

## Part II

An Israeli Arab woman travelling by taxi from the city of Haifa to her "village" Kababir - which is a part of today's Haifa - made the following experience:

The driver asked me: "What, you call it village? It is an area of Haifa!" I said that since I have been living here, we called it "village". Kababir has not become much bigger although houses have been built around the village. The driver told me that he thought that I am not from here. I pointed out that I was born here but I returned after 12 years living abroad. He asked me how I felt. I told the driver that everything seems to have changed. Nothing is like it was before. He asked me why I am going back and I answered that I can't live in a place with no safety for my children. I asked him the same question: "Do you feel safe here in this country?" "No, but I have been born in this country and I am going to die in this country." I had the feeling of racism when he told me that: I am a Jew and I am born here and this is my country. I asked: "How long can you live in such a situation?" He said the best solution would be to give the Palestinians their own country and then not to let them enter into Israel. We were speaking openly and I asked him: "I think that you don't accept me living here". He told me that I was born here. I said: "I am born here and I am an Arab, a Palestinian. So I belong to them. The way you are looking at me, how will it be possible for you to live with me in the same place?" One has to accept each other as a human being then one can live together. One has to respect the religion, the mentality of each other.

A new way of protest was described in an article in The Jerusalem Post: under the title: Israeli youth staged a rave dance against Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza.

"Israeli youth, known for tuning out politics and tuning in loud music instead, made a statement with their feet at a dance party called to protest Israel's continued presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Thursday evening. At the rave party in front of the Tel Aviv Museum, the theme was urging Israel to withdraw from the territories. The unusual event drew a mix of about 1,000 youth more at home at underground parties or in trendy cafes than at political demonstrations. [...] Organized by a group of twenty-somethings involved in the arts, the event had no affiliation to any traditional political group. "We think the old ways of protest, the usual marches don't mean anything to young people," said one of the organizers, Shai Rapaport, 28.

"Some people said don't bring politics to parties but a rave can have a lot of power - people come together and feel love and unity but it also expresses some kind of rage."

Held under the banner of "Get out of the territories so we can get out of our houses," the event grew out of a sense of desperation and helplessness. Many Israelis avoid coffee shops and nightspots for fear that crowds may attract suicide bombers. Just after the party ended, a terrorist tried to blow up a night club in another part of Tel Aviv, but a security guard shot and killed the attacker first. Many felt that getting out of the West Bank and Gaza would end the terrorism. "Leaving the territories means we can leave our homes without fear. It means life can go on as usual," said Orr Gilat, 25 a waiter who wants to make films.

Among the artists were Israeli DJ's as well as some Israeli-Arab hip hop groups. Tamer Nafar, 23, an Israeli Arab, said the event was an opportunity to protest the depressed situation in his hometown of Lod in center of the country. The mixed Jewish and Arab city is burdened with poverty, crime and drugs. "We sing about being Arabs in a Jewish country, about being Palestinian, when above us is the Israeli flag," Nafar said. "We are against the occupation, and we are trying to occupy the hearts of those encouraging it and flip their feelings around because the occupation is killing us and them," he added. (The Jerusalem Post, May 24, 2002)

In the second part of the report several people are going to share their viewpoints of today's situation in the Middle East. The first interview is with Amram Mitzna, the mayor of the multi-cultural city of Haifa, who served for many years in the Israeli army and also as Major General in Gaza. His message to all is that it is possible to live together. Sooner or later he will be the candidate of the Labour Party against Sharon for the seat of the Premier Minister. (The interview was taken in Haifa on 3.1.2002.)

The second person is an Arab Israeli, a politician who has been now already for years member of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, Hashim Mahameed. He explains why he thinks that Israel is an apartheid state and why he still prefers it to the political systems in the Arab world. For him the Arab youth is a new generation in Israel – they want equality and nothing less than that. (This interview was made in Um el Fahem, 4.1.2002.)

Benjamin Pogrud from the Yakar Centre for Social Concern in Jerusalem, who lived long in South Africa, points out why he can't accept that Israel is an apartheid state. Along with him is Rabbi M. Rosen who shares his religious views and the answers if religion plays a role in the peace process. (Both were interviewed on the 1.1.2002 in Jerusalem.)

From the Islamic point of view the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Haifa, Muhammad Sharif Odeh, tells us in a TV interview why he thinks that Islam is misunderstood by those who commit suicide bombing and that all what is happening has nothing to do with Jihad. (This interview was taken in the Israeli TV Channel 2 on 5.11.2001.)

Amit Leshem an energetic lady who is working for the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute tells us how she is fighting daily for a little bit more peace. How is it possible that she calls those "my friends" while the Israeli government call the same people "our enemies"? When her father died she invited her friends from Palestine to take part in the seven days of mourning. For this she had to ask for special permission.

The Palestinian Munther Dajani, professor for Political Science and Diplomatic Studies at the Palestinian Al Quds University, complains that the peace agreements of Madrid and Oslo are just on the paper and not implemented. The Palestinians feel that they are cheated. But he makes it clear that the politicians of both sides lied at their people. He suggests to have a conference just on peace and to find out what concepts of peace Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Lebanese or Syrian have. (Interview was taken on 6.1.2002 in Jerusalem.)

Hany Tahir, a Palestinian of Kafar Sur near Tulkarem, is a electrical engineer and is teaching at the college in Tulkarem. He belonged to the hardliner till he changed his mind. For him Jihad, about which he has published last year a book, has nothing to do with suicide bombing – but with war. What is going on in Palestine is war. Religions have their part in this conflict especially because they are misunderstood by the Jews and the Muslims. Like Dajani also Tahir thinks that religion can play a positive role in the conflict of the Middle East.

### **Interview with the mayor of Haifa Amram Mitzna, Haifa, 3.1.2002**

**Amram Mitzna is the mayor of Haifa and according to newspaper reports he might soon become a candidate for Prime Minister.**

**Q: Could you kindly introduce yourself and give us your background?**

**A. Mitzna: I was elected as mayor in 1993 and re-elected in 98. I was born in Israel, raised and educated here in Haifa. I served in the Israeli military forces for 30 years. I started as a Private and finished as Major General. I was commander in Gaza and I was also Chief of planning and budgeting in the Defence Ministry.**

**Q: One hears that Haifa is a very special place compared with other areas in Israel. What is so special here in your city?**

**A. Mitzna:** Haifa is special in many ways. It is a very beautiful city. We have green areas and beach. It is also famous for its very old neighbourhood in the down town which were built up to 200 years ago. We have also new centres such as in the Carmel Mountains. Haifa is also unique for its combination of people coming from so many places which makes it a cosmopolitan city. The Jews are the majority but we have a big minority of Muslims, Christians and Bahais. 13-15% of the population of Haifa is Arab. The uniqueness of this city is the co-existence between the people. The leaders of the communities in Haifa succeeded in creating an atmosphere of “live and let live”. This is unique for this region in the Middle East and for Israel. Despite all the problems and obstacles we succeed to overcome the threats to the co-existence. We are very proud of this. The majority of the people in Haifa have the feeling that they are partners and that they are respected. We would like to use the Haifa experience to promote the chances to influence other places in this region. Most important thing is that Haifa is a fact that peace is possible. If some are telling that it is not possible for Jews and Arabs to “live and let live” in Israel, then Haifa is an example for it that it is really possible to do so. We are able to do it and the quality of life for everyone in Haifa is very high due to the fact that the people learned how to live together, instead of living in a conflict with each other.

