



## **July 2004, Israeli-Palestinian seminar Report**

The seminar started from the first moment in a lot of openness and will to communicate and create conversations. There was no hostility. The Israeli group was less keen to “find Palestinian friends” than past years- and it’s just one symptom of the difference between this group and previous ones. It was very heterogenic and included many contradictions- which made it hard for them to create a unified Israeli group in this seminar. People came from totally different backgrounds: ones who served as soldiers in Palestine, also until recently; a girl who lost close friends in suicide bombings; left-wing frustrated gay activist; Israeli Palestinian, who arrived torn apart between two identities; A religious guy who became secular, few members of an organization for social-economical-classes’ change in Israel and others.

People came with different levels of awareness to the other side. Also on the Palestinian side, some of the participants were in Israeli-Palestinian meetings before and some never met Israelis; some didn’t experience the conflict so hard directly, like Issa, from east Jerusalem, and some in the strongest way, like Firas who lost his father. Ahlam arrived two days later because of problems on the way, and that confronted people from the very beginning with reality they didn’t know.

The theater workshop in the beginning was great and really “broke the ice” between the people. They enjoyed and got closer to each other, Much more than in similar workshops last years. We did as usual a step-by-step process of more personal workshops before touching the “heavy stuff”. The participants also said they feel it’s the best way to do it.

From the Israeli side there was a lot of fear from the meeting with Palestinian nationalism. The Panel, which we actually started with the workshops in the seminar, brought up (as usual) the gaps between the 2 groups. Dorit expressed it very clearly during the Israeli groups’ meeting that evening, when she started to cry from frustration, that the Palestinians were all so proud in their identities and their nationalism. She said, “I thought we had it too, and we didn’t...”

Many Israelis came expecting total honesty from the other side from the beginning, and were very disappointed when they didn’t hear the answers they wanted to hear. Mithkal, the Palestinian Israeli in the group, confronted them with that when he said one night- “I see people here that change from being the most pluralist and left-wing after 5 minutes to become racist and can’t tolerate anything which is not convenient to hear”. It took time and complex process to realize, that maybe they won’t hear these answers at all. In the panel they “got it in the face” when almost all the Palestinians said very similar things. It’s not easy to put yourself in the position of “the other side”, to see why they say things they do, where it comes from. Keti said she feels she identifies with the Palestinians pain, and by that she feels she is denying her own right to exist, and she doesn’t know how to deal with that. Many people felt the same way. Some said they even envy the Palestinians, for having such a strong feeling that they are right. They said: “it’s much harder to be suddenly the ‘bad guys’, and not the victims in this story”.

The personal narrative workshop opened many things and started this process: Zvi told about himself as a soldier in Palestine and his inner conflicts, Lily told about her friends who were killed. Firas told about his father (what he didn’t tell many people in his own group before

that), Nancy told many hard stories, Rawa described a sexual harassment from a soldier in a checkpoint. Her story made Lily and Dorit, who were with her in the same group, identifying with her first of all as women. They were shocked from the fact these things even happen. When Firas told his story, he cried, and Nati set in front of him and cried with him. Suddenly blocks were collapsing inside people. It was hard and good at the same time. Nati went out of the workshop feeling “thank god I came”. Adi said he is being careful not to show “too much empathy” because he doesn’t feel safe enough for that.

People came from a very specific education system, and this look into the feelings of the ones who were until now your enemy, is very threatening, because it can collapse our whole defense system, who allows us to function in a crazy reality without demanding too much from ourselves. Many wanted immediate answers, “what would I say to people at home?” and short-cuts. That isn’t really possible. We are used to talk in titles and not to listen, but the answers come from another place.

We started every day with 1-on-1 session, when we split to couples for 10 minutes and that’s how you open the day. It appeared to be the right decision, because it gave another channel of expressing oneself and creating personal connections, especially to the ones it wasn’t easy for them to do it alone, and between people who didn’t become close automatically.

The collective narrative workshop was complicated. Both sides had to present as a group the historical narrative (that they think is important or representing) of their people / nation / country. For that, they had to agree first over 10 points.

