

Quotes Gathered On a Trip to Jerusalem, Israel, Palestine November, 2007

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These are comments by various persons during a visit to Jerusalem, Israel, and the West Bank in November, 2007. The program was organized by the American Friends Service Committee and InterFaith Peace Builders. The emphasis was upon grass-roots leaders, especially those committed to reconciliation and peaceful outcomes. We met no political leaders. In the course of this program, we officially met approximately 17 Israelis, 26 Palestinians, 15 internationals or NGO officials. We also had scores of individual conversations. These quotes should be read as a body representing a range of perspectives. They are presented without names. There are references to UN Resolution 181 of 1947 recommending the creation of Jewish and Arab States federated together, Resolution 194 of 1949 saying that the Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their homes or be compensated, Resolution 242 of 1967 calling for land for peace, and Bush's Annapolis Conference, scheduled for later in the month. There are also references to the European Jews (Ashkenazi) and the Arab Jews (Mizrachi or Sephardi).

I. Comments by Israelis

Israelis in Sderot, a town on the Gaza border shelled almost daily

“We have spent seven years in hell.”

“Fifteen seconds of silence. This is the reality of our life. This is how long we have when we hear Red Voice [the security alarm].”

“We are experiencing negative immigration. People are leaving.”

“I tell my son that the people on the other side of the fence are not our enemies. They are suffering also. But it is hard.”

“Schools are not secure. Homes are not secure. People have eating disorders. Crime is up. Divorce is up. The most important thing is here is no hope. I am a very rational person but I see no hope. There is no post-trauma here. It does not stop. It is ongoing trauma.”

“This is my home. I am not leaving.”

“I do not know who is bad or good here. I think it is just misfortune.”

“This is a deep conflict. Think of Black and White in your country. I wanted to break this conflict. We Ashkenazis were snobs. We did not meet them [Mizrachi Jews]. There was a wall built up. We were condescending.” On the gap between European and Arab world Jews.

“I am living in Sderot for 20 years. I never lost my empathy with the other side. I find myself awake at night unable to sleep, not because of the kassams [rockets] but because of the Israeli army. For a time they bombed 24 hours a day. They committed crimes. Sometimes I feel ashamed of what the occupation has made of the Israeli state.” Speaker had a break in her voice.

“I was born in the US but came to Israel when I was five. My parents went back to the US in 1982. They were drawn back to their homeland.”

“It is easy in Israel to complain of the situation and do nothing. But I could not live three miles from Gaza and be detached from the nearby reality. Military service changed me. I was in Gaza 3 or 4 times. I saw a nearby but far away reality of how people lived”

“The Palestinians have made every mistake possible.”

“The average Israeli is convinced that all Palestinians are terrorists who would kill them if they could. They are driven by sixty years of fear.”

“I don’t want to argue any more. I don’t think dialogue can change people’s hearts. My ability is not to save Israel on a large scale. We try to meet each other”

“It is heaven for feminists.” Woman on kibbutz on how men share cooking and child care.

“It is like a stone. It is hard to stop them.” Israeli security officer on kassam rockets.

Bereaved Families for Peace

This is an organization of people who have lost children or relatives in the conflict. They speak for the end of occupation, usually an Israeli and a Palestinian together. The Israeli tells of how his 14 year old daughter was killed in Jerusalem by a suicide bomber.

“We heard there had been a bombing. We called her cell phone but she did not respond. You hope this finger will not turn to you. You run from police station to police station, hospital to hospital and you find yourself in a morgue and the finger is stuck on your forehead in a way you will never forget.”

“When we were asked who is to blame, we said the occupation is to blame. We sat shiva for seven days and on the eighth day you are alone. You have to decide what to do with the unbearable pain and anger. You want to get revenge when someone kills your 14-year-old girl. Then you ask yourself, will killing someone else ease your pain? The other option is to ask what happened and why. What made someone so angry that he would blow up people? And what do you do about it? Foolishly, I tried to go back to work. But after a year I could not. I met a Big Man, with a kippa on his head. He told me of his son Eric, kidnapped and killed by Hamas in 1994. He told me of that organization he had founded. He had come to my house during Shiva and I was angry. How could you talk to me of peace? He asked me to go to a meeting just to listen. I saw people coming, heroes whose names I knew. Yakub Kupperman, Holocaust survivor who lost his son in Lebanon in 1982. He stood in front of the Prime Minister’s office with a sign “Murderer.” I was 47 and saw for the first time Palestinian families shake my hand, cry with me. I am not a religious person but after that night I was changed. I devote my life to telling people we can break this cycle of death. We do this by listening to the pain of others. If we can talk to each other, anyone could, and should.”

“When Israel dropped a one ton bomb in Gaza and killed 17 innocent people to kill one terrorist, we sneaked into Ramallah and gave blood. The media asked how we could give blood to the enemy. We said it is better to give blood to keep people alive than to spill it in war.”

“We give 1000 lectures in high schools, Israel and Palestinian. We do not talk politics. We talk of feelings. If even one kid nods, we have saved one soul, one life.”

Question: How do you handle “explosively angry” responses from audiences? “What else is new? When Israelis and Palestinians appear without anger, this deprives people of their weapon of anger. When I appeared in a Los Angeles synagogue and people said, ‘My country, right or wrong’ I tell them the occupation keeping 3 ½ million people under military control is not Jewish. But they cannot harm me, I have paid the price. (His Arab colleague: “We ask, why there is anger. Perhaps they have had an experience. They treat us as the representatives of what happened. They call my friend self-hater.”)

Zochrot/Remember, a Jewish organization

This organization tries to acknowledge and “remember” the villages Israeli destroyed during and after 1948. We are in Lifta, a Palestinian village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It is in a beautiful setting, in a valley in the midst of the city. There are ruined houses there. There is a plan to demolish the houses and rezone. The Zochrot director shows us around.

