Mark O`Doherty

Map for Realization of Peace between Palestine and Israel

An evidence based qualitative research project on the Arab/Israeli
conflict focusing on social, political and ideological perspectives

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Von **Mark O`Doherty**

In the following qualitative explorative study 16 Israeli and Palestinian people were questioned regarding their social, political and ideological views; reasons for the Arab/Israeli conflict varying from social-, territorial-, political- and cultural conflicts, as well as lack of empathy and trust, to mutual blame and unforgiveness.

As a result of this research, criteria for a »Map for Peace« from the perspective of Israeli and Palestinian people was derived, where 'social relations' was found to be the primary criteria, as well as 'human rights', 'territorial dispute', 'ideological conflicts,' 'politics' and 'intervention by the international community'.

Noticeable were the differing opinions of the questioned groups; for example Palestinian people in general desire more support from the international community and were eager to speak about the alleged atrocities committed by Israelis; while the majority of the questioned Israelis did not desire intervention from the international community and seemed reluctant to speak about the Arab/Israeli conflict, having given up hope that peace between Palestine and Israel is possible, and feeling somewhat misunderstood by the international community. However, contrary to initial assumptions, in general both groups believed that politicians were more inclined to maintain the »status quo«, than to change the political situation in Israel and Palestine. Furthermore, a polarity was noticeable in both groups regarding religious and agnostic beliefs, which was independent to the ethnic background of the questioned persons. However, there does seem to be a correlation between religious convictions and the 'justification of violence' in both groups.

Inconsistencies in the category »social relations« were noticeable throughout this study in both groups. This indicates that there is uncertainty – and even some confusion – regarding what social-interaction-roles Israelis and Palestinians would like to have when communicating with each other.

This would mean specifically, that Palestinians and Israeli‹s would be probably overburdened to »draw« a Map for Peace on the 'social relations' level.

These and other factors make it difficult for Israeli and Palestinian people to find common ground, and to break the cycle of violence. To manifest the elusive win-win situation in this region, 'Peace Building' in the form of psycho-social counselling, problem-solving workshops, community work and pedagogic counselling for young persons and adults is recommended, conducted by international- and local NGO's in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

■ Statement of Problem ■

The Arab/Israeli situation – which seems to defy all solutions – must be one of the most complex and polarising subjects in the world.

My personal interest with the situation in Palestine began first when I was an Erasmus student at the Oslo University College, in 2009, where I met an Israeli gentleman, as well as a Palestinian gentleman who both had very strong opinions about the situation.

The Palestinian gentleman, who was currently teaching at the Oslo University College, had been exiled from Palestine by the Israeli occupying force, and was therefore unable to return to Gaza, his hometown in Palestine. He, the Palestine lecturer, also mentioned that in Gaza most Palestinian children were oppressed by the Israeli army. To substantiate this, he showed me a newspaper article depicting a Palestinian boy used as a human shield by Israeli soldiers, with the title: »The day Israel used a boy aged 13 as a human shield" (Source: Daily Mail, Friday 23rd April, 2004).

In conjunction I interviewed briefly an international student from Israel, who of course defended his country, by saying that Palestinian Terrorists have been killing the Israeli People for such a long time, and that they were living

in daily fear (especially his girlfriend) of bomb attacks, and that therefore the Israeli occupation in Palestine was justified; (according to the interviewed subject, but he did agree, that the children in Palestine were innocent victims of the war. However, when I asked him, whether the Israeli Army should withdraw from the Palestinian States, he replied, that it was not possible, saying that the occupation of Palestinian States was the only option for Israel at the moment to secure safety for the Israeli People.

It was this particular encounter with a Palestinian citizen and an Israeli citizen which motivated me to launch this qualitative, explorative research project in Palestine and Israel.

Worthwhile mentioning is not only the territorial conflict in the region, but also the fight over water resources between the Israelis and Palestinians, which are only very limited. This is not an uncommon problem with warring ethnic groups; the lack of acknowledgment that the other side has the right to limited life-sustainable resources too. A prerequisite in any conflict resolution is that all parties must recognize that the needs and rights of the other are just as important as their own.

Is that the case with Israeli's and Palestinians? Are they willing to give peace a chance? Or are they determined to fight to the bitter end over the resources of the 'Promised Land?'

This brings us also to the high population density of the region. Israel has a population density of 341 people per square kilometer. The Palestinian Territories have a population density of 654 people per square kilometer. Compared, for example, to the USA which has a population density of 38 people per square kilometer, and France which has a population density of 116 people per square kilometer, the region of Israel and Palestine has an extremely high population density; not to mention the Gaza Strip, which has a population density of 4000 people per square kilometer. (Source: CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

So perhaps a just peace between Israel and Palestine is actually not possible, because there are simply too many people in the region.

However, there are some tight-knit societies in the world that live in peace. Indeed, to live in harmony with your fellow man in an environment where the population density is extremely high – like in most western metropolitan cities – can actually be a very rewarding experience. After all, you can have only a limited number of enemies; but friends you can have an unlimited number, regardless how close they live together with you.

Is that the case with Israeli's and Palestinians? Would they be willing to be peaceful neighbours with each other if they had the chance?

However, it is true that the geo-political dynamics in the Middle-East conflict are for more complex than in Europe, and from a psycho-historic perspective there seems to have been some progress in present day Palestine and Israel, if one looks at the history of this war-torn region. Because if the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis would have taken place two thousand years ago, the law of the jungle would have still prevailed, and the »unlucky" ethnic group that was conquered by the other ethnic group, would have been simply vanquished by the winning party. But this is not the case. No genocides have taken place, and no party has been vanquished yet. So it seems there has taken place some kind of evolution of the people living in the region today, compared to the people who lived there two thousand years ago, where the constant ethnic conflict in the region was only ever resolved temporarily by violence and forced displacement.

Actually, it is a miracle that the Middle East conflict has so far been contained in this small region of Palestine and Israel. Palestine and Israel may be a hotspot, symbolizing religious and ethnic conflict in all facets and colours, but the Islamic-Christian-Jewish conflict exists all over the world. Indeed, the »function« of the 'Holy Land' may actually be to carry the burden of ethnic and religious disharmony in our world, and to act as a warning example – as a cautionary tale – what can happen if we are not willing to learn to live with each other in peace; meaning that peace may well continue to remain elusive in this region; like it has for he past two thousand years….

However, regardless of my personal opinion about the matter, we should always give peace a chance; and this is the reason why I decided to initiate this qualitative peace study – to research if, and to what extent, people in Israel and Palestine are willing to learn to live in peace with each other.

Literature regarding the Arab/Israeli conflict

It should be noted that this peace study is based on a phenomenological approach; meaning that the researcher approached the questioned persons as if he had no prior knowledge of the subject and therefore no literary references in conjunction with the Arab/Israeli conflict are made in this paper. This is due to the fact, that the Arab/Israeli conflict is a highly volatile and complex subject, where no consensus exists within the international community. Basically, the researcher started »from scratch" with this peace study, without any pre-conceived notions about the subject at hand.

