we do not become the alibi of the established institution.

(Prof.Dan Bar-On and Prof.Sami Adwan wrote a very good jschool-book with narratives from both sides. It was published by the Koerber-Foundation but is not allowed to use).

**Follow-up-activities - Unbelievable:  
This happened in HEBRON SHUADA-Street.**



A former pilot of the Israeli army took his One-Wheel-bicycle to Hebron and taught Palestinian kids how to ride it.

Soldiers forced him to stop. He wrote in a letter:

“Dear Helga,  
my military service was in the Israeli Air Force (IAF), where people do not have a face or voice, they are just shadows on a computer screen.

I have met Palestinian people throughout my life, but I never had the chance to look them deep in the eyes and listen to their voices. These two weeks gave me the chance to do so. I did not always like the arguments they were referring to me, but two weeks is the ideal time to learn about the other side, and absorb their pain.”

“After your lecture concerning the Committee’s activities in Germany I was very inspired. I was looking and thinking with myself: What can I do? When I heard you talking about ‘Clowns without borders’ I was inspired.

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I thought of doing a joint project of sending Israeli and Palestinian clowns to do a show in Syrian refugee camps in Jordan. The preparations already started, I have found very talented Palestinian & Israeli artists.

The first journey is planned to happen in December, but the preparations started in September 2013. These Syrian refugees have lost all of their life in a day or two. They lost their houses, their relatives their health and dreams. I want them not to lose their taste of life and the will to survive. The Red Cross and other important organizations are helping them to survive. Let us help them to keep the reason to wake up in the morning.

Unfortunately, the situation is currently not good at the refugee camp and we are not welcome at the moment. The winter rain has destroyed many tents and the political situation in the Kingdom of Jordan is not stable enough to be able to send mixed groups of volunteers there -safely. We have taken part in other activities and have performed in air raid bunkers during the war on Gaza.



## Follow-up-activities

### Another group also went to Hebron

Nearly all of our groups visited Hebron, where a Palestinian participant led the others to the most explosive places, such as the Ibrahim Mosque and the A- Shuada Street, which the Palestinians are not allowed to enter, because the settlers occupied their houses and are protected by very many soldiers.



“And what is very special, we knew it, but didn’t believe it till we saw it: The garbage that the settlers throw out of the windows. The market traders have stretched large fishing nets over the trails to protect people and food.” The Israelis were shocked. They wanted to inform the public about the human-despising behavior of the settlers. They had to experience that no-one wants to know that.



## **Murad Amro**

grew up in the old town of Hebron. While studying he was chair of the student union. Having been arbitrarily arrested and physically assaulted by the IDF Murad was one of the founders of “Youth Against Settlements” (YAS) and is now an active member of the Coordinating Committee. He participated in our seminars 2009 + 2012. He wrote that this was very important for him and gave him strength.

One of their projects is – together with “Breaking The Silence” from Israel- to guide visitors from Israel or



abroad in the city and show them the pressure of the army against the Bedouins in the hills south of Hebron. Murad also is part of the campaign “Open A-Shuada Street”.

Murad toured around Germany with lectures about how the army protects orthodox Jewish settlers who

drive the inhabitants out of their homes in the old town and move in the houses with their large families.

**Issa Amro** also wanted to come to a seminar in Germany but could not pass the checkpoints. Today he is an EU recognized human rights defender and chair of YAS. He was several times in the Israeli jail and last year also imprisoned in Palestine, because he demonstrated for freedom of speech. After a petition from Amnesty International he was released.



## Follow-up-Activities

### Secret Pride

From Kosovo to Palestine, state institutions and foundations support and fund the concepts for 'education for leadership'. Young people are often selected by political authorities. So they should later pacify what their patrons are now destroying. A very questionable concept.

Our partner-organizations are small initiatives. The concept is grass-roots oriented and not addressed to an elitist circle of young middle-class people. However, on the other hand we cannot deny a hidden joy when former participants become famous "leaders" because of their unusual activities.



