



FINDING PATHWAYS

Middle Eastern Women's Peace Work and Challenges – Defining Actions to Build Peace



*Report from a Dialogue Seminar and a Public Lecture Campaign
with Women Peace Agents from Israel and Palestine*

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ABSTRACT

The Swedish Non-Governmental Organization [NGO] Operation 1325, working to promote the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325:2000, invited peace-working women from Israel and Palestine to participate in a seminar and a public lecture campaign arranged in Stockholm, Sweden, in March 2008. 13 peace agents gathered during one week to meet, share experiences and discuss possibilities for cooperation within the field of women, peace and security.

The arrangement consisted of two parts – a Dialogue Seminar and a Public Lecture Campaign. The aim of the Dialogue Seminar was to provide for the opportunity to meet on neutral ground and thereby render possible contacts, exchange of experience and collaboration between peace-working women in Israel and Palestine. The purpose of the Public Lecture Campaign – “Peace in the Middle East, Voices on the Conflict” – was to increase awareness of women’s peace initiatives relating to UN resolution 1325 among the Swedish public in order to stimulate the debate concerning the resolution in question.

- During the Dialogue Seminar, four different themes were addressed:
- Law – the judicial aspects of UN resolution 1325.
 - Media – how to work with UN resolution 1325 through media.
 - Political work – how to gain political influence to promote UN Resolution 1325.
 - Action plans – for implementation of UN resolution 1325 on international, national and on an organizational level.

All themes were processed in smaller groups where the participants defined the present situation, the change they desired for the future and concrete actions to bring this change about. Many suggestions were given; out of these, six were identified as “jewels” – actions easily realized and with great effect.

- Jewels**
- The training of women in feminist leadership.
 - The creation of joint projects with women’s organizations from both Israel and Palestine.
 - The development of networks between organizations and individuals.
 - To give information sessions on the issue of conflict.
 - To share information between different peace actors.
 - To raise awareness of the role of women in a militaristic society.

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, a number of Israeli, Palestinian and Swedish women representing different women and peace organizations met in Istanbul for a bridge-building seminar. Adding weight to the concept of “women as peace agents”, the aim was to inspire and exchange ideas from each others’ experiences of working on women and peace issues in different settings. The seminar also aimed at discussing and looking into possible ways for peace and women’s organizations in Palestine, Israel and Sweden to collaborate in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325:2000 on Women, Peace and Security.

Operation 1325 drew on the experiences and ideas put forth during this meeting in the creation of the framework for a follow up: “Middle Eastern Women’s Peace Work and Challenges”. The necessity to further deepen the network among the women and peace organizations had been strongly emphasized. The need to increase awareness, knowledge and successful information dissemination about the conflict and peace initiatives performed by women and peace organizations in the Middle East – from women’s perspective, was also identified as necessary to develop further. With this in mind and with much excitement we – 17 women from Israel, Palestine and Sweden – met during an eventful week in Stockholm in March 2008 for a combined Dialogue Seminar and Public Lecture Campaign.

We went from intense discussions and group work in the Dialogue Seminar to public lectures and curious dialogues with Swedish students during the Campaign. We worked with intense workshops in Stockholm and open seminars in Uppsala, Umea, Malmö and Lund. The week involved warmth and laughter, frustration and strong emotions. Controversial topics were discussed, sensitive themes put forth – it engages and evokes feelings. The Dialogue Seminar, aimed to further the network and awareness of each other’s work, to inspire and lift themes where women’s peace work has a role to play, coupled with the outreach event was a combination that required focus and a lot of energy from everyone. It was a responsibility where all of us contributed and made our very best which became apparent when looking at the results from the evaluation of the Public Lecture Campaign. It appears to have made a lasting and well-received impression among the audience whose feedback was very positive throughout.

It feels as if we lived in a weekly long fog – or bubble – where women, peace and UN resolution 1325 imbued all aspects of life. It was a week of paramount importance. Partly for the encouragement and motivation to one’s own peace work that it brought about; partly for the important contribution to and example of the world wide activities that are required, and performed but not sufficiently known – in order to fully implement UN resolution 1325. Collaboration projects like this – seeking to make visible and known the important roles and peace work of women and further widen networks and collaboration arenas do not only add legitimacy to UN resolution 1325 but provides a forum that makes possible the exchange of experiences between women who cannot meet even though they are neighbours. A project like this adds weight to the concept of women as peace agents and generates new ideas for actions, thus encouraging a continued work for equal peace.

Encouragement and inspiration are the sentiments with which I – and more people with me – look back at this week. The hope for the future is that these feelings will be translated into actions that ultimately contribute to equal peace – a peace where women have been involved and visible throughout the peace process. Remembering the faces of the dedicated and committed women peace workers who created a truly inspiring and enriching week, I am convinced that eventually, we will find the pathway leading to peace.

Nina Olsson
Project Leader
Operation 1325

BRIDGING THE GAP

*“How is the situation for us as peace-working women today?
How would we like it to be? What can we do to bridge the gap between the two?”*

These questions were pondered over by 13 women peace agents from Israel and Palestine during a Dialogue Seminar hosted by Operation 1325 in March 2008. During three days, the participants shared experiences of living in a situation of conflict and working for peace and justice. Many issues were brought up – some were agreed upon and others remained to be developed in future discussions.

During the same week a Public Lecture Campaign was realized. The peace-working women visited universities all over Sweden and spoke about their experiences in relation to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325:2000 with three questions as a point of departure:

*“How am I affected by the situation in Israel and Palestine?
How do I work to affect the situation?
How could the Swedish public act to affect the situation?”*

In this report, the outcome of the Dialogue Seminar and the Public Lecture Campaign is presented. In the following chapter, an introduction will be given to UN resolution 1325, the initiative taker to the seminar – Operation 1325, and to all the participants.

UN resolution 1325

UN resolution 1325 was passed in October 2000 and is partly a result of decades of advocacy from civil society and women’s organizations all over the world. The aim of the resolution is to increase the involvement of women throughout the whole peace process – in all work to prevent, manage and solve conflicts. Furthermore, the goal is to implement UN resolution 1325 at the local, national, regional and international level.

The 18 paragraphs of UN resolution 1325 can be grouped under three broad themes. The first theme highlights women’s roles as active agents for peace and for example calls for more women as mediators in conflict resolution. The second theme deals with the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives, for example in the area of education. The third theme emphasizes that women are particularly exposed during conflict and that women’s rights should be considered and secured. An example of this is to make sure that women’s needs are provided for when planning refugee camps.

UN resolution 1325 is unique in several ways. First of all, it withholds a strong support from the civil society and second, the adoption of the resolution implied that the Security Council for the first time analyzed security policies from a gender perspective. Moreover, UN resolution 1325 recognizes the diversity of women’s situation in conflicts by emphasizing both their role as agents for peace and particular vulnerability.

Operation 1325

Operation 1325 was founded in 2003 and became an umbrella organization in 2006. The initiative came from five peace and women's organizations¹ concerned with what they considered to be a slow implementation of UN resolution 1325 adopted three years earlier.

The goal of Operation 1325 is to contribute to the full implementation of UN resolution 1325 both in Sweden and internationally. This includes that more women should be involved in all work for peace and security and that the experience, knowledge and needs of women should be considered when working to prevent and solve conflicts, as well as in the rebuilding process after a conflict.

