

Talking for Peace – A Karl Kahane Lecture Series

The Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue
in co-operation with the Karl Kahane Foundation

kindly invites to the lecture of

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CONFLICT NARRATIVES AND RESOLUTION AVENUES IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Welcome address:
Patricia Kahane

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Amal Jamal

Guten Abend. Es freut mich sehr, hier zu sein. Ich habe versprochen, auf deutsch anzufangen, aber auf englisch fortzufahren. Ich kann nicht genug deutsch, um diesen Vortrag auf deutsch zu halten. Deswegen werde ich auf englisch sprechen. Danach können wir vielleicht die Fragen auf deutsch stellen, und ich werde versuchen, auch auf deutsch zu antworten.

First of all I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity. I am very glad to be here. It is my second time in Vienna. Last time was terrific, it was a very special experience. I hope this experience will be also as positive. I know that I speak about tough issues. It is a very tough reality. When we speak about it it is usually not easy to hear for many people. I would like to announce from the start that my talk tonight won't be that optimistic. It is going to be realistic. It might sound pessimistic also. But I would like to frame it as realistic as possible. And I explain why I say that through the lecture itself. But I would like to start with something else.

I like to start with a sentence said by Friedrich Nietzsche. He said, "We think we live in the present. But actually we don't live in the presence very much. We are caught so much in our past and planning our future that we seldom visit our presence." This is a very important sentence when it comes to speaking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, when it is being about the Middle East in general, or other conflicts as well. We human beings are constructed in such a way that we are very busy, consciously or unconsciously, with our past. We are caught within our socialization process in such a way that in many cases we are unable to get out

of it and look at it critically. And therefore we find ourselves sometimes fighting for – and I hope I am not insulting anybody – stones, fighting for walls that were built 2000 years ago, or buildings that were built for a different purpose and we transform them in order to make them very prominent and existential. But we are not caught only in our past, we are caught also in our future. Look at how we calculate our daily behavior as persons, as individuals, as well as groups, and especially national groups. We think in future timings in the sense of the expectations of the future. The way we envision the future determines the way we plan our daily life, consciously or subconsciously also. And when it comes to nationalities, nations are one of the most prominent phenomena of the modern age, but one of the most groups engaged with time and understanding of time, and planning time, and trying to control time as much as possible because as some people have said, nations are about narratives. Nations are about narration, how we tell our stories, how we construct our reality. This does not mean that the discourse or the narrative we create is far attached from reality itself, from the stones I was talking about. The stones feed the way we imagine our reality. And therefore when it comes to looking at a conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is very important to look at the basic and fundamental perceptions of people involved in the conflict.

I am going to repeat the main topics I raised in my last lecture when I was here in Vienna. In order to frame the current reality inside the theoretical understanding that enables best analysis or understanding of what is going on today. I think Palestinians as well as Israelis – when I speak about Israelis I mean mainly Jews. I don't mean Palestinians that live inside Israel because the conflict is between the two nationalities, so Israeli Jews as a group and Palestinians. And of course, I am generalizing a little bit. But I think it is necessary for our understanding. A split of several issues that are very deep in their understanding of the self in the way they look at themselves, in the way they look at the other, and so on. And these points are history and narrativity, that both sides are caught each one in his own history and in his own narration of his own history to an extent that any story about the relationship between one side and the place in which they live is totally exclusive of the other. If we look at the infrastructural components of Jewish history vis-à-vis the land of Israel or Palestinian history vis-à-vis Palestine, we see that both narratives exclude the other side almost completely although we find that some people, politicians or intellectuals, speak about the possibility of the existence of the other side. But when it comes to the basic fundamental foundations of the way each side narrates his own history it is exclusive of the other side. This is one thing and it is very important.

The other issue that I mentioned last time, morality and power. There is a balance between morality and power on both sides. Both sides think that they are weak side as well as the moral side. So this balance between morality and power is very important in the conflict. And when it comes to understanding the conflict itself you have to look at the usage of both sides of this combination between morality and power. It is very important to understand.

The third issue is the relationship or the intricate relationship between presence and existence. Being present on the land and existence which is very important on both sides. Both sides look at it exclusively also. Both sides try to claim that they were present all the time on the place. And this presence is not always connected with physical existence. The presence could be, when you are far away from the land of Israel or Palestine either you exist there in your daily behavior or the land exists in your consciousness. Look at Jews living abroad. Look at Palestinian refugees who live in Lebanon for sixty years or live in Europe for sixty years. They still consider themselves as refugees, as people who were displaced. The same thing with Jews who lived there 2000 years ago and still felt until the foundation of Israel as refugees, as people who were kicked out from their own homeland.

Strategy and struggle is a very important issue. State and sovereignty. They are divided on the meaning of state and sovereignty. What does it mean to be a state? And whether a state means sovereignty or not? And what kind of state each side wants? Do we want a state in the meaning of “Rechtsstaat” where the rule of law is the main characteristic of the state? Or do we want a state that acts like a movement? The state of Israel Judaizes (make it Jewish) the space, the place, and time constantly. I will come to that in a minute when I speak of the settlements. The same thing with the Palestinians. I will speak about the Islamic movement also.

Recognition and reconciliation. The issue of recognition and reconciliation is very important. When you look at the negotiations taking place between Israelis and Palestinians, have they recognized each other really? To what extent? Have they looked at each other as equally legitimate in the place? To what extent? And how does it affect a possible reconciliation between the two sides? Very important question. And the last issue I spoke about last time is the relationship between spheres of normality and abnormality. What is normal? What is considered normal in the Israeli-Palestinian relations? Who considers themselves as normally being there and the other side as abnormal? Look at both sides. Israelis look at themselves as the normal, the norm, and the Palestinians as the abnormal. And the other way around is also true. That Palestinians look at themselves and say, Palestine is ours, this is our home, this is our place, this is our normal life. And what the Jews did with the establishment of the state of Israel is, they took from us our normal life. We can't live normally as long as this state is there or as long as occupation is there. So this relationship between spheres of normality and spheres of abnormality is very important. I elaborated on that last time, so I am not going into that deeply. But it is very important in order to connect to what I am going to say now.

