

Charter of Principles Adopted 27 July 2005, Istanbul

The International Women's Commission (IWC) brings together Palestinian, Israeli and international women dedicated to an end of the Israeli occupation and a just peace based on international law [including relevant UN resolutions], human rights and equality. The IWC aims to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through immediate final status negotiations leading to a viable sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel on the June 4, 1967 borders. The IWC works for an ongoing and comprehensive reconciliation in order to realize a mutually secure and sustainable peace and co-existence.

The IWC is a coalition of Palestinian, Israeli and international women who recognize the urgent need to achieve a meaningful peace between Israelis and Palestinians and feel a shared commitment to accomplish this goal. Participation in the IWC is grounded in mutual respect for diversity and the rights and dignity of all parties.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and other international conventions and instruments call upon state parties to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. In accord with this resolution, the absence of Palestinian and Israeli women from the decision-making processes and official negotiations must be rectified. Women from all ethnic and national communities must be full partners in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not only on the basis of principle, as re-affirmed by Resolution 1325, but also on the basis of the significant contributions made by Palestinian and Israeli women over the years in developing alternative models of political dialogue and engaging in peace-making efforts.

Mission

The goals of the IWC are to:

- ensure the meaningful participation of diverse women, including those from civil society, in any Israeli-Palestinian peace process, including negotiations and supportive initiatives;
- guarantee gender equality and that women's perspectives and experiences be incorporated in any future resolution of the conflict;
- work for an end to the occupation and genuine negotiations towards a just and sustainable peace;
- promote a process of political dialogue that rectifies ongoing asymmetries and addresses all elements of reconciliation;

The immediate objectives of the IWC are to:

- set forth principles and suggest concrete, substantive and procedural measures within reasonable timeframes to facilitate constructive engagement and political progress between Palestine and Israel based upon the principles of fairness, justice, and equality;
- insert a gendered perspective, voice, and experience into the peace process;
- ensure that the rights and issues of women affected by the Palestine-Israel conflict are raised and effectively addressed including issues dealing with women's economic, social and cultural rights, and human security;
- push for transparency, accountability, and respect for rules and principles to be maintained throughout the peace process;
- provide an early warning of obstacles that undermine the two-state solution (Jerusalem, the wall, settlements) and activate interim preventive measures;
- contribute to the mobilization of civil society in support for a peace built within a legal, humanitarian and human rights framework.

Implementation

To achieve these aims, the IWC will:

- advocate IWC principles among policy and decision-makers at the national and international levels;
- seek the active participation of women in all formal and informal peace-related processes;
- review and make recommendations on all relevant multilateral, bilateral, and intra-governmental structures;
- make suggestions for facilitating constructive political dialogue and ways of reframing divisive issues and rectifying ongoing asymmetries;
- assess all existing and future peace proposals and make recommendations to ensure full incorporation of a gender perspective, as well as human rights, international law and human security;
- incorporate into their recommendations the experiences and expertise of international women, specialists, peace activists and organizations engaged in conflict resolution around the world;
- mobilize local and international support for a just and sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace through public and media outreach, networking, dialogue and political efforts and actions;
- constantly evaluate and adapt its own structure and mechanisms to changing needs, circumstances, and new opportunities.
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International Women's Commission For a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace

Membership in the International Women's Commission for an Israeli-Palestinian peace is on an individual and voluntary basis. Commission members do not represent other organizations they are affiliated with.

IWC Chair

Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM Executive Director

Honorary co-chairs

President Tarja Halonen, Finland

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia

Prime Minister Helen Clark, New Zealand

- Palestinian Members -

Mayada Abbasi – Palestinian Ambassador, Brazil

Wafa' Abdel-Rahman – Executive Director, Filastiniyat Organization

Tahani Abu-Daqq – Women's Activist and Community Development Advisor

Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas – Executive Director, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling

Hanan Ashrawi – Palestinian Legislative Council Member and President of Miftah

Annan Attiri - Director, Nablus Governorate

Naila Ayyesh – Executive Director, Women's Affairs Center, Gaza

Samia Bamieh – Ambassador, Former Head of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palestinian Territory

Siham Barghouthi – Chairperson, Society of Women's Action

Hania Bitar – Director, Pyalara (a youth organization)

Nebras Bseisso – Director, Palestinian Banking Association, Gaza

Leila Chahid – Palestinian Ambassador, Belgium

Samar Hawash – Nablus Coordinator, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development

Salwa Hdeib – Deputy Minister, Ministry of Women's Affairs

Lama Hourani – Gaza Coordinator, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development

May Kaileh – Palestinian Ambassador, Chile

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Amal Khreisheh – Executive Director, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development

- Israeli Members -

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Colette Avital - Member of Knesset, Labor Party; Deputy Speaker of the Knesset;

Khulood Badawi - Field Researcher of the Separation Wall, The Association of Civil Rights in Israel; Bat Shalom Board Member; Member of "Taayush" Movement

