

## Chapter 4

### **Peace with Justice, Peace with Care: Bat Shalom and the JCW Debate Settlements**

#### **I. Contrasting Peacemaking Models**

Within the joint Jerusalem Link, the two independent daughter organizations embrace deeply different political models of peacemaking.

Bat Shalom engages in peace activism using a “peace with care” model. This model focuses on building a relationship of mutual political acceptance, tolerance, and understanding with the Palestinians. The moral orientation underlying this model relies on an individual commitment to duty, sympathy, care, and relatedness in reaching out to rebuild the Palestinians’ lives (with ameliorative projects such as the house demolition projects) and to ensure their rights (with the political lobbying projects), as presented in Chapter Three. Moreover, this model holds that peace can be a product of changing political attitudes. Bat Shalom’s current programmatic emphasis — raising public awareness and sympathy for Palestinians among Israeli men and women of all ideological backgrounds — reflects its reliance on the peace with care model. Public sympathy can directly influence Israeli state policy regarding the Palestinians because, in Israel, peace process decisions — such as Israeli land withdrawal — are often put to a public referendum.

Peace with care does not come from solely altruistic motives. For the fifty-year-old established and militarily secure State of Israel, future peace in the region

will be determined by their future relationship with their neighbors, including the emerging Palestinian State. The architects of the Oslo Accords, signed in 1993 and 1995, identified the importance of peace with care to the success of their negotiations, and defined this caring coexistence as a “normalization” between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Care, relatedness, and understanding are all means of reducing the mutual antagonism that has characterized the Palestinian-Israeli relationship for the past one hundred years. After living for so long within a militarized national climate of militarization (as discussed in Chapter Three), Israelis eagerly welcome a less hostile regional climate.

The JCW engages in peace activism using a “peace with justice” model. Its moral underpinning rely on a discourse of Palestinian nationalism analyzed in Chapter Two. This model petitions for Palestinian political rights, such as the return of refugees, the dismantling of Jewish settlements, political autonomy in Jerusalem, and a Palestinian State. Its engagement with Palestinian rights differs from that of the peace with care model. Attaining a just peace with full Palestinian rights must not rely on Israeli sympathy or concern for the Palestinian situation because the Palestinians are collectively entitled to these rights.

The JCW activists’ reliance on the peace with justice model reflects their current status as a stateless people with few if any recognizable rights. This model, in contrast to that of peace with care, sees peacemaking as a series of tangible, short-term steps that can be taken. Although the JCW remains committed to building a relationship of care with the Israelis, its members believe that coexistence and tolerance are empty without first ensuring justice. The peace with

justice model, therefore, relies strongly on international conventions, charters, and agreements — rather than individual relationships with Israelis — to secure Palestinian rights. Thus, to those who believe and act upon the peace with justice model, normalization as prescribed by the Oslo Accords is not a first priority.

In this chapter, I argue that the recent political tension between Bat Shalom and the JCW can be understood as the clash between their two different models of peacemaking. This chapter looks at one point of political contention within the Jerusalem Link that has undermined the feminist grounds for mutual trust on which the organization was founded. The debate about whether to allow women who live in Israeli settlements to join the Jerusalem Link dialogue groups continues to fuel dissension among and between the two sides of the Link. As an outsider traveling back and forth between the offices of Bat Shalom and the JCW, I heard staff members on each side discussing the settler issue, often fervently.

I present both the Palestinian and Israeli positions on the settler controversy.<sup>1</sup> The opposing positions, I argue, result from the differing conceptions of rights and underlying moral and political orientations between Bat Shalom's peace with care model and the JCW's peace with justice model of peacemaking. Finally, I discuss the importance of the settler controversy and its

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis in this chapter is drawn from interviews with the top paid staff members of the two organizations, particularly Bat Shalom's Gila Svirsky and the JCW's May Kasem. However, throughout the summer, the Bat Shalom staff granted me greater access than the JCW staff did. I was able to interview Gila Svirsky, director of Bat Shalom, on three separate occasions, whereas the JCW grants researchers only one official interview with a staff member because of their limited office resources (See Appendix A: Research Methodology). On the basis of my interviews, my observations, and data from the media and other sources, I attempt to present here as accurate a description as I can of the conflict that has arisen among the Jerusalem Link board members. My greater access to Bat Shalom, however, may have helped me understand the subtleties of the Bat Shalom position more than that of the JCW. Two Palestinian-Americans and a former JCW activist have recently read and support my analysis of the Palestinian position.

temporary resolution in forcing Bat Shalom and the JCW to consider the political differences challenging their partnership.