And I think what I am going to say now has to do with the announcement of the American President George Bush on August 21st calling for an international conference for peace in the Middle East. I think I heard Israelis as well as Palestinians being very optimistic about this conference. Some people started speaking about a fundamental change of reality in the Middle East as the result of this summit. Some of the Arab states will come, the Saudis will come, Israelis will be there, Palestinians will be there, Americans will be there, the Europeans will be there. And this will be a trigger for a fundamental change of reality in the Middle East or at least in the Israeli-Palestinian relations. I heard even some Palestinians, people who are close to President Abu Mazen, speaking, promising that, within a year there won't be any Israeli check point in the Westbank. Some Israelis are also very optimistic. This reminds us of the optimism that we had during or after the Oslo process. Those who followed the process at that time were in euphoria. We thought that there is a fundamental change in the relations between the two sides, or most people believed that there is a fundamental change in the relations between the two sides. We hear today some rumors or some people speaking about possible fundamental change in the relation between the two sides. I differ. I come from a completely different position not only to the summit or to the relationship between the two sides. I think in order to understand what is going on in the Israeli-Palestinian relations there is a gap. We can look at two levels. One level is the discursive level, what is being said by the Prime Minister's office in Israel, what is being said by the President's office in the Palestinian Authority vis-à-vis what is going on in reality. Those of you who are following what is going on in reality know that the reality is completely different. I will mention only a few things in order to elaborate this point.

When you look at Israeli policies in the Westbank and in Gaza Strip we see that Israeli policies did not change very much. Despite the nice words, despite the meetings between Olmert and Abu Mazen in the last few months the policy itself did not change fundamentally or even basically. Targeted killings are still taking place. Many Palestinians are being killed. I can even give you numbers. The number reached 218 until mid August 2007 since the beginning of the second Intifada in October 2000. To that one should add 367 Palestinians killed during targeted killings. This is a very basic and fundamental Israeli policy. Or the demolishing of houses. The same thing is taking place. From October 2001 to January 2005 Israel demolished 668 homes in the occupied territories as punishment. To that one should add 165 houses demolished in the years 2006, 2005 for not having building permits. And 7 houses were demolished in 2007 for military purposes. This policy of demolishing houses continues until this very day. Detention of political activists. I can give you a list of how many people were arrested each month since the beginning of 2007 until this very day. Many people were detained for mainly political purposes. I am not speaking about people accused to be terrorists. This is data of the Israeli defense forces. It is not Palestinian sources, rather official Israeli sources. So it is continuing. Expansion of existing settlements. It is a policy that is still taking place. Israel has never stopped expanding settlements. Despite the negotiations, when Abu Mazen is meeting Olmert in Jerusalem, settlements are being expanded all over, in every place. The legalizing of what is called illegal settlements is also something that is taking place. Incursions of the Israeli army into Palestinian cities

is also still taking place, in Nablus, in Ramallah, in Hebron, in Jenin, and so on, on a daily basis almost to arrest what is called terrorist activists, or potential terrorists, or activists in political movements.

Restriction of the freedom of movement. Hundreds of check points are implanted in different areas in the occupied territories, in the Westbank, in order to control the movement of the Palestinians. In one of Bethlehem's reports called "Ground to a Halt: Denial of Palestinians' Freedom of Movement in the Westbank", released in August 2007, I will read only one piece from it saying,

"Since the beginning of the second intifada, in September 2000, Israel has imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank that are unprecedented in scope and time. As a result, the fundamental right of West Bank Palestinians to freedom of movement, their exercise of which was limited in any event, has become a privilege that Israel extends to them as it deems fit. Indeed, Palestinian travel in the West Bank is now an exception, which must be justified to the Israeli authorities, and almost every trip entails uncertainty, friction with soldiers, much waiting, and often great expense."

To this I would like to add, when we look at what is going on in the Westbank with the check point policy we see that for a Palestinian to pass 17 kilometers he has to travel around 150 kilometers because he has to take leeways in order to get from one place to another. When we look at what is going on in parallel with settlers in the Westbank neighboring these Palestinians, to pass 17 kilometers it takes a few minutes only. The highways that are being build for Jews only in the Westbank is a policy that is being applied until this very day. Now in the Westbank we can see a very clear separation between roads for Palestinians and roads for Israelis or for Jews. It is very problematic. When you look at this reality we can understand or at least conceive how Palestinians look at the peace process or look at negotiations taking place between Abu Mazen and Olmert. To that one should add, of course, the Al Kassam missiles being targeted to Israeli cities from the Gaza Strip, looking from the Palestinian side, which also harms the relationship between the two sides. Every day almost between 7 and 10 missiles are targeted on Siderot city in the south which harms very much the relationship between the two sides and doesn't enable Israelis to trust the real intentions of the Palestinians. This is especially true when you look at the fact that about a year and a half ago the Hamas movement has won the elections in the Palestinian Authority and is rejecting any recognition of the state of Israel, or negotiations with the state of Israel.

So this reality vis-à-vis what is going on on the discursive level, the negotiations between Olmert and Abu Mazen, the gap is very big. This does not enable us to understand what is going on. One has to ask himself the basic question, why is this gap? What is going on? Should we actually follow the discourse and be optimistic and look at the negotiations as something that could really change reality? Or should we look realistically at what is going on and actually understand the reality from there? I am more realistic. I would like to follow these events, these policies taking place on daily basis in order to understand what is going on and what other future options we have to follow. When we are looking at Palestinian society itself, the Palestinian society is very suspicious of what is going on. Palestinians in general don't believe in the peace process. And I think most Israelis also have no positive attitude or at least a serious attitude at what is going on in the negotiations. Most Israelis don't trust the negotiations. Most Israelis also don't believe that the Olmert government can deliver even if it reaches a certain agreement. The Olmert government can't actually implement any agreement reached between the two sides which means that the average person on both sides is very suspicious of what is going on. This means that the negotiations taking place now between the two sides maybe cannot change the infrastructural reality between them. Looking at the main points that will be brought to discussion in the future summit in November one can see that an agreement is very hard to reach.

Let us look briefly on the main points that could be brought up.

The first point is the borders between the two sides. Where should the borders be? What should they pass? We see that both sides have completely different attitudes about the borders. Despite the fact that people are speaking about a possible compromise by exchanging lands, still the issue of borders is much beyond

exchanging land. Who will control the borders of the Palestinian state from the eastern side with Jordan? Who will control the southern borders between the Gaza Strip and Egypt? How can Israel guarantee its security when one has no access to these borders? Will the Palestinians agree to give up control on these borders which means the fundamental or basic meaning of sovereignty of a state? These are very difficult questions to answer.

