

OPERATION 1325

# WOMEN AS PEACE BUILDERS

## EVOLVING FURTHER COLLABORATION

REPORT FROM A DIALOGUE SEMINAR WITH WOMEN PEACE AGENTS  
FROM ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN, SEPTEMBER 2009

A REPORT PREPARED BY OPERATION 1325  
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# 1. Introduction and background

## 1.1. Introduction

In 2007, representatives from Israeli and Palestinian peace and women organizations came together in Istanbul for a bridge building-seminar. The aim was to inspire each other, strengthen women as peace agents and exchange experiences of working with women and peace issues in different settings. The aim was also to examine further possibilities of collaboration between the organizations, specifically on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325:2000 Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325). In 2008 the representatives met again, this time in Stockholm. The aim was to further evolve the network, exchange experience and knowledge on UNSCR 1325. The participants also gave a Public Lecture Tour at Universities in Sweden.

The overall aims of the seminars have been to evolve the network, and to highlight the peace initiatives made by women and peace organizations in Israel and Palestine. After the seminar in Stockholm 2008 the need of making women’s voices heard on this issue at the European political level was pointed out. The participants believe that they need outside help to put pressure on the officials in the peace process to include women. The experienced lack of response and initiative from the US and the UN has made it important for the representatives to establish connections with decision makers of the European Union (EU). It is therefore time to spread awareness about the work of women organizations in Israel and Palestine to the European level. There has also been a need to put pressure on the EU to actively work to implement the UNSCR 1325.

As a response to this Operation 1325 put up the framework for the follow-up seminar at Tollare Residential Study Centre in Stockholm in September 2009. The seminar was shaped with the intention to meet the participants’ needs and requests put forward at prior seminars. As one of the objectives was to establish connections with EU decision makers, the seminar was held in Stockholm during the Swedish presidency.

Some of the issues that were raised by the participants during the seminar were:

- The EU should put pressure on Israel and Palestine to involve more women in the peace process.
- The EU should invite women and NGOs to peace talks.
- The EU should at a minimum meet with women when visiting Israel and Palestine.
- EU can’t solve the conflict, but they can and should do something.

## 1.2. The organizer – a presentation of Operation1325

Operation 1325 was founded in 2003 as an umbrella organization gathering five Swedish women and peace organizations. The initiative was taken due to a growing concern about the slow implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Operation 1325 consists of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, the Swedish section IKFF), Women for Peace (the Swedish section KFF), the Swedish National Committee of UNIFEM, The Federation of International Association for Immigrant Women (RIFFI) and the Swedish Ecumenical Women’s Council (SEK). Operation 1325 also works in close collaboration with the Swedish Women’s Lobby (SWL).

The main objective for Operation 1325 is to work for the full implementation of the UN resolution 1325, based on the conviction that conflicts must be dealt

*Top row from the left: Aliyha Strauss, Angela Godfrey Goldstein, Galia Aviani, Galia Golan, Khulud Khamis, Lizi Sagie. Bottom row from the left: Lucy Talgieh, Nisreen Morqus, Salwa Duaibis, Sawsan Bitar, Sileen Muhtaseb, Susie Becher.*



with via peaceful, democratic means, and that women need to be involved throughout that process. To fulfill this goal, Operation 1325 works with information dissemination, training and capacity building for women and advocates and performs lobbying both on the national and international arena.

### 1.3. Presentation of the participants

All participants are active in women and/or peace organizations in Israel and Palestine. They are strongly committed working with questions related to women-, peace- and security in Israel and Palestine. They are also interested in bringing these issues to the European level. A majority of the participants have taken part in prior seminars arranged by Operation 1325.

**Aliyha Strauss** is the President of the Israeli Section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), where she works to bring together women of different beliefs to work for peace in Israel and Palestine. She is a veteran peace activist working also with e.g. Raging Grannies.

**Angela Godfrey Goldstein** is the Action Advocacy Officer at the Israeli Committee against House Demolition (ICAHD), where she works with grass roots activists rebuilding homes, advocate human rights and an end of the occupation.

**Galia Aviani** is a feminist and peace activist, who work with women, peace and security-projects for Isha L'Isha at the Haifa Feminist Center. She is also working with anti-racism projects targeting the Israeli society.

**Galia Golan** is Professor Emeritus of Hebrew University of Jerusalem and member of the International Women's Commission, which brings together Israeli, Palestinian and International women dedicated to an end of the Israeli occupation and a just peace based on International law.