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Roberta Fahn Schoffman - CEO, MindSet Strategic Consulting
Zehava Galon – Member of Knesset, Meretz-Yahad Party; Chairperson, Knesset Committee on the Trafficking in Women
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Shlomit Lir – feminist activist; computer engineer; PhD candidate, Tel Aviv University
Eti Livni – former Member of Knesset, Shinui Party; Former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset
Talia Livni - Advocate, President of Na'amat Israel – Movement of Working Women and Volunteers
Molly Malekar - Director, Bat Shalom of the Jerusalem Link organization
Anat Saragusti - TV Journalist, Channel 2; Itach - Women Lawyers for Social Justice Board member; The Association of Civil Rights in Israel Board member
Aida Touma-Sliman – Executive Director, Women Against Violence organization

- International Members -

Feride Acar – former Chair (2003-2005) and member (1997-2005) of the UN CEDAW Committee (Turkey)
Phoebe Asiyo – Member of Parliament and Chair of the Women's Political Caucus (Kenya)
Sylvia Borren – Executive Director, Oxfam Novib (Netherlands)
Frene Ginwala - former Speaker of the National Assembly (South Africa)
Ana Gomes – Member, European Parliament (Portugal)
Antigoni Karali-Dimitriadi – Adviser to President of PASOK & Socialist International, George A. Papandreou (Greece)
Luisa Morgantini - Member and Vice President, European Parliament (Italy)
Jessica Neuwirth – President, Equality Now (USA)
Simone Susskind – Adviser to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice (Belgium)

- Honorary Members -

Carin Jämtin – former Minister for International Development Cooperation (Sweden)
Leire Pajín Iraola - State Secretary for International Cooperation (Spain)
Patrizia Sentinelli – Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (Italy)
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IWC POSITION ON THE UPCOMING ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

October 2007

The International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC) recognizes that the U.S.-sponsored Annapolis conference scheduled to take place in November could provide a unique opportunity to end the occupation and to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is concerned, however, that if the meeting is not used to launch expeditious negotiations on all outstanding issues within a clear time frame, it will not succeed. Failure will have disastrous results for both peoples and the region as a whole.

The IWC views the adoption of a new, embracing, consultative approach, replacing the failed one dominated by men guided by military perspectives, as imperative at this critical juncture to achieve our common vision of a dignified existence free of fear and want.

The only way to achieve human security and the right to life with dignity is to end the occupation through a negotiated agreement on all remaining permanent settlement issues.

The Arab League Initiative provides the essential framework for freedom for Palestine, legitimacy for Israel, normalization of relations in the region, and human security for all.

Previous experience shows that general statements lacking specific substance are a prescription for further deterioration. What is needed now is a detailed framework for ending the occupation and creating an independent Palestine alongside Israel on the 1967 borders, with two capitals for two states in Jerusalem. Implementation of these understandings must be monitored by the international community with verification and arbitration mechanisms according to a strict and speedy timetable. Only a political solution will resolve the extensive humanitarian crisis and the perpetuation of the conflict.

The international community, along with the majority of the publics in Israel and Palestine, recognizes the need to move urgently, directly, and firmly to final status negotiations now. Civil society in both communities continues to play an important role in promoting this objective.

The IWC calls on the leaders of Israel, Palestine and the international community, in accord with UNSC Resolution 1325, to grant the IWC consultative status as a way of incorporating women into negotiations and taking into account our perspective in order to ensure the achievement of a substantive, comprehensive, and lasting peace.

The IWC appeals to the international community and to the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, as well as to civil society in both communities, to join together in an inclusive and transparent effort to extricate us from the shackles of the past and help us create a just and peaceful future based on the principles of justice, equality, tolerance and mutual respect.

International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace – All Member Meeting
Hosted by Oxfam/Novib
11-13 July 2007, The Netherlands

Obstacles for Palestinians to attend IWC meetings:

- It is important to understand the situation we live in. In their introductions, Palestinian members identified themselves not just as Palestinian but by where they come from in Palestine. This is because the specific residence determines the system of permits she is ruled by, which changes from place to place. Permits regimes rule our lives. Amal, Hania and Zahira – couldn't come for unfortunate personal reasons.
- **Permits:** Others who couldn't come: Wafa Abdul Rahman, from Ramallah – has a residency ID that stipulates Gaza – therefore she needed 2 permissions – from the Israeli side, and an entry permit from the Jordanian authorities – in order to cross the bridge into Jordan. After great difficulty in getting the first Israeli permit, she was unable to obtain the second. Tahani Abu Daqua from Gaza wanted to come. She couldn't exit through the Rafah crossing into Egypt, since it's closed. **Visas:** Palestinians need a Schengen visa, which takes 3-4 weeks to obtain. We had hard discussions if to come or not if only a few of us could come. We concluded with difficulty that *we had to go*, even if only two could make it, otherwise, it implies that we have given up.
- Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza – each have different systems. Organizers/hosts of IWC meetings need to take into account that sudden changes happen that are entirely unpredictable (e.g. strike in ministry of interior). We have to be creative. Getting visas is not easy but in the case of the Netherlands, it was more complicated than usual. The Palestinian coordinator was refused a permit. **Planning flights:** Our colleagues arrived in Amman to discover that they could not get on a flight because it stopped in Frankfurt and they had no transit visa for Frankfurt. They could only go through Turkey. Due to the great will of the women, they pooled funds to get on that other flight so they could be with us.
- **Humiliation on the way, and upon arrival:** Some of the women had to go through 6 checkpoints on the way to the bridge – 6 experiences of harassment and humiliation. Upon arrival they experienced humiliation yet another time in Netherlands airport – 3 who arrived on Turkish Airlines – Anan, Salwa, and Lama – were taken to the police – humiliated not only by Israelis, but also here. Women request the IWC to send a formal letter to the authorities mentioning that this is not acceptable, and to protest that these women were treated like criminals, when they had all the proper documentation. Oxfam/Novib will follow up.
- Palestinian women note that when they are visited, they make a point of coming to the nearest point possible to welcome their visitors. They were disappointed that nobody was present to welcome/receive them, much less to protect them from possible harassment, particularly at a time when Muslims are so vulnerable to mistreatment by the authorities.

