

JULY 2022

The Middle East in Dialogue



Report of a two-day-symposium in Paris, co-facilitated by the Alliance for Middle East Peace and Connecting Actions.

1. Introduction/background for the intervention



From July 6th to July 7th, the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) and Connecting Actions co-facilitated a symposium with leaders of French Jewish, Muslim and inter-community associations to have an exchange on different means to resist the clash of cultures, which exists on many important subjects of the French society, but particularly and for a long time on the subject of Israel and Palestine.

ALLMEP is the largest and fastest growing network of Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, with over 150 member organizations engaged in activities that promote peace and equality. ALLMEP Europe was established in 2018, headquartered in Paris, and taking on as part of its mission an effort to promote the work of Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders in France. This is both to create greater understanding about a win/win approach to the issue, and also to help reduce the prejudice, extremism and racism that sometimes accompanies the debate on Israel/Palestine, which has been notable since the Second Intifada, and has included some instances of violence between French citizens. ALLMEP Europe's vision of activities in France is to facilitate a dialogue between Jews, Muslims and other concerned citizens around the conflict and to raise awareness among the general public, the media, opinion leaders, and policymakers in France about the work of peacebuilders in the region, who they can unite behind, together, rather than furthering dangerous inter-community divisions.

Connecting Actions is an international initiative to convene citizen, intercultural, interfaith and intercommunal dialogue organizations and experts to share best practices and reinforce this essential field for a better coexistence. Ever Since 2017, Connecting Actions has been carrying a permanent effort of connecting and federating European and French Civil Society Organizations working for peace and social cohesion through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. After organizing several symposia at the European level, it launched in 2018 and still leads the European Institute For Dialogue, a federation of 12 European NGOs working for social cohesion. The 2022 Symposium was part of this ongoing effort to help local actors of "Vivre Ensemble" in France to join forces, professionalize their work, be more visible and increase their impact for a more cohesive society, despite deep political and cultural divides.

This was the first time such an event took place in France, bringing 18 leaders of community based (Jewish and Muslim mainly) as well as interreligious / intercommunal nonprofit organizations to speak about how best to have conversations about Israel-Palestine in the French context. Most of the guests were knowledgeable about the conflict. But most often, they and their organizations either avoid talking about a topic that is incredibly salient for all concerned or fall into destructive patterns of confrontational debates about the origins, present and future of the conflict, which often tends to create further tensions. Both approaches have often resulted in very tense and sometimes deeply damaging events, most often coinciding with periods when violence in the region is at a peak. With Connecting Actions' experience in facilitation among faith groups in France and ALLMEP's expertise and network in Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, one of the goals was to give participants insights, concrete communication tools, and networks of support (both in France and in the Middle East).

These insights and assets can then help participants address this topic with their respective constituents in a way that is constructive and without running the risk of "importing the conflict" in France, while ensuring a minimum solidarity with each other – despite their faith identities or pro-Israel/pro-Palestine preferences – and with their Palestinian and Israeli peers who are working for peace. Participants had varied opinions about the conflict (though no one in this group was "extreme" in our estimation) and the hope is that the keynotes and stories from the Israeli and Palestinian participants humbled them, gave them tools to avoid "importing the conflict, showed them models that can be replicated or borrowed from, and inspired them to take positive action, in France and beyond.

The intention is that– with this new understanding of the power of professional dialogue, and of the work of a growing number of Israelis and Palestinians working together in the region– participants will become champions of this approach and spread this approach throughout their own organizations, to partner organizations, educators, religious leaders, and anyone else relevant. The event was supported by Kaleidoscope Foundation, Jean-Daniel Cohen and Maison de la Conversation, where the symposium took place.



2. Schedule of Program and Bios of the attendees

The symposium took place on two days at “La Maison de la conversation” in the North of Paris. The first day was about introductions, dialogue tools and skill building, stories, and dialogue practice, while the second day was focused on presenting the Israeli-Palestinian situation in a balanced and impartial way, with more tools being introduced and time given to participants for practice and action-oriented talk.