**Stav** was the first-one who slept in a tent in the center of Tel Aviv and initiated a social movement for public housing. The protest-wave reached all cities in Israel.

Even many German media reported. Very soon she became a deputy in the Knesset for the Labor Party. As far as we know she still

is very committed to the social cause and we hope that her experience with "Vacation from War" will carry a shimmer of our dream for peace into the Labor Party.

## Noa- an amazing process of change



Noa spoke as delegate of a program for "young leaders" in front of the European Parliament in Brussels. She found very personal and political words against the bombing of Gaza.

Noa was a proud soldier of the IDF. She was the first candidate to attend a seminar, who appeared in uniform. The team was irritated and discussed, whether this is acceptable for us. It was!

After her return she wrote an impressive report. Later she was invited for peace lectures in many international

institutions.

12.03.12 "Last summer I was part of an Israeli-Palestinian group that traveled to Germany for two weeks and practiced intense dialogue, and even simulated peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

At the beginning, I was slightly intimidated by what may come up in the dialogue, since I had just finished three years of military service. Those two weeks turned out to be a fascinating experience in which I got to know the other narrative of the reality two nations are facing, together with a rare chance to be with and get to know the other side. I had the chance to re-examine the values I came with, and to try and understand if I still agree with them after facing the hard stories I heard – from both sides. After the delegation ended I could not stop my learning and eye-opening process. Now, I wanted to see with my own eyes how life is like in the West Bank; I wanted to

continue finding ways to converse with Palestinians; and I wanted to advance my understanding and knowledge and transmit what I learned to others. Therefore, I got in touch with the manager of the camp, Mohammed– which I had already learned to trust during my time at the camp. He was happy to open his house, family, and experience to me. Quickly, I found myself not only discussing vital matters with him, but actually coming to stay at his house in the West Bank, getting the rare chance to see how life was like for and to talk to all the members of his big family.

I took the opportunity for an incredibly meaningful journey through the different cities, villages and refugee camps in the area. I was overwhelmed: I was exposed all at once to both the advancement of the cities and the difficulties of the villages. I saw both: life – regular, casual, ordinary; and, at the same time, I saw the conflict that surrounded it – separation walls, checkpoints, under-developed infrastructures and more.

These few days in the West Bank – meeting Palestinians and hearing their stories not in Germany, but right here in Israel/Palestine; and seeing the Palestinian territories now with my own eyes – were a true continuation of my time in Germany.

In Germany, a fire was started inside of me; returning to my homeland I now felt obligated to continue nurturing it, spreading more light on my surroundings, opening my own eyes further and helping others open their eyes to the different perspectives of our reality in this region. Following and during these experiences, I henceforth became more politically involved, in different frameworks, including among others volunteering in NGOs that promote peace-building and the end of the occupation and promoting these ideas to my peers, family and friends in my surrounding. I had an eye-opening summer that ended with countless insights, and led to a path of activism and a search for a solution.”

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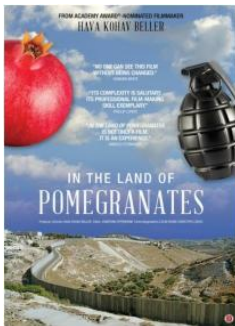
## Ten Years after Hava Beller's documentary 'In the Land of Pomegranates'



In the year 2004 Hava Beller, a filmmaker from New York, who was already honored with many remarkable prizes for her work, heard from the encounters of young people from Israel and Palestine in Germany. She decided to document these

extraordinary encounters as the culmination of her life's work. But it was not easy for her to shoot the film because the young people rejected strictly all photographs and tapes. Coming back home they fear to be branded as traitors on both sides. It took Hava two years to build trust. She spoke to many participants, even visited them in Israel and the Westbank. She visited Shulti in Israel and came to Frankfurt to persuade Helga and even to Palestine to convince Mohammed. Hava assisted in a seminar

without recording. Finally in 2006 she and her team could start recording. Since then, we have asked Hava a few times about the movie. The answer was, that she was working on it and didn't want to be pressured. In the beginning of January 2018, the news came completely unexpected: "The movie is completed. The opening is at *the Lincoln Plaza Cinemas at Broadway.*" About 500 visitors came to the premiere and film reviews were published in the NYT.



