
Podium Israel – Palästina

Alltag und andere Möglichkeiten

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Moderation:

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Alexandra Senfft: Die Osloer Verhandlungen sind jetzt genau 20 Jahre her, und es ist kein Friede in Sicht. Momentan gibt es wieder kleinere Bewegungen, doch keiner weiß, wohin das führen wird. Der Nahe Osten polarisiert und ist eine Projektionsfläche für allerlei offene, aber auch versteckte Motive der verschiedensten Art. Die Welt teilt sich – bei diesem Konflikt noch extremer als bei vielen anderen Konflikten – in zwei Seiten. Auch hierzulande ist man meistens entweder nur für die Palästinenser oder nur für die Israelis. Leider selten für beide zugleich, was eigentlich der richtige Weg wäre, denn alles andere heizt den Konflikt von außen nur noch weiter an.

Sie lernen gleich vier außergewöhnliche Menschen kennen, die man als Grenzgänger bezeichnen könnte. In der Soziologie sagt man auch »marginal people«, das sind Menschen, die nicht zum Mainstream ihrer Gesellschaften gehören und deshalb die Rolle von Vermittlern zwischen beiden Seiten eingenommen haben. Man ist in dieser Position oft sehr einsam und sehr häufig unter Druck. Es sind mutige Menschen, die allen politischen Verhältnissen zum Trotz weiter an die Kraft der Menschlichkeit und des Dialogs glauben.

Nir Oren ist der israelische Direktor des Parents Circle. Er ist 1960 in Tel Aviv geboren und lebt heute in Herzlia. Nir ist von Beruf Sozialarbeiter, widmet sich jedoch vollkommen der Arbeit im Parents Circle. Diese Initiative hat 1995 Yitzhak Frankenthal gegründet, nachdem sein Sohn von Hamas-Kämpfern ermordet worden war. Der Parents Circle ist eine der wenigen Initiativen im Nahen Osten, in der Palästinenser und Israelis gleichberechtigt und auf Augenhöhe als Partner miteinander arbeiten. Der Parents Circle organisiert jährlich zwischen 400 und 700 Dialogsitzungen.

Mazen Faraj arbeitet schon seit Langem in dieser Initiative mit und ist seit

einem Jahr der palästinensische Direktor des Parents Circle – Families Forum. Er ist vor 38 Jahren im palästinensischen Flüchtlingslager Dheisheh in der Westbank geboren, wo er noch heute mit seiner Frau und seinen beiden Töchtern lebt. Als Teenager war Mazen während der ersten Intifada mehrfach im Gefängnis. Im Jahr 2002 erschossen israelische Soldaten ohne Anlass seinen zweiundsechzigjährigen Vater, als dieser gerade auf dem Heimweg von der Arbeit war.

Mazen Faraj: I am a Palestinian; I live in Dheisheh refugee camp and am 38 years old. I lost my father in 2002 when he was coming back from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. As a Palestinian, as a refugee, as someone who lives without justice, without rights, without freedom, he started to understand at an early age what is behind all our suffering as Palestinians. We call our history as Palestinians Nakba, our catastrophe. This year, it will be 65 years since we were expelled from our original villages. My father and his family were expelled from their village when he was six years old. He spent all his life under the occupation of the Israelis. And growing up with all this heavy history and all this heavy pain and suffering I thought you should do something as a human being: to speak up and to express yourself and to continue life. So I found myself in an Israeli jail for the first time in my life at the age of 15. Not because I killed anyone, and not because I stole money – just because I was speaking up against the injustice together with all the Palestinians in my camp, with all my neighbours and friends. So I had to leave school, and I lost everything in the first Intifada. And in the second Intifada, my family paid the highest price there can be in this conflict: we lost our father and our last hope, as we call it.

Senfft: How did you lose your father?

Faraj: On the 10th of April 2002 we received a phone call from the hospital in Bethlehem saying that our father, or the body of our father, was in hospital. That night, we went to the Israeli army to ask them permission for going to the hospital. And they just said: »It is not allowed. You have to wait until the morning.« And we waited. And all the information they gave us at the hospital the next morning was that he was coming from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and that they started shooting him, that they killed him without any reason.