Research Questions

Focal research questions in this study are the following:

1. *Which »barriers« in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel prevent a just peace between the two groups.*
2. *Do the Palestinian- and Israeli people harbour and desire 'social relations' with each other? And to what extent is there a difference in that regard among the interviewpartners of the different groups?*
3. *Do Palestinian- and Israeli believe that their »Human Rights« are being protected? Where are differences and where are commonalities?*
4. *Under what circumstances do the Palestinian- and Israeli population think that the use of legitimate force can be justified?*
5. *Do the Palestinian- and Israeli people believe that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? Where are differences and where are commonalities?*
6. *What are the driving ideological/religious beliefs of the Israeli and Palestinian people. Where are differences and where are commonalities? To what extent is there a difference in that regard between the interviewpartners of the same ethnicity?*
7. *How is »peace« defined by the Palestinian- and Israeli population? Is »peace« a goal for all Palestinian- and Israeli people? Or do a proportion of the Palestinian and Israeli people favour conflict instead of peace? (either consciously or sub-consciously)*

Methods

In the following qualitative explorative study eight Israeli and eight Palestinian people were questioned regarding their cultural, political and spiritual views. The Qualitative research included data collection and evaluation, field research, intercultural communication, participating observation, narrative interviews, guided interviews, content analyses and contextualisation.

Selection of the Qualitative Research Method

Within the social sciences, there are basically two opposing schools of thought. One holds that fields like sociology and psychology should attempt to be as rigorous and quantitative as possible, in order to yield results that can be more easily generalized, and in order to sustain the respect of the scientific community. Another holds that these fields benefit from qualitative research, as it allows for a richer study of a subject, and allows for information to be gathered that would otherwise be entirely missed by a quantitative approach. Although attempts have been made in recent years to find a stronger synthesis between the two, the debate rages on, with many social scientists falling sharply on one side or the other.

Qualitative Research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfil a given quota.

Qualitative research studies are focused on differences in quality, rather than differences in quantity. Results are in words or pictures rather than numbers. Qualitative studies usually have fewer participants than quantitative studies because the depth of the data collection does not allow for large numbers of participants.

Quantitative and qualitative studies both have strengths and weaknesses. A particular strength of quantitative research is that statistical analysis allows for generalization (to some extent) to others. A goal of quantitative research is to choose a sample that closely resembles the population. Qualitative research does not seek to choose samples that are perfectly representative of populations. Conclusions in qualitative research are made by induction, but which is also a scientifically acknowledged research method.

Also, qualitative research is a much more subjective form of research, in which the research allows themselves to introduce their own bias to help form a more complete picture. Qualitative research may be necessary in situations where it is unclear what exactly is being looked for in a study, so that the researcher needs to be able to determine what data is important and what isn't. While quantitative research generally knows exactly what it's looking for before the research begins, in qualitative research the focus of the study may become more apparent as time progresses.

But most importantly, qualitative data does provide a depth and richness of data not possible with quantitative data. Although there are fewer participants, the researchers generally know more details about each participant. Quantitative researchers collect data on more participants, so it is not possible to have the depth and breadth of knowledge about each.

The reasons why the Qualitative Research Method was chosen for this study were the following:

1. An explorative, open study was conducted
2. The Arab/Israeli conflict is a complex, differentiated, non-conclusive and partially contradictory subject.
3. Not verification of theories, but formation and evolution of theories.
4. A high level of communication was required in this study
5. The living environment was explored of the interviewed persons.
6. The size of the sample in this study was not defined from the beginning.
7. Sampling was concluded when theoretical saturation was achieved.

Altogether nine of the questioned persons were interviewed face-to face, while seven persons were questioned with online questionnaires.

Five of the Palestinian Interviewpartners were selected in co-operation with the International Palestinian youth League (IPYL), located in Hebron; while two Palestinian Interviewpartners were recruited through personal contacts in Bethlehem; the reason why the respective research is focused in the public space of Hebron and Bethlehem. But the last Palestinian Interviewpartner was from Jerusalem, selected randomly with an online questionnaire.

The eight Israeli Interviewpartners were selected randomly with online questionnaires, with the exception of two interview partners who were interviews face-to-face – located in Nahariya and Acco – who were recruited through personal contacts of the interviewer.

The online questionnaire was developed since it was very difficult for the researcher to attain face-to face interviews with Israelis on the subject. Therefore, to reach this »hard-to-reach« target group, online questionnaires were sent out to numerous organisations and individuals until finally six Israelis were found who were willing to answer the in-depth questions on the online questionnaire.

For the face-to-face interviews a partially structured interview manual was used, which were then evaluated using the qualitative content analysis of Mayring. (Mayring:2003)

Using the qualitative content analysis, the following categories were applied to the interviews and the responses from the online questionnaire:

1. Social Relations
2. Human Rights
3. Territorial Dispute
4. Ideological Conflicts
5. Politics
6. Intervention by the International Community

After all interviews and online questionnaires were analysed, important segments of the data were further evaluated by the method of objective hermeneutics, which is an empirical method, originally derived from traditional hermeneutic techniques and hermeneutical interpretation.

[…] Our approach has grown out of the empirical study of family interactions as well as reflection upon the procedures of interpretation employed

in our research. For the time being we shall refer to it as objective herme-neutics in order to distinguish it clearly from traditional hermeneutic tech-niques and orientations. The general significance for sociological analysis of objective hermeneutics issues from the fact that, in the social sciences, interpretive methods constitute the fundamental procedures of measure-ment and of the generation of research data relevant to theory. From our perspective, the standard, non-hermeneutic methods of quantitative social research can only be justified because they permit a shortcut in generating data (and research »economy« comes about under specific conditions). Whereas the conventional methodological attitude in the social sciences justifies qualitative approaches as exploratory or preparatory activities, to be succeeded by standardized approaches and techniques as the actual scientific procedures (assuring precision, validity, and objectivity), we re-gard hermeneutic procedures as the basic method for gaining precise and valid knowledge in the social sciences...[1]

■ Findings

Using the qualitative content analysis (Mayring:2002), the following core categories were applied to the interviews and the responses from the online questionnaire: » Social Rela-tions«, »Human Rights«, »Territorial Dispute«, »Ideological/Religious Conflicts«, »Politics«, and »Intervention by the International Community«.

Noticeable were the differing opinions of the questioned groups; for example Palestinian Interviewpartners in general were eager to speak about the alleged atrocities committed by Israelis. And seven out of eight Palestinian Interview-partners desired more support from the international com-munity.