## II. The Case of the Jewish Settlers

Throughout my interviews with the leadership of Bat Shalom and the JCW, both groups of women differentiated clearly between two arenas of their activism: their joint Israeli-Palestinian activities and the independent programs of each separate organization. On their websites, both organizations describe the Jerusalem Link as “a coordinating body of two independent women's centers.” The previous chapters have addressed the specific *programs* sponsored jointly by the two women’s centers — such as dialogue groups, the 1997 Sharing Jerusalem Event, and political action programs such as rebuilding demolished Palestinian homes. This chapter will focus on the *political platform* of the Jerusalem Link as a joint organization, whose goal is to “serve as an institutional base for coordination, cooperation, and mutual support between the two centers, while each center maintains its organizational and executive integrity.”<sup>2</sup>

When the Jerusalem Link was created in 1994, as an offshoot of two Brussels Conference meetings between top Palestinian and Israeli political leaders in 1989 and 1992, a joint declaration of shared principles, written by both groups of women, became the foundation of its political platform. This Jerusalem Link declaration commits both groups to a set of principles in pursuing a

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<sup>2</sup>“About the Jerusalem Link,” <<http://www.batshalom.org>>.

“comprehensive, just, and lasting peace.”<sup>3</sup> The joint programs as well as the independent programs of each organization attempt to promote these political principles. The joint Israeli-Palestinian all-women’s dialogue groups, which, according to JCW director Sumaya Farhat-Naser, are the “cornerstone” of the Jerusalem Link’s joint programs, depend upon the political principles endorsed by the joint programs.<sup>4</sup>

The dialogue groups began in 1996, joining Israeli and Palestinian women from Jerusalem, Hebron, Tul Karem, and Jenin into age-based groups to meet in multiple sessions with a trained moderator. The participants have included women of different ethnic, socio-economic, religious, and occupational backgrounds who heard about the groups from Jerusalem Link publications or through word of mouth.

During the 1996-1997 year, two women from Ma’aleh Adumim, a Jewish settlement northeast of Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> signed up to participate in the Jerusalem adult dialogue group, unbeknownst to the leadership of either Bat Shalom or the JCW. After some initial contention about these women’s residence among the dialogue group participants, the group continued meeting successfully for the rest of the year. However, in late spring of 1997, JCW director Sumaya Farhat-Naser learned that the two women were settlers. Outraged, she protested their participation and any future participation of Jewish settlers in the Jerusalem Link dialogue groups.

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<sup>3</sup> From the new Jerusalem Link Declaration, revamped on August 18, 1999, “The Jerusalem Link Declaration,” <<http://www.j-c-w.org>>. See Appendix E for a comparison of the old and new Jerusalem Link Declarations.

<sup>4</sup> “Director’s Message,” <<http://www.j-c-w.org>>.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix F: Maps of Jerusalem [from maps published jointly by Bat Shalom and the JCW in *Sharing Jerusalem* (1997), 65-67], for a detailed map of Jerusalem and the surrounding Jewish settlements such as Ma’aleh Adumim.

In the eyes of the JCW leadership and of most Palestinians, who believe that settlements are illegal and an affront to Palestinian human rights, settlers themselves are a painful symbol of this illegality and injustice. For this reason, the JCW claimed that women from any settlement should not be allowed to participate in future dialogue groups sponsored by a peace organization such as the Jerusalem Link.

The Bat Shalom leadership, however, initially maintained that the settlers' participation in dialogue groups was important both to further Bat Shalom's organizational mission of reaching out to Israeli women with more right-wing political leanings and also to diversify the Israeli dialogue group participants. After six months of intense discussion between the board members of both organizations, the Israeli leadership of Bat Shalom agreed to ban Ma'aleh Adumim residents and other settlers from all dialogue groups.

This decision did not settle the issue. In early 1999, Bat Shalom director Gila Svirsky discovered that one of the Israeli women then participating in a dialogue group lived in the settlement of Beit El. Aware of the 1997 promise, Svirsky saw this women's presence as a breach of trust and brought the matter to the attention of the JCW board. The dialogue group with the Beit El woman was immediately canceled. The top leaders on both sides met in a series of difficult negotiations to seek a compromise to what they now understood had become a central challenge to the dialogue program.

The two organizations, as well as their individual members, define the term "settler" differently. The question is which of the Jerusalem neighborhoods built

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after the 1967 War constitute “settlements.” All of the Palestinian and Israeli women I interviewed, for example, agree that Ma’aleh Adumim — a twenty-five year old settlement, located east of Jerusalem and outside the Jerusalem municipality — constitutes a settlement. On the Israeli side, however, the women disagree about which of the newer neighborhoods within the Jerusalem city municipality — such as Gilo to the south and Ramot to the north — should be considered settlements<sup>6</sup> (See Appendix F: Maps of Jerusalem). The Palestinian women peacemakers I interviewed consistently defined settlements as any Jewish neighborhood built on land procured by Israel after the 1967 War.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the spring of 1999, Bat Shalom and JCW leaders continued debating the settler issue. Both sides understood the high stakes of their deliberation. If a compromise could not be worked out, then all dialogue groups would be canceled. Without the dialogue groups, the Jerusalem Link — an organization considered to be a daring experiment in political partnership between Palestinians and Israelis — would have failed. Finally, the Palestinians agreed to allow the Jewish women from the newer settlements (such as Gilo, Ramot, and those within the Jerusalem municipality) to participate. The Israelis agreed to forbid the Beit El resident from participating in the group. The current compromise