Senfft: There is a lot of traumatisations in this whole conflict. And I think, unless one understands the traumatisations on both sides, one does not come anywhere near understanding the conflict. Nir, you have also had a traumatic experience in your family.

Nir Oren: Yes, unfortunately. As a member of the Parents Circle, this is our cynical entrance ticket to the organisation. All the members are from families who lost their loved ones in the conflict. I lost my mother in July 1995. She was a young retired teacher, her name was Golda. She went on a bus to visit one of her friends in Tel Aviv and on that bus a suicide bomber bombed himself and killed her and five other Israelis. Naturally, feelings of grief, pain and emptiness are following such an event. And immediately, you also have feelings of revenge and hatred and the need to do something with your hands. I can still feel it. Every morning, you have to deal with the decision what you are going to do with those feelings and the pain.

Senfft: Has there been a key moment in your lives that prevented you from reacting in hate and in revenge? I remember that Rami Elhanan, who is also member of the Parents Circle, once told me that a key moment for him was that he met Palestinians from the Parents Circle, and it was actually the first time he met them as human beings with their own suffering. And he could suddenly start feeling empathy which he had not felt before. And that was the changing moment for him. I am sure there was probably such a moment for you, too, was there?

Oren: Actually, I think there are a couple. First, I kind of took the decision not to follow a path of revenge. The second decisive moment was the meeting with the other side which I believe characterises most of the members of the Parents Circle. This moment gives hope for the first time. Five minutes ago, Mazen and his family were my enemies. And here, I meet a Palestinian bereaved family that listens to my story, showing some tears. They responded with empathy. It was overwhelming and not understandable for me. And I listened to their stories. And the feeling of belonging to the same pain and following the same hope was very strong.

Senfft: Was there a turning moment for you, too?

Faraj: I grew up with a very clear picture of the Israelis – as settlers or soldiers or as the people who treated us so hard in Israeli jails. I started to have this picture when I was six or seven years old. And after the tragedy of losing my father we had limited choices: to stay at home and get depressed with your memory, or to take revenge and become a suicide bomber. The first time I met Rami Elhanan seven years ago, he started to talk about the suffering and pain and I started to compare: what do you mean by suffering and pain? I am the one who is a refugee and live under this occupation. And then he started to talk about how he lost his daughter in 1997 and then I realised that we can share our suffering and our pain. And the most important thing that devel-

oped between us after all our bereavement was respect. We respect each other as human beings. And this is actually what we need.

Senfft: What is the key to your understanding and what do you think is the essence of a real dialogue as opposed to one that is only *called* a dialogue?

Oren: What we are doing is overcoming our victimisation. We lost our loved ones to the conflict and so we are victims. But we do not act upon it, meaning: a victim has a lot of privileges. He is always right, he can do everything and still people pity him and feel guilt next to him. This is something that both societies are doing. And this is one thing we do: we do not want to compare our suffering, we want to say that this is enough, we do not want anyone else to get into this circle. We do not fight who is right, maybe Mazen is not accepting what I am saying and vice versa, but we have the same vision. Those are the basic things that we are doing.

Faraj: What does the dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians mean? When I was 15 years old, I would have told you about violence. I would tell you to throw a stone, I would tell you to do anything to hurt the Israelis. But today I can tell you: the main key that we have as human beings is the ability to listen to each other and to understand each other. And more than that: to understand the history of each other. The minute that you have the ability to listen and to talk and to understand the pain of the other, it will be the ability to continue in this life. This is the key.

Senfft: Ich möchte Riman Barakat vorstellen, die vor 33 Jahren in Ost-Jerusalem zur Welt gekommen ist, wo sie heute noch lebt. Sie ist seit einem Jahr die Co-Direktorin des Israel-Palästine Center for Research and Information (IPRI) in Jerusalem und teilt sich wie im Parents Circle die Leitung mit einem israelischen Partner. Sie hat Nah- und Mitteloststudien sowie Internationale Beziehungen studiert.

Carlo Strenger ist 1958 in der Schweiz geboren und aufgewachsen, als junger Mann dann nach Israel ausgewandert. Er ist Philosoph und Psychoanalytiker. In Deutschland erschien kürzlich sein bemerkenswertes Essay »Israel – Einführung in ein schwieriges Land«. Herr Strenger lehrt an der Tel-Aviv-Universität und schreibt in der israelischen Tageszeitung HaareZ eine regelmäßige Kolumne.