I: „Do you think that your human rights are being protec-ted where you live. If yes, why? If not, why not?«

Palestinian Interviewpartner 1: „No, because we are not treated as human beings here in Palestine. The Israelis have all the rights and power.«

Palestinian Interviewpartner 3: „No. The Israelis imprison children and adults alike, without abiding by any of the human rights laws put forth by the UN….The UN, Europe and the U.S.A must help us…«

Palestinian Interviewpartner 6: „[…] since the Israelis oc-cupy the West Bank, they have absolute control here in Hebron. They control everything; including peace and vio-lence. If they want peace, we have peace; but if they want violence – which they often do – the Israelis engineer si-tuations of violence, in demonstrations, for example…it's difficult to explain to somebody who does not live here, but that's how the situation is….«

Palestinian Interviewpartner 7: „[…] As long as the Israelis occupy the West Bank, and imprison us Palestinians by their law of 'administrative detention' – without holding a fair tri-al – our human rights are not protected….I hope that other countries in the world will come to see the injustice brought force by Israel in Palestine…what about your country? How does the Austrian government react to the atrocities com-mitted by Israel against the Palestinian people? »

Palestinian Interviewpartner 8: „[…] The Israelis occupy our land, have all the power, but are offering us nothing. So how are we supposed to negotiate with them? […]The Inter-national Community and the UN have to impose sanctions

on Israel, otherwise nothing will change…«

A narrative interview held with *Palestinian Interviewpart-ner 5* – who had lived in Palestine for over thirty years but was now living in Dubai – revealed that violence by Israeli soldiers (whether justified or not) seems to have been part at some stage in the lives of most Palestinians, in one form or another. The father of Palestinian Interviewpartner 5 had allegedly lost his eyesight on one eye, due to a head injury caused by a blow from a rifle-butt by an Israeli soldier, when her father had tried to peacefully – allegedly without provo-king any Israeli soldiers – to resolve a dispute between Israeli soldiers and an elderly Palestinian citizen. There was no anger or bitterness to observe in the narration of Palestinian Interviewpartner 5 regarding this incident; but she did deem it important to emphasise the feeling of „powerlessness« that Palestinian people felt against the Israeli soldiers.

Palestinian Interviewpartner 5: „[…] The Palestinian people feel powerless against the Israelis, as nobody is able to stand up against them; therefore the Palestinian people are hoping that somebody may come….this may be a 'Saladin' like per-son from our own country, but it could also be anybody else from any other country in the world; just somebody who is able to stand up against the Israelis and bring peace to the Palestinian and Israeli people …«

(Note: Saladin was a Muslim sultan of Kurdish origin, who led Islamic opposition against the European Crusaders in the Levant. At the height of his power, his sultanate inclu-ded Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Hejaz, Yemen, and parts of North Africa. He is still regarded today as an icon in Palesti-ne, and some Palestinian Interviewpartners made a reference to him, in the context that a 'Saladin figure' was needed to liberate Palestine from the Israelis)

In contrast to the Palestinian Interviewpartners, the Isra-eli Interviewpartners in general seemed reluctant to speak about the Arab/Israeli conflict, having given up hope that peace between Palestine and Israel is possible.

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: „[…]The whole world is in des-pair at the Israeli government's lack of commitment to a peaceful solution(?) […] Israel has given up on the idea of peace...they are just digging in and making a fortress, and to me that is a disastrous policy, because you can't win like that. History has shown that. The Israeli government, and the people that support it, are no longer concerned anymore what the world thinks. They just say, 'Fuck the rest of the world.' A bit like the attitude certain elements(?) in South Africa had during the Apartheid era. But the Israeli's can't live in isolation. They can't go on like that. They have to try to win back the trust of the nations, which Israel had for a long time. Initially Israel was seen as the little start-up state, being bullied by the big Arab nations; but now Israel is seen as the big bully…."

Israeli Interviewpartners 2, 3 and 7 were the only ones out of the eight Israeli Interviewpartners who stated unequivo-cally that intervention from the international community would improve the situation. However, four out of eight Israeli Interviewpartners stated that they would appreciate support from NGO's (be it local or international NGO's); this was due to the fact that Israeli Interviewpartner 8 diffe-rentiated between international political intervention, and NGO intervention.

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1 Oevermann/Ulrich:1987 P. 436–447.

I: Do you think that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: Yes. It certainly would help; whether successful is another story.

(How intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People, Israeli Interviewpartner 2 did not elaborate on).
I: Do you think that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 3: I think that the scent of the new wave of cultures could significantly improve and widen peoples ability to accept whats different; therefore achieving a positive step towards piece.

Israeli Interviewpartner 7: Yes. Intervention from International NGO groups and International Political Leaders from other countries would improve the political situation between Palestine and Israel.

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: By Leadership. The South African example.

I: What exactly do you mean by that?

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: […] the solution that did work in South Africa, and could work for Israel, is to break this climate of fear. Whites in South Africa accepted change when a leader (FW de Klerk) appeared to allay their fears of 'a blood bath' if the blacks 'took over'. He was able to do this because his government was already talking to the leaders of the 'other side', led by Nelson Mandela: This is what is crucial: finding them equally eager to negotiate a peaceful solution. With this common goal of a peaceful solution, they were able to negotiate a change […] So, I think what the situation here needs is for great and magnanimous leadership on both sides: For statesmen of the calibre of De Klerk and Mandela to appear…«

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 3: I personally think it takes a lot more than anything I can think of on my spare time.

I: Is there anything you wish to add in conclusion?

Israeli Interviewpartner 3: Maybe piece and war are not the only two possible conditions!
This is of course a somewhat cryptic answer, which Israeli Interviewpartner 3 did not care to elaborate on. However Israeli Interviewpartner 3 does make it clear, that he is overburdened by the question of how the Arab/Israeli conflict could be resolved, and how peace could be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People.
Israeli Interviewpartners 1, 4, 5 and 6 strongly rejected in-

tervention from the international community and also had given up on the idea of peace, just like *Israeli Interviewpartner 2* had predicted. Also, a certain kind of frustration is evident from these answers, as these Israeli Interviewpartners appear also to feel somewhat misunderstood by the international community.

I: Do you think that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 4: No, because their interventions would be for their own benefits, and that harms more than it helps.

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 4: Neither side wants a complete peaceful solution, and neither wants to give up on their own land for the other. Therefore there is no peace between Israelis and Palestinians to be achieved.

I: Is there anything you wish to add in conclusion?

Israeli Interviewpartner 4: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a long and everlasting conflict that, in my own personal opinion, will lead to nowhere but the murder of innocent civilians and leave people homeless and devastated. Outside support is useless and the only thing I like to do is not think about this anymore. Walk with the sheep and close my ears.

I: Do you think that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 5: No, it was tried before and failed.

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 5: First, they (the Palestinians) need to stop the violence. Then we can start to talk.

I: Is there anything you wish to add in conclusion?

Israeli Interviewpartner 5: No.