**Khulud Khamis** is Developing Coordinator at Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Center. She works with women, peace and security projects, developing 1325-projects. She is also interested in anti-racism and anti-militarisation projects.





**Lizi Sagie** is a member of New Profile and WILPF Israel, where she works to change the militarization of society, supporting persons who have refused military service, struggling against racism in Israel and working on women, peace and security issues.

**Lucy Talgieh** is the Women Project Coordinator at the Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center, where she works with women empowerment, advocacy, training and workshops, promoting women's advancement in various fields such as the democratic process, gender equality and conflict mediation.

**Nisreen Morqus**, political activist for peace, is working for The Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace, developing educational material promoting peace, democracy and equality. She is also involved in many other peace organizations.

**Salwa Duaibis**, member of MATTIN Group where she monitors human rights violations. She also works with policy research and advocacy for Pal-

estinian human rights. The MATTIN Group focuses on Europe's relations with Israel and Palestine.

**Sawsan Bitar**, Program Coordinator at Sabeel, Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. She works with the Clergy program promoting unity and ecumenical discussion, visiting communities isolated by the occupation.

**Sileen Muhtaseb** is a Board member and working for the Jerusalem Women Center, where she gives legal advice and social support to Palestinians who have lost their homes. She is also involved in empowerment and human rights education projects.

**Susie Becher** is the National Executive of Meretz Yachad Party, where she is elected leader in the party's Women Forum. She worked for the adaptation of UNCSR 1325 as Israeli law, and is always working for that the party has women issues on their agenda.

## 1.4. Representatives from Operation 1325

**Anna Sundén**, Coordinator at Operation 1325.

**Delgér Jonsson**, Board member of Operation 1325 and member of The National organization for the organizations for Immigrant Women (RIFFI).

**Frida Oredsson**, intern at Operation 1325.

**Karin Axelsson Zaar**, Project manager for international cooperation.

**Maj Britt Theorin**, Vice President of Operation 1325, former ambassador for disarmament and a previous member of the European Parliament.

## 1.5. Objectives and goals

The overall objectives of the seminar were to provide the participants with knowledge about the EU system and to establish contacts between European Union decision makers and women peace organizations in Israel and Palestine.

## 1.6. The goal of Operation 1325's international work

Women and peace organizations are still often marginalized in conflict and post-conflict societies. Operation 1325 works to strengthen women in their work for peace and security, to provide a forum for exchanging experiences, and to empower women as peace agents through capacity building and training. The training is based on the experience of the participants and on them taking an active role in discussions, exchanges, exercises and evaluations. The overall goal of Operation 1325's international work is a strong civil society where people can participate actively. This is a crucial part of any democratic and peaceful society.

## Additional objectives of the seminar were:

1. To facilitate continued contact and collaboration between women's organizations working for peace in Israel and Palestine through an exchange of experiences. Furthermore, to examine the possibilities of developing structures for facilitating regional collaboration.
2. To offer an arena for dialogue between women's organizations, agents in advocacy work for sustainable peace building, EU parliamentarians and officers from EU directorates working with peace building in the Middle East. The aim is to stimulate the inclusion of women's knowledge and experiences from peace work in EU strategies, as peace building agents in Israel and Palestine.
3. To stimulate the visibility within the EU of strategies and peace work of women's organizations in relation to Resolution 1325:2000 about Women, Peace and Security in Israel, Palestine and Sweden.

## 2. Where we stand – introduction to the seminar

The Dialogue seminar started with an introduction speech by Galia Golan and Nisreen Morqus. They talked about their views on the conflict and the challenges for a successful peace process, but also about the dilemmas of being a peace advocate in Israel and Palestine.

In their speeches and in the discussion that followed there was an evident frustration as to how the current peace process is being conducted. The peace negotiations have failed and need to change. There is an asymmetry in the current peace process, and negotiations will not succeed before this has been addressed. As long as the most powerful part, Israel, is ignoring this asymmetry or inequality, the negotiations will not succeed, and there is a risk of them continuing indefinitely. The inequality is present in the whole of Israel and Palestine, and makes itself present in the personal life as well. The sufferings on the different sides are not equal. The awareness level of the discrimination against

Palestinians and women needs to rise, both in the Israeli and Palestinian society and in the international community. Being a peace agent in Israel and Palestine is difficult. Women and civil society have not been included in peace negotiations. But being part of the peace process is not necessarily what women and peace organizations want to strive towards, because the process itself is discriminatory both against women and Palestinians. Instead, the focus has to be set on changing the peace process. In their own work they have to be aware of the widespread discrimination against Palestinians, and it has to affect whom they are inviting to discussion and whom they are collaborating with. They also need to think through whom they are representing, and that their society is more complex than the division between Israelis and Palestinians. As an Israeli or Palestinian woman you can't represent all Israeli or Palestinian women, the experience is different depending on where you live, what you do and who your family is.