### Video 'German wave', 'Deutsche Welle'

<https://www.dw.com/en/reporters-sandra-havenith-joins-young-israelis-and-palestinians-as-they-take-a-break-from-the-middle-east-conflict/av-5855958>

<https://www.dw.com/de/reporter-sandra-havenith-macht-mit-israelischen-und-palaestinensischen-jugendlichen-ferien-vom-nahost-konflikt/av-5855829>

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdK\\_FIdNrO0DW](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdK_FIdNrO0DW)

## Aqaba - Impressions from an observer

Yaniv is a member of the 'Combatants for Peace'. He came to the seminar in Aqaba in order to meet a Palestinian member of the group. He is teaching in the university of Beer Sheva and Eilat, just a few minutes from Aqaba. But usually Israelis never cross the border. He wrote down some impressions:



*"I heard about the seminar from a Combatant for Peace. As a member I took part in numerous seminars, but more training meetings. So I cannot compare but I can give you my 5 cents about dialogue-groups more generally. As you know, one of the problems with dialogue groups is the "normalization" significance some people ascribe to them. Israelis are coming and feel good with them for doing something about the situation, but remain passive in terms of their willingness to end the occupation... At times where the policy of separation between the two peoples governs our reality every meeting is important! I hope that the Israelis, at least some of them, will be more conscious about their passive role as occupiers and will find ways to take part in changing the situation.*

*Mohammad is one of the most professional moderators I have ever encountered. He is brilliant amazing guy, you are very fortunate to have him at your side. Najah is also a great translator. The fact that she is Christian, Israeli by citizenship, and does not identify herself with neither one of the national narratives makes her also a great interpreter who can be trust by both sides.*

*The process, from my very short observation, is conducted in a very sensitive and thoughtful manner. The discourse of victims and the frustration that it produces (at least in the Israeli side) is a natural outcome of such meetings. Each side wants to gain the empathy of the other side. I don't know what the next step is, but I think that the understanding of the responsibility of each one of the participants about the situation and the future is an important stage. I guess that you set some rules at the beginning of the process of how to listen to the others.*

*I noticed the difficulties to overcome the language barrier at the free time, but I guess it was a natural separation. That's why I believe in mission-oriented groups. When you have a common mission, language becomes an obstacle to overcome and not only a circumstance or excuse to stay in your group in the free time.*

*The groups were quite heterogeneous. On the one hand this is good as it represents the diversity in both societies. On the other hand, it makes the communication within the group quite challenging. I guess this should be a strategic decision of how to recruit people. One of the biggest criticisms against the Israeli peace-group is the absence of Mizrahim Jews from the periphery.*

*Finally, I want to say the obvious. I was impressed by the crew (all of them) – amazing people with the mission - to the process-to peace.*





## The concrete utopia of a peaceful world

### The other Follow-up Program

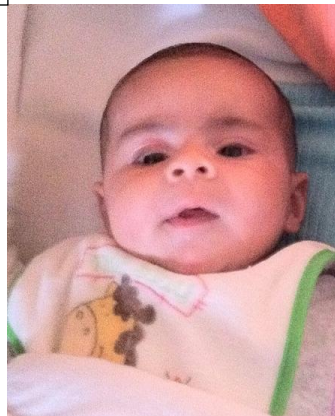
Their parents took part in the dialogue-seminars when they were young. Ten years after some have children and still stay in contact. They want their children to grow up in equality and peace, with curiosity and respect, with open minds and open borders.