The issue of exchanging land for settlements. Will it be possible? The first time that some Israeli politicians mentioned the possibility of exchanging lands in the Negev area, many residents or leaders of that area started speaking about taking the initiative in order to block such a possibility, that they won't allow the exchange of land for settlements. Why should we endanger our future and become very close to the border with the Palestinian state for the sake of the settlers who are illegally there? Why should we allow legalizing the settlements by giving up our security and moving the border of the Palestinian state closer to us? This is a very important issue. But internal Palestinian discussion or debate is not less tense. Also Palestinians are speaking about this possibility of exchanging lands. Getting some sand areas in the Negev and giving up very fruitful areas in the Westbank.

The second issue is Jerusalem. When we look at Jerusalem it is a very problematic issue. Will the Palestinians in particular and Muslims in general give up the control of the Harem Sharif for any international sovereignty? Will they have the possibility? Will they have the agreement of the Arab states to do such a thing? And can we imagine Israel giving up its sovereignty over the Western Wall or at least part of the old city? I can't see such an option. So we are stuck there, too. It is a very problematic and sensitive issue.

The refugees are a very problematic issue. Will Israel accept Palestinians coming back into Israel? The official Israeli position is No. I know from some Israeli politicians that Israel will agree to some. Barak has agreed to some. Will the Palestinians agree to symbolic number? No. Palestinians think that their right to return has to include coming back to Israel, inside Israel, not only to the Palestinian state. Palestinian politicians, of course, who want to promote the negotiations speak about Israeli agreement to small numbers or at least that most Palestinians won't return anyway. But this issue is very problematic. How many Palestinians will come back? How many persons will Israel allow to come back? If the Israeli government reaches an agreement that 20.000, 30.000, 100.000 will come back, will it be able to hold on to power? Any prime minister who accepts such a deal, will he remain in office for a long time? I am not sure. Any Palestinian leader who will give up the issue of the refugees, who will go for a serious compromise, giving Israel the possibility to determine the numbers and where they return to, will he remain in office? I am not sure.

This brings us to an almost impossible situation. What are the options then? Should we be left with this conflict forever? Are we going to be entangled in this conflict for the coming years? Or are there options to go out of the stalemate? What are the options? How can we get out of the current reality? I am going to mention for you several options that I am not very optimistic about also. I will end with an optimistic notion. But the options that are there are not very optimistic, are very problematic. Israel has occupied the Westbank and the Gaza Strip in 1967. It is 40 years ago. Israel has managed to maintain the status quo for 40 years. Most of you will agree with me that Israel can maintain the status quo for another 40 years. So this is one option, to maintain the status quo. To manipulate, maneuver, do anything possible in order to follow one of the basic and fundamental policy lines of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel, creating facts on the ground. Just create facts on the ground and negotiate from there. Negotiate for a long period of time, so you can create new facts on the ground. Transform the demographic reality, transform the political reality in such a way that enables you to win more space, more land. When you look at the wall that is being built, although it is a fundamental or basic change in Israeli policy, and the previous prime minister Sharon has changed his mind regarding the wall, he was one of the fast politicians to come out against the wall, but he changed his mind because he thought that it could solve the demographic problem and enable Israel to include the basic concentrations of settlements to Israel. I don't know to what extent the wall can solve the demographic

problem or even the security problem. But when it comes to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the wall can't help. The wall can't lead to a solution. You can't unilaterally impose a solution. But it can help maybe to maintain the status quo. It can maintain separation between Palestinians and Israelis to a certain extent in order to maintain the status quo and create new facts on the ground. And this was the policy for a long period of time. Will the Palestinians remain quiet? Will they expand to Intifadas? We can expand another one which could be much worse. The Palestinians won't sit still and wait for Israelis to create new facts on the ground. This means that the conflict will remain there. Although the Israelis can maintain the security situation in such a way that they can live with, but the Palestinians have understood the game very well and they won't keep silent for a long period of time. This option is there. I think that it is not a solution, but it is an option that is there, that is very problematic in my view. I think some politicians in Israel think that it is the best option. It is the best option because any other option is much more costly. This is one possibility.

The second possibility I would like to speak about is Apartheid. It is a de facto reality in the occupied Palestinian territories. I mentioned the roads. If you look at the roads map in the Westbank you will see clearly there are roads for Israeli cars with yellow tags and there are streets or roads for Palestinians only. There is clear separation between the Jewish settlements and the Palestinian residential areas. Interaction between the two communities takes place only in check points between the army and the Palestinian civilian population. Palestinians are basically not allowed to come and work in Israel. Since 1992 Israel has reduced the numbers to maybe 3000, 4000 only. A very small number of Palestinians are allowed to come and work in Israel. This means that we have segregation, a segregation that serves, of course, Israeli policies that are imposed by Israel, thus not allowing Palestinians to run their own normal life making them dependent on spheres of normality, namely Israel. That they can't move from one place to another freely. Those of you who have visited the Westbank can understand what I am talking about. I mentioned an example of how kilometers it takes to pass from one place to another. As I said it is a de facto reality in the occupied territories. The Gaza Strip is a very large detention camp. People can't go out whenever they want. People can't come in whenever they want. The Westbank is divided and controlled by a lot of checkpoints and highways that render the Palestinians trapped in small cells that they cannot leave without permission. It is partially an Apartheid situation. I know that it is very sensitive to use the concept of Apartheid because of South Africa, because of racism. When the previous American President used it in the title of his book he created a lot of tension and criticism. There are big differences between South Africa and Israel. But we are not talking about Israel proper. We are talking about the Israeli control system in the Westbank. It has many of the characteristics of the Apartheid system. It is not exactly the same like in South Africa, but it has fundamental and basic components of that system, where Palestinians are allowed to walk or not to walk, or to travel or not to travel. This is connected to the status quo situation, another option that could be there for another 40 years. I know that most of us, at least here, don't want this system. But it is there for 40 years, it could continue for 40 years. It doesn't solve the conflict? Yes, it doesn't solve the conflict. Of course not. But it could remain there for some time.