I. Analysis of the political situation

Palestinian perspective

- The perspective from the outside **avoids the real source of the current crisis, - occupation** - focusing instead on the struggle between Hamas and Fatah. Had there been no occupation, the situation in Palestine would have been considered similar to what is seen in most other countries: two major parties competing for power, plus some smaller parties, just as we see in Israel, the US and most other democratic countries.
- **Overemphasis on corruption of Fatah:** The discourse is that “we have a problem with Hamas, at same time there is corruption in Fatah”. This issue has been inflated as if it is the biggest problem, when in fact the problem of corruption is not as serious as we see in other countries (Israel included). This does not mean Fatah shouldn't do more to stem corruption. However, it is not corruption that led us to where we are. We are not a sovereign state.
- **Oslo accord:** Under Oslo, the PLO agreed to establish an elected council and Ra-yes (choice of the Egyptian reference to President Nasser) of executive authority for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip. This authority was for a transitional period – *not exceeding 5 years* (May 4 1994). Article 11 asserts that Gaza and West Bank are viewed as a single territorial unit. Article 19 speaks of safe passage between Gaza and West Bank. In 1999 – legally, the interim period came to an end, but there

was no final status agreement. Israel picks and chooses when to refer to the Oslo accord as obsolete, and when to behave as if it's still in effect. Israel has not been made accountable for its own undermining of Oslo. In 1999 Arafat was exploring the possibility of unilaterally declaring a Palestinian state, especially because since the declaration of independence in 1988 more than 120 states had recognized Palestine - that's why there are embassies of Palestine in some countries. He was then advised mainly by the Europeans to postpone this declaration for a year to give a chance for final status negotiations. In 2000 we entered into a renewed period of occupation. The international community pressed for elections, with no linkage to a restarting of negotiations or the Road Map. When the Israeli government unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, Palestinians were not given safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, making Gaza a prison with no economic revival; poverty in a condensed area with 1.5 million, mostly youth, which is a powder keg. Europe especially bears much responsibility for failure to keep the Rafah crossing open.

- We still are unable to move today. After Camp David – efforts were made to undermine Arafat – creating an evermore complex system for people under occupation. The Prime Minister position was created as a requirement so Arafat would have less power. Some Palestinians saw this as a move towards a more democratic process – some of them saw this as taking power from Arafat to create division and weaken Arafat. Later, Abu Mazen as Prime Minister, now as President continues to be undermined. While oral support is being given, nothing is changing on the ground.
- **Political Islam:** Hamas is part of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has grown to fill in the void left by nationalist governments who failed their people. Some wanted to see if Hamas would be more like the Turkish model – more moderate and secular in political terms. Many Europeans approached Hamas directly, but few, including Hamas itself, thought Hamas would make so many gains.
- **People's disillusionment:** The Palestinians were increasingly fed up since Oslo. Instead of seeing phases towards peace, they saw consolidation of the occupation through expansion of settlements, land confiscation, annexation, road blocks, economic strangling. They felt that continuing to talk about negotiations just gave Israel more time to solidify its position. So it was not just Islamists who voted for Hamas – even the extreme left wing voted for them. But Hamas misinterpreted the reasons for its success.
- After the elections, IWC warned that sanctions would not work, but would only strengthen Hamas. Palestinians suffered, but felt the only power they had was to select their own leaders. Finally a unity government was formed. For Hamas, some held to Islamic discourse but others from a pragmatic point of view accepted platform that nearly states what they were asked to accept. Sanctions continued, punishing the Palestinians for their democratic choice. Hamas seized the opportunity to take the power they thought was rightfully theirs, effectively putting an end to democracy.
- Questions arise: Why were agreements not implemented? Why was there no accountability for Israel to abide by them? All this should be looked into more. Lack of agreement and accountability has made the emergence of a democratic Palestine impossible. The intentions of Israel are also in question – many believe that the overtaking of Gaza by Hamas is welcomed by Israel. The real dispute is not about Gaza, but about the West Bank.
- Israel is responsible for allowing the flow of weapons into Gaza. The siding of Israel with Abu Mazen and against Hamas creates suspicion and has led to the people turning against Abu Mazen. Syria and Iran are working to support Hamas. The Jordanian official position is to support Fatah. Egypt's attitude changes. Europeans were in favor of reengaging with Hamas so they could secure the release of Allen Johnson. It seems that Israel is closing its eyes to the arming of West Bank militias. There is increased militarization also in the West Bank, with more control in the hands of decentralized militia. War lords are allowed free reign in Jenin and Nablus – there is a threat of the crisis in Gaza spreading to the West Bank.
- **Changes to daily life are revealing:** – and we can predict Palestinian behavior as a result. Looking at the situation from a woman's perspective and analysis, examining space, spirituality, poverty/resources, health, and women rights, we can predict that the situation is becoming ever more dangerous.
- **Pressure on PA** – there is a big pressure on the PA to assume control, at the cost of undermining civil society. There is a big battle with NGOs because civil society is the only free space left and they want to take this away. Poverty has increased and we are heading the same way as Afghanistan, only more controlled because Israel will not allow chaos.
- Our situation resembles that of the Native Americans or people living under colonialism. Control of natives is consolidated not only by military force, but through procedures, laws, systems that take time to happen, all on basis that the other is uncivilized, doesn't know what's good for them and they cannot develop on their own. The project of consolidation of occupation is continuing at a steady pace. The wall is being completed, complex systems of terminals, road blocks, bantustanization are being installed over time with the aim to a) imprison people and b) prevent access to land. It is important to go out and see what is happening on the ground and realize the systems of control that take time to go through, including going to the high court to get approvals, overriding peace activism or resistance. People in