*Imad  
from East-  
Jerusalem  
and Yair from  
West-  
Jerusalem.  
are neighbors.  
They could be  
friends. Why  
not???*



Mai's parents looked for a place without walls and moved from Israel to Berlin.



Maras parents from Ramallah live under the occupation and can't move at all.



## Phantasialand

In 2002 I (Helga) joined the first group with youth from Israel and Palestine. On the last day, the teenagers presented me a gift, a picture with a new flag. I thought in despair: "This poison of nationalism and chauvinism infects our reconciliation encounters". They explained me that this collage was the result of their workshop about perspectives for the future. It is the flag for an utopian, peaceful state, whose name they had discussed: Ispal or Palis. But then they decided: "Phantasialand". Everyone agreed that the road to Phantasialand would be long, leading through the coexistence of two states. When I showed this picture with the flag in the following years, an emotional discussion ensued. Also the German supporters didn't agree with the symbol - neither the 'Solidarity with Palestine' nor the 'Israel-friendship' organizations. Some said: "This undermines the struggle for an independent state of Palestine. This flag supports the occupation." Others said: "After the Holocaust the Jews need their own secure state. This denies the right of existence of Israel. This flag is antisemitic." Others said: "A common democratic state with equal rights for all citizens is the only way for a lasting peace." At that time no-one could imagine an equal coexistence of Israelis and Palestinians in one country. Exceptions were a few small groups such as the "Young Anarchists against the Wall", some of



whom participated in our seminars. Meanwhile more and more critical Israelis plea for the one-state-solution. The civil society in Palestine hopes to continue the fight for an independent

state, which is to be enforced by the international pressure of the BDS campaign.

I really dislike flags, hymns and other national symbols, but 'Phantasialand' really sounds great.

## Attachment 1

### **Some more joint activities**

- ➔ I visited a girl in the West Bank where I met her family and heard their stories. Because I saw the Palestinian territories with my own eyes, I also wanted to open the eyes of others. I now tell about my experiences everywhere.
- ➔ We were so motivated to meet again that already in September we wanted to celebrate the Iftar together, the fast-breaking in Ramadan. But this could not take place because at that night the Israelis carried out military operations in Hebron and other places in Palestine.
- ➔ Now I learn Hebrew because I was very astonished, that some of the Israelis already started to learn Arabic. I find it important to talk to each other.
- ➔ The first group of the women seminar arranged a monthly meeting in the area of Jericho to which female family members and friends should be brought, in order to create more contacts between the two peoples.
- ➔ After the women seminar, we succeeded to get special permits for the Palestinian women from the Westbank to come to Israel. We went to Sderot in Israel, very close to the border of Gaza and often the target for missiles from the Hamas. Just these days the war against Gaza started. We went together on a hill from which one can look to Gaza. We talked about our fears and thought of the suffering on the other side.
- ➔ Palestinian and Israeli women visited war-injured children from Gaza in an Arab hospital in East Jerusalem. They brought toys and sweets with them, expressing their solidarity and compassion.
- ➔ They also were currently organizing a trip to a Palestinian village – they played with the children and worked in the village.

- ➔ We look for cooperation with other organizations. We stay in contact with activists, for example with members of the 'Parents Circle'
- ➔ I was full of enthusiasm after the seminar. I now work with the Combatants for Peace, whose members were active fighters on both sides and who are now fighting for peace. For April I plan a peace conference together with others.
- ➔ We communicate with Skype and meet twice a week. In these virtual meetings we continue our discussions. This is new for the most of us and a great possibility. It also is fun.
- ➔ This seminar was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Now I am a journalist with Ha'aretz, I work with the "Committee against Torture" and I am a spokesman for "Breaking the Silence".
- ➔ Official Palestinian television has invited our Coordinator A. and a Palestinian participant to talk about the project.
- ➔ For the first time in 2013 we tried to qualify some former participants in facilitating and moderation in the hope of intensifying the dialogue and joint activities.
- ➔ In Facebook, some participants also discussed the forthcoming elections in Israel, and whether a boycott of the Palestinian minority in Israel makes sense.
- ➔ One group recorded videos from every-day-life at home and changed it with the other side. Others taped interviews. Some even cut a short film out of all the recorded videos on the cell phones..
- ➔ Mira is a young actress. In a seminar she offered sketches according to the methods of the "Theatre of the Oppressed". In joint follow-up-meetings they practiced it.
- ➔ The coordinators Mohammed and Shulti visited very many participants and their families in Palestine and Israel. Mohammed applies for a special permit for Israel and Shulti finds his ways.

