

## **Breaking Barriers – a Seminar Report**

### **Preliminary Remarks by Helga Dieter**

The initiative "Breaking Barriers" was founded in the summer of 2002 at the first holiday camp hosted by "Vacation from War" with participants from Israel and Palestine. At that time, at the height of the 2nd Intifada, the search for partner organizations for the planned encounter proved to be difficult. We got to know Keren from Tel Aviv and Rami from East Jerusalem, who had encountered each other shortly before on the "Peace Boat" of the Japanese peace movement, where they had both been lecturers. To their amazement both realized there, far from the actual conflict, how much their ideas about a peace making process coincided. Ever since then they have worked for "Vacations from War" with enthusiasm.

In autumn 2003 Keren and Rami got the "Mount Zion Peace Award." Prior Benedict, head of the Benedictine Cloister of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, said then in his laudation:

"They have the courage, honesty, strength and spirit to continue their efforts in a time in which such projects are needed probably more than ever before. The political struggle between two national movements is in its most crucial, dangerous and violent phase. The future is either a time of communication and cooperation or the region will fall into more blood and violence - should that be possible."



In summer 2006 twenty four young participants of the initiative came from Israel and twenty four from Palestine - together with their teams - and met in the Rheinland. They were aged between twenty and thirty- some team members being slightly older.

Please read the report of the three Palestinian/Israeli groups - each consisting of sixteen participants.

## **Breaking Barriers - Seminar review**

### **Raz ~ Germany ~ July 2006**

In my experience this seminar was a challenge of a new kind not only because it brought together Israeli Jews and Palestinians from the west bank. It was also one of my first attempts at facilitating an adults' group, in difference from my usual work with youth. I find it important to note as my accounts of the seminar will undoubtedly be affected by this perspective and comparison which accompanied me all throughout the process.

*The two preparatory meetings* of the Israeli group in Tel-Aviv were successful in the way that they gave the participants a good grasp of what the camp is going to be like in terms of method and framework. The encounter and experience with the other Israeli participants made them more comfortable once we started the actual encounter. On the other hand, hence the participation of two Palestinians citizens of Israel (from now on will be referred to as 48 Arabs<sup>?</sup>) the meetings did not take an entirely uni-national nature. For instance, the factor of filtration of fears and doubts did not take place in the way it should for either of the participants, Israeli or 48 Arabs, under the auspices of the preparatory meetings. It did though take place informally through conversations I had with the participants individually and among themselves outside the workshop. The complexity of a group containing both Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel accompanied the group throughout the seminar so the acknowledgment of it was nearly as important as reflecting on fears of the Israeli-Palestinian encounter.

*The first day* of the seminar was all in all friendly and cheerful. At the same time the conflict was present in the room from the very first session when people chose to introduce themselves via it, and pose the actual political questions ("so what about the occupation? What about the territories? What about the D'ulum?") as their expectations and doubts. At the same time it was clear to most participants that issues should not be opened yet at this early stage. The theatre workshops I conducted were fine and seemed to allow the participants a positive unorthodox interaction which they desired at this stage. At the end the participants were asked to split into bi-national pairs which will take turns during the next mornings of the seminar to make sure everyone make it to the workshop and conduct a wake-up exercise/game before workshops start. It turned out to be a very helpful arrangement, giving platform for informal interaction and more important, assuming responsibility as participants on the seminar and its process.