**Q: If we look at Israeli statistics they say that 46% of the Arabs live under the existence minimum. How is the situation here in Haifa?**

**A. Mitzna:** The situation in Haifa is better. First of all the number of the people living under the poverty line in Haifa is lower then the average of Israel. We have an Arab minority but also there less people are living under the poverty line. People are working together; our society is mixed compared with other places.

**Q: You are the mayor for over 8 years. How has the situation changed during this period of time? Which are the specific changes which you have seen?**

**A. Mitzna:** Here in Haifa - and again I have to take Haifa out from the rest of Israel where we have faced acceleration in conflicts and problems -, I can say with high confidence that the situation has improved during the last 8 years. The citizens have confidence and do stay with the leadership, with the municipality and to the mayor. Of course we have solved many problems. When we speak about minorities then there are two levels. The first level is their physical condition. Are they getting their part in the pie? This is something you can measure – you built a new school or not, you made a lot of constructions in the Arab neighbourhood or not. We have done a lot in this matter. The other level is the state of life. How do you feel? I think most of the Arab citizens in Haifa straighten their confidence with the political municipal leadership of the city. In many ways this is much more important then just to solve problems. There will be always problems. We have done a lot but there is still a lot to do. But important is the high confidence in the municipality. They can come and talk, they are well received here. Many city employees are Arabs. For example the head of the Department of Treasure and Finance is an Arab and he was elected to this job – not because he is an Arab but because he is good. This is a good example which shows that nobody thinks here of majorities and minorities.

**Q: When you talk to Jews or to Arabs it seems that they know very little from the other side. They don't have many friends who are Arab and vice versa. What do you think about this?**

**A. Mitzna:** It is very natural that people from a certain region will socialize with their own people. I am sure that is also the case with you. It is the same here. You see a lot of people who become friends at their working place. For example if you go to the hospital you don't know who is serving you. It could be a Jew or an Arab. But back home you celebrate a religious festival with your people or you go to a Synagogue or to a Church for prayer. You socialize with the same people who speak the same language, eat the same dishes and celebrate the same holidays. In many cases you will find that the friends are from the local community. Again here in Haifa you will find more and more examples of friendship between Arabs and Jews. Just go to big apartment houses and you will find that Arabs and Jews live for years door to door and socialize with each other.

**Q: For long one said that Haifa is a place of peace. In the last months also some bombs blasted here. How were your reaction and the reaction of the people in Haifa?**

**A. Mitzna:** The reaction was very much expected. Not like in other places in Israel. You didn't see any demonstrations like you have seen in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. Very few people and for only a short time demonstrated against Arabs, against the government and the municipality. 99% of the citizens in Haifa thought that this was made to destroy the relation between the Jews and the Arabs. They don't blame each other for what happened because they know that the terrorists are coming from outside. One of the aims of the terrorist is to challenge the co-existence of the citizens of Haifa. The reaction of most of the citizen was that the relation became even better. I was very proud of the reaction although I was very worried of such a situation. The reaction was much better than what I expected and I felt that eight years of talking, preaching and bringing people together and solving problems with dialogue and not by conflict helped that even in such a problematic and sensitive time the people reacted in such a way.

**Q: You just mentioned the word "preach" which has a direct connection with religion. What do you think what role, what importance do religions play in the peace process?**

**A. Mitzna:** Very important. There are many terrorists and extreme groups which are using the name of God, the name of Allah, in a way which nobody ever thought of. People who are committing suicide are doing it in the name of Allah. You know and we know that most religious leaders reject this idea. Still there are some few religious leaders who don't. Again here in Haifa we succeeded that the religious leaders in our society are part of the leadership of the city. They participated in many meetings which we had together. When we have problems we meet each other – Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. The same happened when we had the terrorist act in Haifa. All religious leaders criticized those who encouraged such attacks in the name of religion. Religion and religious leaders are very important. The biggest threat is that a national conflict becomes a religious one. To that we have no answer.

**Q: On one side you were a Major General in the high command in Gaza and on the other side you are now a civilian and the mayor for so many years here in Haifa. What went wrong? You just said that one should solve problems through dialogue. Can we not apply what you have said also in this conflict?**

**A. Mitzna:** Both, Israelis and Palestinians did not use the chances during the past years to solve the problems. It is for the Israelis who conquered in 1967 territories in the idea of Greater Israel, neglecting the rights of the Palestinian people for a state of their own.

Later on when the Israelis were open enough to improve the situation and to solve problems, the Palestinians were not realistic and clever enough to make enough concessions and to take what was offered and to solve the problems. In the last few years after Oslo there was big hope. Unfortunately the extremists on both sides dictated and succeeded to pull the people into situations which are very difficult and from there it is also difficult to bring them back to the negotiation table. I think that it was a hard decision a year ago to leave the negotiation approach and to try to use violence to achieve his goal. I think that was a big mistake. It is very difficult for Arafat to climb down the tree he climbed up. I think it was a big mistake of Arafat when he came back from Oslo to the area where he did not change his state of mind from being a leader of a national struggle to a civilian approach. Till now his behaviour to his people one can not understand. In the Jewish tradition God forbid Moses when he went from Egypt to enter Israel. What does that mean? Moses was the rebellion, the revolutionary. He took the Israelis out of Egypt and was for 40 years in the desert. He is not qualified to be a leader of a country, of a state. That means one has to stay away and make place for another leadership. The same was with David Ben Gurion or even Menachem Begin they were rebellions who fought against Arabs and British. Once we decided to have a state we put all the energy in making the state. The success of Israel for the last 50 years is that we had to defend ourselves and we had to put a lot of efforts in building up an army power and to demand from our people to go to the army. But on the other hand we didn't excuse ourselves of building a country. It is a small country but we succeeded in medicine, high technology, culture, literature. Arafat didn't make it. The symbol of his is that he is still wearing a uniform. You accomplished a part of your dream. Start thinking about your people. He didn't do it. He is thinking about the Palestinians all over the world and their right of return, which is ridiculous. He is not thinking about his people who are living here. We have here about 3.5 Million people in the West Bank, in Gaza – what has he done not to fight the Israelis but to support them? Food, jobs, welfare? This is his mistake since Oslo. Of course Israeli leaders have also a lot of on their back. But the main problem is that the Palestinians didn't choose between to fight to the last drop, to the last meter or let's take what we have and then we can go on dreaming and expecting. The issue of right to return is something which united all Israelis. 99% of Israelis – even myself and I consider myself as someone on the left, liberal, humanistic. But this is not even impossible to think that the Palestinians would have their own state and the right of return of them would be to the Jewish state. If you want a state: “Ahlan wa sahlán” (arab. Welcome). The right of the Palestinian from all over the world to come back is to the Palestinian state. This is the compromise – to divide this region into two states. I was in Camp David with Barak and he offered to the Palestinians almost everything. He [Arafat] played many Israelis into the hand of the extreme right in Israel and it is no wonder that now so many Israelis believe less and have less confidence in the Palestinians goals. But I am optimistic because we are now in such a level so that people in Israel who belong to the left do know that peace is not just behind the corner – it will take time. It is all complicated and one can't solve the problem over night. But what the rightist say just let the army win – I think we have learned that there is no military solution to this problem. This is a very important step forward. The other side, the Palestinians, will also understand that there is no solution by terrorizing Israel. No way! We are stronger than you have expected. Stronger with our feeling. Militarily we are stronger there is no doubt. But on the other hand you have to compromise. If you don't compromise you will stay where you are. You have to divert all your energy to help your people. So, if both sides will understand that – and I think there is also a lot of understanding – then the road back to the negotiation is open. The problem is that in Israel you can like the decisions of the government or you can dislike

it. It is a political tool to come to a decision in a democratic way. With the Palestinians there is no other leadership except Yasir Arafat. There is no democracy and there is no real organisation. There are a lot of groups which are fighting for its own goals. Arafat didn't succeed in organising his state and this is a big problem.

