

## REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT:

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### Case Study



**The Peacemakers: NGO Efforts in the Middle East  
1948-2001**

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This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

**These documents do not represent a final product of the project.** While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

## **Section 1. Context of the Middle East Conflict and Peacemaking**

The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 ended in a truce in 1949 - not in a peace agreement - and there has been conflict ever since, sometimes intense. The war itself represented failure of the United Nations' partition plan, which was to divide Mandate Palestine into two roughly equal-sized geographic locations, one for a Jewish state, the other for an Arab state. As the war ended, however, the new state of Israel, proclaimed in 1948, occupied 78% of the territory of Mandate Palestine. In addition, the war created a massive refugee problem. Some six to seven hundred thousand Palestinians were driven from, or voluntarily left, their homes in the territory that was to become Israel and migrated to the West Bank which came under Jordanian control, and to Jordan itself. They moved as well to Lebanon, to Syria, and to Gaza, which was controlled by Egypt. A high proportion of the migrants ended up living in refugee camps which had been established by the newly-created United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The end of the war left Jerusalem divided. The Arab section in the east, including the Old City, was under Jordanian control, the western sector of the city became part of Israel. Barbed wire and a narrow "no man's land" separated the two sectors.

The second war for Palestine was the strikingly brief war of June 1967, which saw further Israeli successes. Israel ended the war in control of territory from the Lebanese border in the north, the Jordan River in the east, and the Egyptian border in the south - the whole of Mandate Palestine. Beyond this, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula up to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal from Egypt, and the Golan Heights in the northeast, from Syria. The peace treaty with Egypt in

1981 returned the Sinai to Egyptian sovereignty, albeit including a US-led international observer force stationed in the Sinai. The success of 1967 brought well over 1,000,000 Palestinians under Israeli control in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis established an occupation regime to administer the territories. In addition, Israel expanded the borders of Jerusalem to the north, east, and south, incorporating numerous Palestinian villages and a whole Palestinian refugee camp (Shuafat). All of East Jerusalem and the extended areas were annexed to Israel. Between 1967 and 2001, 144 Israeli settlements inhabited by approximately 200,000 Israelis, have been established in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel concluded a peace treaty with Egypt in 1981 and with Jordan in 1994. An “Accord” was agreed to with the Palestinians in 1993 - the Oslo Accords; which was an interim agreement aimed at ceding some rights to the Palestinians on the way to a final status peace treaty. The most contentious problems - the right of return of refugees, the status of Jerusalem, the settlements that had been established by Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, the borders separating Israel from what was expected to become an independent Palestinian state, and water rights - were all postponed for several years to be decided upon in final status negotiations.

The nature of the issues to be resolved between the Israelis and the Arab states and between the Israelis and the Palestinians are visible in the issues left unresolved from 1948 and 1967.

## **Section 2. Conscious Efforts at Non-Governmental Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution**

There are five fairly distinct phases during which efforts at resolving the Israeli-Arab/Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been made. This case study will focus on those efforts undertaken by non-governmental organizations and individuals, although it will be impossible not to refer at times to the attempts at efforts by governments to become involved in the process. These five periods reflect clearly changing circumstances in relations between Israel, the Arab states, and the Palestinians and the changing potential for involvement by local participants.

Period one, 1948 to 1967; the focus of what little non-governmental peacemaking activities were carried out was largely that between Israel and the Arab states - Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. On the ground, however, several agencies provided direct humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees.

During the second period, 1967 to 1987, Palestinians themselves became the focus in the wake of the Israeli capture of the West Bank and Gaza. Also, state-to-state efforts continued.

Period three, 1988-1993, was marked by the PLO's "recognition" of Israel and by the Intifada or uprising, which began in December 1987 and involved local Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank in opposing continued Israeli occupation. 1991 saw both the "Gulf War" and the opening of the multilateral Madrid Talks.

The fourth period, from 1993 to the summer of 2000, was marked by the Oslo Accord of

1993 and subsequent follow up agreements, negotiated in Cairo, Paris, Faba, and the subsequent return to Palestinian territory of the leadership of the PLO who had been living in exile. The Palestinian Authority was established, elections held, and areas of autonomous control turned over to the Palestinians.

The fifth period began in the summer of 2000 with the failure of the intense negotiations at Camp David to yield agreements and the beginning of a second uprising (the Al Aksa Intifadah) in late September.

The activities of NGOs will be examined in each of these time periods, we will identify and characterize those elements that seemed to have made a difference either in success or failure, considering the following questions:

*Who?* Which organizations and/or individuals were involved? Where did they come from and who did they have carrying out the activities? Were they experts with knowledge and experience of the region, either through formal training in Middle East issues or through experience on the ground over time? Or were they experts in negotiations, conflict resolution, and similar efforts who take their skills to many different areas or issues?

*What?* What did the NGOs and the individuals do? Did they set up groups for dialogue over a wide range of issues and to explore insights, interests, and identities of the participants? Did they engage in more structured pre-negotiations and even serve at times as a “front” for

official parties? Were they engaged in building a peace constituency with the expectation that numbers of people cycled through their meetings would enlarge the circle of those who had experience meeting those on the other side of the conflict and engaging them in discourse and coming to “know” people on the other side? Were the projects they designed short-term, one-or-two-session efforts aimed at a specific short-term goals or were they longer-term, based on the judgement that repeated interaction and discussion were necessary?

*Legitimacy:* What kind of legitimacy did the third party NGOs have and where had they gained it? Had they developed credibility through previous work in the region or through activities of conflict resolving in other places and other circumstances? Did they have a patron, as in the Oslo case, where the Foreign Ministry was involved in the background from the beginning? And what about the participants - did their prior activities, their present positions, their engagements, and/or their patrons give an added legitimacy to the effort as a whole?

*Support:* Where did support come from? Was it from government funds either channeled through an NGO or directly through a Foreign Ministry, or did the support come from an aid agency, a foundation, or a wealthy donor working through a personal or family fund?

*Results, Goals:* What about the product, either anticipated from the outset or developed in the course of the work? Was there to be a report, a position paper, talking points, options or recommendations? Was the product to be briefings which the bilateral participants could bring back to their own leadership and, in turn, try out ideas which they heard emanate from leadership

conversations? Or was the product to be a process of “normalization” in which individuals or groups from the two parties could find modes of interaction, e.g. joint research, joint discussion groups, jointly taught courses, and other activities to engage wide numbers of people and largely depending on the third party for financial support rather than direct mediation or intervention? Or was the product the less tangible “understanding the enemy?”

*Reach:* Who was involved? Elites within the two parties? What attention was given to the transfer of knowledge, information, understanding, upward to leaderships and outward to broader segments of the public? How were the activities structured to reflect these two often contradictory aims? Were sessions open or closed? Were the groups small (3 or 4 from each side) or large (30 to 40 total)? Were there audiences for the encounters?

*Contexts:* Finally, in what contexts have the NGO efforts taken place? How “ready” have the sides have been, or can small groups effectively work if they are significantly ahead of their government and/or leadership?

### **3. Examination of the Phases**

#### **1948 - 1967**

In October 1948, the United Nations turned to the British and American Quaker groups to come to Gaza to join in an emergency relief effort. The Quakers had been active in Europe at the end of World War II in providing shelter, food, and related emergency humanitarian assistance, and on the basis of these efforts (for which they had won the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize) they were



called in to be part of a broad relief effort in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. In the course of their efforts in Gaza, where they worked largely with Palestinian refugees in the 19 months prior to the establishment of UNRWA, Quakers provided food, cooking oil, mattresses, tents, blankets, and other materials necessary for the conduct of refugee camps.

In the course of these efforts shortly after the truce between Egypt and Israel had been established, the Quakers were called into the Negev not far from Gaza. They were asked to provide food and other humanitarian assistance for a group of civilians who were trapped in an enclave held by some 3,000 Egyptian troops. This brought them into direct contact with the young colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was Chief of Staff to General Said Taha.

Subsequently, during the 1950s, the Israelis asked the Quakers to help them work toward the achievement of a *modus vivendi* with Egypt, particularly following the revolt of the “Colonels,” the overthrow of King Farouk, and the seizure of the Suez Canal, using the channels that they had developed. This activity came to a head in the spring and summer of 1955, when Nasser, who had become the Egyptian president, requested that the Quakers undertake shuttle diplomacy to head off what looked like an emerging military conflict. They turned to Elmore Jackson, who had worked in Gaza, but was at the time the Quaker representative at the United Nations. The effort, which was supported by the Israelis and given US diplomatic encouragement involved a series of trips back and forth between the Israeli leaders David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett and Nasser. Jackson played the classic intermediary’s role, shuttling back and forth, talking to the two parties, finding areas of agreement, and carrying messages with increasing

urgency.

The effort ended in failure when it became apparent that the Israeli military leader Moshe Dayan was unwilling to reach agreement for Israel to stay out of what ultimately became a joint British/French/Israeli military effort to recapture the Suez Canal which Egypt had nationalized under Nasser's leadership. The two roles - humanitarian assistance on the ground and back channel diplomacy - provided the Quakers with an access and legitimacy which lasted for a good number of years. Within the Israeli and Egyptian foreign ministries, the very name Quakers or Friends opened doors particularly as long as some of the older ministry personnel who had had direct or indirect with Jackson and his efforts remained on the job.

The Gaza relief effort it turned out also remained in memory for a long time. In 1975, when I went to Beirut, Lebanon on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee to make direct contact with Yasser Arafat, at our first meeting, a late-night supper attended by some half-dozen people at the home of Arafat's secretary, included the senior PLO leader Abu Jihad and his wife Um Jihad. As I opened the session over the dinner table and began an introduction of the Quakers and their efforts, I was immediately interrupted by Um Jihad who said that she would tell the group who the Quakers were, since she had remembered as a young woman living in Gaza in 1948 that it was Quakers who had brought cooking oil and blankets to her family during those first months in the refugee camps. The incident remained a vivid one for Arafat in our subsequent visits. He had clearly identified Quakers as people with credibility derived from their work in the Palestinian refugee camps.

The Quakers, in the post World War II years, were working in a number of areas, and developing an explicit international NGO role and style. They consciously engaged in efforts at bringing former combatants or potential combatants together. They initially focused on the East/West Europe split and on the US/Soviet divide. Their mode of operation included international conferences aimed initially at young diplomats and young leaders who were invited to somewhat out-of-the-way sites - a Swiss resort off-season, for example - for intense discussion of outstanding or critical issues. In addition to the conferences, Quaker international staff conducted visitations, circulating among contestants or enemies, sharing ideas and views that they had heard from the other side and including some of their own suggestions at how mediating roles might be achieved. Indirectly, they were carrying messages. Constituencies for understanding, if not peacemaking, were being built in many quarters; the directory of participants - young leaders and young diplomats - who had attended the conferences served for many years as a way to directly enter the door in government offices and foreign ministries, as well as newspaper offices, university centers, and on occasion local NGO groups.

### **1967-1987**

In the aftermath of Israel's stunning military victory in June 1967 with the capture from Syria of the Golan Heights, from Egypt of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, and from Jordan the West Bank territories which they had administered since 1948, the Quakers undertook an extended effort in Middle East peacemaking. A working party was established by the board of the American Friends Service Committee in 1968. It was chaired by Landrum Bolling, at the time

President of Earlham College, the Quaker school in Richmond, Indiana (he took a leave of absence to carry out the work). In the initial working party, which included some of the “brass” of American and British Quaker groups, key figures included Allan Horton, an American working at the time for the American University Field Service, who had spent a year and a half working with the Quakers in Gaza in 1949 and 1950. Also involved was Don Peretz, an American-Jewish conscientious objector and scholar of Middle East politics and history who had worked for the Quakers in Haifa and the Galilee within Israel in 1949 and 1950. The report, which was ultimately published as a book/pamphlet, Search for Peace in the Middle East, was translated and published in both Arabic and Hebrew as well as French and German.

It stood out from many earlier reports and proposals for Middle East peace in that it introduced for the first time in specific fashion a call for self-determination for the Palestinian people. In addition, it called for Arab acceptance of Israel’s existence as a sovereign state. It stressed that peace among the states in the region must be made in consultation with Palestinian Arabs. In the course of preparing the document, members of the group visited in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. They traveled to refugee camps and entered discussion with political leaders and displaced Palestinians. The proposals advanced in the report were cast in practical terms. They called for steps to be taken by the combatants in an effort to reach formal peace agreements. A series of potential options were discussed. The document was used by many church groups and some synagogues; members of the working committee visited as part of a process of public education. This was very much in the context of long-standing Friends Service Committee efforts both in the United States and in the United

Kingdom to educate the public, and through the public influence policy in areas of war and conflict such as the Soviet-American confrontation, nuclear weapons, and South African anti-apartheid and freedom efforts.

