

Women, Religion, and Social Change II

PANEL: DIALOGUE IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

SPERRY ROOM

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2003

2:00 - 3:45 PM

DIANA L. ECK: Dear friends, I think we will go ahead and begin our afternoon session, it being a couple of minutes after 2:00. For those of you who are joining us, and I see there are some new faces in the crowd this afternoon, let me just say that this conference over these several days is really the coming together of two groups of women, each of whom have met each other before. One is a group that joined in a conference here at Harvard Divinity School 20 years ago now on Women, Religion and Social Change. It was a week-long conference, and as a result we got to know each other really quite well. And that set of connections has been renewed over the last couple of days and we're still in mid-stream. The other is a group of women the Pluralism Project has been in touch with in a series of gatherings, workshops, conferences of women's religious networks in the United States, mainly Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women organized in groups like Church Women United and Women of Reform Judaism and the Muslim Women's League, all of which have their own sets of connections. And, yet, we're not very much in touch with each other in knowledge of one another's common agenda. So, we have met three times, beginning two years ago just now, continuing with a meeting in New York City after September 11 and again just a year ago this April.

So, that's who is here, and we have a very interesting panel this afternoon that will be chaired by Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah of the Institute for Conflict Analysis. And I'm going to simply introduce Alma to introduce herself and then our panelists. Thank you very much.

ALMA ABDUL-HADI JADALLAH: Hello, everyone. How are you doing? Well, I'm definitely sure that you will be engaged in this panel, so I'm not worried about the heat nor that you have overeaten. First of all, I know, given the great hospitality, I took permission from Diana, even though we thanked them enough, but I want to thank Grove, Beverly, Nan, Claire, Ellie, Kathryn, Alan, and Jack and Brianne just for their great hospitality, of course, including Diana. So, why not a round of applause. Thank you.

Again, my name is Alma. I am here with a big challenge, and I say challenge because I love this topic and I'd rather be talking about it too, but I know it's in very good hands with three very prominent individuals and women who have a lot of experience in that topic. I also would like to say that the way it's framed in the program, "Dialogue in the Midst of Conflict" is an interesting title for us to think about. Because I think, I'm Palestinian by origin, that the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israel-Palestine question has been with us for many, many years, some of us on a very personal level, some of us on a local level, national, international. And I think that something to think about, where you stand and how you've thought about the conflict, what you will learn today. And I'm also thinking that the spirit of

this room, there are a lot of you who are true practitioners in dialogue, and, so, I will be very much looking forward to your questions to the panelists and how we actually have modeled the best of dialogue for the past couple of days and in past years when we've come together. So, I think there is a spirit of dialogue already in the room that we should keep in mind.

I am in the field of conflict resolution, and often dialogue is looked at as an easy part and a difficult part to it. Not to use academic language, just easy and difficult. Easy because it requires people to listen and to speak to one another, two skills that have been almost given to us as a gift as human beings. And then difficult because once we engage on that level, we have to really think about who we are and what we think of the other party that we're engaging with in the dialogue. Also, another dimension is that sometimes there is a third party or a third element in the room who is someone very good-willed and would like to facilitate that opportunity. And, so, I hope in future discussions we can always have a discussion around that.

I thought I would share with you something very quickly. For those of you who know, please comment if there is anything else to be said. It comes from two Greek words, dia, meaning through or with each other, and logos means word. And often dialogues are designed to engage our inquiry. Not to seek the right answer, we are often told, but rather to consider other points of view, to find common ground, if there is any to be found, to discover common values, and I think that's not a very easy task, but we can find them, definitely, if we seek to do that. And to understand how others make meaning of what is happening. And to seek mutual understanding and, of course, naturally, in the spirit of the Pluralism Project, to generate collective action. But many claim that what is needed in a dialogue is often collaboration from the participants, trust, a desire for understanding, and a place to voice perspective. And I'm hoping that today is one of those safe places where we can voice our perspectives with respect to one another and what we have to say.

Again, we have three prominent panelists. I've had the pleasure on a personal level to get to know them. Blu I met two years ago, and I have engaged with her on a personal level of discussion, but also I have a lot of admiration, given what she has done. Laila and Jean Zaru are also Palestinian women, so there is a certain linkage to my heritage and I also got to meet them in the United States, which I think symbolically convenes many of us on many different levels.

We decided as a team here with you today to follow the program so you can identify the names with the speakers. We did not want to juggle this, based on some recommendations from our panelists. So, I'm going to start with Laila Al-Marayati. As Mary Hunt shared with you this morning, the biographical sketches, there is a link on the Web that you can explore in more detail. But for those of you who are here, I will share with you some highlights. But they're very accomplished guests, so I would still encourage you to go back and read what they have accomplished.

Dr. Laila Al-Marayati is the spokesperson and past president of the Muslim Women's League, a Los Angeles-based organization dedicated to disseminating accurate information

about Islam and women and to strengthening the role of Muslim women in society. Dr. Al-Marayati has written articles and participated in numerous conferences addressing issues of concern to Muslim women. Topics include basic women's rights in Islam, reproductive health and sexuality, stereotyping, violence against women. Dr. Al-Marayati spearheaded the Muslim Women's League's efforts on behalf of rape survivors from the war in Bosnia in 1993. And she was a member of the official U.S. Delegation to the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As an American of Palestinian descent, Dr. Al-Marayati frequently speaks about the rights of Palestinians. She is a member of the Board of Directors of KinderUSA, a newly-formed charity whose primary focus at this time is on addressing the health and educational needs of Palestinian children living in the West Bank and Gaza. Welcome, Laila.

Blu Greenberg, author and lecturer, is President of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance and chaired the First and Second International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy in 1997 and 1998. Blu has served on the boards of many organizations, including EDAH, the Covenant Foundation, Project Keshet, U.S. Israel Women to Women, the National Jewish Family Center, and the Jewish Book Council. She was founding chair of the Federation Task Force on Jewish Women. She has participated in many interfaith and interethnic enterprises and was co-founder of the Dialogue Group of Jewish and Palestinian Women. Blu Greenberg is the author of several books, and Diana kindly shared with us some of them. But just for those of you who have just joined us the titles are *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* and *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*. She is married to Rabbi Irving Greenberg. They have five children and 14 grandchildren. Welcome, Blu.

Jean Zaru has traveled across the Atlantic to be with us today. Jean is the presiding clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting in Palestine. As a Palestinian woman living under Israeli military rule at the same time finds herself in a traditional culture. Her life has been devoted to the struggle for liberation, liberation for Palestinians, for women, and for all people. She has done this through her work in her own community and internationally. For many years, Jean taught religion and ethics at the Friends School in Ramallah. She served as President of the YMCA of Jerusalem, culminating that career with the YMCA in 1991 as Vice President of the World YMCA. Jean served as a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches from 1975 to 1983, and from 1981 to 1991 she was a member of the Working Group on Interfaith Dialogue of the World Council of Churches. Jean is one of the founding members of Sabeel, an Ecumenical Palestinian Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. She has been the keynote speaker at numerous conferences around the world and her papers have been published in many books. She continues to struggle for human rights and women's rights and continues her work in interfaith dialogue with other persons of faith.

Please let us welcome our panelists. And we start with Laila. And I have negotiated more than 10 minutes, if that's okay.

LAILA AL-MARAYATI: Thank you, Alma. Thank you all very much for coming today and to the organizers of this conference. I think we're embarking on discussion of a very difficult

subject. Any my purpose in this panel, as I see it, is to talk about the problems of discourse in the United States on this issue between different groups. Alma told you about my background, and I think sometimes when we're discussing these things, it's important to understand what our expectations are of each other. Because that is sometimes what becomes a problem when things don't turn out the way we expect, when people don't say what we want them to say, what we don't want them to. But I think this is important to me. I think the other guests will talk more about the core issues of the conflict in the Middle East. But over the past several years, I have been more involved in issues related to dialogue or lack thereof in this country, and I think it's extremely relevant because of the role the United States plays in the conflict.