**Q:** You are saying that the Palestinians need to organize themselves, they need a democratic system. What about killing the functionaries of Arafat and the destroying of police stations? Does that not weaken a partner who could talk with you about peace?

**A. Mitzna:** It is a catch 22 situation. First you have to protect yourself. Tell me one country which would agree to the situation where buses explode in the middle of the big cities. That suicide bombs will explode in the centre of the cities. India is almost in a war with Pakistan because a group of terrorists attacked the parliament of India. Nobody is allowing this. When you are facing this then you have to react to it. No one can blame Israel for doing that. Just remember the situation before the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. When you know that these people are going to destroy the planes is it not a moral order to kill them? That is a big question. But you can't do it and I agree with you if you destroy police station and chasing some of the military leaders it is a destruction of the way for later when one wants to go to the negotiation table. But what can we do?

**Q:** What is your dream, your hope for the next year?

**A. Mitzna:** Go back to the negotiation table. Stop terrorism and stop military response. Next year the best we can expect is to start to negotiate, to talk.

### **Interview in Umel Fahem; Hashim Mahameed, Arab Member of the Israeli Knesset, Um el Fahem, 4.1.2002.**

**Q:** Could you kindly introduce yourself?

**H. Mahameed:** My name is Rashed Ahmad (?), I was born here in Um el Fahem inside Israel. I am a Palestinian and Muslim – but not very religious. My family was poor. I went to school here in my village then I attended a Jewish high school and later again a Jewish school for teachers. After becoming teacher I was working in this field in many different schools. I studied English, psychology and politics. Later I was also doing psychological counselling. I did my Ph.D. in politics. I became active in politics and now I am more than 10 years in the Knesset.

**Q:** To which party do you belong?

**H. Mahameed:** I was part of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality which includes the Communist Party. I had a deep disagreement with the party especially after the failure of the communist world and the collapse of the socialist countries. As a head of this party, I tried to change the ideology but I failed. After that we formed a new party called Party for National Unity. We won also seats in the last elections and we have our representatives in the Knesset and we are part of the Arab Democratic Party and Islamic Movement in the parliament. We are three parties which formed one group in the Knesset. We have a common agreement on the main line but at the same time each party is independent. The three parties are the following: The Islamic Movement, Democratic Arab Party and the Party for National Unity.

**Q:** You are living here in Israel and you are member of the Knesset for many years, you were also mayor for six years in Um el Fahem. You have seen different situation in

**Israel. How has the situation changed during your career, especially for the Palestinians within Israel?**

**H. Mahameed:** There is a change. There are some real improvements but we see more discrimination against us now. Our children have better education than we had. They go to universities and they compare themselves with Moshe and David. My generation perhaps compared us with what we were before. The awareness is bigger in the new Arab generation in Israel towards discrimination. I would say there were three stages. The first stage of despair in the years 45-48 where we lost most of our leaders. Many Arabs run away or were forced to leave and we were left behind. The second stage was the one where we were aware of what had happened – that means that we have lost everything. In this phase we became a little bit more realistic. On one side pessimistic but also optimistic. I give you an example. I could ask my son “why are you angry with the Israeli military government – they killed some of us but not all” or “we are allowed to leave our villages at least for some time” or “they took 90% of our land but not all” and so on. This was the way people thought in the second stage. This was the time when some of our sons used to change their names when they went to the university. Hashem was changed into Moshe. It was the stage “you are in between” and still you carry on your shoulders the feeling of inferiority. The third stage from 1976 to now has made a big change in the thinking of the young people. In this stage the people started to react. For example the government wanted to destroy some houses of Arabs and many went there to protest against this. On another occasion near our village 600 of our sons were wounded in three days when they defended the annexation of their land and we won! This means that this generation looks straight into the eyes of the Jewish State and the Jews telling them “We are equal!” I can say that I am proud of this generation but we cannot go backwards, our forefathers won’t come back. But without them we wouldn’t be here!

**Q:** I talked with Jews and told them that many Arab Israeli citizens call this state a state of apartheid. One of the people was from South Africa and he said you can’t compare Israel with apartheid. Apartheid really means that you are separated. He gave the example of the hospital where a Jewish woman gave birth to a child and just next to her an Arab woman. This he pointed out was impossible in South Africa – a white and a black woman in the same ward. What kind of discrimination do you see? Why people still say that in Israel we have apartheid?

**H. Mahameed:** Apartheid doesn’t mean that you have to copy South Africa. Also racism goes on with different tools. There is only one single university which is called Arab Israeli University; we don’t have any hospitals in Arab towns – there is one hospital in Nazareth which belongs to the church. You can also talk about small things such as ambulance – many Arab villages have none. There are no projects of housing for the new generation. Land which belongs to the Arabs is confiscated for the benefit of the nation which means for the Jewish people. It is the only country in the world where the land belongs to an ethnic group and not to the citizen of the country. Israel is the land of the Jews and the land belongs to the Jews. That is apartheid! Apartheid doesn’t just mean that you can not go to a certain restaurant. No other country calls itself according to a religion. There are non-Jews in this country – what is their status? Now we are facing even a new theory in which we, the Arabs, are called a demographic problem. Especially at the Haifa University under Prof. Arnold Safar (?) they make these statistics. He says that at the moment the Arabs are 1/5 of the Israeli population. In 20 years we will be 1/3. This means that every new born Arab child is looked at as a danger. Every pregnant Arab woman is a danger.

**Q: How do they want to solve this problem?**

**H. Mahameed: With transfer of the Arab population. But if I have to go I will take my land – is this possible? This is the plan which is in the drawers of some security offices, ministries and scientists. This is for me apartheid! Apartheid is when you have two kinds of policies – one for the Jews and one for the non-Jews.**

**Q: Do you see other fields of problems?**

**H. Mahameed: In education for example. Our students after completing their studies they have no other place to go then to teach in schools. We have no factories in Arab towns. Many are unemployed and Arabs are looking for jobs in Tel Aviv and other Jewish places. Normally they get just small jobs.**

**Q: We have also rich Arabs why they don't build their own factories?**

**H. Mahameed: You are talking of Arabs out of them 50% are living under the poverty line! We are the poorest. But your question is right. Still I don't expect that those who are rich should come and solve our problems. We are part of this state and the state has to take this responsibility. Otherwise one could ask why the King of Saudi Arabia doesn't do something for us. One day when this state will recognise me as a part it has to take care of me. If there will be an explosion in Israel it will be in the face of everyone – the Jews and the Arabs! We as Arabs will suffer under this Jewish thinking but they themselves will also suffer.**

