



Notes from the Shalom-Salam Seminar held in Jerusalem on May 6. 1997

Over the last few years a group of Norwegian Rotary Clubs has each year provided scholarships for a dozen students, Israeli and Palestinian in equal numbers to attend a six week program at the International Summer School of the University of Oslo in Norway. The program centers on academic achievement and international goodwill.

In order to ensure that the students keep in touch after leaving Norway, a one day seminar was set up in Jerusalem on May 6th for this purpose and with the objective of creating an alumni association as a vehicle for future co-operation.

The seminar was attended by 27 students, including 12 students, recently selected for this years program from various Israeli and Palestinian universities (see attachment 1).

In addition to the students the following were present at the seminar:

Petter Rasch, President of Skoeyen Rotary Club, responsible for the practical organization of the seminar and leading the Seminar,

Dr. Edy Kaufman, Professor and Executive Director of the Truman Institute at Hebrew University,

Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi, Director of the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem,

Arne Olav Brundtland, (also a member of Skoeyen Rotary Club in Oslo), Professor at the International Summer School at University of Oslo,

Markus Storm-Jensen, Past Rotary District Governor and member of Roea Rotary Club in Oslo,

Einar Vannebo, Director of the International Summerschool (who selected the students for this year's Summerschool program),

Mimi Vilunski from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Israel (partly present),

Lena Endresen, coordinator of the Israeli-Palestinian "People To People" program of FAFO (Institute for Applied Social Science) as part of the "Oslo channel" (partly present), and

Cecilie Ihlebæk, member of Victoria Rotaract Club of Oslo, Norway (reporter).

Highlights of Dr. Edy Kaufman's message

Dr. Kaufman presented a historical perspective of the Middle East Conflict, and mentioned the five wars that emerged after the state of Israel was founded i.e. in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982.

Dr. Kaufman asked the question - how is it that these wars are occurring? In his opinion the Middle East Conflict is not very different from other conflicts. It is a conflict of identities, - a conflict people to people. The conflict represents a human right problem - not so much a question of borders. This problem is difficult to resolve, because of the tendency of the two people to stress their differences rather than their similarities.

Dr. Kaufman further stated that peacemaking by leaders needs to be accompanied by peacemaking by the people. He stressed that this requires active interaction and doing things together - not only exchanging news for instance. In this relation, he talked about the so called "people to people projects" in academic settings, that for several years have tried to build bridges. However, academic interaction slowed down, because the Israeli Government and PLO denied to cooperate. The Oslo-agreement played an extremely important role in this respect. With the Oslo Channel the academics became more motivated, and Palestinian and Israeli groups started to work together. Dr. Kaufman and Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi are soon to work together on the issue on fear and terrorism. This project is one of some 20 israelo-palestinian co-operation projects resulting from the Oslo II agreement.

Dr. Kaufman also talked about the potentiality in academic circles to influence the government, but it is just as important to communicate effectively with the grassroot. To accomplish this he recommended that the academics should invest more time on the street. He stated; "It is the activists, not the academics that represents the power of change".

Highlights of Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi's message.

Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi presented a Palestinian point of view on the peace process, and mentioned the development of the Palestinian Society that strives towards the ideologies of antifacism and against antisemitism. He further referred to some intellectuals with refreshing points either for or against the peace process. Among them, the famous author Edward Said, who for long has opposed the peace process, and has blamed Arafat for having capitulated. Said thinks that PLO has made themselves inferior to the Israelis, and has tapped the meaning of the "the Liberation of Palestine"- programme. However Said now acknowledges, and talks about, the suffering of the Israelis.

According to Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi there is only one option to the Middle East Conflict, that is to live together - there is no other option. The real challenge today is that many academics are passive and quiet and do not want to be involved in the peace process. His message to the students was that in order to strive for their rights and selfdetermination, it is important to speak up, and that it is time for the Palestinians to wake up, and recognize the needs of both sides.

As important factors for future peacebuilding talks, he stressed the need for neutral

meeting facilities, a third party mediator and a need for objective point of views. He further stressed the importance of shaping a new belief system, and minimize the stereotypes that exists on both sides.

Both emphasized the importance of academics being active - do things together in order to achieve peace (be peace activists together !). They both mentioned that a good model would be to learn from each other, as well as learn how to share the resources like land and water. Other important elements in the effort to work for peace emphasized by the two speakers were face to face interaction and changing the quality of relationships, acknowledgement of human rights and focus on the issue of social justice.

Both of them pointed to South Africa and the Apartheid system as an example of experience from which something could be learned, especially with regard to the process of reconciliation. It took courage to say sorry for the suffering of the Apartheid system. Transferred to the Middle East Conflict both parts must acknowledge that much suffering has been inflicted to both peoples, and that they have to apologize to each other.

Highlights of Mr. Arne Olav Brundtland's message.

"Normal Academic Interaction in a Conflictful World" was the title of Brundtlands presentation. He started by appealing to the new students in the Shalom Salam project, that they should not bring with them the Middle East Conflict to Oslo this Summer.

Brundtland raised the following rhetoric questions:

What is the nature of the relations of the post-cold war?

What is the purpose of a state?

What is the individual need that drive politics?

What is the nature of the challenge of security?

Brundtland emphasized two important factors with regard to what people can expect from the government: physical security and prosperity. According to Brundtland the termination of the cold war opened up for regional cooperations, and sited The Barrents Region, the Baltic Region and the Black Sea Region. One of the students commented that such regional co-operations may serve to pull down the significance of state borders to enhance communication, and may serve as a model for the Middle East Conflict especially now that the cold war is over.