*The second day* was the one of the hardest for my group and personally for me as a facilitator. It started with a deeper personal getting-to-know-each other in small groups. The discussion moved to the less pleasant topics (rode blocks / bombings casualties / IDF brutality). Mostly the Palestinians were telling and the Israelis 'interrogating'. Though very attentive to one another, the doubt and mistrust were clearly evident. A logistic interruption which made us change rooms and because of which we did not conclude this session properly had made its impact throughout the rest of the day. The second workshop took place in a small crowded room. The method in this workshop was asking each side questions and answering them. The questions were almost all conflict-directed and the atmosphere suddenly tensed. In a decision that was broadly discussed later on, Luna and I have allowed this to go on with out stopping it or moving to another more personal encounter exercise that was planned. The result wasn't

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<sup>?</sup> In the seminar's facilitation team we distinguished between 3 types of participants: (1) Arab-Palestinians citizens of the Palestinian Authority, (2) Jewish-Israeli citizens of Israel and (3) Arab-Palestinians citizens of Israel. For reasons of mere clarity and regardless of neither the participants nor my own view of the above definitions and their possible political implications, I will refer in this text to those groups as follows: 1) Palestinians, 2) Israelis 3) 48-arabs.

easy for any of people involved. The dynamics was that the Palestinians were asking difficult accusative questions and the Israelis partially answering them and partially being defensive. Despite of that, the mutual respects for the people in the group was kept and the participants left the workshop with the understanding that making friends and good atmosphere was only the initial easy part, and that they are now approaching the more changing and real aspects of this encounter. It could be that interfering with this stage, redirecting the group to the planned lighter personal encounter activity would have created a more gradual leap into the conflict. At the same time the group was clearly drawing directly into the heart of the burning issues and preventing it from doing so might have created an inauthentic feeling and weakens the group's capability of opening these issues later, feeling they shouldn't. The day was concluded with one-on-one session in which the group split into bi-national pairs and processed the day events in free conversation with a participant from the other group. I got the impression that most participants used this exercise in order to reassure the trust and mutual interest in the encounter after the harsh discussions in the previous workshop, and most of them kept their conversations going long after the workshop time had finished and dinner was served. With those methods we opened each of the following days of the seminar.



I wish to bring up at that point the sense of 'otherness' felt by Luna and me within the facilitation team of the seminar. Generally speaking, and specifically in the history of this project, the common pair of facilitators is of a Palestinian man and an Israeli woman. Being the other way around was felt as something unusual from the very first stages of the seminar making within the facilitation team. In retrospective, it is clear to me that the path taken by our group in this encounter- that was different from those taken by our two parallel groups - was influenced by this fact. This change of gender/nationality roles confused not only the participants but also the supervisors. After it was felt most strongly in the second day of the seminar, I felt that all parties are growing accustomed to this situation and actually turning it into an advantage as the days passed.

Later that day was the first uni-national meeting, in which the people share the difficulties having to represent the Israeli side, being accused for things they might not even been aware of. The issue of guilt and its role in this encounter was discussed as well as the concept of suffering, who suffers more or is there even such concept of comparing suffer. Facing the Palestinian point of view for the first time in this seminar have marked out the asymmetry of the situation and created a sense of illegitimacy among the Israelis, for their own on side or

suffering. At this point the two 48 Arabs in the group have not said much, they were talking about the awkward situation they find themselves in being 'trapped in the middle', coming with the Israeli group but identifying with the Palestinians. On the other hand one of them talked about the sense of exclusion from the Palestinian group, and criticism of being an Israeli citizen.

The third day of the seminar was dedicated to the 'personal narrative'. Changing rooms for the last time, Luna and I have decided to conduct the workshop while sitting on the floor. Each participant was asked to bring up four personal meeting points he experienced with the conflict. Then each person was given the space to share their stories. Some of the stories that were brought up were extremely difficult and often tears were showing. The dissuasion that came after reminded a lot of the previous day's dynamic. The personal stories and perspectives were soon transformed into generalized political topics, in which many people were not fully involved and listening was generally scarce. Eventually it mostly revolved around the concept of terror and the different meanings this word has for the different groups. The Israeli response to the Palestinian accusations was some time denial ("*there is no way the IDF is doing such things on purpose, if civilians are killed it can only be an accident*").