The third option is the bi-national state. This means that the two sides decide if they cannot separate between themselves, they will live together. They will live in the same state. They will live in a bi-national state in which they share power and divide the power positions among themselves. Many Palestinians and some Israelis do speak about this option. Most Israelis are against this option. The formal Palestinian political system is against this option. But still, many people are talking about it as an option to solve the problem. Of course, one of the reasons of Sharon's policy change regarding the wall is because of this option. After the breakout of the second Intifada and a lot of talks about the demographic problem and the impossibility of separating between Israelis and Palestinians and the more and more Palestinians started speaking about the bi-national option Sharon changed his mind regarding the wall. The wall came actually to block such a possibility, to disable the demographic situation to impose itself on the political solution and separate between Palestinian and Israelis. But still, the bi-national state is an option, is an avenue of resolution that does not have a lot of chances today, that does not have a lot of supporters. But it is there. And it is being considered by some intellectuals on both sides. I know several Israeli academics who wrote about it as an option. I know many who are against it. But it is an avenue of resolution at least in the remote future. I don't

see any chance that it could be implemented in the near future. And I don't see Israel giving the 3,5 million Palestinians living under Israeli occupation Israeli citizenship.

The fourth option which is also very problematic is ethnic cleansing. It happened in 1948, it could happen also in the future. This means that in a war situation or in a third Intifada in which Palestinians will use more force Israel could find itself in a situation where it sees it legitimate to do what it did in 1948, evacuate some parts of the Palestinians outside the Israeli control system. Of course, it is a very problematic option. It is not a positive option. People who would like to see a solution don't consider it as an option. But Realpolitik makes us think about it because it happened in the past. When we look at the 1948 war you see that it was used. And it is not an accident that the whole shore area along Israel between Nahariya and Ashkelon does not have Arab towns other than three Arab villages. There were hundreds of villages there. How come the concentration of Arabs that remain inside the Israeli state are in parts that were supposed to be part of the Palestinian state according to the partition plan. Because Israel did not believe that the world will give up on the Palestinian state so fast. And that is why they made a mistake. They left these Arab villages there. But in the next round, in the future, it could happen if the Palestinians break out in a third Intifada in which they use much violence, in a state of war, it would be seen as legitimate to do what happened in 1948. And the 1948 war was not a short war. It started actually with the partition plan 29th November, 1947, until almost October 1949. Almost two years. So the same thing can happen. It is a tragic solution, but we have to consider it. If we want to influence reality we have to take these options into consideration, be aware of them, and try to prevent them, and to get more involved actively in order to prevent such possibilities. I am not saying these possibilities are there because this side is bad, or the other side is bad, or this side has bad intentions, or the other side has bad intentions. I don't know what people think. We can't see what people have in their minds. We can't see people's hearts. But we can read politics, we can read history. Ethnic cleansing can happen suddenly or indirectly. It does not have to be evacuation in the way we imagine it, that Israel will bring people into busses and leave them outside the border. It does not have to happen this way. In a war situation we can find ourselves in a place where many Palestinians will find themselves outside of their residential areas. The current situation of refugees or internally displaced Palestinians, around 250.000 internal refugees inside Israel, that were never given the opportunity to get back to their original homes, is good evidence that it is possible and it could happen.

I inserted this sentence because I am afraid to mention the next option which is also very problematic before I get to the last option that may be optimistic.

The fifth option which is very problematic is genocide. It has to be taken into consideration. Genocide does not have to happen the way Armenians were slaughtered by the Turks or what happened with the Jews in Germany. It could happen in different ways. It happened here in Europe very close to you in Bosnia. I think you were not satisfied with the way the European Union dealt with it. It is happening in Darfur. It happened in Africa in several places. So it could happen. We have to take this option into consideration because it is a bad option, of course, but that could happen. Partially, by the way, it is taking place. In what sense? What I call elitocide. The killing of leaders, parts of the Palestinian elite, has to be considered seriously by us, people who want to look at possible solutions. We would like to be optimistic, but can't. Elitocide is taking place. How many Palestinians were assassinated in the last few years intentionally? These "targeted killings", the invention of "sterile operations of death". Dropping a half ton bomb in Gaza in order to kill Saleh Shehadeh. I can mention several cases. We have to be aware of it. Or the suicide bombers. Suicide bombers are not some type of genociding? It is. When you come and kill yourself among innocent people who have had nothing to do directly with the conflict, we shouldn't consider it? We don't have to call it genocide. But, when you kill yourself with another 20 innocent people, civilians eating their lunch in a restaurant, or you blow yourself up in a bus, this has to be seriously considered by us. And both sides are using methods in order to harm the other side, especially innocents. It took place between October 2001 and January 2006. Tens of suicide bombers kill themselves with Israeli civilians. The powerful side has more options to implement such a policy. One of Agamben's concepts is that occupation, as state of exception, turns people's lives into bear life, exposes them to death every second. Occupation makes people bear life in the sense that

when you go out you can never be sure you are going to come back. Those of you who are interested to read something about read the Palestinian Raja Shehadeh his memoir about the occupation, of living under occupation.

After saying these terrible things I was left with one option that I will mention here. The two-state solution. I left the two-state solution to the end in order to end with an optimistic option. I don't think that most of us would like to see the five options that I mentioned until now happening. I don't like to see these options taking place ever. And therefore, we are left with the two-state solution option. I think it is a realistic option. But it is becoming more and more remote, and it is becoming less and less possible because of the policies I mentioned before. If we want to intervene, if we want to push a solution forward, if we want to change reality, we have to understand exactly what this solution means. It means two sovereign states, completely sovereign state. A sovereign state has complete control over itself. This means accepting a sovereign Palestinian state in the Palestinian areas. I think that Israel has to recognize the Palestinian right for self determination within a state that is completely sovereign. And I think the Palestinians can't compromise for less than that and won't compromise for less than that. Why? Because the Palestinians have internal forces that will disrupt any possible solution in the future if it does not meet the minimum standard of a completely sovereign state. I mean here the forces that are behind Hamas and even in Fatah you have people who will agree only to a complete sovereign state that has complete control over its borders, complete control of its own territory, and is located within the borders of the 1967 war. And this option is becoming remote because of what I said before. Many of the policies that are being applied are making this option less and less optional. But, I think it is the best solution possible at least in the near future. If we want to intervene we have to intervene for such a solution.