To attain this goal, Operation 1325 concentrates the work on three areas of action. First, the organization works with information directed at the public to raise awareness about the issues brought up in the resolution. Second, Operation 1325 trains and conducts capacity-building work with women to reinforce the competency requested for working on an international level. The third area of action is advocacy towards people in decision-making positions nationally, in the European Union [EU] and the United Nations [UN] – in order to encourage and ensure their commitment on working with UN resolution 1325.

Since the establishment of Operation 1325, the organization has held five international seminars of which three have included participants from the Middle East.² The seminar preceding the event covered in this report was held a year earlier – March 2007 in Istanbul, Turkey. The former seminar has served as an important point of departure when planning the Dialogue Seminar and the Public Lecture Campaign described in this report. The aim of this report is to facilitate the planning of eventual future seminars and cooperation as well as to give the readers a comprehensive insight in the unique meeting between women working for peace in Israel, Palestine and Sweden.

In international cooperation projects such as the event addressed in this report, Operation 1325 seeks to involve all aspects of the organization's activities – information through the Public Lecture Campaign, training through the Dialogue Seminar and advocacy through a seminar for parliamentarians.

The Organizations' Web Pages

WILPF:	http://www.wilpf.int.ch
Isha L'Isha:	http://www.isha.org.il/default.php?lng=3
New Profile:	http://www.newprofile.org
WIAM:	http://alastah.org/address
Sabeel:	http://www.sabeel.org
Jerusalem Center for Women:	http://www.j-c-w.org/index.php
Meretz Yahad:	http://www.myparty.org.il/main-branch/en
International Women's Commission:	http://iwc-peace.org
Sikkuy:	http://www.sikkuy.org.il/english/home.html
Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace:	http://www.adaminstitute.org.il/english/index.html

¹ The Federation of International Association for Immigrant Women, the Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council, the Swedish section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, UNIFEM and Women for Peace.

² For more information, see the reports covering these seminars: "The Way Forward", "How to Wage Peace" and "Women's Empowerment"

³ The information outlined in this chapter is based on the participants' presentations during the Seminar and information retrieved from the organizations' Web Pages. Some information has been retrieved from www.peacewomen.org.

13 Peace Agents Visiting Sweden

The following chapter will serve as an introduction of the women who participated during the week – all peace activists, some working within an organization or political party and others active on their own. Below, all participants and their involvement in peace work are presented.³

Aliyah Strauss is the President for the Israeli Section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF]. The aim of her organization is to bring together women of different political beliefs and philosophies who all are determined to work for world peace. One example of how this is done is by supporting the implementation of international humanitarian law.

Galia Aviani and **Manal Shalabi** are both members of Isha L'Isha, "woman-to-woman". They are active within the organization's Jewish-Palestinian Feminist Center in Haifa where they work to raise awareness about women's inferior conditions in the society and to promote equality for all women. Isha L'Isha furthermore runs the Project for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Galia Aviani is moreover a political activist and Manal Shalabi works with the Haifa Battered Women's Hotline.

Salwa Duaibis is part of the MATTIN Group that works with policy research and advocacy concerning the economic and human rights of Palestinians. The group focuses on Europe's relations with Israel and Palestine, monitoring how the EU responds to the actions of the Israeli Government.



Susie Becher is member of the Israeli political party Meretz-Yahad that considers a comprehensive peace with the Arab world an objective of highest priority, and that a permanent settlement with the Palestinian people is of vital importance. Furthermore, the party stands for human and civil rights and social justice.

"Today, I wish to urge the participants in our seminar, these women of peace, to make NOW the theme of our meetings. Women now; an agreement now; implementation now; peace now."

Susie Becher, Meretz Yahad

Dina Zreineh works with Sabeel, an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement for Palestinian Christians. Sabeel promotes justice, peace and reconciliation in Israel and Palestine by working internationally – raising awareness about the situation in the region and locally, with different programs to empower the population.

Rachelle Friesen is a Canadian volunteer living in Bethlehem, working with the organization WIAM. WIAM aims to create better relationships and promote peace and reconciliation in the Palestinian community through various activities. Furthermore, the goal of the organization is to strengthen democratic norms and values in the society.

"Our children's program provides recreational activities and we also provide trauma coping skills. We would love to provide trauma healing skills; however, everyday kids undergo another layer of trauma. All we can do is teach them how to cope with the trauma they are living with."

Rachelle Friesen, WIAM

Michal Gelbal works with New Profile – Movement for the Civil-ization of Israeli Society. The organization consists of feminist women and men who are decisive to change the current profile of the Israeli society – the one of militarization. To achieve this, New Profile works with awareness-raising through exhibitions and lectures and with counseling networks for people who refuses military service.

Tahani Abu Daqa is the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture of the Palestinian Authority. She also works with the International Women's Commission, an organization with women from Israel, Palestine and other countries with the aim to ensure the implementation of UN resolution 1325.

Mariam Ikrimawi works with the Jerusalem Center for Women in East Jerusalem that focuses on Palestinian women and cooperates with an Israeli Women's Center in West Jerusalem through a coordinating body called the Jerusalem Link. Within the centers, a number of activities are pursued concerning UN resolution 1325, human rights, democracy and international law.

"Women must be central partners in the peace process. Their active and equal participation in decision making and negotiations is crucial to the fulfillment of a just and viable peace."

9th Principle of the Jerusalem Link

Chassia Chomsky works with Sikkuy – Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel. Sikkuy means chance or opportunity and the organization seeks to increase the equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. The three core values – equality, shared citizenship and human dignity – are promoted for example through advocacy and education.

Susan Nathan is an internationally known author, her most famous book being "The Other Side of Israel – My Journey Across the Jewish/Arab Divide". Furthermore, she holds lectures addressing what she perceives as a militaristic and chauvinistic Israeli society and is very critical towards Israel's way of treating the Arab population – a behavior she compares to apartheid.

Nasrin Murqus works within the Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace, an institute that develops programmes promoting education for democracy, peace, civic education and methods of conflict resolution. The programmes are mainly targeting individuals within the educational system but are also directed towards community activists and immigrants.

MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN'S PEACE WORK AND CHALLENGES – THE DIALOGUE SEMINAR

In the following section, the four themes of the Dialogue Seminar – law, media, political work and action plans – will be presented. Furthermore, the work of Operation 1325 will be introduced and the outcome of the workshops⁴ during the Seminar will be summarized. Thereafter, a brief review of the participants' opinions about the Seminar is presented.

The Dialogue Seminar started with all participants identifying the paragraphs in UN resolution 1325 they considered most relevant for their organizations and situations. The participants were encouraged to consider how the specific paragraphs could be implemented in relation to the themes processed. Following this discussion, a lecture was held where Operation 1325's work with UN resolution 1325 was introduced to inspire the group discussions. Thereafter, the four themes were treated one by one. The four themes derived from reviews and expressed opinions during earlier conferences.

- Law – the judicial aspects of UN resolution 1325.
- Media – how to work with UN resolution 1325 through media.
- Political work – how to gain political influence to promote UN resolution 1325.
- Action plans – for implementation of UN resolution 1325 on international, national and organizational level.