There was a second effort as well, a classic attempt at second-track diplomacy. Landrum Bolling, very much an active and charismatic figure, pulled together a small team which included Roger Fisher from the Harvard Law School, who had been developing the program on negotiations and found the Quaker effort a perfect place to try out ideas. Gidon Gottlieb from the Law School at New York University was also recruited, very clearly to bring into the group a Jew whose family had ties to Israel, in that Gottlieb's father had been an attorney for the Lord Montifiore, the British Jewish leader who had been influential in establishing settlement projects for Jews in the Holy Land. Paul Johnson, a Friends Service Committee staff member assigned to the Middle East, was resident in Cyprus, and had been traveling among the Middle East countries for some time. The approach the team adopted was to use part of the text in draft form, especially the recommendations, as the focus for discussions as they traveled among the parties to the conflict attempting to establish common positions and to stimulate negotiations. The effort, beginning in 1968, was intense and sustained. Their access initially was gained through individuals who had been familiar with Quaker efforts twenty years earlier and still welcomed them for discussion. In their enthusiasm the group sometimes made statements that became public, often offending one party or the other, causing the necessity for patching up difficulties that arose. Needless to say, political feelings were tense, and individuals who had allowed themselves to be part of discussions were nervous about being publicly identified or quoted.

Ultimately, this effort at NGO second-track diplomacy faded out. The leaderships of the several parties were not ready for continued exchange and the vehicle might not have been the right one for the time.

Members of the committee overseeing the efforts from the United States also queried what might have been an organizational conflict built into the two-part approach, creating a public document while at the same time attempting second-track diplomacy. The efforts at the diplomatic level used a preliminary version of what became a hallmark of Roger Fisher's later efforts at diplomatic backchannel efforts - the establishing of what he called a "single negotiating text" which both parties would use as the focus of their discussions in the expectation that it might be refined to become the actual negotiating document. There was another issue raised at the time that came up through discussions with individuals who had been visited by the Quaker diplomatic team. Did the members of the team know enough about the situation in the Middle East itself? None of them had had real training in the field nor did they know the local languages, Arabic and Hebrew. Among members of the working party that prepared the original text several had significant Middle East background; the diplomatic team lacked this strength.

The Quakers (joint British-American, albeit led from the United States) made a commitment at the time to establish a longer-term effort on the Middle East to do the kind of things that the Quakers had done elsewhere - service on the ground and bringing conflicting parties together in a variety of circumstances. Quaker representatives established residence and offices in the Middle East with only broad guidelines for the clear to move among the parties and

to establish credibility through work on the ground. After the 1967 war, UNRWA invited the Quakers back to Gaza, this time to establish kindergartens in the refugee camps, which lay in territory captured by Israel and under Israeli military control. Expatriate staff moved to Gaza, recruited local teachers and supervisors, and put in place programs in most of the thirteen Gaza refugee camps. The regular visits of other Quaker staff and committee members created links to a variety of local Palestinian leaders and activists as well as teachers and UNRWA local and expatriate staff. A second on the ground project was set up in 1973, a legal aid office in East Jerusalem. Initially, it provided services for Palestinians in East Jerusalem then extended to the West Bank efforts to help Palestinians make use of Israeli social services and civil legal services. Slowly the project began to deal with Palestinians who became involved with the Israeli legal system both in Israel and the military courts in the occupied West Bank. The office worked jointly with Palestinian lawyers, most of them Israeli citizens who brought cases or represented individuals. They also worked with Israeli lawyers who were willing to take cases on appeal to the Israeli High Courts. As this process expanded, it provided close links with the Palestinian political leadership and emerging human rights groups in the West Bank and with Israeli civil rights and civil liberty lawyers and organizations.

There was a second ongoing effort which involved the Quaker representatives living at first in Cyprus, then Jerusalem, and then Amman, Jordan who visited with individuals across the political spectrum from the Israeli nascent peace movement to the hardliners among the ultra-Orthodox, the religious nationalists, and the political rejectionists. They also met with local Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as members of the leadership living in

Beirut, Damascus, and Jordan. At times these meetings involved members of the oversight committee from the United States (I took part in such efforts through the 1970s and 1980s). In addition, these Middle East representatives brought together international groups which gathered in Cyprus, Athens, Rome, Istanbul, and Geneva, or other sites to which Palestinians, other Arabs, and Israelis could travel. In the 1970s and early 1980s it was still too early to count on direct exchanges between Palestinians and Israelis, albeit these began to develop in the late 1970s. The aim of these broader meetings was to build a constituency of individuals in the Arab states, among the Palestinians, and the Israelis who had an interest in constructing the means of peacemaking among the parties. By the late 1970s there was an increasing attempt to sharpen the direct Palestinian-Israeli focus of the discussions. Initially, the topics had to be somewhat oblique rather than directly focusing on efforts at conflict resolution and peacemaking, since for some of the parties, especially the Syrians and some among the Palestinians, these topics were fraught with too much political baggage.

In 1975, the American Friends Service Committee sent a two-person delegation (I was a member) to Beirut to meet with Yassir Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to attempt to widen the terms of who could be involved in Palestinian-Israeli meetings. At that time, the PLO, which had become (in 1974) “the sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people,” had established a rule that Palestinians could meet in conferences and dialogues only with Israelis who were members of the “progressive, democratic, anti-Zionist forces” of Israel or, at the very least, non-Zionists. The meeting with Arafat, taking place in the middle of the civil war in Lebanon, in which the Palestinians were much involved, turned out to be successful in some



large measure because of the earlier Quaker links on the ground in Gaza and the presence at the meeting of Um Jihad, who recalled for Arafat her earlier knowledge of the Quakers when they had provided essential humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees in Gaza in 1949 and 1950. But the situation was never easy, and for almost every meeting that the Quakers prepared it was necessary to meet with Arafat and gain an explicit go-ahead for the involvement of Palestinians whether from inside the occupied territories or those living abroad. Certainly, anyone who had formal links to the PLO depended on that clearance being achieved.

In 1984 a direct effort was made to take these off-the-record (but not secret) contacts between Israelis and Palestinians from the backchannel to the public as part of the peace education efforts focused on the Middle East that the Friends Service Committee was conducting in the United States. Two individuals, one from Israel and one from the occupied West Bank, agreed to make a joint PLO-Israeli tour across the United States and engage in public dialogue on the nature of the conflict and the potentials for its resolution. The tour was controversial among hardliners both in the Palestinian constituency and in Israel and was publically denounced even as it was occurring and was attacked by some individuals in the leadership of the American Jewish community, even though a number of the joint appearances were scheduled with synagogue groups. Mohammed Milhem was the mayor of the Palestinian town of Halhul, near Hebron, and had become one of the early Palestinian leaders in the West Bank willing to join in dialogue with Israelis. Mordechai Bar-On, a retired colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces and the former head of education in the IDF had become active as a “realist” in the Israeli peace camp. Their tour at one level was a great success and became the basis of a “Frontline” TV special since permission had

been given for a “Frontline” camera crew to travel with the group. But even the TV show demonstrated the tensions and the strains that these two veteran dialoguers had as they attempted to maintain continued constructive discourse in the face of challenges and hostile questions. Several years later Milhem was deported by Israel, took up residence in Amman, Jordan and became a member of the PLO executive committee. Bar-On was elected to the Knesset as part of a peace coalition. Their joint effort represented a high point in the attempts to bring the Palestinian-Israeli dialogue to the public in the United States for policy influence and indirectly to reach Palestinian and Israeli audiences through the heavy coverage their trip had in the local press. But the potential price for peacemaking efforts could be high. Milhem himself while living in Amman was threatened on numerous occasions by Palestinian extremist groups and his close colleague, fellow deportee and former mayor of Hebron, Fuad Kawasmeh, who had also been deported, was assassinated by an Iraqi-based Palestinian rejectionist group.

The Quaker efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s were almost alone. Few other NGOs took up the Arab-Israeli or Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the focus of their efforts. In the U.S. the issue was considered too controversial for most of the peace groups, since Israel’s supporters in the U.S. Jewish community were not ready to move beyond the direct commitment they had to Israel. Many people in leadership positions in the peace community were Jewish in background and initially shared a wariness to involvement in the Middle East conflict. I recall a meeting I had in the early 1970s with several leaders in the Washington, D.C. Jewish community who had come to hear a talk I gave on the Middle East. While not hostile to the content of what I had to say, they asked why the Quakers (AFSC) were focusing on the Arab-Israeli conflict when there were

so many other areas in which they could make use of their peace making efforts.

The first significant and sustained direct Palestinian-Israeli encounters began in mid-1975 and involved individuals at a relatively high level in their respective societies. There is a record of some previous brief interactions by individuals on the Israeli non-Zionist left and Palestinians which took place generally in university encounters in Europe and the United Kingdom; while they influenced individuals, they left little trace. The meetings that were pieced together in 1975 involved an individual with a relatively high profile in the PLO plus some associates and a group of Israelis with clear Zionist credentials who had held high level positions in Israeli military, political, and media life. The central figure in getting the meeting started was Henri Curiel, an Egyptian-born Jew from an old and well-known family who had become a communist and moved to Paris from where he developed many Third World contacts and engaged in exchanges with a wide variety of individuals. He was explicitly interested in bringing together Israelis and Palestinians for serious interaction. A young Israeli physicist, Danny Amit, from Hebrew University, Jerusalem, who was part of the Zionist left, served as the early intermediary who helped assemble the Israeli participants. On the Palestinian side, Dr. Issam Sartawi, a surgeon (who had spent a year of medical residence in Boston at the Massachusetts General Hospital), was ready to “break out” of the rigid positions that the PLO had adopted. He had the type of credentials which gave him a degree of stature and independence within the PLO. Some years earlier he had formed and led a Palestinian guerrilla faction which ultimately joined Fatah, the group led by Yassir Arafat. He had watched and been part of several preliminary encounters with

Israelis organized by others, among them those developed in London through the PLO representative in the city, Said Hamami. Sartawi arranged to be “sent” by Arafat to Paris where he was allowed to freelance in making contacts with Israelis prior to the PLO itself permitting and certainly not endorsing such contacts. But as one Palestinian commentator noted, from the mid-1970s the involvement of third party intervention became an important element in PLO policy with the idea of reaching out to Israeli society as well as encouraging support for Palestinian aims from European and especially American leaders. By being independent, Sartawi’s actions and activities allowed deniability by Arafat and the several leaders around him who were willing to see contacts move ahead. It should be noted, however, that one of the inner circle, Farouk Kadumi, who had responsibility for PLO foreign relations, remained opposed to Sartawi’s efforts throughout the whole time of their existence. Sartawi was joined by Sabri Jiryis, a lawyer whose family (Christian) had remained in Israel after 1948 and who had received his education, including a law degree, at Tel Aviv University. He had the advantage of being fluent in Hebrew as well as Arabic and indeed commented to me on one occasion that when it came to formal written work, his Hebrew was still better than his Arabic since his college and professional education had been in Hebrew. Shortly after 1968 he had left Israel and moved to Beirut, where in the 1970s he became an important figure in the Palestinian research apparatus responsible for tracking news from Israel. The third regular member of their group was Ghazi Khoury, the “expediter” responsible for all logistical arrangements. The Israeli group represented by far the most senior Israelis ever to directly encounter Palestinians. Matityahu Peled, a retired major general and member of the Israeli Defense Forces general staff (during the 1967 war) and at the time a professor of Arabic literature at Tel Aviv University, had been one of the creators of the Israeli

Defense Forces, having joined it before the declaration of a state, and moved to be one of the handful of general staff leaders who had responsibility for the war in 1967. Arie "Lova" Elav came to Israel in the 1930s with his family from Russia and was involved in efforts at bringing Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine in the years prior to the new state. His exploits at evading British Mandate forces were well-known and after the state was formed, he became an active figure in the Labor Party, rising to the position of its secretary general in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yacov Arnon was secretary general of the Israeli Treasury, who had recently retired when he joined the peace efforts. Meir Pa'il was a recently retired brigadier general in the Israeli Defense Forces who had taken on the work of a military historian chronicling Israel's wars. Uri Avneri was an active member of the Zionist left and the editor of the popular weekly magazine Haolam Hazeh (This World), as well as being a political activist. Almost all these individuals were members of the Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which was made up of old-line Zionists who in the post-'67 years formed an organization with the explicit intent of seeking the peace that had eluded those who commanded the Israeli forces in 1967. They had personal access to Itzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister and former Chief of Staff of the IDF.

