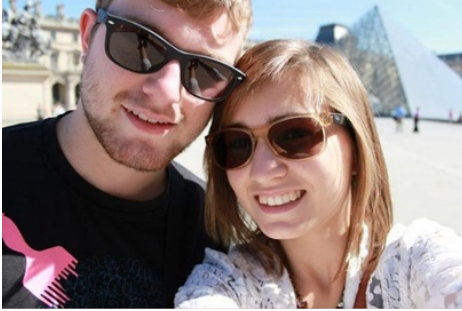


"Love is in the air"

Three young people from Israel, Palestine and Germany talk about the differences in love and relationship in their culture

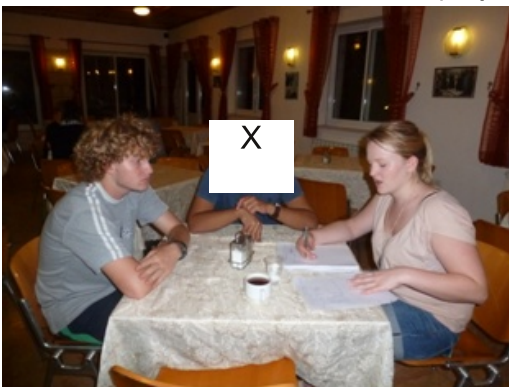


Amit (Israel), Theresa (Germany) and X. (Palestine, he doesn't want to be mentioned) are sitting in the dining room of Talitha Kumi, young people from different nations and civilizations. This is one of the few places in the Middle East where they can meet. They are discussing the personal situation and opportunities. They have a lot in common, but

there are some differences resulting from their different cultural and/or religious backgrounds.

Amit (17) from the Negev desert, says, "There is no problem being in a relationship with a girl as long as she is from the same religious group and has the same opinions as I have". That reflects the situation of young people in Israel and Palestine: People from different religious and cultural background don't have contact with each other.

Amit adds, "Some people don't take relationships serious, they are having a relationship because of different reasons which are not love, for example just for posing or just having sex".



The situation in Palestine is completely different: Having sex or several relationships before marriage means a social disgrace for the person and the whole family. X. says, "For me it's hard to have a relationship, because even if I am Christian, my society has Islamic traditions. That means neither sex before marriage nor acting like a couple in public. It's extremely important, especially if you are a girl, to be a virgin before you get married. There are medical examinations to check your health and your virginity before marriage. The examination can change your ability to get married."

"In Germany", Theresa says, "however, it is not a problem to have relationships and sex at teenage age, also not for me as a young woman. As long as we properly protect ourselves against diseases or pregnancy, it is also not a problem for most parents. Of course 50 years ago it was different. Sexual education is taught in Germany at the age of 10, even if some religious people are against this. I think it is important to know facts about sex and partnership. Most of my friends can openly talk with their parents about sex.

Theresa (17), "Love, sexuality and partnership play a big role in the lives of adolescents. Our society has changed a lot in the last 50 years. Media, parents and my environment exemplify permissiveness. Nowadays it is easy to have a relationship in public without being forced to hide it."

Amit (16), "Today in the state of Israel there is freedom for the secular people to have a relationship. Every couple can do whatever they want, like expressing love in public and hanging around. But it is different in orthodox communities".

X, (22): "For me it is very hard to have a relationship, because even if I am Christian, my society has Islamic traditions and I have to follow them."

Friendship/Relationship/Sex/Marriage

Interviewing each other: Very personal answers, without names and not representative!

Question	German	Palestinian	Israeli
1. Is a boy and girl-friendship (without any romantic interest) common in your country?	It's a common thing, I have more boy- than girl-friendships	It's very common	It's very common
2. When do you start having a relationship?	About at the age of 14, but people with good education may start earlier	At about 17	Something like between 14 and 15, when high school starts
3. How does the community influence your relationship?	I live in a small village, where there is a lot of gossip. You must be careful who you are going to a party with, the people will talk about it later. If s.b. gets pregnant or gets married at an early age (before 18), many people say it's weird and he/she should have done it after getting a job, experience life etc.	If you are in a relationship for a long time, people start talking about you. In a small community people and especially the parents of the girl care about the gossip, so they get married earlier than they want to.	I don't feel that community puts me under pressure. I am also not interested in this kind of gossip. I don't care about what others think about my relationships
4. What do you think about gay relationship?	Gay marriage is accepted in Germany, also by law. I accept it as well.	No one accepts this here, gay marriage is illegal, we don't like gays. I agree with this opinion, because in culture a man needs to be a man. We know some gays, we talk about them only bad things and don't like them	Gay marriage is not accepted in Israel because of religious reasons. I personally think that it is O.K. and that gay people should have the same rights as the others. Some of my friends are gay and they are great people.
5. Do you talk at school about pregnancy?	We talked about it in biology for three weeks and how to prevent it. They showed us all kinds of contraceptives, we got condoms as a present. My mum also talked with me about abortion.	We had just a short lecture about it and how to prevent it. My parents don't talk with me about it, I learned about it by myself	We don't talk about it very much at school. I feel free to talk about it with my parents