Ramallah and Jerusalem live in a little bubble of misconception. Outside of these two cities, from a gender and space analysis, one loses any hope for a 2-state solution.

Israeli perspective

1. Status of Israeli system on eve of Gaza crisis (Hamas takeover)

The Israeli political system today has 4 distinct things that haven't changed in past year or more:

- a) **Israeli democracy is highly unstable.** We have had 6 Prime Ministers over the past 12 years. The average shelf life of a minister in any position is 18 months so there is almost no continuity of government. The government is unstable, but enduring, with a lot of personnel changeover. The present government gives the appearance of being more stable since June. There is great likelihood of elections before the spring. With the recent labor primaries, the election of Barak and the reshuffling of government, the Olmert government has been given stability until release of the final report of the Winograd Commission on the Lebanon war and issues of corruption are dealt with. With Chief of Staff, Halutz and former Defense Minister Peretz already out of office, Olmert is the only leader left to be held accountable for Lebanon. Government stability therefore is an illusion. This raises the question of how one works with Israel, which has a constantly changing leadership.
 - b) **Dysfunctional government** – made more difficult by extensive corruption at top. We move from crisis to crisis. Israeli women for the past 10 days have been involved exclusively in fighting against the plea bargaining of the President on rape charges – this takes all energy. The government is considered rotten to the core. Even though there are some good members of parliament, with so much corruption, faith has been lost in the system as a whole.
 - c) **Duality (Public versus Private)** – we live a dual existence – in a public world where everything is awful, and in a private world – the economic sphere – where everything is flourishing. People can move from the public to the private world, where people function well. As a defense mechanism, many Israelis are doing that.
 - d) **Lack of ability to govern** - Instability, dysfunction, duality - leads to lack of ability to govern – making decision-making and implementation of decisions all the more difficult (from budget, to traffic to environment, and definitely – resumption of a political peace process).
- There is a similarity between the crisis of leadership and governance in Israel and in Palestine (one highlighted by the entire world, the other glossed over). Questions of feasibility, capability – are common– even if the manifestations on each side are different.

2. Analysis of Israeli perceptions of change

Within this situation, Israel watched what happened in Gaza. While interpretations of why it happened vary, what's important to understand is why people think this is different, although there is confusion about the meaning. In descending order you hear 4 points emphasized:

1. What happened divides Gaza from West Bank geographically – “like before 67”
2. It also divides ideologically - between the religious and the nationalists (both in Gaza and West Bank)
3. This has strong regional implications – for Egypt and Jordan, possibly Syria and Lebanon because of the Hizbollah connection, also possibly Iran
4. (Almost not vocalized) – Expression of need for international intervention, accompanied by inability to translate this need into something concrete (example: in a conference in Brussels, Israelis were talking *more* about international presence, while the Europeans said, we're not sure we want to be in Rafah for presence and protection). This is a reverse from the past

From geographic, to ideological, to regional, to international, this series of issues raised in Israeli debate has one distinct bottom line – nobody knows what to do. The mood around this falls into two positions: either very dismissive of the problem: Oh, they are at it again, it's their problem, Palestinians are killing each other – and these tend to be optimists, who think: 'this is good for us'. Or the opposite mood – found only in some small circles of the left – and women here are indicative – “the worried group” –they can't understand what has happened, but they are instinctively worried and they acknowledge the parameters have changed.