**Q: You are a member of the Knesset. How is it for you as a politician who is taking part in this system change this situation?**

**H. Mahameed: I have three possibilities. First: To be indifferent and to do nothing. This is much more comfortable. Second option which is also impossible is to go and change the situation by force. The third possibility is to change the public opinion. We have to make the Jews clear that their future is connected with ours. For example one has to point out in the Knesset that an Arab child is getting half of the social help for his studies than a Jewish child. How can we get equality? This is possible only through the Knesset. At the moment with this political situation we can not change anything. We still can influence the politics in the Knesset but not as it were 5 or 6 years ago. But we should not loose hope because we have no alternative.**

**Q: In Europe it is said the only democratic state in the Middle East is Israel. What is your opinion about that?**

**H. Mahameed: It is correct for 80% of the people in Israel – for the Jews. But taken into consideration my answers to your questions we can say that Israel can't be a democratic State. No state which is occupying the land of others and is putting others under pressure is democratic. All the corruption which we can see here we see also in the society, in the families, in the abuse of drugs. But if we compare Israel to Syria or other Arab states then of course one has to admit that some of them are the worst dictatorships. I can say that Sharon is an idiot or the president of Israel is an idiot. But how can I say that president Assad is an idiot? If you see at this little freedom of speech I prefer it to the system in the Arab world! To compare the Arab world with the Israel is very bad. Arab states you can't compare with any democracy in the world!**

**Q: We talked about the situation within Israel. How is the relation with Palestine?**

**H. Mahameed: We can't go to Gaza. Still we are one family. We have the same language. Other minorities perhaps would have lost their language. But we have different orientation, different objectives. Our objectives are equality here and peace by**

having a Palestinian state beside Israel. I am sure this would also bring progress to Israel. We are not taking part in the Intifada because we are in a different situation. We are here and we use our own legal means. The Palestinians in the occupied territories have the right to stand up against the occupation and for that they don't need permission from Israel. But again I would point out that I am against any acts inside Israel! I am against those suicide bombers because innocent people are killed – they can be Jews, they can be Arabs. Some people think that I am very dangerous. I get threats by phone. Because what I am saying to you now is not good for the right wing groups. I am saying points which need responsibility. What they want is that I should say that I hate Jews. They want us to be radicals. Like that it would be much easier for them to deal with this situation. We are and we will be a part of this state!

**Q:** You are part of this state and at the same time you know what is going on in Palestine. Is this not a chance for the government to use this knowledge for the peace process?

**H. Mahameed:** That could be correct if the government really wants peace. Mr. Sharon is not interested in peace! He even rejects the agreements which were made before he came into power between Peres and Arafat. I once gave a speech and I told that there are four options for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 1. To transfer the Palestinians to the desert. I asked if that is possible and the Jewish right wing audience said no. 2. To destroy the Palestinians. This Sharon tried in 1982 in Beirut – he couldn't destroy the leadership nor the people and I pointed out that also Hitler couldn't kill all the Jews. This option is also not possible. 3. To have a Palestinian state beside Israel. My audience said no to this idea. 4. Then to have Great Israel with Gaza and the West Bank – one Israeli – not Jewish – state where all citizens will be equal. The audience shouted no. They said like that the Jewish state will be destroyed because of the Palestinian majority. So I asked them what other option do we have and they agreed finally the two states option. I would love to have one state and I am sure we could live together. But at this moment and with this atmosphere it is impossible. I can't accept the idea of right-wing Jews who say that they want a Great Israel with the Palestinians without any rights. And I don't agree radical Palestinians who want to destroy Israel. I reject this morally and it is also not possible for the Palestinian, they are not even able to guard the little they have now.

**Q:** How do you see the future? What would you like to happen?

**H. Mahameed:** I am optimistic if not then I would not go on working in politics. There are some moments of darkness and despair but I say go on. I am proud of this generation and I am sure that they want to live in peace and coexistence. This is only possible when both sides of us in Israel are equal! We don't agree to be the horses of others. We want to be respected and to give respect under mutual understanding.

**Benjamin Pogrund and Rabbi Mickey Rosen, Jerusalem, 1.1.02.**  
**Yakar Centre of the Orthodox Synagogue.**

“The Center's founding principle is that a secure future depends on making contact and creating trust between people- - Jews and Jews, Jews and Muslims, Jews and Christians, Israelis and Palestinians and other Arabs.” [www.yakar.org](http://www.yakar.org)

**Pogrund:** Rabbi M. Rosen is the head of the Yakar Centre. I am running the Centre for Social Concern. This is a secular offshoot of the Yakar based on the Jewish orthodox Foundation. We try to stimulate and challenge Israelis to look at what is going on. We are active in the Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

**Q:** You participated at the meeting of the World Conference of Religion and Peace in Amman. What was your personal result and what benefit did you gain from it?

**A:** I was encouraged to go on with my work at the Yakar Centre. It reinforced my basic believe about the social concern. It was very important to have contacts with the different participants in Amman. I have a South African background. What I bring along with me is a simple mantra: Make contact and create trust. First you will have personal contact and then personal trust with the others. Like that you can work together. I remember I listened a lot at the Amman conference. People talked a lot about religion. If I look at the history of religion my hairs stand up. The way religion can separate people it can also bring them together. In Amman I had some personal contacts which I couldn't keep up for which I am sorry. It was a very positive experience for me. One point which I didn't comment was this map of this part of the world in a class room which we visited. There, where Israel was supposed to be, it was just all blank space.

**Q:** We went into a geography class where we have seen the geography books and also there Israel was not mentioned. This seems to be a general phenomenon isn't it?

**A:** I was just astonished because it is a German missionary school.

**Q:** How do you see a chance to change something?

**A:** We are now in a bitter and terrible time. Before the Intifada I used to go to Ramallah to visit my friends, to go to their homes and to have meetings in offices. We were told not to come anymore because the friends couldn't guaranty us anymore our safety. In November (2001) I was told by friends why I don't come anymore to Ramallah. I told them that I am scared. So I was invited and it was okay. The same happened in East Jerusalem. I mean we don't to have to agree on politics but on what we do agree is that we have to live together! In both sides the leadership made mistakes and the result we can see now. The leaders on both sides are stuck in their own prisons which they have created and now they can't get out of them. But I think as long as the settlements are going on that will make a Palestinian state impossible.

**Q:** Do you think that under Sharon these settlements will be stopped?

**A:** No. No way.

**Q:** Do you think that these settlements are the main obstacles for the peace?

**A:** At this stage! You raised an interesting point. The occupation is an important fact but not the ultimate reason.

**M. Rosen:** Since the Intifada one can say that the Palestinians have still not accepted the Jewish presence in this part of the world. Therefore there will be always violence. I don't accept the way Israel behaves after Oslo. Since then it was understood that the next steps would be diplomatic. The tragedy is that the Intifada immediately erupted after Camp David. It is very difficult now to find again the trust which was there before.

**Benjamin Pogrund:** We all disagree about what happened in Camp David- everyone has a different view. Actually I think we didn't go far enough and the mistake of the Palestinians was that they turned towards violence. Our mistake was to kill too many people; the Palestinian mistake was that the started with suicide bombers. If we go back

then we will see that the main problem is the existence of Israel. I do think that Israel has its right to exist. I was an official member of the Israeli delegation to the UN conference on racism in Durban. The reason I went was the draft of the declaration and I was outraged. I don't believe that Israel is an apartheid state. I object to that totally. Anyone who is saying this doesn't know what apartheid is. Either the person is ignorant of what happened in South Africa or doesn't know the situation in Israel. I also do not believe that Zionism is racism. I think Israel's right of existence is still challenged. There is a lot of discrimination against the Arabs who are living in Israel but they have the right to vote.