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<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Professor Herb Kelman for helping me to understand the political conflicts such as the settler debate that I observed between and among the Israeli and Palestinian women. See Herbert C. Kelman, “Group Process in the Resolution of International Conflicts: Experiences from the Israeli-Palestinian Case” *American Psychologist* 52, no. 3 (March 1997): 212-220 and “Coalitions Across Conflict Lines: The Interplay of Conflicts Within and Between the Israeli and Palestinian Communities,” in *Conflict Between People and Groups*, ed. S. Worchel and J. Simpson (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> This “post-1967” residency criteria is shared by most “peacemaking Palestinians,” as defined in Chapter Two: Palestinians who have agreed or accepted the Oslo Accords and, with it, the recognition of the State of Israel. Palestinians who do not recognize the State of Israel consider settlers all Jewish residents of post 1948 Israel.

reached by the board members of the Jerusalem Link bans all women from certain agreed upon post-1967 Israeli settlements from participating in the dialogue groups. Viewed by many Bat Shalom activists as a capitulation to the demands of the JCW leadership, this decision has provoked feelings of frustration among many of the Israeli activists and ultimately contributed to the resignation of Bat Shalom director Gila Svirsky in September 1999.

Many of the peace activists on both sides told me that the settler debate had precipitated the Jerusalem Link board's reevaluation of its joint political principles. On August 18, 1999, the joint board meeting of the Jerusalem Link convened to update their joint declaration. As a result of this meeting, the board members added greater detail to certain clauses of the Jerusalem Link Declaration that favored the Palestinian position on settlements. The new clause on settlements reads: "All Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 are illegal, as stipulated by international law, and violate the requirements for peace." Although this position on the illegality of settlements echoes directly the position of the mainstream Palestinian peace parties, such as Yasser Arafat's Fateh party, it differs dramatically from the Jerusalem Link's previous stance on settlements. The old declaration of the Jerusalem Link included the following clause regarding settlements: "Settlements and their ongoing expansion constitute a severe impediment to peace."<sup>8</sup> The difference between "illegal as stipulated by

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<sup>8</sup> From the copies of the old and new Jerusalem Link Declarations, see Appendix E. Note that the Bat Shalom website has not updated its posting of the Jerusalem Link Declaration to include the August 18, 1999 changes but the Jerusalem Center for Women website has. According to Gila Svirsky in an e-mail dated March 2, 2000, Bat Shalom board members "made an explicit decision not to put it on, knowing that it was a source of dissension on the board and could conceivably alienate other [Bat Shalom members] who read it there." This is an interesting anecdote to the "resolution" of the settler question. The decision to keep the old version of the Declaration for

international law” and “a severe impediment to peace” highlight the change that occurred in the past year in the Jerusalem Link’s political principles. The deliberation of these principles reflects the mediation between peace with care and peace with justice.

### **III. The Israeli Position: Demanding Peace with Care**

I conducted three separate two-hour interviews with Bat Shalom director Gila Svirsky. In each, she returned (unprompted) to the settler debate and the feelings of frustration it had provoked. Although her opinions are not identical to those held by other Bat Shalom affiliates, her experiences and attitudes as the director of Bat Shalom do reveal the organization’s constraints on the issue. Svirsky articulated her view, also held officially by Bat Shalom, that Ma’aleh Adumim was a full-fledged settlement, which she called “stolen land:”

To many of us, Ma’aleh Adumim appears as just a regular suburb [of Jerusalem]. That is a false impression. Most of us don’t think of it as a wicked place but it is stolen land from the Palestinians, who are denied access to its water and agricultural potential.<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1999, Svirsky contributed to a forty-page report sponsored by B’Tselem, the largest Israeli human rights watch group within Israel. The report was entitled, “On the Way to Annexation: Human Rights Violations Resulting from the Establishment and Expansion of the Ma’aleh Adumim Settlement.” It catalogued the human rights violations that have resulted from the twenty-five year old Ma’aleh Adumim settlement, which is the largest of the settlements in the post-

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public viewing reflects Bat Shalom’s reticence to publicize the changes, which might alienate some or many of its more centrist members and international supporters.

<sup>9</sup> Gila Svirsky, interview, 23 August 1999.