And here I come to the need for intervention because of what I said until now, because of the harm that both sides have caused each other, because of the mistrust, because of the bad experiences, because of the lack of capable leadership on both sides, because of the lack of legitimate leadership on both sides, there is a need for a new factor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And this new factor that has been there at least partially, but never intensively enough in order to transform the conflict, this is third party intervention. There is a need for intensive third party intervention. When I speak about third party intervention I mean maybe the quartet, maybe more than the quartet. But there is a need for an external force to change reality. I don't think that both sides are capable of seriously negotiating. And if they are seriously negotiating they, at least in the near future, lack the possibility to deliver. And I mean both sides. Looking at the Olmert government and looking at the Abu Mazen government I don't think that they are able to deliver. And I don't think that the next governments that will be elected on both sides will be able to deliver unless there is intensive third party intervention by the international community that can guarantee both sides that the process will be successful and impose certain steps on both sides in order to move forward. Thank you very much.

Question

You just spoke about the need for outside intervention. You mentioned at the beginning of your talk the conference. Basically what you said, the agenda is not clear, there is a lack of vision on both sides, they will not be able to deliver. But it seems to me that we have the same lack of vision on the party of those who might be able to intervene from the outside. I am speaking about the US. Also the political capital of this government is basically spent. If this conference will be a failure as probably you and also I will agree on, isn't that problematic to raise expectations before? Wouldn't it be more clever to tell the people listen, what you just said is true that we cannot expect a solution from neither this government nor the next government, nor can we expect outside intervention, so everything is bleak and gloomy. Wouldn't that be better for the people because then they would just go on and say well, it is bleak and gloomy, so let's just wait for another 40 years? But if they see this whole conference collapse then it is another bad day for them.

Amal Jamal

It is a dilemma. Sometimes when we look at the conflict we use international relation theory or political ... theory. But sometimes it is good to look at it philosophically, to contemplate it. What you are saying is on the

one hand if we tell people the pessimistic story then nobody will trust such a summit, nobody will support such a summit, and most people will ask themselves, what for. If we lie to them, use a platonic concept, the noble lie, we raise expectations but we give them an option, we give them an optimistic option at least. What is better? To lie to people for a certain period of time in order to make them more relaxed and more optimistic, and then maybe afterwards tell them stories why it did not work like Barak told stories after Camp David did not work? Or tell them the truth from the beginning? If you analyze it philosophically it is a dilemma. I don't know what is better. But when you bring parties inside, when you bring Olmert inside for instance in this specific case, for his own survival as a politician he has to raise expectations. But he is not also raising expectation to an extent that is completely unrealistic. He is negotiating with Abu Mazen, he is meeting with Abu Mazen. The question is, is he really meeting with him and negotiating in order to reach a solution or is it part of his strategy of political survival? From the political point of view what he is doing is the best option possible. He wants to survive as a politician. But when you come to analyze the reality I think it is much better to tell people the truth. Our role as intellectuals, as academics is to tell the truth. I am not going for a political post, I don't want to be elected. So I can allow myself to tell the truth. I have to refer to him, he has to use what Plato told him to use in his *Republic*, the noble lie. Lie when it serves the interests of your country or of you as a politician. And he is lying. The same thing with Abu Mazen. So there is no clear answer to your question. We are humans only.

Question

My question also refers to your optimistic last option, third party intervention. In a week that had seen the publication of a controversial book on the Israeli lobby in the United States it seems unlikely that the Americans can be acceptable to the Palestinians and the Arab world as an impartial third party. How do you see the chances of a functioning European intervention?

Amal Jamal

First of all I would like to announce that tomorrow there will be a lecture about third party intervention in Patricia's house. Timea Spitka will be speaking about third party intervention. She is more specializing in this topic. So you are invited to come and here a more sophisticated answer. So I am not going to go into that deeply. But I would like to just make a short comment in this regard. The Europeans, until now at least, have not proved that they are capable to intervene successfully in none of the conflicts in the world, not even in the conflict that was on their borders. Look what happened in the former Yugoslavia and you know what I am talking about. This does not mean that they should not try. I think they should try. And I expect them to try. You can't play the role of the moral of the world and live in Vienna in nice cafes. You have to put on your boots and go into the mud. If you don't do that you can't tell me that you are moral. A superpower like the European Union, economically at least, has a lot of capabilities to intervene, much more than is being done. The gap between the discourse and the practical policy is very problematic. I am a political scientist. I look at the practical policy. These words of being the moral of the world, the enlightened continent, for me it doesn't play any role as long as the intervention is not intensive enough in order to change realities in different places. Look at what is happening with the water system in Africa and what the Europeans are doing in this regard, and you may understand what I mean. I am personally connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because I come from there. But look what people in Nairobi are drinking and how people are losing water here. And you understand the gap between discourse and practical policy. It is really unfortunate. Because the Europeans could have much influence on the US and they are not using their role efficiently enough.

Question

This summer there was a lot of talk about the conflict, a possible war with Syria. Maybe you could make a few comments about what was behind it. Or was it just to draw attention away from what the real issues are? And maybe you could say a few words about the future of leadership within Fatah, what in your view the future of Abu Mazen is going to be? Is Marwan Barghouti the next one? What is actually happening there?

Amal Jamal

Regarding Syria I will keep silent exactly the way the Israeli prime minister and the defense minister have done because we don't know a lot what happened there in this specific night. But it is clear, the Israeli policy towards Syria or what is going on there has to do with the second Lebanon war, much more than anything else. The Israeli army needs to do something. The Israeli army needs to do something that will reflect positively on the Israeli public. I think it has to do with that more than anything else. Israel doesn't want war with Syria. And I think the Syrians don't want war with Israel. But limited provocations that could be reflected or could be viewed, framed positively, I think, is the framework in which such an occasion or such an event has to be understood. Other than that we will have to wait for historians to write history in 50 years and know exactly what they did.