I: Do you think that intervention from the international community would help to achieve peace between the Palestinian and Israeli People? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: No! There will never be peace the Palestinian people always say that they will fight till the Jewish people leave Palestine they say that clearly! And the Jewish people are not leaving. Giving them the rest of Gaza didn‹t help… nothing is going to help! I can‹t understand how people think different!

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: I don‹t think it‹s possible.

I: Is there anything you wish to add in conclusion?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: Not really.

Regarding if the Separation Barrier constructed along and within the West Bank should be removed, all Palestinian Interviewpartners voiced a strong opinion that the Separation Barrier should be removed. The Israeli Interviewpartners were divided among this issue, a polarity being noticeable. (*Israeli Interviewpartner 1, 2, 5 and 6* were strongly against the removal of the Separation Barrier. *Israeli Interviewpartners 3,4,7 and 8* were strongly for the removal of the Separation Barrier; even comparing the Separation Barrier with the late Berlin Wall, like *Israeli Interviewpartner 4* did:

I: Do you think the Separation Barrier constructed along and within the West Bank should be removed? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 4: Yes, because we‹re not living in old Berlin.

However, even some of the more liberal Israeli Interviewpartners, like Israeli Interviewpartner 1 and 2 believed that the Separation Barrier had reduced the danger of terror attacks, and should therefore not be removed for the time being, as long as there is the danger of terror attacks in Israel.

Interviewpartners 5 and 6 were strongly against the removal of the Separation Barrier; however their arguments did appear to be driven by emotion (fear), rather than reason:

I: Do you think the Separation Barrier constructed along and within the West Bank should be removed? If yes, why? If not, why not?

*I*sraeli Interviewpartner 6*: No never! It saves many lives as we remember a lot of people where being killed daily not just Jewish Israeli people also many tourist and even Arabs it was very sad…»

Israeli Interviewpartner 5: No, the Separation Barrier protects the Israeli people.

(However, how the Separation Barrier protects the Israeli people, *Israeli Interviewpartner 5* did not elaborate on).

Contrary to initial assumptions, the majority in both groups believed that their respective politicians were more inclined to maintain the »status quo«, than to change the political situation in Israel and Palestine; which indicates that the majority of people in Israel and Palestine have lost hope that their politicians will bring a just peace to the region.

Furthermore, a polarity was noticeable regarding spiritual beliefs; about half of the questioned had strong to extreme religious convictions, while the other half had either weak or agnostic or atheistic beliefs – however these beliefs were in no connection to the ethnic background of the questioned.

Most Interviewpartners also believed there is a connection between politics and religion in the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian People; however there were some exceptions on both sides who believed that the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian People is entirely a conflict of territorial nature.

Most importantly, there does seem to be a correlation between religious convictions and the 'justification of violence' in both groups; the more extreme the religious convictions of the Interviewpartners were, the more they seemed to be inclined to fight against the other ethnic group and die for their cause:

I: What is your personal philosophy of life?

Palestinian Interviewpartner 1: We‹re born to pray for God and prove ourselves worthy of going to Heaven.

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Palestinian Interviewpartner 1: The only solution is to fight for it. If those Israelis are really willing to fight for their claimed country then let the strongest get it. However, since Palestine is our land and those chicken won‹t be willing to die for a country they don‹t belong it, then us the Palestinians will get the land and teach them a hard lesson. It is impossible to understand how not only Palestinians but all muslims are willing to die for the sake of our right.

I: Do you think you will be rewarded by God if you please him?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: Yes, I strongly believe I will.

I: Do you think you will be punished by God if you do not perform religious services on a regular basis?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: Yes, I strongly believe I will.

I: In your personal opinion, how can peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli People?

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: I don‹t think it‹s possible…there will never be peace the Palestinian people always say that they will fight till the Jewish people leave Palestine they say that clearly! And the Jewish people are not leaving….

Very interesting to note is also that both of these two Interviewpartners – who had rather extreme religious convictions – disapproved strongly of intermarriage between Palestinian and Israeli People; and also disapproved of Palestinian and Israeli People having more common cultural activities, believing that the relationship between Palestinians and Israeli‹s could not be improved in any way.

Israeli Interviewpartner 5 also disapproved of intermarriage between Palestinian and Israeli People; but interestingly enough approved of Palestinian and Israeli People having more common cultural activities, and also believed that Palestinian and Israeli People should do personality development programs together, and that the general relationship between Palestinians and Israeli‹s could be improved.

Such inconsistencies in the category »social relations« were noticeable throughout this study. For example, even though *Israeli Interviewpartner 1* approved of intermarriage between Palestinian and Israeli People and believed that the general relationship between Palestinians and Israeli‹s could be improved; he was neither willing to participate in joint cultural activities together with Palestinian People, nor willing to do personality development programs with Palestinians.

Interestingly enough, among the Palestinian Interviewpartners there were also some noticeable inconsistencies in the category »social relations«. Three Palestinian Interviewpartners believed and/or hoped that the relationship between Palestinians and Israeli‹s could be improved; however, these Palestinian Interviewpartners were neither willing to participate in joint cultural activities together with Israeli People, nor willing to do personality development programs with Israelis.

This indicates that there is quite possibly some confusion regarding the matter of interaction between the two groups. This would mean specifically, that Palestinians and Israeli‹s would be probably overburdened to »draw« a Map for Peace on the 'social relations' level.

One the political level, the two groups are more consistent and more concrete. The majority of the Interviewpartners either believed in a One State Solution (Fusion of Israel and the West Bank), or a two Sate Solution: (Israel and the West Bank/Gaza). An overwhelming majority of all Interviewpartners in both groups were against the policy to maintain the „Status Quo«; (to leave the Palestinian/Israeli situation as it is at present).

However, two Israeli Interviewpartners believed strongly that a scenario to reincorporate Gaza into Egypt and the West Bank into Jordan, would be the best solution.

On the other hand, there was one Palestinian Interviewpartner who believed that a military solution is the only possible solution for the present Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and that one day the Palestinian people would reclaim all their land from the Israelis; implying that the Palestinian people should wage war on the Jewish people until they leave Palestine.

Incidentally, this is just what Israeli *Interviewpartner 6* stated,

Israeli Interviewpartner 6: […]There will never be peace the Palestinian people always say that they will fight till the Jewish people leave Palestine they say that clearly! And the Jewish people are not leaving. Giving them the rest of gaza didn‹t help… nothing is going to help! I can‹t understand how people think different!

Undoubtedly, *Palestinian Interviewpartner 1* fits into *Israeli Interviewpartner 6*'s depiction of Palestinian People. However, where Israeli Interviewpartner 6 is wrong, is that he believes that ALL Palestinian People want to fight the Jewish people to the bitter. But according to this research study this is not the case. Seven out of eight Palestinian People (87,5 %) do not wish to fight the Jewish people, strongly rejecting a military solution.