Question	German	Palestinian	Israeli
6. What is your opinion about getting divorced?	<p>It's common to get divorced. I don't think it is good that in my country more than 30% get divorced. You should make sure about your love and partner before getting married.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>It takes about three years to get divorced and it's really hard. You have to do it in church and you must have a good reason, like cheating or not being able to have a baby.</p> <p>My parents also got divorced.</p>	<p>You have to get divorced by a rabbi, even if you didn't get married by an orthodox rabbi. A lot of my friends have divorced parents.</p>
7. Do you think it's O.K. to have sex before getting married?	<p>I feel it's O.K., most people have sex before marriage. Most people have sex in a relationship. It's weird if you are already 20 and you haven't had sex yet.</p>	<p>We don't have sex before getting married, even if a couple has been together for a long time, e.g. four years.</p>	<p>I think it's O.K., it feels good. Of course religious people don't do it before marriage. Most people I know don't have a problem with it.</p>
8. What do you think about abortion?	<p>I think it's not easy to make such a decision.</p>	<p>It's not legal in Palestine. I think it should not be legalized. In my opinion it is murder.</p>	<p>I think it should be allowed only in rare situations, e.g. after a rape. But I don't know what I would do in such a difficult situation.</p>
9. At what age do people get married in your country?	<p>In Germany I think the average marriage age is about 29.</p>	<p>It used to be 17-18, but now it's 20-25. Muslims get married earlier than Christians.</p>	<p>It depends on the person. If you are religious, you get married after high school, but if you serve in the army and you want to see the world after the service and go to university, like my sisters, then you get married later.</p>

Different identities and different opinions Interviewing each other about special topics in mini-groups

1.) Are men and women in the police of your countries equal?

Christine (Pal.):

No, they aren't equal. They do different jobs and the women aren't allowed to carry guns or investigate/joining serious stuff.

Noam (Isr.):

I think in Israel men and women are equal in the police. They both carry weapons and do the same jobs.

Melanie (Ger.):

In Germany men and women are equal in the police because we are living in a democracy. It is not allowed to discriminate women in police.



2.) Do women and men have the same feeling of national identity?

Christine:

"Yes, they do. Mostly women believe more in their country than men, maybe they have a stronger feeling of national identity than men".

Noam:

Yes, they are proud to live in this country. One of the reasons is that women also go in the army not because they have to, they want it.

Melanie:

Yes, but there are some people who don't want to be called Germans, because of the Nazi-period in Germany.



3.) What do you think about the project?

Christine:

"I think that this is a very good project, because it lets us know the opinion of the other side about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and maybe it works out some solutions."

Noam:

"It's a really good opportunity to meet Palestinian people and make friends with them"

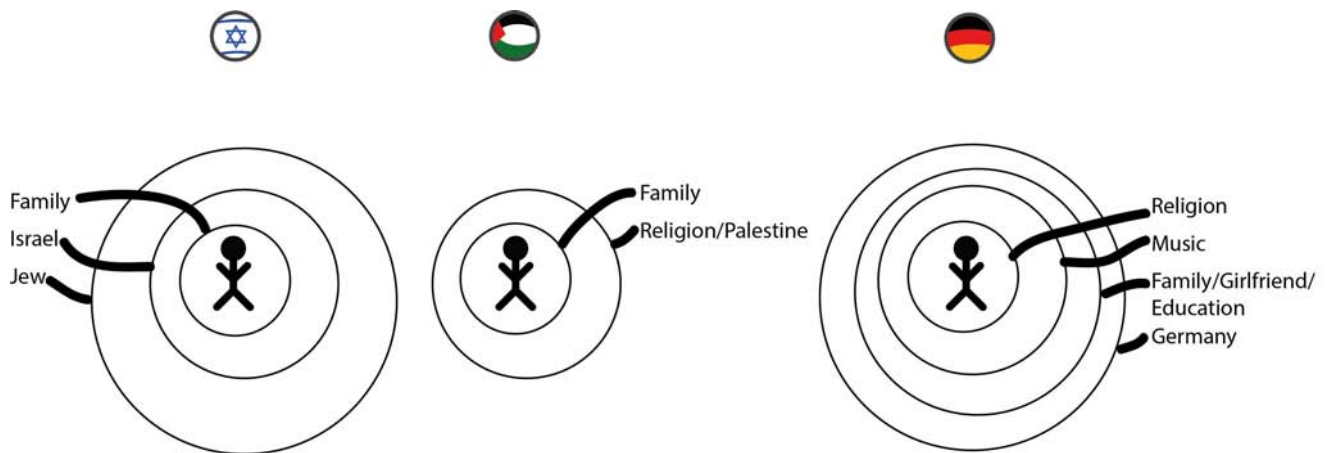
Melanie:

"The project helps us more to know about the countries. We can make friends with them and maybe I'll meet them again, because of the project."



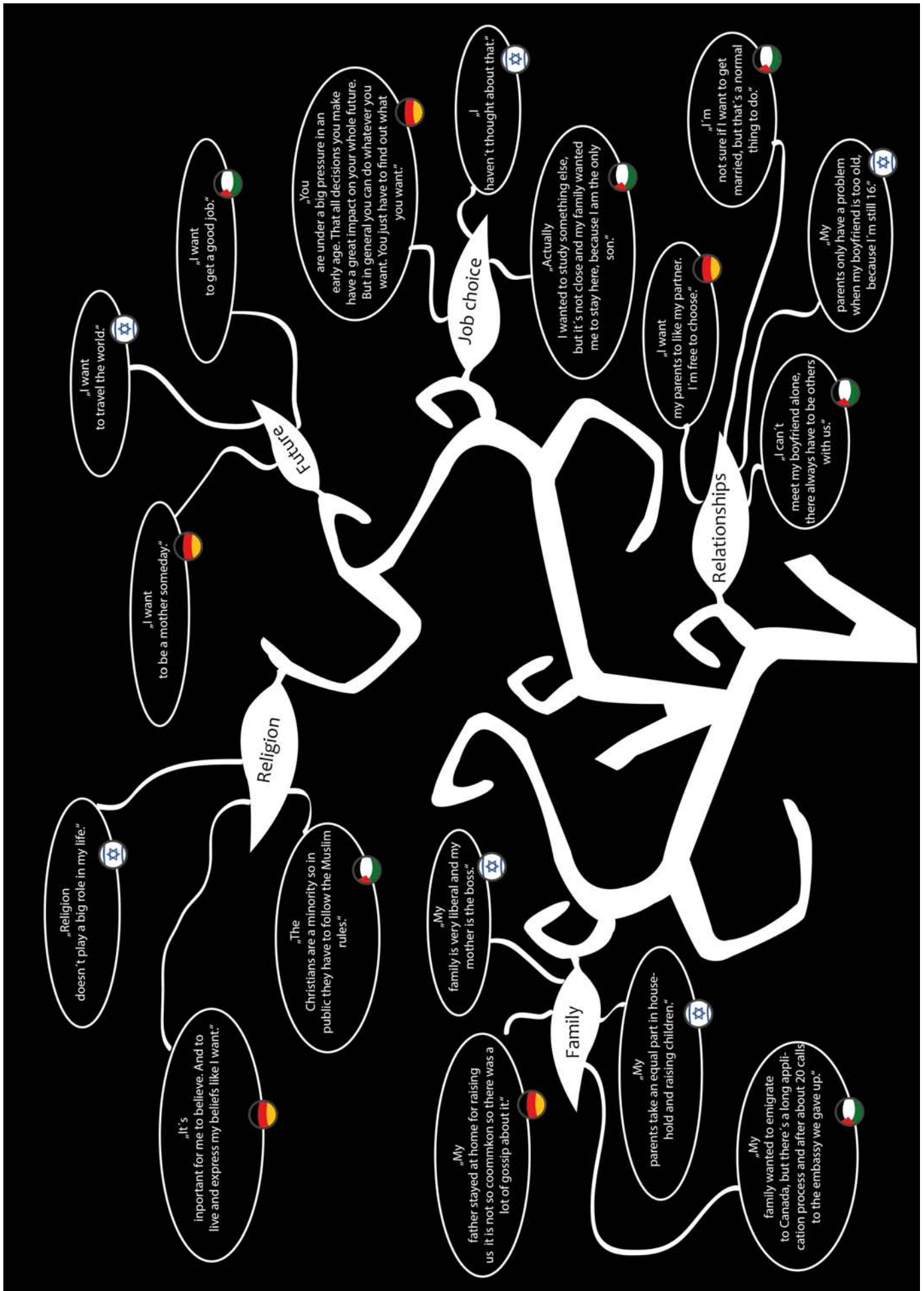
Different cultures - different identities.