Forming the alumni association

The second part of the seminar was devoted to the students own activity in forming an alumni association. The participants were divided into four groups of six students (both Palestinian and Israeli students).

The group tasks were:

- 1) To come up with suggestions for the desired purposes / objectives of the association, in other words what the students want to achieve in forming the association.
- 2) Suggest some concrete ideas for practical and action-oriented tasks or projects that the association could work with.

Each group presented their suggestions on a flipover board for the whole seminar (se attachment 2).

Subsequently, the participants selected six students to form an interim management committee (equal number of Palestinians and Israelis). Orit Bashkin from the Tel Aviv University was chosen as Interim President of the association and given the task to prepare the ground of the association on the basis of suggestions presented by the four groups of students referred to above.

The other members of the Interim Management Committee (in alphabetical order) are:

Bayan A. Abed
Dalia Abu-Gazaleh
Reham Al Wahaidy
Tally Gur and
Liat Vranesi.

The committee was then given a check of US \$ 1500 from Rotary as a starting capital in order to cover communication expenses and various activities. The interim management committee decided to convene in Jerusalem at Dalia Abu Gazaleh's place on June 6th.

The seminar ended after diner in a friendly atmosphere and all parties sensed the need to stay in touch for further bridge building talks.

List of participating students (by ISS year):

Name	Telephone & fax #	ISS-year	University
Ofer Castro Cassif	(44) 181 53 19 149	94/95	
Dalia Abu-Gazaleh	02 672 42 54	95	Bethlehem
Rula Shahwan	02 998 62 06	95	Birzeit
Orit Bashkin	09 955 28 71	95	Tel Aviv
Yaron Parasol	03 524 86 50	95	Hebrew
Kifah Ewaiwi	02 992 04 11	95	Hebron
Ra'anani Kahani	02 586 04 63	95	Hebrew
Gabriela Fishman	03 559 25 15	96	Tel Aviv
Reham Al Wahaidy	07 82 55 64	96	Al Azahr
Eldad Davidov		96	Tel Aviv
Ari Aisen	02 583 16 31	96	Hebrew
Kobi Peled	02 676 02 27	96	Hebrew
Liat Vraneski	03 731 24 61	96	Tel Aviv
Oren Marom	03 933 04 20	96	Tel Aviv
Daniel Shabtay	03 629 54 24	97	Tel Aviv
Ma'en A. Melhem	02 992 65 29	97	Hebron
Rola K. Sabri	09 37 90 42	97	Nablus
Ravit Hanavel	03 501 36 39	97	Tel Aviv
Ateah Awwael	05 091 39 93	97	Hebron
Yanir Peleg	09 952 13 45	97	Tel Aviv
Wisam M. Notal	07 86 70 87	97	AL Azahr
Rachel Mordhavich	04 837 21 36	97	Haifa
Bayan A. Abed	07 82 18 39	97	Al Azahr
Artur Zimerman	02 583 16 31	97	Hebrew
Tally Gur	02 500 01 56	97	Hebrew
Wafa Yasin	09 94 03 21	97	An -Najah

Objectives, tasks and activities proposed by the group of students:

Group 1:

- Objectives**
- Keep a dialogue between the students, keep the contact alive, maintain personal relationships.
 - Helping future groups in Oslo
 - Keeping contact

- Tasks**
- Formal meetings in order to take part in choosing future projects participants.
 - Forming a committee:
 - a) Keeping connection between members of the association.
 - b) Organizing 4 meetings a year
 - c) Choosing an agenda for meetings (lectures etc.)
 - d) Organizing trips, parties in formal meetings
 - e) Organizing projects such as for instance planting trees.
 - Fix dates/days for future meetings
 - Deciding on a committees structure (one person from each university, equal number of Palestinians and Israelis, functional structure)
 - Publishing a periodical open to all group members - edited by a chosen editor/committee.
 - Decide fixed deadlines for sending letters with suggestions for future meetings.

Group 2:

- Objectives**
- Mutual respect
 - Tolerance
 - Getting to know each other
 - Understand culture, religion and beliefs
 - Hope to live peacefully
 - Building trust and confidence
 - Understanding misunderstandings
 - To know each other socially

- Tasks**
- Meetings every 2 or 3 months
 - Find meeting places
 - Bring new members
 - Seek help from the Norwegian Embassy
 - Name/logo
 - Next meeting June 20?
 - Subjects of every meeting
 - Choose president or director and finance manager

Attachment 2 (continued)

Activities:

- Publishing in newspapers, stickers and writings
- Singing, dancing and poetry
- Ethnic foods
- Sightseeing
- Conversations/lecture

Group 3:

- Objectives**
- Continuity of relationships
 - Advices to new participants
 - Cooperations with political parties and non-governmental organizations
 - Establishing contacts with the media
 - Establishing a centre for our activities

- Tasks**
- Statement of purpose
 - Create a database of all participants (Addresses, E-mail)
 - Establishing a framework of communications
 - List of friends of the alumni association of the Shalom-Salam project

Group 4:

- Objectives**
- Human rights
 - Civil human rights
 - Peace-justice, equal opportunities
 - Cultural activities

- Tasks**
- Permits
 - Establishing E-mail connections
 - Offset pressures