All these issues were addressed using the methodology presented below.

Methodology

The appropriate way of working with UN resolution 1325 always depends on the context in which the activity is to be performed. Therefore the method used for the Dialogue Seminar was to provide a framework, where the knowledge and experiences of the participants would be emphasized. Each session was divided in three sections; an inspiration speech on the specific theme, a group discussion and the sharing of results.

Inspiration Speech

As an introduction to each theme, people with specific experience from the topic in focus was invited to give a brief lecture to frame the subject and inspire the participants.

⁴ Throughout the report, the term workshop, group discussion and group work will be used synonymously.



Group Discussion

After the inspiration speech, the participants were divided into smaller groups to discuss their own experiences related to the topic. The workshop departed from the following questions:

1. Today – What is working poorly or is difficult? What effects do this have on you / others? What is actually working fairly well?
2. The Future – What are the fears for the future if no change occurs? What are the hopes for the future? What would a desirable future situation be?
3. Pathways – What concrete goal should you / your organization have in order to contribute to improve the situation? What concrete actions can you take to bring this about?

Sharing Results

At the end of each session the conclusions of the workshop were reported back in plenary.

Room for Flexibility

During the seminar, some new issues and topics for discussion occurred – among them a desire to formulate a joint press release from the peace working women from Israel and Palestine regarding the situation in Gaza that was severe during the week of the event. When such topics occurred, the guiding principle was to allot time. However, all topics could not be dealt with thoroughly in this forum. Nevertheless, ideas and suggestions put forth are invaluable for the organizers if the possibility to hold future meetings presents itself.

Operation 1325 – Working with UN resolution 1325 through Action Plans

The first inspiration speech was given by Maj Britt Theorin, Vice President of Operation 1325, who started by giving a short historical background of the organization which was founded in 2003. One of the aims was to make the Swedish Government develop an action plan for the implementation of UN resolution 1325. However, it soon became clear that the organization needed an action plan itself.

In Operation 1325's Action Plan 2007–2008 the goal is to transform UN resolution 1325 into practice. The initial focus has been on the § 1–9 and on § 17, whereas the upcoming Action Plan will have a broader focus including all paragraphs. To fulfill the goals and ambitions in the Action Plan Operation 1325 works in three different areas: advocacy, education and information. In relation to each area, a number of goals are guiding the work.

Political Influence on Several Levels

The main focus of Theorin's speech was the work related to political advocacy and the content of the Action Plan 2007–2008. When formulating this Action Plan, Operation 1325 decided to act on the national, Nordic, European and United Nations [UN] level. On the national level, Operation 1325 demanded the Government to support the enacting of a roster of qualified women to increase the representation of women in peace work. However such a roster still has not come into practice and Theorin expressed her conviction that no change in women's participation in peace work will occur without an index of qualified women.

When forming the Action Plan, Operation 1325 also decided to encourage members of the Swedish Parliament to act for women's involvement in peace processes through seminars, meetings and by assisting in the writing of proposals. Moreover, military and police authorities were requested to ensure that gender questions become a central part in their educations. Since Sweden will hold the presidency of the European Union [EU] in the second half of 2009, Theorin explained that Operation 1325 will request a meeting with the responsible ministers to demand that UN resolution 1325 is brought up on the agenda of the EU during the Swedish presidency.



On the Nordic level, cooperation with the civil society within these countries was identified as an important area in the Action Plan 2007–2008. On the European level, Operation 1325 decided to send a letter to the spokes person of the EU to ask how a gender perspective is incorporated into the peace-building activities of the EU. Moreover, the organization incorporated into the Action Plan that the Government should be urged to demand annual reports from all countries on what has been done for the implementation on UN resolution 1325 and to make the same request within the UN.

Operation 1325 also included in the Action Plan that the Government should be encouraged to adopt a policy to work internationally to promote women's participation in peace processes. Furthermore, the Government should suggest two qualified candidates for every civilian UN mission – one man and one woman, and make sure that no country allows impunity for soldiers who have committed rape or outrage against women. Additionally, Operation 1325 decided to demand answers from the Government on how they have implemented directives from the Secretary-General of the UN concerning UN resolution 1325.

A new Action Plan is now in process. One of the supplements that will be made is that a hearing with politicians is planned to take place in the summer of 2008 focusing on what the Government have done in order to implement UN resolution 1325. Operation 1325 is also planning a specific program for folk high school teachers. In her conclusion, Theorin emphasized the usefulness of two action plans: one for the Government and a second for the organization itself.

The Judicial Aspects of UN resolution 1325

The second block of the Dialogue Seminar dealt with the judicial aspects of UN resolution 1325 and the inspiration speech was given by Salwa Duaibis from the MATTIN Group. The MATTIN group is a policy research and advocacy partnership based in Ramallah, focusing on economic and human rights of Palestinians. As an introduction, Duaibis defined the situation in Israel and Palestine not as an armed conflict but as an occupation. She emphasized that all occupations are submitted to certain rules, but that Israel rather acts as if in a situation between two armies.

“We are at war – the war of knowledge and accurate information, precision and diligence.”

Duaibis explained that an occupying power has duties to the occupied population. For example, an occupying power is not allowed to transfer the population to occupied areas or cause unnecessary harm in order to protect itself. Thus, Duaibis claimed that Israel can build a wall for security reasons, but the wall cannot cause unnecessary harm to Palestinians.

“We as women are particularly interested in enforcing rules and laws. Laws are there to restrict the use of natural or unnatural advantages that we as women lack.”

During occupation, the occupying power is responsible for institutional functions in the occupied territory until the occupation ceases. Duaibis pointed to the fact that institutions are especially important for women; if there is no government where to address human rights-demands, women are the first to suffer. Duaibis concluded that Israel does not fulfil any of the above mentioned responsibilities and the wall causes harm to Palestinians. Furthermore, Duaibis added that Israel targets public institutions, civilians and food supply-storages in attacks.

To Play by the Rules

Duaibis asserted that “If we find ourselves playing a game, even if against our will, we should do it by the rules”, in this case the rules of international law. Parts of international law was formulated with the aim to protect the rights of civilians, but no decisions were made on concrete means to enforce it. Thus, the enforcement depends of the political will of ruling states in the UN and the countries in the Security Council with the right to veto. This lack of a concrete enforcement mechanism is a crucial weakness of the system of international law, according to Duaibis.

Duaibis however explained that it is of common interest to the states that developed international law that legal obligations are respected. For example, the EU is founded upon laws that member countries are obligated to comply with and some laws extend to the countries with which the union are related. Duaibis expressed that the European countries great respect for law is an important opportunity for influence; it can be of great value to anchor the work of our organizations in international law.

Since the EU has extensive relations with Israel, Israel is embodied by the laws agreed upon in the union. According to Duaibis, Israel therefore cannot apply what law they want to the occupied areas but is obliged to respect the EU regulation. Israel applies national law to the settlers, thus not in compliance with European legal obligations. Duaibis considers this is an opportunity for the EU to take action and pressure Israel to live up to their legal obligations and commitments made.

“The Europeans say all the right things at all occasions, but are not very prone to act when an opportunity presents itself.”