Regarding Fatah. The Fatah movement has been very prominent in Palestinian politics all the time. But I think the people or the average person lacks good understanding of the structure of the movement to understand its politics. Fatah has never been a hierarchical organization. Fatah has always been composed of different centers of power. During Arafat's period he managed to control everything almost and play the cards according to his own interests and control the movement. But since he left the political scene there isn't one Fatah. There are many Fatahs. Abu Mazen doesn't have the power the control the whole Fatah movement. The only person who can maybe, potentially at least, play a role of Arafat in the 1960's and 1970's is in the Israeli prison. As long as he is there the Fatah movement will be Fatahs. The Fatah in Hebron is completely different, its structure is completely different than the Fatah in Jenin. In Ramallah it is completely different than in Nablus. There is a national leadership of Fatah. But the differences within this leadership sometimes are much bigger than the difference between Fatah leaders and Hamas leaders. Fatah coming back to power if elections take place won't be because people want Fatah, it will be because people don't want Hamas maybe. As much as what happened in the last elections. Exactly like what happened in the last elections. People didn't want Hamas as much as they didn't want Fatah. It was a protest vote more than pro vote for Hamas. And the same thing would happen in the next elections. People are copying. Every Palestinian understands that there is no chance that the current world will speak with Hamas, that Hamas could lead to a solution, that Hamas could lead to changing the basic reality in the West Bank and Gaza. And therefore, they may vote Hamas out not because they hate Hamas or they like Fatah but because they see in that the only option possible in order to transform reality.

Question

I feel a little depressed and frustrated. I was coming here to hear about solution avenues and I hear the avenues that don't work. As a casual observer I have the impression that maybe there isn't so much interest in the first place of finding solutions. I get the impression that the political establishment on either side fares pretty well on a low boiling conflict. It brings a lot of foreign money in. It brings also a lot of attention which is also something to go for. It also brings the opportunity to write on a nationalist victim issue on elections. Can you a little bit elaborate if there is a will in the first place?

Amal Jamal

Very good question. A colleague of mine, Avishai Ehrlich, has written about that a while ago. And other political scientists have mentioned this issue. Conflicts don't take place just for the sake of conflict. Conflicts remake conflicts. We orient ourselves in such a way in order to confront other people or reconcile with other people. So certainly there is a basis for what you are saying. There is a structural difference between the Israelis and Palestinians answering this question. Let's talk of the Israelis. The Israeli leadership could be maintaining this conflict because it is the only way to maintain its power. And if we look at the Israeli political elite, and the number of officers in this elite, and the number of the officers in the economic elite, we may have a good answer, meaning that the only way that these people can maintain their political power is by keeping the security situation in such a way that they are needed. Those of you who read Michel Foucault would take a Foucault's analysis of this reality that yes, nobody will define his own reality or structure his own reality in such a way that he will lose power. Their will to power, Nietzsche's will to power, is much stronger than anything else. And this is elitist analysis that could be valid. But it can't explain the whole reality. That is the problem. The Palestinian side, of course, has no choice. The Palestinians don't want to

keep the conflict if they manage to reach their goals. Which means, what their goals are, at least the official goals of the Palestinian Authority or the PLO is a Palestinian state in the Westbank and Gaza. But I can't guarantee anyone that the conflict will end there, because there are always Palestinians that maybe will want the whole Palestine that they have in their mind. And the conflict could continue. Hamas was established 1988. Since then Hamas' politics has been always provocative in such a way that it serves its own political interest and present it as the most authentic representative of Palestinian interests. So even if the Fatah movement reaches an agreement with Israel Hamas could look at itself in such a way or could act in such a way that will disrupt a solution. And it did after Oslo. If you look at Hamas policies until they decided to go for elections a year and a half ago it was always to disrupt, delegitimize the Palestinian Authority. The moment in which they changed their mind is the moment in which they understood fully because of the war on terror and the axis of evil their chances to survive are near zero if they continue the same policy. That is why they changed mind and thought, if we can't fight them join them, use the American ... If you can't fight the Palestinian Authority and survive, join it, occupy it, and survive. Will they use the same policy in the future? I don't know. I am not saying that this will happen. I am saying, being a political scientist, we have to take all options possible. And this is possible.

Question

The cover story of *Profil* magazine was entitled "Why is Israel so powerful?" I want to connect us again to the issue of perceptions and the narration of nationality, the narration of history. You talked about methods of reconciliation or solving the problems. In how far do you see reconciliation on that level, on the idea of narration? Possibilities for reconciliation on this level on massive scale? Not just same friends or intellectuals.

Amal Jamal

Thank you for the question. If you were here from the beginning, I started with Nietzsche saying that we are busy with the future and the past more than the present. Your question brings me back to this. It is very hard to tell how things will develop in the future, especially on the level of perceptions. Analyzing current reality you question would be, do you think that the way Palestinians and Israelis understand themselves or conceive themselves narratively could be mutually inclusive? No. That is the problem. But still in order to give myself a way out, to be a bit optimistic, we have to consider the gap between perceptions and reality. People can continue narrating their history in such a way and living in Tel Aviv and thinking about Hebron that Hebron belongs to the Jewish people. The same way, people can live in Hebron, Palestinians, and think that Jaffa belongs to them. Go visit, have a swim in the sea, but they don't have to control it completely. This option is there. Exactly like people dreamed about Jerusalem for 2.000 years without being there. The Jewish people ... appear because of their lack of presence. In my last lecture I connected between presence and existence. Both sides want to be present because the claim is the only way to exist. I say no, you don't have to be present in a certain place in order to exist in it. The issue of displacement or the meaning of absence. You can be absent and present at the same time. You can be in Hebron and in Jaffa at the same time. So you can narrate a certain story. By the way, the Irish example is a very good example. I was there a while ago. We were examining options of solutions and how they dealt with the issue of reconciling. One of the options was exactly this, that you have a narrative and you have a reality. They don't have exactly to correspond. They don't have to fit. They don't have to match all the time.

Question

What influence does the political Islam, the rising Islamic movement, have on the conflict? Can you isolate the solutions from this background?