“The normal memory is our Israeli memory of liberation and victory. This is an abnormal memory of the *nakhba*, the displacement of the Palestinians and the destruction of their villages. We lead groups, we take testimony, we post signs to indicate a village was there. These signs are being removed. It is very hard and difficult and challenging for Jews to acknowledge this. We have a testimony project, by Palestinians, some by Jews. Most Jewish testimonies follow a Zionist narrative: they attacked, we were in danger, we fought, some died, we won. A few tell a different story. One spoke of Bersheva, how they executed prisoners. Someone published a dual narrative. Schools who adopted it received a letter from the Likudist Minister of Education threatening the schools and the teachers.”

“One million Israelis fled their homes during the Lebanon war in 2006. They should not lose their homes because they fled war.”

“When I was a young man, I heard of Kakum, a place I visited many times. I was told the ruin was a crusader fortress. I grew up on a kibbutz 3 kilometers from there. I was astonished to realize it was a large village until 1948.”

Israeli Activist

“In my private conversations in a bar, I am critical of the Palestinian Authority, but it is not my place to criticize the people I am oppressing.”

Jewish Yemeni Activists in Tel Aviv

We meet five or six. They call themselves Mizrah or eastern Jews. They are physically different from European Jews, with olive skin. They were given houses in an abandoned Palestinian neighborhood after 1948 but never titles. Now they are being evicted to make room for a high rise apartment complex by a prominent Israeli land developer. They are involved in litigation.

“We were settled as workers. The Yemenis were not considered “Pioneers” but were ‘natural’ workers. Ashkenazi workers are called the quality element and Mizrahi workers the ‘quantity’ element. You contribute nothing except labor.” Note: Chalutzim/pioneers are Israeli heroes.

Factoid: In Israeli universities 94% of the tenured positions are Ashkenazi, in the judicial system 10% are Mizrahi.

“When we left Yemen we had to leave our homes. We could not sell them. We went by foot to Aden. We carried our ‘written culture.’ But all money, manuscripts, gold were taken by Israel and never returned. Many Yemeni children were kidnapped and sold inside and outside of Israel for \$5,000. 2/3 of all the kidnapped children were Yemeni.”

“If you are white, you are the best in Israel. If you are born white in Israel it is as if you won the lottery. I think the Zionist movement is a racist movement. Even the left wing Zionists use the term ‘natural workers.’ Most Mizrahi Jews are more comfortable on the right. The right did not tell our children to rebel against their parents and their culture.”

“Our oppression is greater than any other except for identity. Arabs have a nationality so they are oppressed from the outside. We are oppressed from the inside of Zionism. We have no nationality. I wanted nothing more than to be an Ashkenazi Zionist. People of my color have trouble getting into night clubs. My accent is considered inferior. I have a doctorate in dentistry. People cannot believe it. Dentists should be white.”

“Israeli leaders should realize they are in the Middle East, not Europe. They consider themselves part of western world. This erases me, not to say the Palestinians. I object to this kind of discourse. I am a Mediterranean person, not a part of Europe.”

“We live here in our suitcases, waiting for a demolition order.”

“I had to reconstruct my Jewish Yemeni identity. In my house, I have a major archive of my culture, the stolen Yemeni culture.”

“The left wing took the rhetoric of peace and used it to oppress all others. When Rabin kept Palestinians out, they brought in foreign workers. This dropped Mizrahi workers down. This peace is killing us, so why do we do it? It was peace with Europe, not peace with the Palestinians, or peace with me. The Roadmap made peace with Bush, not with the Palestinians. Peace will empower Ashkenazi culture as part of Europe. Even the word peace is corrupted.”

“I am on the left wing, but consider us Pioneers.”

Female, 35, long black hair, face like Penelope Cruz. “I have been married twelve years to a member of the council. I have four adorable kids. All have been traumatized by the removal orders. They saw one house demolished. They feel that their home is unsafe. They are ashamed to bring their friends home. The first child had incontinence problems. When the smallest one sees an advertisement, even for movies, he fears it is a demolition order. They do not know, but there is a demolition order on our house. This causes problems with couples, divorces, problems with health, children, parents. We came here sixty years ago. We are a Cohen family. This is considered a prestige family. I want to leave this neighborhood but my husband was born here and feels obligated to stay with his community.”

New Profile, women’s group to support war resisters

“When I organized the first meeting, I arranged for it to be here in my kibbutz. 150 people arrived. When my friends found out, they stood outside of the meeting hall and chanted ‘Auschwitz, Auschwitz, Never Again.’ We had to move to another place.”

“A bigger issue than the occupation is the militarization of Israeli society. All children from the beginning get military orientation. At the age of 16, they get military documents.”

“We have no membership list. We are an all volunteer feminist group, that uses feminist theory.”

“Only one suicide bombing was prevented by a bus security guard. All of the other guards died on the busses.”

Former Israeli Prisoner (for anti-war activities)

“It is a miracle that I came out almost as normal as any human being.”

“I am regarded as a traitor and a spy. I stay in East Jerusalem. I don’t want to see them or talk to them [the Israelis]. The Palestinians are suffering. They view me as a hero. I acted for peace. I did my best.”

“The Israelis talk all the time about the holocaust while they have nuclear bombs. How can they plan to destroy cities?”

“If they give me the right to leave, I would have left long ago. I will not live in a Jewish state. I would go to Europe or America, the free world. I have read American history and believe American democracy will survive in spite of September 11.”

“Three years before prison, I converted to Christianity. I decided to declare my Christianity in prison. I believed this would stop them. I am not one of them. I used the time to read the New Testament, to learn of Jesus Christ. I became close to Jesus Christ, what he teaches, that he died on the cross. You must be willing to die on the cross rather than sin. They wanted to build power. I told them to identify with humanity. After a few months, they knew I was very determined in my beliefs. They tried to destroy my head. They are good at this. The US army learned from the Israelis what they are doing in Guantanamo, but they do it better.”

“You are meeting one of the case stories of how crazy Israel is.”

‘once you know, you cannot be silent.’

“If I were still Jewish, the Jewish public would say, ‘Look what a Jewish man did.’ The Jewish religion cannot accept a Christian man. The Jews in America are respected. Daniel Ellsberg is a hero. He came here and spent four days with me. I did what he wanted to do in 1961 but he did not have the courage so he waited until 1969.”