**M. Rosen:** If we would have only attacks on the other side of the green line, the West Bank, then we could have said that it is due to the occupation. Benjamin answered to this point that there are people who say if you make my life a hell, I will make your life also a hell. I understand that but it weakens the position. The impression is that Hamas and Jihad are beginning to reassess the situation.

**Amit Leshem (Van Leer Foundation/Jerusalem):** I had discussions with people who do use the expression apartheid for Israel by Israeli Arabs. I have seen that this word is used by them actually to say that they are discriminated. But of course apartheid has another concept and discrimination is something else. So this word is used without any justification.

**Q:** But very often when you talk with Palestinians or with Israeli Arabs they do use this expression.

**Benjamin Pogrund:** Apartheid was a system which went into the last corner of society, from the moment you were born up to the moment a person died. It determined the place you lived, what you worked and every single aspect of life. I give you an example. My daughter was in the hospital giving birth to her child. She was in a small room with two other women. Next to her was a wife of a pilot and the third woman was an Arab. In the corridor were the same doctors, same nurses who were taking care of all of them. That you wouldn't find in apartheid of South Africa. So about what are you talking? Something like that was not possible in South Africa, it was not even allowed by law. I lived in America, in England and in South Africa. Of course you will find everywhere discrimination and injustice. I am talking about Israeli Arabs – in Palestine we have to talk about occupation and that is wrong. When the Messiah will eventually come, in our belief, then all this will disappear. Why to single out Israel, we are not worse than any other country? If one singles out Israel then that means that you challenge the legitimacy of the State of Israel. An occupation can't be nice what is done there is for me as a Jew unacceptable and not tolerable. There is nothing which could justify this act.

**Q:** What positive role can religion play in the peace process? Amit Leshem was saying that religion is an obstacle. What is your opinion as a Rabbi?

**M. Rosen:** Religion like nationalism can be a way of excluding and narrowing ones focus. If we look at nationalism we can say that it is an obstacle for peace. In reality nationalism gives a definition of ones cultural heritage and so does religion. We do have in Israel a religious nationalism which is not exclusive but inclusive. It doesn't exclude the other but gives the confidence and understanding to engage the other.

**Q:** What do you think, you were in Amman and what can WCRP do to improve the peace process?

**Benjamin Pogrund:** Making contacts, organizing conferences, bringing people together, I think we have no other way. We have to do it on. Sometimes they are more effective, sometimes less. We have to spread the understanding and knowledge for each other.

**Rabbi M. Rosen:** One should open coffee shops where people can meet. The big danger is that what is said in these conferences remains on the top but doesn't go down to the people on the streets.

**Q:** What I have seen in Israel is that Jews and Arabs in maximum they live side by side but not with each other. The coffee shop idea seems to be very good. That would be the place where you meet the other. I have met Arabs and Jews and if you ask them "Do you have Arab/Jewish friends" they would say just at the working place- if at all!

**B. Pogrund:** There are fewer contacts here between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem. In Tel Aviv it might be different and of course in Haifa.

**Rabbi M. Rosen:** The same you can say about secular and orthodox Jew – they also have little contact with each other. All this is a very delicate situation.

**B. Pogrund:** I think the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians will be solved. The bigger problem is the one between the secular and the orthodox!

**Q:** For both, the Jews and the Arabs Palestine is the Promised Land. How can religion play a positive role in this process?

**Rabbi M. Rosen:** I can't talk about Islam but as Jew I can say something is promised to me but that doesn't mean that I have to take territorial control over 2 Million people who don't want to be controlled by me. I still believe that this land was promised to us by God but I don't have to put me into a situation which is self destructive. That is a pragmatic position. There are others who just see pure theology and they would leave out pragmatic reality. That is a dangerous recipe. We believe in dialogue.

### **Interview with Muhammad Sharif in the TV Israeli Channel 2, 5.11.01**

Before I met you Muhammad Sharif Odeh, I never heard anything about Ahmadiyya.

**TV Dov al Boing:** Tell us something about Ahmadiyyat

**MSO:** Ahmadiyyat is all over the world.

**TV:** Is this a religion?

**MSO:** No it is an Islamic movement.

**TV:** So you are Muslim. A religious movement... This is what we have also in our Jewish religion. We have also different groups which call themselves Jews. So you are going according to the Islamic pillars?

**MSO:** We are Muslim and we practice all the Islamic rules. There is one Messiah who will come for all the religions, for the Jews, the Christians, Muslims, Buddhist etc. This Messiah will bring all people together.

**TV:** Are you not accepting the prophets which came to the Jewish?

**MSO:** We as Muslims, as it is written in the Quran, we have to accept all the prophets which are mentioned in the Quran. We have to believe in God, his prophets and the books. All the prophets before that came for a certain time and all of them made the prophecy that a universal prophet will come.

**TV:** Did he come already?

**MSO:** Yes, he came already and his name is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He is the founder of Ahmadiyya and he is the Messiah, Buddha, Krishna etc.

**TV:** Really? I never heard of him. When did he come?

**MSO:** He was born in 1835 in Qadian... 1889 he founded this movement and he said that he was sent by God.

**TV:** Does that mean that Ahmadiyyat is mixture of Islam, Buddhism, and other religions?

**MSO:** Islam or the Quran is a summary of all other books.

**TV:** You are also talking a lot of life after death, about the apocalypse, about Gog and Magog. What do you think about that?

**MSO:** The war between Gog and Magog did not take place yet. Unfortunately those who try to destroy the meaning of Islam and I give you an example, some Muslim organisations which are talking about Jihad as a war – I tell you nowhere in the Quran it is written about Jihad as war. War means to defend yourself – only.

**TV:** That means there is no Jihad with spears? What is then all this about Jihad... which we see in all these Muslim countries?

**MSO:** This is a problem of interpretation.

**TV:** No. It is a question of life and death. We are suffering from this problem.

**MSO:** This is a problem which is growing in all the religions. You find it in Christianity, it is in Islam, look what is happening in Algeria...

**TV:** As a religious person like you and you look very young, 35 years, how many believers do you have here?

**MSO:** In this country there are about 1200 members.

**TV:** What about world wide?

**MSO:** We have also members in the West Bank and in Gaza.

**TV:** Really? That means that there are Muslims who become Ahmadi-Muslims?

**MSO:** I think this is a way of the solution. Against fundamentalism we would never fight in this way. Because otherwise the situation will become worse.

**TV:** This way of thinking of the people in the Middle East.

**MSO:** It is the way of the Holy Quran.

**TV:** In every religion we have seen hard time. Don't you think that Islam is now in this situation?

**MSO:** The most important is, what also our Messiahs has said, is that you should have the love for your fellow human being. This is what we Ahmadis are doing.

**TV:** You are giving love and love but against you the others have given Fatwas that you are non-believers. You are telling me that you can't even write articles easily in news papers?

**MSO:** One has to differentiate between the people and the religious people who have tried always power to reach their goal. They look for power. That is way we try the people our way – to give love. Our slogan is "Love for all, hatred for none".