1967 Occupied Territories. Ma'aleh Adumim is currently home to 25,000 Israeli residents. It continues to grow. The report confirmed what other Israeli public sources, newspaper clippings, and academics have predicted: in the final status negotiation of the borders of Jerusalem, the Israeli government hopes to include Ma'aleh Adumim in Israeli proper. Yet the land on which Ma'aleh Adumim was established, according to the B'Tselem report, was taken from the Palestinian villages of Abu Dis, al-Izariyyeh, al-Issawiyyeh, a-Tur, and Anata. The report concluded that in building this settlement Israeli policy had disregarded international legal rules governing military occupation (the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Rules). The report also criticized the Israeli Supreme Court for allowing this illegal seizure of land and settlement.<sup>10</sup>

Svirsky and B'Tselem's position, that Ma'aleh Adumim and similar West Bank settlements are illegal under international law, was shared by two-thirds of the Israeli women peacemakers that I interviewed. However, this stance towards settlements is not typical of the Bat Shalom constituents, the 2000 women on the mailing list.<sup>11</sup> The fact that Bat Shalom takes a more radical position on Israeli settlements than most of its members demonstrates the common characterization of Bat Shalom as an extra-parliamentary peace group situated "left of left," on the political extreme. Even the mainstream, left-wing political parties such as Meretz and Labor do not officially endorse Bat Shalom's position on the illegality of settlements. As I have mentioned, these parties are represented within Bat Shalom

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<sup>10</sup> From Yuval Ginbar, "On the Way to Annexation: Human Rights Violations Resulting from The Establishment and Expansion of the Ma'aleh Adumim Settlement," unpublished draft (B'Tselem: July 1999), <<http://www2.iol.co.il/btselem>>.

<sup>11</sup> Ronny Jaeger, interview, 20 July 1999.

by Knesset members Naomi Chazan (Meretz) and Yael Dayan (Labor), who are, moreover, active founding board members and key spokeswomen of Bat Shalom. Although these women individually view settlements as illegal, their Knesset parties prefer calling them an “obstacle to peace.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, Bat Shalom’s condemnation of all settlements as illegal represents the position of neither the great majority of its members nor the left-wing Knesset parties.<sup>13</sup>

Almost all of the Israeli women I interviewed said that the word “settler” could apply to all Israelis living beyond the 1967 Israeli borders.<sup>14</sup> As mentioned above, however, the Israeli women often distinguished between settlements within the Jerusalem municipal lines and those beyond (See Appendix F: Maps of Jerusalem). This differentiation reflected Bat Shalom’s recognition that the Jewish neighborhoods within the Jerusalem borders are most likely to remain under Israeli control after the final status agreements have been completed. (More than half of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem live in neighborhoods built beyond the 1967

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<sup>12</sup> In a personal e-mail dated 28 January 2000, former Bat Shalom director Gila Svirsky forwarded me the yet unpublished transcript of a discussion between herself and Sumaya Farhat-Naser, the JCW director, in September 1999 about the political disputes within the Jerusalem Link at that time. This discussion will be published in “The Jerusalem Link: Testimony and Debate,” in *Women, Culture, and Development Practices*, ed. Celeste Schenk and Susan Perry (London: Zed Books, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Because the mainstream left-wing Knesset parties do not officially condemn all Jerusalem settlements as illegal, the fact that Knesset Member and Speaker Naomi Chazan was willing to submit to the demands of the JCW that the Ma’aleh Adumim settlers be banned from the dialogue group represents another complicated, internal conflict that undermines Bat Shalom’s political credibility in the eyes of the Palestinians. There is a gap between the positions individually supported and stated by Bat Shalom’s most famous politicians and the policies that their parties can support. Many of the Palestinians I interviewed criticized this disjunction between policies that Bat Shalom could support nominally and those it had the power to implement through governmental channels.

<sup>14</sup> The future of Jewish settlements is currently on the agenda of the final status agreements. To some Israelis and Jews, dismantling settlements represent an ultimate blow to the ideological roots of Zionism. This ideology was founded on the dream of Jewish settlement in the land of Israel. Most Israelis are concerned with the economic and demographic repercussions of dismantling settlements. The Israeli peacemakers believe that dismantling the “illegal” settlements should be a first priority.

border.<sup>15</sup>) Disqualifying this population from dialogue groups, therefore, would prevent most Jerusalem women from participating. In general, the Israeli women used settlements far less than the Palestinians to exemplify human or political rights abuses of the Israeli occupation.

Svirsky expressed sympathy with the indignation felt by the Palestinians in regard to the Jewish settlers. She understood that Palestinians consider settlers as a humiliating affront to their national dignity and human rights, specifically to their rights to own their land.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Bat Shalom leaders, including Svirsky, also expressed their convictions on the importance of including settlers, especially those with the most right wing and anti peace process sentiments, in the dialogue groups. They believed that the objectives of the dialogue groups could best be achieved by exposing a cross-section of Israeli women to the dialogue group experience and introducing Israeli women of all ideological positions to Palestinian women. According to Bat Shalom's written publications, these objectives entail giving the members "an opportunity to dissolve stereotypes...and exposing them to one another's reality:"

Without such groups, Palestinians and Israelis would never meet and never understand the fear that underlies the national animosity. Bat Shalom believes that the creation of a durable and just peace in the region necessitates such efforts to bridge the gap, allowing the unmediated contact that melts mistrust and alienation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Exploration and Fact Finding," Israeli-Palestine Center for Research and Information, <<http://www.ipcri.org>>.

<sup>16</sup> Gila Svirsky, interview, 9 July 1999.

<sup>17</sup> "Bat Shalom's Ongoing Activities," <<http://www.batshalom.org>>.