As many of you know, over the past two and a half years the situation in Israel and Palestine has deteriorated to such an extent in flaming passions on both sides that civil discourse about this conflict has become, without any exaggeration, in my opinion, impossible. In the past year, I have been on panels where they couldn't have the pro-Israel and pro-Palestine position in the same room at the same time. They were on different days, in fact. When you listen to different discussions on the radio or debates, sometimes the speakers refuse to appear on the same podium, as it were, with another person. And, so, again, either they're not participating at all or they participate at separate times. When people do speak, like in public places such as this, you see heckling, yelling, screaming, disruption, name-calling, and sometimes the antagonism is so fierce that it spills outside of the lecture hall into actual physical fights. And, so, any attempt at having discourse is not possible in a civilized, respectful way at this time.

You also see a sense of the intensity of the emotion around this issue if you just open any op-ed column in the newspaper, either looking at the op-eds themselves or looking at the letters to the editor. And now they're publishing letters about letters to the editor. They used to not do that. But because people want to be sure to correct what they feel is such an erroneous position, they consistently insist on having their point of view. And as much talking as there is, there is really no listening going on, in my opinion.

In Los Angeles, which is where I'm from, we used to have what was called the Muslim-Jewish Dialogue that over the past couple of years has completely disintegrated. And that's because of the inability to discuss the conflict in the Middle East and even to admit that that issue needs to be discussed at all. On a larger level, when you look across the country and you look at interfaith dialogue after 9/11 and the importance of groups coming together and understanding one another, things usually move along just fine as long as no one really mentions the 800-pound gorilla that's sitting in the room. But it can't be ignored, because not only of how serious it is, but about how much people so deeply care about the issue. In Los Angeles, just to give you a little bit of background as to why that completely disintegrated, there were two major issues, I would say, in terms of the expectations of either side. And I'm speaking to you from the point of view of the Muslim side. And I would never presume to speak on behalf of the Jews in that dialogue, but I'll talk to you about how my perception was of the dynamics in that situation.

Since 9/11, Muslims have been called upon to denounce terrorism in all its forms. And from that time, most of the mainstream Muslim organizations have done so, including condemning any and all acts of suicide bombings that have occurred in the West Bank, Gaza, and in Israel itself. And this is something we're used to. And sometimes people haven't heard that our groups have come out and condemned these things. They don't go and look at our Web site. Nobody publishes the press releases. And, so, there's a perception in the general community, 'Why haven't you condemned?' Well, we have, but nobody's there to hear it when we actually say it. At any rate, that's on the record. It's been reiterated. But at the same time, it's a rejection of those acts full stop.

But there's a desire to try to understand what that's emanating from, what the despair is that leads somebody to do such an incredibly self-destructive act. Yet, as soon as you start having that conversation, it makes it sound as if you're apologizing for the behavior in itself, and, so, there's no ability to discuss that. In the meantime, other voices come out to explain why these behaviors occur. So, for example, Science Magazine about a month or two ago had a full article that basically attributed suicide bombings wherever they occur as fundamentally based in religious fanaticism of Muslims and Islam. So, while that's allowed to be discussed in a scientific journal, when we try to talk about where the actual origins of those things are, it's not something that's been allowed. No addressing of social injustice and so forth. It's really just attributed to fanaticism.

At the same time, there's no expectation on the other side to condemn what our community would consider violent acts, whether you call it terror or not, doesn't really matter, against the civilian population of Palestinians. So, killing of innocent civilians, for example, or house demolitions. And what happens in those conversations is, 'Well, nobody intentionally kills the civilians, and the demolitions are part of having to deal with this problem of whether it's smuggling arms or, at the larger picture, blaming the Palestinians themselves. If you can't police yourselves well enough, then this is what's going to happen.' And, so, there's always a qualifier. Instead of, again, a full stop saying, you know, children should never be killed, they would add the adjective, well, they should never intentionally be killed.

And this is a problem, again, of language and discussion when they talk about, for example, in the Gaza Strip militants hiding among civilians. Well, I don't know if any of you have ever been to the Gaza Strip, but it's the most densely populated place in the world, one and a half million people, and the dimensions are 25 miles by eight miles. And those one and a half million people now live on 50% of that land. Between the settlements and what the Israeli Army has now occupied and considered security buffer zones, there is no place to move. It's the most incredible thing you can imagine. So, it's kind of disingenuous to say they're hiding. There is no place else to be in that environment, although I think it's important to realize that when violence is used in any location there, innocent people will be killed and, so, it becomes indiscriminate. At any rate, it should be condemned.

I think that sometimes when there is that sort of qualifying attempt at this behavior, sometimes it's good to stand back and see what exists in other places. And I keep being reminded of what's going on in this country, especially in Los Angeles, with gang violence that has taken a lot of innocent life and is a severe problem. And perhaps the police know

who the major gang members are, they don't carry out extrajudicial killings, they don't destroy the homes of the mothers of the gang members. There is a line that's drawn. So, there is criminal activity and it must be addressed, but there are also certain ways of addressing it that are within international law as well as the law of the land.

There is also the notion of expectation of recognition of Israel's right to exist without a parallel expectation of acknowledging Palestine's right to exist. So, these are some of the fundamental issues that could not be overcome and that caused the whole dialogue and discussion to break down.

So, as a pragmatist and a realist, I have to ask this question. Considering how difficult it is to broach the subject and engage in civil, respectful discourse between two groups who are advocates for a certain cause here, why should we bother at all? Considering not only that it's very difficult to come together on the issues, it makes people physically ill when they're finished having these conversations. I mean it's something that is true, that creates anxiety and depression and maybe fear, depending on the environment they're talking in.

And while I recognize that there are other purposes of dialogue that are important that I will talk about, really, the question following my first question really determines whether dialogue is worth happening at all. And that is, will a dialogue between these groups, with recognition of the basic issues that matter so much to each participant, do anything constructive vis-à-vis resolving the conflict in the Middle East leading to peace and justice? In other words, I could sit and argue with somebody until I'm blue in the face, and at the end of the day, have I made life better for anybody living in Israel or Palestine? Probably not. And for me, that would actually determine whether I would decide it's worthwhile participating in a dialogue that's such a major issue. And the only way I could see it being constructive is if groups could come together on common ground and have a common perspective and they could take that to people of influence, whether in media or politics, to say here's an alternative way of looking at the situation. But we're a long way off from that, but that's where I could see it actually having a benefit as opposed to simply talking to each other and becoming frustrated and hurt.

Some of the limitations, I think one of the major ones is we never know who should be talking to whom. If you hear people talk about it, we say Arab-Israeli conflict. We say Arab-Jewish dialogue. We say Muslim-Jewish dialogue. And each of those words has a different meaning. So, there should always be Muslim-Jewish dialogue. Muslims and Jews have many things as Americans to be talking about, and we should continue that. It's not only about the issue of the situation in the Middle East. Who should be speaking about the situation in the Middle East? Should it mostly only be Palestinians? Or people who support the Palestinian view whether they are Muslim or Christian? And when you say Jewish, are you talking about Zionists? Or what about Jews who aren't Zionists? And what is the proper labeling? And I think that's important, because I think the labels we use sometimes create different expectations that we can't fulfill because the right people aren't talking to each other in the first place.

I think the state we're in right now is that there really is no dialogue between groups. And really what has happened is the whole situation has degenerated to a battlefield in the court of public opinion to seize and retain the moral high ground. And that's what people are fighting for today. Not really to create understanding and mutual recognition, it's to occupy the moral high ground on this subject. And, so, I look, trying to think outside of the box, at how we can expand the scope to other groups and to the larger community. And even looking to other groups to have dialogue among themselves within the Jewish community itself, within the Christian community, within the Arab and Muslim community. But if we're not at a point where we can speak to each other in our separate faith groups, we should at least be discussing these issues from within, because even then, there's not much opportunity for dissent in any group.