Riman, I think a lot of Palestinians are quite frustrated these days with dialogue because there has been a lot of talking for the past 20 years. And all the talking seems to have been futile as the situation seems to be getting worse by the day, actually on both sides. Among Palestinians there is a strong movement against dialogue with Israelis because it is felt that dialogue presents an image of normality in a situation that is anything but normal. You,

however, have not only decided to take up the position I have just talked about but you also immediately said »I would love to join this forum tonight«. I am very curious to know if there is something in your biography that has brought you to this point.

Riman Barakat: I was seven years old when the Intifada started and I went to the Schmidt's Girls College in Jerusalem. There were many days that I would step out of school and see blood on the street or see young Palestinian men being humiliated. During my childhood, I watched all the violence that was happening on TV. I have been fed with many negative images about the others. I felt that this is not the life that I wanted to live. I wanted to live a life of peace where I can enjoy my freedom, where I am not afraid to step out of my schoolyard, where I don't feel the tear gas making me afraid to move onwards. This is what led me to start this work because I believe it is important to speak to the other side. The first time I spoke to an Israeli was difficult. I was convinced that this person is my enemy. But it's a process where one has to listen and understand that the humanity goes beyond this level of impressions that we are fed with.

Carlo Strenger: Many Israelis are also very frustrated about the fact the dialogue hasn't led anywhere so far. I grew up in an orthodox Jewish family with Zionist values for whom it was a matter of course that all human beings have the same rights. When I moved to Israel, I realised that the situation was very different from what I grew up with. That was when I started to participate in groups of Palestinian and Jewish students who tried to dialogue, who tried to move towards solutions.

Senfft: How would you define a dialogue?

Strenger: The big problem is that those who come to participate in the dialogue are not the problem to begin with. What happens is that on both sides the participants in the dialogue are human beings who have values, who are clearly for co-existence and compromise and so on. The problem is that we are so to speak preaching to each other's choir. That is one of the reasons I have moved out into a much less comfortable arena, which is to fight and argue with those on both sides who are opposed to any compromise.

Barakat: Since I have taken my position at IPRI we have changed our strategy and we try to engage those people that are hard to reach. We have started developing several programmes, one of them is to organise tours for regular Israelis to go and visit Palestinian cities. It is always a turning moment when you see the faces of those Israelis entering the Westbank. Because the last time some of them have been to the Westbank was when they served in the army.

But the younger generation has no connection with what is going on on the Palestinian side. We also tried to bring Palestinians to Israel. And we are trying to be more inclusive in engaging people like settlers, Likud members, like those people who are out of reach usually. This is what we are trying to do: to get people to connect.

Senfft: How do you convince somebody to say: well, let's travel to Israel or to Palestine?

Strenger: It is much, much easier for me to talk to you than it is for me to talk to some religious right-wing ideologue. But since I come from a religious orthodox background – you can guess from my appearance that I no longer belong there – I speak their language. So I have created a TV show in which I meet with some of the most extreme religious nationalist rabbis who argue for positions that I quite openly call fascist. This has been running for almost two years and we have never hit each other physically. We have continued the dialogue. Because of Israeli law we are prevented from speaking directly to Hamas. But I have found ways – via the pages of the Guardian or the New York Times and other background channels – to establish a forum of communication in which an often very harsh polemic is going on between us and those groups. And again, I think one of the things that we need to learn is: it's easy to talk to the like-minded. In many cases, you have to be willing to endure a certain amount of verbal violence, in some cases physical threats. But I think that if we don't go into that arena, people like us feel very good about each other and about ourselves because we do the right thing but we are not reaching those who actually need to be talked to.

Senfft: There have been so many initiatives for so many years and in spite of all the talking it never seems to translate into politics. There is a gap between the grassroots' movement and the political leadership. Do you have any idea where that gap comes from and what would need to be done to actually close it, so that there is a top-down approach as well as a bottom-up approach?