The detailed program was as follows:

Wednesday, July 6th

1. Introductions
 - a. Presentation of the project, the organizers, and the speakers
 - b. Presentations, motivations, and expectations of the guests
 - c. Presentation of the objectives
2. Collective adoption of a framework for the exchanges
 - a. First training element: building the framework for dialogue
3. The context
 - a. Pre-dialogue on our findings on inter-community relations and their relationship with public discourse in France
 - b. Why is it so difficult to talk about Israel-Palestine?
4. Experimental exercise: identities and identity threats
5. Connecting Actions: the concept and practical tools of dialogue
 - a. Identifying the pitfalls of our conversations
 - b. The main stages of dialogue
 - c. The tools of dialogue
6. Stories of grief and resilience from both sides of the Green Line
 - a. Stories from Ms. Huda Abuarquob (ALLMEP) and Mr. Yuval Rahamim (Parents Circle Families Forum)
 - b. Question and answer session.
7. Practice - Dialogue on the situation in Israel-Palestine
 - a. Work in small groups. Practical application where guests can alternate between the role of participant and facilitator.
 - b. Feedback on the tools used and evaluation of the dialogue
8. Final feedback and closing
 - a. Debriefing of the day
9. Screening of short videos of the organizations and individuals working for peace in the Middle East





Thursday July 7th

1. Feedback on the previous day
 - a. Discussions on everyone's impressions after the first day
2. Discussion: The Israeli-Palestinian political context according to ALLMEP
 - a. A multi-party presentation: from confrontation to overlapping narratives.
 - b. Political moods on both sides
 - c. What role for peace organizations in the region
3. Experiences of dialogue in Israel and Palestine
 - a. Presentations by Rabbi Nava Hefetz (Rabbis for Human Rights) and Mr. Ali Abu Awwad (Taghyeer) on their peace building work.
4. Deepening of dialogue tools
 - a. Managing difficult dynamics
 - b. Overcoming conflict avoidance and confrontation
 - c. Managing power dynamics
5. Practical application - Deepening the dialogue
 - a. Work in small groups. Practical application where guests can alternate between the role of participant and facilitator.
 - b. Feedback and evaluation of the dialogue
6. Conclusions and next steps
 - a. How to implement these dialogues within and between communities? between them? How can we work together?
 - b. Final feedback and closing

As a closing event, ALLMEP and Connecting Actions in cooperation with Les Guerrières de la Paix and Kaleidoscope organized a panel discussion with the four speakers that were present during the seminar: Huda Abuarquob; Nava Hefetz, Ali Abu Awad, and Yuval Rahamin. It took place at the Mairie de Paris Centre, moderated by Hanna Assouline, filmmaker, and founder of Les Guerrières de la Paix.

Participants were recruited by Rafael Tyzsblat, who used his network in the interfaith community and the world of nonprofit organizations in France to find potential candidates. Through exchanges with acquaintances in the network and through references passed on, he was able to reach about 50 possible participants who were all leaders of French Civil Society Organizations. He met with 40 of them to introduce the concept, solicit feedback, and get buy-in from the participants. Almost all of them expressed their interest and support of such an initiative. Each interested organization was asked to nominate one or two representatives, insisting that they be presidents or higher rank members of the organization. The 18 participants to this symposium were the ones available for those two days. Some of them came to officially represent their organization while others joined on a personal basis. This possibility was meant to create a safe environment for all participants.



The following individuals were part of the organizing team:

John Lyndon

John was ALLMEP's first European Director, founding its new office in Paris in 2018, before becoming the organization's Executive Director a year later. He brings with him over a decade of experience leading NGOs concerned with conflict resolution and international development, with a particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the pivotal role civil society can play in any lasting resolution. A regular contributor and commentator on events in the Middle East in international media, John is also a Visiting Fellow at King's College London's Department of Middle Eastern Studies.

Rafaël Tyszblat

Consultant, mediator, facilitator, trainer in conflict management and intercultural communication, and designer of interfaith and interidentity dialogue programs. Rafael works for Soliya, a leading NGO of the Virtual Exchange Coalition, bringing together young people from the "Western" and "Arab-Muslim" worlds through videoconferencing. He was the program director of the Muslim-Jewish Conference, an organization that brings together Jewish and Muslim youth. He chairs the Connecting Actions association to strengthen the professional practice of dialogue and leads the newly created coalition of twelve European NGOs: the European Institute for Dialogue. Rafael has conducted dialogue spaces and conflict resolution workshops for thousands of youths and adults. His experience of more than 15 years ranges from facilitating intercultural relations groups to mediation in the school, family, social and corporate fields, including prevention of radicalization, facilitation of interfaith encounters and missions in conflict and post-conflict areas.