The preliminary meeting which launched the efforts was an encounter between Sartawi and Peled arranged by Danny Amit. They each recalled that they had seen enough in the other's outlook to make a subsequent expanded meeting worthwhile. The first session took place from July 30 through August 1, 1975, with Henri Curiel being joined by a French Jew, Joyce Blau, an expert on Kurdish and Arabic language and literature, and Joseph Hazan, an associate. Paris was

to be the venue, but the problem of keeping the meetings out of sight - indeed, secret - caused the organizers to hunt for an appropriate “cover” for the participants. Former French Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France took on the task for the first meeting, while later sessions involved the active Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky. Both the Palestinians and Israelis present in Paris reported back to their leaderships. Matti Peled turned directly to his former colleague in the IDF, Major General Shlomo Gazit, who was at the time head of Israeli military intelligence and previously had been military coordinator for the West Bank and Gaza. Gazit told me that he in turn regularly brought the comments from Peled and the others on the Israeli side directly to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Gazit recalls that he thought the exchanges were valuable and could possibly lead to positive results but that Rabin, while listening to what was being reported, remained cold. On the other hand, Rabin did nothing to stop Peled and the others from continuing their meetings. Sartawi went directly to Yassir Arafat with his reports. He recounted that Arafat was interested and encouraged him to go ahead with the meetings, in spite of the fact that they were breaking then-PLO policy of not speaking to Israeli Zionists. Farouk Kadumi, who was in charge of foreign affairs for the PLO, was quite critical of Sartawi’s efforts, and felt that they were undermining the Palestinian position. There were periods during which the talks became difficult largely because of premature publicity which angered and potentially endangered one side or the other. Nonetheless, the desire of the leading participants to continue their exchanges overcame their difficulties. At times one side or the other called upon third parties to help them over a problematic stretch. For example, the American Friends Service Committee, which had been in contact with both Peled and Sartawi, and had tried on several occasions to get them to appear on a platform together in the United States, was asked to intervene. Early in the talks,

Sartawi asked the Quakers to go to Beirut and visit with Yassir Arafat in order to indicate to him the valuable nature of the meetings. On the first of these occasions, I was joined by a staff member of the AFSC (Gail Pressberg) and traveled to Beirut just as the civil war was winding down. Arafat listened carefully to our accounts and judgements about the important role that the Sartawi-Peled talks could have. Although critical at points in the discussion of Sartawi's independent spirit, he indicated that he would provide space for Sartawi's efforts to move ahead and would shield him from the criticisms from within the PLO. On another occasion, Arafat invited an AFSC staff member who had been deeply involved in the series of Quaker activities (Gail Pressberg) to visit the Palestine National Council meeting and talk with other members of the PLO leadership about the PLO-Israeli dialogue. On still another occasion when the Israelis and the PLO talks had been halted because of an incident that had created distrust, the Quakers were asked to visit the Israelis in an effort to bring them back to the talks. Bruno Kreisky at that point volunteered his vacation home on the island of Majorca as a site for the group to meet once again. The effort turned out to be successful, and the explanations of the problems were accepted.

During the early 1980s, official Israel visibly refused to accept to PLO as interlocutors for peacemaking; even the vigorous new center of the Israeli peace movement, Peace Now, actually censured two of their leading members, Dedi Zucker and Yael Tamir, for meeting with Issam Sartawi. That session had been planned explicitly as an expansion of the range of people with whom the PLO representative would be meeting. Some Israelis in turn were intrigued at the possibility of talking with the "enemy." Very few Israelis, intellectuals included, had ever had

conversations with Palestinians. In spite of the attempts to discredit the dialogue - attempts made on both sides - they did continue for a period of almost six years. In the discussions, the group worked through the critical issues and began to find areas in which Palestinian and Israeli views, at least among moderates, could be found to overlap. On the Palestinian side, Arafat, who had been moving a step at a time since the mid-1970s toward increased openness for exchanges with the Israelis, brought others in the PLO leadership circle along with him. On several occasions he repeated reports that Sartawi had made to him, to the assembled group at the Palestine National Council meetings. The exchanges themselves were brought to an end on April 10, 1983 when Sartawi was assassinated while attending a meeting of the Socialist International in Portugal. It was suspected that the assassination was carried out by a member of the breakaway Palestinian faction supported by Iraq and led by Abu Nidal. During the course of their exchanges, Sartawi and several of the Israelis developed intense personal relations. After all, both of them were in one way or another bucking the tide in their own societies and both were taking risks. At the time of Sartawi's assassination, Matti Peled, who had been on a speaking tour of the United States, was recovering from pneumonia while staying at my home in Cambridge. It was there he received a telephone call telling him of Sartawi's death. He immediately went back to the phone to call Sartawi's widow and found that he was the first to bring the news to her. The battle-scarred general had tears in his eyes as he related the story. Peled himself died of cancer in 1994, shortly after the signing of the Oslo Accords. Sartawi's daughter traveled from Amman to the funeral. She stood just yards from Peled's old comrade in the army - but bitter critic - General Ariel Sharon.



While the talks between Sartawi from the PLO and Peled, Eliav and others from the Israeli elite had a high level of integrity, there was no institutional structure which provided a basis for them and the means by which the ideas shared, the areas of agreement reached, and potential steps to be taken, could be fully integrated into the body politic on either side. The meetings relied largely on individuals committed to the dialogue of peacemaking and of the episodic involvement of third parties like the important role of Henri Curiel or the symbolic role of Bruno Kreisky or the low-level operational role of the AFSC. The interactions between the Israeli and Palestinian participants were strong and the leaderships on both sides recognized that these were non-trivial encounters. At a recent discussion in Jerusalem (March 2001), the retired Israeli general Danny Rothschild (a military commander of the occupied territories) reflected back on the Peled-Sartawi exchanges as being among the most important that had occurred, but that unfortunately neither the leaderships nor the constituents on either side were ready to embrace the exchanges and take them to the next obvious official level. The talks were admired from a distance; they will be recognized in history for breaking important new ground.

Herbert Kelman has been dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict for almost three decades. His activities highlight the role that an individual can play in creating the circumstances in which exchanges can occur across the boundaries of a conflict. The context of his own work comes directly out of his background in social psychology and specifically from early exchanges he had with the social psychologist John Burton, who had been involved in developing an approach to conflict which he identified as “controlled communication.” The representatives of the conflicting parties who were not themselves officials gathered in a confidential setting to explore each other’s

interpretations of themselves and their enemy and those things that stood between them.

Kelman's first involvement was a seminar he did together with Burton in 1966 in London focusing on divided Cyprus. During 1969-70, Kelman decided to explore using this approach to conflict through workshops with colleagues in Israel to get reactions to his proposal. The responses were mixed. He recounts that Shlomo Avenieri, a very active political scientist who several years later became director general of the Foreign Ministry, was very negative to the idea, and confronted Kelman with the critique: "Jews who don't live in Israel should not come to the country to play with the lives of Israelis." Kelman relates that he dropped the idea and instead wrote a more theoretical article on what he went on to call "Problem-Solving Workshops."

His concept was straightforward. If individuals meeting each other in small groups could undergo change of perceptions themselves, could that change be transferred to the official level? The approach developed would involve individuals who were influential and non-official but had access to those with political authority. The first workshop that Kelman conducted was in 1971. It was small, and on the Israeli side involved one faculty member and one graduate student - what Kelman dubbed "pre-influentials" [et. Quakers' "young leaders"] - and two professionals on the Palestinian side. Following recovery from a heart attack in 1973, he returned to the task in 1974 and teamed up with his former graduate student Steven Cohen to put in place an ongoing series of workshops. He realized that in addition he needed to find an Arab colleague or two to join him as part of the organizing group, and he recruited Edward Azar, a Lebanese political scientist teaching in the United States, who had been active in the peace research community. Kelman, together with Edward Azar and Kelman's wife Rose, traveled to the region, visiting in Egypt,

Lebanon, and Jordan. The first freestanding workshop that Kelman was able to pull together came in 1976 and was held at his own home in Cambridge and involved three Israelis and three Palestinians; as he described it, people who were in town and were willing to participate. But again there was a lapse of several years until Kelman got his workshops back on track. In the interim, in early 1977 he agreed to participate in an American Friends Service Committee conference on mutual recognition between Palestinians and Israelis. It was the first time that he himself had talked on, and then published, on the substance of the conflict as distinct from the process of conflict workshops.

It was not until 1982, after Egyptian President Sadat's 1978 visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David negotiations, and the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, that Kelman got his workshops under way in a focused fashion. Well over a dozen sessions have been held since then. Initially, they were conducted in the context of a class he was teaching on conflict resolution. One meeting specifically involved only women as participants. The workshop held in 1986 at the Conference of the International Society for Political Psychology was a "fishbowl" event - that is, there was an audience that watched the veteran participants - with Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi and Camille Mansour on the Palestinian side and Shimon Shamir, Mordechai Bar-On and Naomi Chazan on the Israeli side. But the normal structure of Kelman's seminars was what his wife once referred to as "Herbie's secret meetings." That is, he hoped to provide focused space and a special context for individuals to get together. His idea was that they would come to know each other better, know how the other side thought, what their hopes and fears were, and that these understandings

might be spread more fully to their colleagues and their leaderships. He often referred to these sessions as “prenegotiation,” in that they were more involved with personal interaction than a focus on topics. Encounters in depth were the primary aim. For much of this time Kelman was joined by another former graduate student, Professor Nadim Rouhana, a Palestinian Israeli who now splits his time between Boston College and Tel Aviv University. In his most recent workshop Kelman was joined as director by Professor Shirley Telhami, also a Palestinian Israeli who now directs the Sadat Center at the University of Maryland. This format changed in the post-Oslo years, when participants in his groups became more restless with the encounter quality of the meetings, referring to it at times as “atmospherics.” In the last several years his meetings, still held “in secret,” did produce reports on specific issues. The meetings became more fully institutionalized in 1994 when Kelman established the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution and brought it into the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard, and appointed Donna Hicks as the Director. The Middle East Activities were conducted as a subunit in the Joint Workshop on Israeli-Palestinian Relations. Perhaps the most important quality of Kelman’s meetings was their duration. That is, they were held year after year over a substantial period of time. Although there were quite a few individuals who repeated participation in the sessions on numerous occasions, some new participants were sought for each session, and in time many in the Palestinian and Israeli intellectual communities and policy elites had at one point or another passed through one of Kelman’s seminars. Some look back and say meetings of this sort may well have been helpful at the time when it was difficult for Israelis and Palestinians to come together, but in retrospect they wish there had been more focused discussion on the issues themselves. In addition, the limits that the Kelman workshops put on their

participants in terms of refraining from detailed discussion of what had actually happened in the sessions at times created suspicion among some friends and colleagues.

The Kelman meetings were generally quite low budget and support came through small foundation grants and one or two individual donors. The organizational frame was minimal and the fact that until recently no “document” was expected kept bureaucratic needs to a minimum.

