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About relationships: The case of relationships between Palestinians and Jewish in the shadow of political conflict

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In this presentation I will discuss the case of relationships between Palestinians and Israelis during the accelerating conflict between them. I will refer specifically to the case of relationships in the last attack on Gaza.

My presentation builds on interviews that were conducted via electronic mails with Palestinians from various fields such as social work, bio-chemistry and business. Moreover, it builds on my personal experience in the first place as a friend of many Israelis, and as an activist in psychoactive, and in the second place it builds on being a social worker that worked in an Israeli health facility. I will not discuss the whole data that I have collected via interviews; rather I will use some of it as examples to support my current presentation.

The relationships between Palestinians and Israelis have always grabbed my attention as a Palestinian woman and as a social worker. As a Palestinian child I grew up in a village 10 minutes far from Jerusalem by driving. I wasn't enough acquainted with Jewish folk or their culture. Although my father used to have many relations with Israelis due to his work as lawyer, but this didn't give me a clear picture about what it means to be Israeli. As a young girl the Israelis for me were depicted as those who were profoundly sincere and kind to us. They were friends of my father who visited us constantly at our house and always carried gifts with them. They shared with us our happy and sad events. Thus, years later I had another image of them as those terrifying soldiers who intruded our life in the village once in a while. They either arrested men from the village who were taken

and I never saw them again, or they demolished houses for different reasons. These two contradicted images about Jews confused me as I was young.

In the year 1987 I joined the university I was studying by that time in Bethlehem University. Not long after the studying year began, the first Intifada embarked. I witnessed the death and the injury of many students who contributed in demonstrations at that semester. The university was closed later on at that year by an order of the Israeli Minister of Defense. During the intifada my youngest sister persecuted for 2 years, she was only 14 years old by then.

The intifada that upraised at the year 1987 from Jablia refugee camp spread throughout most of the Palestinians cities and villages. During that time I didn't remember that I saw anyone of my father's Israeli friends around. They totally disappeared, I think my father was annoyed of that, but in the same time we were satisfied of the fact that they are not around. This satisfaction was due to the fact that Palestinians who have relation with Israelis can be accused as collaborators or traitors.

The Oslo Accords in the year 1993 returned the hope to us (Palestinians) of political solution. Consequently, Palestinians and Israelis renewed their relations. Later on I became an activist Palestinian who works for the peace' benefit. Therefore I integrated in many activities and sessions that aimed to create understanding and co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. I joined one of the most famous left organizations that was active in many fields especially the social field. I devoted much of my time to this organization.

Just like me so many Palestinians were integrated in other organization aiming at creating peace through out widening the activities' circle between the two folks. Surprisingly, these relations were conditioned and didn't go in the right track. I witnessed many colleagues withdrawal from the organization that I was belonged to right after discussion gatherings. I figured that relations with most of Israelis in this organization were not real. In many cases these relations proved to be fake and inadequate. These relations were profoundly influenced of what going on between Palestinians and Israelis in the daily

level. There were questions over many issues that were suspended and left without any clear solution. The ambiguity that surrounded these relations was just an indication to the unfinished business between both nations that Oslo agreement didn't sort out. Said (2000) referred to that in his book *The End of The Peace Process* " it is absolutely clear that whether or not these agreements have actually helped or hindered Palestinian self-determination, no leader is prepared in any way to forego, modify, or renege on them. The Oslo agreements signed at the white House were first, two letters of **mutual recognition** exchanged between Israel and the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people and second, a Declaration of Principles that laid out the interim arrangements for redeployment rather than withdrawal of the Israeli army from unspecified areas of the West Bank except for parts of Gaza and Jericho. The agreements postponed the really complicated issues __ Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and sovereignty__ to final-status negotiations that were to have commenced in 1996".

The issues detailed above by Said remained as problematic in the Palestinian/ Israeli relations and in many cases turned to be taboo for discussion. It's pretty obvious that any relation between Israelis and Palestinians is not purely social or work one. Therefore such relations were always sensitive to any political conflict arises later on.

Although the history teaches us that the relations between Israelis and Palestinians in many levels are related to many dimensions. For example, the history that they both shares and the present that shadows any integrations between them. But for many reasons both nations are interested in understanding each other and so some of them do really care for co-existence. For the Israelis Govrin indicated to two groups emerged in the Israeli society in times of aggressive conflicts. The first one she called it the we-ness schema and the second one called the underdog schema. While the first one support using the power against the Palestinians, the second group devotes itself to end the suffering of the oppressed nation. (Govrin 2006). Palestinians who are in relation with Israelis therefore welcome such group (underdog) and cooperate with it. In return this group continues to support the Palestinians and stand for their rights. Such kind of group exists and lives for long time. They build strong relations with Arabs and even some of them moved to live in Arab villages. Thus in times of war or intifada, something occurs within

these leftist groups. While some of them continue to stand for Palestinians human rights, others demonstrate peculiar attitude toward Palestinians who are considered their friends or acquaintances. I will refer to few examples that indicate to the lapse in these relations. My interviewees were asked about their relations with Israelis during the period of the attack on Gaza at December 2008, about how they felt against Israelis, whether they continued to have relation with their acquaintances, and how they see the future of the peace.