Katia Mrowiec

52 years old, married and mother of 6 children, graduate of Sciences-Po Paris/ DEA on the post-communist world. Of Polish origin, she was very early marked in her childhood by this Europe torn apart by the Berlin Wall, which nourished her questions, doubts, and interest in the issues of living together: how to meet, get to know and listen to each other in order to break down the walls that separate us... and build bridges. As a Christian, she also wonders about Judaism and the Jewish roots of her own faith. As a journalist and author for young people, her publisher Bayard commissioned her to write "Dieu Yahweh Allah; 100 questions sur les trois monothéismes" (2004). In 2018, she created with her husband, the Kaleidoscope Foundation whose purpose is to support initiatives for peace, dialogue, and reconciliation, living together and social cohesion, to fight against stereotypes and all forms of racism and to promote human diversity. Since then, she regularly travels to Israel and Palestine to better understand this conflict and meet her beneficiaries.

Luisa Siemens

Luisa joined ALLMEP as a Regional Policy Fellow in December 2021. Prior to that, she interned with different NGOs and media outlets in Germany and abroad, and worked as a student assistant in the “Dynamics of Security” project, focusing on processes of securitization and desecuritization in international trusteeship administrations. She is finishing her MA in Peace and Conflict Studies at Marburg University and holds a BA in Political Science and Law, with a specification in international law from the University of Muenster. Her research focuses mostly on socio-psychological dimensions of conflict as well as transitional justice and reconciliation.

Charles Tenenbaum

Charles Tenenbaum is a lecturer in political science at Sciences Po Lille and director of the Humanitarian Action, Peace and Development program. A researcher at the CERAPS (University of Lille), his work focuses on international mediation, the role of religious actors in conflict resolution, and the study of multilateralism and international cooperation institutions. Charles Tenenbaum is a regular speaker at the Institute National du Service Public (INSP/ENA) and the Institute National des Etudes Territoriales (INET). As a consultant for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), he coordinates several intercultural and interreligious mediation projects. Co-director of the Observatory of Multilateralism and International, Charles Tenenbaum has also coordinated the research seminar “Religious Actors and Multilateralism” at CERI and the research group “European and International Perspective: Peace, Europe, Defense” (University of Lille, Sciences Po Lille). He contributed to the Dictionary of War and Peace published at PUF (2017) under the direction of F. Ramel, J.G. Jeangène Vilmer and B. Durieux as well as to the book “Négociations et Médiation dans la résolution des conflits” .

Olivier Fournout

Sociologist and semiologist, writer and director, research professor at the Institut Polytechnique de Paris/ Télécom Paris, accredited to direct research (HDR). His research focuses on the ethics of dialogue, the relationship between art and science, and leadership issues in hypermodernity. In 2020, he published « La trumpisation du monde at Bord de l’eau; and in 2022, « Le nouvel héroïsme. Puissances des imaginaires (Presses des Mines) », as well as « Germinata, a novel of anticipation », published by C&F éditions. He intervenes in the media on the place of dialogue in our controversial societies.

Sami Elmansoury

Sami H. Elmansoury is Founder and CEO of Precision Learning, a US-based institute dedicated to soft skills, leadership development, and Business English training. He serves on the boards of several educational and social non-profit organizations, including on the Advisory Board and Selections Committee of the New Leaders Council, an American fellowship program that seeks to train and mentor the next generation of young leaders in business and social entrepreneurship. In 2013, Sami was inducted as a responsible Leader Fellow by the BMW Foundation for his efforts to advance quality global education. He has also served as Co-Chair of the Muslim Jewish Conference and Founding Driver of the US Department of State’s Generation Change initiative. Sami is currently an International MBA candidate at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He has been a frequent contributor to The Huffington Post on issues pertaining to national identity, interfaith relations, and conflict resolution.

The following individuals were the invited speakers at the symposium:

Huda Abuarquob

Huda joined ALLMEP as its first on-the-ground regional director in 2014. She has years of experience in conflict resolution, NGO leadership, and social change education and activism, as well as a life-long commitment to building strong people-to-people Israeli-Palestinian relations. A Fulbright scholar and co-founder of the Center for Transformative Education (CTE), Huda is a well-known speaker on issues related to Middle East politics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and has taught and trained hundreds of students in Israel, Palestine and the U.S., as well as working as a leader in grassroots Palestinian initiatives focused on women's empowerment and people-to-people diplomacy.