The Palestinian group did a united and invested presentation and the Israeli group passed few hours discussing and arguing about the different narrative each one of the group identified with. For example: Adi put in his own the kingdom of Judah; Zvi claimed the history starts for him on his birth date; and Mithkal had a totally different narrative, which didn’t identify at all with the Jewish-Zionist narrative some of the group presented. Shortly, the group was totally divided and even when there was an agreed main narrative, it was selective from dozens of other points and didn’t really represent “An Israeli group”.

In the end they presented a tree with personal “braches”, for ones who wanted to add points on the main trunk. The trunk was a very traditional brain-washed Jewish-European-Zionist one, which also reflects a lot about our education. Still, maybe we should think in the future about an alternative method, in which each one is building his own historical narrative and put it on the wall, and that way you can see the differences in the opinions more freely from both sides, and also the similarities, and maybe have more deep discussion about it.

The Palestinian group had the chance to present their point of view of history out loud, in front a listening audience. The Israeli came out of the presentation with different opinions; it was new to them to see Palestinian pride which is not apologizing, scared or silenced. The Palestinians made their presentation in a very charming and non- aggressive way and with humor (what can’t be said about the Israelis, who took themselves and the presentation in terrible seriousness- also in the presentation of the 2 societies later on).

Some Israelis felt satisfied of the equality they felt between the 2 sides, some felt threatened from the “held fist”. As Adi said-“Individuals are ok, but as a group they are a threat to me, even in language and songs they sing”. It is always harder to the Israelis to find a mutual narrative than to the Palestinians, who feel united by one struggle, but this time it was even harder because of the differences inside themselves.

In general, even when discussions became hard, especially around the subject of 48’, the personal relations were kept and people talked freely to each other. The “Palestinian group”, always exists, especially in the beginning and at points of crisis. We can’t forget that we come and return to a reality of power-relations that we are used to live in. It is always a threat to the Israelis, who try to find (sometimes desperately) inner-Palestinian criticism- because they have it on their own side, and also because they want to take off themselves the burden of ultimate guilt. In this seminar it was broken in several places, also in the discussions, for example when already in the

personal narrative workshop started an inner Palestinian argument about the responsibility of Palestinian leaders on the situation.

In the workshop of 48', in all the groups almost Israelis raised the question: "We are with you, we agree, but what do you expect us to do? What can Israeli people do? We can't leave our houses or kill ourselves, what do you want?" Zvi raised it very strongly. Nancy and Majduleen told him that they know Israelis have their rights. And that they are willing to compromise, and that they are speaking from their pain. Rawa started to cry, because she realized that there are Israelis who are against the occupation. It was easier for her in a way to think that all the Israelis are against Palestinian rights, because then there is some hope to change, but if there are people who fight against this policy, and still nothing is changing, maybe there is no hope. It was a shock for her.

When the group watched a film about the separation wall, where there are Israelis and Palestinians acting together, Palestinians talked in several times about how it was new to them to see such things, and that maybe it's the right way to go in. Zvi said after the film, that he cried more than for the Palestinian suffering, for his own society, for the soldiers he saw in the film, doing what they are doing without wanting it, being used by bigger power than them without knowing it, for the tragedy of the Israeli people, became like this. He said: "the Palestinian maybe lost his lands, but at least he can still call himself a human being". He was talking about the soldiers who are also our fathers, brothers, friends, ourselves. Himself.

After the film, in the discussion, came up very strongly the subject of possible ways of Palestinian and Israeli resistance and their effectivity, Daniel spoke about his wish to change the minds of people in Israel and his dilemmas and others talked also about their frustration. Imman said that resistance doesn't help anyway. Then the suicide bombings issue came up. It was a hard discussion and many private conversations were made after it. One thing that appears in every seminar is the Palestinian response to this issue, as a group and as individuals and as usual things sound different in each forum and each one has his own opinion.

After that when we did the loss workshop, and each one had to draw the meaning of loss, Bahaa drew a bomb (symbolizing the suicide bombings) and his mixed feelings towards it: On the one hand, it will free the "handcuffs"; on the other hand, it could kill the peace. It was hard for him to meet people who can die themselves in one of these attacks. Lili, who lost close people in those attacks, had a hard time during this workshop. She expressed her pain, saying she didn't expect to feel the pain so strongly during the seminar.