Munir (44 age) is a father of six children and a merchant and business man from East Jerusalem. He talks Hebrew very fluently and he has many relationships with Israelis due to his job. He deals with them on daily basis. These dealer-beneficiaries' relations transformed to friendships in some cases. He expresses how his relations influenced by the last attack on Gaza:

I do have relationships with Israelis because of business and I also have friendship with them. These relationships were deeply affected by the war in Gaza. I was very disappointed by them. Especially those whom were considered as best friends of mine and whom I used to think that they are supporting peace. Instead they confirmed the brutal war on Gaza where the majority of the victims were kids, infants and women. My Israeli friends were cheering to encourage the IDF. Those friends have changed their attitude to me for I told them my political opinions honestly. The way they were justifying the war on Gaza was so pathetic if not disgusted. The last attack on Gaza reshaped my way of thinking about the Arabs- Israeli relations. For now we have only business relations, they are not in the category of friends.

The questions related to the example such as: How deep these relations were and whether these relations are real? I will address such questions later on in this presentation.

Maya (age 30) a social worker and a psychotherapist who works in an Israeli facility expressed her thought by saying:

I have many relations with Israelis most of them are job-relations, but some of them evolved to outstanding interpersonal relationships. During the period of the attack on Gaza I avoided talking about politics for I had a previous experience from the war with Lebanon on 2006. I have found out that one cannot discuss politics with Israelis because they support their government with all its actions. No matter how strong your

relation with them, during war they stand for defending themselves since others always target them. They describe themselves as victims who have the complete right to protect themselves. Sometimes I talked about the innocent children who were killed in such attack so as to get feedback. In return they used to blame Hamas who used civilians as a shield to obliterate the Israeli military. Moreover, they said: civilians elected Hamas so they are backing them up. The war on Gaza didn't renew any information to me about Israelis but I was disgusted to see their love to bloodshed and revenge. That didn't surprise me for I used to such attitude. I didn't expect that they will condemn the war or they will feel the deep pain and suffer inside me. They were happy and sure of their victory unlike the case of the war with Lebanon. I was so furious and angry of all the sides that are related to this war. I wanted this war to be ended I didn't want to see them happy of killing children. My attitude didn't change towards them for I know them and I don't expect anything else from them.

Rema (age 44) a scientist and artist, mother of three children whom her father was assassinated by the 1970s by an Israeli hit squad. Her mother was died recently because of delay of getting permission to pass one of the check points in the west bank so as to get SOS treatment in Al MAKASED hospital. She is engaged in relations with professionals from the mental health area in psychoactive. She describes the relations with Israelis in this way:

There is no doubt that the attack on Gaza lead to resenting and condemning what happened. But we know that the war was put into operation by one layer of the nation and not by them whole. We cannot blame a whole nation for they have distinguished opinions. There are those who condemn the war, as there are those who support it for war is war. Those who I know they were cheering for ending the war, and they tried to help by offering humanitarian help for the Palestinian society especially to children. For them war was conquer to the humanity. My relation with them didn't change and this what proves that human being are alike and there are plenty of space for all of us to live on this land in peace. Therefore, we must not judge people because of what their governments committed. From my point of view reinforcing the relations between us can lead to changing this negative reality. What causes tension in our relations is the unsecured life we live, and our freedom that are limited. Our friendship is built on common principles, and only a principles' clash can lead to ending our relations. These relations are not related to politics or to ethnicity or race and this is what our prophet Mohammad called for.

Another social work that worked in an Israeli health facility and activist on behalf of co-existence says:

When the attack on Gaza embarked I was in a shock. I couldn't understand my feelings. I was terrified, angry, overwhelmed. I knew that the Israel military would not leave Gaza before they destroyed everything there, regardless to what tools they would use. Sometimes I wished that Hamas would defeat their soldiers so as they would not returned to there. My Israeli colleagues at job avoided talking about it and I also did. I didn't want to lose my job because of my political opinions. Somehow I knew quite well that discussing of the brutal attack with them wouldn't not lead to ending it. Surprisingly, some of my Israeli friends who claimed that they are leftist support the attack on Gaza and in order to justify their standpoints they started to circulate Hamas convention that calls for killing Israelis (legitimizing political violent). What bothered mostly that they didn't have any say about the innocent children who were killed everyday. Rather they were worried of their children or relatives who are serving in army and who were in Gaza at the moment. They talked much about the continuous rockets that fell on Sedurot and the unsecured life their fellows have there. By the end they said that they were leftists, but Hamas and its followers should be destroyed totally and for good. Finally I just decide to minimize my relations with Jews and filter it. Ironically, the war on Gaza learned me much about relationship with Israel and especially claimed to be leftist.