Duaibis expressed that there is a discrepancy between the European rhetoric and way of acting – even though the EU makes statements critical to the behaviour of Israel, concrete actions are not taken. Furthermore, EU law functions in a way where the nation or person subjected to a crime must call for attention to the misdeed committed and it thus falls upon every individual to speak out.

As an example where EU law contributed to an adjustment of the Israeli behavior, Duaibis mentioned that in Israel, it is in compliance with the law to label products produced on occupied territories as Israeli. This practice is contradictory to EU law which have resulted in that these products are no longer labeled as such.

Duaibis concluded by emphasizing that change starts with individuals for example asking questions about the origin of products when visiting the super market or deciding to interfere with politicians taking decisions that violate international law.

Group Work – Changing the Military Language and Developing Networks

Today

After Duaibis speech, the participants divided into smaller groups to apply and discuss judicial aspects on UN resolution 1325 in their own organizations and work. Many groups expressed a concern with the concept of “security” as it often lacks the dimension of women and solely refers to men and the military. Obtaining military security can sometimes imply threatening individual security. The lack of legal sanctions to violations of international law was considered problematic and it was mentioned that the Israeli state has accepted UN resolution 1325, but not implemented it. Vagueness in the formulations of international law opens up for Israel’s own interpretations, resulting in a continuing occupation. This impacts on the entire life of all Palestinians. However, the impacts of Israeli politics are not restricted to the lives of people in Palestine. There has been an increasing demoralization and a greater control of Israeli citizens for security reasons in the Israeli society.

The boycott of Israeli products by the international community and the intent to arrest Israeli military men abroad was mentioned as things working fairly well, along with international laws functioning as a point of departure for women peace workers and UN resolution 1325.

Future

The workshop also included analyzing the future and identifying fears and hopes. Expressed fears were a normalization of the situation of oppression and occupation and that women will continue to pay the highest price in an even more violent and chaotic society. The participants hoped for the occupation to end, and “that Israel shrinks down to its size, not perceiving itself as the super-victim, super-power, super-everything.”

Pathways

The groups also discussed goals and actions to achieve these goals. Several aims were presented, such as raised awareness of UN resolution 1325, a change in the military language in general and the concept of security in particular. Other suggestions were to make Israel implement UN resolution 1325 and other international laws related to the occupation, and to affect media to report about the situation in the occupied territories to a greater extent. Possible actions brought up to attain these goals were to support women in positions of decision-making, make use of the positions they hold and empower women with special skills and abilities.

“The goal is to create a brave new world!”

Moreover, the groups discussed the necessity to develop the networks between women’s organizations in order to distill the most important information to reach out in joint action. Dissemination of relevant information, for example through booklets describing the history of both sides, combined with public lectures and small group meetings was also brought up, as well as boycotting goods produced in occupied territories.

The Importance of Media for UN resolution 1325

Concerning the media, Agneta Söderberg Jacobson from Kvinna till Kvinna (Swedish section of Woman to Woman) was invited to inspire on how to engender media. In her introduction, Söderberg Jacobson gave examples on how media has been used to worsen violent situations by broadcasting hate speeches and alike, as the case in Rwanda. However, media can also be an important field for action when working to create a sustainable peace.

Women and media were identified as one of twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Plan of Action in 1995. However, when reviewing the progress, little has been accomplished when it comes to integrating perspectives of women in mainstream media.

“Media produces a stereotype of women as victims, which they are, but they are so much more! Women are also actors, active in all spheres of society.”

Media functions as the mirror of the world. Nevertheless, a research from 2005 shows that men were portrayed in 79 per cent of the news objects and women were only portrayed in 21 per cent. Furthermore, over 80 per cent of the experts are men, while women tend to be portrayed rather as individuals in the private sphere.

Reports from conflict and war are, however, even more one-sided according to Söderberg Jacobson. What is seen in the media is rather the image of women crying in despair than women actively demonstrating for peace. This produces stereotypes of women as victims, in spite of the fact that women are so much more - they are also active in all spheres of society.



Engendered Peace Journalism Changes Perceptions

Söderberg Jacobson posed the question how this can be changed and what the long term effects of gender balance in conflict reporting would be? Is it possible that it would create better conditions for peace? One way to change the imbalance in conflict reporting could be “peace journalism”, a theory introduced by Johan Galtung, who focused on structural violence opposed to the actual, visible violence. His thoughts were further developed by Jake Lynche and Annabel McGoldrick in the book “Peace Journalism”. This theory challenges us to analyze journalist work and look for alternative sources of information. The questions are why certain sources of information are considered more relevant, and what alternative sources are there that could be used? Söderberg Jacobson explained that peace journalism did not include a conscious gender perspective to start with, which is why Kvinna till Kvinna is now working to incorporate this into the theoretical framework.

An important principle of peace journalism that Söderberg Jacobson mentioned was that all fractions of a conflict should be listened to. If this were to be fulfilled, it would broaden the perspectives of a conflict. For example, women are more responsible for day-to-day survival during war which provides them with different perspectives than those not involved in this. Therefore, they tend to see possibilities that others cannot see. Söderberg Jacobson said that unfortunately, women do not get much air-time in the news, nor do their peace initiatives. If these were paid more attention, it would change how conflicts are perceived in the matter of possibilities for peace. Söderberg Jacobson emphasized the fact that flows of information around the world affects conflicts to a greater extent today than ever before.

As a point of departure for how to analyze the engendering of media, Söderberg Jacobson suggested four questions.

How can we change the way the media consider news?

How can we encourage media to take on a gender-perspective?

How can we make media involve women also regarding what is traditionally perceived as “hard” issues?

In what ways can we promote gender and conflict reporting?

Söderberg Jacobson has observed a trend towards a more gender-aware journalism in Sweden and ascribes this development to advocacy and information campaigns. Two other factors that she also believes have affected this tendency are the emergence of alternative media like blogging and the fact that the audience is more critical than it used to be.

Group Work – Monitoring the Engendering of Media

Today

When reporting the conclusions from the workshop back in plenary, several groups mentioned that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is covered solely by male specialists. Media presents Palestinians as numbers without faces and families and on both sides, media is dominated by politicians and political groups serving the regimes. At the same time journalists report their interpretations as objective facts.

“At the end of the day, when the decision is made, it is not a place for women.”

Regarding women in media they are judged harder than men; either because of their views or because of their appearance. Moreover, women working in media do not always imply gender sensitivity and even when they are aware about gender issues, they are limited due to the system. One thing mentioned to work fairly well is the growing number of women visible in media.

The effects of the above outlined are that women’s issues seldom are put forth or made visible. When women are heard, they are often dismissed as carried away by their emotions. The exclusion of women’s perspectives creates a public opinion where neither women’s concerns nor perspectives are present.

Future

A variety of fears and hopes were put forth by the participants as a result of the discussions in small groups. Among the fears was adoption of laws restricting the freedom of press, which would result in that atrocities could be committed hidden from the public eye. Some participants mentioned a fear that a movement to the right in the Israeli society would cause a deteriorating situation for women. Others expressed that if the situation remains as today more stereotypes, ignorance and dehumanization is likely to be expected. Moreover, there was a discussion about the difficulty concerning the need to speak out about violence against women in Palestine, and by doing so risking to demonize Arab med further.