## Attachment 2

### Comments of participants

- ➔ *At first, I was unsure if I should attend the meeting with the Israelis. I have seen them as my enemies...I do not believe that our encounter exacerbates inequality, but on the contrary, that walls are being torn down.*
- ➔ *Each side was afraid of each other. The wall of fear has been torn down. Now is a situation of mutual respect.*
- ➔ *As I broke through this vicious circle of hatred, I felt like a baby who only experiences love and beautiful things...After the experiences in this seminar, I do not accept that I hate other people because I was taught that they are my enemies. From today on I see life differently!*
- ➔ *What I've never experienced, and what was most important to me, was that an Israeli soldier apologized to me for being in the military. I was deeply impressed, that there are also good people among the soldiers.*
- ➔ *The Israelis are happy to have a state - but only because of the suffering of the Palestinians. We never forgot that in our activities. These activities were not normalization.*
- ➔ *My family will understand and support me because they trust me. I will also tell my friends and neighbors about the encounter. I also want to do something that will continue the seminar: Thinking with my friends, what we can do for peace.*
- ➔ *An Israeli participant has made the decision to refuse military service, even though he has to go to jail. We Palestinians have decided to visit and support him there.*
- ➔ *At first, I hated myself and felt guilty about sharing these days with the people who kill my people. But there were so many ideas in the sessions that there was not enough time and we continued to discuss during the breaks. I have explained my ideas, so I'm not misunderstood.*

- ➔ *I suspect that my society does not accept our meeting because that is considered as 'normalization'. But all participants in the seminar - including the Israelis - want the wall to fall, and here we can talk to each other about it. I would therefore like to attend such seminars on a regular basis.*
- ➔ *This intensive meeting is much more political than the first in Germany. The point is that we decided to do something and change things.*
- ➔ *Meeting women who wear hijab was strange. But under the hijab I discovered that they are open-minded and pluralistic.*
- ➔ *I felt that my meeting with them and theirs with me is very significant for the rest of our lives!*
- ➔ *I think the fun part is crucial for the bonding and the feeling we are all human beings that enjoy our life.*
- ➔ *The topics were very important and clear. But then the Palestinians sang together a song "Ana Dami Palestini" (My blood is Palestinian). It struck me and made me feel that I did not belong to them. Separation is created by narratives of identity, not by blood.*
- ➔ *When the Palestinians asked not to take pictures of them because it could be dangerous for them, I understood how difficult it is to bring together voices from both sides.*
- ➔ *I was really angry when I was told that the Israeli army was moral. I am experiencing the opposite every day.*
- ➔ *In the breaks during the lectures I understood how they think. This open time is very important. So I stick with my opinion and do not accept the warnings about 'normalization'.*
- ➔ *As a student and then at work, I experience the violence of the Israeli soldiers daily at the checkpoints, and I hear the sad news.*
- ➔ *I did not trust them, because they took away our land. My mother can no longer walk because of the Israelis.*