The other group that I would look at that must be added to this discussion is a third participant that has been ignored and possibly intentionally excluded, and that's the American public. There is a tendency to view this situation as an age-old conflict far, far away, it's intractable, between two groups that are culturally different from the mainstream of this country. And we really just sort of throw our hands up and say it's too bad. The problem is that Americans need to participate in this, because we are participating in it already, whether it's through tax dollars, whether it's through military activity, or whether it's through the military-industrial complex and people working for businesses that do business in the Middle East, with Israel and the Arab neighbors and so forth. I mean people are connected much more than they think they are, and they really have a right to be participating.

Some of the possible issues that could be discussed, particularly from the American point of view, would be, for example, the Arms Export Control Act, which the President of the United States waives every year, because sending arms to Israel at this time is a violation of that act by U.S. law. So they write a waiver, because the Act says that weapons should not be used against the civilian population. Whether you can justify it or not, that is what the law says.

Another possible issue has to do with allegiance. One of the things that the Muslim community has been faced with is this accusation that somehow we have allegiance to other places before we are Americans. We're told to choose between our identity as Muslims or Americans, which comes first? And that's really quite ludicrous, because I would never presuppose to ask a Christian to tell me if she were Christian before she were American. It's a religious identity. It's not a national or ethnic identity.

But I think one thing to talk about is the fact that there are people working in our government who have dual citizenship, either as Israelis and as Americans or with other countries. And that's an important issue that should be discussed in general, because it begs the question, well, if you're a citizen of two countries, which country is your priority? Perhaps I should assume it's the one you're working for, that you're in the government for, but is it fair to make that assumption? Can we at least have that conversation? Because it means that there could possibly be a conflict of interest. But the question is, can we even have this conversation? Can we even discuss these issues? They're not illegitimate

questions. They're outside of the context of the larger issue that's on the ground right now where people are suffering, but they are relevant to us as American people.

I think that the problem is that in the current climate, attempts to expand the discourse are usually actively suppressed in one way or the other, because, by and large, they're viewed by some segments in the pro-Israel community as a threat to the very existence of Israel. And, so, it's looked at as if criticism of Israel becomes a reflection of an underlying and what's perceived as an undisclosed desire to annihilate the state entirely. So, it becomes an existential issue whenever there's a discussion about criticism, not by everybody, by all means, but in certain segments, and this then translates into a desire to not have the conversation in the first place. It's an emotional leap that blocks the expression of alternative points of view, but it's very, I think, important.

Another form of silencing has to do with labeling any form of criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic. And this creates a lot of confusion for people who are not Jewish and even for people who are Semitic, who are Arab people like myself. What does that mean? What is that? I mean racism is something everybody should condemn. Nobody wants to participate in it. How is it that being critical of one country and their policy actually is a form of anti-Semitism? But it's a very powerful accusation that can be used to silence somebody, because people don't want to be perceived as racist and, so, they tend not to speak out out of fear of being considered that. And also, it has to do with people's lack of understanding of the differences between Judaism, Zionism, Israel itself, the whole big picture of what's at stake. But that shouldn't prohibit us from having a conversation about these issues.

Some of the ways that this silencing is manifested has to do, for example, with the boycotts of the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, loss of revenue to the newspaper. How that influenced the writing, I don't really know, but it was an attempt to influence in that way. Withdrawal of advertising, loss of jobs, or the demotion of reporters who may say something or report in a certain way or want to say something and find that they can't express themselves or tell what they see, so they have to seek work elsewhere. And then outside of the media, when you look at the political discourse, it actually translates into loss of and change in political careers, and the two examples in the last couple of years were Earl Hilliard and Catherine McKinney. So, these have very real effects, and what happens is that even to just have the conversation about something that affects Americans and our interests, especially an issue that now our government recognizes is something that's important, when you look at the facts on the ground, there needs to be much more discussion outside of just the two groups involved and involving the larger community.

I think in the end, what's really sad about this is the inability to engage in dialogue regarding the Middle East inhibits the potential for interfaith efforts that are really critical. During the civil rights movement, the Jewish community stood side by side with the African-Americans to help promote civil liberties for that community and I think were probably instrumental for a lot of the advances that were made. Today, we see the erosion of civil liberties in threats, and the major victims are going to be Arabs and Muslims. And we would like to join hands with people around the country, including Jewish Americans, who can help, who have the experience to defend the loss of those civil rights.

There tends to be, what I have sensed in conversations with other members of the Jewish community, a reluctance to criticize policies of this "war on terrorism" that end up being human rights violations abroad or civil rights violations here because of the perception of some that somehow some of these policies actually benefit Israel. And two examples here were the closure of the Holy Land Foundation, which was done when Ariel Sharon was here, and the arrest of Sami Al-Arian, both of them accused of being related to groups that are considered terrorists in Israel.

I just have three major points to show why, very quickly, dialogue is still important. The reason we still have to talk, even if we can't talk about any of the major issues in a way that's satisfactory to anybody, is, number one, we have to rehumanize one another, because one of the greatest casualties of this conflict is dehumanization. We can do that through friendship and respect, and although I might disagree with somebody, I still consider her my friend. When I think of that community, I think of that person as a human being and somebody that I care for and, hopefully, cares for me.

We should all be able to equally and vociferously condemn racism and hate mongering on both sides, because it will never compromise your position on the larger issues. So, whether calling Palestinians, saying they breed like rats, or any of the anti-Jewish language that's used by certain extremist groups whether in the Muslim community or Palestinians, all of that should be unequivocally condemned.

We can also then, finally, affirm and recognize the value of all human life, all children everywhere, and demand that our leaders in this country as well support and cherish the lives of all. And while we recognize the loss of American soldiers in Iraq, we have to think about the loss of Iraqi soldiers as well. Those men were husbands, fathers, brothers, and children, and they have dignity in their lives and should have dignity in their death. And we should do the same for Israelis and Palestinians. And from that point, perhaps we can then move on to discuss some of the bigger issues.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Laila. And I'd like to invite Blu Greenberg, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance. Thank you, Blu.

BLU GREENBERG: Part of me wishes to just abandon my written notes and respond, have a conversation with Laila, but I hope we'll have a chance in the conversation part at the end of our session. It's been an amazing conference, as all of Diana's conferences, as many of us lovingly call them, are, rich in ideas and substance and just amazingly little repetition and people speaking without reserve and from their hearts. And I've hesitated several times over, thinking I should soften my remarks, but as Jack pointed out, the comfort level here is very high and, so, I'm going to proceed with my written remarks, on the theory that if I can't speak here about what's in my heart, where can I speak? I'm going to speak personally, beginning with two anecdotes and then define what I think the problem is. And you'll hear, I guess, Laila and I are coming at this from two opposite directions. And then express my own commitment, although there are many parallels in our remarks.

Anecdote one. I'm sitting in the lobby of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Chicago with a group of five women, two Arab Americans, two Jewish Americans, and a third Jewish American, a facilitator and organizer of the dialogue. We've just spent four and a half years together, and we just finished presenting the substance of four and a half years of dialogue to Jewish women leaders. Fatima, which is not her real name, one of the participants, is in the middle of a conversation and suddenly I notice on her navy blue wool suit a gold pendant in the shape of a map, which is, as I have come to know it, Israel and the territories, or Israel and the Palestinian land. "What is that?" I ask her. I sat next to her during the course of the dialogue and in the pre-panel conversation, and she wasn't wearing it then. "The state of Palestine," she replies and then continues on. My heart and my temples start to pound. After all, this is Fatima, not an extremist, not someone who has called for jihad. She's an intellectual. We had been discussing a two-state solution for three years. I interrupt again, and I say, "Where is Israel on that map?" A two-hour conversation ensues, and I find no satisfactory answer to my question. More disconcerting, perhaps, is our other Palestinian colleague explains Fatima's actions or pendant away as education. More disconcerting is I know that on Monday morning, Fatima will be in her classroom, stirring her students' minds against the idea of a Jewish state.