3. Some assessment of possibilities of movement

- What this means in policy terms is a mishmash. For the government (or segments of it) this is a political lifeline. Olmert is all of a sudden smiling – he can talk about the Arab League initiative. As of 48 hours ago he talks about Syria. All of a sudden Abu Mazen is his best friend. There is a danger that Olmert will choke Abu Mazen with his embrace. Cynics say – if he's so great, why wasn't he great a year ago? No need to answer this, but to look ahead. It's unclear what behind this discourse of "let's move the political process forward" – political expediency? Tzipi Livni does not belong in this group at the moment, she has a different and more long-sighted approach.
- Much more popular approach purveyed by the security pundits – and is very popular: If in the past there was nobody to talk to, or nothing to talk to – now we have someone to talk to – but *that person cannot deliver* – resembles the claim "*they can't implement...even if we reach agreement*" – bottom line is – it's not possible. That kind of approach means you don't have to anything, absolving you of any obligation.
- Third group from the military establishment speaks of continuing to solidify the situation on the ground - completing the wall, expanding settlements (hoping nobody pays too much attention), carrying out what was in Sharon's mind all the time – a mini-Palestinian state – from the wall to the Jordan valley, not contiguous.
- There is a new group which is saying – wait a minute, what we have to do is reconsider our position vis-à-vis Hamas
- There is another group (mostly remnants of the peace camp) saying – you are still going to need to resolve via negotiations – maybe now is the time, because of the shock, there is opportunity

If you take these together, there is total confusion and no clear policy strategy. On the positive side, it gives more room to civil society. On the negotiations side, there is not much room to move.

4. Some options

- 1) **Containment option:** Gaza de-linked from West Bank, Palestine between the wall and the Jordan valley. This is not a colonialist project, but a very sophisticated form of de-colonialization. The majority will live with "let the Palestinians have their mini-state and make a mess of it, but we don't want anything to do with it. This is separation and containment, not overrule. It is control without the responsibility, but also with international legitimization.
 - 2) "**Let Egypt repossess Gaza and Jordan take responsibility for West Bank**". The Jordanian option revived and promoted by some ex-generals. Underlying this is lack of desire to keep control and finding a way to get rid of the problem.
 - 3) "**West Bank only**" option – Gaza is lost, so let's salvage West Bank, and let's negotiate a permanent settlement – but only in respect of the West Bank.
 - 4) **Syria option** (creating much discussion and disagreement in the peace camp). Many say permanent settlement negotiations with Syria is doable now, but not with Palestine. The more sophisticated version suggests doing Syria and Palestine both. IWC has to address this because this is the big push for serious diplomatic change. Another group says Palestine is the core of the problem, and we cannot continue bypassing it.
 - 5) We have to focus, as in the Arab League Initiative on the core issue of Israel and Palestine now and let the other things follow. This is the **comprehensive approach** that also needs strong international involvement or it won't happen. With other possibilities on the table, it is harder to get that approach discussed seriously and even over the past month it has lost strength.
- Nobody entertains the possibility of the status quo. Maybe one group talks of a long term truce with Hamas, which may be part of the containment policy. This is a crossroads. We should not totally change analysis, but it requires adjustments – there is real reason for us to be in worried school. Requires creativity. More time is spent combating ideas that are dangerous in undercutting any progress than moving forward in a positive way. No one-state solution is contained in any of the options being discussed except under the very worst conditions. This might be long-term thinking, but as an escape value of the frustrated left so we should caution against it. "Just and sustainable" involves some kind of 2-state solution.
 - Tzipi Livni represents the non-occupation option and advocates a 2-state, permanent solution. She disagrees about the 1967 borders, but she's probably a little further along than Barak was at Camp David.
 - On the division of public-private distinction, in 1982 – after Sabra and Shatila, 400,000 people demonstrated at the horror. After the 2006 Lebanon war, a failure on every score from the Israeli point of view, people were so angry they went on vacation. Instead of exercising their voices, they use the exit option. One of the first signs of state collapse is withdrawal of citizens' participation. Study African states and look what is going on in Israel today. How long can Israelis live without a solution?

They are reaching the end, but they cannot see the solution so they are running away, sending children abroad, getting double citizenship.

- Israeli society is in a serious state of crisis. There is no confidence in any state institutions, including the courts and educational institutions. It used to be just in politicians, but now it includes the military and justice as well. There is a turning inward. Civil society is what's left, where people are putting their energies, if at all, because they've nowhere else to go. But NGOs are also weak and fractured. Israeli society is not apathetic, rather fatalistic.
- Hamas will not go away, so possibly there will be an attempt at reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. We must battle the attitude of division between Gaza and the West Bank or it will be a major problem. Even on the left in the Knesset they feel the current situation provides an opportunity to deal with Abu Mazen only. Olmert is talking about peace to buy time, but is also using the Arab League Initiative to jump over everyone to gain legitimacy in the Arab world. We need to find a way to resume negotiations and the only way is via the Arab League Initiative.

Discussion:

- 70% of Palestinians think there is no chance of a Palestinian state in the next five years. 41% are for dissolving the Palestinian Authority. 89% of Israelis and 76% of Palestinians believe that armed struggle will continue. In the Palestinian context there are two options only: 2-states on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the shared capital, or a continuation of the conflict. Negotiations are therefore the only way. Delay has brought new realities on the ground and we need to re-address the issue of occupation. 70% of Palestinians still favor a negotiated settlement.
- This is a flourishing environment for Hamas – the occupation and the desperate situation of the Palestinians gives them a golden opportunity. Palestinians cannot wait for various scenarios to play out – if there is no solution there will be more violence. Palestinians cannot feel the impact of the role of Israeli NGOs - just monitoring and indicators. We are capable of solving our own internal issues, but we need space to do it.