### **1988-1993**

In the fall of 1988, a meeting of the Palestine National Council (referred to as the Palestine Parliament in Exile) in Algeria took an important next step in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The group, at the strong urging of Yassir Arafat, endorsed a resolution recognizing the legitimacy of the state of Israel and accepting the idea of a Israeli-Palestinian solution which would be based on two states - Israel and Palestine - existing side by side, with Palestine occupying the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, that is the Palestinian areas beyond the green line or pre-1967 border of Israel. This move was further strengthened by documents signed later in the year by Yassir Arafat in the presence of observers based on a text supplied by the United States as fulfilling its understanding of what PLO recognition of Israel would encompass. Not surprisingly, these moves did not immediately end the conflict, but they did stimulate and accelerate additional Palestinian-Israeli exchanges, meetings, and dialogues. Ironically, several years before the PLO took that step, Israel had enacted legislation which made it illegal for Israelis to join in direct dialogue or discourse with members of the PLO, which Israel had designated as a terrorist

organization (the US had banned any direct talks between the government and the PLO as part of the deal brokered by Henry Kissinger in 1973). The US had also tried to close down both the PLO Washington Office and their UN office. A court case, *Mendelsohn vs. Meese*, won a split decision; the Washington Office was closed, the New York UN office remained open. Historians have traced the series of steps from 1974, when the PLO assumed the leadership of the Palestinian cause to 1988 through what appears to be an accumulation of moves broadening the terms of interaction with Israelis and explicitly including Zionists. There was increased bilateral unofficial group meetings dealing with the range of topics which would be at the core of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

In 1988, the Committee for International Security Studies of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences received a major grant from the MacArthur Foundation to examine new opportunities and new issues. The CISS, which had a longstanding focus on Soviet-US relations, weapons, strategies, nuclear treaties, and strategic relationships, was directly encouraged to broaden its horizons. As an active member of the CISS for some years, I worked intensely with a key staff member, Jeffry Boutwell, to put together a proposal for an Academy project on the Middle East. The topic had long been considered too controversial for the Academy as it had been for many other war and peace study centers and American peace groups. In the context of the Academy the go-ahead came when one leading member of the Council of the Academy, who I would classify as a neo-conservative Jew, gave his approval. What was envisaged was a series of meetings held at the house of the Academy in Cambridge that had as its underlying assumption

that Palestinians and Israelis would enter into negotiations in the not-distant future. The initial intent was to identify key issues. The program was co-chaired by Professors Phillip Khoury of MIT and Everett Mendelsohn of Harvard. The first meeting involved Arabs from a number of countries, as well as Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans with explicit interest and expert background in the Middle East conflicts. After the initial session the decision was made to intensify the focus on the Israeli-Palestinian component of the conflict. The first of the new sessions dealt with the politically sensitive issues of Israeli-Palestinian security; in preparation for the meeting a pair of papers were written in parallel by Dr. Ahmed Khalidi, editor of the Arabic language edition of the Journal of Palestinian Studies, and Professor Yair Evron of Tel Aviv University. In the course of preparing their separate papers a consultation was held in London involving the two authors and the chair of the Academy committee. The hope was that the texts that emerged, while not necessarily in agreement, would deal with the same or overlapping problems. The effort was successful and the papers were quickly published as a contribution in a new series of Academy studies. The pair of papers quickly became part of the new literature on security. If security was a key question, no less important for any future agreement was the issue of the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Professor Rashid Khalidi, then of Columbia University, subsequently at Chicago University, agreed to write from the Palestinian perspective and Professor Itamar Rabinowitz of Tel Aviv University, and later Israeli Ambassador to the US, wrote from the Israeli point of view. In both the texts and the discussions, no ideas were suppressed, but a marked civility of tone and a focus on substantive discourse prevailed as it had in the first session. The authors made the explicit point that they were writing to educate their own leaders and constituents, and in the case of the refugee question, Khalidi indicated that he

hoped to force the PLO to deal seriously with an issue that it had long skirted as being politically too sensitive. With well over a million Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, as well as living in the West Bank and Gaza, the solution to the refugee question was seen as essential to an end of the conflict. At the time of the meetings, one external participant noted that the setting - the staid conference room of the American Academy in Cambridge with its large circular conference table, comfortable chairs, good ambiance, and well-served food - set a serious tone which the participants respected.

A third session and set of papers focused on the controversial issue of Jerusalem. Professor Naomi Chazan, at the time director of the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (now a member of the Knesset and Deputy Speaker), set out to focus on what she called *Thinking the Unthinkable*. In a bold series of proposals, she indicated how Jerusalem could be dealt with through a combination of redivision of the city and sharing of the city. Professor Rashid Khalidi and Professor Fuad Mugharbi (University of Tennessee) provided a Palestinian commentary. The paper emerged as one of the first to lay out serious options for solving what was clear to become a focal point of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations whenever they began. Khalidi and Mugharbi enlarged their comments into an article published in the *Journal of Palestinian Studies* as well as preparing an Arabic language version.

Perhaps because of the success of these first several meetings, the committee decided to try an experiment, to bring a meeting of Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, and Egyptians



to the Middle East itself. Other than the formal negotiations between Israel and Egypt, there had not been an NGO-sponsored conference dealing in significant manner with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and involving Israelis and Palestinians held in the Middle East in a semi-public forum. The meeting was made all the more intense in that it was held in December 1990 after Iraq had invaded Kuwait and on the eve of the Gulf War. The logistics for a meeting of this sort were complex, but with the aid of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry the session was convened at Mena House, the site of that conference in 1924 which had cut up the Middle East remains of the Ottoman Empire into the various Mandate Territories in some ways setting a basis for what was to be the problem of the separate states and entities that emerged. While a number of papers by Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians, and Jordanians were presented, the pair of the papers by Professor Walid Khalidi (Harvard University) and Ze'ev Schiff (Military editor of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz) were taken as emblematic of the discussions and published in the spring of 1991 under the title *The Saladin Syndrome*. This whole first series of meetings was semi-public in nature in that they involved not only those directly involved in writing papers and leading the discussions but an "audience" of other experts and members of the Academy, a group of some twenty in attendance at each session. The regularity of the meetings and the standard presentation of papers and full discussion slowly made the exercise of Israeli-Palestinian exchange appear as normal rather than exceptional (as it still was at the time). It is fair to note, however, that the participants were not randomly chosen, nor were representatives of the political extremes in both societies included. But the participants from both sides came from the center and center left of the political spectrum. The loss was the absence of the "other" voices in each society. The gain was the ability to find a common agenda, work with it, and advance the discussion. Common views, or at

least variants, did emerge. The participants were all well “connected” in their own communities, to leaderships and more broadly to intellectual circles. The results of the discussions and the printed products circulated.

The war in the Persian Gulf, in which an American-led coalition of European and Middle East forces joined to oust the Iraqi forces which had invaded Kuwait in the fall of 1990, witnessed both a military victory on the field with the Iraqis suffering large casualties and being driven back behind the Iraq-Kuwait border and an uncertain political outcome - Saddam Hussein still in power. In putting together an alliance of Middle East forces which included contingents from Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt as well as the Gulf states, the United States made a commitment of a strong informal nature to move on to the unresolved problem of Israel and Palestine. Secretary of State James Baker doggedly but skillfully convinced the rightist Israeli government to take part in a multilateral peace conference which opened in Madrid in the fall of 1991 which included the PLO, initially as part of the Jordanian delegation. This strong reentry of the United States, which engaged the crumbling Soviet Union as a co-sponsor of the conference, not only succeeded in getting discussions underway among the several parties to the continuing Middle East dispute but also stimulated increased activity at the unofficial, non-governmental level.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences for its part sought additional funding and undertook a new set of focused Palestinian-Israeli discussions convened by Everett Mendelsohn with the assistance of Academy office Jeffrey Boutwell. The redesigned project involved small numbers of Israelis and Palestinians (ca. four from each group) and several Americans to engage

in focused examination of critical issues which would face the Israelis and Palestinians in actual negotiations. The groups were to engage in several meetings from which a single joint report was to be prepared. The first of these new working groups focused explicitly on the issue of the emergence of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Independence was assumed as an outcome of negotiations, and the relations between two states - one Palestinian, one Israeli - were examined in some detail. The aim was to demystify the notion of a Palestinian state, an idea not yet widely accepted within Israel, and looked at with both desire and some skepticism within the Palestinian community. After a series of meetings and consultations, with drafts of different sections being prepared by members of the group and discussed by the group as a whole, Professor Ann Lesch, a longtime student of Palestinian nationalism and a former Jerusalem-based staff member of the American Friends Service Committee, took on the task of drafting the full report. It was reviewed by the participants and the Academy staff and committees and brought into print as a joint publication of the Academy and Indiana University Press. A session to launch the new publication was organized by the Council of Foreign Relations in New York and brought participants from Washington (among others Martin Indyk, then director of the Washington Center for Middle East Research, as well as Adnan Abu Oudeh, then Jordanian Ambassador to the United Nations), and several former State Department and National Security Council officials. It was chaired by Richard Murphy, the former Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East. Ann Lesch was invited to Amman, Jordan for further discussions with official and non-official Jordanians. Several of them were upset with the implications that Palestinian statehood had for Jordanian-Palestinians.

With the focused working group style a success, the Academy agreed to return to a focused study of security, one of the issues considered at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian controversy. As defined, the discussion would deal with security as it would exist for each of the two parties and between them. The initial session of the security working group was jointly organized in October 1992, in London, in cooperation with the Israeli-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), a Jerusalem-based group jointly chaired by Gershon Baskin (Israeli) and Zakaria Al Qaq (Palestinian). The initial success of this new effort was due to several factors which came together during the winter of 92-93 albeit some of the key elements were unknown to the members of the committee at the time of the meetings.

A major reason for success was summed up aptly in a review of the publication produced by the group, written by William Quandt (who had been President Carter's Middle East expert in the National Security Council and at the time headed the Middle East program at the Brookings Institute) when he said that the Academy had brought together the "A-Team". IPCRI dropped away early as both the Palestinian and Israeli participants felt nervous in the presence of a Jerusalem-based NGO as a co-sponsor. The reputation of the American Academy was seen as a benefit and also provided a legitimate cover for the direct encounter which the Israelis would have with the Palestinians, some of whom were closely tied to the PLO. The Israeli participants included Major General (rtd) Shlomo Gazit, who had previously been head of Israeli Military Intelligence and former Israeli military coordinator for the occupied territories. At the time of our meetings he was a senior staff member of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. Joseph Alpher, a former officer in Israeli intelligence - Mossad, and at the time acting

head of the Jaffee Center. Ze'ev Schiff, the military editor for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, was then and continues to be Israel's leading press analyst of military affairs.

The Palestinian participants were Ahmed Khalidi, editor of the Arabic language version of the Journal of Palestine Studies and a member of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. Yezid Sayigh, was at the time a Fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford and an analyst of PLO military affairs. His major book on the subject appeared in English several years later. Both Khalidi and Sayigh were sons of two senior Palestinian intellectuals with very close ties to Yassir Arafat and the PLO. Nizar Amar was based at the PLO headquarters in Tunis and was a senior associate of Abu Mazen. He had previously been an active figure in the Palestinian military and the author of a detailed analysis of Israeli military posture (in Arabic). Professor Khalil Shikaki had his doctorate from Columbia University in Middle East Studies, was on the faculty of Nablus University, and was in the process of establishing a new Nablus-based think tank called the Center for Palestine Research and Study. The Americans included Jeffrey Boutwell (American Academy senior staff), Professor Naomi Weinberger of Columbia University, and Professor Shibley Telhami, then of Cornell University, a Galilee-born Palestinian whose family remained in Israel after the 1948 war. Telhami was fluent, therefore, in both Hebrew and Arabic. Everett Mendelsohn chaired the group.

From the earliest sessions it was clear that the members were well prepared. They had significant background in Israeli-Palestinian security issues, kept up with the literature, and had

had personal exposure across the Israeli-Palestinian boundary; only Nizar Amar was engaged in his first encounter. At the time both Khalidi and Sayigh were members/consultants of the Palestinian team in the Madrid and Washington negotiations even as Nizar Amar, it turned out, was an advisor through Abu Mazan of the Palestinians as well. Everyone in the group had done research and writing in the area and they were familiar with each others' works. The Israelis, on learning of Nizar Amar's volume of analysis, quickly obtained a copy, translated it into Hebrew, thereby identifying their colleague. One other important element became apparent early on in the series of meetings held through the fall, winter, spring, and early summer of 1992-93. The members of the two sides had very good access to their leaderships. Nizar Amar took extensive notes and he shared them directly with Abu Mazen, and on occasion discussed the meetings directly with Yassir Arafat as well. Both Khalidi and Sayigh enjoyed long-term and full access to the PLO leadership in Tunis. Shikaki at that time was not plugged in in the same way, but as the work of the committee became public in late summer 1993, his presence on the committee had a special value, particularly for Palestinians "inside" or living in the occupied territories. While Khalil Shikaki was himself a clear moderate in the politics of Palestinian nationalism, he was the brother of Fatti Shikaki, who was a leader of the radical Islamic Jihad organization, who had recently been assassinated in Malta by the Israelis. Khalil Shikaki enjoyed real access across the spectrum in the Palestinian community on the ground. On the Israeli side the degree of access was made clear to us in one meeting that was arranged in April 1993, when Shlomo Gazit brought the American members to a meeting in the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv with the head of Israeli military intelligence, Uri Saguy. In the course of the two hours we spent with the intelligence head, we were briefed at length on his view of the current state of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

and potential for peacemaking. He went out of his way to give us detail and seemed to wait regularly for me to take full notes. He was aware of the fact that the day after our meeting with him, our delegation was crossing the bridge to Amman, Jordan where we would meet with Yezid Sayigh and then fly on the following day to Tunis for a meeting with the Palestinian leadership. In addition of course, Gazit had easy access to Prime Minister Rabin (who served as his own Defense Minister) and to the Deputy Defense Minister, Mordechai Gur, who ran the defense establishment on a day-to-day basis, had been IDF Chief of Staff, and had himself earlier been involved in one of the earlier Quaker exchanges in Switzerland. Ze'ev Schiff was known for his access in the defense establishment in Israel, and was both listened to as well as given information. It was interesting to us that by late spring 1993 all of the senior Israeli figures we talked to, including the former Deputy Director of Shin Bet, Yossi Ginosur, pointed out in one form or another that it was clear that if Israel was going to make peace with the Palestinians, it would involve an agreement with the PLO, and that in the PLO there was no substitute for Yassir Arafat. We know after the fact that both the Palestinian participants in our group and the Israeli participants were given assignments by their leadership to find responses to a number of issues.