Item two. I'm traveling on an airplane with an Arab American woman whom I have just come to know and am very impressed with and who does, in the course of time, become a friend. We've just finished sharing a panel on post-9/11. She referred in the course of her remarks to root causes, and after 9/11 I've come to understand that root causes usually refers to the Israel-Palestine conflict and the perceived one-sided American identification with Israel. In the course of the conversation, we talk about the four wars. And I say that Israel didn't initiate these four wars. In '47, the partition plan was offered by the U.N. It was accepted by Israel, rejected by the Arab states, who declared war. In '56, the Suez War in Egypt. The Suez War in '67, after threats to push Israel into the sea. Israel won that war. Actually, the threats were bloodier than that. In '73, the Yom Kippur War was so much of a surprise that Israel was totally unprepared and great loss of life. She agrees with me that Israel did not start the four wars. Twenty minutes later, however, she thought it over and said, "You know, Blu, I must reverse, take back what I said before. Israel did start the four wars just by being there."

I know that two or five anecdotes do not a universal public policy make. And I know that not everyone fits into the categories that I've described. Moreover, I could cite from my dialogue experience so many positive anecdotes of friendship, of shared vision, of commonality on women's issues, etc. Yet, I think that this is the underlying problem. This is the core issue in dialogue as regards this most serious area of conflict, i.e., as Laila said, the very right of Israel to exist or rather, Israel as illegitimate, there by illegal means, a rogue state. Or as the gentleman raised at the end of our session yesterday in his rhetorical question that the existence of Israel-- He didn't use the word Israel, in fact, but that all of the world's problems are at the door of the colonial, racist, oppressive forces in Palestine. This is problematic from four perspectives. One, it violates the general rule of dialogue, which is to recognize the very legitimacy of the other. Although, I must say that when I first wrote about this, I was convinced of it, and I'm not sure, I have to rethink whether that's a core rule of dialogue. Maybe it's just a holdover from Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The second, as in the case of Fatima, and, by the way, the second anecdote I told you, I should have added that I appreciated very much the honesty and integrity of my friend. But in Fatima's case, as I have experienced in numerous other incidents, it violates the second rule, or the first if we eliminate the first, which is that you cannot say one thing in dialogue and another out of earshot of your dialogue partner to your own community.

Number three is that all of the issues that are raised are related to this core issue of Israel's right to exist in this corner of the universe. Freedom of travel, the settlements, checkpoint inspections, closure of civil rights, water, suicide bombings, economic downturn, security, religious extremism, all of these are connected, I believe, to that core issue. And it's not just a smokescreen that's put up there. Connected to Israel's daily struggle to exist. And daily, I mean as in 50 years, every single day, security a primary issue, just as it has now become for the United States since 9/11. And I have to admit that it took me a long time to realize this, because I experience a great deal of bafflement in dialogue. To me, Israel has always seemed to be a just and ethical country and people. And I found myself, as a Zionist, having to take criticism for occupation, for searches, for closed travel. I don't want to be in that position. I don't want to be in the position of defending settlements or painfully hearing about my friends' travails.

But I believe all of it is related to that issue, which, and this is the fourth problem, is never spoken about in dialogue but is at the heart of every negative action, reaction, and reaction, and reaction. And I'm sure that the soldiers who stood standing awake all night at some checkpoint, offending people in Gaza on the night of Passover would rather have been home with their families, eating their mothers' matzo balls and chicken soup, but were called to be where they were because Israel was on high alert, combination of threats and security information and last year's Seder bombing. And Israel does the things that it does not because it wants to, but because it must in order to defend its citizens and its viability. Israel has made many mistakes, many mistakes. It has mechanisms for self-correction, for self-criticism and self-correction that are built in, but as far as I'm concerned, that doesn't wipe away mistakes, even mistakes that are inevitable in a war situation, which is what it has faced. And also, there is never enough self-criticism and self-correction. But having said that, I have to add also that I believe it has exercised tremendous restraint in the face of extreme provocation. Its army undergoes rigorous ethical training, and it baffles me why the larger world community and even my dialogue partners, some of my dialogue partners have not acknowledged this. And the primary reason again comes back to the bottom line of recognizing the legitimacy of Israel. And, as I said, the unrealistic demands made by some of the neutral nations of the world would end in nothing less than genocide for Israel as a state.

So, I come to the same question as Laila asked, which is why do I stay in dialogue, given the sense of isolation that I feel and sometimes a battering, as in the way I felt yesterday even amongst friends? I stay in it for personal and for principled reasons. The personal are the friendships. I've met incredible, and this is a very powerful draw, incredible women and men, I should say, even in women's dialogue, and made personal friendships with women with opposing views, women who are very special, very classy, very smart, very fine, very wise women. In a million years, I would not have made their acquaintance except through

dialogue. And the experience has enriched my life tremendously, even as it has brought me some pain, but has brought me more gain than pain, as they say.

But friendship alone is not an adequate reason. Given the fundamental differences, it's certainly not enough. So, the reasons I stay in dialogue, which has been a major part of my life over the last 30 years and running parallel to my work in Jewish feminism, sometimes converging, but sometimes not, is that I feel an optimism in dialogue. I believe that if we keep talking on a personal level, we won't be killing each other, and played out on a larger canvas, if our communities and ever wider groups of circles of talking to each other lessens the likelihood of violence. I have also learned so much in dialogue and listening during these last several decades. And I have to say even my position on two states, which I came to in the early '90s from a relatively isolated or insulated community, I have to say came out of Jewish-Palestinian dialogue. It didn't come from my readings or from my own community.

So, I've learned not only in that area but, of course, in so many other areas. Just the session that we had this morning on globalization, in terms of understanding, stretched my understanding of world empathy. I was going to say, Mary, after you finished speaking, globalization of empathy. Is that a possibility to say that? Or the humanization of ideas, as you said. And I've also learned from dialogue not to set aside women's agenda, as Azza said this morning, in the face of larger problems. I also feel that for a variety of reasons, the dialogue partners from the Jewish community have come primarily from the political left. And though in some circles I'm seen as of the political left, it may surprise some of you here, it's not actually where I see myself. And I feel I don't want to abandon the dialogue to the political left, which I don't think represents the whole Jewish community.

And finally, and I hope this doesn't sound too grandiose or ego-inflated, I see dialogue on these particular issues as my responsibility as a Jew, my responsibility to my people and to Israel. I'm not that important, but if I can represent Israel's position in places where it's not being heard, then I feel I should take up the opportunity. So, I thank Diana and Ellie and, actually, Dorothy, from whom this particular session-- I don't know if you remember, Dorothy. It grew out of a conversation that we had in the hallway in New York two years ago.

My last comment. This actually has been a week of dialogue experiences for me. On Sunday, I participated in a Jewish-Christian-Muslim-Buddhist dialogue on feminism. It was the Mark Tannenbaum Institute for Interreligious Understanding. On Monday and Tuesday, Sacred Heart University on the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding, which has now expanded, that was its original name, Christian-Jewish Dialogue. And that conversation was about theology. These were very, very pleasant. They were very rewarding. They were so free of angst for me, because no one touched on the question of the Middle East.

My hope is that some day in the near future, we will also have dialogue about the Middle East that will be of pleasantries, that will be of solving mutual problems. A dialogue that at its core will take for granted the ideal that Alma set before us yesterday, take for granted

the reality that every child in the region goes to bed at night feeling secure. This is why I believe that we not only can but must have dialogue in the face of conflict. Thank you.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Blu. Our next speaker is Jean Zaru from the Religious Society of Friends in Ramallah. And, by the way, we're doing great on time. You will probably have a good half hour for Q&A.

JEAN ZARU: I'm so happy to be with you today and to be among friends and to make new ones, to meet old ones, and so on. I wasn't planning to share with you these words taken from Psalms for a Pilgrim People by Jim Cotter, but since I am the last speaker, I don't want to take the time to respond or to repeat but I just want to share with you a few words first, besides my talk, where I am inside me.

"How can I keep silent in our day as I see the hypocrisies around me, the poor defrauded of land, the dwelling place of God dishonored? Now that my eyes have been opened, it is impossible not to be angry. I cannot be aware and stay kind. It goes against the grain of my being. I try to hold my tongue and say nothing, refusing to be rash, keeping silent. But the pain grew intolerable. My heart burned, hot within me. While I mused, the fire burst into flame, and I spoke from the depth of my being. Possessed by the demon of anger, swept along by the vortex of rage, I was an easy target for the powerful. A well-aimed blow, and I fell. Yet, I need the fire in my belly, its heat and light to move me. I need to spread its heat and light to move me. I need it to spur me to action. Rage becomes love in the service of others."