The group also watched the film "Arna's children", which is made by a director half-Israeli half-Palestinian. It shows a different point of view of the suicide bombings. After that, in the 1-on-1 session we did, many shared their pain, Dorit and Majduleen set and cried together for the lost lives and the reality they are both suffering from. From the knowledge that you can die from it and also the other one can- and it hurts, when you know each other.

Dorit, who came from a racist family, who didn't accept her coming to this seminar, and from a very closed and conservative circle of opinions and information, identified with the Palestinians exactly from this place of connection to national identity. She was closer to them, more than other Israelis on the seminar and felt more comfortable with them (like Shimi last year.). The highlight for her was when the Palestinians and the Israelis made for her a birthday party together. She never imagined a situation like this is even possible before. When doing the method of the "Witch stick" (= we lie down and imagine- if in the night comes a witch and solves the conflict, how can we feel or know it when we wake up?) Dorit said that she would know it, when she could do this party in Jerusalem, not in Germany.

We used many methods in the seminar, active and interactive, not just discussions. I contributed a lot. For example- someone stands in the middle of the room on a chair and he represents the conflict, the others have to put themselves relatively to him and explain why. Issa outed himself on a distance, watching. Rawa stood on the same chair with the conflict and looked in it's eyes. Moran lied under the chair. Etc. Another example was the presentation of the 2 societies, which

was more cultural and created fun and also new knowledge for people of the beautiful traditions on the other side, not just politics.

One of the most significant things happened in the seminar was towards the end. Adi was during the seminar very analytical and was very scared from crossing the line inside him, of feeling the other sides' pain. It was a line that he was educated on all his life. During the seminar he already changed when calling home, he said he got response from his family like "what do you care how they feel? We don't want to hear it" and he thought to himself, what do they mean, how can it not be important for them?! He felt the gap between him and his family after only few days. In the beginning of the seminar, Nancy told about an experience she had at the age of 6, when a soldier in a checkpoint broke her Barbi doll when she was there with her family. In the end of the seminar, Adi bought Nancy a Barbi doll and brought it to her. They both cried and hugged one another. Many Palestinians were there at the scene and all of them were shocked that it was Adi who did this gesture. It shows how big was the change in both of them, also Nancy, who came with terrible stories about how Israelis destroyed her life until now.

Mithkal, the Israeli Palestinian who came with the Israeli group, became through a lot during the seminar. He came with a big identity conflict and many fears from the meeting, which was his first one, with Palestinians from 67' borders. In the beginning, both groups were demanding and pushing towards him, each group in its way. Nancy told him directly, "first decide who you are, then come here". Daniel told him that he can't understand him, how could he not feel obligated to his state. The Palestinians were suspicious and the Israelis didn't give place to his narrative and were not aware to his difficulties. Both sides didn't know much about the discrimination and racism the Israeli Palestinians are being through every day in Israel. (They didn't notice that, of course, and thought they are very liberal and humanist.) Step by step, Mithkal took his place: he socialized with the Palestinians and spent time with them more and more (in the beginning he was only with the Israelis, where he felt more safe.) He spoke Arabic with them, sang their songs with them, in the cultural presentation he translated and explained about tradition that was also his own one, and was very excited and proud to be in this position. He didn't come from a self-confident place like Salam did last years, who felt belonging to both groups from the beginning. But he took also his place in the Israeli group, opened his feelings and criticism and by that he was a mirror and self-observing for many Israeli participants.

When Ketzi realized that, she said "Mithkal is here, and he is a bridge, he is moving from side to side, translating, socializing, knowing, connecting, and we don't use it and we are not even aware of the power he has and the gift it is for us!" She suddenly looked at the Israeli Palestinians in a different way. Not as a threat but also as something that can be a push to change the reality we live in.

On the first night, the Israeli group went for a drink in the village and was kicked out very brutally from one pub. Zvi was very upset from the fact that Germans are kicking out Jews from a pub. Mithkal told him, "these things happen to Palestinians in Israel every day". Zvi told him, "It's not the same". Mithkal kept quiet 2 days and then opened his thoughts to the group, what wasn't easy for them, but very important. In the beginning, he tried not to involve the Israeli Palestinians' problems in the seminar. He said it's not relevant, and just that he wants the occupation to be over. But in the historical presentation, he put his own narrative, which included things like unrecognized villages, the army regime that took place over Israeli Palestinians for 20 years, the massacre in Kfar-Kasem on 53' of dozens of civilians, the Intifada where 13 Israeli Palestinians were killed by the Israeli police and army, the discrimination and unemployment and racism, etc. Things that many people there from both sides didn't know.