International perspective:

- The level of ignorance and indifference to international affairs in the US is high. Only 15% of the population has a passport and only 50% of Congress. The public also gets very little information about the Middle East from the media. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee has a big lobby group in Washington and people are afraid to oppose it, especially around election time. This is part of why there is no accountability. Iraq and Afghanistan have taken over the agenda because the US has serving personnel there. Even here, the government is trying to block information, eg the blogs from soldiers, but it is having a hard time doing so. The challenge is how to get this issue onto the agenda in meaningful way. The primaries are coming up so we could think about that. Hillary Clinton is a lost cause, not helpful. Congress generally has lower ratings currently than President Bush so an approach to Pelosi might also not be worth much. There is general disgust, like in Israel, and a sense the government is dysfunctional.
- Bush is facing a terrible presidential legacy so maybe a focus on the Administration is best placed. This is also where Rice could come in. There is beginning in the US the cult of the personality of Tzipi Livni. It seems as if Rice and Livni might have something in mind. Rice is an insider – she has a connection to Bush, but not to the Haliburton gang. Rice is pretty clean as far as Bush is concerned in that she hasn't created problems for him and she has maintained a certain credibility. She might be able to bring him along if she wants to do something. We should target accountability as the issue. Rice and the Administration should be targets even more than Bush himself. She likes the IWC and she has met with and written to us.
- In Europe public opinion is more knowledgeable about and sensitive to what's happening in Middle East, but there's a huge feeling of impotence of the leadership, because they can't do anything without the US. All they can do is subsidize and issue press releases. The European Parliament has been much more active, had relations with the coalition unity government and had many more personal exchanges. We need to think about Blair and his role. We should also think about Norway and Switzerland and their wanting to play a role. Belgian political leaders have also come out and said they want to do something.
- The international community is not only the US or Europe, but other continents too. Of course they have the power, but as feminists and if we are seeking an international perspective we must also recognize others. We should not buy into partnership with one segment of the world, especially since that segment cause the problem.
- In the UN we see divisions equally at international level. There is general resentment against unilateral decision-making; the G77 is reclaiming power, but is also very fragmented. There is no implementation and public opinion is losing hope.

What is the IWC's Position and Role?

- On the Israeli side, the outlook of some is that while the government is unstable, there is energy in the public and that if these energies are collected together that will be a starting point to create impetus for a process. There is potential also to mobilize the power of women's leadership from the goodwill in Vienna between Hanan, Tzipi and Rice. On Syria, it doesn't have to be either/or – it's all connected. Long term Hudnah and speaking with moderate leaders of Hamas does seem a realistic possibility to some government members.
- From the perspective outside Palestine, not EU or US, but from a regional country – Turkey - we need to be aware of the general fatigue with the Palestine-Israel issue. In a university serving students aspiring to become future leaders, one sees clear change in attitudes compared to 5-10 years ago. Fatigue, but also something else. Turkey has strategic partnerships with Israel and its people and was very sympathetic to Palestinians and Palestine whatever the leadership. The Palestinian issue was seen as a freedom fight. Nowadays the situation has been normalized in people's minds. It only retains interest for political Islamists. The general perception is that the dimensions have changed – now the conflict has become religious. Secular groups want to keep their distance from Hamas and within women's groups the issue has acquired a different meaning and they are more hesitant to get involved.
- Want to go back to 2-state solution and our Charter. We need to be clear where we stand together. All of us are so desperate, see no light at tunnel, problems in our society – but if we surrender that we cannot have 2-state solution, it means that Israel that built walls has succeeded. We need to go to those who have the power – mainly Europe – and they need to take responsibility.
- We need to look not only at influencing political decision-makers but also bringing on broad constituencies. We also need to target civil society in the US. Failure of a peace process and the actions/inactions of the international community lead to Hamas.
- We have to go back to what we want. Of course we can't dismiss the power players, but we need to keep our focus. A 2-state solution is the only viable solution. The deeper we get in this deterioration, the less the chance of a 2-state solution. The alternative is not more options for one, secular state – rather an apartheid system. We need to bring with us the support of other players and the power of our own constituency – we can't afford to ignore that part of our work. We need to identify supportive global players who can influence the US and EU and activate that support into political power. We also need to emphasize the question of our relationship to power and the feminist approach.
- We speak about going to negotiations – what kind of negotiations are we talking about? Is it enough to open one street, give a bit of food – if negotiations don't lead to political solutions people will not accept any more humanitarian assistance. We need to push for a comprehensive solution. Coming out of Gaza is embarrassing, when all the others are left locked in behind. We have to talk about the occupation of the source. What is going at the borders, about the collective punishment following a democratic decision. Now is it the international community that is doing what the Israelis did before. It is a disastrous situation now - 60,000 students completed their studies and are stuck in Gaza, with no chance of finishing their degrees. Families are divided between the West Bank and Gaza with no contact. There is a problem for those people who are sick. We think the situation is bad, but the explosion hasn't happened yet and when it comes it will also come to Israel and the West Bank. There are 6,000 people waiting at the Rafah crossing today trying to get into Gaza and 30 people have died already.
- A few days after the crisis in Gaza, the economic review in Israel declared "Gaza is on the verge of starvation. The stock market is flourishing" On the Israeli side big money has no incentive to solve the problem. What will bring the Israeli government to the negotiations table?
- How is the IWC different from other groups, the peace industry? Our important achievement is to bring the IWC to women leaders in the world, and to enlist them as supporters. We now need to use them. What was powerful in Vienna was the women power and bringing messages directly to women leaders. We haven't used our network effectively. We need to start publicizing all our analysis and distribute it widely.
- We cannot ignore Hamas. We should not divide Palestine into 2 states and start addressing Gaza and the West Bank differently. We must work to change public opinion about dealing with Hamas.
- How do we see our role in conflict resolution? We have the Charter, 1325, human rights, international law, gender/equal rights. We need to address asymmetry. We didn't build our relationship with Moratinos, Papandreu etc, but instead rushed off to influence other people. We need to focus, to network with those concerned so they can lobby within their own countries. We need to discuss, agree and publicize our approach on the 5 final status issues and how to use our friends to promote this.
- What is going on in Nablus and the north is part of a unilateralist plan, separating the West Bank, daily life – complete siege. Israel is imposing conditions on the ground. How to work in such a political environment? The Charter is the basis of our joint principles, but we need to look at specific issues. Are