Later we used the 'Panel' method; each participant was asked 'What do you have to say to the other side?'. This has marked a change in the sense that people were more direct and authentic in their response and less fortified with political slogans but rather shared their feelings, dilemmas and also empathy. Participants were even bold enough to express their confusion and frustration as a result of the stories they heard. An Israeli participant chose to speak about his feeling of alienation and exclusion within the Israeli society. The day was signed with almost strange feeling of relief. Participants felt they have gone through a lot and later mentioned this day as one of the most significant ones in the seminar.

This day's uni-national started with a talk I had only with the two 48 Arabs. They both seemed unusually troubled. They have spoken of how lonely they feel in the group, having no side and no facilitator of their own. They felt that in the while Palestinians can speak of the occupation and Israelis of terror attacks, they don't have legitimacy to speak up their own suffer even though they are victims of both. I tried to encourage their place in the group. Interestingly, when 30 minutes later we had the uni-national meeting with the rest of Israelis, they were both passionately representing and defending the Palestinian side, trying to explain it better to the Israelis, rather than talk about their own feelings from the day, about their side. The group had repeated many times the story they heard and tale about how they make them feel. Some participants in the uni-national that day said they don't accept the Palestinian legitimacy to attacking Israeli civilians, mostly they said because we as Israelis denounce all violence against civilians and expect them to do the same. I invited them to bring it up in the bi-national group as they did the following day.

The fourth day of the seminar was dedicated to family narratives. Each participant was drawing the route his/her family made, the places they have been to before coming to live where they do now. During the discussion that followed the two 48 Arabs have talked a lot, sharing their family histories and they relation to the conflict, while the other Israeli participants mostly kept quite, perhaps as a result of the previous day. After reflection of the situation, an interesting though yet again political and detached discussion had started, concerning the right of return and the ability or inability of bringing about an historical justice. When Luna had asked the group about their experiences of the Nakba / Independence Day, we witnessed again how the discussion shifts into more personal and direct dialogue rather than a political debate. Two Israelis tolled about the celebration and sense of pride and happiness related to their Independence Day experiences which infuriate several Palestinians, claiming it to be cruel selfishness. Those participants, Israeli and Palestinian, stayed in the room and clarified things to one another after the workshop was over. In the uni-national meeting an interesting discussion was held regarding the different meanings that the 'talking

about what happened' has for the different sides. Participants said that they felt that while for the Israelis in the group talking about the past is matter of reference to relate to in order to understand the present and the future better, for the Palestinians is a matter of talking about the past for itself that is important, perhaps even for recognition's sake.

Later that day the participants joined with the rest of the Israelis in the seminar, in order to prepare the cultural evening in which each group presents its culture to the other. It turned out not only to be an interesting challenge - figuring out what is to be regarded 'Israeli culture' watch- but also served as a good preparation for the next day. This activity also marked a breaking point in the position of the 48-arabs in the group, which had a dilemma concerning what group should they perform with, the Israeli or the Palestinian, ending up not performing at all.

The fifth day was spent in the uni-national groups. We started by each listing the ten most important points in their narrative. The remarkable difference was of course between what most of the group came up with and the ten points the two 48 Arabs came up with. It is wrong to perceive this day and the group dynamic in it as uni-national for the presence of the Arab participants in the group made the processes and dynamics all throughout the day were bi-national. The position of the 48 Arabs participants was probably the hardest and most demanding in this day's dynamic. While the Israeli participants are clearly removed defences, feeling they can do so in the uni-national forum, they were as a result by far less sensitive to the to the needs and 'otherness' of the Arabs in the group. After some initial discussion the group was asked to create a presentation of it's narrative to the Palestinian group. Once the group assumed responsibility to complete this mission, the dialogue was very different. Since the group have made up its mind to make one combined presentation (and not split into Jewish and Arab subgroups), the process many time took the shape of negotiation and bargaining. Often the Arab participants needed to struggle hard in order for the group to agree to include some parts of their narrative (such as the Dir Yassin massacre, October events 2000 etc), explaining over and over aging the significance of the events to the other participants. At the same time I felt that their place in the group was never as strong as it was throughout the whole of this day. While some of the Israelites in the group have openly opposed their line, others played more mediating roles. Others were trying to over-rule many of these attempts by 'objective'-logistic arguments ("*we can only choose so many events*", "*we'll get nowhere if we kip mentioning each person who got killed*"). The group did succeed in the end, moreover, the presentation which they decided will take the shape of a comic news broadcast, was all conducted in Arabic, by one of the 48 Arab in the group. This came to show the profound process the group went though during this day and strength it had as far as such unexpected show of trust.