The theater workshop made by Ketzi was good and important. It allowed another way of expression of feelings, not in a verbal way, and tension falling together, in a positive way. The group in general was responsible and took responsibility from the beginning along almost all the seminar, over waking up people and helping in the kitchen, the cleaning, laundry etc. The division to couples each day worked great and let people know each other better through practical work together, not only talking on the "heavy stuff".

This is the place to thank Henrike and Doris and our hosts, and to apologize for any damage done.

The seminar showed progress, in the contents as well as in the sense of participants coming. To next times, it could be good to have more social organized activities.

We thank you again for the support which without this seminar wouldn't have taken place, waiting for farther seminars and for keeping the contacts between the July 2004 seminar.





## **Israeli-Palestinian Dialog seminar - august 2004**

**By Natalie**

### **The participants, the program and the process before the seminar:**

The chosen Israeli group this year was more right wing than past years, some of them with even religious roots. This was a conscious decision, because we aspired to open this experience to new people with different opinions and difficulties, and to broaden the discussion. We wanted people that doesn't necessarily identify with the Palestinian suffer, and feel very connected to Israel and its own suffer. The participants were:

Gilad – a 28 years old guy, acting student, that used to be a fighting soldier in the IDF,

Rahamim, 29 years old guy, law student, also a fighter in the army, his religious family lives in the jewish courter in the old city of Jerusalem, he chose to be non-religious.

Shoshi, a 24 years old religious girl, her family is jewish orthodox, also lives in the jewish courter,

Hadas is a 28 years old woman, she works in the organization "Zionism 2000",

Einat a 29 years old woman, came from a traditional religious family, said that she used to be a left wing person but became more moderate after the second intifada,

Shani, a 23 years old girl which used to be right wing,

Oron, a 24 years old guy from Tel-Aviv, which is completely politically unaware,

Nir, a 24 years old guy from Jerusalem, also with religious roots,

Yair, a 24 years old student which used to be an officer, but recently joined the refusers organization, and has a settler brother, and last –

Natalie, a 30 years old women, feminist activist which consider herself as a left wing person.

As can be seen, this group was extremely heterogenic; people were in different ages, from different backgrounds. The **Palestinian group** were a bit different this seminar too, eight people came from the west bank – Maisa, Lubna, Shayma, Hadeel, Jawdat, Farid, Rania and Safaa , and only three from east Jerusalem – Rasha, Hazem and Ihab. Most of the Palestinians didn't know Hebrew, and the two groups communicated in English exclusively. Another point was that this year, there has been a majority of girls in the Palestinian group.

### The seminar

In general -

The seminar took place at Lahnstein, Germany. Most of the Palestinian participants arrived at the 16/8 at noon, while the Israeli group with the three Palestinians from east Jerusalem landed at night – 2 o'clock in the morning. We got to Lahnstein very late – this affected the first day of the seminar, we started later and the main trouble was that we found out that no external facilitator was suppose to operate the 'ice breaking' workshop. That is why the leaders had to plan it on the first day in the morning.

The first day started, everybody was a bit tired but the atmosphere was great, the games with Akram and Shiry lee and the workshop of Zikrid were successful, everybody cooperated, laughed and it seemed like people are open and there is no conflict. People got to know each other, there was no hostility and they really connected. Oron, one of the Israeli guys was really impressed from the closeness, and on the first break talked about how amazing this thing is and that we should broadcast it. So, it turned out really good that that Shiry-Lee and Akram were the guiders because it helped both sides to feel its ok to communicate with the others. The expectation circle, which came at the afternoon, was a bit heavier. Some things surprised the Israeli side – Yair said at the evening that Maisa's expectation was hard for him – she said "I want to check if I can talk with Israelis". Most of the Israelis felt confused – this was definitely a good start, but they were afraid from what will come next. Oron said that he "got scared that it wouldn't stay like this when we'll get to deeper conversations". Some of the people in the group expected complete openness and honesty immediately. Hadas told the group she went to sit with the Palestinians, and they kept speaking in Arabic and she felt left out. Us, the coordinators, tried to lower the expectations at this point, and told the group to be more patient. Another intimidating thing for the Israelis, which is a common ground for most of the groups that participated in the seminar, was the fact that the Palestinians seemed like a homogeneous, unified group, while the Israelis felt unconnected to each other, still trying to figure who are the others. Einat felt she is expected to behave and think in a very apologetic way. She said "I don't want to be a target for arrows that I'm not sure I'm willing to except". This is something that will be with Einat through the entire seminar. At the evening Natalie decided she wants to exchange stuff with people, so she and Farid sat together and taught each other Hebrew and Arabic. Natalie, who came with a very activist left wing background, was surprised from the seminar. She claimed she never heard these kinds of radical opinions before.