**TV:** You sound like a Sufi. Once we had here a Sufi and he sounded very similar.

**MSO:** Our founder was a kind of Sufi.

**TV:** We can say that all the prophets were in a way Sufis?

**MSO:** Today we have problems with mysticism and our feeling. The religious people are changing the religion for their own interest. This is happening today.

**TV:** Where is this happening?

**MSO:** For example people are ready to die for just throwing one stone.

**TV:** Is it not correct to throw a stone for the Al Aqsa Intifada?

**MSO:** Our prophet Muhammad said in the Hadith, that our Kaaba, which is the most religious place for us Muslims, could be destroyed to pieces instead of seeing the blood of a believer. That means this is not the correct way.

**TV:** How is it possible that Jihad or Hamas don't know this Hadith?

**MSO:** This is also a question of the interpretation. What is written in the Hadith is clear. What is also written is that you should treat you enemy well and we should be always able to speak with each other in a nice way. All what is happening today is terrible.

**TV:** So how do you see the situation of today?

**MSO:** First of all we have to fight against the bad in us and to look for the way in which we can love all. If we try to change our thinking we can reach a lot.

**TV:** This is correct. Also from Buddhist I have heard this – there must be a way for all of us. This is for personal interest but not for example for the state?

**MSO:** The problem is that the politics is based on injustice. For example when there is a decision and the justice is in contradiction of the interest of the people or the state, then the justice is left aside.

**TV:** What do you think about that most of the Israelis are living in fear. They feel afraid and terrorised. Also of course the Palestinians. Should we do as Gandhi did?

**MSO:** We have to understand terrorism in connection with truth.

**TV:** So you don't agree with what the Americans are doing in Afghanistan?

**MSO:** No, but I also don't agree what has been done in the USA. But truth is truth.

**TV:** You are a little outside of everything...

**MSO:** What do you mean by that?

**TV:** You are born here in Kababir and you can see the side of the Muslim Arabs and the side of the Jews... So, who is correct?

**MSO:** We can't get an answer to this unless the politic is changed.

**TV:** Is Islam accepting Israel as a part of this place?

**MSO:** In the Quran it is even mentioned that the Jews will come to this place. It is mentioned in the Sura Bani Israel. At the end of the time God will bring all in one place.

**TV:** Where in the Quran? Why He wants to through us into the sea.

**MSO:** I don't think in the way you are saying.

**TV:** But I think some of the Muslim want us to through into the sea.

**MSO:** I don't think so. Before that I have been in Gaza and in the West Bank and the people there want peace.

**TV:** In the Quran it is written that our people will come back to Israel.

**MSO:** Yes, but for a wedding one needs a bride groom. Israel has been founded when the Messiahs came.

**TV:** So then the Messiahs is still coming?

**MSO:** No, he came already.

**TV:** What do you think about the war between Gog and Magog?

**MSO:** This is the war between the most powerful countries. But that war has not yet taken place.

**TV:** So you are still waiting for this war to talk place?

**MSO:** No. I want that the people should change their way of life and this is the way how we can reach peace. We have to change our way of life.

**TV:** Which way and how?

- MSO:** To accept the Messiah like it has started in Qadian in a very poor place with one person and the prophecy was that this Messiah will see many followers. Any prophecy which is coming from God one has to accept.
- TV:** Is there any example of a fundamentalist who has accepted Ahmadiyyat and has changed his way?
- MSO:** Yes of course. There are important people in Gaza and West Bank who have changed their way of life. They were very much against Ahmadiyyat and belonged to Taqfir ul Hijra, who are writing against Ahmadis. In Nablus we were not allowed to put our books in the libraries because they say that we are infidels.
- TV:** So you are like Salman Rushdie?
- MSO:** I think Salman Rushdie brought the ideas in a wrong way.
- TV:** You should read the book.
- MSO:** SR has interpreted the ideas wrong.  
The interpretation about the prophets like Salomon or David is similar, for us they are prophets and you say King Salomon.
- TV:** Muhammad Sharif, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, thank you very much.

### **Amit Leshem, Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem, 1.1.02.**

“The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute was established in 1957 by the Van Leer family as part of their charitable commitments in Europe and in Israel. Built in the center of Jerusalem on land granted by a special act of Knesset (parliament), the Institute was designed to serve as a center of intellectual excellence and advanced learning - serving science, ethics and society.”

[www.vanleergroupfoundation.nl/vlji.html](http://www.vanleergroupfoundation.nl/vlji.html)

“Last year, under the auspices of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and with support from The Abraham Fund, Jewish and Arab teachers from ten Israeli schools developed a coexistence curriculum together. This year, the curriculum will be implemented as a pilot project for more than 300 students at 10 Jewish and Arab schools. An additional teacher-training component will enable a select group of teachers to guide their colleagues in implementing the curriculum. Project staff and teachers will also increase support for the curriculum by meeting with school principals, supervisors and representatives of the Education Ministry.”

[www.abrahamfund.org](http://www.abrahamfund.org)

**Q:** How did for you and your organization the situation change during the year 2001?

**A. Leshem:** The situation before was quite different. We - Israelis and Palestinians - had the possibility to see each other, to communicate with each other. But since the last Intifada the direct communication has stopped. Now it is forbidden for us to go to Palestine and for them it is forbidden to enter Israel. This had a big effect on our trainings programme which we used to offer together. Also the communication with our partners in Palestine, especially in Gaza, was cut down to phone calls, faxes or e-mails. When my father passed away I asked for special permission so that my friends from Palestine could come and take part in the seven days of mourning. Gaza is now completely closed, it is the biggest jail.

**Q: What do you think what will happen next?**

**A. Leshem:** If the situation would calm down and Arafat would take action against terrorism then we can hope that the Palestinian will be able to help themselves. On the other hand we depend on each other! Prof. Nuseiba Hussaini from the Al Quds University is showing us a new way of cooperation. Not just on the academic level, it also shows a new way of dialogue. We have to find a common topic so that there is a reason to meet.

**Q: There is a new project in which Israeli and Palestinian students meet for discussions. For these meetings you said from the Palestinian side it took much more time to get permission. Why was that the case?**

**A. Leshem:** The Palestinian refused to have any connection with Israelis. For them that means already normalisation. Private contacts nobody can stop but there were no official contacts. At the end the permission was given. It was realised that better connection with the Israelis were important because the only Palestinian allies in Israel are the peace camps. These people are the only who care about a betterment of the relation between the two nations. The peace camps helped the Palestinian during their hard time in different ways such as bringing to them food, with speaking to the government – they realised that we are with them.

**Q: It was suggested that this meeting will take place outside Israel or Palestine, for example in Turkey. Why is it not possible to have this meeting in Israel or Palestine?**

**A. Leshem:** Here it is impossible. The Palestinians won't get permission to enter Israel and vice versa – we can't enter Palestinian territory. We don't even know if we can go as a group from Ben Gurion airport. This results in that the Palestinians would have to go via Jordan or Egypt and from there to Turkey. Israel is putting so many obstacles so that we can't have many activities. The state doesn't encourage us. Every thing is seen under the military point of view. They are against any dialogue.