In the sixth day the two groups have performed their presentations to one another. The Israelis went first. During the entire presentation the arguments kept on. At one point the 48 arab who was delivering the news broadcast stopped the presentation and wouldn't go on until a scene depicting an evacuation of an Arab village in Nakba was performed. The Palestinians presentation took a more serious and dramatic nature, using music, poetry and photos' screening. After watching it, some of the Israelites felt that their presentation was insufficient and light. Some even said embarrassing. The discussion that started afterwards brought up the question of the historical right and the legitimacy of belonging to this land. The Israelis who after much effort managed to clearly phrase their distress with the Palestinian's stand that by denying their basic legitimacy to exist in Israel/Palestine, they prevent them from making any further step in the encounter. The were surprised with the direct Palestinian answer saying there is no problem with them exiting here as long as it is under the government of a just Arab state. The 'Arna's Children' movie provoked once again very strong emotions. Some Israelis felt it was one-sided and legitimates terrorism. In the uni-national meeting held later on, this trend of delivering blame to the framework (facilitators, one sided materials, inadequate

preparation etc.) grew stronger and served as a convenient let out of stress and hard emotions as a result from the generally very difficult day. Through the discussion and reflections from my side the group went back into looking at what was difficult for them and why is it so. Participants said they feel there is nearly no variation of opinion on the Palestinian side and even if there is one they wouldn't show it ("*they only speak out political slogans, they are not genuine in their opinions, always representing the same line*"). That is in difference from them which right from the start have allowed internal arguments and acknowledged the differences among themselves. We have agreed to bring it up the next day.

The seventh day was dealing with methods of conflict analysis. It started with a tree analysis, exploring the roots and outcomes of the conflicts. The participants were surprised to see the similarity between the way the two sides understand the historical and present situation, while the big gaps appear to come in the interpretations and meanings. The second workshop examined power relations between interest groups within the arena of the conflict. We used here a non-verbal method of Image Theater. The compliance of the participants with this method, to hesitant as first, was remarkable. Each deliberately chosen to represent an interest group which she/he do not identify with, they were able to express thoughts and views which would have never been uttered verbally. They later also mentioned who different was the experience of listening, being able to consider and open up to views which otherwise would have been threatening or offensive. Other interesting aspect of this activity was the unusual ability to empathies with the other side a result of acting out its role and experiencing its position in relation to the other 'actors'. The political discussion that came afterwards brought up new yet untouched topics such as Al-Qaeda, the UN and weapon traders as actors in the conflict. The latter were exceptionally 'popular' to denounces for it was a rare opportunity for the group to unite against, Palestinians and Israelis alike. After reflection they reconsidered and the stands were more careful. The last workshop was dealing with the needs of each side. The Israelis which avoided answering the questions from the Palestinians were represented by one of them who said they almost never before asked those questions (such as the right of return, bi-national state etc.) and that they will take time to form and opinion.



The eights day was performed in the big whole, mixing the participants of all groups, using the 'Open Space' method. The participants divided into small open discussion groups, according to topics of their interest. This method allowed us the facilitators to partake in the discussion of a change and interact differently with the participants. Later on that day we held the last uni-national meeting in the seminar. People were concluding and it was rather

surprising the extent into which people felt they went through a profound change in this seminar.

*The ninth and final day* was a day for reflections and conclusions. When asked to conclude the Israeli mostly talked about the experience of eye opening and personal change, while the Palestinians were mostly expressing their content with the Israelis sense of change, encouraging them to endure it further. Both sides talked about their desire to become more active in changing the reality of the conflict. Many said that this will actually be the real test for the entire experience of the seminar and its validity. The group has exited this seminar with a positive though realistic atmosphere, motivated to act.

