

Israelisch-palästinensischer Friedensdialog vor dem Zusammenbruch

In ihrer Ausgabe vom 25. April 2012 berichtet Ophir Bar-Zohar in „Haaretz“, dass sich der Dialog zwischen israelischen und palästinensischen Friedensgruppen in einer schweren Krise befindet. Die bisherigen palästinensischen Partner würden keinen Sinn mehr in der Zusammenarbeit sehen, solange der Friedensprozess stocke. Als Gewährspersonen nennt der Autor des Berichts Tal Harris, die geschäftsführende Direktorin der Gruppe „One Voice-Israel“, Nir Oren, den Vertreter des israelisch-palästinensischen Forums von Gewaltopfern, Ron Pundak, den Mitvorsitzenden der Dachorganisation „Peace NGO Forum“, und Gadi Baltiansky, den Generaldirektor des israelischen Teams der „Genfer Initiative“. Baltiansky und Harris berichten, dass sich ausländische Geldgeber mittlerweile zögerlich zeigen, „negative Kampagnen“ weiter zu unterstützen, sie wollten positive Ergebnisse sehen. Damit stelle sich, so Harris, die Grundfrage nach dem Sinn der eigenen Arbeit. Die, so Bar-Zohar abschließend, am Abend des 24. April geplante alternative Gedenkveranstaltung der „Kombattanten für den Frieden“ für die Opfer von Gewalt habe von rechts Widerspruch geerntet.

Vgl. den Beitrag von Dan Goldenberg „Über die Zwei-Staaten-Lösung hinausgehen, einen föderierten Staat schaffen“ in der Menüleiste „Berichte aus Nahost“ dieser Homepage.

Peace activists are sick of talking about soccer

Ophir Bar-Zohar, in „Haaretz“ 25.04.2012

The number of Palestinians participating in dialogue with Israelis has hit a low ebb recently, as more and more Palestinians see no point in reconciliation attempts while the peace process is at a stalemate.

Peace activists say that as prospects for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seem gloomy, Palestinians perceive activities that don't challenge the occupation directly as normalization, or acceptance of the status quo.

"Last year, Palestinian activists came to our campuses to meet young Israelis and talk to them about the conflict," says Tal Harris, executive director of One Voice-Israel. "Today it is much more

difficult. We had plans to carry out different activities together with Palestinian politicians and peace activists, but they have all been put on hold."

The Bereaved Families Forum, an Israeli-Palestinian organization whose members lost close relatives in the conflict, launched an online campaign a few days ago. Contrary to the manifested desire of its initiators, "a crack in the wall," a Facebook application that facilitates direct communication between Palestinians and Israelis, will feature discussions that will focus only on political issues.

They wanted the application to include discussions about entertainment, hobbies, day-to-day experiences and others, but were met with skepticism and disinterestedness on the Palestinian side. "It took us plenty of time to decide what issues should be discussed," says Nir Oren, the association's executive director. "The development of 'a crack in the wall' shows how careful we have to be these days, much more than before."

As fewer Palestinians take part in dialogue initiatives, they become increasingly internal discussions, where Israeli activists talk among themselves. "The interface becomes more and more limited," says Oren. "We are still able to do things but it is much, much harder."

Ron Pundak, the co-chairman of the umbrella organization Peace NGO Forum, says that "many organizations carry on as usual, only that they've lowered their profile. They also aim at less contentious activities: dialogue between schoolchildren will be considered normalization, but a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian doctors and health officials, or a joint conference of farmers with the aim of boosting the export of strawberries to Europe, will be more easily accepted."

He says that as the political situation deteriorates and the Palestinians have fewer reasons to be hopeful, these sentiments

gain ground. "Violence against protesters, IDF shooting incidents and inflammatory remarks by [Foreign Minister Avigdor] Lieberman weaken those who claim that there is a partner for peace in Israel."

The number of Israeli-Palestinian joint events has significantly dropped over the past few years. Last December, for example, Haaretz reported that a symposium organized by the Palestine-Israel Journal on the impact of the Arab spring on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was canceled, a mere week after protesters stormed into the Ambassador Hotel in East Jerusalem where the first conference of the Israeli Palestinian Confederation took place. The second conference of the confederation, which was scheduled to take place in the Palestinian town of Beit Jala shortly afterward, was also canceled.

Equally, a gala event of the Bereaved Families Forum was relocated from the Palestinian town of Beit Sahour to metropolitan Israel, after 220 out of 300 Palestinian participants pulled out. Dialogue sessions that were held on a monthly basis at Beit Jala's Talitha Kumi school have become rare.

The declining popularity of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue has made fundraising harder for these organizations. "Donors are reluctant to support negative campaigns - they like positive ones," says Gadi Baltiansky, the director general of the Geneva Initiative. "They would be much more enthusiastic to help rally support for diplomatic negotiations."

Baltiansky says that the global financial crisis also led to significant cuts in foreign aid, but above all, add Pundak and Harris, people's enthusiasm has waned. "There are organizations and private donors who channel funds for 20 years and there's no peace in sight," Harris says.

Pundak adds that "we're subject to several layers of hardship: the financial crisis, fatigue, anti-normalization campaigns - they're all working against us."

"If this trend continues," says Harris, "it will cast serious doubt on our raison d'être. If all our activity will be restricted only to one side - the Israeli or the Palestinian - we will not be needed anymore."

The exception to the rule is Combatants for Peace, an organization that has maintained a steady level of activity over time. Spokesman Avner Horowitz says that the organization's activities "are conceived jointly and focus on protesting against the occupation."

Last night, Combatants for Peace staged their seventh annual alternative Memorial Day ceremony, to which bereaved families were invited, including 40 Palestinian ones. Curiously, the popular event - that was relocated from the compact Tmuna theater to the bigger Hangar 11 at Tel Aviv's port - was met with Israeli opposition. Yisrael Beiteinu MK Lia Shemtov called to cancel it, and a Facebook group was opened against it.

Naomi Enoch of Otzar Mifalei Yam, which operates the Tel Aviv port, said the company was opposed to the event but its hand were tied. "As a governmental body we reject any attempt to put dead IDF soldiers and Palestinian victims on a par as damaging the memory of the fallen soldiers," she said. "But the event was held in a private capacity, and we were legally unable to prevent it from happening."