Regarding the high population density in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there was a general consensus from both groups that it contributes to the conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinian People (except one Israeli Interviewpartner and one Palestinian Interviewpartner who strongly believed in the relativity of space and technological refinement of sea water), but that the political and religious elements were the primary contributory factors of the Arab/Israeli conflict.

Interesting to note is also that the majority of Palestinian Interviewpartners differentiated between two kinds of Israeli citizens: The 'regular' Israeli citizens and the »Settlers« (meaning the Israeli citizens living in the occupied territories of the West Bank). It was specifically the »Settlers« which the majority of the Palestinian Interviewpartners regarded as the most troublesome, speaking often about the alleged atrocities committed by the »Settlers«.

It became also evident in this study, that the overwhelming majority of Israeli Interviewpartners regarded it as very difficult to enter the occupied territories; however only three Israeli Interviewpartners wished to have access to all parts of Palestine and Israel. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of Palestinian Interviewpartners regarded it is as very difficult – or even impossible – to enter the »Israeli occupied« territories (meaning Israel); however seven out of eight Palestinian Interviewpartners indicated that they would like to have access to all parts of Palestine and Israel.

Discussion

Inconsistencies in the category »social relations« were noticeable throughout this study in both groups. This indicates that there is uncertainty – and even some confusion – regarding what social-interaction-roles Israelis and Palestinians would like to have when communicating with each other.

The most obvious inconsistency is probably this one: The majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners believed and/or hoped that the relationship between Palestinians and Israeli‹s could be improved; however, most of these Interviewpartners were neither willing to participate in joint cultural activities together with Israeli People, nor willing to invest any other effort to develop synergies with the other group. Simply to just to get to know people from the other ethnic group was also rather rejected by the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners.

This indicates that the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners perceive each other sort of as »things" of a political problem, rather than individual human beings with whom social relations could be formed. This could be evaluated as a lack of human empathy and resentment – brought forth by various factors – which Israelis and Palestinians mutually share when communicating with each other.

Two of the Israeli Interviewpartners and also two of the Palestinian Interviewpartners did not even approve of intermarriage between Palestinian and Israeli People. (Intermarriage between different ethnic groups is regarded from a sociological perspective as the best and ultimate form of racial integration and inclusion). This attitude indicates a lack of tolerance from these four Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners, and is also inconsistent with the United Nations Human Rights Convention, where freedom to choose ones partner is regarded as a fundamental human right. This is interesting, because all Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners – with no exception – articulated that the protection of »Human Rights" is very important for them. This means that either the term »Human Rights« is not associated by these four Interviewpartners with the United Nations Human Rights Convention (but rather a »human rights« concept of their own choosing); or that they are somewhat confused or ignorant about human rights and ethical issues; or even about the whole Arab/Israeli situation in general, the entire problem with all its complex layers simply overburdening them. (just as *Israeli Interviewpartner 3 and 4* unequivocally stated themselves).

This would mean specifically, that Palestinians and Israeli‹s would be probably overburdened to »draw« a Map for Peace on the 'social relations' level; and that they would

need some pedagogic guidance and personal reflection to clarify for themselves how they would like to interact with each other. And in case they truly desire an end of violence in Palestine and Israel, they would need to give up their resentment toward the other ethnic group, and learn to forgive each other and themselves. This is the stage when healing can take place, supported by psycho-social and therapeutic counselling. Anna Freud - the daughter of Sigmund Freud - developed the psycho-therapeutic method of »Rede-Therapy«, which means translated ›Talking Cure‹. It may sound simple, but this is actually the universal principle behind all modern psycho-therapy practiced in the world: By simply talking about their problems, their traumas, and other feelings causung suffering, people can get cured.

There were of course those two interviewpartners (*Palestinian Interviewpartner 1* and *Israeli Interviewpartner 6*) who displayed very concrete social-interaction-roles when communicating with the other ethnic group, and made it clear that they were not interested at all in forming any social relations with the other group; just to fight and wage war on another until all eternity! Interestingly enough, in Israel and Palestine some of these 'hotheads' are actually treated as national heroes; while in any other first-world country they would end up in jail, mental hospitals, the foreign legion, or at best as football hooligans.

Regarding the Zionist ideology, the problem is that there is no such thing as an exclusively Jewish State; a majority Jewish State, perhaps. The 'problem' (for Israeli Interviewpartner 5 and 6 who aim for this Zionist Ideal), then arises with what 'to do about' the rights of non-Jews who live within Israel's borders. Similarly, the fundamentalist ideology of *Palestinian Interviewpartner 1*, to believe that eventually they will defeat and vanquish all Jews from Palestine and Israel, is also a rather unrealistic policy. Indeed, the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners also rejected those two extreme ideologies.

Interesting to note is that both *Palestinian Interviewpartner 1* and *Israeli Interviewpartner 6* had religious convictions of a rather extreme nature. So there does seem to be a correlation between religious convictions and the 'justification of violence' in both groups; the more extreme the religious convictions of the Interviewpartners were, the more they seemed to be inclined to fight against the other ethnic group and die for their cause. The majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners substantiated this theory; believing that there is a connection between politics and religion in the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian People. *Israeli Interviewpartner 2* pointed out that religion is not bad per say, but that religion can be abused in some ways:

I: Do you think there is a connection between politics and religion in the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian People . If yes, why? If not, why not?

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: In some ways, when appeals are made to the words of Bible and Koran to justify occupations and violence.

So here again, pedagogic guidance is required – especially for young persons in Israel and Palestine – to interpret the Koran and Bible correctly, so that they not fall prey to religious preaching of violence and hatred.

Regarding if the Separation Barrier constructed along and within the West Bank should be removed, all Palestinian Interviewpartners voiced a strong opinion that the Separation Barrier should be removed. The Israeli Interviewpartners were divided among this issue, a polarity being noticeable. (*Israeli Interviewpartner 1, 2, 5 and 6* were strongly against the removal of the Separation Barrier. *Israeli Interviewpartners 3,4,7 and 8* were for the removal of the Separation Barrier)

The Separation Barrier seems to have some support among the Israeli citizens. Even some of the more liberal Israeli Interviewpartners stated that the barrier has reduced the danger of terror attacks.

From *Israeli Interviewpartners 1, 2, 5 and 6* it was noticeable that they were afraid of terror attacks, and therefore the separation barrier seemed to be a kind of symbol of protection for them.