During its discussions the group did some deep exploration of topics, but they did not negotiate in the classic sense. The exploration was guided and general agreements were found on many key issues, and on those where agreement was not reached the positions were laid out with care rather than through confrontation. Early in our discussions Shlomo Gazit proposed an idea that he had been developing at the Jaffee Center in Tel Aviv to have a phased Palestinian re-entry into to territories. The idea as he called it then was "Gaza first." Nizar Amar was immediately

interested and insisted that Gazit share with him his Hebrew language book-length essay in which this approach to Gaza had been spelled out. Gazit was more than pleased, in the hope that it might serve as an entry for serious discussion. It went beyond the type of issues being discussed in Madrid and in that seemed an advance.

What the Academy group did not know until after the fact is that its discussions were being used as a backchannel to the secret but quite active Oslo track. This was particularly true for security issues, since the Oslo group included no one with a background in security and military affairs. Both the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships acknowledged that the Academy had served the very useful purpose of securing deeper confidence in what had become by the spring of 1993 official secret meetings between the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships. We noted along the way one or two things which in retrospect took on new meaning. In the winter 92-93, after a particularly tense time in Israeli-Palestinian relations, our Palestinian members explained to us that the PLO was breaking off bilateral NGO exchanges with Israel in all cases but the Academy project. At the time we were gratified, and in retrospect of course know that we were serving an additional function. We were being used unknowingly.

What was the Academy's role in these meetings? It turned out that we were able to provide important space for discussions of a serious sort, and in turn to provide a "cover" for exchanges. On several occasions during the winter and spring the Israelis and Palestinians indicated that they would go off by themselves without the American group members. This seemed natural to us at the time since substantial goodwill had developed, whereas early in the



procedure the Israelis particularly wanted the Academy leadership present in their exchanges. We know after the fact that the Israeli and Palestinian participants used their private sessions for intense exchange of questions and answers that had been proposed after their reports to leadership members. All of the Academy sessions during the security discussions were off the record; no guests were invited, and although everyone would have admitted that the sessions had taken place, there was no attempt during the course of them to spread the news. Our one journalist, Ze'ev Schiff, took very seriously his commitment to work here as an expert on security issues and not as a journalist. Although the Academy leadership agreed to chair the sessions, the group was small enough that there was not much need for direct guidance. The Academy members did not mediate between the two sides, albeit we were regularly called upon to summarize where we were at any given point. Particularly toward the end of each day, we would be asked to help reorganize our understanding of where the group had come in the various degrees of agreement and where there were issues which needed further work, and which ones might well be put off to some future time, since agreement was not close at all. The participants all took on the task of writing up drafts of issues that had been discussed in which they had special interest or familiarity. This was particularly true for the areas of discussion where agreement had been achieved. We were struck by the extent to which the members from either Israel or Palestine did not do special pleading in their drafts, but rather gave a fairly good account of what the group as a whole had come to agree on.

The Academy meetings, unlike those that began in Oslo some months after the Academy sessions, did not have strong patrons who had a real stake in the discussions. While the Academy

group had access, they were not acting directly on behalf of the leaderships, either Palestinian or Israeli. They were unaware of the simultaneous Oslo talks. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences - the third party - was also non-official, albeit by now credible as a third party. We were not, however, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and could not call in the Foreign Minister or an equivalent to help out at critical junctures. Further, the talks conducted by the Academy did not rapidly become official as the Oslo channel did. At Oslo, key "brass" was brought in on the Israeli side when Yossi Beilin, who had been an early patron, joined the discussions, and when the Foreign Minister appointed two trusted figures, a lawyer from New York, Yoel Singer, and a senior civil servant from Jerusalem, Uri Savir. In the final stages Foreign Minister Shimon Peres himself joined the talks. On the Palestinian side, the delegation included Abu Mazen, the second in charge of the PLO, joined by Abu Ala, a very senior figure, and at the time in charge of the PLO treasury, and Hassan Asfour, a direct aide to Yassir Arafat. And of course on the Norwegian side, Foreign Minister Holst became directly involved and helped shepherd the activities to a conclusion. The defense channel traditionally is more constrained than the political; the Oslo talks went through the Foreign Ministry, which may have been less constrained. There was one other limiting factor for the Israelis. In April 1993 after that meeting with the head of intelligence, Uri Saguy, the whole of the Academy team was invited to travel to Tunis to meet the PLO leadership. The Israeli members were nervous, fearful of potentially being exploited, worrying about their photograph with the PLO leader and thereby losing some of their credibility in the defense and security community and ultimately turned down the invitation. In retrospect of course they realized they missed a big chance, for they might well have been much closer to the Oslo accords and the celebrated outcome than the more muted congratulations they got for a more circumspect

job.

The Academy took the drafts that had been developed and in the several months following Oslo in September 1993, edited, shared the drafts with the original committee, and quickly published them. Since the time seemed right the report was immediately picked up and translated into Arabic by a Palestinian research center and given to several Palestinian think tanks and a set of 75 copies taken at once to Gaza for distribution in Palestinian leadership circles.

The period of the late 1980s saw a number of interesting efforts getting under way, some of them short-lived, others starting, stumbling, picking up and continuing through a long duration. Sari Nusseibeh, the scion of a prominent Jerusalem family, received training in philosophy at Harvard and became a professor at Bir Zeit University. He points to an encounter in the mid-1980s which he said represented an important turning point. It was his involvement in a seminar organized by Herbert Kelman. He had heard from several Palestinian colleagues that they were to be involved in the Kelman meeting and he became interested in participating. It included figures who were already connected with or became connected with the Palestine National Council; Afif Saffieh, Fuad Mugharbi, and Walid Khalidi were among them. A number of Israeli Zionists were also to be involved including Yossi Sarid. At the time Nusseibeh had been head of the faculty union at Bir Zeit University, deeply involved in and constrained by the kind of discourse of an organized Palestinian group. He realized that as such he could not take part in an encounter with the Israelis and therefore resigned from the union leadership and went to the meeting as an individual. He found the session quite interesting, for though he had known some individual Israelis before, he had never encountered them in a group situation. Immediately following the

Kelman meeting, he took part in an open meeting at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem which included Hanan Ashrawi, Hana Sinora, and Feisel Husseini, among others. It came shortly after the meeting of the Palestine National Council and there was intense discussion of what Palestinians might now engage in. Shortly after that, while he was a visitor at the University of California in San Diego, he attended a good number of meetings and among others met General Ephriam Sneh. These meetings were primarily direct, bilaterally arranged, without third party intermediaries. On his return to Jerusalem he found himself involved with members of the Palestinian leadership during the period in which they were meeting with Secretary of State George Schultz, who was pursuing a policy of engagement with the Middle East for the first Bush administration.

In late 1986, he received a call, as he put it, “out of the blue” from Moshe Amirav. The initiative for the call as Nusseibeh recalls it was completely from the Israeli side, albeit an intermediary - another Israeli - brought the two together. The intent was clear. Amirav was looking for direct contacts with Palestinians in potential leadership roles. What was surprising is that Moshe Amirav was not from the Labor Party, or the liberal wing of Israeli society, but was instead a member of the Central Committee of Likud, the major party of the Israeli Right, the party then in power. Amirav took the lead in these sessions. The expectation, as Nusseibeh recalls it, was that since both of them were connected to their leaderships, they might in their exchanges make a difference in policy decisions. Nusseibeh was intrigued by the possibility of having a direct link to Yitzak Shamir, the Israeli Prime Minister, and other members of the circles of power in Israel. It was clear to Nusseibeh, however, that if he was to become involved he had

to clear his moves with the Palestinian leadership. He got a positive response from Feisel Husseini, who served as the senior Palestinian leader in the occupied territories; Husseini himself was in and out of prison during the 1980s. Nusseibeh made an attempt to set up a meeting between Amirav and Arafat in Geneva. At the last minute, Amirav pulled back; it was a step further than he was willing to go. When Husseini was jailed again, Nusseibeh went to court attempting to defend Husseini, pointing to his role in peace making. When the news of these exchanges became public there was anger among some Palestinian activists and one evening several Bir Zeit students attacked Nusseibeh, beat him up, and in the course broke his arm. Shortly after this incident, the first Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, of December 1987, broke out. Hanna Sinora, an East Jerusalem businessman, publisher of two newspapers including the English language weekly version of Al Fajar, became increasingly involved with Nusseibeh in interactions with Israelis, including at one point a meeting with Shimon Peres, who was in the political opposition in the Israeli Knesset since Likud led the government. In spite of the Intifada, Nusseibeh carefully continued his meetings with Israelis, including several with Yossi Beilin, an active member of the Labor Party's left wing. In addition, he published leaflets in Hebrew aimed at the Israeli public in the hopes that he could educate across the divide.

A further effort to bring the Palestinian-Israeli to a broader public involved a joint book. Gail Pressburg, a former staff member of the American Friends Service Committee working then for the Foundation for Middle East Peace, came up with the initiative of bringing Sari Nusseibeh together with Mark Heller, who had just returned from completing a degree at Harvard and had joined the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. Dorothy Harman, daughter-

in-law of the president of the Hebrew University and a former ambassador to the United States, Abraham Harman, joined the effort to help edit and publish the book. It was brought out by Hill and Wang in the United States. Nusseibeh's aim was to clarify the Palestinian political message. He had been one of the leaders of the Intifada and now wanted to create something tangible. For the Palestinian reader, he wanted to develop an awareness of what a Palestinian state would mean in reality, spelling out in some detail how such a political body would be organized, what its aims would be, and what its relationship to Israel would be. As he wrote, he constantly sent his materials to the PLO leadership in Tunis, both to gain their response but also to educate the leadership-in-exile about ideas being put forward by Palestinian interlocutors of the Israelis. This was an effort similar to those of Rashid Khalidi, Itamar Rabinovich, and Naomi Chazan. They wanted to both educate the public but also the leaderships. They were looking at what they believed was the reality of peace making.

Mark Heller, from his side, noted that although Sari Nusseibeh regularly consulted Feisel Husseini as he developed his exchanges with Israelis, he (Mark) had no consultations with Israeli leaders as he proceeded. The idea itself for a joint book had been proposed by the Washington lawyer Merle Thorpe, who also funded it through his Foundation for Middle East Peace. Gail Pressburg did the legwork, particularly keeping the authors happy with their job and in touch with each other. As Heller recalls it, the audience was the reading public and not decision makers. He also notes that since the book was published in English and then translated into Hebrew, French, Italian, and Japanese, but never into Arabic, it had a strange career. Although he was chided by some of his colleagues in Israel, Heller recalls no trouble ever coming from the effort. And

although he believes the volume may have had educational value to English language readers in the United States and the United Kingdom and that small group of Arabs who may have read it in English, it did make some mark for Hebrew readers who became aware of a Palestinian voice that spoke in reasonable tones. It was in many ways the written equivalent of the exchanges between Mohammed Milhem and Mordechai Bar-On.

One of the noticeable characteristics of the Palestinian-Israeli exchanges that occurred during the past several decades is that the participants were almost all drawn from the elites in the two communities with the expectation that they would have access to their respective leadership groups. The sessions generally had limited numbers of participants (primarily new) who met in relative seclusion, if not secrecy, and rarely had effective communication with broader constituencies. There is one significant exception.