Barakat: We restructured the philosophy of how we work and the field of conflict resolution has introduced a term called »sustainable peace-building«. This has to do with really trying to affect and change the lives of people on a daily basis. Unfortunately this has not happened since the Oslo Accords have been in place. We know that economic prosperity is the real way to engage people and lead them to a peaceful vision for themselves. It is important to raise the level of people's quality of life. On the Palestinian side, we have identified that a key issue needs to be addressed: building the capacity of allowing them to see the positive prospects for themselves, regarding eco-

conomic or health aspects. If people are happy, they will think in peaceful terms and that will introduce values of democracy.

Senfft: An Israeli journalist once wrote that, if you would ask an Israeli the way to New York or to Thailand, he would easily be able to tell you but he would not be able to tell you how to get to Ramallah some kilometres away. How come there is so little interest in what is happening right next door? And did the wall actually aggravate this problem?

Strenger: First, I want to say something that will make me quite unpopular here. I am among those who endorsed building the wall. However, the way we endorsed the wall was to be along the 1967 lines. After the terrible history that our peoples have had with each other, especially after the second Intifada, any trust that Palestinians could be entrusted with our security was gone. As a citizen and as a psychologist I came to the conclusion that quite unfortunately what we would need was one generation on both sides growing up in a way that no Palestinian child would ever see an Israeli soldier again and no Israeli child would ever witness a bus blowing up in the middle of a city. Only then would a normal form of co-existence be possible. It did not work out this way and the wall was not built along the 1967 lines. I am afraid the wall does not just represent a physical reality but indeed a mental reality as well.

Barakat: I think if the wall really had been built on the 1967 borders and if there had been a real viable Palestinian state with rights for Palestinians to exercise their citizenship and their basic human rights of freedom of movement and so on, then it would have led to the product that you are talking about. But unfortunately the occupation has continued, Palestinian life has not improved and there is no likelihood that this separation will lead to something positive at this moment.

Strenger: I can tell you that for us, it was an absolute horror story when we started to see what Sharon made out of our plan. I am in no way defending what was done with this idea.

Faraj: It is good that Rimán is here. As a Palestinian you know that I feel homesick. I am in Germany, not in Palestine. But actually until now as Palestinians we still feel homesick in our land. And this is actually why we call it the continuation of our Nakba, of our catastrophe in 1948, until now. The people here cannot understand what it means to live with this situation more than 65 years. Especially the Israelis should understand what the checkpoints and the wall and the refugee camps and the occupation mean for the Palestinians. And equally we as Palestinians should understand what the history of the Jewish people means to them.

Oren: One of the things that both of you talked about indirectly, is the fear that is controlling our judgment. When we talk about the Nakba in our narrative groups with mainstream Israeli and right-wing people and settlers, most of them manage to go through the process with empathy, they manage to hear with emotions about the horrible process the Palestinians went through in 1948. But what is hard to accept for them is when we are talking about the right of return. The Israelis become fearful because of what may happen. And this is what we have to manage. I also believe what you said, Carlo, about the need of separation before getting married again. So it might be that the two-state solution should be the right way. I hope, we stop missing opportunities. We have missed too many opportunities; we cannot afford to miss anymore.

Anwältin des Publikums: An den Parents Circle gab es sehr viele Fragen, zum Beispiel, wie genau arbeitet ihr, wie sehen die Projekte aus, wie kommen die Menschen zusammen?

Oren: Let me mention two of our major projects. One is what we call »dialogue meeting«. We go to schools in Israel and Palestine with bereaved Israeli-Palestinian pairs. We start with sharing personal stories of bereavement. When I am going with Mazen to an Israeli high school the 17-, 18-year-old pupils are cynical, they are anti-Palestine. In the beginning, there is a lot of demonisation. I am usually sharing my story first. They know such stories. It is not the first time they hear of Israeli bereavement, they hear it quite a lot. But the story is opening their heart and mind, they listen to me. In this opening, this window, the Palestinian comes with his story. They are quite shocked. This is the first time that they hear a Palestinian sharing a personal story, talking about all his life, when he was a freedom fighter and threw stones and when he was bereaved and how he joined the Parents Circle. There is an opening, there are still the walls of demonisation but stereotypes are falling slowly in these moments. And they listen to something completely new. It is changing the picture that they have in their minds. When I am coming to Palestine it is the opposite. It is the first time that Palestinian young people listen to somebody who is not wearing uniform or not a settler or somebody that makes their life horrible. This is one of the activities we do hundreds of times every year. Our mutual message is what is powerful about this project.