Elena asked three boys, what they mostly identify with: Hanna, Lukas, Yam. The answers are not representative. Hanna only mentioned two aspects.



The editorial staff would like to thank the different groups for their open answers. They are very personal and subjective, but they can give us an insight into the different attitudes within the three cultures. We do not want to judge the answers, yet they show us the attitudes concerning men and women in different civilizations. The talk in mini-groups about personal problems was the most effective one in the project.

"A Future Life Tree", designed by Elena Etges. Do the statements fit to your stereotypes and prejudice?



Tamar Novoplansky's dream cartoon



Women living under religious pressure Interview with Palestinian and Israeli girls

Living under religious pressure

Everybody is equal, everybody has the right to practise the religion he/she wants. That is the meaning of human rights. But the reality is different throughout many civilizations in the world. We talked to a Christian Palestinian and a secular Jewish girl. A (Palestinian), B (Israeli)

A: "In Palestine you are confronted from early childhood with the belief in God. You cannot choose your belief, as it depends on the family you are born into. That influences your later life, no matter if you are Christian or Muslim".

A. makes a difference in the way you practise your religion:

1. If you live a religious life you follow traditions and rituals, you live according to the religious laws, you have a personal distance to God.

2. You live your religion, but traditions and rituals are not so important, you have a personal and close relationship with God and you cultivate this relationship.

As Christians are a minority in Palestine, they have to orientate according to the rules and social demands of Muslims. This is especially true for your behaviour in public: no short clothes, covering shoulders and knees. Christians have to listen to the regular Muezzin call for prayer, they hear it from the towers all over Palestine. Christians have to tolerate it.

She sums up, that Christians feel under pressure in public to follow the Islamic rules. If you don't follow them, you have to suffer from bad looks, unpleasant remarks and even contempt.

B: In Israel people live their Jewish religion very differently. There are orthodox or ultra-orthodox Jews, who orientate their lives completely according to the Tora and the fulfillment of religious laws. On the other hand there are Jews, who know the Tora, but do not live according to religious laws. Others are liberal or don't believe in any God.

B. explains a very interesting aspect. As a kibbutznik she has a relationship with an orthodox boy. Her kibbutz is normally just the opposite of this very religious lifestyle. She experiences limits:

On Shabbath there are no busses to meet her boyfriend, shops are closed. When she first met her boyfriend's family, she felt very uncomfortable, as she was exposed to the looks of her boyfriend's siblings. When she dressed herself immodest, she was examined thoroughly from top to bottom. That disturbed her very much and it was embarrassing. She had the feeling that her boyfriend's parents didn't accept this relationship.

In case of a future marriage she thinks that she doesn't have to follow all orthodox norms, but she certainly has to obey many rules, e.g. to go to the synagoge regularly.

Basically everybody can decide how intensively he/she practises religion. But it is extremely difficult for those, who are born into an orthodox family.

Lukas



Boys and girls
practising at Talitha
Kumi Hotel College

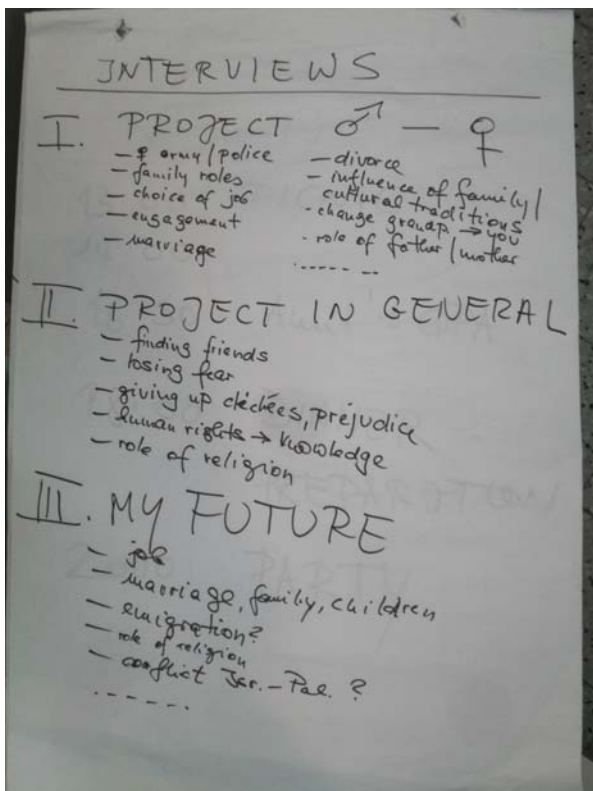
A process to peace? A Commentary by Tal Arbel (16)