Twenty-five years ago, I had an enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue. In fact, I was a pioneer as a Palestinian Christian woman in these international, local, whatever interfaith dialogues. I had a passion for seeking truth and the fearless dissemination of it. I tried to understand the other and to commit myself with love and respect to the otherness of the other, to provide a stimulus and challenge to reconciliation between desperate groups. I insisted on the espousal of hard truths rather than an accommodation based on dissent from them. I must make a confession now and today, after years and years of interfaith dialogue, I am no friend of dialogue that does not respect realities. Interconfessional dialogue too often hides the realities in which it is involved. Urgent problems do not pass or go away because they are not addressed. Without political, social justice and adherence to the global rule of law, theological talk only about doctrine and dogma cannot lead us to transformation and working together to promote just solutions for our world. I was often told that it was very hard for my partners in dialogue to sit and listen to me describing my reality, which is embarrassing for some and hard to hear for others. I dare say, if it is hard to hear it, it is much harder, my sisters and brothers, to live through it. [applause]

It is surely a service to truth to unmask the untruths and injustices. Moreover, for the dialogue to proceed along more productive lines, we should not make demands only on one partner. Most often, the less powerful partners have to give in, to accommodate, to be silenced in the service of the so-called peace. And somebody asked me, "Jean, what did you learn from your experience in dialogue for the last 25 years?" My response was, "I

developed an art of being sensitive to people who are most insensitive to my existence." We need mutuality, equality, and reciprocity in any dialogue to be successful.

I tell you, if I described my reality, you would think that I was exaggerating. For when you find out how I left the country, it is unheard of in this century. There is an endless battering of Palestinians on a daily basis. Virtually imprisoning us in our houses half of the time and the rest of the time within fragmented communities separated from each other by endless walls, ditches, and checkpoints, making the means of daily life, jobs, education, hospitals all but inaccessible in order to make daily life so intolerable so many as possible will be convinced to leave. An Israeli military leader has referred to Palestinians as a cancer and suggested a second course of chemotherapy is needed to clean out this cancer, thus defining the first major expulsion of Palestinians as the first incomplete course of chemotherapy that failed to do the job and should be followed by a second one in the future.

Yet, such extreme language passes without outcry or even mention in the American press. And moreover, Prime Minister Sharon is referred to as a man of peace by your President. Future generations may look back at these tragedies, one after the other, and see them differently. But for us who lived through the past 50 years, 55 years of despair, empty promises, shattered dreams, loss of land, water, and resources and denial of basic human rights find it often difficult to keep the faith in the struggle against seemingly overwhelming odds.

But Palestine and the Palestinian people remain despite Israel's concerted efforts to get rid of us and make us ineffective. The people of Palestine have not disappeared. The more Israel wraps itself in exclusivity, the more it assists us to stay on and resist the injustices. And I hope and pray that this resistance will be a non-violent resistance, for morally and strategically, it is the only way. It is true that we are losing day by day more land due to Israeli settlements, bypassed roads, expropriation of land, bulldozed fields, uprooted olive trees, plants, and crops, thousands. Thirty-eight thousand trees were uprooted in the last two years. Demolished homes where we often stand by helplessly. It is true that Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza are not allowed to enter Jerusalem, Israel, or even to travel from one Palestinian village to another. Practically, I cannot leave Ramallah anywhere without a permit, and it is not easy to get one. The West Bank has been cut off into 62 fragmented parts or communities. You can come to the West Bank, you can visit, anybody can move, but Palestinians cannot even in the West Bank. I'm not talking about even going to Gaza or to Israel.

Despite the gloom everywhere, I, as a Palestinian, would like to testify to the resilience and perseverance of the Palestinian people and their hope for peace. I know many in Israel and Palestine and elsewhere who know how to challenge and resist oppressive powers without dehumanizing the human being hidden behind "the enemy." I really do not consider that there are two sides in the struggle, the Israeli side and the Palestinian side. I see there are people that have crossed boundaries, that are forming networks, those that are on the side of justice and ending occupation and a two-state solution, and there are the exclusivists who do not want this to happen.

These people, these communities of hope often bring new directions and patterns of hope, of thought. They may affect political decisions and economic transactions. The growing networks of non-governmental organizations that cooperate across the globe are also an encouraging sign. However, without the support of great majorities of people, large numbers of men and women who see themselves as responsible human beings in a world created for mutual justice, care, and compassion, I'm afraid millions will continue to suffer from oppression and injustice. Our mobilization efforts must be broad-based, as diverse and as inclusive as imaginable. Our road to renewal is to be truth-tellers, not to cover up. But to be truth-tellers can be done only through non-violence. Because truth and violence are incompatible, and only through non-violence truth can be known.

As I walk alongside many others in my journey and carry with me hope to move from oppressive and destructive power on all levels, to liberating and life-enhancing powers, we should not be interested as women or as Palestinians to simply transfer from men to women or from Israelis to Palestinians. That's not my interest. And I advocate this all the time. Rather, what—we should struggle for together and people in this room together is for the transformation of our communities. To move from military state coercive power to the power of mutual trust, from ethnic and religious exclusiveness to the celebration of diversity, from racist and sexist discrimination to the protection of rights and humanity of all, from neutrality and objectivity. As a Quaker, and I'm tired of this word, balance and neutrality. There is nothing neutral. We have to move from neutrality and objectivity to compassion and ethically-based priorities, from exploitation of nature to gentle cooperation with nature, from gods removed and far away to god within, and from death to life. Our grief today is profound, but it will be repeated over and over again if we do not respond by building a better world. To memorialize the victims of war and violence, let us work for justice so that we may create peace, real peace. And this is our challenge.

JADALLAH: I'm sure on behalf of everybody who was listening, we truly thank you all for not just sharing your insights but being transparent about where you stand on the issue of dialogue. I have contracted with-- Shula, I know you're number one. I have mapped out the theater, so I know this is an important topic for many of you. I've contracted with Jack and-- I'm sorry, I can't read the name. Hold on, Beth, please. Shula, could you hold a second? What we are hoping to do, because we are suspecting that there will be a lot of questions, with your permission, if you're okay with this, what I'd like to propose is we gather two to three questions at the minimum. And if you would like one panelist in particular to answer your question, just state that. And then we will give the panelists a chance to answer, and this way we think we will manage our time better so we don't have long answers and long questions. And I would also please ask you if you would like to make a comment, to make it brief. If you have a question, to be a little bit more concise for the sake of time. And if anybody has an objection, state it now. But I think we could be okay with that. Is that okay? Can I contract with you around that? Thank you. And, Shula, please go ahead. And if you look at me, not at the people who have the mikes, because then I will ask them to pass it around. Shula, thanks for your patience.

SHULAMITH KOENIG: My name is Shulamith Koenig. I was born in Israel in 1930. I fought in the Israeli Army. I was an officer in the Israeli Army. I was the woman commander of the

Jerusalem area. I had 800 women under me in 1949. And I was very, very lucky because my parents had Arab friends, and my parents spoke Arabic very fluently. I just wanted to introduce myself so my comments will come from the right place. I do believe that Israel is to exist. It's the only thing that I agree with Blu about. Israel is to exist, has the right to exist, we had no other choice. If Israel didn't exist, I wouldn't be alive, because my parents came from Poland in 1917 and I was born in Israel. However, I don't think there is a symmetry, Blu. There is none.

The symmetry is that in 1949, I was in a meeting where Moshe Dayan stood in front of us of the Negev Brigade and said to us, "In wars we will expand." And whoever started the wars, we always used them to expand. And if anybody tells me that the settlements are, indeed, for the security of Israel, I would say it's not. I wouldn't use any other sharper words, which I would like to. Because in the settlements, we have lost our moral argument of existence. We have shown that, actually, as we have said the Arabs want to throw us to the sea, we want to throw them wherever they want to go. We speak all the time of the many Arab countries where they can go. We do not agree to their existence as much as some of them don't agree to ours. And I would say some of us don't agree to their existence, because I do.