Faraj: Sometimes, we know each other and we know the story of each other, but we know nothing about the history of each other. So we took more than 140 Palestinians and Israelis, and they started a process of knowing the narrative of the other side. We went together to Yad Vashem and to a village, which was destroyed in 1948. We want the people to understand what has

happened to the other side and what the Nakba means for the Palestinians and the Holocaust for the Jews and for the Israelis.

Oren: There are obviously a lot of obstacles and things are not easy to initiate and to go on with. But on the other side, maybe we learn to see things in an optimistic way. It is not easy, for example, to enter a high school classroom the day after a violent event happened in which somebody got killed. This again changes the picture in the people's minds and hearts.

Senfft: »What impact does your work have on society and on politics?«, that was another question that was asked.

Oren: Our situation is like a fire that you try to put out with glasses of water. And out of a thousand glasses of water one comes with a glass of gasoline. So it is an ongoing conflict that is very hard to change. We know that we influence the people that we meet, we do research about it. The situation is slowly progressing; nobody for example spoke about the two-state solution in the Israeli mainstream 15 years ago. What me and Mazen are doing now was forbidden many years ago. Meeting with Palestinians was against the law because all Palestinians were considered terrorist. And all these things are still in the Israeli minds but at least they are not illegal. So things are in progress. We manage to get to the heart and mind of the people we meet. We manage to change slowly, and so hopefully parallel to the peace agreement we'll manage.

We try to work on the politicians as well. They accept us; our bereavement is an entrance ticket to the Knesset sometimes, just like it is in the high schools. At the moment, we are working with some politicians and with academics on a reconciliation paper. It entails an actual vision and a working plan for reconciliation between the two sides following a peace agreement in order to make it a lasting peace. We are, I think, the only organisation in the world dealing with reconciliation before the end of the conflict, before there is an agreement. We know that the obstacle towards a peace agreement is mainly emotional and mental, not physical. The physical decisions were on the table in most of the talks that happened in the last 15 or 20 years. So, to overcome the emotional obstacles, we need to reach some mutual acknowledgement and overcome fear and hatred from both sides. And this is what our reconciliation process is trying to do.

Senfft: Mazen, what does it mean for you to work in an atmosphere where the anti-normalisation and boycott campaign is very strong?

Faraj: There is no normalisation under the occupation. The main reason why the people don't become more involved in the solution is the situation of their

lives. A student who goes to a school in Tel Aviv, will go home by bus after the meeting and will return to a good life and a good family and a good everything. But the student in the Westbank, when he finishes the dialogue meeting with Nir and Mazen, would go back through the checkpoints and the settlements and all of that. So the minute that we give the people a new hope it will be kind of a solution and a new future for these countries.

Senfft: Riman, there is a whole generation of young Palestinians who grew up with the Intifada and the wall and who are meeting Israelis less and less. How do you perceive your work with young Palestinians and what is their vision of the future?

Barakat: Unfortunately, more and more young Palestinians are feeling that the two-state solution is no longer possible. They feel frustrated that there is no future for them. More and more, they are saying: we do not subscribe to the Palestinian leadership and to what it has signed up for in the Oslo accords. They say we want a one-state solution. Or a bi-national state, a state where we can have access to jobs, to the sea, where we have freedom in movement. And so there is a growing preference for individual and human rights over the national and collective rights, because the national and collective rights have not delivered. And this is a very big challenge for us as Palestinians because everywhere around us in the Middle East, people are having democratic fights. In Egypt, there are groups that are calling for democratic values on Tahir Square. We are in a double struggle. What do we deal with first? Do we deal with democratic issues first, our rights as women, or do we fight the occupation first? There is a preference to let it be one state, it does not matter if the Israelis are ruling us if it is a democratic state. Of course, this is not possible. We cannot transcend the need for a national sovereign state living side by side with Israel. And on the Israeli side they also cannot forgo their security, their demographic security. The younger generation, however, has to have reasons for hope. The only way forward is to continue building viable Palestinian institutions that the Palestinian authority has started to build. Unfortunately the building of the Palestinian state has been continuously stunted, stopped and prevented. We don't have a regular infrastructure for the basic life needs like water and electricity. We don't have viability for the Palestinian state. And this is why the settlement projects are diminishing the prospects for this hopeful future. Still, whenever we bring Israelis to Palestine, they are amazed about what has been possible, what the Palestinians have built so far and this gives hope for the future. Israel must understand that in order to have real peace they need to have a strong neighbour. They need to allow this neighbour to have the freedom to build their state and they need to recognize this state.