The Bat Shalom position on right-wing settlers interested in dialogue groups derives directly from the moral orientation underlying its “peace with care” model. Therefore, while Svirsky firmly denounced the Ma’aleh Adumim settlement, she still strongly advocated including one of its inhabitants in the dialogue group. This combination of insisting on Palestinian human rights but also insisting on forging bonds between Palestinians and a wide spectrum of Israeli women reflected both her own and Bat Shalom’s moral and political conviction that peace in the region will require coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. Bat Shalom’s *political* commitment to peace with care relies on a fundamental *programmatic* commitment to forging ties and relationships with the Palestinians. Programs such as condolence calls, distribution of aid to homeless Bedouin, visits to Palestinian women in jail, and dialogue groups all reflect the discourse of peacemaking employed by Bat Shalom, which sees caring for the Palestinians as a critical first step in protecting their rights.

Moreover, Bat Shalom attempts to raise public awareness and sympathy for Palestinians among Israeli women of all ideological backgrounds. Peace with care is also directed internally, at the Israeli public and government. In order to affect change among the Israeli public’s opinion regarding the Palestinians, the dialogue groups must include Israelis who hold right wing or anti-peace positions. Ironically, it is the failure of Bat Shalom to appeal to a more widespread range of Israelis that has prompted its most frequent criticism. Many of the Palestinians I interviewed criticized Bat Shalom and the Israeli peace camp for “not delivering”

because of the small subculture of “already converted peace activists whom they targeted.”<sup>18</sup>

#### **IV. The Palestinian Position: Demanding Peace with Justice**

The fifteen Palestinian peacemakers that I interviewed varied in their styles, attitudes towards the conflict, and personal experiences with the conflict. All of the Palestinian interviewees, however, referred to the same two specific components of peace, suggesting that there is a certain national Palestinian political lexicon.

First, every one of the Palestinians preceded the word “peace,” when they spoke, with some adjective such as “just,” “fair,” “honorable,” or “comprehensive.” The most frequent term was “just peace,” meaning that Palestinian human and national rights were an essential component to the peace process. Some of the Palestinian women peacemakers explained a “just peace” by referring to their own experiences in being denied certain human rights. One told how she had never been allowed to go swimming in the Mediterranean Sea. Another described her experiences in an Israeli jail.

Second, although the Palestinians listed different conditions for a just and comprehensive peace, every Palestinian I interviewed voiced a particularly strong objection to Israeli settlements, insisting that they be dismantled as part of the peace process. The fervor, often anger, in the Palestinians’ description of the settlements was palpable. The settlements symbolize an affront to Palestinian human rights and national dignity.

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<sup>18</sup> Siam Barghouti, interview, 27 July 1999.

Therefore, it is not surprising that when I interviewed the program director of the Jerusalem Center for Women, May Kasem, she immediately brought up the conflict over the settlers in dialogue groups. When I asked a general question about the joint work of her organization with Bat Shalom, she referred immediately to the importance of the joint political declaration, as a set of political principles that must be used to guide the Link's current work. In order to join the JCW, Kasem said, the Palestinian women must agree to this declaration's political positions. This emphasis on adhering to principles means that the JCW, according to Kasem, had a set of "red lines" beyond which it would not or could not compromise. According to both Kasem and JCW director Farhat-Naser, a basic red line involves negotiating with settlers:

We won't sit down with people of settlements. This is just the way we conduct ourselves. In order to be working jointly, we cannot have someone in our group who is infringing on human rights.<sup>19</sup>

Kasem, Farhat-Naser, and the other Palestinian women that I interviewed saw settlers in dialogue groups as painful symbols of both the actual Israeli settlements and the ideology behind them. The Zionist ideological basis for settling in the Occupied Territories, they said, directly challenges Palestinian political rights, specifically the Palestinians' right to own their own land. The Palestinian women I interviewed saw the presence of settlers as a challenge to the Palestinian collective "human right" of political self-determination.

In addition, many Palestinian women I interviewed said that their own sense of "human dignity" and "pride" depended upon attaining these collective national

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<sup>19</sup> May Kasem, interview, 19 July 1999.

rights. They consider Jews settling previously owned Palestinian land as a direct blow to Palestinian historical legitimacy and national ownership of this land.