we really talking in one voice? If we want to have an impact, we need to organize ourselves first. We need a joint, concrete vision.

- We have our analysis of the situation and from there we must build to a mutual position. We need to make specific proposals about mechanisms for moving forward. We also need to show why our voice is different.
- We need to go back to examine why women power failed in history (WILPF)
- IWC can say “we told you so” about what happened in Gaza. We said sanctions would be the best gift to Hamas and Israel. We told Rice this. They are now supporting Abu Mazen by killing him. Israel is only gradually releasing the Palestinian tax money and the 250 prisoners it is releasing were due out soon in any case. When there is internal fighting in Gaza, support ebbs from Hamas, but when Israel supports Abu Mazen or attacks Palestinians, support for Hamas grows. We are united against the occupation. Israel is the one who supported giving them weapons, they know what we do in our bedrooms, they have pictures of each one of us, and now they are supporters – want 4 entities in West Bank and Gaza, now and then, give us a bit of electricity, flour – it’s a racist, apartheid society, you will have all Palestinians becoming suicide bombers. Kassam bombers are now about 25 years old, but they started to be formed when they were 13 years old when their fathers lost their jobs in Israel and they went hungry. They rebelled in the only way they could. Then the PA was told to clamp down on “terrorists” so these rebels went underground and what they knew was that they were hunted by Israel and by Palestinians and that they were hungry. The international community forced Palestine to have elections when we didn’t want them. It knew Hamas would win. Israel and the international community created Hamas. For the first time Palestinian is fighting Palestinian – this has never happened before. It’s good that it’s only this point, but we know we cannot say this is the worst, because the worst may yet happen. Our poverty is not your poverty. We will deal with internal issues, but this is caused because of the occupation. Algerians stopped extremists by force. Hamas is ready to negotiate – prisoners’ document, declaration, agreements. Before, Palestinians in the same family had all factions, we fought, but at the end of night we sat together. Now it’s different, it’s extremism, but planted by the occupation. What’s to be done – we have to go back to the resumption of negotiations, an international conference. The EU has to take part - this is how we can implement 1325.

Three phases in the next year:

1st Phase: Buildup (next 3 months):

Fine tune IWC call for action and make sure it reaches everybody: Letters to UN Security Council, Blair, the 10 European Ministers, the IWC Co-Chairs, including approach by Noeleen to the Swiss government. Israeli, Palestinian and international members should continue to develop and implement their own work plans, including public activities, media, work with the grassroots, internet and maybe joint activities on the ground. Maybe that would include also planning of the international conference. .

As part of the first phase, the IWC should implement what is already in its work plan – to discuss the different interpretations of our five final issues. This will also support the preparation for the conference, where the IWC can enter on more solid ground. A series of discussion should focus on the common positions regarding the final status issues (the wall, freedom of movement for people and goods, incursions, settlements, confiscation of land, closure of Gaza, refugees).

2nd Phase: (six-eight months)

International conference

3rd Phase: (follow up implementation)

The international conference should not be a peak but a big first push (first shot) among a series of activities on the ground that begin to implement actions the IWC has demanded, in which the IWC becomes one of the players/actors. As the IWC, our aim is to first build pressure, then convene, and through our advocacy action, become an actor in advancing the IWC agenda for sustainable peace.

Letter to the members of the Quartet

29 May 2007

Dear [Secretary-General, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Dr Javier Solana, Dr Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Minister Lavrov, Secretary Rice]

On behalf of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace (IWC), we have pleasure in attaching our recent call for inclusive negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As you meet tomorrow in Berlin to discuss how to de-escalate the conflict between Israel and Palestine, we women leaders of the IWC ask you take to heart that the only way to achieve human security and the right to life with dignity is to end the occupation through a negotiated agreement on all outstanding permanent settlement issues.