At a meeting of the third United Nations Women's Conference held in Nairobi in 1985, several Palestinian and Israeli women came together in an exchange, almost spontaneously, and shared elements of their separate and joint concerns with women attending the meeting. Herbert Kelman, having heard about this from several of the participants, attempted to pick up this women's initiative at a meeting which he convened at Radcliffe College (Harvard University) in 1987 in which the group was made up entirely of women from the Palestinian and Israeli communities. While the session was interesting, participants noted, nothing permanent came out of it, albeit a somewhat larger group of Israeli and Palestinian women came to know each other quite a bit better. Almost all came from "inside," that is, they lived either in the Palestinian

occupied territories or in Israel. But as several of the women involved noted later (particularly pointed out in a joint paper by Galia Golan and Zahira Kamal) nothing really happened to follow up for several years, until after the Intifada that began in December of 1987. This uprising was an event which had several important implications and consequences; among them was that Palestinians in the course of the ensuing several years who were resident in the territories became politically emboldened and significantly more organized than previously had been the case. New civic organizations were formed at the local level, including women's groups.

In 1989 it was an outsider (albeit a friend of several of the Israeli women), Simone Susskind, a leader in the Jewish women's community in Brussels, Belgium, organized a large public meeting dealing with issues of women in the Middle East focused on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Susskind was the wife of the leader of the Belgian Jewish community, David Susskind, who himself was a wealthy philanthropist who had long been interested in Israeli-Palestinian activities. The women at their meeting initially had very different perceptions as to what they were meeting for. The Israeli women at first thought that feminism and women's concerns would be the focus of their activities - women's rights was their definition. On the other hand the Palestinian women were very clear that the issue was national rights for the Palestinian people, with their belief at the time that women's rights would have to await independence.

The 1989 Brussels meeting involved a fairly good number of women, some twenty or thirty in all, including Israeli members of the Knesset and women who held official positions in the PLO. What became apparent in their discussions is that during the Intifada Palestinian women



who had organized new forms of local activities began to place issues of women's rights alongside national rights as part of the political agenda. Out of this third party-supported, albeit largely bilaterally-organized conference, a sustained women's dialogue began. The Israelis organized the Israel Women's Network for the Promotion of Peace (Reshet). They undertook activities with a variety of Palestinian groups. They brought Palestinian women whom they had met in Belgium and others who they had met through exchanges back home into Israel. The Palestinian women were invited into Israel for both "parlor meetings" and public sessions. Substantially large numbers of women were reached and the activities as they developed had grass roots qualities. The women planned joint demonstrations, they issued joint statements, and their activities culminated in a major demonstration of some 30,000 women, of whom 15,000 were Palestinians, for a women's march in East and West Jerusalem, and the forming of a hand-in-hand human chain around the Old City of Jerusalem - their "Hands Around Jerusalem Demonstration." It should be noted that the Israeli police had closed the city of Jerusalem to prevent Palestinians from the West Bank from joining the demonstration, but many found their way in nonetheless, and many Jerusalem residents participated.

A second meeting was held in Brussels, again under the patronage of Simone Susskind in 1992, and at this session the decision was taken to institutionalize the increasingly active and successful women's organizing. It was not until shortly after the Oslo Accords were signed on the White House lawn, 13 September 1993, that the joint organization, Jerusalem Link, actually was established. It included two separate women's organizations, one in Palestinian East Jerusalem - the Jerusalem Women's Center of the East; and the other in Israeli West Jerusalem,

Bat Shalom (Women for Peace). Each group had their own organization, but Jerusalem Link had a joint steering committee. Their focus was on peace and women's rights. They raised money jointly to be divided between the two groups. Much of the funding came from Europe. As they set about their organizing they consciously saw in what they were doing a model for broader Israeli-Palestinian coexistence. They took their story to the fifth UN Women's Conference held in Beijing. They realized that at one level, women's organizations, they had a "gimmick" but that also they were providing clear space for women's voices. Both groups were well aware of the fact that when women were part of mixed male-female dialogue groups, the men often turned out to be the major spokespeople, with the women half-consciously taking a secondary role.

The public nature of Jerusalem Link's activities and the broadly democratic organization of both the Palestinian and Israeli groups had the virtue of speaking to a much wider public constituency, but at the same time made the project much more sensitive to changes in the public moods, especially at times of crisis. After the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995 and the move toward new elections by interim Prime Minister Shimon Peres set for June 1996, the bus-bombings carried out by the Islamic radical group Hamas in February and March 1996 dramatically undermined public confidence and the dialogue between the women's groups broke down. Meetings were canceled, contacts - particularly of a public nature - were avoided as Golan and Kamal report. Both women recognized that this was just the type of period when there was need for communication both to achieve understanding and to restate the desire for peace, but both groups drew back because of the negative implications that such activities would have for the respective publics at the time. Personal contacts, they noted, were maintained, but the

attempt to find common positions again and restart joint efforts took a fairly long time.

One important, very well designed and carried out joint activity occurred during the years that Likud was back in power under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu. A three-day meeting culminating in a public demonstration took Jerusalem as its focus, using as its motto “Sharing Jerusalem: One City for Two Peoples.” The joint statement produced was finely crafted, making use of the efforts of a number of conferences and dialogue groups. Speakers made presentations, concerts and cultural events were held, and representatives from women’s peace groups came from several parts of the world to demonstrate their support. With the public and the press watching (indeed, encouraged to be present) the organizers worked from a tightly choreographed script. As an invited speaker at the meeting, I observed carefully as tensions arose and were successfully dealt with by dedicated and politically adept leaders. Nonetheless, it was clear through the sessions that there were two groups who had developed skill at cooperating but clearly remained in tension, at some levels, with each other. Each group had its board members and subcommittees, and there were often discordant demands and responses. Nevertheless, it was an impressive sight to see several thousand women (joined by men) parade through East and then part of West Jerusalem holding their closing rally at the Wall of the Old City facing into Israeli West Jerusalem.

As a publically organized effort, Jerusalem Link had to have a public statement or platform. The carefully-negotiated document dealt with the primary issues of an end to the

occupation, negotiations for peace, an end to the settlement movement, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and cooperation across boundaries. These reflected the key aims of the broadly-supported peace constituencies in both the Palestinian and Israeli communities. It took the group additional efforts to elaborate their platform for a shared Jerusalem, taking up this potentially very controversial issue which had been relegated to the delayed final-status negotiations in the Oslo Accords. They were successful, as their meeting and demonstration showed. But in late 1999, when the Palestinian women wanted to raise the issue of refugees and the right of return, and also to insist on a clearer definition of the commitment to full Israeli withdrawal from the territories all the way to the borders of 1967, the Israeli and Palestinian could not find common ground, and indeed beginning in August 1999 real contact between the Israeli and Palestinian groups broke down. While several among the leaders continued to talk privately, organizationally, things have been at a standstill. Little things also plagued cooperation. At one point, the International Women's Foundation asked the directors of the two groups to travel to Europe to make presentations, and raise funds. The Palestinian director was prevented from leaving the country, and as one person remarked, "the occupier came out, leaving the occupied at home." There was further difficulty in joint efforts after the coordinating group of Palestinian non-governmental organizations in summer, 2001 announced its refusal to sanction cooperative efforts between Palestinians and Israelis. The Palestinian director of Jerusalem Link also found herself in many ways out on her own during the recent crisis with no political protection for cooperative engagements. As one international donor agency NOVIB put it, a new model was emerging: two groups undergoing separate unilateral work on joint projects, or in one specific case, on a joint curriculum. Financial support from Europe has been dropping

off during the recent crisis, since the large donors had defined their goal as joint projects and therefore are unwilling to supply money to the organizations for their separate efforts. And as the Israeli director commented, funds from the liberal and progressive community in Israel have also dried up during the past year.

### **1993-2000**

September 13, 1993 marks a significant turning point in Israeli-Palestinian relations. It was on that date that Yassir Arafat, for the PLO, and Yitzak Rabin, for Israel, signed the Oslo Accords. Then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres also signed, since the negotiations had largely been carried out in the final critical stages under his aegis, and at the last meetings with his personal presence. All three leaders were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the following year.

A few words on the Oslo negotiations themselves. Several books have already been written, one a very quick journalistic account and then three volumes by participants - two by Israelis and one by a Palestinian. A definitive, analytical account, has not yet been written, albeit several are in the works. I will not deal at length with the Oslo process, since so much of it is known, but I will quickly note some of its characteristics. In its earliest manifestation, it represented an effort led by Terre Rood Larsen, the director of FAFO, an Oslo-based social science research institute. Larsen and his colleagues came to the West Bank, involved a group of Palestinian social scientists in a series of surveys of the social and economic life of the Palestinian

community. These were ultimately published. In a report he made at Harvard to a small group in the autumn of 1993, Larsen frankly admitted that he engaged in direct work with the Palestinians to develop credibility on the ground which would allow him to enter the field of backchannel negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. In retrospect, several of the Palestinian scholars who helped him in the first instance expressed some sense of betrayal in the feeling that they had been used for purposes other than those stated. Through the Palestinians Larsen made contact with the PLO in Tunis and recruited their cooperation and their direct personal involvement. Two officers of the PLO, Ahmed Qurei and Hassan Asfour, took on the role as the Palestinian interlocutors. On the Israeli side a pair of academics, Ya'ir Hirschfeld and Ron Pundik, were the initial Israeli participants. Hirschfeld was closely associated with Yossi Beilin, who was at the time Deputy Prime Minister and a protege of Shimon Peres. Larsen received aid from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, where his wife was a senior level Foreign Service officer. The country estate where the meetings were held, the arrangements for travel, and all the logistics were handled by the Foreign Ministry or delegated to one or two FAFO officers. The meetings were strictly secret; travel took place from Tunis and from Ben-Gurion Airport in roundabout ways so that the participants could not be easily traced. The first sessions were held in winter 92-93. The setting was a comfortable one, but once the discussions were underway, the Israelis and Palestinians largely conducted them without even the presence of a Norwegian interlocutor in the room. They joined the group for meals and oversaw arrangements. The Norwegians did get involved at several key stages when roadblocks emerged and especially when the success of the initial meetings raised the status of the sessions themselves. The Foreign Minister himself was called in on several occasions. Within a very short period of time the meetings moved from being

a mixed genre, part NGO and non-officials to all officials when Israel appointed two senior figures to lead the Israeli teams. By early spring the issues under discussion and the agreements achieved were reported to Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, who after some reluctance, gave the go-ahead to his Foreign Minister to see how far these negotiations could get. One interesting factor was that it was agreed on all sides that the United States would not be informed until all the negotiations came to a close. The initial meetings had had high level mentoring from within official circles, and the closing sessions were secret official government-to-government meetings. So complete was the transfer that when the Israeli delegation headed to Washington for the signing session presided over by President Clinton, Hirschfeld and Pundik were left behind, no space on the official plane given to them, and indeed they ended up paying their own way on a commercial flight to Washington to participate in the ceremonies on the White House lawn.

But if the initial sessions had strong NGO/third party input, the activities spawned by this first major breakthrough toward peace between Palestinians and Israelis, the multiplicity of Israeli-Palestinian exchanges, dialogues, joint projects which flowed very quickly from the successful talks were almost all outside official circles. Several of the projects reflected a carryover from pre-Oslo activities, particularly in that they utilized the talents of unofficial or semi-official participants. One of the most interesting involved a series of meetings that took place in 1995 not long after the PLO returned from exile to take up residence and share leadership in Gaza and the West Bank communities. Yezid Sayigh, who had been involved in the American Academy meetings particularly on security, and in several Kelman sessions, together with Yossi Aplher who had been a key member of the Academy security project as well as a veteran of Kelman meetings,

with support from an Oxford based small center and funder set up a series of brief but remarkably fruitful meetings between several key figures in the new Palestinian governing apparatus and several leaders of the right-wing Israeli settlement movement. For a period of about five months Mohammed Dahlan, the Gaza-based Palestinian security chief, and Hassan Asfour, close political consultant to Arafat, met with Israel Harel and one or two other settlement leaders at sites in Tel Aviv. The meetings ended with some embarrassment for the Israelis when the Israeli press caught wind of them and broke the story. Each side had expressed interest in knowing more about how the other side thought and acted. Dahlan, who had been deported from Gaza to Tunis in the early 1990s, had only known Israelis through imprisonment and military occupation. Harel knew Palestinians only as day laborers who worked in the settlements.

