

# [13]25

***IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS THE WORD***

WEST BANK / ISRAEL



PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXTS BY ***DANI LAGARTO FERNÁNDEZ***

**Extract from the *RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY*  
FROM THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL (YEAR 2000)**

*(...)Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, (...)Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;(...)*

The project has gathered together portraits of 13 women working actively to attain peace in the Middle East. There are Israeli and Palestinian women as well as women from the rest of the world who devote their lives and their best efforts to achieving an end to the occupation of Palestine by Israel, and an end to the violence caused by this occupation. Political leaders, trade unionists, grass-roots activists, members of international organizations, individuals, groups and representatives of NGOs criss-cross the border that separating (and uniting) two societies, two realities.

Many of them are convinced that if women had taken part in the peace talks between the two nations over the past decade, the agreements would have been well structured, and reconciliation could have been achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli people. As women, they devote their energy and their resources to creating another model of negotiation and relationship, building bridges of dialog between the two nations.

The author has asked each woman to choose one word to sum up the vision, mission or emotion linked to their personal and / or professional relationship with the conflict in their respective countries. All of them appear with bare feet, as a metaphor for their honest and straightforward position, within the reality they have to live in, without ambiguities or shortcuts (and with the risk of rejection and misunderstanding within their societies that this implies). They themselves have chosen most of the places they are portrayed in: the interrelationship between the environment, career and the inner universe of these women go hand in hand in these images to approach the human essence of each one more intimately.

*WE GET CLOSE TO WOMEN WHO ARE WORKING FOR PEACE IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE. THROUGH BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH THEIR VIEWS, THEIR LONGINGS AND THEIR LIVES AND WHAT MAKES THEM TICK, WE CAN DRAW A NEW EMOTIONAL MAP OF THE REGION AND OF THE CONFLICT DRAINING IT: WE MEET SOME OF THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FACT THAT HOPE HASNT DESERTED THE MIDDLE EAST COMPLETELY.*

When peace arrives in the Middle East, in the Holy Land, it will be more within reach of the rest of the planet. These women know it, and have much to say in this respect: a word each from them. They have much to say especially now, in the year in which the 60th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel and the Naqba (the catastrophe) of the Palestinians is being commemorated and, in everyone's opinion, the situation is worse than ever. They also feel this way, but they cannot afford the luxury of losing hope.

The project also wants to be informative. Internet links are provided for everyone wanting to learn more or wanting to get in touch with the people and organizations mentioned in the texts included on this project.



## AMAL KHREISHEH

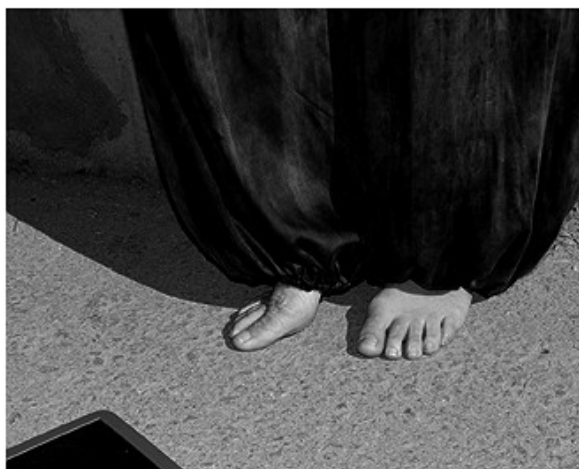
Amal is the director of the *Palestinian Working Women Society for Development*: [www.pwwsd.org](http://www.pwwsd.org), and she works to encourage Palestinian women to take part in the democratization of civil society, and to achieve the equal rights and to integrate them into the processes of decision-making. She is also a member of the *International Women Commission for a Just and Sustainable Peace*, a movement that brings together Palestinian, Israeli and international women dedicated to an end of the Israeli occupation and a just peace based on international law (including relevant UN resolutions like the 1325), human rights and equality. The IWC aims to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through immediate final status negotiations leading to a viable sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel on the June 4, 1967 borders. The IWC works for an ongoing and comprehensive reconciliation in order to realize a mutually secure and sustainable peace and co-existence: [www.peacewomen.org/WPS/OPTIsrael.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS/OPTIsrael.html)

*THE ARROGANT POLICIES OF THE OCCUPATION MAKE PALESTINIANS TO PROTECT THEIR TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM AND ITS PROCEDURES AS FORM OF SELF-DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF THEIR COLLECTIVE EXISTENCE. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE WOMEN ARE THE MOST VULNERABLE SOCIAL SECTOR OF THE POPULATION.*

Like many Palestinian women, she believes that a clear connection exists between Israeli colonialism and the violence of gender. The arrogant policies of the occupation make Palestinians to protect their traditional customs and the patriarchal system and its procedures as form of self-defence mechanisms of their collective existence. In these circumstances, Amal states, women are the most vulnerable social sector of the population, since they do not have a legal frame that protects them, and still under occupation which targets them and their families.