Amal Jamal

No, of course not. I don't like the concept the rise of political Islam. Islam was always political. It has never stopped being political, from the beginning. One of the more sophisticated political leaders in human history was the Prophet Mohamed. If you know the exact history of what he did and the transformation he brought, you will agree with me that he was a very sophisticated politician beyond being a Prophet. Islam cannot be

disconnected from politics, it has never been disconnected from politics. On the other hand we have to also differentiate between what I said, that Islam is political, and the misuse of Islam for political reasons. The fundamentalist movements, the Salafin movements, Al Kaidas, all Jihadi movements, are not necessarily Islamic in their religious belief or implementing Islam as such. Islam is being misused exactly like other religions are being misused for political reasons. But it has an influence on the conflict in the sense that Hamas is an Islamic movement that is deeply engaged in the conflict. It is an ideological movement. It is partially pragmatic because Islam is pragmatic. But it is using Islam or using religion in order to promote its own interest. And the ideology of Islam is very effective in a society like the Palestinian society which is very conservative, fundamentally conservative. Not in the religious sense, in the social sense people are conservative. People are very close to tradition, very traditional. And therefore, Islam can work very well. This is the basic explanation for the support that the Hamas movement wins in the Palestinian areas. Political Islam is playing a very basic role. On the other hand, on the optimistic side, make a comparison for those of you who know the Palestinian movement. Is there a big difference between Fatah of the 1950's and 1960's and Hamas of the 1980's and 1990's? I don't think so. There is not much difference. Arafat was called Abu Ammar. Why Abu Ammar? Ammar bin Jasser, Jasser Arafat, Ammar his son. His icon name was Abu Ammar because of Ammar bin Jasser. Ammar bin Jasser was the first military man of the Prophet Mohamed. He was part of the Islamic movement in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood. Many of his friends were very involved in the Islamic movement. Actually he became the head of the Palestinian Student Union because of the support of the Muslim Brotherhood. When they moved to Kuwait they were using Islam also. It was always there, in a different way, but he was very pragmatic also. The same thing with Hamas. Hamas is an ideological movement, but the ideology it has is pragmatic. It is not a fundamentalist, Salafin movement. In a certain situation it could find itself on the negotiating table. It depends how, of course. But without engaging Hamas or winning Hamas from within it is going to be very difficult for the Palestinians to reach an agreement with Israel. They can't be excluded. They have enough power in society that you can't ignore them. And sooner or later, exactly like Israel, 40 years they did not want to speak with the PLO and then found that the only option was to speak with the PLO, the same thing will happen with Hamas. Let's wait and see.

For 40 years Israel maintained the status quo. The conflict is not going to end tomorrow, unfortunately. We can find ourselves in a situation where we are 60 years old or 40 years old and the conflict is still there, the occupation is still there. I assure you that when Bruno Kreisky lived the same discussions took place at that time. We are still talking about it. And we may talk about it in the next 30 or 40 years, I don't know, unless we really intervene, unless we do something. And we have to do something. We have to move. We can't watch what is going on in the Middle East on TV and yell or shout and say we did something. We have to go out and do something. We have to be engaged. We have to be involved. That is why I said third party intervention is indispensable.

Question

I see a gap, it is not a contradiction, in you mentioning of the option of the bi-national state where you need or where you ask for the third party intervention and your statement that not only this generation but the next one of Israeli and Palestinian politicians cannot deliver. How does it go together?

Amal Jamal

It is not a gap in my talk, it is a gap in reality. I wish they could deliver. It doesn't mean that we can't move. There won't be a ... solution. It is not going to be hokus pokus, there is no conflict. It is going to take some time. The more optimistic people are the more you see a change, the more you encourage to support policies that could lead to a change. I think the solution is there in the sense that the more third party intervention that really guarantees both peoples some basic sense of security, a level of standards of living in the Palestinian case at least could be more legitimate, could be viewed as more legitimate. Abu Mazen lost his power among his own people because he can deliver, because they can't affect reality. People don't trust them because they are not changing their fundamental, basic neither standards of living nor stopping settlements, nor targeted killings. They are negotiating without paying. And therefore people don't trust them anymore or people don't see them as leaders that ought to be supported. But if we look at the reality in which Israelis as well as

Palestinians feel more secure, that Palestinians see that their standard of living is going up and the level of unemployment is going down. People in most cases are rational, instrumentally rational at least. And if they see that a certain leader is able to change reality because of third party intervention maybe they will support him. I am not deterministic. Based on current reality I assure you despite what happened in Syria most Israeli don't trust Olmert. And most Palestinians don't think that Abu Mazen can lead to a change in Israeli policy. Every third party intervention intervenes deeply and can force these leaders to change basic issues in their relationship so people can feel more secure, people will support. People can change their minds. Based on the current reality there is no third party intervention or not enough and leaders are not viewed as legitimate enough. Would be this chronic? Would this be there all the time? I don't know. I am not that deterministic. Based on the current reality I think neither now nor in the near future we will see a fundamental change. But we could see a change if really this third party intervention will be more intensive. Again, I am not speaking about hokus pokus. I am speaking about the process. This conflict has been built up in almost 50 or 60 years according to at least Israeli history. I hope we won't wait 60 years, but we could find ourselves waiting 60 years until we deconstruct the conflict. Don't think that it is going to happen tomorrow. Maybe the grandson of the current Bush will be better than his grandfather.

Question

What do you think about the possibility of postponing the conference by a little more than one year so that instead of risking results that might not be very positive, one could have a chance of having a conference under a different US presidency which could be a lot more capable of creating conditions towards better results?

Amal Jamal

Let me ask you a question. George W. Bush has been in power six and a half years almost. He never took a serious step in order to change reality. You think you trust him for organizing the summit because he wants to create a change? In a year from the summit, November, there will be elections in the United States. So he does not have enough power. His party will be engaged in the elections. He won't have enough time. He does not care. He wants to mark ... that he did something. I think the person who is behind this summit is Condoleeza Rice, more than him. Why? Because she did not do anything, actually. The only thing she could do before the elections take place is the summit. He has enough in his record. At least the war in Iraq. She wants something else in her record. The summit which will be framed positively. But waiting until now, one year before the elections, is not a good sign. The option to postpone it until after the elections is an option always, but for W. Bush it is not an option because it does not help. That is why he is organizing it now. For both parties, the Israelis and the Palestinians, it will be better, not for the leaders of the Israelis and the Palestinians. The leaders have a completely different interest. Three weak leaders that didn't succeed in anything they did need something for the record. They have CVs, and they have to write something there. And one of the things that they have to write is such a summit. Maybe they will be looking for jobs later on.