### 3. An introduction to the EU system and a lecture on international law

To give the women a starting point to the EU system and to deepen the participants' knowledge in international law there were two lectures during the seminar. The lecture on the EU system gave the participants an introduction to the different decision making bodies in the EU, and to how the common foreign and security policy in the EU is made.

The lecture was held by Josefine Karlsson from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, the Swedish section IKFF). The participants had none or little prior knowledge about the EU system, and after the lecture they felt that they needed more knowledge to fully understand

the EU system, but that they now had a foundation to build on.

The lecture on international law and the group discussions that followed covered different areas of international law, and UNSCR 1325's place in the international law family. The lecture was held by Pernilla Nilsson, international law specialist from Stockholm University, and was highly appreciated by the participants.





# 4. How to change the peace process with help from the EU

One of the objectives of the seminar was to enable a meeting between the participants and EU representatives. Preparing for the meeting with Swedish EU parliamentarian Anna Hedh and representing the Swedish presidency political advisor Nina Frödin, the participants discussed their situation in order to map out their expectations on the meeting.

## 4.1. Mapping out the broad picture

The discussions followed two tracks, both linked and parallel to each other. The first track was more immediate issues, and breeches of international law that need to be addressed, such as the situation in Gaza, the settlements, and the wall. These violations affect women to a larger extent than men, women being more vulnerable in conflict. International law must be followed, bringing the violations and the suffering of women in society to an end. This would also work as an equalizer in the peace negotiations.

The second track was the process itself, and how the participants can contribute to putting the peace process on a new track, a track enabling them to take part in the process. As the situation is today, it is difficult for the civil society to do so. Many of the participants also felt that they don't want to be involved in the peace process as it is now, because the process itself is discriminatory both towards Palestinians and towards all women.

The participants all agreed that they want help from the international community to put peace negotiations on the right track, a track that includes women, and that this is crucial for a successful outcome. Women and men have different experiences of the conflict, and they both need to be represented in the peace negotiations. In order to include more women in the negotiations there is a need for the international community to put pressure on the conflict's official representatives. As the EU is one component of the international community, the participants are looking for allies within the EU.

## 4.2. Analyzing the conflict by using a triangle model

After mapping out the broad picture and identifying what issues they wanted to discuss with the EU representatives, the participants looked at these issues with the help of a triangle model. The model was used as a tool to analyze the reasons for what they had identified as major problems, and to give an understanding on how to deal with these. The problem was illustrated by a pyramid put upside down, supported by pillars that symbolized the different reasons for the problem's endurance.

The problems that were discussed using this model were the difficulty of determining the status of Jerusalem, the occupation, and the exclusion of civil society and women from peace negotiations.

### 4.2.2. The exclusion of women from the peace process

Two of the identified pillars underpinning the exclusion of women and civil society from peace negotiations were the militarization of the Israeli and Palestinian society, which is leading to a more patriarchal society, and the Israeli focus on military security over human security. Security issues are dominating Israeli politics and the politics are focused on a military understanding of security; this excludes women with the stereotypical prejudice that women don't understand security. A militarization of the Palestinian struggle has led to women, previously a part of the official struggle, being pushed out. The Palestinian women immediately need to be included again.

The structure of the peace process as it is now was also one of the identified pillars that support the problem. The peace process is discriminatory toward women and Palestinians. To include women, the structure needs to change. The standstill of the peace process and the freeze in positions of the two sides is also contributing to keeping women out of the process. The solution to the exclusion

of women is to continue working together to make women's voices heard. This analysis crystallized several questions and demands that the participants wanted to put forward during the meeting with the EU representatives, and gave a framework for their future collaboration together: (See figure 1)

The participants don't believe that the EU listens to women NGOs today. However, it is primarily the Israeli and Palestinian women themselves who need to take initiatives towards change – to be agents in this process. But they need sponsors to facilitate meetings and support them.

Figure 1

- The EU should put pressure on Israel and Palestine to involve more women in the peace process.
- The EU should invite women and NGOs to peace talks. Women are not part of the official negotiations and meetings, so the EU has to demand to talk to women and to meet with women.
- What strategies does the EU have for UNSCR 1325 in Middle East?
- What is the EU strategy to include Israeli and Palestinian women NGOs in the negotiations?