It all started in Germany. Since then we have heard much about the hard lives of Palestinians. We heard about the bad economy, corruption, the underdeveloped media system, the unemployment, lack of freedom. This life is extremely difficult and I hope no one in the world would have to live a life like that. However after some discussions I had the feeling that Palestinians are innocent, poor, humble people and the Israelis are terrorists and emotionless monsters. After that I started to understand that this conflict cannot be handled until the basic living conditions will be solved. First the economy, corruption and political leadership have to be fixed - only then we can start talking about agreements and peace.

The Israeli government is not responsible to fix the Palestinian Authority problems. It is not in our responsibility to take 3-4 million Palestinians, Muslims and Christians, and support their economy and fix their lack of leadership, we have our own problems. I think that as a member in the Arab League, the Palestinian Authority can ask for money and experts to fix the hard conditions with 21 countries. The Israeli government would be more than happy to give promotions to those kinds of experts to go into the Westbank and Gaza Strip to fix the problems. The living conditions in the PA area have to improve, only then we will be able to sit together, speak as equals and reach some agreements. Not through operation and not through occupation. Not through meaningless speeches and not through bitterness. But only through actions we can get somewhere, only through real meaningful actions we can fix the conditions in Palestine.



Interviewing eye-witnesses, interviewing each other. Christof's T-Shirt. The project members could choose the partners and the topics.

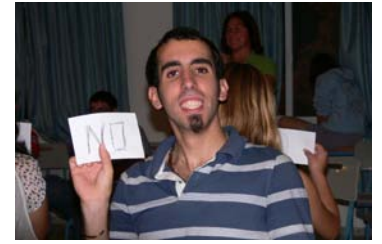


	ISRAELI	PALESTINIAN
JAN	Amit (girl)	Amira
JAKOB	Omer	Dina
FELIX Carolin	Einat Einat	Tamer
JONAS, TILL MELANIE (CH)	Noam	Christine
LUKAS	Hila	Jane
ELENA	Yam	hanna
ALEXANDRA	Tamar	Samer
THERESA	Amit (boy)	Adel
MARIE	Tal Einab	Adham
MELANIE (K) CAROLIN	Ofri	John

"We agree that we sometimes disagree" - Similarities and differences Eynat Goldman



A sculpture in Kibbutz Zeelim, a symbol for the mutual dependence?



The human rights project allowed us to have meetings between three nations: German, Palestinian and Israeli. Using a common language, we found out that there are many things which - from the past until the present - the different nations have in common. Somehow many things are combined with each other. Though many political conflicts exist between these countries, we all came together, teenagers representing our nations, talking together and having fun, disregarding the differences of religion, race and sex.

Relationships in the Past

We started to talk about our families and about our societies as they were in the past. The Germans' parents met each other and after their wedding their first child was born. After her son's birth, his mother quit her job saying she wants to be with him and to concentrate with raising the family. The Palestinians told us that their parents weren't allowed to meet each other in public or have a closer relationship before marriage. The Israelis' parents were allowed to meet and to get to know each other, and after their wedding they built their home, and raised their children while both staying at their jobs.

Friendships

During the years we met new friends in different places in different time periods. The Germans have a few friends from their childhood. Now they learn in different areas in their country and know different people. Still, they stay in good contact with their childhood friends, even though they live a few hours away from each other. The Palestinians grew up together, learnt together and they still hang out together. The Israelis grew up together and they have known each other since they were born. They have good contact which keeps them together. Besides their childhood friends, they meet new friends at the elementary school and at high school.