Yuval Rahamim

Co-General Director – Parents Circle – Families Forum, Yuval was 8 years old when he lost his father, on the second day of the Six Day War. For years he believed that when he'd grow up, he'd avenge his father's death, but it never came to pass. In time Yuval recognized that revenge won't soothe his soul, rather reconciliation and the end of the conflict and the bloodshed. Today he's Co-General Director of PCFF, an Israeli-Palestinian organization of bereaved families, working towards reconciliation between the two peoples. He joined the organization in 2010, took part and hosted many of the dialogue programs and meetings between Israeli and Palestinians. In recent years Yuval has also served as chairman of the Israeli Peace NGO Forum.

Ali Abu Awwad

Ali Abu Awwad is a Palestinian peace activist and the founder of the Taghyeer (Change) National Nonviolence Movement. In 2016, 3000 Palestinians from all over the West Bank came together in Jericho to launch Taghyeer's model of addressing community needs while building a national nonviolence movement that resists the occupation. Since then, Taghyeer's programs have engaged hundreds of activists and participants in community-led development projects, capacity-building programs, and nonviolent resistance actions. From 2002-2009, Awwad (who was imprisoned in the first intifada and lost a brother to IDF violence in 2000) toured the world with the Bereaved Families Forum, speaking about his journey to nonviolence. In 2013, he began building the Karama (Dignity) Nonviolence Center on land owned by his family in Area C, near Gush Etzion Junction. Ali's life and work have been featured in two award-winning films, Encounter Point and Forbidden Childhood.

Nava Hefetz

Rabbi Nava Hefetz is currently the Educational Director of Rabbis for Human Rights. She runs dozens of programs dealing with Human Rights in Israel, the occupied territories and overseas. Rabbi Hefetz developed an interdisciplinary program aiming to teach Human Rights from Jewish and International perspectives. She supervises 12 Rabbis working across Israel on Human Rights issues such as: Violation of Palestinian rights in the OPT, social justice, the position of the Jewish tradition towards the "others" in the Israeli society (Gender, foreign immigrants, refugees, etc). She has a BA in French Linguistics, French Literature and Philosophy, and an MA in Education and Jewish Studies from J.T.S. (Jewish Theological Seminary). During the years 1978 – 1988 she worked at the Diaspora Museum as educator and curator. During the years 1989 – 1994, she was regional coordinator in Melitz – Centers for Jewish-Zionist Education. During the years 1994 – 2001, she worked as Senior Program Director and Executive Director of The Charles R. Bronfman Centre for Mifgashim (encounters). In this framework, she worked, on one hand, with Israeli Organizations, Youth Movement, Mayors, National Ministries, and on the other, with peers in the Diaspora, in order to introduce the concept of inter-cultural encounters between Israelis and their peers from the Diaspora, both in the Israeli Society and the Jewish community worldwide. In 2003 she started to study as rabbinic student at Hebrew Union College (HUC), during this period, she served as rabbi in Johannesburg. She was ordained Rabbi, November 2006. As a Rabbi she served in the Jewish Congregation of Pretoria – South Africa and Shanghai – China. Since 2012, she is involved with UNHCR. In January 2018 she started with two other female rabbis the initiative Miklat Israel (Israel' Shelter), that aims to hide and protect African asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan in Israeli families. Rabbi Nava Hefetz received the award of Excellency from HUC in contributing to the Israeli Society. She was Nobel Prize Contenders together with two of her colleagues for driving campaign to shelter Asylum Seekers.

The following individuals took part in the symposium:

Lola Kerc

Responsible for social and cultural programming at the Maison de la conversation.

Panuga Pulenthiran

A graduate of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Action Master's program at Sciences Po Paris, Panuga has over three years of professional experience with various organizations including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights and the European Parliament. She has worked on transitional justice, democratic governance and anti-discrimination in South Asia, conducting research for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka and the Pharos Observatory. She is now focusing on anti-discrimination and peace building in France by working with grassroots organizations, including Coexister, as a research and program officer.

Ines SHYTI

Holding a degree in history and a master's degree in the sciences of religions and societies at the EPHE/IREL, Ines has been involved with Coexister for 7 years, and has been in charge of the Training Department for 3 years.