### 4.2.3. Determining the status of Jerusalem

Disagreement concerning the status of Jerusalem is one of the reasons for the standstill in the negotiations and for the continued suffering of civilians. Pillars that were identified supporting this problem were the historic and religious claims. Two other pillars underpinning the problem are the settlements in East Jerusalem and the extended borders cutting off the West Bank.

One solution that the participants discussed was an internationalization of the city and free access to historic and religious sites. The participants also thought that it is crucial with an immediate settlement freeze in East Jerusalem, and that the international community needs to put pressure on Israel

#### After this analysis the participants formulated the following questions:

- What is the EU's position on the discriminatory regulations concerning permission to live in Jerusalem?
- Settlements in East Jerusalem needs to be included in the settlement freeze negotiation, they can't be excluded or get special treatment, because they are part of the same problem. The US is talking about freezing the settlements without including East Jerusalem; EU could and should raise this issue and demand that East Jerusalem has to take part in the talks.

to stop building settlements. The participants meant that there are rules about who can live in Jerusalem that are discriminatory towards Palestinians, e.g. citizens from East Jerusalem or Palestinian Israelis can't marry someone from the West Bank and live in Jerusalem.

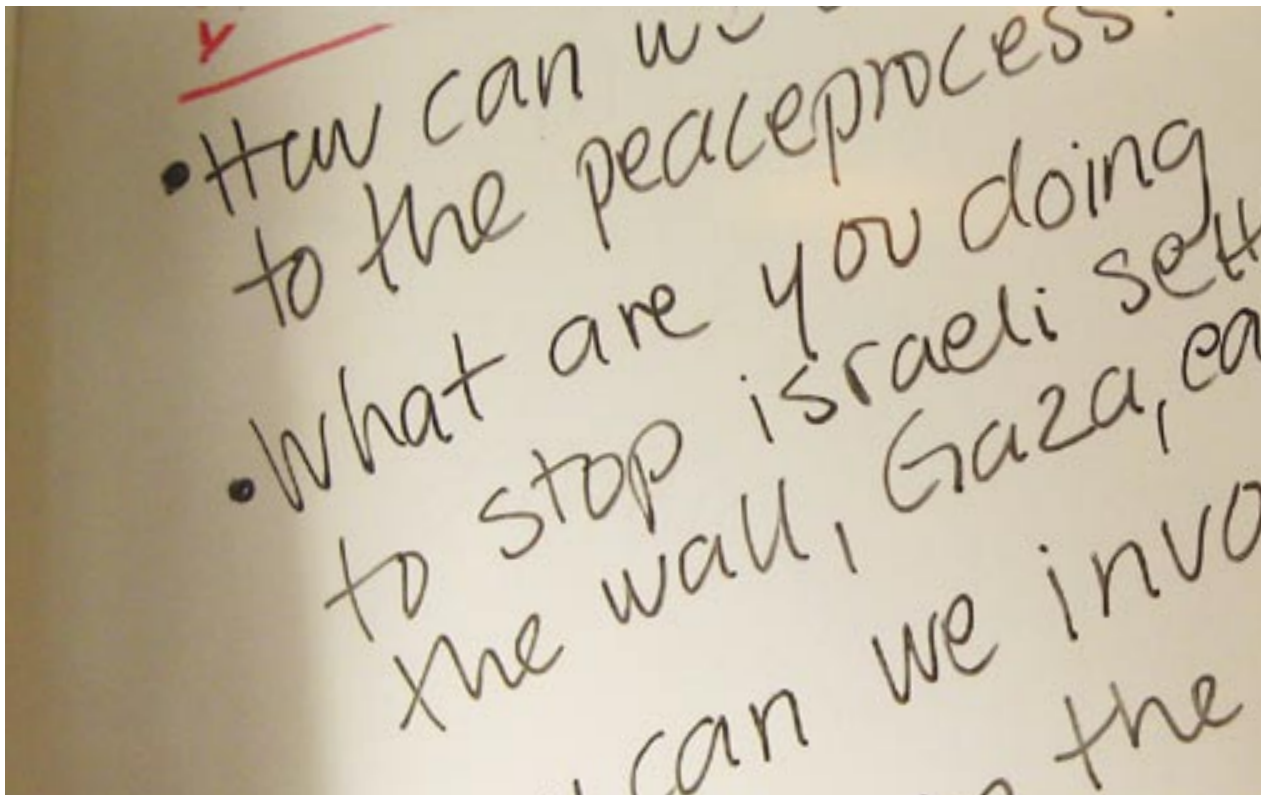
#### 4.2.4. The occupation

The continued occupation is one of the main reasons for the continued suffering by civil society and needs to stop in order to put an end to the suffering. The factor that was identified as underpinning the problem is the fact that Israel suffers no consequences continuing the occupation, neither from inside the country or from the outside world. As a result, there is no motivation to end the occupation. Instead, Israel benefits from the occupation both financially and military e.g. by the exploitation of natural resources. There is not enough resistance from inside Israel because of the lack of knowledge of the consequence of the occupation. The outside world doesn't only refrain from putting pressure on