**Word:** Freedom: "It is what defines the most characteristic essence of the human being. All the values that we have been acquiring and adopting across history (justice, equanimity, respect for human rights...) are echoed in the concept of freedom. And without freedom there will not be safety. There will not be peace. "

**Place:** The "street of the Spring", in Ramallah, West Bank." I like this street near the centre of Ramallah, my favourite city, and the most tolerant of my country. This street preserves my most intimate memories: here I walked up and down with my husband when we were boyfriend and girlfriend; my children went to school here... In 2002, when Israel assaulted, trampled and raped Ramallah, we were fleeing from the soldiers taking this street, and getting lost among the backyards of the houses that we know so well. I do not remember the name of the street, I call it the Spring Street, where you can still find lawn under your feet in the middle of the city, and the trees celebrate the arrival of good weather. The spring: renewal, new life, change, development... freedom. "



## ANGELA GODFREY-GOLDSTEIN

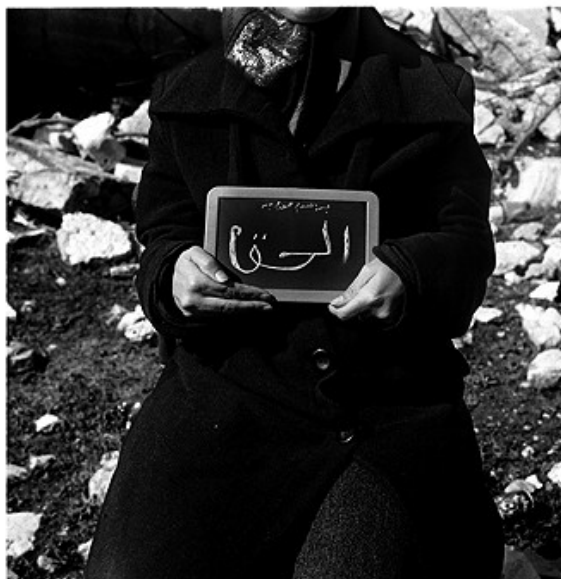
She is Action Advocacy Officer of the *Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions* (ICAHD): [www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org). ICAHD works in three interrelated spheres: non-violent resistance and actions of protest in the Occupied Territories; efforts to bring the reality of the occupation to Israeli society; and mobilization of the international community to obtain a just peace. She has chosen to be opposed to the demolition of Palestinian homes because she thinks it is a question that stresses Israel's cruelty, an operation that, together with Jewish settlements, is carried out to make Palestinians understand that their land is not their home.

*"AFTER SUFFERING THE WALL OF THE GHETTO OF WARSAW, NOW WE HAVE CREATED THE WALL OF THE GHETTO OF ABU DIS... WE MUST TALK. WE MUST BE IN SOLIDARITY TOGETHER WITH THE UNDERDOGS. TO BE THE VOICE OF THE MUTE, OF THE DEAF, OF THE WEAK WITHOUT HOPE. OF THE HELPLESS."*

Angela believes that hope for an end to this conflict resides in international civil society, and in diplomats who finally understand what is really happening: she is waiting for a miracle. She trusts in human rationality and believes that ultimately the message will be understood, though she wonders how many people must die before this happens. She feels alienated inside her society, the Israeli, for protesting against her government's savage politics of settlements and landgrab: she understands that the problem is not between people, it is caused by politicians and radicals. Having lived through the process of apartheid in South Africa, she knows that resistance to the occupation predictably generates violence, but does not hesitate to affirm that Israel is far more violent than was the racist South African government.

**Word:** Freedom.

**Place:** The wall in Abu Dis (Jerusalem). "In the last four years we have killed five times more children, three times more civil Palestinians than the Palestinians have killed civilians or Israeli children. We have taken their homes, land and villages, dignity and work. Do not say that the Israelis are the real victims: after suffering the wall of the ghetto of Warsaw, now we have created the wall of the ghetto of Abu Dis... We must talk (preferably in Arabic). We must be in solidarity together with the underdogs. To be the voice of the mute, of the deaf, of the weak without hope. Of the helpless. Of our fellow human beings. All created equal in God's image. All sacred. We have to retrieve respect and worship for the sanctity of creation. The freedom of Life."



# ARABIYA SHAWAMREH

Arabiya is a Palestinian woman whose house, Beit Arabiya, in Anata (East Jerusalem), the Israeli authorities have repeatedly demolished. She and her family have returned to re-build it every time, only for it to be demolished again. For a Palestinian woman, to lose her house means to lose all her world, her identity. Arabiya's gaze reflects this forced and traumatic loss of roots. Now, and with the initiative and the help of the ICAHD, the house has been reconstructed again and transformed into a Palestinian centre for the formation and training of leaders and grass-root activists, the *Centre Beit Arabiya for a Just Peace*. The Centre is also threatened with a demolition order.