Israeli Interviewpartner 5 mentions that an end of violence is a prerequisite for him before any negotiations can start with the Palestinians:

Israeli Interviewpartner 5: »…First, they need to stop the violence. Then we can start to talk.«

Here again, the fear of violence becomes evident. But how can the cycle of violence be broken if one group uses violence to suppress the other group from using violence? (which does not seem to work so well either, for the Israelis, otherwise they would not have had to build the Separation Barrier)

According to *Israeli Interviewpartner 2* 'fear' is indeed an important policy for the current Israeli government:

Israeli Interviewpartner 2: »[…] Fear of being overwhelmed is governing the current policy of the Israeli government, and is supported by the majority of the Jewish population. This fear has, as was the case in South Africa that 'there'll be a bloodbath if the Blacks take over', succeeded in electing and keeping in power the present Likud led regime - as it did with the white apartheid regime of South Africa….«

It is interesting to note that *Israeli Interviewpartner 2* compares Israel with the South African white apartheid regime. *Palestinian Interviewpartner 8* also made a comparison with the South African apartheid regime:

Palestinian Interviewpartner 8: [...]The International Community and the UN have to impose sanctions on Israel, otherwise nothing will change […] Israel is like South Africa during Apartheid; changes will only happen if the international community gets involved…«

However, there is one very important element missing in this region which prevents a peaceful solution from happening - something which South Africans certainly had during this critical period of transition from Apartheid to Democracy: Strong leadership in both ethnic groups, cooperating with each other, as also *Israeli Interviewpartner 2* pointed out. According to this study, the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners believed that their respective politicians were more inclined to maintain the »status quo«, than to change the political situation in Israel and Palestine.

Also, something else which South Africans had during this critical period of transition from Apartheid to Democracy, was the belief that you can live in peace with your fellow man; which the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners seem to be believe too; however the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners seem to be unwilling to invest the time and energy to form social relations with each other.

Perhaps it is idealistic to believe that Arabs and Jews can get along together. But we do not live in the dark ages anymore, either. In fact, living in peace with your neighbour is actually not such a radical idea in this day and age. It is not as if supporters of the one-state solution are proposing to re-invent the wheel here.

As one author has put it: »Why would a one-state solution to the West of the Jordan River, where all the hotheads from both sides would be forced to come to terms with one another under the rule of law, be a more of a mistake than two ethnically based states on a small piece of land where radicals of opposing stripes may rise to power?"

On the other hand, Dov Khenin, a Jewish member of the Knesset's Arab and communist-inclined Hadash party, sees two states as the only practical path to peace even while sympathising with the ideals of the one-staters. »If the two peoples want to have a bi-national state, OK," he says wistfully. »But my impression is that Israelis and Palestinians don't very much like each other."

That of course is true. The Israelis and Palestinians don't very much like each other; that is also evident from this study. And according to this study, the majority of both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners are keen to improve their social and political relations.

In short, forgiveness and trust has to come from both sides. But it is true that the first move has to come from the Israeli political elite. And as both Israeli and Palestinian Interviewpartners have pointed out, South African history serves as a good example.

It is not an easy situation for Israel. But some decision has to be made to bring a just peace to all people living in the region; either a one state or two state solution.

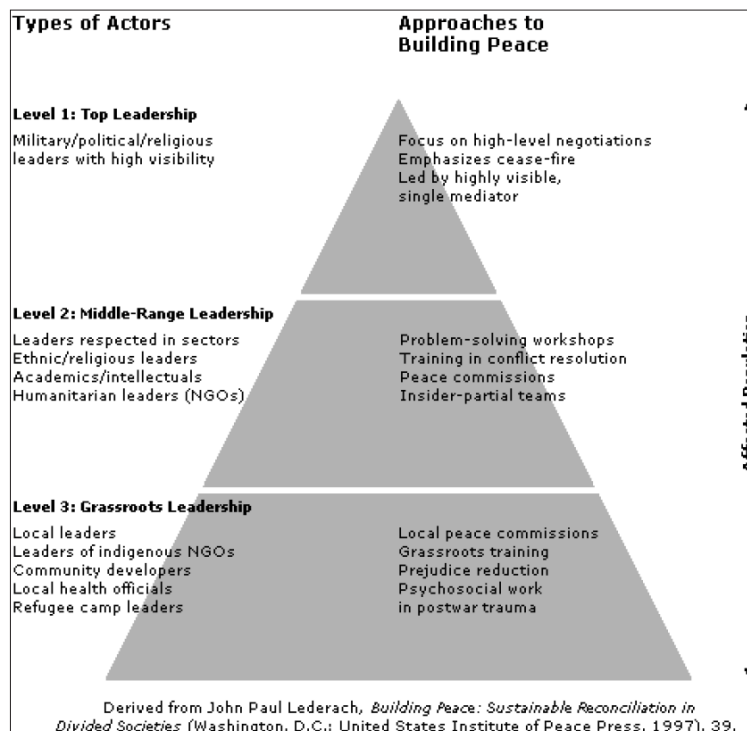So how can a just peace be achieved in Israel and Palestine?

First of all, formal and informal education is a very important part of peace work, to help citizens in post-war societies in developing a consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and to connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action.

In the initial stages of pedagogic guidance, it is necessary to oversee or mentor the student. And the same applies to healing when treating a patient – like a broken leg, for example. Before the patient can walk again, the leg needs to be healed. With a post-war society it is similar. Before a just peace can be implemented for all people in a post-war region – like in Israel and Palestine – its failed policies need to be reconstructed, and some kind off healing process has to be brought to its citizens.

According to Lederach, 'peace building' is a very important stage for a post-war society. The 'peace building' concept according to Lederach, is a complex, multi-dimensional model, which we will explore now.

Peace Building according to Lederach

In conjunction with Peace Building in post-war societies Lederach has developed a model to implement Peace Building on a community basis, which could be a method of great benefit for peace workers when doing community work in

Types of Actors	Approaches to Building Peace
Level 1: Top Leadership Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility	Focus on high-level negotiations Emphasizes cease-fire Led by highly visible, single mediator
Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership Leaders respected in sectors Ethnic/religious leaders Academics/intellectuals Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)	Problem-solving workshops Training in conflict resolution Peace commissions Insider-partial teams
Level 3: Grassroots Leadership Local leaders Leaders of indigenous NGOs Community developers Local health officials Refugee camp leaders	Local peace commissions Grassroots training Prejudice reduction Psychosocial work in postwar trauma

Derived from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

Israel and Palestine. This method by Lederach is illustrated by the following diagram.

The Pyramid

According to John Paul Lederach, to build peace, one must understand who acts on each level, and what actions are best taken at each level. (Lederach, 2007)

The levels are: 1) the top elite, 2) the middle-range, and 3) the grassroots.

The top-level elite leadership represents the fewest people, in some cases a handful of key actors. The grassroots level, on the other hand, involves the largest number of people, who best represent the population at large. The grassroot level is also the most important level regarding community work of social workers in post-conflict societies.