Gender sensitivity in journalist educations was mentioned as a hope for the future along with more gender aware women represented in the media. Another expectation was that media will present a less one-sided perspective by including women, and that it would be made visible how the occupation serves to make patriarchy stronger.

Pathways

Many suggestions on actions were put forth, for example to raise awareness amongst women journalists and form action groups that monitors and reacts to stereotyped media reporting. Counting the media coverage of women and scrutinize how the marginalized people of society are covered could be part of the monitoring. Other suggestions were to highlight women working for peace and make women in conflict visible through different campaigns.

Another idea was to train women and youth how to handle media. The participants should be taught how to take photos, talk to journalists and conduct correct fact findings. Some participants also raised the possibility to write, publish articles and give lectures.

Gaining Political Influence to Promote UN resolution 1325

Tahani Abu Daqqa, Palestinian Minister of Sports, Youth and Culture addressed a number of problems concerning women trying to gain political influence in her inspiration speech. She also challenged the participants to take a number of actions.

*“We should never be silent and
accept to be ignored.
We must raise our voices.”*

Abu Daqqa’s experience from politics is that women are always nominated last to political positions. A way to change this pattern is to enforce a quota system, but in the Palestinian context it does not function as a mean to promote women’s issues, according to Abu Daqqa. Women that identify themselves as feminist are simply not nominated. There are examples where a woman has been elected for a council, but her husband has shown up at council meetings instead of her which indicates that the woman was only elected because of the quota system, but in reality, the nomination was intended for her husband. Another problem brought up by Abu Daqqa was that women are not educated to be leaders or to handle media to the same extent as men which makes it harder to find qualified women to nominate.

*“Many women back off if they are
contradicted, but we must not.
If you stand up and fight,
they will eventually respect you.”*

Abu Daqqa emphasized the need for women to cooperate and support each other to a greater extent. Furthermore, Abu Daqqa identified as a problem that women politicians and peace workers choose not to support women who they disagree with. However, all women in process of gaining political influence should be supported. “We need to seize all opportunities to get women into politics.” Abu Daqqa expressed that if women are not backed by other women they will seek support elsewhere – often from men.

Once appointed to a political position a woman is often regarded as a woman only and not, as in the case of Abu Daqqa, a minister. It is however possible to change the way you are perceived by not giving up when criticized for your proposals. Regarding proposals focusing on gender issues Abu Daqqa’s opinion is that gender budgeting is crucial to make it possible to fund projects for gender equity.

The Need for an Index of Qualified Women

Regarding the question how women can gain political influence, Abu Daqqa emphasized the necessity of creating an index of competent and qualified women, to ensure that there is always someone to nominate when a position is available. Furthermore, Abu Daqqa claimed that the creation of such index is an important area of action for women’s organizations.

All opportunities to personally influence politicians in decision-making positions should be seized. It is crucial not to abstain from contacting politicians we do not agree with; instead we should set out to influence such persons and their politics. If our opinions do not correspond with those of the person we need to address, we should seek to explain this to the person in question and not choose to abstain. Abu Daqqa stressed that someone who knows a politician personally has an excellent possibility to impact this person.

*“We need an index of qualified women,
and to develop such an index
is an important task for NGOs.”*

Abu Daqqa concluded her speech by saying that the experience from her political career is that minds can and do change.

Group Work – Developing an Index

Today

After Abu Daqqa's speech, the group again divided into smaller groups to discuss the issue of political influence more thoroughly. Many concerns were targeted as working poorly such as women politicians not being taken seriously and the issue of women not supporting other women. Informal decision-making channels, where women are not represented were also mentioned and some claimed that women are used as mere window-dressing. Another problem brought up was that men as politicians work with what is traditionally perceived as "high politics" whereas women are restricted to "low politics". One part of the problem is also that both women and men accept these definitions. Furthermore, many women in political positions are not working for a gender agenda and there is a general lack of gender awareness in public institutions.

"Women are put up front, but not involved in decision-making. They are used as window-dressing."

It was mentioned that women from the civil society do often not want to work within the established formal structures – the problems of identifying with politics makes the step from civil society into politics difficult. Those who have chosen to work outside of the establishment due to their disagreements with the ruling powers have difficulties gaining respect for their engagement. The one thing mentioned working fairly well was the quota-system.

Future

When reporting in plenary regarding the fears and hopes for the future, it was brought up as fear that women and women's perspectives would be absent in peace negotiations and also that women actually involved in mediations will not be motivated or able to push for a feminist agenda. At the same time, more women in conflict management and gender mainstreamed decision-making were presented as future hopes. Further expectations were that there will be a change in attitudes on what is perceived as "high" and "low" politics and that women will be chosen for positions because of their qualities, not because of a quota system demanding a woman. Furthermore, the groups hoped that women learn to be more assertive and supportive of each other and wished that more men and women become involved in the peace movement.

Pathways

Many participants meant that the formulated hopes were also the goals. Moreover, that the Israeli Govern-

ment implement UN resolution 1325 was brought up, as well as raised gender awareness in the establishment and decision-making bodies. Another goal formulated was to form and mobilize "a critical mass" of cooperating peace-working women with the ability to monitor and question political decisions.

A media campaign was suggested to put pressure on the Israeli Government to implement UN resolution 1325. Further suggestions were to publish an index of competent and qualified women and to conduct work aimed at strengthening the solidarity among feminist women. Also, female codes to use in peace negotiations should be formulated, as opposed to male codes dominating today.

A Variety of Action Plans

The fourth theme of the Dialogue Seminar was action plans. Anna Sundén, coordinator at Operation 1325, gave an inspiration speech regarding this issue. She asked a rhetoric question: are national action plans to be considered a tool for advocacy and implementation of UN resolution 1325 – or just paper tigers?

Sundén gave the lecture from a Swedish horizon, but started off mentioning something about the work on the international level. Within the EU, there is no system-wide action plan on how to implement UN resolution 1325. During a seminar with representatives from Nordic civil society organizations held in Brussels, it became clear that there is a great need for work on the resolution within the EU system. Regarding the UN, the system-wide action plan ran out last year but a number of follow-ups have been made. Sundén's impression was that there are a lot of documents, drafts and plans written about the matter but that a joint initiative is missing.

How can we as NGO then contribute? The drafting of the Swedish Action Plan began in 2005, after pressure from the civil society. During the process, Operation 1325 was invited to consultative meetings along with several other organizations, people from the academia and different governmental authorities. The meetings resulted in an Action Plan that covered the years of 2006–2008.

The Action Plan has several focal points such as women's participation in peace processes and the protection of women and girls during and after conflict and covers the national and European level as well as the international. Different authorities such as the police, Sida, the foreign ministry and the national defense college are pointed out as responsible actors for the implementation of the Action Plan but also NGOs.



Remaining Concerns

Sundén appreciated the inclusion of Operation 1325 in the consultancy process but not all demands raised during this period were considered or reflected in the Action Plan. Among these concerns was the need to develop policies for conflict prevention and peace keeping, not only military strategies on how to act when the conflict has already occurred.