At the second day of the seminar we had two workshops – 'getting to know each other' and the panel. The first workshop made an opportunity to communicate in small groups; people often felt they didn't have much time to express and to listen. The first surprise to everybody came later – at the game of feelings, which has been conducted before the panel. Until this point, both groups seemed strong and happy to be where they were. At this game, a lot of people crossed the room when they identified with the sentences "I prefer to be in a different place right now", "I'm confused" "I miss home". After this session started the panel – two questions were asked – what are you proud of in your country / people? And what do you want to say to the other side? The first question was very hard for both sides. The Israelis heard a lot the sentence - 'I'm proud in every shahid who died for our nation', and it was extremely hard for them. The Palestinians heard how proud Israelis are in their country, which probably made their lack in country stronger. Some of the Palestinians seemed very depressed, Rania cried this whole session, few days later she said she didn't expect meeting Israelis to be so hard for her. At the break between the two questions, Israelis felt hurt, the term 'shahid' in Israel refers to a terrorist that bombs himself, while Palestinians use it to describe every dead in the intifada. The Israelis demanded an explanation for this word at the beginning of the next session, but still were surprised. Later on that day, the Israelis talked about how hard it was for them, the panel, but couldn't see that some of the things they said could have hurt Palestinians. The second round of the panel began, and it was even harder. People were tired, and exhausted. At the middle of the round Farid started talking, he mentioned the holocaust. Rahamim, couldn't bear it, didn't even listen to Farid's words, and left the room. Afterwards that day, Rahamim convinced himself that he can't stay in the seminar, and tried to convince us to let him go.

Important to mention that in this group, the holocaust issue, "collective memory", was much stronger than in other groups, and it was shown in the long part of it in the Israeli presentation. That was interesting because unlike former groups, many of the participants came from eastern and Arabic roots and not European ones. That shows how strong is the effect of education and the nationalistic victimizing thinking on the Israeli minds, especially when they feel threatened.

At the Israeli meeting that evening, some people identified with Rahamim's act, others didn't. Shani said to him – "you left the room for me", while Nir said "we cannot be too sensitive, if we come with an intention to get hurt, it's a problem". This was only the second day, but as can be seen, the situation got really sensitive and intense. Hadas said that she expected to get angry from the meeting, but she wasn't. She was surprised and sad – "all of a sudden it seemed so unreal that we sit here, and Rania seemed so desperate, when in the morning she seemed so strong and educated".

Einat said that she felt her blood was allowed, and Shoshi described this confusion in a very touching way "I'm here to take responsibility on my country's acts, but I have responsibility to my family. When I sit in this room and hear these words I feel that I betray in it. I feel very unprotected".

Important to mention that in between the workshops, people started to communicate, laugh with each other, and to get use to the other's presence around. On a retrospective look, it turned out to be a good decision to set the first free day on Thursday, people needed to rest a bit and just to hang out and to have fun stuff together.

On the train to cologne the group set separated, but from time to time they made contact. On cologne we made a group picture, which was a very impressive step, usually the Palestinians don't agree that quickly. On cologne we had several activities we made together such as climbing on the cathedral tower, and going to the chocolate museum. That gave the group a chance to talk and gain shared experiences.