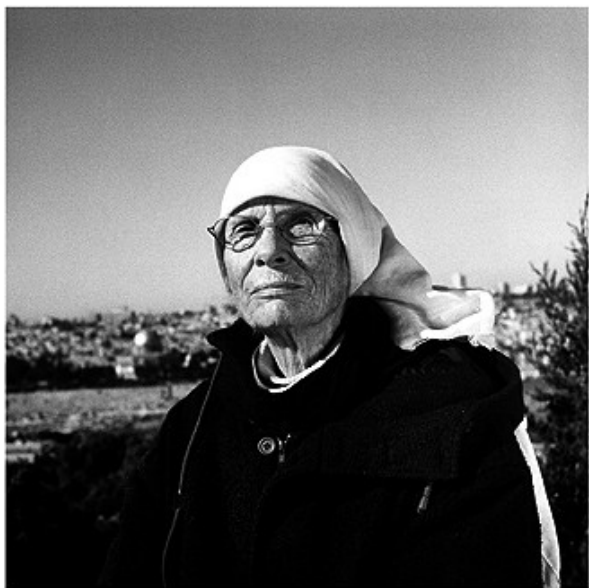
*FOR A PALESTINIAN WOMAN, TO LOSE HER HOUSE MEANS TO LOSE ALL HER WORLD, HER IDENTITY. ARABIYA'S GAZE REFLECTS THIS FORCED AND TRAUMATIC LOSS OF ROOTS.*

Arabiya and her family's fight have turned into the symbol of resistance against Israel's policy of demolition of Palestinian houses, and of the resistance to the occupation in general.

**Word:** The right (to security, to a worthy house, to be respected...)

**Place:** Remains of other demolished houses close to the *Centre Beit Arabiya for a Just Peace*.





## ELLEN ROSSER

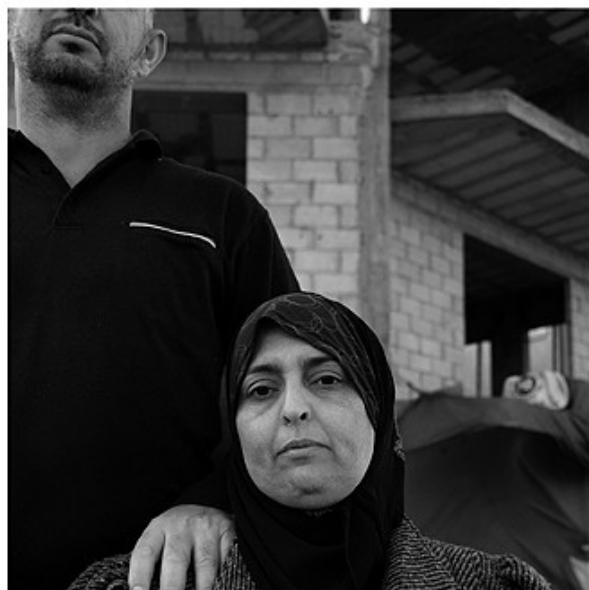
Ellen has lived and been working in the Middle East from 1987. In 1996, she created the *Friendship and Peace Society* in Hebron (Palestine), of which she is the director: [www.friendship-and-peace.org](http://www.friendship-and-peace.org). Nowadays she resides in Jerusalem after having being expelled from the Gaza Strip in July, 2007, and is working on the *Jerusalem Proposal*.

*"WHEN THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS GOVERN JERUSALEM, THE SACRED CITY WILL BE A CENTER FROM WHICH HOLINESS WILL RADIATE OUT TO THE WORLD AND WILL INSPIRE THE WHOLE WORLD TO LIVE IN AGREEMENT WITH GOD'S LAW AND PEACE."*

She believes that the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict will come through granting Jerusalem the status of "God's City", administered by representatives of the three religions, autonomous from both Israel and Palestine. She feels that God was the one who brought her from the USA to Middle East, and follows the religious procedure of the Christian, Jewish and Moslem religions. "When the religious leaders govern Jerusalem, the Sacred City will be a centre from which holiness will radiate to the world and will inspire the whole world to live in agreement with God's law and peace. Then the three religions will see their prophecies fulfilled of bringing peace to the Earth, and Jerusalem will be truly the city of the Peace of the Just people. "