“Too much courage, if you know not fear, cannot be good.”

Settler Spokesman in Hebron

This is the place of an ancient Jewish community. In 1929 an attack killed 67 Jews. There is a small museum honoring the dead in that incident. After 1967, Jews began to return. They have a reputation for being some of the most extreme settlers. The spokesman said they are viewed as “crazy, violent extremists from New Jersey.” In 1994, a settler went into the Ibrahim mosque at

dawn on the first day of Ramadan and killed 29 worshippers. 19 more were killed by the Israeli army in the demonstrations after the attacks. We met with the spokesman for the community.

“This is the second holiest site in Judaism.”

“Oslo is suicide. 2,000 Jews have been killed in terrorist attacks since Oslo.”

“Why give them a state? Hamas will take it over and destabilize the world.”

“Everything I have said is security based, But as a believing Jew I believe this is our land. 60 years ago people tried to destroy us and no one lifted a finger. So we came here. And again they will sacrifice us. Why is it acceptable to expel Jews from their homes but it is racist to expel Arabs?”

“There are six million Jews in Israel. We are surrounded by half a billion Arabs.”

“Why not just get rid of Israel. Then all problems are solved. ‘Peace on earth, good will to men.’” [Note: This quotes the angelic chant proclaiming the birth of Jesus].

“People ask how can you bring children here. Children here grow up with ideals. But problems of prostitution, cars, do not exist here.”

“It is either you or them. I would prefer that my children die fighting for the state of Israel than be killed in their house. That is what they would do.”

“I had a [Palestinian] carpenter. I paid him a lot He did great work.”

“How long can you hold your hand out and they spit in your face? They want to kill us.”

Question about Jews and Arabs living together peacefully in Spain until 1492. “In 1992 the issue of Jews in Spain got extensive coverage. But how relevant is that? Jews were expelled. They had no place to go. But even if we have forgotten it, they have not. Just nearby is an Arab girl’s school called Cordoba. They think it is still theirs.”

“You should not support us because of us, but because of your own security. They say ‘we will paint the White House black. We will take control of Washington and turn it into the Muslim capital.’ If Israel is forced to acquiesce in terror, it will backlash to the whole world.”

“Regarding what resolution there might be to this conflict, I am not sure I have an answer. It is not just a political issue. It is a religious issue. Religious people do not want to compromise. They have not accepted the legitimacy of the Jewish state.”

“Had 10,000 Israelis been killed in an attempt to blow up the oil refinery in Tel Aviv, there would be no Arabs left in Israel. You cannot compromise with those who would destroy you.” [Reference to a planned attack stopped by Israeli security].

Comment: You sound like Osama bin Laden. “I don’t hijack planes. I don’t want to take over the world. I just want to live in peace without being shot at.”

“I am not trying to say our pain, their pain. Opinions can be debated. Facts cannot. The people who raped and tortured and murdered those people on the wall [of the museum] were their

neighbors. There were Arabs who saved Jews. There were. But not enough. I cannot tell you how many of my friends were killed.”

Question: What disturbs me as a Jew is certain things I was taught. You don't cut the trees of an enemy. If they are hungry, you give them bread and water. A: “Most you are told is false. Foreign groups write ‘Death to the Arabs’ on walls, then take photos. Those on the left destroy trees and take photos. We gave them Gush Katif. What do you want us to do? You want real Jewish law? It says you go in and take them out. If they are trying to kill you, you kill them.”

“This conflict goes back thousands of years. It did not start yesterday.”

Jewish Activist Intellectual

“There is nothing easier than coming from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. But it is abnormal. Today Israeli teachers are on a heroic strike. I marched with them. A woman asked where I was going. Bethlehem. Aren't you afraid? She is progressive, probably votes for Meretz [the leftist peace party]. But this is a fear. Her husband has probably been here, on a check point. Coming to Bethlehem is for Israelis a central political duty. Our second duty is to not let the wall close completely between Nasser [his colleague] and me. We have a wall, a mental wall, that makes it impossible to meet. I doubt that 500 Israelis have come in the last few years. This is not just an Israeli-Palestinian wall but a wall of civilizations.

“I hate the term Judeo-Christian civilization. This is ultimately against a third. Against whom? I have cultural ties to France, Their new foreign minister is a man of the left. He helped found Physicians without Borders. He is a man of human rights. In America he says our civilization is threatened by Islam, not only in the world but in our cities. Islamo-fascism as a term is parallel with Judeo-bolshevism, a dash with a threat.”

“The Annapolis Conference is no longer a conference, a meeting, no longer a place. It is a war conference. Look who is *not* invited, then you can see the core of the matter. Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria are not there. Those who are not invited *are* the agenda.

“In July, 2000 the peace movement collapsed. Not September, 2000, the Intifada. There was no Palestinian Intifada. There was an Israeli offensive, not a Palestinian uprising. Read the Israeli press of July to September to see the collapse of the peace movement. Barak produced two Big Lies. Big Lie One was that he made a generous offer to Arafat, but Arafat would not negotiate. Big Lie II was that ‘I, Barak, unmasked the real intentions of Arafat. He never intended to negotiate. He wants to throw the Jews into the sea.’ The man elected by the Peace Movement returns from Camp David and says there is no partner. But do not forget that Barak opposed the first Camp David, and Oslo. By the end of September until mid October, 82 Palestinian kids were killed. Only one Israeli soldier was killed. They were killed by snipers, not up close. In Israel, the left has turned right. My generation founds its way not through books but through an internal ethical compass. The current generation do not know the green line. They do not like the PLO or Arafat because they dislike authority. They are not guided by a compass.”