Senfft: I think it is also important to know what is going on in Israel right now. Netanyahu just said that if we will not have two states soon, it will be one state and that is not what we want. And there is a new initiative by the Arab League now. How do you assess the possibilities of starting something like a peace process again from the Israeli point of view? And maybe you could also talk a little about the question of fear. What are the fears of the Israelis, how real are they and how much are they being instrumentalised?

Strenger: Let me start with what I consider to be the primal sin of Israel's right-wing politicians. I have been an opponent of the Israeli settlement projects from the very beginning. I think that it is Israel's moral and political catastrophe. This being said I stand here as a professional who has been researching this and as a citizen and I want to tell you all: there is no meeting, no social gathering of Israelis, whether it is a Friday night dinner or just a barbecue, where the question does not come up – will this country exist in another 20 or 30 years? I tell you what the primal sin of Israel's right is: they have manipulatively used fears that are completely genuine. They use fears to justify something that does absolutely nothing to increase Israeli security. How on earth do the settlements help against the fact that there are 60,000 rockets within striking distance that the Hezbollah has aimed against Israel? What does it help that the Syrians have thousands of scuds, many of them with chemical warheads, aimed against Israel and what does it help against the Iranian threat? However, what you need to understand is the omnipresent fear. And that is difficult to understand. What you see of us is our F16s, our satellites, our high-tech industry, our phenomenal ability to use technological means in war. What you do not see is the fear. What you do not understand is what it means that you cannot drive more than 20 kilometres in one direction without coming to a border that you cannot cross and from which you have been shot at. Now, the problem is that the fears are very genuine. There is only one single point in which I agree with Netanyahu. Netanyahu has always said that the problem is not just an Israeli-Palestinian problem. The question is also if the Arab world recognizes Israel's right to exist. The Arab League has started a peace initiative in 2002 and it has been endorsed again and again. 92 per cent of the Israelis don't even know that it exists. I think it is absolutely essential that the international community, primarily the western world, amplifies the fact that this Arab peace initiative actually exists. I think it will make a big difference for Palestinians, because I think most Palestinian leaders have an enormous problem to get the internal legitimacy to sign peace agreements because of the problems of the right of return and so on and so on. It will give the Palestinian leadership a much stronger legitimacy if the entire Arab world stands behind it. Incidentally, there is a second enormous problem. Israelis say: »Look, we saw what happened when we left Gaza. We got rockets, rockets, rockets. The Hamas won in 2006. Who tells us

that it is not going to happen again?« I think the one way to change Hamas is through the Arab Peace Initiative. I think Mahmoud Abbas has always endorsed it. I think that the international community has an enormously important role to play.

Senfft: The question was raised about the role of Germans or of us discussing this here in Germany. What role do you think could a country like Germany play within Europe? And, what role could the church take in this conflict?