**Word:** God, who guides her steps.

**Place:** The Mount of Olives, Jerusalem.



## IBTISAM MAHAMEED

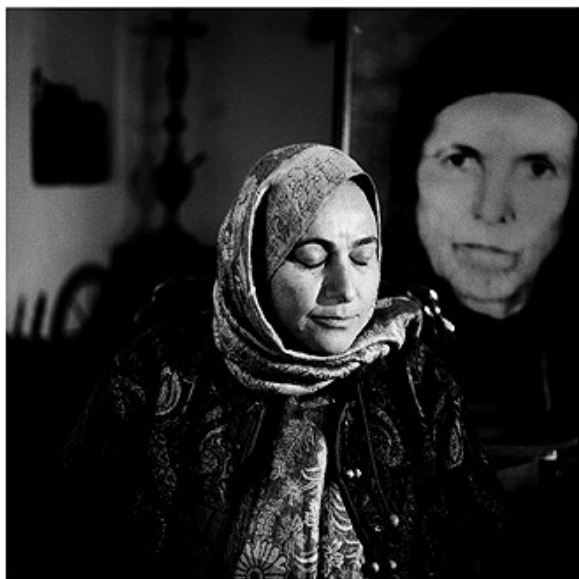
Ibtisam is a Palestinian woman in Israel living and working in the north of the country, in Paradise, an Arab village near Haifa not marked in the maps nor signposted on Jewish roads. The principal area of Ibtisam's activity is to improve the relation between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and she also works to improve the status of the woman inside Arab and Jewish societies. [www.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibtisam/index.html](http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibtisam/index.html)

*SHE REMINDS HERSELF THAT SHE IS VERY LUCKY BECAUSE SHE HAS THE SUPPORT OF HER HUSBAND AND OF THE REST OF HER FAMILY, DESPITE FACING THE REJECTION OF MANY NEIGHBORS EVERY DAY, BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE CONTACT THAT SHE MAINTAINS WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY.*

Most of her work is developing inside the Palestinian community in Israel, especially among women that the Arab culture and society suppress. She reminds herself that she is very lucky because she has the support of her husband and of the rest of her family, despite facing the rejection of many neighbours every day because of the close contact she maintains with the Jewish community. Her husband asks her: "When will you stop bearing the weight of the world on your shoulders?" She answers him that when she finds anyone to share it with...

**Word:** She is a religious woman, and the one who inspires her activities is the great Sufi teacher Rabeiah ėAdawiya (VIIIth A.D.): like her, Ibtisam considers herself to be a "Lover of Allah".

**Place:** The future *Centre Hagar and Sara* conceived for the meeting of Arab and Jewish women, which she and her family are building in Paradise.



## ITAF AWAD

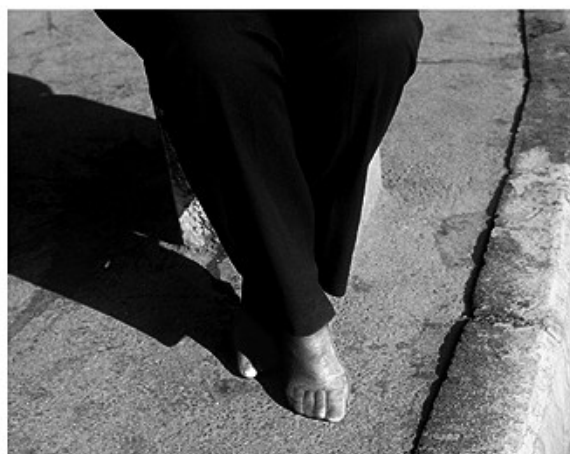
Itaf comes from Daburiah, a Palestinian village in the north of Israel, near Nazareth. She is the granddaughter of Nasra Awad, midwife, healer and peacemaker in her community, who she says still inspires her steps and her work. She took charge of her family at the age of 12. She worked as assistant of the mayor of the village and was in charge of matters relating to women, before she retired. She has devoted herself to work for peace as a facilitator in meetings between Arab and Jewish women, incorporating techniques and exercises of listening and understanding others. Like her grandmother, she is a mediator who always walks with patience and pity as companions.

*"MANY JEWISH WOMEN ARE READY TO MEET THE ARABS, AND TO TAKE PART IN THIS CURATIVE PROCESS ON CONDITION THAT POLITICAL ISSUES ARE NOT DISCUSSED, BUT I CANNOT FORGET THE LEGITIMATE CLAIMS OF MY PEOPLE: WE ARABS IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE ARE HUMILIATED, DENIED AND FORGOTTEN."*

"My work is basically that of the spiritual healing of the wounds caused by the conflict and the occupation, to face the fear of those who do not want peace and to offer them dialog in exchange. Many Jewish women are ready to meet the Arabs and to take part in this curative process on condition that political issues are not discussed, but I cannot forget the legitimate claims of my people: we Arabs in Israel and Palestinian are humiliated, denied and forgotten."