- ➔ *Before I came here I was very afraid of the ideas in this seminar.*
- ➔ *How can I meet people who have caused so much suffering to my people?*
- ➔ *Although the Palestinians have no army, this suffering is inflicted on them.*
- ➔ *Through this experience in this seminar I want to break down this wall of violence between us, together with some from the Israeli side, who work for peace and want to end the occupation.*
- ➔ *The Israelis should be informed that the occupation is damaging not only to the Palestinians but also to the Israelis.*
- ➔ *The seminar was the total turning point in my life.*
- ➔ *I'm asking myself: If we are able to live together here in the seminar, why shouldn't we be able to do so in Israel/Palestine?*
- ➔ *We have come to hear your voice — before we have only heard your shots.*
- ➔ *Separation is poison. Now we all know a cure.*
- ➔ *To the heroic supporters of the project: I thank you for the support of the Palestinian people who have now lived under occupation for more than 60 years. This Seminar gave me the possibility to tell the Israeli side directly of my suffering and to stand up for the rights of the Palestinians. At the same time I could relax and lessen the pressure weighing on me because of the occupation. At the end we could come to proposals for a just and true peace. I deeply thank all the supporters.*
- ➔ *When the Israeli group accepted that the occupation should be ended and that the settlements are illegal it was the most important day for me.*
- ➔ *I didn't come here to elicit tears of sympathy from the others. I came to cry out loud that I'm right and what the truth looks like. The project has offered me just that. Thanks to everybody.*

- ➔ *For me as a Jew whose family experienced the atrocities of the Nazis it was very difficult to come to this seminar to Germany. While discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict I had to face the horrible past that some of my relatives went through. It helped to identify with the Palestinians who come to meet a part of a people that has done and is still doing horrible things to them.*
- ➔ *Above all, I have understood how different the Israeli-Zionist narrative is, how intensively things are hidden for us and how complicated history is.*
- ➔ *From the stories of the Palestinian women about their daily struggle with the occupation I understood that it is my task to stand up against it in a clear manner. I also understood how much the responsibility for the end of the occupation lies in the hands of the Israelis.*
- ➔ *There was a moment on our way to the station, when we finally started to tell jokes about each other. These are the moments when one can finally think – Yes, this is going to work.*
- ➔ *I think a lot of what the Israelis are focused on, is fear: Fear of the other side, fear of losing our country and that fear is what motivates the Israeli government and the Israeli society. At that moment I truly felt that I had lost this fear and will never let it take a hold of me again.*
- ➔ *Palestinians told us that before this seminar it had never occurred to them that Israelis can be anything but soldiers or violent people, and that now they feel some hope meeting us. All this happened after some Israelis said that they feel they will never forget or ignore the Palestinian friends' suffering. These activities were not normalization but they make us think about how the occupation can be stopped.*

## Attachment 3

### **To be close and far away.**

*Just before we finished this brochure the third encounter in Aqaba took place. Guy's report was some days on facebook and already found many readers. Najah translated it from Hebrew:*

- # I went down to Jordan with a delegation of Israelis and Palestinians. Some I have known since years, and some I just met for the first time. Here are some pictures, emotions, stories, thoughts, dilemmas.
- # The Rabin-Aqaba border crossing.  
At the Jordanian side, they ask Shlomi to take the saxophone out for inspection. He starts playing. Everyone is happy. Beautiful and strange crossing the border on foot- to see your country from the outside. The lights of Eilat, receiving radio stations in Hebrew. *To be close and far away.*
- # Conversations begin: No matter how hard I try to rearrange the reality for myself in a way that I can live with it in peace, it's disturbing the peace. That's it. Bum-Bang, it's over.
- # There is no example in the world of a country that had military control over another nation for a long time. And rightly so. There is no reason in the world that can justify military control over other human beings. No color, no religion or nationality, no economic superiority, no security reason.
- # Choosing a nonviolent struggle. Jamil's mother lost her young son by the Israeli army. She sees on the news that Israeli children were killed in a suicide bombing and cries. Her older son tells that he asked her "But Mom, why are you crying for them? They are not ours, they belong to the Jews."  
"Children are children, a mother's pain is a mother's pain", she answers, "bloodshed after bloodshed will not bring us life."
- # Deception. The vast majority of the Jews haven't met Palestinians face-to-face. A large part met them only through weapon sights and uniforms or through screens. And vice versa. When you meet and talk and listen there is a chance to see things differently and to change.
- # I agree with a Palestinian girl who said: "Do not believe your leaders, challenge them, whether they are Palestinians or Israelis. And work on peace with your own hands."