So, the question is not to speak of whether Israel is to exist or not. We have to ask ourselves, do we really believe that the Palestinians have a right to the land left to them now? This is the question we have to ask. And you took a lot when the last speaker spoke about, I have been there, I have seen the women who are suffering the most, I have seen the women at the checkpoints who are not allowed to go to the hospital and gave birth to a dead child at a checkpoint. If somebody tells me that this is for the existence of Israel, I don't know what to say. So, I'm not for suicide bombers. Neither am I for a tank that goes to look for one Hamas man and puts down a building of five stories. I am not for what Dayan said, "In wars we will expand." And the most important thing I'd like to say is that it is our responsibility to go to the American government. And Harry Sigmund says it over and over again, it is your responsibility as Americans to go to the American government because they are the ones who could bring peace. But not to keep the Bush-Sharon evil axis, but to keep a new vision of a two-state solution without the settlements and to know that the settlements is the root of all evil in what's happening in Palestine and Israel today. Thank you.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Shula, for the comment. Is it a question or a comment? Okay, please go ahead. And if you could self-identify, please.

(Audience member) **MARY LAHAJ:** My name is Mary Lahaj, and I'm American Muslim, Arab American. I'd like to thank Jean for her representation here. It was important to hear what you have to say. And you directed my question right to the heart of the matter, which is the legitimacy of Israel to exist, legitimate right to exist. In my studies of philosophy, I've studied about the social contract. And all of the focus of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been, as far as I know, on how to resolve the conflict. But the question I have is what would make Israel a legitimate state? Because in social contract in America, we're very proud of our social contract. It's the only written contract. We entrust the government. It's a tacit agreement for generations and generations. And we have a right to rebel against the

government if the government doesn't act in our behalf. So, it's a two-way street, a social contract, any contract, right? So, the way I see it, when the state of Israel was formed, there was no social contract, so there's lots of conflict and people resisting and complaining. So, what is the solution to that? And if you also know about ethics and social contractarian philosophy, maybe you could also address that, too.

JADALLAH: Thank you. One more question before we go to our panelists? Please go ahead.

(Audience member) **Meyer Bekamat(?):** My name is Meyer Bekamat(?), I guess a Jewish American for this context. But I just have a quick question for Jean. Can you describe the efforts in your own communities that you've tried to create a non-violent opposition to Israel? And how have those efforts been accepted in your community and what success have they met? And also, do you think going forward-- Please talk about that strategy in your own community, which I think I agree you will gain a lot more support in all contexts if that is a much stronger voice in your community projected outwards as well.

JADALLAH: Okay, thank you. And I'd like to ask our panelists, if they'd like, we do have time if the three of you would like to respond and maybe take five to seven minutes to do that. Jean, go ahead.

ZARU: I think sometimes peace work is not easily detected by journalists. Most of the journalists that are in Israel and Palestine are living in Jerusalem. So, they really don't have quick access to what's happening in the territories. They have more access to what happens in Israel because of the restriction on movement and where they are stationed. So, sometimes the efforts of what we're trying to do, either our peacemaking or our violence, is depicted more-- The violence is depicted but not the peacemaking.

I must tell you that I am one of nine people who have been part of a steering committee for all the Palestinian NGOs, faith-based, men, women, non-faith, mixed, agricultural, all kinds that have been really working on trying to develop a non-violent strategy, active non-violence, to bring about change. And when I speak change, it is to really-- I think Blu knows that even before officially any time the Palestinians have admitted or made a pronouncement that they recognize the state of Israel to live in the borders of '67, I did that publicly in a Nairobi assembly, and not an easy thing in '75. So, it is not something that I'm just doing now. And Blu remembers that I did this in '88 in the summer, even before the Palestinians made the declaration in Tunis.

Now, the Palestinians and the Arab world really, I mean I am really surprised that most of the time, I understand there are fears on the part of Israelis. But let's face it, the Arab initiative that came from the Arab summit said that we really want to recognize Israel and that Israel live in secure boundaries, but we have to end occupation and the Palestinians should have their state in the boundaries of '67, according to the global rule of law and U.N. resolutions. And we want to, you know-- We have been making these efforts. We have many Israeli groups that come and accompany us in this non-violent struggle. Many Israelis that come. You have women, the Coalition of Women for the Just Peace. Sometimes I'm really surprised when I am in the United States, because you find more articles written protesting what we are going through as Palestinians living under occupation. Articles by Amira Haas in Haaretz. And this moral questioning in Israel is very legitimate. You have

Gush Shalom, you have Uri Avneri, you have the Alternative Information Center, you have the Committee Against House Demolition. These are Israeli groups that work with Palestinian groups. And it's legitimate to question these things.

But I feel in the United States we cannot do that. I'm sorry. I spoke for too long. But I just wanted also, in a way, to allude to the fears of some people that think we don't want peace, we don't recognize Israel. We do and we did and we changed the charter of the Palestinians, and there are many non-violent activities going on.

GREENBERG: As you can see, I spread myself out all over here. I wanted to say just so many small comments and then one sort of larger one. First of all, I think the press is relatively free, probably more than in any other Middle Eastern country. Although I don't know, but I think the reports that come out of Ramallah are probably faithful to the situation, and there's a lot of it. So, I don't think there's a one-sided view of the press. If anything, Jews here in the United States complain about the other one-sided view. But as long as we're both complaining, I think it's an indication that the press is relatively free. So, my question is, I really wanted to hear your answer, Jean, to the social contract and legitimacy. I think it was addressed to you, but maybe it was addressed to Laila. I also wanted to ask you, picking up on the young man's question here. Well, before I go to that, let me respond to Shula. ... I don't want to monopolize the conversation.

JADALLAH: No, but if I may ask you also to keep in mind the types of questions that were asked. One we had around the social contract, which I think we'll have to get back to. So, why don't you go ahead and respond for another minute or so, and then we'll open the floor.

GREENBERG: Okay. I'll just say to Shula and also in response to Jean, too, the settlements and occupation was a response to the six-day war. And there was a search after the six-day war for partners for peace and that failed. There were no takers there. That's number one. And number two is the Oslo Accords, which I think were a very significant opening, were rejected by Arafat. And that would have taken down or dismantled or whatever the word is 95% of the settlements. And there were no-- No, not 40%. We'll look at our maps together. And that's important for us to do to clarify. And the response instead of continuing the conversation was an Intifada response, almost as if all or nothing.

So, I think that one has to say that there were many missed opportunities along the way. And I think we all have to share responsibility for missed opportunities. I'll just stop right there.

JADALLAH: Okay, thank you, Blu. We have a question from Dorothy, a question from the lady in the blue checkered, and then Sylvia and, I believe, Judy. Okay, let's try to make your questions short and quick. We'll take the four of them and then we'll go back.

DOROTHY AUSTIN: I'll try to make mine short. I'm Dorothy Austin. Blu, I think my question, my response is to you. I know you well, I have a deep love and affection for you, an appreciation. I've been to Shabbat in your home. And I've heard you speak about your

feelings of vulnerability as a Jew. And I would like to see this conference offer to you an opportunity to speak publicly, if you can and if you will, if you may, in a kind of imaginative sympathy of what you would hope for for the lives of Palestinians, say, like Jean Zaru, who are living on the West Bank. For example, do you imagine that there might be, let's say, an Israeli-initiated dismantling of the settlements? Do you imagine certain proactive things that you take now in an empathic mind as you sit within, say, the Palestinian occupation from your own mind? I guess I'm asking for an imaginative stretch that I think you're capable of.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Dorothy. And could you please self-identify.

(Audience member) **HILDA SILVERMAN:** I'm Hilda Silverman. I'm not here for the whole conference. I'm a Jean Zaru groupie, and I came because she was on the panel, but I've appreciated all of the speakers enormously. I would like to say I was a little disconcerted with the composition. It feels to me that having three Palestinians and one Jew, however powerful and articulate and moving she is, feels off to me. As a Jew, I think it would anyway, although I actually agreed more personally with what the other speakers said than with what you said, Blu.