The examples mentioned above suggest many questions and points worth to be discussed. They revealed how relations between Palestinians and Jews are influenced by political violence.

- ✓ From a historical and philosophical point of view, Zionism has a big share of the Palestinians misery. On the ground of the Holocaust many Palestinians turned to be refugees, lost their lives and their prosperities, imprisoned and executed. Israel has never admitted of the harm it caused the Palestinians and no compensation was offered for them.

History cannot be ignored; Israeli people still receive compensation from Germany. There is a consensus all over the world on the harm created by the Nazi to the Jews. Therefore, there are many Holocaust Museums for the memorial to the Jewish victims as an expression of the universal feeling of guilt of what happened such as the one in the USA. Ironically the Palestinian had to pay the "exorbitant human cost of the Holocaust".

Meanwhile and in many occasions, Arabs skipped the history and wanted to create peace with Israel without debating over the past. Said says:

To care about oneself is to care about one's past: alone of most contemporary civilizations, we

Arabs risk the loss of our history almost entirely. And with that we lose any capacity we might have had to discuss present realities and past responsibilities.

- ✓ Violence should be understood in different contexts. Causes and motives should be overlooked. What its motives, rationale, objects and methods and how it legitimized. People are not born violent rather they become, and in many cases its personal decision. Governments are involved in continuous violence every single minute. They give reasons of their violent and they show their interests through integrating it in “moral principles” that turned to be legitimized in late phase, look to the case of the United States in Iraq. (Apter 1997).

This explains the acts of both Israeli's and Palestinians. While Israel claimed that they are defending themselves from the violent Hamas. Palestinians claimed that they are defending their right to live in freedom in their homeland. Both sides are firm with their ideas and a tiny space was left for negotiations. Israel is strong country that is backed up by the USA. They don't have to see in Hamas a partner for negotiating, and they declare this every day in the media, rather they seek another Arafat for signing another irrelevant agreements. Meanwhile, the Palestinians have to wait for the human rights organizations and for the world to end their suffering, or to continue in their struggle against a brutal occupation and for seeking justice.

- ✓ The relation between the Palestinians and Jews cannot ignore the fact that the Palestinians are occupied nation who have the right to celebrate basic human rights. It cannot marginalize issues that had been arisen by the occupation, and that been neglected in Oslo agreement in 1993 also before and afterwards. These issues proved to be crucial and a ground for any cooperation between the nations such as: end of the occupation, removal of the settlements, return of East Jerusalem. Real self-determination and equality for Palestinians. (Said 2000).
- ✓ The case of Gaza proved that many Israelis joined the right wing parties and encouraged a military solution. For them the government should take a drastic

action against Hamas once and forever. “They are bad and we are good.”

The examples demonstrate what really happen between two groups that live in continuous conflict. From a psychoanalytical standpoint, during violent conflict two groups arise, in her psychoanalysis Govrin discussed thoroughly the creation of two **schemas** the first she called **we-ness schema** and the second one called the **underdog schema**. While the **we-ness schema** represents a powerful group which acts negatively to other who are not belong to them, the **underdog schema** represents those who condemn the oppressor and empathize another **underdog schema** just like Palestinians or the radical left. (Govrin 2006). According the powerful group Palestinians are bad and violent especially when talking about suicide attacks, therefore they are enemy who must be obliterated by military force. Meanwhile, the radical leftists go on in supporting the Palestinians who suffer from the Israeli siege and embargo. (Govrin 2006). This example explains why relations between the two nations change during conflict and why many of these relations come to end or to shift.

- ✓ “Psychoanalytic thinking depends on identification”. In order to understand why Jews or Palestinians act this way, one should identify with them as objects. Psychoanalysis, therefore, suggests not dealing with the object as transparent but as an opaque, just as we are. This **opaque** object has a history that affects its elements. (Moss 2001). Consequently, many Israelis who support the attack they don’t hesitate to mention that in front of their Palestinian friends. For them their Palestinians friends are **transparent** which means they have no history or anything to claim; therefore in the case of conflict they feel offended if they condemn Israel actions against Palestinians.