**Word:** Equanimity. "We are immersed in a peace process that is not equal: the Jews want more territory, continue building more and more illegal settlements. Gaza is closed; the wall is a political wall, not one built for security, and is constructed in Palestinian territory; Arab neighbourhoods and Arab villages in Israel receive fewer public services than the Jews while paying the same taxes, we are forbidden to construct more ... is this what they call peace?"

**Place:** The room in the family house in Daburiah, where she carries out the work of dialog, healing and mediation between Arab and Jewish women.



# LUISA MORGANTINI

Luisa is one of the leaders of the Italian pacifist movement. She was one of the founders of the Italian branch of the anti-militaristic organization *Women in Black*, after learning from the experience of the initiators of this movement in Israel twenty years ago: [www.coalitionofwomen.org/home/english/organizations/womeninblack](http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/home/english/organizations/womeninblack). Since then she has cooperated in the reconstruction of the network and the links between the pacifist movements of Palestine and Israel. She gives her support to women's organizations in the Middle East and in other Mediterranean regions (the zone of the former Yugoslavia, Albania and the Maghrib). She is ex-vice-president of the European Parliament and also a member of the *International Women Commission for Peace*. In recognition of this tireless activism, in 1995 she got the Prize for the Israeli Peace Women in Black, and she was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2005, within the initiative *1000 women of peace for the Nobel Prize for Peace 2005*. [www.luisamorgantini.net](http://www.luisamorgantini.net)

*SHE STATES THAT EVERY DAY WOMEN ARE MORE PRESENT WITHIN THE PROCESSES OF REFLECTION, MEDIATION AND DECISION REGARDING THE CONFLICT AND ITS POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. AND THAT THERE IS NO GOING BACK.*

She considers herself a woman who combines grass-roots activism with high-level international politics and lobbying. She is not so concerned about accounting for the results of the efforts of the pacifist women's organizations in the region as in stating that every day women are more present in the processes of reflection, mediation and decision regarding the conflict and its possible solutions. And that there is no going back.

**Word:** Dignity

**Place:** Bus station at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, final stop of public transport leading to Palestine and the Occupied Territories.





# MARIAM IKERMAWI

Mariam is the director of the *Jerusalem Centre of Women*: [www.j-c-w.org](http://www.j-c-w.org), created at the same time as the Israeli women's centre Bat Shalom, on the other side of the wall. Both centres support joint programs through a coordinated body known as the *Jerusalem Link*. This joint initiative indicates the first time that a Palestinian organization and an Israeli one work as related organizations for the improvement of the situation of the human rights and especially of the women in the region. The profitable experience of the *Jerusalem Link* inspired the appearance of the *International Women Commission for Peace*.

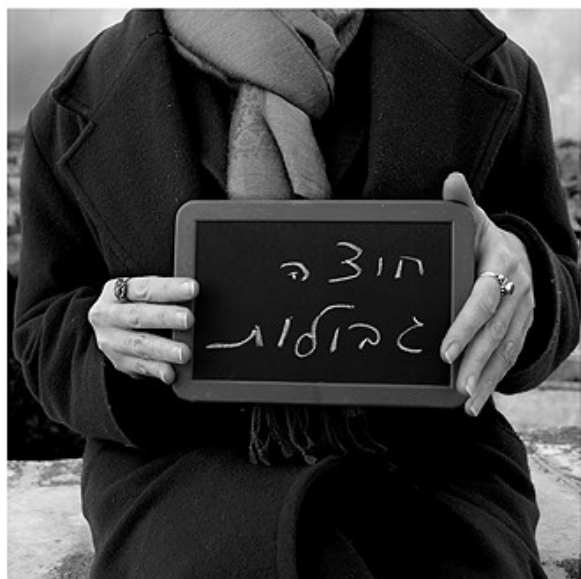
This woman is a survivor of a reality in which reigns the desperation, especially after September 11. A reality where Palestinians are stigmatized and seen as terrorists for the mere fact of being simultaneously Palestinian and Moslem. She is fed up with justifying the fact of being Palestinian and a person; of justifying why they are a nation in resistance. This does not mean that she justifies the suicide bombing attacks, but she can understand why Palestinian young men or women make themselves explode when they are denied freedom of movement, work, right to a nation, safety, dignity... hope in a better future.

*SHE IS A SURVIVOR OF A REALITY WHERE DESPERATION REIGNS, ESPECIALLY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11. A REALITY WHERE PALESTINIANS ARE STIGMATIZED AND SEEN AS TERRORISTS FOR THE MERE FACT OF BEING PALESTINIAN AND MOSLEM.*

She knows that her work for human rights and those of women is important because the Palestinian woman bears the brunt of Israeli occupation: after the daily fight to educate the children and to preserve order in the house inside a unstructured society, she is a victim of the violence of gender. For she bears all the frustrations of a husband who may well have been humiliated by queuing many hours at an Israeli check-point, only to see that he will not find work that day either, and once again will not be able to bring money back home.