A second attempt to map a resolution for the unresolved “final status” issues from the Oslo Accords began in 1995 was dubbed the “Stockholm track” since it got some of its initial support from the Swedish Foreign Ministry and had some of its earliest meetings in Stockholm itself. The participants who did most of the work were veterans of earlier exchanges. On the Palestinian Ahmed Khalidi, who had been deeply involved in the American Academy project on security as well as a member of the Palestinian delegation at Madrid and Washington was joined by his London-based colleague Hussein Aga, who had also taken part in a number of dialogue sessions. The Israelis were Ron Pundik and Ya’ir Hirschfeld, who hoped to repeat on the Stockholm track what they had helped achieve at Oslo. In this case, while the major interlocutors were non-official individuals, they had direct patron relations with Abu Mazen the second-highest leader in the PLO, and Yossi Beilin who was by then a full member of the Israeli cabinet. On



several occasions, we are told, Beilin and Abu Mazen directly joined the discussions, but most of the work and the preparation of the documents was left to the unofficial group. The so-called “Beilin-Abu Mazen document” was largely completed in mid-fall 1995 and was brought by the two patrons to Arafat in Tunis and Rabin in Jerusalem. Rabin was aware of the document and its findings but had not yet made a judgement on its acceptability when he was assassinated in November 1995. Arafat, we were told, was favorably disposed toward the set of agreements outlined by the unofficial and backchannel negotiators, but on learning of Rabin’s death, put aside the text and delayed any public response. For several years everyone denied such a document existed (although segments of it were quoted); ultimately, as the Israelis and Palestinians went into the Camp David negotiations the summer of 2000, a “pirated” version was printed in English in Ha’aretz, the Israeli paper and in Newsweek, the American weekly. The level of agreement achieved on issues as sensitive as Jerusalem, settlements and borders, was striking. The least satisfactory area they discussed had to do with refugees and the right of return. What had not happened during the course of these unofficial negotiations was building public constituency, awareness, and support for the far-reaching steps envisaged. The document was seen by its drafters and immediate supporters as a major step and perhaps the penultimate one to a final status agreement and an end of the conflict. A full account of the Stockholm track has not yet been written, albeit several of the participants and one external analyst have all promised books in the near future.

In the period following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, there was a sharp upturn

in projects jointly conducted by Palestinians and Israelis. They ranged from explicit political efforts, as the PLO-settlers encounters noted above, through cultural, educational, and university research collaborations. One recent study of Arab-Israeli research cooperation during the years 1995 to 1999 identified over 200 such projects in which Israeli scholars, professionals, and practitioners teamed up with Arab scholars. 133, or 62% of the projects, were conducted between Palestinians and Israelis; the others in much smaller numbers included Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia. The fields of cooperative effort ranged from the social sciences and education through veterinary medicine, agriculture, human medicine, water resources, and other technical subjects. The collaborative research activities reported in the study by Paul Scham (with whom I talked during my recent visit to Jerusalem) were sponsored on the Israeli side primarily by three institutions: the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), and the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation (CRB). It should be noted that these three organizations are headed by active members of the “peace camp” in Israel. The Palestinian partners were more numerous, involving individuals or small groups in the universities in Gaza, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Bir Zeit, and Nablus, as well as many NGOs, some of them brought into existence specifically to join the cooperative effort. One somewhat skeptical Israeli from Tel Aviv University who had been involved in one or two joint efforts commented that Israelis often pushed Palestinians into joining collaborative efforts primarily because it was only through joint applications that money was readily available. He went on to note that in his view, 90% of the input for project design came from Israelis, and that they in turn did 95% of the work. Palestinians, in their turn, had a different view of the relationship, indicating that Israelis often came to them with projects which they (the Israelis) wanted to conduct and

brought the Palestinians along in an effort to provide bilateral cover. The Palestinian universities themselves were reluctant to enter formal university-to-university agreements with their Israeli counterparts, and indeed only one - Al Quds University in Jerusalem - explicitly had official cooperation. It should be noted that the President of Al Quds is Dr. Sari Nusseibeh. Al Quds has the distinction of being the only Palestinian university with offices and campuses on both sides of the green line. A second Palestinian university, Bethlehem, had some quasi-official arrangements specifically involving several members of their faculty who had been engaged in pre-1993 Palestinian-Israeli dialogues and conferences.

There were several characteristics and issues which mark the post-93 efforts. Often there was an asymmetry of background and skills among academics or professionals who attempted collaborative efforts. Obviously the same skill problems did not emerge in politically-oriented projects where different kinds of experiences were involved. The large majority of the post-1993 projects had no third party mediators or visible presence. The third party was the funder. The Europeans were the largest funders of projects, followed by the United States. Of the approximately 200 projects, 106 were funded by Europe, 48 by the United States and Canada. Another 43 were noted as funded from Israel but, the researcher points out, almost all of the Israel funding came from grants outside of Israel itself. UN agencies funded a small number of additional projects.

Israelis involved in these collaborative efforts often complained that the Palestinian institutions were not up to speed in the handling of funds and reporting on activities. The

Palestinians noted (and the Israelis largely concurred) that mobility for the Palestinians was often difficult. On many occasions when joint sessions were to be held in Jerusalem or within Israel proper, Palestinians were prevented from traveling because of closures, temporary road blocks, need for special permits, and other impediments of a largely political/security sort. The Palestinians noted that the enthusiasm of Palestinian researchers often quickly waned when they ran into this type of problem. In turn, the Israelis were largely loath to travel to sites deep within the Palestinian territories such as Nablus or Hebron.

Scham's survey of the projects attempted to find out from the academics involved in the collaborative efforts why they took these on. Overall, the answers were deemed not definitive. Israelis were quoted as saying they wanted to help the peace process or Palestinians would indicate they wanted an opportunity to upgrade their skills and work with higher-quality equipment. For some, there was a clear interest in dealing with inter-and-intra-society problems, though once again the availability of research funds meant to encourage Arab-Israeli peace was one of the most significant incentives. The Israeli universities became more and more anxious to highlight their work with Palestinians in the hopes that it would impress future donors. For example, the Hebrew University printed two volumes in 1996 and 1999 of glossy brochures detailing the nature of the work carried out with Palestinian scholars. The range of individual academics involved spanned the Israeli universities with several researchers even coming from the most conservative of the Israel centers - Bar-Illan University, the home of the religious Zionist movement. For the Israelis a single word captures what it is that they believed they were engaged in: "normalization." The sense among academics and others favoring joint and collaborative

efforts was that this willingness of Palestinians to join them in projects reflected a post-conflict situation in which the relationships between Palestinians and Israelis was reaching a state of normality.

On the part of Palestinians, the evaluation of these joint efforts was more complex. While they agreed that individual Israelis with whom they worked were decent, the asymmetry of the situation often rankled. They noted that once Israelis felt that legitimacy had been achieved through the collaborative efforts in the academic sphere, there would be no reason for additional Israeli concessions in any other areas. The Palestinians felt that although on an individual basis their colleagues might help them receive the permits needed for travel or the import of equipment, they believed that the academic establishment in Israel never really used its significant influence to reduce the difficulties that the Palestinian academics faced. By comparison, the Israeli assumption was that the more Palestinians who chose to work with Israelis, the more institutions would alter their policies, that more cooperation would increase incentives for Israelis to become involved in efforts to change Israeli policies. As Scham noted, a dynamic developed “whereby Israelis are pushing for more joint work, while Arab partners are often less eager.” The Palestinians sensed that Israel and Israelis were anxious to receive recognition from them, and that withholding it was one of the few potent weapons they had. Israelis by and large, including those in the peace camp, do not agree with this appraisal. There exists, then, a significant gap between Palestinian and Israeli perceptions. Scham summed this up nicely when he said “Israelis see peace as flowing from normalization in academia as in other fields, while Arabs see normalization as an eventual result of peace and a rectification of Arab grievances.”

There is one interesting wrinkle that developed during the period of increased collaborative efforts. The Palestinian Council for Higher Education (or the Rectors' Conference) had issued a decree during the first Intifada stipulating that Palestinian universities could not work directly with Israeli universities. This however did not ban individuals from entering into joint research projects with Israeli academics. The Rectors' Conference, however, stipulated that these research contracts and other collaborative efforts could occur as long as there was a third party involved! This generally meant a foreign institution, European or American, or a Palestinian research consortium such as the Palestine Consultancy Group, which incidentally is headed by Dr. Sari Nusseibeh.

Dr. Eddie Kaufman, Director of the Truman Institute at Hebrew University and one of the most indefatigable organizers of joint projects at both the academic and political level, noted some of his own successes at bringing together Palestinians from Bir Zeit University and Bethlehem University to projects at the Truman. During the 1988 Intifada, he noted that for two years, Palestinians came to monthly meetings at the Truman where they discussed both academic and political issues of joint interest. They then slowly developed joint research projects. He is also proud of the fact that the Truman has developed working relationships with academics in Jordan and Egypt as well. He sadly pointed out that all of the joint projects with Palestinians and other Arabs were in abeyance since the autumn of 2000 and the current violence. Whereas he had been proud to note that during the 1990s, third parties largely dropped away as being irrelevant to the bilateral arrangements that Palestinians and Israelis were able to make for collaborative efforts, he

now once again notes the essential role that third parties would have in helping Palestinians and Israelis come back together, even for groups which had worked jointly in the past. Individuals, he said, of course can continue individual contacts, but any group meetings or formal sessions almost certainly require outsiders, and he suggests that for them to succeed at this stage they may have to move outside of the Israeli and Palestinian regions for their meetings.

There are two additional NGOs which should be discussed briefly since they represent specifically indigenous efforts to serve, each in its own way, as a link between the Palestinian and Israeli communities and as an educational voice within those communities. The Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) actually predates the Oslo Accords, having begun its organizational efforts at the time of the first Intifada in the spring of 1988. The original idea for a local joint Israeli-Palestinian organization dealing with efforts at conflict resolution and peace making was born in the head of Gershon Baskin, an American-born Israeli. Firmly located in the peace camp, the idea that emerged in discussions with Palestinians was to create a program which would be truly jointly directed by a Palestinian and an Israeli, that they would have a board of directors comprised of equal numbers of Israelis and Palestinians, that there would be co-chairpeople - one Israeli and one Palestinian. They turned initially to two people for advice. Retired General Mati Peled on the Israeli side was blunt: "stay away from me if you want to involve Israelis from the establishment." While it was initially somewhat problematic, they did bring together an Israeli group from the center-left as members of the board. They turned in addition to Feisel Husseini with the aim of gaining the support of this leading figure in the Jerusalem Palestinian community who was also closely linked to the PLO leadership in Tunis. It

took close to two years before the Palestinian director was appointed. Zakaria Al Qaq, who had a checkered early educational career, with time spent at Kuwait University, at Cairo University, and ultimately at Aberdeen University in Scotland, where he completed a PhD. He traveled and worked widely in the Arab world - Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria - some of the time as a journalist before returning to his home town of Jerusalem. At the time Al Qaq received the support of the local Palestinian leadership, especially Feisel Husseini, to become co-director he had had virtually no prior contact with Israelis.

The initial co-chairs of the board have shown up earlier in this report. Hanna Sinora, the Jerusalem publisher and businessman and Moshe Amirav, the Israeli Likud member who had taken part in earlier pioneering direct exchanges with Palestinians. Their idea was to establish working groups; the first three dealt with the problems of water, business and commercial relations between the two communities, and the city of Jerusalem. From early on they started a pattern of open or semi-open meetings, to which they invited a range of Palestinians and Israelis. Their three working groups who met monthly, were comprised of economists and businesspeople, water specialists, and individuals from both communities who had worked on or studied the issues of Jerusalem. They chose a neutral site, or almost neutral, at which to hold their meetings: the Notre Dame Center which sits adjacent to the Old City wall, literally on the line that had separated Arab East and Israeli West Jerusalem before 1967. Notre Dame serves primarily as a hospice for Catholic pilgrims coming to visit the Holy Land; in the years since Israelis and Palestinians started meeting together in Jerusalem, it became an important site for these gatherings. It should be noted however that its staff is almost completely Palestinian, albeit



several of the administrators hold appointments from the Holy See in Rome since Notre Dame is officially a pontifical center. IPCRI also takes advantage of the Catholic Church's presence in the Holy Land by currently having their office located at the Tantur Conference Center, which sits on the border between Palestinian Bethlehem and Israeli territory. This is particularly valuable, at this time, since Palestinians can come from the Bethlehem side and Israelis from the Jerusalem side. Crossing the border is otherwise difficult for each group, and dangerous for some.

IPCRI's interesting dual directorship has some of the same problems that were found in Jerusalem Link, but there is a difference: IPCRI is a single organization, and if it is to function, the two directors have to communicate, albeit each of them indicated that at times they have had difficulty and have almost come apart. Personally, both Baskin and Al Qaq are outgoing, voluble individuals who don't hide grievances and seethe inside. Instead they bring issues forward directly, and issues there are. As Al Qaq put it, they see themselves as a front for the Palestine-Israel conflict itself. As he noted, originally the Palestinians responsible for putting him in the job saw him as having a role of being there to "slow things down." Baskin was a vigorous supporter of Oslo, Al Qaq an opponent. He saw Oslo at best as a political survival operation for the Palestinians.