Characterizing the Three Levels

Each of the three levels can be characterized in terms of certain common features. The top-level elite leadership comprises the key political, military, and religious leaders in the conflict. They are the primary representatives of their constituencies and are therefore highly visible. By virtue of this high profile, they are often locked into positions regarding the conflict‹s substantive issues. They must maintain an image of strength, which makes it difficult for them to accept anything less than their publicly stated goals. In many cases, they find it difficult to manoeuvre.

The middle-range leadership, including leaders of mid-level NGOs (non-government organizations) and GOs (government organizations), comprises those who function in leadership positions but are not necessarily connected with formal government or major opposition movements. These middle-range actors are far more numerous than top-level leaders, and their status and influence derive from their relationships with others. Leaders in sectors such as education, business, agriculture, and health are likely to know and be known by top-level leadership, and yet have significant connections to the constituency that the top leaders

claim to represent. They serve as an important connection between the top and grassroots levels. In addition, because these middle-range leaders have lower visibility, they tend to have more freedom to manoeuvre than do top-level leaders.

Finally – in my opinion the most important level for community work in war-torn societies – we have the leadership at the grassroots level, which includes those involved in local communities, members of indigenous NGOs carrying out relief projects, health officials, and refugee camp leaders. These may also be school principals, mayors of towns, and spiritual leaders, like Rabbis in Israel and Imams in Palestine.

Generally speaking, one can say that grassroots leaders represent the masses, those who often experience a day-to-day struggle to find food, water, shelter, and safety in violence-torn areas. Because local communities are often split into hostile groups, grassroots leaders witness firsthand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity associated with conflict, and therefore provide ideal contacts for human rights work, psycho-social work and community work.

According to Lederach, many of the conditions that generate conflict, such as social and economic insecurity, political discrimination, and human rights violations are experienced primarily at the grassroots level. However, the lines of group-identity conflict are more often drawn vertically rather than horizontally. Group divisions usually cut down through the pyramid rather than pitting one level against another. This is because contemporary conflicts typically arise around issues of ethnicity, religion, and regional geography, rather than class. (Lederach,1997: 82-83)

It is also important to note the inverse relationships in the conflict setting. While a higher position in the pyramid means greater access to information and more decision-making capacity, it also means that the individual is less affected by the day-to-day consequences of those decisions. Conversely, a lower position increases the degree to which individuals directly experience the consequences of decision-making, but limits access to decision-making power. These inverse relationships pose difficulties for the design and implementation of peace processes.

Approaches at the Various Levels

Since each of the three levels plays a unique role in peacebuilding, different conflict-handling processes must be adopted at each level of the hierarchy. These various activities must be integrated into a comprehensive peacebuilding framework.

Top-level approaches to peace building aim to achieve a negotiated settlement between the principal high-level leaders of the parties involved in conflict. In these high-level negotiations, elite leaders are brought to a bargaining table and attempt to work toward new solutions. The first goal of these negotiations is typically a cease-fire or cessation of hostilities. This is typically followed by efforts to initiate a national transition, which involve the political leadership in implementing a framework that can allow for democratic elections. Peacebuilding at this level often involves a step-by-step, issue-oriented, and short-term achievement process. Because the negotiation process is usually conducted in the public limelight, top-level leaders face the difficult challenge of maintaining publicly articulated goals while at the same time moving toward compromise.

The challenge for the top-leaders is of course finding the

»elusive win-win situation". An important thought from Lederach is, that any meaningful peace process will have to move beyond top-level negotiations, and involve a much more comprehensive framework. It will have to rely on multiple tiers of leadership and participation within the affected population. In other words, peace-building efforts among the elite must be accompanied by efforts of mid-level and grassroots leaders – only then actual »peacebuilding" can take place.

It is also important not to focus on the top leaders too much, but rather to promote community work at the grassroot level. The middle range leaders are of course also very important, where peace workers may assist in organizing problem-solving and human rights workshops, conflict-resolution training, and the development of peace commissions.

Indeed, many believe that middle-range leaders are the key to creating an infrastructure for achieving and sustaining peace (Lederach 1997). Because these leaders have low visibility and are often connected to extensive networks that cut across the lines of conflict, they can play a crucial role in establishing productive relationships and working through conflict.

So what exactly are problem-solving workshops?

According to Lederach, problem-solving workshops (or personality development programs as referred to in this study) feature informal meetings designed to broaden participation and deepen parties‹ understanding of their shared problems. They also provide a forum for effective interaction as well as a politically safe space to test new ideas. Conflict-resolution training aims to raise parties‹ awareness about how conflict operates, and to impart skills for dealing with conflict.

Leaders, who participate in problem-solving workshops, often also participate in peace commissions that allow for increased communication at the national, regional, and local levels. These commissions bring together prominent individuals from each side of the conflict and work towards reconciliation.

However, these middle-range efforts are all the more effective in light of peacebuilding efforts undertaken at the grassroots level. Indeed, grassroots-level programs are crucial in helping people deal with the violence associated with war and repairing damaged relationships, and peace workers at this level can be involved in local peace conferences, peace programs, and local seminars. They might also form part of broader community and public-health programs for dealing with post-war trauma, (specifically PTSD) and make room for forgiveness and reconciliation. So here again, community work and psycho-social work comes in, as Grassroots approaches bring together former enemies at the village level in post civil war societies, and are a crucial part of moving toward reconciliation.

Social Change as a bridge between peacebuilding and social work in Palestine and Israel

Lederach basically sees conflicts in war-torn societies as a process in social change, which has reached its fatal climax in the outbreak of war. So the task of post-conflict work, is to make sure that the continuation of social change can take place, so that human rights, democracy and that social justice can take place. (Lederach 1997:82)

These principles are more or less also part of the Mont-

real Definition of International Federation of Social Workers 2000, which states:

»The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.« (Source: http://www.dbsh.de)

An important task for the peace worker is to make sure that the continuation of social change can take place, however it is controversial if »democracy« and »social justice« should be an absolute aspiration for community work in post civil-war societies; simply because »democracy« and »social justice« are very relative terms – especially in post-war societies, where 'one man's terrorist may be another man's freedom fighter'; as is the case in Palestine, for example.

However, the protection of the UN Human Rights Declaration – and especially the UN Children Rights Convention – is essential in Palestine in Israel, as there is reason to believe that these rights are violated to a certain degree in Palestine; as all the Palestinian Interviewpartners claimed in this study. Here again it shows how important 'Peace Building' is in Israel and Palestine on all the various levels.

▬ Summary and Conclusions ▬

Noticeable were the differing opinions of the questioned groups. Palestinian people in general desire more support from the international community and were eager to speak about the alleged atrocities committed by Israelis; while the majority of the questioned Israelis did not desire intervention from the international community and seemed reluctant to speak about the Arab/Israeli conflict, having given up hope that peace between Palestine and Israel is possible, and feeling somewhat misunderstood by the international community. However, contrary to initial assumptions, in general both groups believed that politicians were more inclined to maintain the »status quo«, than to change the political situation in Israel and Palestine. Furthermore, a polarity was noticeable in both groups regarding religious and agnostic beliefs, which was independent to the ethnic background of the questioned persons. However, there does seem to be a correlation between religious convictions and the 'justification of violence' in both groups.