“I never wanted to meet Arafat until he was surrounded and a prisoner. Then I went with others to meet him. It was one of the saddest experiences of my life. It was sad to see an old man sit and not know what was happening to him. He had won the Nobel Prize. He was President of the Palestinian people. Then without moving he became a terrorist. When I saw his face, he did not know. He kept saying “my friend, Yitzhak Rabin’ and “the peace of the brave.’ He did not understand. But the peace movement understood. Five decades of decolonization that started

with the end of fascism, had ended and was replaced with a strategy of recolonization. A jump of history produced the neo-conservatives with their strategy. Arafat said, 'I have not moved' but the world moved. Oslo as a process of decolonization was replaced with a strategy of re-colonization of the West Bank, taking back not only land but symbols, words, dignity. Netanyahu, Barak and Sharon are three neoconservative in Israeli leadership. Arafat was a player in the first act . But the second act is entirely different from the first act. This small movement in history, when a political leader becomes the hero of a tragedy, and no one told him."

"The peace leader on the checkpoint will not move until something burns his ass."

"Last summer, Condoleezza Rice twice delayed a cease fire in the UN in Lebanon. 'Give them more time to finish the job.' We pay you well. The neoconservatives are pushing Israel, not holding it back. The whole Arab league is begging for peace. They will pay a big price."

"The Zionist project was very common in the past. In 1871 my grandfather in Alsace was offered land in Algeria. It was normal to think of an ethnic state and displacing local populations. Then there was a crisis of big empires to create individual states. Zionism fit these two conditions perfectly. But Zionism emerges as the world is going in the opposite direction, to decolonization. The train is leaving in one direction but Zionism is arriving in the other direction. But Jews had a case—the genocide. The West was not driven by bad conscience but practical problems—what to do with the Jews. For Europe, this was the cheapest solution. The Zionist movement was a minority movement, hippies, dreamers, utopians, lunatics until Hitler. Then it became respectable.

"Sometimes I do not understand Israeli thinkers. They are not a part of Europe. They are in the heart of the Arab world, the 'jungle' they would say."

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Center

"I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil." This biblical passage (Ezekiel 37:14) is on an arch as you leave the facility.

"Why wasn't Auschwitz bombed?" Large featured letters in an exhibit. An aerial photograph shows how obvious the killing area was. Below, at waist level, in small letters is a statement by US military officials that they are using their resources to engage in strategic bombing of military sites. It is almost necessary to get on one's knees to read this. The larger letters note that the Americans bombed refineries within the Auschwitz complex but not the death facilities.

II. Palestinians

"The people in the US want to support Israel whatever it does. Arabs want to support Palestinians whatever they do. If you are a friend you do not support a friend making a mistake." Palestinian activist.

"Israel controls 5% of the West Bank surface but 70% of aquifer basin." Water expert.

Sabeel is a Christian Liberation Theology group in Bethlehem.

"Suffering is a part of everyone's life but we cannot dwell on suffering."

"Human beings are not bad. We are created in the essence of God."

“All the settlements in this area were built after Oslo.”

“A two state solution is not possible. The other option is a one-state solution for Jews and Palestinians. Israel is a ‘Jewish’ state. But over one million Palestinians live in Israel with no inherent right to be there. Will I ever see it? No. Will my children ever see it? I doubt it.”

“We have been very hurt by Christian Zionism. This is hard for us to understand. It negates our existence. It says we have no right to the land.”

Jenin, during the Olive Harvest Festival

“They planted so we can eat. We will plant so future generations can eat.” Palestinian saying about olive trees.

“Two busses of people came. When they left, a woman was there. I was afraid. Who is she? She wanted oil from the church for her brother who had pain in his neck. There was none. But I saw an incense burner hanging. It had some oil I poured it into her bottle. Her brother was waiting at the gate. As I was cleaning candles, I heard, ‘O God! This is a miracle.’ When she opened the oil, it was blood. They put it on her brother’s neck and he was healed.” Deacon at St. George Church, the Church of Miracles.

“We celebrate the olive tree and what this tree symbolizes for our steadfastness on the land.” Palestinian olive cooperative manager.

“The soldiers burned ten dunams of olive trees three months ago. We do not know why.” Olive farmer in Jenin, whose land is divided by the Israeli wall.

“Our family had fifteen acres. We lost four.” Palestinian olive farmer in Jenin.

“Before 2000 I would work in Afula, just a short drive away. Now we are separated by the wall and I cannot work there. We are suffering financially.” Father in Jenin.

“There is an NGO mafia. They know how to get grants from USAID and the Europeans.” Head of an olive cooperative.

“The Europeans work with NGOs. The Americans prefer to work with companies.” Head of an olive cooperative.

“The seeds of the wheat stems that die fill the valley of wheat stems.” Statement at the entrance to the Martyr’s Cemetery in Jenin. This is for those killed in the fierce fighting between Israelis and Palestinians in 2002, and in subsequent incidents. Note the parallel with John 12:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, lest a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Some of us meet a young woman who is a grade school teacher. She is asked if they teach students to hate Israelis. “We do not teach hate. We teach them to be proud of their heritage, of their land. We teach them to be educated and to stay in Palestine, not to consider going anywhere else. We teach about the past because it is our history, but not to make people hate. There is no use in dwelling on the past. But if you come and hurt me, I will hate you.”

Ramallah Friends Meeting

“We think of international law. They think of divine law.”

“This is not just our problem. This is your problem also. If you did not give so much money to Israel, the occupation would not have lasted forty years.”

Combatants for Peace, a Palestinian

This organization is made up of Israelis and Palestinians who have engaged in combat against the other side, and decided that violence will not work. He spent seven years in prison for planning a failed attack. Earlier year, his commitment was tested. His daughter, 10, was shot to death after school. Older boys threw stones at soldiers and the soldiers fired at the children, killing the girl. She was shot in the back of the head. The Israelis denied responsibility, first saying she had been throwing stones, then that she had an explosive device in her hand. The case was closed.

“We care less about the borders. We want to end the occupation. If they change the borders, that is ok.”

“Our enemy is the occupation. Jews suffered from slavery and the holocaust but now do what was done to them. We can go to Saudi Arabia to pray but we cannot go five minutes to Al Aqsa. Some from Ethiopia can come to Jerusalem but not us.”

“They killed her twice. Once when they shot her, once when they closed the file and said they were not involved.”