Strenger: If you don't mind, I would like to say a few words in German because it matters to me. Der Grund, warum ich ein paar Worte auf Deutsch sagen möchte, ist, dass es für mich persönlich immer wieder eine wichtige Erfahrung ist, in Deutschland über diese Probleme zu sprechen. Auf der Seite meiner Mutter ist fast die ganze Familie in der Shoa umgekommen und ich habe gleichzeitig eine sehr tiefe Verbindung zur deutschen Kultur und ich glaube auch, dass die tragische, aber auch mehr und mehr fruchtbare Beziehung zwischen Deutschland und den Juden heute eine besonders wichtige Funktion hat. Ich möchte im Hinblick auf Ihre Frage, was Deutschland tun kann, etwas betonen: Im europäischen Diskurs ist es oft so, dass eine gewisse Form von Linksdenken, das Israel immer mehr delegitimiert, einen absolut disproportionalen Raum hat im öffentlichen Gespräch. Andererseits, wenn ich sehe, wie israelische gemeinsam mit europäischen Rechtsextremisten das neue Hobby der Islamophobie pflegen und glauben, dass das irgendetwas hilft, ist das natürlich eine reine Katastrophe – auf beiden Seiten. Das Problem ist: Die Verrückten machen immer mehr Lärm. Und ich glaube, im Sinne der Menschlichkeit und der Normalität ist das Problem, dass gemäßigtes Denken, das von Natur aus nicht sehr viel Lärm macht, sich nicht genug hören lässt. Fast jedes Wort, das Angela Merkel klar sagt, über die Situation in Israel und über den Israel-Palästina-Konflikt, wird sehr genau wahrgenommen. Denn es ist jedem Israeli klar, wie komplex, tief tragisch und auch eng die Beziehung zwischen diesen beiden Völkern, den Deutschen und den Juden, ist. Das Gewicht Deutschlands ist größer, als ihr vielleicht immer wahrnehmt, und ich glaube, es wird nicht genug genutzt. Wenn klarer gemacht wird, dass der Konsens Europas, und hier hat Deutschland ein besonderes Gewicht, ist, dass beide Extrempositionen absolut nicht akzeptabel sind, dann wird es ein gewisses Gewicht haben. Und da müssen wir, die gemäßigt Denkenden, einen Weg finden, ein bisschen mehr Lärm zu machen, damit klar wird, dass wir nicht die Minderheit sind, sondern die Mehrheit, um schlussendlich zu einer positiven und menschlichen Lösung zu finden.

Barakat: It is a very complex question for me to answer from the point of view of a Palestinian, because of the closeness of the relationship between the Germans and the Jews. It is a relationship of guilt, but at the same time what is

going on in Israel cannot continue anymore and a human approach needs to be implemented. I would support what Carlo said that there is a need for thinking beyond »we support only the Palestinians« or »we support only the Israelis« because we have this historic responsibility. We need to open the door rather than close it. I consider as important what Obama did. In his speech in Jerusalem he spent the first 28 minutes hugging Israel. It was frustrating for Palestinians to hear. But at the same time that is the Israeli psychology. And if we want to get from here to here, then, ok, let's hug a bit! And then move on to talking about that the Palestinians on the other side have the same dreams, that they have young children etc. As a Palestinian I need to put myself in the other shoes and at the same time we all need that acknowledgement. And as a Palestinian I will need in return an acknowledgement of my Nakba.

Oren: I am excited that you said many things that I have thought about, thank you. It was actually very accurate about the Israeli side; about how to understand it. I believe there is a mainstream in both societies. We don't think we are able to change the extremists but we can change the mainstream. And in this the international community can support us by walking with the two sides together, not taking sides. And the churches should do the same. This is something that we need more and more and we need states and churches to press our two leaderships to do something.

Faraj: I think the role of the international community – I say it as a Palestinian and as a refugee – is to tell the Palestinians there is a justice in this land and in this world. I am here in Germany to say that I exist and that today it is your responsibility to support something new in the Middle East which is peace and justice.

Oren: Can I share one anecdote that Mazen now reminded me of? Tel Hai is a college in the north of Israel and there was a dialogue meeting with some settlers in which Mazen was a Palestinian representative. After the meeting one girl from Kiryat Arba, a settlement near Hebron, came to him crying her heart out. She said that every time she went with her mother with the bus to Jerusalem, she crossed the road near Dheisheh refugee camp where Mazen lived and she used to ask her mother: »Mummy, who lives there?« And the mother said: »Nobody.« – For me it is the most horrible answer. If she said »terrorists«, it would have been better than this elimination. And this girl told Mazen: »I cannot bear it anymore.« And she was crying because she could see now that the »nobody« was standing next to her. He is a human being. It was very emotional. I hope we will manage to do this. I hope, you will help us to do all of this and to gain the trust and justice and all what we need. Thank you for having us today.

Senfft: We have seen different approaches to dialogue with different attempts or different conclusions that are drawn. The Palestinian writer Samir El-Youssef once said: »If you take sides with just one side you basically opt for war.« I think this is not what anyone wants and therefore I plead that you listen to all the narratives on both sides. I want to finish with words from Aziz Abu Sarah: »You are stronger when you let humanity overcome enmity.«