Inconsistencies in the category »social relations« were noticeable throughout this study in both groups. This indicates that there is uncertainty – and even some confusion – regarding what social-interaction-roles Israelis and Palestinians would like to have when communicating with each other. This would mean specifically, that Palestinians and Israeli‹s would be probably overburdened to »draw« a Map for Peace on the 'social relations' level.

These and other factors make it difficult for Israeli and Palestinian people to find common ground, and to break the cycle of violence. To manifest the elusive win-win situation in this region, 'Peace Building' in the form of psycho-social counselling, problem-solving workshops, community work and pedagogic counselling for young persons and adults is recommended, conducted by international- and local NGO's in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Regarding the relatively high population density in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there was a general consensus from both groups that it contributes to the conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinian People (except one Israeli Interviewpartner and one Palestinian Interviewpartner who strongly believed in the relativity of space and technological refinement of sea water); which would mean that there is quite possible a demand for counselling of family planning in Palestine and Israel, to contain and monitor population expansion. This could be implemented through outreach work by social workers and members of the medical profession.

It became also evident in this study, that the overwhelming majority of Israeli Interviewpartners regarded it as very difficult to enter the occupied territories; however only three Israeli Interviewpartners wished to have access to all parts of Palestine and Israel. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of Palestinian Interviewpartners regarded it is as very difficult – or even impossible – to enter the »Israeli occupied« territories (meaning Israel); however seven out of eight Palestinian Interviewpartners indicated that they would like to have access to all parts of Palestine and Israel.

If any kind of constructive interaction is to happen between Israeli and Palestinian people this has to change of course; it is vital that access is made easier for those Israeli and Palestinian people who wish to travel to the territories of the other group. A change of attitude on the part of the Israeli people would also be of great benefit, as the majority do not wish to enter the occupied territories. This must change, because if the Israeli people are truly committed to peace, they do need to form more social relations with the Palestinian people. But that is of course the problem; according to this study, the majority of the questioned Israelis have given up hope that peace between Palestine and Israel is possible. Here again, the Israelis need to rekindle their desire to have pace in their country, and also motivate themselves to win back the trust of the international community which Israel had for a very long time.

The best way for Israel to signal their good will towards the international community would be of course if the Israeli government would co-operate with international NGO's to aid them in 'Peace Building', and allow international- and local NGO's to enter freely the West Bank, Gaza and all parts of Israel. According to this study seven out of eight Palestinian Interviewpartners and four out of eight Israeli Interviewpartners would appreciate support from NGO's (be it local- or international NGO's); which is an overwhelming majority. So, based on the evaluations of this study, 'Peace Building' for young persons and adults is recommended, conducted by local- and international NGO's in Israel, with the support of the political elite in Israel.

Interesting to note is also that the majority of Palestinian Interviewpartners differentiated between two kinds of Israeli citizens: The 'regular' Israeli citizens and the »Settlers« (meaning the Israeli citizens living in the occupied territories of the West Bank). It was specifically the »Settlers« which the majority of the Palestinian Interviewpartners regarded as the most troublesome, speaking often about the alleged atrocities committed by the »Settlers«. 'Peace Building' in the form of problem-solving workshops, as mentioned in the previous chapter, would be vital for an improvement in the social relation between Palestinians and »Settlers«.

Regarding the psycho-social situation in Israel, it is evi-

dent from this study that Israel - and Palestine - is a country that needs healing in so many ways. The Israeli people are afraid of terror attacks, and therefore the separation barrier is a symbol of protection for many of them, as they do not trust the Palestinians. So how can one change this attitude from the Israelis?

Anna Freud developed the psycho-therapeutic method of »Rede-Therapy«, which means translated ›Talking Cure‹. It may sound simple, but this is actually the universal principle behind all modern psycho-therapy practiced in the world: By simply talking about their problem, their traumas, and other negative feelings, people can get cured.

According to this study, Israelis and Palestinians are uncertain how they are supposed to interact with each other. One could say, that there is a 'Psychological Barrier' in Israel and Palestine, which needs to be deconstructed. Therefore, according to the evaluations of this study, an extensive campaign of psycho-social consultation is recommend for Israeli- and Palestinians citizens; which could include multiple projects in the form of a crisis hotline, online counselling and even street work and outreach work, by qualified local- and international mental health support workers dedicated to 'Peace Building.'

What is also worthwhile mentioning, is that since the traditional international diplomatic strategies have failed in that region (there are no embassies in Palestine), it is the youth of day, young Palestinians and Israelis who were among the questioned persons in this study – but also young international volunteers – who have picked up the flag of liberty. Where the older generation has failed, it is today's youth who are attempting to amend the errors of their forefathers.

From an empirical social scientific point of view, one can say in conclusion that this explorative qualitative study was to a certain extent successful (thanks to the kind cooperation of the interviewpartners of this ambitious and multi-dimensional research project); as the study supplied important insights and generated new evidence-based theories how a map for peace between Palestinians and Israelis can be developed.

The outlook would be to launch an extensive quantitative survey in Palestine and Israel to verify and test the theories generated in this research paper; with a stratified random sample that is representative to the Israeli- and Palestinian population.

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Appendix

I. Partially Structured Interview Manual

1. What is your occupation and how do you make a living?
2. What is your philosophy in life?
3. Do you like living in Israel?
4. What is your personal opinion about the situation between Israel and Palestine? Why do you think is there a conflict?
5. In your opinion, what constitutes a peaceful country? How would you define peace?
6. How do you think that peace can be ensured in Palestine and Israel?
7. The region of Israel and Palestine has a relatively high population density. Israel has a population density of 341 people per square kilometer. The Palestinian Territories have a population density of 654 people per square kilometer. And the Gaza Strip has a population density of 4000 people per square kilometer. Do you think that peace between Israel and Palestine is possible, even though there is such a high population density in the region?
8. How would you define »justice«
9. How would you define »injustice«?
10. Under what circumstances do you think that legitimate force can be justified?
11. What are your personal religious beliefs?
12. Do you think that peace is a goal for all Palestinian- and Israeli people?
13. How would you define »good« and »evil«?
14. Do you believe in personal development?
15. Do you believe in spiritual evolution?
16. Are you currently participating/or intend to participate in any personality development programs or workshops?
17. Are you currently participating/ or intend to participate in any religious services or any other spiritual activities?

II. Questionnaire

See the following link:
http://kwiksurveys.com/s.asp?sid=b9xdw6jutq685hs67440

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Abbreviations

CD Community Development
CRC or **UNCRC** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
IFSW International Federation of Social Workers
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
PTSD Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
UN United Nations