**Word:** Justice. "Why have I chosen this word? Every day, to get to the office or to return to my house, I have to avoid the wall passing underneath, walking with bowed head through a sewer that links both sides. One day the soldiers blocked the sewer, and I said to myself: my God, they treat us worse than the rats, they don't even let us pass where the dirty water slips through ... do I have to explain the reasons for my choice to you?"

**Place:** The street of the office of the *Jerusalem Centre of Women*, in Beit Hanina, blocked by the wall that separates Jerusalem.



## MOLLY MALEKAR

Molly directs *Bat Shalom*: [www.batshalom.org](http://www.batshalom.org), the Israeli counterpart of the *Jerusalem Link*, and she belongs to the *International Women Commission for Peace*. "I live in a reality, in a State, Israel, which does not have definite borders: let's remember that the same definition of State implies possessing definite borders. I work to achieve a clearly defined border, to achieve the end of the occupation, and for the recognition of the right of another people, the Palestinians, to have their own definite borders as well, that is to say, to have the sovereignty of their State fully recognized. "

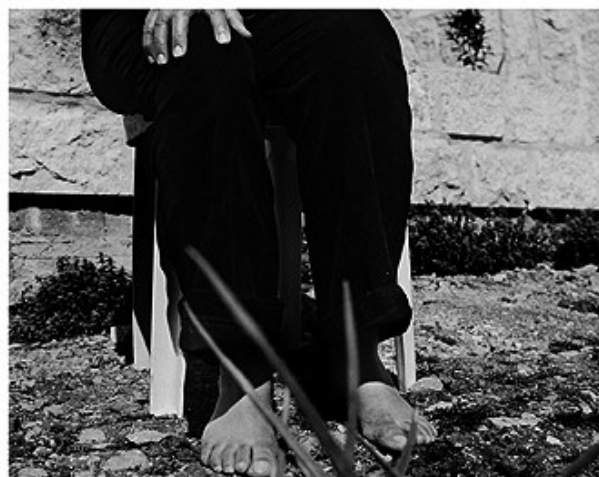
*"INSIDE ME EXISTS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE CERTAINTY THAT WOMEN HAVE TO BE IN THE CENTER, TO EXERCISE POWER, TO ATTAIN CHANGES, AND TO KNOW THAT TO ACHIEVE THIS POSITION WE MUST REALIZE MANY COMMITMENTS, YIELD IN MANY OF OUR PRINCIPLES."*

"My vitality as an activist and as a woman is rooted in the territory of these undefined margins. I feel fascinated by these spaces with the broken borders because although chaos reigns there, it is the most propitious territory for dialog and exchange. And there we find spaces of freedom which you do not enjoy if you belong fully to the tribe.

Historically, we women have had to cover ourselves and to hide inside private circles far from the public gaze and forums: on the margin, far from the centre. Politically, I believe that any centre must always look at the margins. I try to take in what the margins feel and think about the centre. As woman, sometimes I feel that we have not invested enough energy to get this, probably because to enter and to remain in the centre means to fight, and the fight means power games, and we have hesitated to enter these games. Inside me the contradiction exists between the certainty that we have to be in the centre, to exercise the power, to attain changes, and to know that to achieve this position we must realize many commitments, yield in many of our principles. I want to see many more women in the centre, even if it means yielding, because we cannot continue to accept that power is tied to this masculine way of imposing rules, violently, through the way of force, of denial of others and of clash ... the way of war. "

**Word:** Crossing borders.

**Place:** Roof of the Austrian Hospice in the Old City of Jerusalem. "I like to come to relax at the café of the Hospice. I feel it as an unusual refuge of peace and of silence in the middle of the dumb tension you can feel, especially on the streets of the Old City. It is like being in the centre of the hurricane, where not even a breath of air is blowing... "