On the forth day we actually got into the bottom of things – personal narrative workshop. It turned out to be a very strong, powerful and empathic session which brought people together. The Israelis heard some hard stories from the Palestinians, and the Palestinians heard stories which clarified the Israeli's fear. Jawdat told us about his 3 friends that got killed, Oron described us his mom's fear that he died in suicide bomb and his journey to his house, Shaima told about her friend that got hurt from the army and cannot move, Rahamim told about his life as a child at the jewish quarter, and his experiences as a fighter, Maisa cried and we all cry with her when she described her fear that soldiers might harass her sister sexually. This workshop opened a lot of boundaries – Oron said at the end of this day that he understood for the first time that the Palestinian's life is much harder than ours. Maisa said at the end of the workshop that she didn't believe that she could feel empathy to the Israeli's suffer, but she thinks that from now on when she hears about a bomb attack she'll look at things differently. Farid was completely broken after this session, he told the group about his brother, and it was extremely hard for him, he sat outside alone and cried for about two days. This workshop opened up a gap for a lot of confusion and ambivalent feelings. Israelis and Palestinians found themselves feeling empathy, and identifying with people that are their 'enemies', and the stories they are telling deals with 'bad Israelis / Palestinians' that can easily be their friends, family.

Einat, felt that she lost in a competition – "we (the Israelis) started with easy stories, while they told us very hard ones". Einat had a lot of problems with dealing with this guilt, or even to feel that in this seminar, she will be a target for all sorts of accusations.

The day after we had the 'lost' workshop, in which people were asked to draw what is lost for them. This workshop was very empathic, and continued the line that started the day before. People talked about the things they have lost as a result of the conflict, and Einat said later that day, that it was the first time she felt that she is being heard.

The historical narrative day was extremely hard for the Israeli group. Although they agreed quite fast about the ten points, it took them a lot of time to plan it and by the presentation time everyone got tired. The Palestinians made a short presentation, funny and accurate, and finished it with the national anthem – 'biladi biladi'. Hadas decided that the Israeli group should sing the 'tikva' two minutes before the presentation and an argument has started. At the end of it Hadas cried and didn't participate. Later on that day she said "I feel like we are getting lost, and it scares me and makes me sad. About the tikva – we said that we represent ourselves, but we represent a country".

The presentations were a great example for the power relations which don't disappear even when we come to Germany. After living years in an oppressing / oppressed society each side "knows" its role and its place and many times returns there automatically. One example is that the Palestinian's presentation was short and the Israeli's one was much longer and tear-squeezing. The Israeli narrative took over this workshop. Power relations could be seen in it like a micro cosmos, when some Israelis couldn't bare hearing the Palestinian's anthem without singing their own. This is the reality we come from.

That day, the Israelis encountered the Palestinian nationalism, and saw a unified society in front of them, it reflected their own society – a society with many narratives, many opinions, confused, and scattered. Suddenly, it became a competition, the Israelis tried to fight back. The discussion on the tikva was the essence of this situation. Nir said – "I was impressed by them (the Palestinians) – they saw a goal – in our group everything came apart to so many pieces". Yair said "it has been a hard day, I saw how different we are, basic issues for me are not basic to other people". In a way, the groups understood that day the power of knowledge. The fact that we don't know enough our history embarrassed some of them. And at this context Einat said that "it's easy to be empathic to the Palestinian side when you don't know your own".

Some of the remarks were also very patronizing – Yair claimed that the Palestinian's history isn't as rich as the Israeli/ Jewish history because the Palestinians started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That was another difference between the two groups – the Palestinians thought they should represent a narrative related to the conflict, while the Israelis chose to attach all the Jewish narrative as well.

The problem with this method of presentation was that most of the energy and time went to internal national group work on the presentation, instead of the historical discussion about the different narrative, facts, views and the other things that for them the workshop was created. The presentation is not that important for this particular process, therefore maybe it's better to change it in the future.

The Palestinian group had a lot of difficulties. Every night Akram sat with many of them, had personal conversations, mainly with Lubna, Rania and Farid, people who felt this seminar is too hard, to intense, too demanding.

One figure, Ihab, was extremely interesting. Ihab, as we mentioned, is a Palestinian from east Jerusalem, he was different because he met Israeli's before, he has a family in the U.S.A, and in general he feels very connected to western culture and in the seminar, from the very beginning, he tried to bond himself to the Israeli group. He was the only one who used to sit with Israeli's, to be with them on his free time, and not with the Palestinians. He told many Israelis that he is a citizen just like them, that he has a blue ID, which was only partially true. He was turn apart between the two groups, and between his two identities. That could be seen at the panel, when he cried out of identification with Shiry-Lee. Later he told that his group didn't understand him, and mentioned it to him.