I belonged to a dialogue group in Philadelphia in the '80s. It was Jewish-Arab, but all the Arabs except one were Palestinians. Most of the Jews were students at the Reconstructionist Rabbinic College. It fell apart after months and months in development of close personal relationships over the issue of Israel's right to exist. And this was in a context where all of the Jews supported a two-state solution. This was in the mid-80s. We all supported a two-state solution but the Palestinians. And when we pushed about what that was all about, the answer was, because if we support Israel's right to exist, it is saying it's okay what happened to us, and what happened to us wasn't okay. And I don't agree with Shula that the problem is the settlements. It is part of the problem, it's a main problem, but I think there has to be a much more profound acknowledgment on the part of Jews that, yes, Jews needed a state at that time. There was a desperate need, there were reasons for it to be in that place, but that another people paid an enormous price and they paid an enormous price from the very beginning. And I think without that kind of acknowledgment, it's very hard for us as Jews to go forward in real meaningful dialogue with Palestinians and others.

And on the other side, it seems to me that Palestinians and those who would support them need to, and I think this is very, very hard, to somehow feel deeply that even though Jews have in Israel, Palestine, and in the world disproportionate power at this point, that the fear and the sense of powerlessness lives very deep inside of us and cannot just be ameliorated with the current situation.

JADALLAH: Thank you for sharing your comment. And, Sylvia, thank you for your patience.

SYLVIA MARCOS: Well, she says always to identify. I have Palestinian ancestors. I am from Mexico. And I have indigenous ancestors. So, I have this kind of mixed immigration identity, which we all have. We all have multiple identities. But I don't want to enter into this. I am

far away, I was not part of it. I have recently gone and visited and seen with my own eyes the situation, so there is nothing that anyone can tell me but what I experienced myself. One time invited by the state of Israel, the second time invited by Sabeel. So, you know, I was once on one side, once on the other side, so I got quite a bit of exposure.

But at this moment, I just want to ask, particularly Blu, to answer me. Blu, I just could never understand how on earth Sharon got his way not to let the committee of the U.N. go to appreciate or to evaluate whatever was done on the Jenin Camp. This was simply impossible. And it was impossible, and that's it. And I want you to tell me why you think this happened. And then I have a second question.

JADALLAH: Okay, and quickly, please, for the sake of time.

MARCOS: Blu, I want you to explain to me why there have been two Jewish Americans that are supporting the Palestinians that have been killed. They have been-- I don't know if you know it. You know, I have been getting this through e-mail. There is a girl, there is a big story. Many of you must know.

AL-MARAYATI: She was not Jewish.

MARCOS: And there was another one that was seriously injured. I don't know if they were Jewish American. I just know they were civil people that were simply taking a human rights position. And I want to hear what you have to say to these people.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Sylvia. And we go to Judy. And then Diana has a quick question. And then we'll go back to the floor and end with that for the sake of time.

JUDITH PLASKOW: I'm Judith Plaskow. I'm an American Jew. I'd like to thank all the panelists for modeling dialogue by speaking your difficult truths. I want to raise not a question for the panel but a question about the panel, and it's not why are there three Palestinians and one Jew, but why is this issue the province of Jews and Palestinians? And I'd like to address the fear or the indifference or the whatever it is among us as a group that leads to having this panel not a diverse panel in the way that all the other panels here have been. And why somehow is this issue, which is such an important issue in the world, seen as a Jewish issue and an Arab issue or an Israeli issue and a Palestinian issue?

JADALLAH: Thank you, Judith.
[applause]

JADALLAH: And, Diana, would you like to go quickly? And then we have one more person, and then I'm going to close the questions for a few seconds.

DIANA ECK: I'm so happy for that question, Judith, because in some ways I think that is really the question that all of us have. And that is that none of us feels that we're really very good at talking about this issue. And it's such an important issue. And I feel that Laila Al-Marayati has put her finger on something that for all of us is important, which is that this

has started to unravel in ways that make all of us very timid to open our mouths and speak. And as a result, I agree with you completely. Because, obviously, we can't put all of the onus of responding to these difficult issues on three women.

JADALLAH: Thank you. And we have one question there. And then with the permission of the person in the back, I'm going to go back to the panelists and then if we have more time, I'll come back to you. And if you could make it short, please.

(Audience member) **ATALIA OMER:** My name is Atalia Omer. I'm a student here. And I have a brief question addressed to Laila. My question is you mentioned that part of the problem is concerning who should actually be engaged in this dialogue. My question to you is who do you think should be engaged in this dialogue? Arabs, Muslims, Jews, Zionist Jews, non-Zionist Jews, Palestinians, Christians?

JADALLAH: Thank you. With permission from Laila and Jean, I'd like to give Blu a chance to finish her thoughts, and she got several questions here. And then maybe go to Laila and end with Jean. And if I may ask you to manage your time, maybe help them out with five minutes each at a maximum.

GREENBERG: So, Dorothy, I'll start with your imaginative stretch. I don't have to go too far, because I went through that once before. And that was post-Oslo, when a lot of us had hopes that we were moving towards coexistence, two states, side by side, living in cooperation. What I would hope is that, you know, the education, advances in education, in science, in sharing water, in solving the region's problems, in environment, which is abused on all sides. And I would hope that textbooks would be rewritten, and I particularly have to point to the textbooks that are in the Arab community, which have not been rewritten and still teach a great deal of violence and hate. And I wanted to ask Jean that question. And I just want to tell you one example of what I would say. This is a bit difficult for me to say this, and I hope I will get through this. But I give you an example.

As some of you know, my son was killed in a bicycle accident eight months ago in Israel. And he died in such a way that his-- He died instantly, but it was an injury to his head and the rest of his body was in perfect condition. And he was able to donate six organs. Three of them went to people who would not have been alive at the end of the week. His liver, one of his kidneys, and one of his lungs. And three others affected the quality of life. And amazingly, all of the organs took and are still working in those bodies. And while we were sitting Shiva, the head of Hadassah Hospital came to visit us and that was where the liver transplant was being done. And he gave us a report on how well the patient was doing. And after we got up from Shiva, we were called by the hospital and asked if we would like to meet the family. And it was only on the way to the hospital that we were told that the recipient was an Arab father of a family of seven children from Shuafat. And we went to meet this beautiful family and we met the man himself.

What was so amazing to me was that the head of the hospital and in all of the discussions about transplant did not mention. It was as if medical science, transplant of organs was color, race, religion, ethnic blind. Abdel Alghani was the next on the list and the most

serious and the most serious candidate for a liver transplant, and he is the one who got it. That's my vision for the region.

I want to say about the Jenin. Actually, that's for a really long conversation. But I will say that the reason the Israelis went into Jenin-- Was it you, Sylvia, who asked me that question about Jenin? Right. Why was the U.N. not allowed in? I really don't know the answer to that question. I have to say I just don't know the answer. I have to go and look into it. But I've seen different reports on Jenin. Well, that's not the question you asked me. I'm not going to defend the Israeli position on Jenin, although that's what I would do if I had a great deal of time.

JADALLAH: And then the third question, I think, was around the two Americans?

GREENBERG: Oh, yes, that's right. These are very difficult questions to ask, when someone comes and uses himself and herself as a human shield in a time of war, and this is a time of war, and these are those unfortunate and sad, tragic accidents that happen. And one would hope that one could do, you know, surgical responses, which is if you're going to do something and someone gets in your way who is not guilty but is only there for defense, you'd like to see that they would be removed out of harm's way. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen, and I would have to say again, you know, mistakes are made. I think fewer mistakes than would be otherwise if the Israeli Army hadn't been trained to avoid mistakes. One was clearly an accident. And the other one, there was a warning to get out of the way and to get out of the way. And this was seen, for whatever military reasons, the Israelis made this decision. I think those are the kinds of decisions, painful ones that are made on all sides in a time of war.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Blu. Laila?