## NAELA ODEH

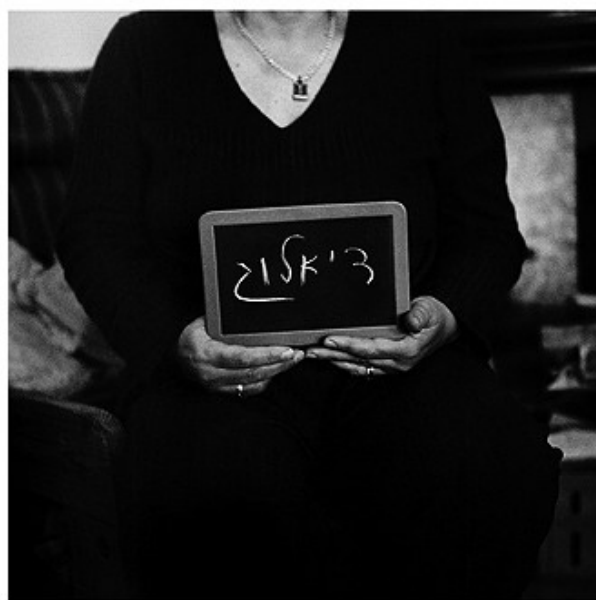
Naela is a social worker who has worked since she was 18 years old in several women's organizations to protect the rights of working women. Nowadays she collaborates with the *Palestinian Working Women Society for Development* in telling women workers about their syndicate and trade union rights: she has collaborated in the creation of the trade union for kindergarten and private school workers, and now she is immersed in the process of formation of the hairdressers trade union.

*NAELA HAS THE DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE LIVING, SAFEGUARDING HER DIGNITY AS A HUMAN BEING, REMEMBERING THAT SHE POSSESSES THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO LIVE AND TO ENJOY LIFE.*

Her longing has been always to provide her children with the safety that she did not enjoy either as a girl nor once married: her father was expelled to Jordan in 1969 accused by Israel of rebelliousness and resistance, and the family house was destroyed. In 1989, her husband was arrested and imprisoned for six years, for being one of the leaders of the first Intifada, and she took care of their three children alone while pregnant with her younger daughter. Her village, Deir Jreer, in the West Bank, existed long before Israel took the neighbouring mountain, Tel Assour. This is a strategic emplacement where the Israeli Army built an important radar and observation base. Nearby, a Jewish settlement cuts the road that use to run to Ramallah: now they must drive through mountain roads, being obliged to make a great diversion before reaching the city. In spite of the daily fight to continue to feel a person in this situation, Naela has the determination to continue living, safeguarding her dignity as a human being, remembering that she possesses the inalienable right to live and to enjoy life.

**Word:** Life

**Place:** The garden of her house, in Deir Jreer, in front of the olive tree that she and her family have planted recently. She believes that the changes must come from inside, they must begin in everyone's house. Hers is the example: they have planted an olive tree in the garden, now that the soldiers and Israeli civil servants also pull up olive trees from the fields of the Palestinians.



## NURIT PELED

Nurit is a University teacher who graduated in Comparative Literature. On September 4, 1997 her teenage daughter, Smadar, was one of four victims of a suicide attack perpetrated in West Jerusalem by a Palestinian kamikaze. Plunged into mourning, Nurit didn't make the Palestinians responsible for the death of her daughter, but the policies of the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu. She received the Sajarov Prize for Freedom of Conscience in 2001; this is awarded by the European Parliament to personalities or organizations that have marked the fight for human rights and freedom in their country with their own stamp.

*"I WANT TO HUMBLY ASK THE WOMEN OF PALESTINE TO BE MY SISTERS, TO EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION FOR THEIR COURAGE AND THEIR PERSEVERANCE, AND THE FACT THAT THEY CONTINUE TO HAVE CHILDREN AND BRING THEM UP THE WAY THEY DO, TO LIVE THEIR LIFE WITH DIGNITY IN SPITE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSITIONS MY WORLD MAKES THEM LIVE THROUGH."*

Invited to Strasbourg on March 8, 2005 to speak before the European Parliament on the occasion of International Woman's Day, she declared: "(...) Living in the world I live in, in the State I live in, in the regime I live in, I do not dare to offer any ideas to the Moslem women on how to change their lives. I do not want them to take off their hijabs, or to educate their children differently, nor will I press them to construct democracies in the image of the Western democracies that despise them as much as those who share their same fortune. I want to humbly ask the women of Palestine to be my sisters, to express my admiration for their courage and their perseverance, and the fact that they continue to have children and bring them up the way they do, to live their life with dignity in spite of the impossible impositions my world makes them live through. I want to say to them that we are all victims of the same type of violence, although they suffer much more because they are the ones ill-treated by my government and its army with the help of my taxes (...)"

**Word:** Dialog.

**Place:** Her house, where she says she works better, in West Jerusalem.





# SAHAR VARDI

Sahar is seventeen years old and, in accordance with the law of Israel, should begin military service next year. She will not. She will go before the Committee for Conscientious Objection, and will declare herself a pacifist. What the Committee considers a pacifist is the problem: they will ask her questions like, for example, what she would do if her mother was attacked in the street in front of her. She will be honest: she will answer that she would defend her, and her honesty will be enough to ensure that the Committee sends her the letter with the date of conscription. She will not go. This will mean her going to the military prison for between twenty and twenty-eight days. They will call her again to enlist, and she will refuse again, starting the process again. Normally, when you have spent approximately hundred days in prison they declare you "useless" for military service (even when there have been people imprisoned for two and a half years), and Sahar will be able to get away without having lied.