“The American people were silent in the holocaust of the Jews. Now they are silent in the holocaust of the Palestinians.”

Asked if he reconsidered his non-violence after his daughter was killed: “Absolutely. I could have taken a weapon and killed several soldiers before they killed me. My son is thirteen. He went to throw stones. I spoke to him. He said, ‘you are frightened man. You must avenge your daughter.’”

“I do not want revenge. I want the soldier who killed my daughter to be prosecuted.”

Asked if some Palestinians might see him as a collaborator: “Never. We are known. They see us activists for the Palestinian cause. Some agree with us, some do not, but all respect us.”

“Tomorrow is the twelfth anniversary of Rabin’s assassination. I will stand in that place and call for a joint Intifada. Rabin was a war general against the Palestinians. He called to break bones. Now a Palestinian will stand in Rabin Square and honor his memory since he declared a peace partner. His death was the death of the Palestinian dream and of the Israeli dream too. Ehud Barak declared that there was no partner for peace.”

Asked about the coming Annapolis Conference: “This is not peace. This will start the next Intifada. There is nothing good from this conference. For the conference to fail is not the worst. But the Americans want this conference. The whole world is suffering from American policy. We are just bullets in their guns, the Israelis and the Palestinians. During the Lebanese War [2006] Israel wanted to stop the war but Condoleezza Rice wanted to continue the war. Last month, Israel declared Gaza a hostile entity, as if it had been a good neighbor. Within two hours

Rice said Gaza was a hostile entity to the U.S. We get an agreement with the Israelis and the Americans disagree. If they left us alone, we might reach an agreement. If the American people knew their money was killing Palestinian children, they would object.”

“Jewish groups oppose Palestinian suffering but do not want to give up East Jerusalem. Some say, ‘they killed my son, they killed my daughter. We are equal.’ No. We are not equal. We are equal as parents but not equal in the struggle. You are an occupier. When we talk, and then you send your son back to the check point, our conversation meant nothing.”

“I met the past head of Shabat [Israeli domestic intelligence] in Tel Aviv. I felt I was talking to my grandmother. He had simple views. ‘You are 150 million and we are six million.’ This is the real occupation. To realize that your occupiers are stupid. I told him, ‘You tell your soldiers to attack a home and beware of killing children. But realize that the Palestinians will hold up their children to look good in the media.’ Would any donkey believe this? The general said, ‘You hate Jews.’ I said, ‘I do not hate Jews but right now I hate you.’

“The Israelis gave me permission to speak in Tel Aviv tomorrow in Rabin Square, but the Americans will not give me permission to go on a joint speaking tour of American with an Israeli.”

The man is asked about his daughter. He gets up silently and walks slowly into an office. He has a serious limp in one leg. He comes back with a child’s backpack. He holds up a photograph of a smiling girl. “This is the photo of my daughter, my fighter. This is her weapon [backpack]. This is the candy she never tasted. She bought it but did not taste it. These were her coins.”

Palestinian family of educators in Hebron

“Because the roads are blocked, the children have to come to school by walking through the graveyard.” Comment by the principal of the primary school. We heard this comment more than once. To Americans, this is an odd comment but to Palestinians it is significant. As a rule, children do not go to graveyards, a task reserved for adult men.

“There is a difference between Israelis and settlers. We can live with Israelis, but we do not want settlers. Go live in Israel.”

“The son of our neighbor was shooting at settlers. He was killed. He was 18. The soldiers came and took all the males in the house to prison for nearly a month. Then a few days later, they arrived at 5:00 a.m. There were six jeeps. The family was given six minutes to get their essential things out of the house. I went to help and they beat me. At 7:00 all the neighbors were told to move away so they could destroy the house. When they blew it up, the cement privacy wall between our houses was destroyed. Two olive trees and our grape vines were destroyed. This tree on the edge of the wall was destroyed. After two years of death, the tree began to revive. I call it the resurrection tree.” Note: the destroyed house was being rebuilt.

The son notes the framed poster of his father on the wall proclaiming him a martyr. Since he fell dead of a heart attack, we ask why they used that term, often associated with suicide bombings. “The word has different meanings. In the origin of Islam, it meant those who died fighting non-believers. Our father was in prison so he may have died from that. Those who die fighting Israelis or are shot by soldiers are martyrs. There are different classes of martyrs. Anyone who fights in the resistance is a martyr. The Islamic meaning and the Palestinian meaning of martyr are different. Our father was active in the PFLP. He had a law degree from the University of

Damascus. He was put in hot water, then cold water. They put him in drums and beat on it. They used electricity. His legs had scars from torture. He had trouble standing. He was only 60 when he fell dead. We think he might have died from the consequences of his imprisonment and torture so he is a martyr.”

Young Man: “Last month I was coming from Ramallah. A soldier began to beat me in the face. I was very angry and thought of how to resist. I got children in Hebron and began to write *Peace* and *Hope* on their faces, and to draw suns. The soldiers tried to stop me but could not.”

Female teacher: “In the morning I go through a check point. They check my bag with teaching notes. They go through the paper, lifting the pages with their weapon, not with their hand. Our children go through the check points. My friend with her face covered is always checked. One student wants to kill the soldiers because they killed her father. Another wants to attack a check point. In their drawings, you see tanks, martyrs. They do not experience a childhood.

I asked the primary teacher how she taught her students to deal with the situation. “We tell them to live their lives, to look forward, not to live in the past. We study the past because it is our history, but we do not dwell on it.”

Bethlehem City Council Member

“Trauma, bed wetting, nightmares, restlessness, nervousness, displaced anger.” Listing the impact of the occupation on children.

“We are all hostages to fear.”

“We cannot compete over suffering.”

“We engage in trauma coping, not healing. The process is ongoing.”

“It is easier for me to go to California than for me to go to Jerusalem.” (five miles away).

“We must shift from guilt and victimhood and pointing the finger. Those who are oppressed must work harder. Those who are oppressors must be aware.”

“We do not ask that you be pro-Palestinian. We ask that you be pro-Justice.”