## Under Jasmine Shade



This is a letter from a Palestinian participant, four weeks after the joint seminar in Germany, in the wake of the Arab liberation movement (Short-cut).

*My life had been full of blind radicalism, far away from any humanity. It was like the life of every Palestinian youngster, marked by destruction, murder and hatred of the occupiers who had robbed us of our youth. Before I came here I had doubts: "How am I supposed to*

*sit together with the eternal enemy of my people, and listen to and discuss with them? How can I live with them under one roof? They killed my best friend, they bombarded my house and attacked us with heavy artillery, they put many of my prisons in I applied for the seminar, where we were to meet our enemies in an atmosphere in which both sides were, for a time, equal. I would engage them in a bloodless battle of words in which I am as strong as them. At the airport I looked at their faces from a distance. So far, I only knew faces that express the power of the occupiers. Should I greet them at all? It was an inner struggle between my human side and the pains of my life that would force me to betray my anger in my face. Finally, I reached out my hand and greeted them with a smile.*

*On the bus there was a tense atmosphere. They sat around me, and I watched them, trying to discover their human side. Are they really people like us? I was surprised. We actually have much in common, the*

same movements, the same looks, and even the same clothes. Suddenly, one said "Hi" to me. It was the first time that an Israeli had ever spoken nicely to me. We talked. I knew that we live on the same earth, but I felt that we lived in different worlds. What surprised us most was that our homes made us neighbors. We live just a few hundred meters apart. But the reality is that the distance between us seems infinite.

In the first few days we talked about ourselves, about our past and present, about the occupation and our personal experiences, about everything that moves us. We showed the other side images of everyday life. Our weapons are our words and our past, which is full of wounds.

The Israeli Sharon cried as she spoke about her slain father; the Palestinian Samah cried when she talked about her slain brother. We all cried, not only over the dead, but we were crying about the vain wishes for a better life that we all desire so much.

Day after day during our stay in Germany, I felt something inside me that was coming closer to the surface. Something I had been looking for my whole life, but could not find. Now I came so close - my feeling that I'm human.

Now I am convinced that the "meeting with the enemy" is not a betrayal of the blood of those killed and my people. It is the right way to prevent more deaths, more destruction and expulsion of my people. Because war attracts only war - death attracts only death.

When I had lost my friend to the Israelis, I felt a strong rage in me, which almost led me to do something violent against the occupation. Today I mourn over each killed from both sides. I am now a free man, free from radicalism, free from nationalistic fanaticism and religious intolerance, and I am dealing with morality, **which is a human privilege.**

## Attachment 5

### Peace negotiations:

#### The Middle East conflict is solved!

(This was the friendly ironical headline of a German newspaper ND)

Toward the end of the seminar with young people from Israel and Palestine usually "peace negotiations" between the parties were simulated. (Foto:ND)

This method was developed in the "peace school" in the Arab- Jewish village "Neve Shalom-Wahat al Salam". Most



of our facilitators from Israel and Palestine have qualified there in courses for Moderation or Mediation.

These simulation games were modified in our concept.

However! There was skepticism concerning the simulated peace-negotiations:

The practice of statesmanship, a formula language, the acceptance of hierarchies etc. does not correspond to the grassroots approach of the project. We have always criticized the widespread "education for leadership".

'Our' negotiations should not be oriented on real politics, leaders or institutions. The groups can also create models of an utopian community. But most groups stick to the realities.