One demand made by Operation 1325 was also that equal funds should be provided for prevention of conflicts as for intervention in conflicts. Another suggestion was to develop strategies on how to mainstream gender in conflict management. Moreover, Operation 1325 wanted the Action Plan to emphasize more clearly that education of women should be supported, that there is a need to develop an index of competent women and that more women must be involved in all peace work.

So, are national action plans on UN resolution 1325 tool for advocacy and implementation of UN resolution 1325 – or just paper tigers? Sundén asserted that the National Action Plan can definitely be a tool for advocacy and implementation of UN resolution 1325. It provides the civil society with an opportunity to scrutinize and follow up what is being done and subsequently, what remains to be done. This opportunity has been seized in several ways.

Operation 1325 has for example written an assessment report on how the police have worked with the resolution and there will be a hearing with the Minister of Development this summer, where the Government will be asked to declare for their efforts on the implementation of the Action Plan. Moreover, the Plan is important for NGOs when arguing for the contributions of the civil society.

However, Sundén expressed a fear that the Action Plan can end up as just another paper tiger – many of the goals formulated in the Action Plan are broad and vague which makes it difficult to make concrete demands and to assess when the objectives of the Action Plan are fulfilled.

To summarize, Sundén concluded that apart from the problem of unspecific goals, there are no grave hindrances or obstacles for the Action Plan to be a useful tool for the implementation of UN resolution 1325.

Group Work – The Importance of Cooperation

The groups reported back suggestions on goals and actions on a national or organizational level in plenary.

Pathways

All groups concentrated mainly on defining actions, but four goals were formulated:

- Raising awareness about UN resolution 1325.
- Increasing the participation of women as equal partners in decision-making.
- Incorporating a feminist agenda in conflict resolution.
- Mapping the needs of women in conflict.

Mapping the needs and the political representation of women were defined as actions. Another suggestion was to narrow down "implementation of UN resolution 1325" to concrete actions and projects, in order to be able to make specific demands towards the Israeli Government. Moreover, the importance of raising awareness on UN resolution 1325 amongst women in Israel and Palestine was emphasized, in order for them to use the resolution as a way to formalize their demands and use it as a mechanism for pressuring.

Further actions were the creation of an index of qualified women, to carry out media campaigns, to write position papers and to teach conflict resolution within the organizations. All this can preferably be done in cooperation with several women's organizations in order to have more thorough power.

"Media campaigns, creating an index or teaching conflict resolution – all our activities will have greater effect if they are realized in cooperation with several women's organizations."

Several groups suggested documenting and spreading information about women's special needs and violations against women and humanity during conflict. Another crucial goal was to help women support each other where actions are needed to facilitate and stimulate that development. Whereas some meant that such cooperation could not always come naturally as women can and do work with opposing goals, it was still an overarching objective and goal to develop the solidarity and collaboration between women.

Possible Areas for Collaboration

Nina Olsson summed up the outcome of the Dialogue Seminar in a closing session with the purpose to highlight Possible Areas for Collaboration on goals and actions formulated during the Seminar. Olsson reviewed the four thematic areas one by one with special focus on goals and actions. Finally, she concluded the session by giving all participants the opportunity to formulate individual action plans for the implementation of UN resolution 1325.

Law – Raise Awareness and Expand Networks

Goals

To reach out with accurate and distilled information to women and youth in Israel and Palestine.

That NGO's in Israel contribute to the implementation of international law and better norms in society to a greater extent.

Awareness about the rule of law.

Actions

Projects aimed to raise awareness on international law.

Maintaining and expanding networks between NGO's to conduct joint actions.

Boycotting of products produced in settlements.

Media – Monitor and Train

Goals

Empowering women by media training.

Getting women journalists to listen to the voices of peace working women.

Changing the one-sided picture of women in the media.

Greater gender sensitivity amongst youth and women.

Actions

Providing media training and courses.

Monitoring the representation of women in the media.



Political Work – Develop Index of Qualified Women

Goals

An index with competent and qualified women for peace work.

Capacity-building of women.

That women are chosen because of their qualifications – not because of the quota system.

Changed political terminology – no longer male-centered.

More women and men in the peace movement.

Actions

Raising gender awareness among decision-makers and in the establishment.

Developing “female codes” as opposed to “male codes” that dominate peace negotiations today.

Encouraging conduct of peace oriented politics.

Action Plans – Map Needs and Actions

Goals

Increased participation of women in peace work.

Women and men functioning as equal partners.

Raised awareness of UN resolution 1325.

An index gathering women's capabilities.

Stimulating solidarity between women's organizations.

Ability to concretize and demand the implementation of certain paragraphs in UN resolution 1325, particularly relevant for our specific organizations.

Promotion of feminist agenda in society.

Actions

Mapping actions that are gender sensitive in the political arena.

Mapping actions to engender the political arena.

Mapping needs related to women's issues.

Teaching conflict resolution within the own organizations.

Conducting media campaigns.

Writing petition papers.

Collecting testimonies from women in conflict situations.

Raising awareness about women's different roles before, during and after conflict.

Supporting networking between women's organizations for information sharing.

Make use of the positions of women decision-makers.

Summing Up



Addressing action plans on the organizational and national level, Olsson reminded about the fact that the outcome of the Dialogue Seminar constitutes a strong foundation for action plans regarding law, media and political influence. As for the individual level, Olsson introduced an exercise to encourage the participants to formulate one action to perform during 2008. The exercise included judging the degree of difficulty and the effects of the actions formulated. Together the group identified six actions that would be easy to perform and have great effect – Olsson referred to these actions as “jewels”.

Jewels

- The training of women in feminist leadership.
- The creation of joint projects with women's organizations from both Israel and Palestine.
- The development of networks between organizations and individuals.
- To give information sessions on issues related to conflict.
- To share information between different peace actors.
- To raise awareness of the role of women in a militaristic society.

Quick Review

The objective of the Dialogue Seminar – to facilitate the contact, collaboration and exchange of experience between women working for peace in Israel and Palestine – was considered to have been achieved to a large extent by most participants. Several expressed that the meetings with the other peace-working women were the most interesting:

“What I found most interesting about the seminar was all the women and their various outlooks, experiences and ways of working.”

“Most interesting, I found meeting new prominent women peace agents with different and rich backgrounds.”

As the most important thing they had learned, many participants mentioned “the judicial aspect and its importance”, the speech held on media and the significance of stimulating women to support women.

It was expressed that the really difficult aspects of the conflict were not discussed in the group as a whole. “The actual conflict was in the back ground but we kept it down.” Regarding the dynamics of the group, most participants agreed that when working all together there was quite a lot of tension amongst the participants. However, these experiences did not seem to hinder the dialogue – the participants assert that they expressed themselves freely. Moreover, several expressed a need for future seminars to continue the discussions and most participants were positive regarding the dynamics of the workshops:

“During group work, there was a very good atmosphere and exchange of views.”

“The group work was amazing and an eye opener.”



THIRTEEN VOICES ON THE CONFLICT – THE PUBLIC LECTURE CAMPAIGN

“Our peace initiatives are not recognized by our Governments or the international community. The experience we have and the reports we write are not acknowledged – we need to find alternative ways to reach out.”