“The Christians are a qualitative community, not a quantitative community. We have schools, hospitals. Under the PLO we have a good role. Two ministers are Christians. Christian involvement in the struggle is disproportionate.”

“If Israel is to be in the Middle East it must extend its hand.”

“Historically every town had a Jewish Quarter. Israel is a Jewish quarter.” This is an argument that having a Jewish state would not violate Islamic tradition.

“We hope to find a DeKlerk or DeGaulle among the Israelis. Abu Mazen calls for peace. He says the same thing to us as he says to CNN.”

“ Hamas is a part of our family. I work with them on city council. They have families, as we all do. The only way to reform Hamas is through restorative justice.”

“I respect Marwan Barghouti. He is a grass roots leader, a visionary. He is opposed to the use of violence. He is respected by all people. He would give more power to the PLO and could deal with Hamas. Israel does not want to release him. If he is released, he will be the President of Palestine.” In response to my question.

“Hamas has recognized Israel. Elections were held under the Oslo Agreement and Oslo accepted Israel. Israel has assassinated moderate Hamas leaders. Ismael Abu Shanab was preparing a document that would have represented a shift within Hamas. He was assassinated in 2003. This empowered the radicals and destroyed the cease fire.”

“I follow the teaching of Rumi [the Sufi philosopher]: Stay together, friends. Do not scatter and sleep. Our friendship is based on being awake.”

Palestinian activist in Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem

“I do not want anyone to lose his mother. I lost my mother.”

“In the past, people stayed in camps as a way of maintaining their Palestinian identity. That is not true any more. Now they can live anywhere and it is the same.”

Deheisha Refugee Camp, Bethlehem

“We are stuck in this bad-shit camp. We lost everything. But we had to build here, not cry all the time. Education was not big in the village. Now they say study, get an education. Then the world governments began to pay for the settlements.”

“George Bush put the bullet in the gun and gives you democracy in Iraq and Palestine and kills many people.”

“They can bomb or kill but we have a powerful weapon, our mind.”

“My friends and I were detained. They told us if we would go overseas they would release us. My friend was a dentist from Abu Dis. He said, ‘I can stay in prison but will not leave.’”

“People from overseas come here and are instant Israelis. This is your paradise while we live in this camp.”

“The Palestinians are smart. They try to occupy our mind but we will not let them.”

“They can kill me, but the next generation are smarter than I am.”

Head of Women’s Programs in Deheisha Camp

“My life is so difficult. It is not easy. From 9 years, I feel I am not normal. I live in small house with ten persons, mother, father, grandparents, sisters and brothers. UNRWA bought it for us. We have not water, electricity, kitchen, bathroom. As child, we have no life to play. My mother works sewing. UN has restaurant for all the camp, lunch, no dinner. I eat rice. I remember every minute, every minute. I walk one kilometer to well three times, four times each day for water to wash. I walk without shoes. Clothes come from Europe. Each family goes to UNRWA to get clothes. They are different sizes. We have to fix to make them fit. After Nakhba, no work, no land. All families forced to this area. We quarrel with my brothers and sisters. You have to go to

collect wood for fire. You have no time to rest. I remember all these things. My mother worked hard to feed us. They gave us one glass milk in morning, fish oil seeds. There were many cases of sick children.

“When I became 15 I became more understanding in my society. I want to know, why we live like this? What happened in 1948? They make massacre in Deir Yassin, Yaffa, Haifa, war against civilians. They killed anyone, old men, women children. In 1979 I am in left party, PFLP. When I became 20 or 22 I read about Zionists. I learn from my grandmother and grandfather that we live with Jewish, but others come from outside to occupy Palestine. I read about Balfour. I want to know—was a Palestine? Or for Jewish? The Jewish have problems in Europe. All Europe want them from their countries. Balfour promise to give them land in Palestine. Palestine holy for Jewish. ‘You can live in Saudi Arabia,’ they say. ‘This is our land.’ I am now 42. I have 4 children, 2 boys, 2 girls, some in university, some in high school. I teach them. We have to struggle but the people in the world are with us, but not the governments, even the Arabs. [Noting the facility in which we meet, open with tables, much like a high school cafeteria]: This camp, this hall, this building, it is a dream for me. To have weddings, to laugh, to cry, for martyrs, Nakhba Day. We have the Edward Said Library, a coffee shop for women.

“We are suffering from men. We have violence. Here oppression is double. We struggle against occupation and against patriarchy. You can build your house and in one minute it can be demolished. They go everywhere, Yemen, Ethiopia, Falasha, and bring them here. I believe we have to win. We have our hearts, our dreams. If you walk the street, you will feel, touch, the words I tell are true. Women are poor, weak. One wants to go to university, to be a doctor. But there is a check point. She must have a house in Abu Dis but she is poor. So she goes to Bethlehem University to be a teacher. Israel has all allies, Palestinians have no partner. We stay in refugee camp but one day, I promise you, we will be free, we will return to our village. We need 60 years, no, maybe 100.”

Christian Family in Beth Sahour, next to Bethlehem

“She was like a crazy woman for two months.” About a relative who lost her only son. She was making supper. He was next to her. He was shot through the window by soldiers.

“They came into my house. They fired gas. I could not breath.” Elderly grandmother describing attack by Israeli soldiers in 2002.

“Five boys were killed on this street. They were throwing rocks at the soldiers. My mother saw one shot to death with her own eyes. She was looking out this window [second story of two-story flat]. They knocked him down. The soldier put his foot on him. He put the gun against his body and shot him. Then they pushed him over the fence into the garden of the house below.”

“Why the Jewish come into my house and kill me, kill my daughter, kill my son? Abu Issa [father, now deceased] worked for the wazir [Israeli official]. We were friends. He was a guest in my house—ahlan wa sahlam [welcome]. When his son marry, we go to wedding. Now they shoot us. A guest came once to stay. She said, ‘I am a Jewish woman,’ I said, you are welcome. We do not hate Jewish. It is very hard now [near tears]. We do not have jobs. Issa [her brother, an engineer] worked in Jerusalem. There was a dilapidated church that he fixed. It is very beautiful. Now he cannot go. The people are without work. But we will not leave.”