Please accept the expression of our highest consideration.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Chazan	Maha Abu-Dayyeh	Shamas	Noeleen Heyzer
Galia Golan	Samia Bamieh		Luisa Morgantini
Anat Saragusti	Lama Hourani		Jessica Neuwirth
Aida Touma-Sliman	Zahira Kamal		Simone Susskind
Israeli Steering Cttee	Palestinian Steering Cttee		International Steering Committee

On behalf of the International Women's Commission

IWC CALL FOR INCLUSIVE NEGOTIATIONS

13 May 2007

The International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC) recognizes that there may be a unique opportunity today to end the occupation and to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is concerned, however, that the present flurry of diplomatic activity has created a great deal of motion without any concrete movement towards this goal.

The IWC calls on the leaders of Israel, Palestine and the international community, in accord with UNSC Resolution 1325, to incorporate women into negotiations and to take into account our perspective in order to ensure the achievement of a substantive, comprehensive, and lasting peace. The adoption of a new, embracing, consultative approach, replacing the failed one led by men alone, is imperative at this critical juncture to achieve our common vision of a dignified existence free of fear and want.

In the absence of substantive and viable political negotiations, the exclusive emphasis on improving conditions on the ground without taking concrete action on lifting the economic siege, facilitating the movement of people and goods, and normalizing relations with the National Unity Government, perpetuates the occupation, generates a massive humanitarian crisis, and undermines the prospects for the implementation of a two-state solution. It also diverts attention from the political questions at the core of the conflict. The lack of realization of the fundamental right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in an independent state alongside Israel continues to fuel the conflict.

The only way to achieve human security and the right to life with dignity is to end the occupation through a negotiated agreement on all outstanding permanent settlement issues.

The international community, along with the majority of the publics in Israel and Palestine, recognizes the need to move urgently, directly, and firmly to final status negotiations now. Civil society in both communities continues to play an important role in promoting this objective.

The Arab League Initiative provides the essential framework for freedom for Palestine, legitimacy for Israel, normalization of relations in the region, and human security for all.

The IWC appeals to the international community and to Israeli and Palestinian authorities, as well as to civil society in both communities, to join together in an inclusive and transparent effort to extricate us from the shackles of the past and help us create a just and peaceful future based on the principles of justice, equality, tolerance and mutual respect.

The International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Peace between Israel and Palestine (IWC) is a body of Palestinian, Israeli, and international women established in 2005 under the auspices of UNIFEM in implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

International Women's Commission For a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace

Membership in the International Women's Commission for an Israeli-Palestinian peace is on an individual and voluntary basis. Commission members do not represent other organizations they are affiliated with.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMISSION

***International Women's Commission
for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace***

**CALL TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS
WITH THE NEW PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT**

22 March 2007

The IWC regards the formation of a unity Palestinian government as an important positive step forward. This government, a broad-based coalition composed of the different parliamentary groups in the Palestinian Legislative Council, gives voice to the range of opinions in Palestinian society. It provides in its program the elements necessary for the resumption of final status negotiations to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The political platform of the unity government states clearly that the government honors international law and all existing agreements signed by the PLO. It acknowledges that negotiations are the mandate of the PLO and it entrusts President Abbas to conduct negotiations as the legitimate Palestinian negotiator for peace.

The unity government has defined its goal as achieving a solution based on two states through the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders and the consolidation of a strong foundation for peace, security and prosperity for present and future generations in the entire region. It has reaffirmed that, as the international community has acknowledged, ending the occupation is an essential requirement for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has expressed its commitment to work with the international community to achieve these objectives.

The new Palestinian government has also made a firm commitment to a comprehensive reciprocal ceasefire. It has indicated that it will work with all concerned partners for the release of Gilad Shalit on the basis of an exchange of prisoners.

The IWC calls on the international community to normalize relations with the new unity government immediately and to promote the resumption of final status negotiations to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. The boycott of the previous Palestinian government has damaged public institutions and undermined the capacity of the authorities to deliver the most basic services to Palestinian society. The sanctions on the Palestinian people have created high levels of unemployment and poverty. Civilians, and particularly women and children, are paying the price. Concrete improvements must be felt on the ground to show that meaningful steps in the right direction yield a tangible dividend.

The international community has a critical role to play in building greater trust and holding all parties accountable to their declared commitment to resume negotiations in good faith.

A just and sustainable peace is the only way to ensure security for both peoples and for the region. A clear majority of both the Israeli and Palestinian populations also supports a negotiated two-state solution. Movement towards final status negotiations must start immediately and all genuine voices for peace must be empowered and amplified, including strong representation of women. The IWC stresses that any viable peace depends on the firm commitment of all parties to promote and protect women's rights and gender justice.

Now is the time for courageous leaders to transcend fears and get down to work towards resolving all the most difficult issues. Women of the IWC are showing the way and can be counted on to actively support the political negotiation process.

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