**Q: Is this not a mistake from the Israeli Government?**

**A. Leshem:** Yes, I think so. It is a big mistake. I just told this in the Israeli television that the government is not allowing people like us - who can do something for the peace – to work in this field. Instead we are handicapped in our facilities and mobility.

**Q: What does it mean? Are the big parties in Israel not interested in the peace process?**

**A. Leshem:** Actually the government doesn't know what to do. It has lost the way and now the army is speaking.

**Q: You mentioned that in the discussions you are not planning to discuss any political aspects. What do you mean by that?**

**A. Leshem:** We are not going to talk about solutions. We want to talk about the general aspect of the conflict like the situation of the others. None of the sides knows what the others are thinking about the same question. So, one has to take the other sides view also into consideration.

**Q: You mentioned your three minute interview in the TV. Do you think that the public is informed about what is going on and what people like you are saying?**

**A. Leshem:** This interview was shown at 8 a.m. I got some positive feedback. In general the media is not giving any coverage of the activities in the peace camp. Last Friday we had a big demonstration in Jerusalem of women including a delegation from Italy, USA,

Portugal and other places. We demonstrated for peace and called the government to stop with the occupation and settlements. But nobody was informed because the Israeli TV is not interested! The Palestinian Israeli Coalition for Peace made an ad in the news paper and from this people were informed and came. It is also the first time that a lot of Palestinian took part – we, the left wing, to participate in a peace demonstration that is banal and known but not the big number of Palestinians from Israel. They came from Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Palestinians from Gaza or Ramallah they couldn't come. 200-300'000 Palestinians are living around Jerusalem and normally they don't take part in any political matter but this time they were present in the meeting! We are planning to establish a meeting point for the Israelis and the Palestinians in the old city of Jerusalem – at the Jaffa Gate.

**Q:** With which Palestinian organizations do you deal and with which other Israeli or Arab organizations do you work in Israel?

**A. Leshem:** We have friendly contacts with the other organizations in Israel but actually we work only with Palestinian organizations such as the Educations Centre in Gaza, Centre for Conflict Resolution also in Gaza, with the Palestinian ministries in Gaza and Ramallah, the Al Quds University and the Department for Refugees in Ramallah. We had contacts with the Fatah groups. Most of them are now considered as enemies by the Israeli Government! But for me they are not enemies they are still my friends.

**Q:** You just mentioned that your organization has friendly contacts with others. What I have seen is that there is no coordination between these groups. Is this correct?

**A. Leshem:** We made a Peace NGO's Union so that we can meet each other from time to time in Israel. But most of the peace NGO's in Israel have closed because of money problem. We are lucky because we have some donors from Israel who are helping us. People to people contact it the best. Like that one is learning about the other and working on the same topic. For this we had donor countries which were helping this process like the German through Friedrich Adenauer or Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Since the intifada we have to find new methods for our activities.

**Q:** Do you think there will be a dialogue on both sides?

**A. Leshem:** We are continuing with the dialogue and we will not ask for permission from the government. We will go to the other side. There are Israelis who are willing to renew the peace talks and their relation in Gaza and Ramallah.

**Q:** What you are doing is illegal. Is there danger that you might get problems?

**A. Leshem:** We are doing this for the last one year and a half. I have asked several times for permission but with no chance.

**Q:** What do you think about the movement for peace in Israel?

**A. Leshem:** I think the majority of the people in Israel they want peace. But it is the government which is talking about the Palestinian incitement against Israel.

**Q:** What do you think about the religion and its influence on the peace process?

**A. Leshem:** Religion is one of the obstacles. I am very sad to say that because in the name of religion many things are happening. I want to make clear I am not saying the religion but the religious people. If they would be more courageous, open the mouth, they should go to the media and say openly that these people shouldn't use religion for their atrocities. No religion will approve atrocities in their name! No one can live on the expense of the others!

**Q: Do you see some brave religious leaders?**

**A. Leshem:** I don't see any such leader on the Israeli side and about the Palestinian side I can't say anything in this matter, I don't know enough. The only Chief Rabbi whom I see can do something is the Sephardic Rabbi. He meets with the Palestinians, he feels sympathy with the Palestinians and he has religious tolerance. He is keen for peace – this I don't see with the other Rabbis.

**Q: Do you know anything about World Conference on Religion and Peace?**

**A. Leshem:** No, nothing.

**Q: Main problem what I have heard is money, is this correct?**

**A. Leshem:** Yes, we need donation. I should go to the Embassies. I should go and see for example the Swiss Ambassador. We go to the Canadian, to the British. We approach the British Council. Then we contact the private foundations.

**Prof. Munther S. Dajani, Chairperson Department for Political Science and  
Diplomatic Studies at the Al-Quds University Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, 6.1.02.**

**Q: Could you kindly introduce yourself?**

**M. Dajani:** My name is Munther Dajani and I am professor for Political Science and Diplomatic studies at the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. Our department is 2 years old and we have about 200 students. All in all we have 6000 students. It is the first time that we have such a department in Palestine. We have to struggle for funds. This is the biggest problem. I am also the director of the institute which is working on peace studies and advancement of peace. We believe in peace and in achieving it in our life time. As moderate Arab we are in a very difficult situation with Israel. The extremist are claiming that there is no possibility for peace with Israel. We have to learn that we have to share this world. We also believe that we – the Jewish and the Palestinians – can become partners. We could do a lot together. Israel has the technology and we have the labour. I am working in the peace process already for the last 8 years. In my dissertation I wrote that negotiation is better than confrontation. At that time this meant to be a traitor. We know what happened with many who spoke about peace such as Sadaat. I think one day both parties have to sit together and to achieve peace whether they like it or not. I believe the sooner the better. The more are killed on both sides the more difficult it will be. The Arabs feel that they have been cheated. The promises which were made to them were never fulfilled. Both sides lied to their people. The Israeli negotiators didn't tell to the Israeli public that at the end of the process there will be a Palestinian State according to the 1967 borders, as it is written down in the documents of Madrid and also Oslo. The Palestinian delegation didn't tell to their people that if once Palestine is there, there will be no chance of going back home. The right of return will not exist any more. I understand the worries of the Jews. If you let come back 5 Million Palestinians to Israel you have to Palestinian states at the end – one in Israel and one in Palestine. That means if someone is coming back it will be to the state within the borders of 1967 and not to the territory of Israel. I think these problems can be solved. Jerusalem will be the capital of two states. It is already divided! There is a psychological and a natural boarder – both do exist. The mayor of Jerusalem made this clear, these

are facts. They didn't spend money on the Arab sector of Jerusalem and made through this two clear parts of Jerusalem.

All problems can be solved! Many Jewish bought houses in the occupied area as investment – they live in Haifa or Tel Aviv or let's say this way they could buy these houses very cheap.

**Q:** Do you think that these settlements are the biggest problems which have to be solved?

**M. Dajani:** No, I don't think so. As far as I know most of the houses are empty anyway this according the information of Edward Abington, who was the Consul General to the US. They haven't seen any activities via their satellite in these settlements. After this comment he was declared as persona non grata in Israel.