Question

How do you explain the differences between the results of the public opinion polls that are taken also at the University of Tel Aviv and the governmental policies? It seems, at least from the answers to the polls, that the large majority of the Israeli Jews are willing to give up sizable, perhaps everything within the 1967 borders. And then we see such policies as we see. As a media person also can you help us understand what is actually going on, why the public answers as it does, and why it does not affect more or does not create a situation in politics where these answers come to bear fruit? What is the actual status of the religious settlers today? It seems as if the Jewish Israeli population is sort of fed up or at least is not so enthusiastic from this group anymore as it was 10, 15, 20 years ago. What is their role? What kind of power do they have? And the last point. There was a visit on the Temple Mound by the Rabbis of the Gush Hemomin groups in May. Could it be that this visit was connected to the fact that they see themselves losing parts of the Westbank and they want to create a crisis at the focus of the whole thing, of the most important point at the Temple site? Maybe that would be their way of causing an Armageddon type of a situation where it is not anymore the

question of settlement here or settlement there, but they want to make sure that the government can't make any compromises on the holy of holies.

Amal Jamal

Let's start with the first question. From your question I understand that you have read Walter Lipman and maybe John Dewey and people like them, democrats who believe in the public and the inherent connection between public opinion and decision making in a democracy. If you read them and did not read Noam Chomsky I think you should read Noam Chomsky to get to know that there is almost no connection between public opinion and decision making in democracies. Look at most democracies and public opinion. Public opinion is made to serve decision making processes and the other way round. They don't reflect public opinion. I am very doubtful regarding the relationship between public opinion and decision making especially in conflict situations. Because the leadership is able to manipulate the situation almost for security reasons and therefore to shape or to construct public opinion that is convenient for its own purposes. And that is what is happening in Israel most of the time. Look at the Israeli media. In most cases the media adopts the official position when it has to do with security issues. This is an introduction.

To your question directly. Yes, if you ask generally, most Israeli will agree for the basic points of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, meaning a Palestinian state, meaning a compromise over the giving up of not allowing any refugees to come back, and so on. If you cash this general public opinion to specific questions you will find a lot of gaps between the general answer that they give and the specific answer that they give for specific questions. And the Mount Hermon and APR have done such an examination, several times. They were criticized by different people at the Tel Aviv University, myself and others. You ask people general questions, are you for peace? Of course, they are for peace. It is exactly what ... Aryan is doing in the Israeli democratic center with the democracy. "Are you a democrat? Are you pro-democracy? Do you think that democracy is good enough in Israel?" And most people say yes. But when it comes to accepting an Arab as your boss in the work as a basic democratic right, most Jews say no. Do you want an Arab as your neighbor, most Jews say no. And so on. The same thing with the peace process. If you cash it into specific questions you find a lot of doubt among the Israeli public regarding the peace process, especially when it comes to refugees, especially when it comes to Palestinians being responsible for the international border between Israel and Jordan and the border with Egypt. If there is a connection between public opinion and the decision making process you have to look at the specific questions as the best answers in order to see that there is no gap.

I have a doctorate student writing about the relationship between changes in the Israeli political structure, and the relations between these changes and changes in the Israeli media. His thesis is that despite the changes in the Israeli demography as a result of the immigration from the Soviet Union and despite the liberalization policies of media in Israel and the rise of different radios and so on, the basic fundamental positions regarding the security and foreign relations of Israel have never changed in the media. I think he is going to prove this thesis. I think it is true.

The Gush Hemonim issue. We have to differentiate between their status among the public and their political influence. They still have a lot of political influence. Their status among the public has changed, transformed for two main reasons. First of all, because the public understood and they understood that they can't be any more active like they were in the 1970's or in the 1980's even. Why? Because the Israeli leadership cannot explain it internationally and cannot explain it locally. The other thing is that they won. In what sense they won? Any Israeli politician, even in the left, is speaking about including their settlements into Israel or connecting them to Israel in any possible solution in the future. What did they want more than that? They have won the war in this sense. Some of them, the more radical settlers that want to expand much more, have lost their practical father. They have no powerful politician that can push them forward like Sharon did. And therefore they understand that quite well. They want to establish what they have won already. Most of them. And they won a lot. Even Yossi Beilin, even the Geneva Initiative, speaks about including the ... settlements into Israel in any future negotiations. No dismantling of settlements, which is winning the war actually.

Question

What do you think about encountering and dialogue projects in the grass roots and the youth movements and schools, especially if they have the subject about listening to the narratives, and legitimating the narratives? What do you think about the empowerment of the Israeli Palestinian youngsters?

Amal Jamal

Any intercultural, any international, any interethnic negotiations, or relations, or communication is viewed by me at least very positively. But it can't change reality. Unfortunately. Most research about these Jewish-Arab meetings show that both sides, but mostly on the Israeli side, people that share, or meet, or participate in these meetings, actually strengthen their stereotypes about the other side rather than change their mind about the other side. Only a small minority changes its mind positively. Why? Not because people are crazy, but because the gap between what happened in these meetings and the outside reality is so large and big that people come out from these meetings influenced very much by what happens outside that what happens inside them. It doesn't mean that we have to stop. I am part of an initiative now. The Education Ministry funded such programs for a long time. And ... became the best Education Minister in the history of Israel and canceled the funding for such programs. Now I am part of an initiative to go back to funding. Even if it doesn't affect all people, if it affects 10% positively I think it is enough to fund it. I think it should be done. If you don't communicate you never understand the other. I think these meetings are very positive.

Regarding empowerment the Israeli Palestinian or Arab community, well, I am for it. I have recently written an article questioning the issue of empowerment. To what extent this community is being empowered by what is happening? Maybe we should seek different policies in order to empower this community, mainly by legitimating it as a fundamental part of Israeli society. As long as it is not considered by the Jewish majority as a basic component of Israeli society it can't be empowered. As long as it is considered as part of the enemy it can't be empowered. The Jewish society's perception of what Israeli society is has to be changed. Israeli society has to include all Israeli citizens, including those who are not Jews. As long as this does not change empowering this community can't happen. Why is it important to empower this community? For two main reasons. First they are going to be there all the time. Any solution of two states will keep this community, 1.2 million Palestinians, inside Israel. If there is a solution, the other options I spoke about are not possible. Not ethnic cleansing, not genocide, nothing. So they are going to be there all the time. If they are going to be there all the time you can't keep them frustrated, because it is not sage. The other reason is they can play a very important role in the Israeli-Palestinian relations. They are not giving the opportunity to play this role. If they are given the opportunity by both sides, by Palestinians as well as Israelis, they could be a very constructive component. And that is why they should be empowered, too.

I would like to thank you very much for being here.