Peace-working women from Israel and Palestine, Istanbul 2007

In order to meet this need and seek ways to reach out with narratives of peace-working women, the Dialogue Seminar was followed by a one-day Lecture Campaign. The participants split up to give lectures at seven universities and high schools in five major cities all over Sweden⁵ on the theme “Peace in the Middle East – Voices on the Conflict.” The Campaign had the additional goal of stimulating and encouraging debate in Sweden on the possibilities to implement UN resolution 1325 to a greater extent. It was arranged in cooperation with Swedish Association of International Affairs⁶ and was attended by about 500 persons.

“We are working with our people, we are trying to build awareness among them that we cannot build our state with violence.”

Tahani Abu Daqa, Palestinian Authority

“The most important work that I have to do as a peace activist is to open the eyes of other Israelis. There is so much disinformation, misinformation and outright lies that are believed by a majority of Jewish Israelis.”

Aliyah Strauss, WILPF Israel

“I feel that I cannot live in a privileged way, a way that promotes me and not others. I do not want to be walking comfortable in a street when my Arabic friends are walking beside me, feeling insecure and forced to hide for example their accent.”

Galia Aviani, Isha L'Isha

“As long as there is no peace, as long as the daily toll of casualties on both sides continues to mount, as long as the conflict continues, I cannot take pride in anything I have done. But one step at a time, I plod on in the hope that eventually it will all add up to a better world.”

Susie Becher, Meretz-Yahad

“Decreasing militarization will enable all layers of the society to seek solutions for the conflict by peaceful instead of violent means. The aim is to stop one of the main root causes for maintaining the conflict.”

Michal Gelbal, New Profile

”

“At WI'AM we always say: ‘We don't want you to be pro-Palestinian. We don't want you to be pro-Israeli. What we want you to be is pro-justice. We don't want you to take sides; we want you to work for justice in the world.’”

Rachelle Friesen, WI'AM

“How you – the Swedish public – can affect the conflict and make a difference? The Swedish government knows very well how it could be putting pressure and empowering people like me to speak out. You cannot continue to ask this question as if it was some wondrous novelty – you know the answers.”

Susan Nathan, Author

“As a part of our work for peace, we gave 50 Jewish teachers the opportunity to meet with Palestinians and to see what their reality is like.”

Nasrin Murqus, Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace

“I'm now convinced that we should always try to understand the ‘other’. We don't have to accept everything but at least try to understand it makes it easier to deal with in conflict resolution. We have to open our eyes, hearts and minds.”

Dina Zreineh, Sabeel

“Disrespect for the law has been one of the main characteristics of the conflict in the Middle East. The systematic violations have caused tremendous human suffering among innocent civilians and fed extremism on both sides of the conflict.”

Salwa Duaibis, Mattin Group

“We want to train soldiers to be gender sensitive but it is very hard to talk about and promote UN resolution 1325. The resolution is not taken seriously, and is not implemented. Only NGOs work with it, not the state and women are not heard in these processes.”

Manal Shalabi, Isha L'Isha

“It is time we embrace peace and build mechanisms that will enable that peace to breed more peace and mutual respect. Being a woman, I see it my duty to empower women to raise moral and humane considerations to the public sphere of debate.”

Chassia Chomsky, Sikkuy

“The effect of the conflict and occupation is doubled on women as they have to live under two oppressions – the patriarchal society and the occupation – where the second is very much promoting the increase of the first one.”

Mariam Ikrimawi, Jerusalem Center for Women

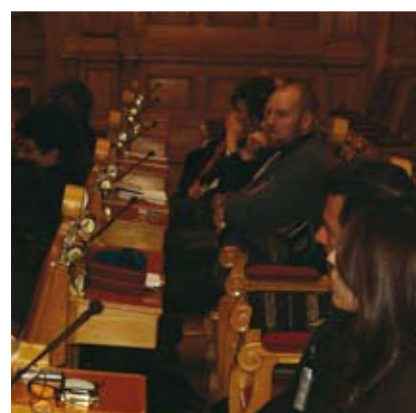
⁵ Lund, Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå and Uppsala.

⁶ Also Fredsagenterna and Palestinagrupperna.



The participants agreed that the campaign was a very important part of the week. Many experienced the Swedish audience to be sympathetic and genuinely interested but not very knowing. Several auditors posed questions about what they could contribute with.

Most participants said that the objective of the Lecture Campaign – to disseminate information about women's peace initiatives related to UN resolution 1325 in Israel and Palestine and to stimulate debate on these issues in Sweden – was reached to a great extent. Moreover, many participants described the campaign as very exciting.



"I was very satisfied with the Public Lecture Campaign. It is an important thing and we should do it more."

"I experienced the Public Lecture Campaign as wonderful, enriching, interesting, connecting, invigorating, empowering, inspiring and motivating."

PEACE FIRST – THEN WOMEN?

*"Why more women?
Because it is our right.
Because we can."*

The good news here is that the younger generation is growing up in a world where women hold positions of power. The bad news is that there are not enough of them."

This was asserted by Susie Becher, one of the two speakers at an open seminar organized in cooperation with the Olof Palme International Centre. About 80 persons were present and had the opportunity to also listen to Tahani Abu Daqqa and Maj Britt Theorin, who was the moderator of the seminar.⁷

An intense debate on the design of a successful peace treaty followed the key speeches. Someone posed a question about the role of women in any such process and their possibility to cooperate. The answer was that any collaboration that includes Palestinians and Israelis is very difficult because of the limited freedom of movement. Therefore, the possibility to meet on neutral ground in Sweden was put forth as an unique and valuable opportunity.

Regarding the headline of the seminar, "Peace First – Then Women?" it was concluded that there is only one possible answer:

"The answer is clear. Not peace or women but women of peace."

⁷ See also <http://www.palmecenter.se/RegionerOchLander/Mellanostern/Palestina/Artiklar/080305kvinnodialog.aspx>, 280408.

⁸ Sällskapet Riksdagens Kvinnor mot Krig.

⁹ See also <http://www.operation1325.se/content/view/182/1>, 280408.

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

"I speak here today as a human, which is more important than me as a Jew."

With these words Susan Nathan introduced her speech in the Swedish Parliament, a seminar that was arranged in cooperation with SÄRK.⁹ Nathan was accompanied by Salwa Duaibis, Aliyah Strauss, Tahani Abu Daqqa, Maj Britt Theorin and Deborah Ruiz Verduzco, representative from Parliamentarians for Global Action.⁹ Nathan talked about Sweden's duty to speak out about the situation in Israel and Palestine in the EU and that no member of the European Parliament will ever be able to say that they "did not know" what the situation in the Middle East was like – all facts are available to anyone searching for them.

Strauss talked about her dedication and commitment to peace work.

"Who am I to go into the peace process? I am a woman who has stepped out into the society without being afraid to be put down. I don't have the patience to sit home, waiting for the men to make decisions that concerns my daily life."

She concluded by posing a challenge to the Swedish parliamentarians present: "I will do my part to obtain peace in the Middle East. Now we need you to do yours."

Foto Alexander Parotidis



CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was clear from the first day of the Dialogue Seminar that the group gathered in Stockholm was very dedicated to the issue of UN resolution 1325. During three days of speeches and discussions, there was never a lack of devotion to the subject or will to cooperate. What was lacking however, was time. Many participants expressed that the themes and questions of the Dialogue Seminar were interesting and relevant but wished for further opportunity to explore the issues deeper.