**Q:** What is according to you the biggest problem in the peace process?

**M. Dajani:** I think it is Jerusalem. Israel can't keep East Jerusalem. After 30 years of saying that Jerusalem is a united city they have to recognize that it is a city with two parts. It can't be united unless both sides agree on it and they make Jerusalem united. I told in the class room when Saddam Hussain invaded Kuwait that no body would have made a fuss if the Kuwaitis would have asked for the unification. But it was a forceful unification and therefore not acceptable. The same with Jerusalem! If the Israelis want to keep Jerusalem united by force then this will not go. At the same time Israel is saying that it is a democracy. The biggest problem which has to be solved is the occupation. Israel has to end the occupation. The Palestinian knows that they can be the bridge between Israel and the Arab world. That would bring about the prosperity Shimon Peres was speaking about. We all are carrying out luggage with us – some for the last 70, 40 or 50 years!

**Q:** What about the new generation? Is there any hope?

**M. Dajani:** I think so. They want to live they want to have fun. They would care less for the extremism of the older generation. I am very optimistic about the younger generation. It is the world of globalisation. Look at Europe at the end they are united now after all the problems they had! The world has become much smaller with the new communication systems such as internet and e-mail. You can pickup your phone and just phone all over the world. I think at the end of the day there is no other way then peace.

Take a father whose son is killed and who has other sons. He will be ready to give his other sons also. I told this person that he is crazy like that he would loos all his family. But also his sons would go, how is it possible for them to stay in the village without loosing their face after the Israelis have killed one of their brothers. If you see this then one has to ask oneself how bad did the Israeli academicians misanalyze the situation! Mr. Sharon it seems that he has taken pills against understanding other people. He is a general, but not a statesman. Israel is killing Palestinian leadership but they are loosing potential leaderships when bombs explode and kill Israelis. I am getting faxes from all over Palestine and Israel and people are saying that they want peace! In history he will be not only known as the butcher of Chatila and Sabra but also as the butcher of the Intifada. Instead of becoming a man of peace he is become more extreme and let the extremist do what they want. It is very sad. One day Israeli kids will ask why nobody stopped this crazy man. The same on our side. Also we will be asked by our kids why we didn't stop it! Killing never brought anything except destruction and more destruction. Violence brings only violence.

**Q: What role could religion play in this quest for peace?**

**M. Dajani:** I think religion can play a very positive role. The absence of religion makes our life harder! I studied Christianity for 12 years and I really believe that not a single religion legitimises killing. No religion is saying that one should destroy houses of others because they have another religion. During the time when the Jordanians had power over the veiling wall they didn't allow the Jews to go there – I always criticised this. I think the relation with God is private. I feel now very sad when I see how Israelis are stopping people from worshipping in Bethlehem or Jerusalem. It makes me feel bad because I always thought that we were doing wrong and we should correct it and how they used to tell us that they would never stop people from praying. Interesting is that the Israelis first did exactly this – they stopped people from going to pray. I hope that one day there will be somebody in Israel who is courageous and will make peace. The Israelis are bankrupt and the Palestinians are bankrupt – also spiritually and now both are also becoming bankrupt financially! The investors are going away. The stock market in Tel Aviv almost crashed. No body wants to make business in a state of war. On the other hand it will take time for people to make the first step in building confidence especially after the last 15 months of killing on both sides.

**Q: You just mentioned a project of yours together on the narrative issue. Can you tell us something about that?**

**M. Dajani:** I always believed that we have to take the common points of the Israelis and the Palestinians and to start from there. We won't be successful if we talk only about the negative sides. There is a catastrophe for the Palestinians – the war of liberation. Till now the people do talk, pass each other but not with each other. There are two narratives one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians. You have to hear the Jewish side, the Christians and the Muslim side. You can't ignore what happened if you do you can't have a future. People without a past have no future. Working in joint venture or joint projects between Israelis and Palestinians you have to bridge the gap when people try to understand the culture of the others. The Israelis claim that they know us very well and we claim that we know the Israelis very well. The fact is we don't know much of the other side! The Palestinians have never been in an Israeli house on Sabbath and they don't know what they do on Friday evening at home. The Jewish don't know what bothers us religiously. I told to my students that the easiest way is to continue to fight like that you don't have to listen to others; you just ignore the other side. But when you have to listen to the problems of the other and vice versa it is much more difficult. If you have to answer the critic why someone has put a bomb at the Jaffo Street it is more difficult. If you kill a child you have to answer it. If you are still fighting you don't look for answers. In such a moment you have started to solve the problems. In time of wars you accumulate the problems and leave it for the future generation and that is escapism! Peace is more painful than war, it is harder to deal with it.

**Q: Is this feeling correct that both sides do have another idea or concept of what Peace means?**

**M. Dajani:** For the last five years I am telling the people to make a conference on peace. Because the concept of peace for a Palestinian, for a Jordanian, for a Syrian or an Israeli seems to be quite different. When we speak about peace all should have the same reference. You have to understand the psychology of the Arab. Although we lost several wars against Israel the politicians managed to sell it as victories. At the end this becomes the truth! This psychology of the Arabs the Israelis should analyse. The Israelis were standing just 101 km in front of Cairo, they had taken Sinai and the Suez or they were almost in front of Damascus but read the speeches of our leaders what they were telling

the people! This should be a lesson for the Israelis. With this mentality of the Arabs they won't be ever able to defeat them! The problem with the peace of Oslo was that it was only a piece of paper and there was no implementation of it. Now I think we need a concept of peace where we have real peace. You have to break the cycle of killing that means you have to make concessions to the other side. All the soldiers and all the violence on the Israeli side didn't stop the violence on the Palestinian side. Military people are obsessed. They want to use what they have learnt in their college. Peace is not their business. This is the sad part.

**Palestine, Kafar Sur near Tulkarem, 25. December 2001.**  
**Hany Tahir, electrical engineer at the (Hadoori) college in Tulkarem.**

**Q: What are you teaching?**

**A: I am teaching electronics since nine years.**

**Q: You have written several books one also about jihad. What is your conception of it? How do you see the suicide bombers?**

**A: I think there is no connection between Jihad and the suicide bombers. The people who are doing so, they think that they are defending their land. This is not a Jihad, but this is war. There are some who think that this is Jihad because their land was taken away from them. They have forgotten the real meaning of Jihad – for them to fight is Jihad. Even if they get money for fighting they call it Jihad. I am not against fighting the enemy. Our land was taken from us and we all want to get it back but me and those, we have different opinions how to do it. It will show if suicide bombing will bring any peace or any solution to the problems. I think that all this has more to do with politics and less with religion. Religion does influence men. But religion doesn't mean just to go to the mosque. Religion wants from me that I behave in a good way. I should be honest in my way of life. Religion is for the people and is also a part of politics. Islam wants justice between the Muslims and between the others also in the rights and the duties. When we have to do here with other people we shouldn't look what religion they have. One has to separate religion from the government and the politics of a country. Otherwise it is not going. Today religions are responsible for war and fighting because they are understood wrongly. Especially religion is wrong understood by the Jews and the Muslims. I think God is punishing the Jews because they think that the land between the Nile till Euphrates belongs to them, while the Muslims have the wrong idea that the Jews don't have the right to believe in God the way they do and they think that we have to throw them out of the land – that of course means war. It is possible that we come together and it is also possible to find solutions for many problems. But unfortunately we see today that those people who call themselves religious are too aggressive and they don't use their mind anymore. All problems over the world do have solutions – not the problem in Palestine! For this the so called religious Jewish and Muslims are responsible. The fact is that the problem in Palestine is a politically and not a religious one. For me it is clear that this what our people are doing is not Jihad but it is fighting against the Jews.**