A note should be made about the issue of the language. Right from the beginning the major medium chosen by the participants was English with several exceptions of people who chose to be translated and right from the first days the roles of translators were assumed by specific string participants, enhancing their position of power in the group through the translation. An interesting shift was when in the third or fourth day the group turned to the 48 Arabs, asking them to translate directly between Arabic and Hebrew to make things more efficient. This have marked a general increase in the presence and power of them two in the group.

## **'Breaking Barriers' seminar - July 2006**

### **by Moran**

In the framework of the seminar of 'Breaking Barriers' this summer, I facilitated, together with Imad, a group of sixteen participants: eight Palestinians and eight Israelis.

The encounter was interesting, good, complicated and meaningful which brought up many questions about the two societies in general and of course questions about our conflict specifically.

Back home, before the seminar, we had two meetings in separate groups (Israelis and Palestinians) in order to get to know each other and to discuss about the expectations, fears and wishes from the meeting with the other side. As the facilitator who accompanied the Israeli group I knew that for all the Israelis- who were between the ages of 20-32- it would be the first time that they meet Palestinian people not as soldiers or television spectators.

At the beginning of the seminar we had a few activities of `ice breaking` and acquaintance. These activities were very joyful, the participants started get acquainted with each other- with their hobbies, studies, families etc., and it led to friendly and positive atmosphere in the group. The feeling of fears from the meeting started to disappear as soon as they understood that the other side is funny, intelligent and young as theirs. Simultaneously, this very fact raised a different fear in the Israeli group: the image of the Palestinians as 'stones throwers' as they had been taught didn't fit any more.

Then, they almost all agreed that "this group does not represent the Palestinian society and probably belongs to the Palestinian elite". In that stage we started to deal with questions about how we get information in our society and from whom. It was difficult for the Palestinians as well with this issue since most of them used to know the Israelis only as soldiers.

On the following days of the seminar we started to discuss our conflict. We began with personal stories of the participants that were connected with the conflict. The stories were really hard; each one of the participants shared with the group his personal story, the Palestinians explained about the bad experience they have in the checkpoints, about the meaning of the `wall`, the Israeli soldiers' behaviour and more. The Israelis explained about the life in Israel amongst great fears from terror attacks, about the service in the army and more. It became harder because they felt real sympathy with each other in the previous days and it was hard to hear about the pains that are part of their life and are basely caused by the actions of the other side. For most of the Israeli participants it was hard also because it was new for them, it the first time that they were exposed to that kind of stories. For the Israelis who did their military service in the occupied territories it was really difficult because they had been exposed to that situation, they had been there but from the other side. A difficult situation was in our group when one of the Israeli participants told the group about the time when he was in Genin as a soldier and how it was difficult for him there. It was in 2002 when many battles occurred there and most of the city had been destroyed. He shared with the group his story and his dilemmas despite his fear of the group's reaction and particularly of the reaction of one of the woman in the Palestinian group who told him the day before about her terrible experience as resident of Genin in that time. There were difficult discussions, and despite the need of each participant to react and respond immediately- each speaker was respected with wonderful listening by the audience.

The group's dialogs and discussions about the conflict led to a different understanding about the societies that we live in. In the Israeli group there was an interesting discussion about inner social issues, for example social and economical gaps between different communities in Israel (men and women, centre and periphery, Jewish people and not Jewish- one of participant in the group talked about his problematic place in the society as Palestinian

in Israel). During that critical discussion about the Israeli society few myths were broken which promoted later the conflict analyzing.

The conflict analyzing was very intelligent and fascinating, it could be seen that the group listened to its members and learned from them a lot. When we asked what's the other side's needs- both the groups, the Palestinian and the Israeli knew the answers.