Palestinian Activist Intellectual

“I lived 30 years in Damascus. I also lived in Moscow. I have written five books. I never imagined I could work with an Israeli. But because I am a Marxist, that protected me. I can work with anyone. I refuse to recognize any religious difference. How do we build bridges for Israelis and Palestinians to struggle together? I see no peace proposal. All are based on the balance of power. We seek to fight this, and the chauvinism within Palestinian society.”

“I have my own god. He has email. He contacted me and said, ‘This land is for you.’ I refuse any religious approach to the conflict. I look on the ground, not in the heaven. I reject Bush and the clash of civilization. When Bush spoke of a crusade he awakened the demons in the Muslim world. We try for 22 years to find a bridge to peace, but based on real issues, economics and resources, not Rambo culture. Americans are using the Jewish as a fuel for the fire in the Middle East. They have a strategy. They believe all regimes will fall—Iran, Syria. All will be under control of the American empire. This occurred when the Soviet Union collapsed. Now the US is not leading just the capitalist states. They want to lead all the world. They must control the oil. By this, they can catch Europe by the neck. Also Japan and China. The giant China is coming.”

“Bin Laden is not the natural son of Islam. They created him in the headquarters of the CIA. They created him to fight the USSR but then he was out of the bottle.”

“There was no peace process. The Israeli agenda is to continue control Palestine and the Middle East. They say there is no partner for peace: Arafat, Abass, Hamas. Who is the partner? Annapolis is based on very colonial premises. Pushing Palestine to be more weak, more weak, until they can push Palestine to accept their proposal. All resistance is terrorist. Violent, non-violent, cultural, economic, political. We Palestinians are generically terrorist. There are 14,000 Palestinians in jail. There were two Israelis captured in Lebanon. Bush talks of a ‘viable Palestinian state’ full of settlements. But I cannot go from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. The main problem is the refugees. It is not Al Aqsa mosque.”

“I have a dream. The only solution, the democratic solution, not Olmert-Bush-Blair-Sarkozy democracy. I believe in one solution—one democratic state. A historic solution. Palestine is for the Palestinians, not for the Jewish. They see this as their land. They come and have kids. We will compromise. One democratic state for all its citizens. I do not believe Annapolis will produce a solution. The flame will return, the ashes. We have time. After 100 years they did not stop crazy Palestinian kids from throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. In spite of this, I am an optimist. The US was defeated in Vietnam, not by force but by contradictions in the American people. The same is true in Iraq.”

What can we do for you? “Do your job. Fight for your rights in America. Your rights as a woman. Don’t worry about us. We are fine.”

Palestinian farmer who has fought a legal battle to save his land

“The settlers offered to buy our land. They held out a checkbook and said, here is an open check in US dollars. Write the amount. We will help you go to the country of your choice. You can keep the land for ten, 20, 30, 40 years. You will get the money now.”

“We organized a Tent of Nations for children. During youth camp, we asked the children their wish. One Palestinian girl said she wished she could die. I was shocked. We spoke to her after to

see what she meant. She said her father had been killed by the Israelis and she missed him. If she were dead, she could see him.”

Palestinian non-violent activist, affiliated with a university

“This is not an ivory tower. It is an integral part of society. One student died, many were wounded. Hundreds if not thousands were arrested. Many state builders are from here.

Regarding academic boycotts. “There is a call in Europe to boycott Israeli university people. People talk of what is not happening but not of what is happening. There is a systematic assault upon Palestinian academics. I cannot go to Najah University in Nablus, or Gaza. I work in Bethlehem and work in Bir Zeit (Ramallah). It takes about two hours to get from one to the other. It can be 4-5 hours in some cases. On some days, I never arrive. It should take 35 minutes from home to the university. Now it takes two hours.”

On why Americans are so responsive to Israel: “Israel started as a settler society, as did the US. These are very competitive societies. It is easier for the Americans to understand Israel. ‘Settler’ here is a demon term. In America it implies courage, initiative, creativity.”

“You never hear a story in America that Palestinians are under an academic boycott, but when one Israeli academic has an article withdrawn, it is on the front page.”

“This is a national struggle, not a civil rights struggle. If at a check point, the soldiers are nice, say ‘sir’ and even salute me, it is still a checkpoint. The fact is the Palestinians were displaced. Israel is very successful as presenting the issue as a domestic problem, that the Palestinians are violent.”

“Israel can afford to be mad. The Palestinians cannot afford to be crazy.” Commenting on Israeli anarchist groups that use “crazy” tactics to resist the occupation.

“Resistance is generational. There is no continuity. The generation of the First Intifada has no role in the second Intifada. Each generation has new surprises. There are cycles.”

“The process of adapting to occupation is dehumanizing. We must build hope and pride and massive civil based resistance.”

III. Internationals, NGOs, etc.

NGO attorney specializing in Refugee rights and law

“The negotiations did not use international law as a basis of negotiations. This would move closer to a solution. They treat this as a humanitarian issue with a humanitarian solution. It should be treated as a matter of rights and law.”

“A two state solution is not longer viable. Israel controls over 45% of the West Bank. It is not a regime of occupation but a regime of apartheid. Israelis in the West Bank are subject to Basic Law [Israeli]. Palestinians are subject to Ottoman law, military law, British law. There are two legal regimes, two sets of roads..”

“The Israeli goal is to remove the Palestinians by making life non-viable. The Palestinians do not know how many have emigrated. The Israelis control exit data so they know how many have left.”

“The Palestinians want a one state solution for Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis are creating a one-state solution for themselves, but not for the Palestinians. Israel is planning twenty years ahead, perhaps fifty.”

“This situation is not sustainable. Israel must decide if it wants to be a Jewish state or a democratic state.”

“This situation will get much worse over the next two years.”

International Law Specialist

“Technically Israel was not ‘birthed’ by the UN. General Assembly. Resolutions such as 181 are recommendations. In fact and in law, the creation of the Israeli state was by force. 1948 was a civil war between irregulars of not-recognized armies.”