Several concerns are important to discuss further, for example how to develop the collaboration initiated between the organizations and individuals present, how to reach out to a broader public with the message of peace and how to put the new knowledge obtained into practice. Future meetings are therefore necessary to, among other things, follow up the work done with the Dialogue Seminar as a point of departure, to support the women to realize this work and provide the opportunity to further deepen the contacts between women peace workers.

Regarding the Public Lecture Campaign, it was experienced as important and encouraging. The direct reactions from both participants and organizers were that the message had been well received and that this kind of event should be realized again in the future. There was consensus on that such a campaign should be extended to cover not only individuals already interested in the issue, but also groups unlikely to agree with the message brought forward by the peace agents.

Operation 1325 aims to contribute to the implementation of UN resolution 1325 through three areas of action – training, information and advocacy. With the event covered in this report, Operation 1325 sought to involve all scopes of practice into the same project. During the Dialogue Seminar, peace working women from Israel and Palestine were trained in media, law, political influence and action plans and became better equipped to carry on with their work for peace. As for information, the Public Lecture Campaign reached several hundreds of Swedish that learned about UN resolution 1325 and women's peace initiatives in the Middle East. Moreover, a seminar in the Swedish Parliament was realized with the aim to influence politicians to act for full implementation of UN resolution 1325.

At the end of the eventful week 13 peace agents from the Middle East and the Swedish organizers returned home to continue their quest for peace. Though arriving at differing situations, one thing seemed to be common for all of them – the sharing of experiences with other women working for a better society had provided inspiration to continue the struggle.

Statement to the Press



Press release

Contact: Maj Britt Theorin

We, women activists from Israeli and Palestinian organizations, gathered in Stockholm at the invitation of "Operation 1325", which is dedicated to promoting the active involvement of women in conflict resolution, are deeply concerned about the recent escalation in violence against innocent civilians and its long-term impact on the prospects of achieving a just and lasting peace in the region. We strongly condemn the measures of collective punishment against Palestinians living in Gaza and the use of excessive military force against them.

We also condemn the targeting of civilians in the southern towns and cities of Israel. Violence only breeds violence, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians is prohibited under international law.

We call on all parties concerned to resort to peaceful means to resolve the conflict and to end the occupation, thereby leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders.

Stockholm 2008-03-04

Abu Daqqa, Tahani
Aviani, Galia
Becher, Susie
Chomsky, Chassia
Duaibis, Salwa
Friesen, Rachelle
Gelbal, Michal
Ikrimawi, Mariam
Murqus, Nasrin
Nathan, Susan
Shalabi, Manal
Strauss, Aliyah
Zreineh, Dina

The following section provides a brief historical background to the conflict in the Middle East and presents a number of episodes important for the development in the area.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, the Zionist movement was founded in response to the worsening persecution of European Jews.

In 1917, the British Government supported the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration.

After World War I, Britain won control over the area of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire and the district became known as the British Mandate of Palestine. Britain thereby governed over Jews and Arabs living in the territory and continued to do so until 1948.

In 1921, Britain gave the part of the British Mandate of Palestine located east of the Jordan River to Emir Abdullah to form the Hashemite Kingdom of TransJordan.

In 1947, the General Assembly of the UN recommended that the British Mandate of Palestine were divided into two separate states – one for Jews and one for Arabs. Shortly thereafter, fighting broke out as all the surrounding Arab states rejected the partition plan.

One year later, in May 1948, Zionist leaders proclaimed the state of Israel. Again, fighting broke out between the newly declared state of Israel and the neighboring countries, as British troops left the region. Jordan established control over the West Bank and Egypt over the Gaza Strip.

What is often referred to as the “Six Day War” broke out in 1967, and was fought between Israel and Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and Jerusalem from Jordan and the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. However, the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt through a peace agreement in 1982.

During the following decades, a number of wars were fought such as the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Intifada in 1987 and the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

In 2002, the state of Israel initiated the building of a security barrier between Israel and the West Bank. The barrier will surround the West Bank, separating Israelis from Palestinians and Palestinians from Palestinians.

OUTLINE OF THE WEEK

Dialogue Seminar

MONDAY 3 MARCH

Welcome, Presentations and Introductions

Introducing the program of the week

Presentations of all participants

Introduction to the Dialogue Seminar – theme, method and aim

Group work: identifying the most relevant paragraphs of UN resolution 1235

“Operation 1325 – Working with UN resolution 1325 through Action Plans” by Maj Britt Theorin

Formulation of statement to the press

Evening: Public lecture at the Olof Palme International Centre: “Peace first – Then Women?”

TUESDAY 4 MARCH

Judicial aspects, Media and Political Influence

Reviewing Monday

Viewing recording of Monday's news broadcast reporting from the Seminar

“The Judicial Aspects of UN resolution 1325” by Salwa Duaibis

Workshop on law: the present situation, desires for the future and pathways

Discussion about ground rules

“The Importance of Media for UN resolution 1325” by Agneta Söderberg Jacobson

Workshop on media: the present situation, desires for the future and pathways

Reporting back in plenary: media

Reporting back in plenary: law

“Gaining Political Influence to Promote UN resolution 1325” by Tahani Abu Daqqa

Workshop on political influence: the present situation, desires for the future and pathways

Evening: Social gathering with teachers and students at Tollare Study Centre

WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH

Action Plans

Reporting back in plenary: law

Reporting back in plenary: political influence

“A Variety of Action Plans” by Anna Sundén

Workshop on action plans: the present situation, desires for the future and pathways

Reporting back in plenary: action plans

Rounding up session

Afternoon: Seminar in the Swedish Parliament: “Peace in the Middle East”

Evening: Departure in smaller groups to the cities included in the Public Lecture Campaign – Malmö, Lund, Stockholm, Uppsala and Umeå

Public Lecture Campaign

THURSDAY 6 MARCH

“Malmö/Lund”

Lecture at Malmö University

Lecture at Lund University

“Stockholm”

Lecture at Nacka Gymnasium, high school

Lecture at Stockholm University

“Uppsala”

Lecture at Globala Gymnasiet, high school

Lecture at Uppsala University

“Umeå”

Lecture at Umeå University

Open discussion at Hamnmagasinet

Evening: Return to Stockholm

Ending the Dialogue Seminar

FRIDAY 7 MARCH

Defining Possible Areas for Collaboration

Sharing of impressions from the Campaign
Summing up the outcome of the Dialogue Seminar – Possible Areas for Collaboration
Formulating personal goals
Review session

Evening: Pre-dinner reception hosted by Maj Britt Theorin

Good-bye dinner



What is Operation 1325?

Operation 1325 is an umbrella organization with the following member organizations:

- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the Swedish section
- Women for Peace
- UNIFEM Sweden
- Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council
- The Federation of International Associations for Immigrant Women

We also collaborate closely with the Swedish Women's Lobby.

The aim is to contribute to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325:2000 by information, advocacy and training- and capacity-building both in Sweden and internationally.

Do you want to know more about Operation 1325?

Please visit our website at www.operation1325.se or send an e-mail to the administrative director at info@operation1325.se

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