Hanan Awad, director of the East Jerusalem branch of the global *Women's League of International Peace of Freedom*, issues reports on the human rights abuses in the Occupied Territories, including the status of settlements. She described the symbolic pride at stake in the issue of Israeli settlements, shedding light on the position taken by the JCW with regard to the Ma'aleh Adumim controversy. She also expressed her skepticism about dialogue groups with Israelis. Awad said that “[Palestinian] rights” must be “secured first, as a pre-requisite to dialogue, for, if not, it means that we are forgetting our history, our past, our dignity.” She found that most dialogue groups represented a premature attempt to “jump-start” the process of understanding:

The present concept of dialogue jumps over history, the reality, and wants to impose a new reality. We cannot do that. First, Israeli society [must] recognize the historical catastrophe. They have to apologize for what they have done. Without [an apology], we cannot sit around and talk, two nations, and start reconciliation.<sup>20</sup>

Awad's emphasis on principled reconciliation — negotiating with Israelis within the framework of a set of principles protective of Palestinian rights — was echoed by many of the other Palestinian women I interviewed. Because Palestinians come to the dialogue group with disadvantages shaped by historical injustices, they pointed out, the dialogue groups are not a meeting of two peoples on equal footing. Kasem explained that the Palestinian reliance on “starting-line principles” was a necessary means to overcome this unequal footing of the occupier

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<sup>20</sup> Hanan Awad, interview, 29 July 1999.

and occupant, unequal access to power, differences in political experience, international recognition, and socio-economic privilege. “We have a totally different balance of power — we are not living on our own territory,” Kasem said.<sup>21</sup> In general, all of the Palestinians whom I interviewed described deep feelings of powerlessness and inequity because of their state-less status. These feelings of equity within the joint dialogue groups could be mitigated, they told me, only by firmly safeguarding Palestinian rights.

The JCW’s insistence on a “no settler policy” within the Jerusalem Link dialogue groups comes from the organization’s political vision of a “just and comprehensive peace.” Such a peace with justice, the Palestinian women told me, cannot be ensured by informal words or deeds, but must be affirmed through declared and agreed upon principles that can then be implemented. This negotiating strategy — as well as the JCW’s demand for written, tangible principles — parallels the Palestinian position at the international peace process negotiations. The frustration of the JCW with Bat Shalom implied by the settler controversy within the Jerusalem Link reflects the more general feelings of discontent among the Palestinian public over the “vague Israeli promises” made by Israel in the Oslo peace process. Those vague Israeli promises have subsequently changed or have yet to be implemented. JCW director Farhat-Naser expressed this frustration:

We felt that we have been misled by the Israeli government so many times over the past five years of the peace process. The agreements that were signed went back on those written before, and each time fewer rights were given to us than in the previous agreement. The feeling was that the Israelis are cheating us. You can't trust agreements with them. We have nothing to revert to. We

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<sup>21</sup> May Kasem, interview, 19 July 1999.

need a very clear reference for our work together. We feel that our legitimacy comes from the Oslo and UN resolutions, for example.<sup>22</sup>

The JCW insists that Bat Shalom comply with their “red lines,” their basic principles because its members believe that both Israeli politicians and grassroots activists break international laws, do “not listen to conventions,” and “always find loop-holes.” Therefore, they reason, the Israelis need to be held accountable by a peacemaking process strictly regimented by principles.<sup>23</sup>

The JCW’s clear red line banning settlers from dialogue groups also responds directly to other Palestinians’, both constituents and politicians, cold and sometimes hostile reaction to their joint work with Israelis. As one of the few Palestinian NGOs committed to not only joint activism with Israelis but also an official partnership, the JCW is often under attack, criticized by other grassroots groups, women’s groups, Parliamentarians, and constituents within Palestine. Throughout Palestine, normalization efforts with Israelis are not only frowned upon but also sometimes considered treacherous. Palestinian political activity, both on the grassroots and within the Legislative and Executive bodies, focuses primarily on internal state building. According to many of the Palestinian women I interviewed, some Palestinian activists view joint programs with Israelis as a

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<sup>22</sup> Svirsky and Farhat-Naser (conversation transcript).

<sup>23</sup> Hanan Aruri, interview, 29 July 1999. Current research by political scientists and other scholars on the current status of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process reflects this desire by the JCW to negotiate and work with the Israelis within a set of agreed upon principles. In “Building a Sustainable Peace: The Limits of Pragmatism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXVIII, no. 1 (Autumn 1998): 36-50, Herbert C. Kelman argues, like the women of the JCW, that only an Israeli commitment to “principled approach to peacemaking” that recognizes certain goals can forge reconciliation and move the peace process forward. These goals include a final two-state solution with Palestinian sovereignty and viability and full Palestinian citizenship. Like Kasem and the other JCW women, Kelman faults the ambiguities of the Oslo Accords and the lack of definitive commitment to principled outcomes for stalling the momentum of the peace process.

misguided use of limited resources. Farhat-Naser expressed this current prevailing skepticism within Palestinian society regarding joint activism with Israelis in a conversation with Gila Svirsky, director of Bat Shalom:

We have received more and more pressure from our society that working with the Israelis is useless. But we are very clear. We want to work with you [Israelis]. And we push for our joint work.<sup>24</sup>

However, according to Farhat-Naser, in order to “push” for the joint work and to convince the Palestinian public of its importance, the JCW must first prove to the public and the parliamentarians that its efforts can constructively further the Palestinian goals within the negotiation of the final status issues:

First, we want to show our people that we are working on very sensitive issues, and working together with the Israelis preparing the ground for those who are the negotiators and for those who are on the street to understand what is going on in the final stages of negotiation.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, insisting on a no settler policy and a “peace with justice” political platform, could prove to the Palestinian public that the JCW was at “the forefront.” The JCW must show that it is tackling the difficult final status questions, rather than involving itself in joint activism with no regard to a principled peace. Echoing public sentiment, the Palestinian women that I interviewed said that peace with Israel should include understanding, tolerance, and coexistence (elements of peace with care) but that these features are not substantial or effective enough to form a full peacemaking model. In accordance with the Palestinian negotiating position within the international peace process final status talks, the Palestinian women

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<sup>24</sup> Svirsky and Farhat-Naser (conversation transcript).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

activists feel both public pressure and personal commitment to prioritize peace with justice over peace with care.