*"RESISTANCE TO BEING A PASSIVE VICTIM OF WHAT HAPPENS; AND  
RESISTANCE TO BEING OCCUPIERS."*

Her parents support her decision: her father also went to prison when he refused to give his services to the army as a reservist during the first Intifada. She is luckier than some of her companions, attacked by their families when they decided not to do military service. In Israel, the army is like God, even if this is a myth that is changing significantly, especially after the mistakes and the failures in the war in Lebanon in 2006. Every day there are more people who don't want to die for their country by fighting in a war like that one. The Government knows it, and creates media campaigns like the posters shown in the public buses these days: "A real Israeli does not say no to military service ". A law is being debated to establish an ID card where it would be stated if you have been in the army or not, and if you have refused you will not be able to study professions like medicine or law, and in this way two classes of citizens would be created,... Asked about organizations that support the objectors and that work for the demilitarization of the Israeli society, Sahar has no doubts: *New Profile*, a movement for the "Civilization" of Israel. [www.newprofile.org/default.asp?language=en](http://www.newprofile.org/default.asp?language=en)

As the topic of refusing military service is all in the news, Sahar has made her own response: a stencil to make graffiti in the street. It represents a packet of cigarettes, of the "brand" IDF (Israeli Defence Forces), with a message like those warning about the harmful effects of the tobacco, but this one announces: "Warning, to enlist KILLS".

**Word:** Resistance. "Resistance to being a passive victim of what happens; and resistance to being occupiers."

**Place:** Before the main police station of Jerusalem, that in the time of the English mandate was the prison of the city. "It is difficult to resist and to try to change something that does not have life, like the wall. You can resist, and try to change the people who constructed it, and the police ... or the army, and the Government ... symbolize, for me, the kind of people who keep the wall standing, so that the occupation doesn't end."



# TAL HARAN

She is known for belonging to the organizations *New Profile* and *MachsomWatch*, [www.machsomwatch.org/en](http://www.machsomwatch.org/en), founded in 2001 with the aim of monitoring the behaviour of the soldiers at the Israeli check points. It keeps an eye on them, so protecting the human and civil rights of the Palestinians, and makes testimonies of all this in the form of reports that can be consulted on their web page. "This way nobody will be able to say in the future that they did not know it". Probably the main problem that the organization faces nowadays is an emotional one: how to avoid that all the pain and the humiliation witnessed by the members of *MachsomWatch* does not affect them internally and their functioning. Because it is not easy to make the choice of not turning the other cheek and acting as if nothing was happening, as Tal states, the choice to look at things straight.

*"THE QUESTION IS NOT WHY I WOKE UP, BUT WHY I SLEPT. BECAUSE THERE CAN ALSO BE A MILITARIZATION OF THE SOUL, THROUGH INDOCTRINATION."*

Tal grew up in a nationalistic environment. Her father (third generation of Jewish immigrants to Palestine) took part in the process of creation of Israel's State from its most radical side (he belonged to the Irgun). Her mother came to Palestine fleeing the Nazism that was threatening Europe. Tal did not like the "militarized" environment that surrounded her, and she took refuge in art and dance. She always makes clear that it took her 50 years to wake up to the reality surrounding her and that she was ignoring, when the Intifada exploded. "I began to fight against the occupation. The question is not why I woke up, but why I slept. Because there can also be a militarization of the soul, through indoctrination."

**Word:** Contrainformación (in Spanish: Counter-information). "I did not know that this word existed, until I was invited to speak at a conference in Barcelona, Spain: "Other voices from Israel", and one of the topics of the conference was 'contrainformación'. After asking the meaning of the word, I realized that it is a very special term that does not exist in other Western languages. It has not the same meaning as the English expression "alternative information", for example. It revealed different meanings: to go against the official information, to place yourself in opposition to the information before knowing who is providing it to you, also describing the information not produced by the big media holdings controlled by the establishment... Then, when I was writing my paper for the conference, and I had to explain *MachsomWatch*'s mission, I felt that the word was the correct one to describe the type of information that we gather, "to know what does not want to be known ": the fact of documenting it and of returning to what I name " the bubble " automatically turns me into a "molecule" of "contrainformación". And this is my way of doing grassroots' activism."

**Place:** An area dedicated to agriculture close to her house, in Neveh Sharet, a suburb of Tel Aviv. Tal had already been travelling for a year and a half every week to the Israeli checkpoint in Hawara, near Nablus (West Bank), when she discovered that some inhabitants of Balata refugee camp, close to Hawara, came from a little Arab village destroyed by the Jews in 1948, Al Sawalima, and that that village had been in that field, three minutes away from her house... [www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com)