“When Israeli joined the UN, they had to accept the ‘peace loving states’ provision. Membership was conditioned upon Resolution 181. It is also mentioned in Israel’s Declaration of Independence, as well as resolution 194. Abba Eban promised this during the debate.”

“Every year the UN reaffirms Resolution 194 [on Palestinian refugees] and notes “with regret” that it has not been enforced. Hence it has become a “norm” of customary principle with standing in international law.”

“The right of return would not negate the rights of current residents of homes taken in 1948. They are considered ‘innocent third parties’ under international law.”

Palestinian American Businessman in Jerusalem

“It’s over. The Israelis have taken the land. The process is irreversible. The settlements and the wall, which snakes around the Palestinian towns, cutting them off. The roads that link them. There is no chance at all of a Palestinian state. Now our struggle must be for our rights, to education, to jobs, to free movement.”

He is married to a woman with Jerusalem residency and an American Green Card. She has to live in the US two months each year to keep her green card, and must live in Jerusalem to keep her local residency. They keep flying back and forth to balance US and Israeli residency requirements. “I am an expatriate American living in Jerusalem. I am not an Israeli and am not a Palestinian. When Israel took over the West Bank in 1967, they gave my family Israeli identity cards. I was born here of American citizen parents. I grew up in America. Today we are unable to travel together as a family. I cannot leave from Amman since I have an Israeli card. I tell them I am not an Israeli but they will not accept that. The kids and I have to leave from Ben Gurion Airport. My wife is not allowed to travel to Israel so she cannot leave with us. She has to cross the bridge and leave from Amman.”

“In the 1970s national consciousness drove Palestinians. Now nationalism, secularism, and capitalism have all failed. Religion is sweeping the region. Thirty years ago 90% of the women

in Jerusalem looked like you [addressing the American woman with me]. Now they are all covered. It's the same all over."

IV. Various Anecdotes

Some young boys are waving and smiling at our group. They say something. Someone asks our guide what they said. "You do not want to know."

We are in a Palestinian neighborhood where there is Jewish construction next door. A woman comes out from her house and throws some garbage towards us. Maybe this is symbolic speech.

One of our group is at the King David Hotel and meets an Orthodox man. She asks his view of the conflict. He says he wants peace and would give up the settlements but it is not possible. He refers to Jacob and Esau: "They have to hate us. God made them this way." [Note: most people would say Ishmael and Isaac. He said Jacob and Esau. Not clear why].

One of our group meets an Israeli man, the son of a Likud founder. He says he would never go to Ramallah. "We have given them everything: electricity, roads, jobs. And yet they fight us. When we came here it was sand and we created everything. Why do they not do things for themselves? They never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Actually they are good workers. With our brains and their labor, we can create a lot."

Story by a Palestinian: "The Canaanites were in the land when the biblical Hebrews arrived. When Sharon threatened to expel Arafat, he said, 'My roots are here from before Abraham.' Abraham had no land. He was a nomad. He had to purchase land to bury Sarah." Note: Arafat was trumping Sharon.

One of our group is talking to a young woman in a Palestinian family she met. She is 22, a college educated engineer, unemployed. The woman asks, "Do you like us or the Jews?" "I wish for peace for both of you." "So do I, but do you support us or support the Jews?" "I try to see the good in all peoples." "I hate the Jews." Our colleague hesitates then says, "You must not hate them. If you do, they will have stolen your heart, and they will control you." The young woman hesitates. "I know that. I try, but their hearts are so hard."

A female group member and I are walking on the ramparts that go around the ancient city. We see a young boy standing below us against a wall. All tourists would walk past this place. He is exposing himself. Symbolic speech?

"Peace be unto you." Slogan written on the looming cement wall by the Israeli Department of Tourism as you enter the Palestinian areas of Bethlehem. Last year, a pastor registered a protest that this was a desecration of the Christian greeting.

Palestinian Joke: Be nice to the Americans or they will bring you democracy.

Conversation with a merchant in Bethlehem. "The tour groups come in, see the church and leave. This is not fair to the pilgrims and it is not fair to Bethlehem."

A Palestinian is going to Australia for a conference. He had great trouble getting security clearance to leave. The Australian government requests the permit and finally Israeli intelligence authorizes him to leave. As he goes to pick up the permit, the Israeli officials says "Have a good trip. I hope you do not come back." The man says "What!?" and tears up the permit.

Palestinian: "My English is not good...but compared with Bush it is good."

Women in Black. A 92-year old woman says she remembers the refugees in 1948. She speaks of visiting the refugee camps. She wants to end the occupation but 'I lived as a minority in Europe. I do not want to do that again. I want to live among people like me.'

Palestinian man: "Jenin, a prison. Nablus, a prison. Bethlehem, a prison. Ramallah, a prison, Everywhere, checkpoint, checkpoint, checkpoint."

Anecdote: Women in Black are holding their weekly vigil on Friday afternoon. The police require counter-demonstrators to stay on the other side of the street. A Jewish protestor drops his pants and moons the women. An Israeli man observing this says to an American, "there you see what has happened to 3500 years of Jewish ethics."

"Bush, Sharon, Blair. Terrorists." Spray painted on the 27-foot cement barrier snaking through East Jerusalem.

"The Americans and Europeans create temporary aid programs for the Palestinians to bypass their own boycotts." American observer.

"Geography rather than history is the way to understand this conflict." UN researcher.

"I feel like a voyeur." Person in our group saying how he feels after driving into Sderot, interviewing people, then leaving, with stories about how dangerous it was.

"You are entering Zone A. No entrance for Israelis" A sign near Jerusalem. I saw similar signs in the 1960s in Transkei, South Africa, where whites had to register to be in that so-called independent homeland.

"There is no way to peace. Peace *is* the way." Sign in Quaker Meeting House.

Sharon, 2001: "It is possible today to concede control of the hill aquifer which supplies a third of our water?... It is not by accident that the settlements are located where they are."