IPCRI's pattern of operation is multifaceted - at times inventive, at other times confusing. They have organized joint programs on the ground dealing with issues in agriculture, in water, in education, and most recently explicitly in conflict resolution. In this latter effort for instance they teamed up to become the local representatives of the Consensus Building Institute, the

Cambridge-based conflict resolution consulting group. They arranged meetings to train Palestinians and Israelis, sometimes separately, sometimes together, in conflict-resolving techniques on domestic issues, in the environment and economics, and on political issues - Israeli-Palestinian relations and the thorny questions involved. Baskin also likes to see IPCRI as advisors to the Israeli government and he writes reports which he submits to a variety of Israeli ministries dealing with aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontations. The major third party component of their work is through funding. Baskin is highly entrepreneurial in his abilities to get serious support, most of it coming from European agencies. IPCRI is a bilateral cooperative effort of Palestinians and Israelis with both sides carrying their own share of responsibilities and operations.

Baskin particularly would like to see IPCRI become a mediator between the Palestinians and the Israelis particularly at the semi-official level or in non-official meetings of officials. Some individuals in both camps are suspicious of IPCRI's modes of operation and their ability to serve the role of intermediaries. Critics wonder whether a locally-based organization can have the distance needed and skills necessary to truly serve the mediator's role. Both Baskin and Al Qaq have strong opinions and air them easily. Critics have also seen a confusion of roles. They have been quite successful at conducting open and semi-open meetings which have incorporated significant numbers from the Palestinian and Israeli communities. Their views are widely disseminated through a steady stream of publications and IPCRI has taken positions on a range of the critical issues outstanding between the Israelis and Palestinians: Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, among others. For this they gain high marks, but those engaged in off-the-record

informal negotiations or backchannel discussions are fearful of leaks which would be seen to serve IPCRI's own organizational needs and fundraising efforts.

To their credit, IPCRI does not give up easily. They have persevered through the years, and when I met with the two leaders in Jerusalem in March 2001, they were still working hard to keep some of their projects in operation. Baskin however did not feel free to travel in the West Bank or to Gaza. They had to close their office in Bethlehem (Palestinian territory) which they only opened in the late 1990s. When they want to hold particularly serious consultations with small groups, they go outside to Cyprus or to Greece for three or four days of meetings. The two leaders have differing views as to how to proceed at this time. Baskin wants to push ahead at full steam, whereas Al Qaq wants to slow down, giving the groups involved time to "walk and talk." Since last September, things have been very difficult for them. Palestinians fear participating in joint efforts of this sort since they have been criticized by the NGO group of Palestinian organizations and by other individual Palestinian leaders. Some say they fear reprisals from within their own communities where sentiments are very strong. On the other hand, in a session arranged in the winter for seventy-five school teachers in a session of educators for peace, the group went to Turkey for their meeting and only three schools did not send representatives. A group of environmentalist mediators, all came to a Turkish gathering. The death of Feisel Husseini in May 2001 will almost surely weaken their efforts in that Feisel remained their strongest supporter and patron within the Palestinian community and at difficult times served as their protector.

IPCRI may well survive due to the sheer momentum of their operations and the vigor of the two leaders, if the two stay together. And it may be that the emerging focus on more practical activities - teacher training, environmental mediator, skill development, etc. - will have utility on the ground which will partially escape the intense dissensions of the past year.

The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) was founded in March 1987 by Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi together with a group of other Palestinian intellectuals and academics. It is the oldest of the Palestinian think tanks, and its Jerusalem location has permitted it to continue its activities throughout the variety of crises and closures in the Palestinian territories. Mahdi Abdul Hadi is an American-trained political scientist who is a classic study in an intermediary organizer and well-disciplined organization executive. He is from one of the “notable” families of old Palestine and history books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries abound with Abdul Hadi photos. Many adorn the walls of his offices. PASSIA is independent, without any formal tie to other organizations or governmental agencies, raising most of its money initially from foundations and from European governments in more recent years. It has maintained close ties with the British Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) and with university programs in international affairs, diplomacy, and the Middle East in England, the Netherlands, and other sites. Its major mode of operation has been through conferences, seminars, and the commissioning of studies. It has consciously taken on the task of providing training and internships for Palestinian college graduates working in international affairs and related fields. Its steady stream of publications has been prodigious; perhaps the best-known is its annual calendar or diary which keeps the fullest updated list available of Palestinian

organizations, agencies, service centers, and leading individuals. The diary is a necessary accoutrement to any trip to Jerusalem and the Palestinian areas. Madhi Abdul Hadi has also operated on the margins of a number of backchannel exchanges, particularly those involving Feisel Husseini.

While PASSIA began its activities in 1987, things became tougher during the early years of the Intifada in 1988, 89, and 90, but nonetheless Abdul Hadi was able to continue most of his programs, albeit at times he was limited to working only with Palestinians resident in Jerusalem. His interaction with Israelis dates to the pre-Oslo years; he would periodically invite an Israeli intellectual or academic to make a presentation to one of the regular PASSIA seminars in their Wadi Joz, East Jerusalem Center. The focus would be on a tough issue, and the exchanges, some of which I had witnessed, were frank but always courteous. Abdul Hadi maintained a spirit and code of behavior for exchanges at the PASSIA center which almost everyone observed. During the post-Oslo years, PASSIA went into much higher gear, and the inclusion of Israelis in seminars became much more common and a more regular feature. Abdul Hadi himself became more intensely involved in helping set up and take part in exchanges with Israeli groups. One effort was focused on the status of Jerusalem, which was arranged bilaterally, involving - in addition to Abdul Hadi - the Bethlehem University academic Bernard Sabella and Dr. Sari Nusseibeh. On the Israeli side the Jerusalem lawyer and expert on issues on the status of Jerusalem, Daniel Seideman, was joined by Ron Pundik and Ya'ir Herschfeld. The group met on-and-off over a period of two years, at times involving religious figures from the Muslim and Christian communities as well as Feisel Husseini. Results of some of these discussions were published by

PASSIA as signed statements or papers by individuals. Abdul Hadi also maintained good connections with the various consulates in Jerusalem, often inviting the consuls general to address his seminars and at other times to participate as commentators or consultants. While not an organization explicitly formed to serve as a bridge between the Palestinian and Israeli communities - it was explicitly formed to serve Palestinian needs - Abdul Hadi's own conception of what Palestinians need to take active, intelligent, and useful part in the peace making process and in international relations led him to add to PASSIA's formal mandate the informal component of interaction with Israelis. Israelis in turn found the PASSIA forums valuable places to encounter the wide variety of Palestinians not often included in the traditional dialogues and working groups. Muslim leaders often participated alongside Marxist political activists.

## **2000 And On**

My visit to the Middle East in late March 2001, nine months after the breakdown of the Camp David summit and seven months after the beginning of the violent confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians gave a particularly interesting perspective from which to view efforts by non-governmental organizations and individuals at mediation and peace making at the unofficial level. Most of the ongoing exchanges, dialogues, and efforts at crossing the Palestinian-Israeli boundaries had come to a halt. Those who had been involved in them for years had a variety of assessments as to what was going on, and indeed some looked back at the efforts by third parties and by bilateral groups, trying to assess what had worked, and why things now stopped.

It was clear in my conversations that it was the Palestinians, as individuals and as organized groups, who took the lead in stopping or postponing many of the exchanges. The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Group (PNGO) had called for the closing down of exchanges. They were aiming particularly at those activities which fell under the rubric of “normalization.” Many groups, particularly among the Palestinians, drew back in anger at Israel in general and at times in disappointment or even disgust with the individuals with whom they had been in collaborative contact. The collapse of the Jerusalem Link was a good example of active Palestinians who had helped establish this joint women’s effort drawing back as they saw their Israeli colleagues unable or unwilling to join in what they considered the necessary new politics in this stage in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Most Palestinian academics, particularly those engaged in discussing political and social issues, or in carrying out research in these fields, drew the projects to a close. Israelis in some of these efforts, for their part, just “couldn’t understand” the unwillingness of the Palestinian leadership to accept what they saw as an unprecedentedly generous offer by Prime Minister Barak in summer 2000. They announced a loss of confidence in their Palestinian counterparts who just did not see Arafat’s refusal as a failure. It would seem that some of the deep fault lines that had been smoothed over as it appeared that both communities were heading toward peace agreements in the post-Oslo years reemerged very rapidly when the going on the formal negotiating side got rough. Then there was also the very practical element: Israelis stopped traveling to the West Bank and Gaza and even East Jerusalem out of fear as the violence developed. In turn, Palestinians were largely unable to make the trip into Israel or into Jerusalem itself from the territories due to restrictions, need for permits, and arbitrary closures.

For some among both the Israelis and Palestinians who are themselves strong peace advocates and activists, the close of the bilateral activities was greeted with a degree of disappointment. They had hoped for more. Some individuals did keep in contact, often by phone or email. Some loose ends were brought together. Some concern for the loss of funds and the missing of new funding cycles were discussed, but certainly in the spring of 2001 the uncertainties of the future overwhelmed plans and even goodwill.

But what about the veteran participants in dialogues and backtrack channels? For those connected with more public events like the Jerusalem Link, getting together became itself a major political issue. Dr. Naomi Chazan, one of the founders of Jerusalem Link, and one of the strongest peace advocates in Israel (member of the Knesset from the left-wing Meretz party and longtime participant in dialogue groups) recounted the difficulty she had in setting up a meeting with her longtime friend Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, one of the earliest Palestinian participants in exchanges, herself a member of the Palestinian parliament, like Chazan also an academic, found herself constrained by the political mood in the Palestinian street. They both recounted that the meeting they finally arranged at Ashrawi's office just beyond the major checkpoint separating the West Bank from Jerusalem was stiff, even if markedly cordial. These two women who had toured the world in public dialogue found that the animosities and tensions developed since the failure of the Camp David summit had left their own relations strained. They had to relate in public, because this is the mode they had both adopted, and each was therefore very conscious of her constituents' reaction to what they would do and say and indeed even their affect. The group



who had engaged in the less public exchanges, the American Academy-style working group, Herb Kelman's dialogue groups, or the unofficial negotiating sessions established in the years since 1993, found that they were able to continue talking, albeit some noted the explicit strains even as they met in private and off the record. Some looked back on their years of involvement and wondered if much of it had been "atmospherics." One thing is interesting about this group. I can name them all from memory. In this sense the group of non-governmental Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals and influentials who had taken part in exchanges during the past two decades is relatively small. There is a circulation of the members through the variety of conferences, working groups, secret discussions, and informal dialogues. Having taken part in these over a good number of years, during the variety of changes in the Palestinian-Israeli mood of interaction, they themselves have become immune in some large measure to the political strains. They certainly knew the strains and understood them, but they had come to know their interlocutors well enough to engage in even very frank and critical discussion without drawing back. For some, there is a disappointment in the attitude of the other side. Several of the Israelis just did not understand why their Palestinian interlocutors who they had come to respect did not see what a big mistake Arafat had made, and some of the Israelis drew back quite significantly and took on a very critical mode. This was particularly true of one or two of the journalists who took the part of the injured interlocutor. "We expected more from them." This was the attitude adopted by many on the Israeli left who could not understand why the intellectuals, experts, and academics with whom they had entered discourse saw the situation so differently from their own appraisal.

I had one particularly thoughtful and probing discussion with a longtime participant in

Israeli and Palestinian exchanges. This is an Israeli expert on the Middle East who went on to become Israel's ambassador first to Egypt and then to Jordan, and yet remained in contact with - and when out of official roles - participant in exchanges. When we discussed the issue of refugees, he pondered whether the working groups that had focused on this issue might actually have done a disservice. The individuals who had spent a year or two years examining the issues of refugees in detail, talking through potential options and coming up with mutually agreeable recommendations to their governments may, he said, have misled their own leaderships. They may also have misled the policy circles with whom they were involved and to whom they often reported. This longtime participant reflected on the fact that nothing in the refugee discussions that he was aware of would have led him to expect the strength with which Arafat and the Palestinian delegation pushed the concept of the right of return to Israel itself of Palestinian refugees. He remembered the variety of "arrangements" that had been outlined in many of the papers and reports which now seemed not reflected at all in the thoughts of the leadership of the Palestinians. While he will almost certainly take part in further working groups or backchannel efforts, he certainly was sobered by the implications of the gap that exists between even the best-connected of the unofficial interlocutors and the officials when they make decisions and engage in direct government-to-government exchanges.