The fact that the JCW must act in accordance with its national peacemaking model in order to protect its legitimacy both among politicians and with its female constituents reveals the organization's constrained niche as a women's group promoting peace. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Palestinian women I interviewed ranked Palestinian rights higher than any other set of rights, including women's rights. They believed that national rights must precede women's rights, and saw the *intifada* as a time when women put aside feminist platforms to join the collective struggle.

This national collective discourse appears to contradict the second objective of the JCW: to secure women's rights and promote the advancement of women within Palestine. Many of the Palestinian women whom I interviewed seem to be wrestling with how their current women's rights strategies and programs might fit within the national discourse of Palestinian unity. For example, women's rights activists petitioning for more lenient marriage laws within the new Palestinian charter must act gingerly within a political structure still heavily influenced by patriarchal traditional norms. By petitioning for women's rights, the Palestinian peacemakers are already beginning to challenge the social norms embedded in the collective discourse. Thus, they must remain firmly within the political discourse of justice in order to avoid accusations of national disloyalty.

In order to petition successfully for women's rights within a political government based on national unity, the JCW must protect its reputation within the

Palestinian political community. If they appear too radical, they will alienate their supporters within the Palestinian National Council as well as the more rural, conservative women from outside Jerusalem who form the cadre of their organization. Zahira Kamal, Siham Barghouti, and Hanan Awad all hold government posts within Arafat's Fateh party administration. Balancing their dual roles as women's rights activists and as peace activists with Bat Shalom, the JCW leaders must staunchly articulate the national political position on borders, statehood, Jerusalem, and settlements. Thus, it is in part to ensure its own success as a women's rights group that the JCW adheres to a "peace with justice" political ideology, represented by its red line position prohibiting settlers from joining the Jerusalem Link dialogue groups.

## **V. Implications of the Settler Controversy**

I have argued that the disagreement between the two sides of the Jerusalem Link about whether to include Jewish settlers in the dialogue groups reveals the tension between two distinct political ideologies of peacemaking. "Peace with care," with its emphasis on understanding, communication, and coexistence, derives from the particular other-regarding moral orientation taken by the women of Bat Shalom. This position compromises more than the Israeli government on most relevant negotiation issues. The peace with care model sees the inclusion of settlers as not only beneficial to the dialogue process but actually as a preferred strategy for involving a broader range of Israelis in peacemaking. Because of the settlers' potentially more right-wing views, Bat Shalom thinks that they are the

most important potential participants for dialogue groups. Bat Shalom's conclusion reflects a critical objective of peace with care: to provoke greater sympathy among Israelis (with a range of political views) to the situation of the Palestinian people, and thus to change Israeli public opinion. In the long term, peace with care involves a widespread Israeli consciousness-raising that will, they hope, result in the public's pressuring the Israeli government towards compromises at the negotiating table.

The peace with care model also sees future peacemaking potential in the other-regarding behavior itself, in the communication between Israelis and Palestinians. Members of Bat Shalom believe that interactions between the two groups, fostered by programs such as the Jerusalem Link dialogue groups, could eventually help achieve the necessary coexistence within a two-state solution. They also hope that the interaction prescribed by peace with care will cultivate widespread support for the protection of Palestinian human rights. This peace with care vision, with its emphasis on public consciousness raising, public opinion, interaction, and understanding, is a long-term political platform. With the change in Israeli public opinion, Bat Shalom members hope, Knesset members might eventually vote against the construction of a new Ma'aleh Adumim.

As the controversy over the Ma'aleh Adumim women revealed, the peace with care political model of Bat Shalom — with its long-term, indirect objectives, its emphasis on influencing public opinion, and its use of the other-regarding sentiments of care, concern, and understanding to forge ties — clashes with the JCW's peace with justice model. The Palestinian peacemakers I interviewed

stressed the importance of political principles and delineated the constraints posed by their nationalist political environment. Although they advocate very different models of peacemaking, both groups are deeply committed to similar ends.