AL-MARAYATI: I'll just address a couple of the issues and then get to the last question. One thing I wanted to add to the question about the acts of non-violent resistance. I would say that these days, with the 24-hour curfew that's in place, going to school, defying the curfew, going shopping, if I'm not mistaken, Jean, are acts of non-violent resistance on the part of Palestinians today. Just sort of living, subsisting, sustaining your life and surviving to many people is viewed as a way of resistance. They don't support the occupation, I mean the use of violence and suicide bombings necessarily, yet they become the victims of a policy of collective punishment.

And what I would say in response to what Blu has been talking about in terms of the necessary action in times of war and mistakes is that there is a disproportionate and excessive use of force. And there is a policy that I witnessed when I was there in October of widespread universal, absolute collective punishment of the entire population. It's not limited to the people who are guilty of the crimes and their cohorts. One baby we saw in the hospital was born in Hanunas with a major heart defect, and this baby needs a heart transplant. In the past, that child might have gone to Hadassah, but they couldn't get permission to leave Gaza. They couldn't even get past the checkpoint in Hanunas to get to Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City to have the ultrasound echocardiogram the baby needed to

make the diagnosis. And now the only hope for that child is if this outside group called PCRFB can take the baby out to get a transplant. And if not, the child is going to die. So, that child didn't do anything to deserve this.

Despite how difficult it is, there are ways to avoid these kinds of measures. And I think that it's quite extreme. So, even just survival right now, that's what I heard from people, is a form of resistance. Reopening the marketplace that was demolished in Hebron where they sold fruits and vegetables that were locally grown is an act of non-violent resistance. So, things you don't automatically assume because they don't take the form of some organized event in people's minds are how they are resisting what's going on right now. And that is quite widespread.

JADALLAH: Laila, you had a question from the young lady over there.

AL-MARAYATI: The question that came up about who participates in the dialogue. And also the question of understanding the anxiety and the existential issues among Jews themselves is something we don't appreciate. We haven't appreciated, and, as you said, people look at the Jewish community, influence of the Jewish community here as far as money that goes to the state of Israel and all the policies, and what could you be afraid of? And it's that very lack of understanding of Jewish history and identity that goes back thousands of years that in our community people have not been able to really understand. And that's something that could be looked into further, but it is people coming from totally different places. And I would say even the map, I have one of those, part of the reason has to do with keeping a historical memory of what Palestine once was, living in a fantasy of what Palestine could be, and feeling that you can't come to the point of admitting the defeat and loss, because nobody's going to hang anything around their neck that looks like the West Bank in Gaza. They're not even connected to each other.

So, as far as who should participate, it should be more people. And it should be people representing all of the different groups. But, to me, the question really is what's the purpose of the dialogue? I, like many, do not believe anymore in dialogue for the sake of dialogue. There's too much to do, too much is lost. And when you come at such a disparity and inequality of partners but you sit around the table as if you're all equal, you leave. When Jean leaves a dialogue, it takes her four hours to get home because she has to go through all these checkpoints and if they close it before she gets there, then she's stuck. That won't happen to the Israeli counterparts who might meet her in Jerusalem, and she can't even get to Jerusalem in the first place because she needs a permit to go there. So, you wonder what's the point. I think in this country, we need to have more discussion because of what this means for America, as Americans, as far as American policy is concerned. Because truthfully, we are not, even though I'm part of what I would call a diaspora, I really can't speak on behalf of Palestinians living there. And I really shouldn't. So, you have to look at what's the purpose, what's your goal in having the dialogue. And if people are committed to the goal of the dialogue, it should be anybody who wants to participate.

ZARU: First of all, I would like to say one thing, that I don't think it is just a problem for Palestinians and Israelis to solve alone. And we happen here to be maybe you think three

Palestinians, but not really. I mean they live in an American context, and Alma has been the moderator. She didn't speak. So, you had three voices. And the way they put us in compartments, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, or whatever. And I think we're more than that. This is one thing.

JADALLAH: And I'm the three of all that.

ZARU: Another thing I must say, you know, some people think that we are really just anxious to recite our litanies or lament about our situation. It is not easy for me to do that. I really want you to know, friends, I am really tired of that.

JADALLAH: Thank you.

ZARU: I would rather go into dialogue and discuss a play that you would take me to. I'd like to go to a movie. I'd like to go to a concert for some healing music. I do this not because I really want to do it or push myself into it, I'm invited to do it. And I think it would be hypocritical if we do not discuss the reality of our lives. That's one thing. So, I cannot just gloss over it and inhibit my pain and my reality so people can feel comfortable about it. I just want you to be sure about that.

Another thing, if you noticed what I read in my paper at the end, I spoke about transformation for all of us in every community and how we should move on. So, I didn't think it just concerns us here in the room alone or Palestinians and Israelis alone. So, I made these suggestions how to move from this. Now, who are the partners in dialogue? I've been with the World Conference on Religion and Peace, with the World Council, with the Royal Academy in Jordan of Prince Hassan, with the Vatican on Dialogue. I had too much of the theological dialogue. Frankly speaking, it did not deal with the reality. Because the reality is hard, and nobody wants to deal with hard issues, although for me, I think dogma is harder. Because nobody can take anybody else's dogma or doctrine. I think the partners in dialogue are people that can be committed to the same universal values, maybe derived from their faith traditions that can transform our societies toward global justice that was alluded to in the morning. And these are the partners that should be involved together to cross boundaries and to transform society.

JADALLAH: Thank you, Jean. I'd like to take permission from-- Ellie, can we just give Blu, she requested one more minute. I am also cognizant that we have another panel. Could we take permission from The Pluralism Project, since we started a bit late, just to have Blu have finishing remarks. I am aware that some of your questions were not answered directly, and since we are in a community of dialogue, after the session we would encourage you maybe to take your questions one on one. So, after Blu wraps up, we will just close the session. I'll take just one minute for closure.

GREENBERG: I may not be wrapping up, but opening up new things. But I'll just be very brief.

JADALLAH: And that's fine, I think.

GREENBERG: Okay, thank you. One is I want to say the fear is not about ancient fear, it's not our ancient echoes and reverberations, it's a very real fear. And Israelis traveling on roads have fear as much as. Secondly, I wanted to say I didn't really answer Dorothy's question fully, which was to say in response to a comment that was made here, too, that, of course, it implies dividing up the land in a way that is agreed upon. And our leaders and our governments have to do that. And it means sharing the land and, hopefully, I would hope for free passage between and Arabs living on Jewish land, Jews living on Arab lands. But I just wanted to add that.

In terms of collective punishment, I think the nature of urban warfare, you might say, or guerilla warfare, and that is it's a very complex issue, but part of it is that there have been, and these don't get into the papers here either, citizens hiding, harboring, encouraging suicide bombers, ambulances used for carrying explosives and transporting terrorists, pregnant women used as shields or covers. And I think these are all-- Again, as I said, it's a very complex issue.

And the last thing I wanted to say was a disproportionate use of force. I just have to strongly disagree with that. I think that the record will show a tremendous amount of restraint. Israeli Army is a very sophisticated army, and I think it has exercised enormous restraint, as I said before. But I just wanted to not let that comment about disproportionate use of force go by without adding my own correction of it.

JADALLAH: Okay, thank you, Blu. I would like to make a final personal comment in reference to who is at the table and who is not. As we have all listened, this is really a problem that has touched us, and I start off by saying on a personal and national and community level and global level. And what I would ask, if anything that has been said here that has maybe touched our heart is to continue to think about it in what ways. Because I heard not just to play conflict resolution and mediate, we have a lot in common, but rather say there is a lot in common in terms of our need to do something about this conflict. And I think that's what I heard, even from the questions that have been asked. And the resources in the room, whether it was an excellent question around the social contract or around the role of the military in defending individuals on the street or on the people level where people are connecting genuinely on a personal level to build bridges. And I was also part of a dialogue that Blu was part of, and I'm familiar with some of the challenges that she had faced amongst that.

And, so, I thank you and I encourage you. There are a lot of resources in the room that we find other opportunities and moments to come together and to finish up some of the unanswered questions or the probing that has started there. I thank you all.

END OF PANEL