There are the atrocious problems on the table and the question is in the background: **"What compromises should your government go into and what sacrifices would you personally be prepared to bring?"**

In the summer of 2014, however, the group drew up a sophisticated roadmap to a **peace agreement**. This really surprised everyone.

### **The following regulations in a peace-contract with 3 stages have been agreed:**

1. The **borders** of 1967 should, in principle, be valid. Exchange of land is possible if agreed on both sides. Each state defends its borders with the outside world. Palestinian security forces are stationed at the borders of Palestine. An Israeli-Palestinian security force protects the common border. A territorial link with the **Gaza Strip** is to be established within the 1967 borders.  
In the **second stage** the separating boundaries are gradually being reduced. The holy sites remain under international sovereignty.  
In the **third stage** as part of the one-state solution the borders between the two areas will be cancelled.
2. It was agreed that all **settlements** built in the West Bank, on land which had been occupied since 1967, would be dismantled. All settlements in the West Bank should be vacated by Israel. The continuation of single settlements should be possible with plausible compromises, exchange or compensation.
3. **All prisoners** in Israeli jails under 18 years have to be released immediately. Establishment of a Palestinian jurisdiction. If slight crimes are charged, a neighborhood committee can decide. For serious offenses, Palestinian and international judges will decide the guilt or innocence of the prisoners under international law.  
A kind of truth Commission (War-crimes) like in South Africa could be developed in Israel and Palestine.

4. **East Jerusalem** can be the capital city of Palestine. West Jerusalem can be the capital of Israel.

The Old City would remain independent from either state, for example, through provisional UN control.

All sacred sites are to be accessible to all.

The holy places come under UN control. Because thereby the Palestinians have renounced part of their territory, they are compensated by getting out of West Jerusalem areas of equal size, which can be integrated geographically with East Jerusalem.

If both parties are ready for the second stage the Holy Places are further placed under control of the common Government.

5. International **monitoring of non-conventional weapons of mass destruction.**

6. Establishment of a **regular Palestinian army** to protect the state of Palestine and its citizens instead of the (armed) Palestinian resistance movements.

In the third stage: **End of the regular armies on both sides.**

7. Construction of **airport and seaport** on the Palestinian territories and waters. Each side has the exclusive right to use its own **natural resources** and water resources.

## 8. Refugees

- a) Palestinian **Refugees**, who fled or were expelled from the Nakba have the right of return. They have one year to register **and can choose a non-binding option for return or financial compensation.** After that, you can roughly estimate what numbers there are, as the estimates fluctuate between 3 and 5 millions.

- b) They have to decide after another year. For this choice

after 2 years **concrete compensation sums** must be fixed by international agreements.

Above all - Israel has to pay the compensation- also the industrialized states and the religions with roots in the area, as well.

- c) Those **refugees** with the option to return who still live in camps can first move into the vacated houses of the settlers. Renovation plans for the new users are being reviewed and supported, (use of swimming pools as cisterns for garden irrigation etc.).
- d) For the other refugees, who want to go back, new social housing projects must be built in Israel soon.  
If a house is still standing but inhabited, the former owner must accept another (new) house or a compensation. **The injustice of expulsion cannot be made good by new expulsions.**

**9. After 5 years delegates from politics and society will discuss which points have been solved** in the 5 years and which problems still need time or must be renegotiated. Then the way to a federal state should be prepared by the example of the EU.

**After another 5 years, the two small countries can grow together to a larger one**-including the two armies, the currency etc

Due to lack of time, the 'delegations' could not discuss the outstanding issues in detail. However, the complicated draft for a peace contract was designed in summer 2014 in Mohammeds and Shultis group and agreed between the two sides. Some ideas were already created in other seminar groups. The last day the 'delegates' presented the results to the public - in a real press conference. This is more than another 'photo opportunity' of the 'statesmen'. There were some enthusiastic reports in the German press.





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