Ihab, through the entire seminar, emphasized the fact that he supports peace, doesn't want to fight and hate arguments. That's why he didn't like it when we touched 'burning issues'. Ihab tried very hard to be accepted in the Israeli group and to distinguish himself from his group – he said 'I'm different, I'm not like them, we come from different backgrounds, and I feel closer to you'.

Through the seminar, Ihab went through a process of getting closer to his Palestinian identity. The highlight of it came at the 48' workshop, when he told the group that in the first intifada, soldiers entered his school and threatened him with a gun. He also told Shoshi that he cannot understand how she can be proud in Israel, after her country caused so much pain.

The day after the presentations, we went to Bonn. People communicated great, and on the boat we played games together, that the participants initiated.

Through the seminar a lot of personal relations was created, Shoshi and Farid smoked a lot together and talked, Jawdat and Rahamim, although they didn't speak the same language, connected great and became brothers. At the evening of the 'two societies' workshop Nir and his

friends sang Hebrew songs and taught us a dance, while Safaa sang and taught us a song of Fairuz.

On the '48 day we dealt with two issues – Nakba Day and Independence Day. Shoshi felt that she is torn apart, on the one hand she hears touching stories about losing home, which she empathizes with, on the other hand, she is happy that she has a state, and she feels proud on her independence day. People listened to each other at some sessions. Hazem said that he feels jealousy in the Israelis because they have a state of their own and it surprised people. This saying cleared the Palestinian's feeling on the second day when everybody was asked to say in what they are proud of. Later that day, we brought two films that discussed the '48 issue. Some of the Israelis thought that the Israeli film wasn't equal to the Palestinian one, and at the evening some claimed that the seminar wasn't balanced. This was maybe the highlight of the accusations the Israelis have made through the entire seminar. Along with justified and true criticism, their difficulty to deal with the process, with the things they heard and the guilt they felt made them accuse almost anything and anyone. They felt an understandable need to protect themselves. That was one reason for the fact that their narrative was so Jewish and long and represented so well the myth of the Jewish victim. They coped with the fact that the Palestinians are the weaker side by making themselves weak as well.

Along with the warm friendships and the exposure to their situation, and even taking responsibility for it, the national feeling raised its head – Oron talked about feeling responsible for his country. He said – "we have a mission here, we represent our people". Gilad said "my goal here is to protect my people".

The atmosphere was very 'heavy' and it was directed to the program and to each other, but not to the Palestinians.

The last workshop day dealt with the crucial negotiation problem. At the morning we saw Keren's film about the wall, and later on we split them into 4 group discussions. People mainly tried to understand what the other side's opinions are, and to check if there is any common ground.

Gilad laughed on the situation, he said it looked like a peace conference and that everything is like a very cynical trading. Nir said he felt sad because in this day he understood that the Palestinians will not stop at 67' borders. Natalie told him that she spoke with Jawdat, and he said there is a difference between a dream and reality.

Yair said that the Palestinian's situation is so bad, we can't expect them to give up on 67' so easily. Besides, in Israeli society many are not willing to get back to 67' borders.

A lot of Israelis and Palestinians were glad from this day, because that was what they expected when they came to the seminar, dealing with concrete issues. Hadas claimed it was a good day because she heard many Palestinian voices, not a unified collective. Some were willing to compromise more, some less.

At the last day we brought notebooks for people to write. That was really charming, seeing everybody sitting on the floor, writing for hours.

At the closure of the seminar we all got our expectations back and talked about the two weeks experience. That was definitely hard and fun and meaningful experience for all of us. We all learned something and took something with us.

About the process – that was a very different seminar from the previous ones. The Israeli group was very emotional, nationalistic, and each and everyone of its members was shaken up. The internal process inside the group and the problems they had with each other took a lot of energy from them. The Israelis had this tendency to deal with themselves so much, that sometimes, on the Israeli group sessions they forgot the reason they came to Germany.

The two groups connected and made bonds. That was a very healthy process. Not jumping on each other's shoulder immediately, but building trust slowly.