The discussion was summed up in one important question:

- Can a consumer in the EU distinguish settlement products from other products?

Israel to end the occupation - they also reward Israel by continuing buying products from the settlements. The participants thought that ending the occupation is the only solution to the conflict, and to stop the occupation Israel has to be put under pressure. The pressure has to come from the outside world, but the awareness has to rise inside Israel as well.







### 4.3. Meeting the EU representatives

The meeting with Swedish EU parliamentarian Anna Hedh and political advisor Nina Frödin was an opportunity for the participants to ask questions on EU policy on UNSCR 1325, the conflict, and what channels there are enabling their voices to be heard on the EU arena. The participants didn't want to place direct demands on the EU representatives; instead they wanted the meeting to be an exchange of information. The main objective was to ask questions to get an understanding of what they could expect from the EU and what alliances could be created. The questions asked were based on their previous discussions during the seminar.

The discussion followed the two parallel tracks that had dominated the whole seminar. The first being

immediate issues such as the situation in Gaza, the settlements and what policies the EU has vis-à-vis Israel on these issues. The second being how the participating women, with help from the EU could change the peace process and let their voices be heard.

During the discussion with Anna Hedh it became clear that it is not only the women and peace organizations that want and need to get in contact with EU politicians, there is also a desire from the politicians to get in contact with more NGOs. As Anna Hedh described it, EU parliamentarians don't have much time to initiative contacts themselves, but would welcome them. Because the participants wanted to know what channels there are for them in Brussels and within the EU system, Anna Hedh promised to provide them with contact information to other EU parliamentarians that work in committees both on women's issues and linked to the Middle East conflict. She also promised to provide them with contact information to other officials within the EU system relevant for the participants work. Furthermore, she will include information about the women's networks that are active in Brussels. Anna Hedh also promised to ask questions in the Parliament to the Commission and the Council on behalf of the participants. In addition, the participants discussed the possibility for them to go to Brussels and meet with EU officials.

By receiving information on how the EU system works and getting contact information to the right persons, the participants can make Israeli and Palestinian women's voices heard in the EU. By sending the EU their reports, bringing up their ideas and their ways of thinking about the conflict, being an alternative voice and introducing new perspectives, they hope that the EU will start advocating change in the peace process. At least the EU should meet civil society representatives and women when they send delegations to the region.

According to Nina Frödin, political advisor to the Minister of Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson, gender equality is very high on the agenda for Sweden both nationally and at the EU level, also during the Swedish EU presidency. Examples of what the Swedish presidency is doing concerning

UNSCR 1325 during the presidency are hosting a seminar in Brussels on ways to improve education and training on 1325 and 1820 in EU's security and defense policies, planning to harmonize education and training among EU member states, and strengthening the link between pre-mission training and in-mission training. Sweden will also be hosting another seminar on national action plans on UNSCR 1325, and the council of foreign security will discuss the implementation of the resolution.

The participants thought that discussing policies concerning UNSCR 1325 is good, but for them the resolution is not a base for theory or policy making but a concrete tool. It is a tool to allow their voices to be heard, for making an effort of changing the negotiation deadlock, and to change the dialogue on their issues. By bringing women and civil society into the negotiations they can raise different issues and perspectives and hopefully that will make a difference.

Access was a key issue both for the participants and for the EU representatives. The participants from Israel and Palestine expressed the importance of access to channels that let their voices be heard, and the EU representatives underlined the importance of getting alternative views. Nina Frödin said that it would be very useful for her and minister Gunilla Carlsson to get information about the conflict from the participants. Consequently, two participants handed over two reports written on racism in Israel to Anna Hedh and to Nina Frödin. They also talked about ways to formalize contacts between the EU and the women NGOs.

According to the participants, the European representatives positioned in the Middle East region spend too little time in the field. They spend their time in the consulate, not visiting checkpoints or going to the West Bank. Both representatives thought that this was useful information.