In different stages of the discussions there were a few disagreements on different subjects, as the solution of the conflict for example, and it looked like as each side stood in his place and the discussion would not proceed. Here, the women of both sides kept to ask questions, to clarify to themselves issues, which were not fully understood by the other side, they kept talking, in a gently and clever way.

At the end of the seminar all the participants said that they learned a lot in the seminar, they had been exposed to many issues which they would have never been exposed unless participating in it. Most of them talked about their will to act in their society to change the situation. They were very thankful for the amazing opportunity to be part of this seminar. So am I.

## **Report of the 2nd group in Germany, August 2006**

### **by Sharon and Issa**

Our groups started with two preparation meetings which were held as uni-national meetings in Israel and Palestine. The first meeting was mainly about getting to know the participants in the group on the personal level. The participants talked about the reasons they would like to take part in the seminar. In the second meeting, the groups became more consolidated and the participants talked about how they would want to see their societies in terms of internal matters and their relationship to the conflict. They also talked about their concerns and expectations from the seminar, their fears and hopes. One of the participants said that she had a bad experience when she last met Palestinians and that she would like to fix this impression. A lot of them mentioned that they would like to break their stereotypes of the other side, that they want to learn more about how the other side views the conflict and that they would want the other side to hear and contain their personal experiences and opinions of the conflict.

The two groups, Israelis and Palestinians met finally in Germany, and became a very varied and colourful group. It was a group from age(s) 19 to 32, some from high socio-economic status and some from lower ones, some that already met "the other side" and some that haven't yet, some from the political "left" and some from the "right", some attentive and listening and some emotional and reactive. This variation of the group was its best character, which enabled it to go through a very significant process and for its participants to learn a lot from each other.

The group started by talking about their expectations from the seminar and from each other. The Palestinians mentioned that they want the Israelis to know more about what happens in the occupied territories and to acknowledge their responsibility for it and their need and demands for normal life as a nation. The Israelis on the other hand, talked about their will to learn more about the conflict from the Palestinian's point of view and to listen to what the Palestinians go through, but that they want the other side to listen and accept their point of view of the conflict as well. There was also a very unique reference made by Aya, a Palestinian participant, to Rulla, an Israeli-Palestinian participant...Aya said she would want the Israeli Palestinians to acknowledge their Palestinian identity and stop any kind of identification with the Israeli society. This statement was very clear cut, and it created, right from the beginning, the basis for a very open and sincere dialog till the end of the seminar, and served as a very provocative stimulant for the group's process.

The group started with ice breaking and getting to know each other on the personal level, which was essential in order for the participants to raise hard feelings later on in the seminar and for the group to be able to contain them. The Israeli group mentioned in the small meeting, how surprised they were to discover that the Palestinians are so similar to them, in their hobbies, in their way of talking and even in their appearance. The barriers began breaking.

Although the participants got to know each other pretty well on the personal level before starting to talk about the conflict, when we eventually started talking about it, the air warmed up immediately. On the first few days, the whole group was very emotional and reactive. Palestinians and Israelis, both had a strong need to say what's on their heart, to tell the other side about their terrible personal experiences of the conflict and to try and change the other's side point of view. In this stage, all the participants in the group were talking rather than listening to each other.

The Palestinians mentioned a lot of the everyday hard experiences they have under the occupation, especially in the checkpoints. Their stories left a strong impression on the Israeli participants, some of whom never were exposed to these kinds of stories. The Palestinian groups mainly tried to deliver the message that the Israeli side should acknowledge their responsibility over these experiences, understand their demands to return back to their lands and understand their point of view, in which, the violent acts made against Israelis, are acts of "resistance" and not acts of "terror".

The Israeli participants told some hard experiences they went through in the army, as soldiers and in terror attacks, as civilians. They also felt blamed over the stories they heard from the Palestinians, but they weren't ready to accept the Palestinian point of view, in which the "terror" attacks are acts of "resistance". They didn't accept it, nor were they able to see why the Palestinians see it that way. The Israelis wanted to hear from the Palestinians that any killing of civilians is not acceptable, a statement that they didn't hear.