The Future

Our future includes army, university, a job, a family. The Germans consider the option of going out of their country and meeting other people and different cultures and societies. After high school they start learning at the university without knowing yet what they will do with the degree they will get. The Palestinians find it hard to imagine themselves succeeding ... in Beit Jala.

An insoluble conflict? Freedom and human rights - the past (Hila, Ofri, Amit)

The Holocaust is a subject with many different aspects. People usually concentrate on concentration camps and the hardship of the prisoners. One unusual story that we encountered is that of the Jews who belonged to the underground "Partisans" group - those who had the courage and managed to flee into forests, often went alone without their family. They joined a group of strangers who all shared the same aim, religion and culture. They escaped to the woods for freedom and the right to fight.

Zvi Novoplansky, born in 1923, chose to flee to the forests of White Russia when he was only 18, where he joined the Partisans. He was born in the town Dooinsok in border corner of Poland, Lithuania and White Russia, where he studied at a Hebrew school, spoke and wrote in Hebrew. He and his family - his father, mother and two sisters, were part of a movement called "Culture", whose purpose was to preserve the culture of the Jewish people among the Jews of Europe. Zvi also joined the youth organization "Hashomer Hatzair". Zvi's and his friends' dream was to come to Palestine and cultivate the land.

In 1941 the Nazi regime came and went through the town, took Jews to concentration camps or shot people. At that time Zvi fled to the woods, only to return a short while after to save his family. First, he took his mother and sister, and only after he came back to take his father and other sister. Unfortunately by then his sister was captured by the Nazis, and he continued to flee to the woods.

The life of Zvi in the woods was not simple - it was hard to keep the faith, to get food and warm during the cold winter, but still he had the group morale which he used to flame the fire in his spirit for the war for freedom.

According to our opinion, one of the biggest rights taken in the concentration camps and labor was freedom. The Partisans fled and fought for this right. Although they had many limitations in the woods, this right was significant and this ultimately led to the possibility of their fight to save Jews and others in order to come to Israel.

So what is freedom? This is a natural right given to a person being an individual, with intelligence and the ability to manage his/her life. This right ensures the freedom of every person and to protect any person from the tyranny of the government - it is not dependent of any rule, nobody gives it to you, and it cannot be revoked by any authority.

According to this definition we can see how the Nazis stole this right, and prevented millions of people not only the right for freedom but all other natural rights, which actually prevented humans from being humans. The Nazi government took from the people their humanity.

We think - the Partisans' fight was even greater than fighting for the right of freedom, but fighting the fight for the right to be human and not an object with no feelings and rights.



An insoluble conflict? Freedom and human rights - the present (Hila, Ofri, Amit)



The fence/wall separating Jerusalem from Bethlehem. Dima's permission to get into Israel. Road sign at the entrance of Beit Jala.

These days we are part of a multinational delegation - Palestinians, Germans and Israelis. During the expedition we raised many questions: Are there any rights that are prior to right of freedom? Is it possible in certain circumstances to limit or to breach the rights of others for your own rights?

After we met with the people and we have formulated opinions, we tried to think of cases where the rights of one party are broken for the rights of another party. Today in Israel there is a fence or wall, called by some people the security fence, by others the barrier fence or segregation wall. The fence/wall was built by Israel to prevent the infiltration of terrorists into Israel's borders after the second intifada. Nowadays there is a fence around most parts of the West Bank, and the IDF controls and keeps the security in some areas, elements which also keep the area somewhat quiet. This fence restricts and prevents thousands of people who live in the West Bank to enter easily to the State of Israel. Citizens of the Palestinian Authority cannot enter the territories of the state of Israel without permission and even after they are approved, they encounter many difficulties entering Israel, thus many innocents' right for freedom is being harmed, such as available and appropriate hospital in extreme emergencies, flying through the Israeli Airport Ben Gurion Airport and more ...

Equally affected are rights of Israelis, as the rights for free movement and expression of many citizens of the Palestinian Authority. For example, for security reasons in Israel there is a violation of right for privacy, so children grow up in Israel not always with a sense of security as one should. Today in Israel at the entrance to every shopping mall, a public building, and usually at the entrance of each building there is a security guard who checks the bags for bombs or other weapons. The sense of security in Israel is not high among the citizens, but the percentages of terrorism in the country decreased since the fence was built. Having said that, rockets are still being fired at Israel and people need to stop their day off and run into shelters and stay there until the danger passes. And here is the difficult question - is it possible to take away the right of another person in order to prevent him from taking your right? And whether you can take someone else's rights on behalf of your own principles?