The participants asked about the EU's standpoint towards East Jerusalem and why nothing is happening. According to Anna Hedh, it is a problem that the EU Parliament has a right wing majority, but more importantly that the EU is following the policy of the US. Anna Hedh believes that the reason that

the EU isn't firm towards Israel is because they are nervous about how Israel might react. The participants were also skeptical as to how much Israel listens to the EU. Many of them believe that only a strong voice from the US can change the process. But that doesn't change the fact that the EU needs to put pressure on Israel. "There shouldn't be awards for Israel", said one of the participants. "It is offensive to talk about an upgrading of the trade agreement between the EU and Israel when there has recently been a war in Gaza", said another. The EU can't solve the conflict, but they can and should do something, e.g. the EU should put demands on Israel before continuing the trade agreement.

The participants also discussed a possible boycott of Israeli goods with Anna Hedh. She explained that there is a delegation in the EU parliament working for it. Not all participants were in favor of a boycott, as some thought it would do more harm than good.

The group also talked about labeling products from settlements so that there is a choice for the consumers in the EU whether to buy such products or not. Labeling is a big issue in the EU, but currently no distinction is made between Israeli products in general and settlement products. The participants plan to contact the Commissioner for trade and the Trade committee inside the Parliament to put forward their views on settlement goods.

## 5. Panel discussion and meeting with European women

The participants took part in a public meeting at ABF in Stockholm, where there was a panel discussion with Salwa Duaibis, Galia Golan, Nisreen Morqus and Angela Godfrey Goldstein on “Why are women excluded from the peace process?”

The panel discussion was a joint event with ABF Stockholm and was open to the public. The panel gave their views on women’s participation in the peace process, the settlements in occupied territories, the EU’s policy towards Israel and a possible boycott of Israeli goods. The panel discussion very

much reflected what had been discussed during the seminar.

The seminar finished with a meeting with European women at Sigtuna Study Center; the European women were participants at a conference on UNSCR 1325 arranged by the Swedish Ecumenical Women’s Council. Vice President of Operation 1325, Maj Britt Theorin, gave a speech on UNSCR 1325 and women as peace agents. After the speech there was time for all the women to mingle and exchange their experiences.





## 6. Summary



During the seminar many questions were raised and there were a lot of good discussions. Throughout the week the discussions followed two tracks, both linked and parallel to each other. The first track consisted of more immediate issues, such as the situation in Gaza, the occupation and the settlements. The second track was the peace process, and how to change it as the process itself is discriminatory both towards Palestinians and towards all women.

The participants exchanged experiences and views on the conflict with each other and with the EU representatives Anna Hedh and Nina Frödin. EU policy towards Israel was discussed, including EU's position on the settlements and the trade agreement between Israel and the EU. A shared interest of increased contact between NGOs and EU personnel was discovered. It was a question both of access and of action from both parties; the EU representatives and the NGO participants. For the participants, access meant having channels to the EU so they can communicate their views on the conflict. For the EU representatives, it meant having the opportunity to get alternative perspectives. To enable this dialogue, action from both parties is required. The participants made it very clear that the EU should at

a minimum make sure that they meet with women and with NGOs when visiting the region.

Both the EU representatives and the participants found the meeting valuable.

They could all bring back knowledge they could use in their own organizations. The participants wished to continue or to start working towards the EU either in their own organizations or as a group. The development of the group dynamic during the seminar resulted in an aspiration to collaborate on more concrete actions as a group, such as joint statements, a common action plan and united lobbying. The participants expressed a strong aspiration to have a meeting together with EU representatives in Brussels.

The participants appreciated the good climate in the group, which contributed to frankness in the discussions. They also valued the consistency in the group, which allows them to evolve together. They thought that it is still relevant to meet and cooperate. Alongside with the group, the participants thought that Operation 1325 has developed as an organizer and still functions as an important actor facilitating the seminars and providing a forum to meet.

# Operation 1325:

Operation 1325 is an umbrella organisation gathering five organisations from the Swedish women's and peace movement:

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

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

The aim of the organisation is to contribute to the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) by departing from its first paragraph:

“Resolution 1325 [...] urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision making levels in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanism for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.”

Through capacity building and training, advocacy and information both in Sweden and elsewhere, Operation 1325 aims at strengthening women and women's organizations and thereby preparing them to work at all levels and stages of conflict prevention, management and resolution. This is a report from our Dialogue Seminar with Women Peace Agents from Israel and Palestine in Stockholm, Sweden, September 2009.