## **VI. The Unraveling of Peace: Jerusalem De-Linked**

The leaders of both Bat Shalom and the JCW consciously emphasized that the Jerusalem Link, from its inception, created an example of a sustainable, joint peacemaking effort at the grassroots that national leaders could imitate in arriving at a two-state solution. Members from both sides of the Link expressed their pride that women at the grassroots had preceded the (usually male) negotiators in taking daring steps such as mutual public recognition and communication, and establishing political principles. The Jerusalem Link's first draft of their declaration of principles was composed in 1989, four years before the signing of the first Oslo Accords. In the ten years since then, the Jerusalem Link has attempted to be at the vanguard of the peacemaking movement, modeling compromises that the top negotiators have not yet been able to make. The Sharing Jerusalem event in 1997, for example, advocated the radical concept of sharing the city as two capitals for two states before that compromise had entered the mainstream political discourse. Svirsky, from Bat Shalom, presented the original idea that inspired the Jerusalem Link, which she thought had been subsequently paralleled by the Oslo Accords:

From the beginning, we wanted to recognize each other and establish communication. Of course, there is difference of approaches to work out; it is not simple. But we agree on a set of

principles. We established a dialogue that we want our government to model, two states separated but united in principles.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Palestinian model of peace with justice emphasizes “principles” more than the Israeli model of peace with care, the set of principles agreed upon by the board members of both organizations in the Jerusalem Link Declaration has become the central basis for their joint activism. The JCW and Bat Shalom’s heavy reliance on a formal declaration of principles parallels the emphasis on the Oslo Accords and the Wye River Accords as written documents that must guide the international peace process. In both cases, declarations ground the building of trust and communication between Palestinians and Israelis. In both cases, declarations generate the activists’ programs or the government’s policies.

When, at the August 18, 1999 board meeting, the Israeli and Palestinian leaders of the Jerusalem Link convened to update their declaration of principles, they added four new clauses and changed most of the wording. The first clause of the old declaration called for the “recognition of the right to self-determination of both peoples through the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel.” This clause was changed to specify the “recognition of the right to self-determination of both peoples in the land, through the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel on the June 4, 1967 boundaries” (See Appendix E). According to the description of the meeting by both Gila Svirsky and Sumaya Farhat-Naser, the changes were the result of certain Palestinian board members’ discontent with the ambiguity of the old clauses. Farhat-Naser explained the Palestinian impetus for changing the declaration:

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<sup>26</sup> Gila Svirsky, interview, 5 August 1999.

The reevaluation of our declaration was a kind of self-protection, self-defense, in our society, but also to initiate the discussions that we hope will begin. We wanted to include specifics — the refugees, the settlements, Jerusalem. We also thought the weakness of the Oslo agreements were that they did not address the problems of the Palestinians and yet they claimed they had brought peace discussions to the final stages. We felt we did not even get a small part of the rights to which we are entitled in the previous agreements. We feel we need to be much more specific, so we can count on some rights. It is important to us that the basis for the two states be the borders as they were on June 4, 1967, before the war broke out. Why should we now make concessions before we begin to negotiate? In any negotiation, both sides must make compromises. Why should we in the Jerusalem Link begin with a compromise that furthers the Israeli side? This is how our side viewed it.<sup>27</sup>

The August 18 meeting was fraught with tension. As a result of the changes made in the new declaration and the discussion surrounding it, Gila Svirsky resigned in late August from her position as director of Bat Shalom. She said that she could no longer head an organization premised on founding principles with which she did not agree. Further, she felt that the relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli board members had not been one of equal negotiation, compromise, engagement, and discussion. In my terms, she said that peace with care had been stifled. She described the following situation at the board meeting:

The situation was not set up to have a discussion, or even for there to be a safe space for those who disagree to express their point of view.... This was a situation in which the Palestinians said, "we need this" so the Israelis, after so many years of being the oppressor, felt they could not disagree with what the Palestinians were asking for.... I think in American debates over race relations this is called "white guilt." We felt unable to make legitimate counter-proposals. In separate meetings, the Israelis spoke of bringing to the Palestinians some suggestions for compromise wording, and we did. But as soon as the suggestion was raised, there was initial resistance on the part of some Palestinian women

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<sup>27</sup> Svirsky and Farhat-Naser (conversation transcript).

— the younger, more extremist ones — so the Israelis immediately backed down without a full discussion. I fault the Israelis for not being more honest, more open. Instead, we were constantly backing down against real or even imagined Palestinian objections. There was no real engagement on those issues.<sup>28</sup>

Svirsky's frustration and disappointment, eventually sparking her resignation, reflect the role of personal sentiment and feelings in the peace with care model. This moral stance depends upon communication, relatedness, and concern for the other — all personal connections that foster sympathy and solidarity. The limits of such sympathy are also emotionally based. Svirsky resigned in part not only because she could not subscribe cognitively to the new principles but also because she felt that in the process her internal guidelines for caring relations had been breached. Her disillusion reflects, I have argued, the conflicting visions of peacemaking that divide the Israeli and Palestinian women of the Jerusalem Link. If the Jerusalem Link, is in fact, as it intended to be, a grassroots model of peacemaking to which the official Palestinian and Israeli negotiators should turn for a trail-blazing example of joint peacemaking, these negotiators should carefully consider the current clash between the frameworks of peace with justice and peace with care.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.