This phase, which lasted a few days, got the participants to a frustrating position. Both sides felt that the other side is trapped in its position and in its point of view without being able of listen and change their minds. The Palestinians wanted the Israelis to recognize their demands and their point of view that violent acts are legitimate as resistance acts of people under occupation and without an army. The Israelis wanted to hear from the Palestinians that they have the legitimate right to exist and to get recognition of their suffering from the conflict. They also felt that the Palestinian group talked in "one voice" without showing a more complex picture of the different standpoints in their society.

The progression was made, so it seems, by the help of the personal meetings, which took place in "formal" activities and in informal meetings between sessions. Shlomi for instance, an Israeli participant, had a very hard time accepting and recognizing the picture the Palestinian group presented. He was injured in a bomb attack in Jerusalem, and in another bomb attack 4 of his good friends got killed. He wasn't able to "get in to the other side's eyes" until he started to make personal connections with the Palestinian participants. He's unique cultural connection with the Palestinian participant's made the personal connection even stronger. Shlomi's parents are originally from Iraq and he spoke with the Palestinians Arabic fluently. This mutual cultural background created a path between him and Palestinian participants, which eventually enabled both sides to see things from the other side's perspective.

Another example of the significance that the personal connections was the case of a big argument that started between Ben, an Israeli participant and Aya, an Palestinian participant over Ben's request that they all should agree to oppose the taking of life on both sides. Ben, who was a soldier in the IDF and had seen his best friend killed in front of him, took this argument very hard. After the argument got to a "dead end" he felt very frustrated and felt he had nothing more to gain from the seminar. Eventually, Ben and Aya talked one on one, and afterwards both felt that they understand the other side better.

Another interesting process that took place in the group was the raising of Rulla's Palestinian identity. She is an Israeli Palestinian and her position moved in the eyes of both Israelis and Palestinian participants. At the beginning of the seminar, Rulla didn't relate much to her Palestinian identity. As the seminar went on, she got more and more torn between her feeling of belonging to the Israeli group, and her feelings of deep Palestinian identity and connection to Palestinian culture. This process was most evident when Rulla decided that she wanted to join the Palestinian group on the "cultural event" and in her sincere debate during the historical narrative session. Rulla started this session with the Israeli group, and soon felt that she doesn't have a place for her narrative in the group. She had great debates with herself, to move to the Palestinian group or not, a debate that reflected clearly her position in the conflict. The Israeli group had a hard time accepting the fact that Rulla could not find her

place with them and that their narratives do not combine. Finally Rulla moved to the Palestinian group where she also didn't feel she had her place completely. In the end of the seminar, Rulla talked differently about her Palestinian identity, she felt more related to it and became aware of the problematic state that Israeli society puts her in.

As the group proceeded toward the end of the seminar, the participants became more and more attentive to each other and less reactive. They were able to listen to each other, contain the other side's feelings and most significantly, they could understand the other side's point of view. In this stage, the group managed to observe itself from an outer perspective and see how the dynamics that happened in the group were a reflection of power relations that occur in the conflict reality. The ability to observe the group's internal dynamics, along with the personal connections and other processes that occurred during the seminar, enabled the participants in this stage to become more attentive and understanding of each other. The Israelis acknowledged that the Palestinians suffer in the occupation and accepted in some manner the Palestinian's point of view in which "terror attacks" are "acts of resistance". The Palestinian also recognized in some manner the right of existence of the Israeli state and exposed some internal disagreements and criticism, recognizing their society's part and responsibility over the conflict.

The participants finished the seminar with a feeling that they know and understand the other side better, that they want to learn a lot more about the conflict, that they would like to initiate some activities together back home and to maintain some of the personal connections.

It's important to say, that the participants didn't finish the seminar in an euphoric state concerning the conflict but rather in a more conscious and acknowledged position with regard to it.