Yacine Hilmi

Graduate of Emouna - L'Amphi des religions, a training program proposed and initiated by the Institut d'études politiques de Paris (SciencesPo Paris), with the objective of promoting intercultural dialogue. Yacine Hilmi also holds a university diploma in secularism, interculturality and religions from the Institut Catholique de Paris as well as a master's degree in business administration from the Université Lyon 3 Jean Moulin. He has set up several intercultural projects for young people (www.koolyom.fr) and co-hosts the radio program Spi-Cu-Ni (Beur FM) which promotes dialogue between cultures and religions in France. Also involved in popular education, he accompanies youth on issues of education, orientation, culture, entrepreneurship and living together.

Marc Lebret

56 years old, senior executive at the Paris City Hall. Involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (and inter-religious dialogue) as an association since 2007. Volunteer for Israel-Palestine in 2019-2021 (teacher in Beit Jala for 7 months). Organizer of the Forum "How to reinvent peace? with 20 organizations in Jerusalem in September 2020, then of the Forum "Religion: obstacle or solution for the conflict?" in Jerusalem in July 2021.

Mohammed COLIN

Co-founder of the SAPHIR MEDIA Group, which publishes saphirnews.com, a daily online news magazine specializing in Muslim issues, and Salamnews magazine.

Christine Taieb

French Jewess, 70 years old, former executive of a large French group, co-president of the AJMF Paris (Amitié Judéo-chrétienne Musulmane de France), passionate about ultra-marathons, travel, and other cultures.

Anne-Sophie Sebban-Bécache

PHD in Geopolitics since November 2017, her research project was about analyzing Israel's strategies, perceptions and goals toward East African countries including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan. Anne-Sophie has graduated from Sciences Po Paris (bachelor's degree in political sciences, master's degree of Public Affairs) and worked for the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York and the Embassy of France in Israel (Tel Aviv). Concurrently with the Ph.D, she taught and worked as the research assistant of Frederic Encel and member of the Chaire dedicated to energetic risks at the Paris School of Business (PSB). Committed with the NGO Collective Emergency Darfur as Secretary General, columnist in the opinion journal of Bernard-Henri Lévy La Règle du Jeu, she has co-built the creation of a French Review of Israeli Studies.

Very much passionate about public and foreign affairs in general, the Middle East and Africa in particular, she joined the American Jewish Committee in September 2017 as Associate director of the Paris office. Director of AJC Paris since December 2018, her professional goals are led by a strong political and intellectual commitment to bring the most efficient contribution to the advancement of international cooperation, conflict resolution and human rights.

Edgar Laloum

Franco-Israeli, born in Setif, Algeria in 1957, and living in Paris since 2005. He grew up in Toulouse and emigrated to Israel in 1974 at the age of 17, where he did his military service and lived in the Kibbutz Beit Keshet in the Lower Galilee for 3 years. After studying special education and sociology, he co-founded the Bait-ham association in Jerusalem in 1981, which was designed for teenagers in difficulty, using an approach inspired by the French prevention clubs. In 1992, he set up a training institute for specialized educators. In 1995, they created the Tolerance Villages with Palestinian institutions in the wake of the Oslo Accords, whose objective was to share slices of life, various workshops, and dialogue between Palestinian, Israeli and French teenagers. In 1997, with Israeli and Palestinian professionals, they created the association "Passerelle pour le Dialogue" whose goal was to develop a series of projects for Israeli and Palestinian audiences. In 2005, back in France, he worked as Head of Service in a Home for children and adolescents placed by the justice system. From 2006 to 2015 he intervened as a trainer for students at the Irts Parmentier in Paris. At the same time, in 2007 he set up the Ecole de la 2ème Chance Paris as Pedagogical Director. In 2009 he directed the Point-écoute - Maison de l'adolescent in Champigny sur Marne. Since 2014 he has been a private parent-teenager consultant. Since then, he has intervened as a trainer in different institutes such as ENM, Adric, Buc formation and others. Since 2018 he is the vice-president of Ajmf Paris. He also works as a Hebrew-French translator for poetry collections, press articles, documentaries, and fiction films.

Nathanel Gozlan

Born in Israel and raised in Jerusalem, Nathanael worked for many years in informal education - with Jewish communities around the world, political education, and activism. Living in Jerusalem, a city of many complexes, he became a social and political activist to this day. He pursued a dual bachelor's degree in History and Middle Eastern studies and Islam from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a master's degree in international development.

Rym Rais

After a diploma in communication, a master's degree, and an MBA in digital marketing, I worked several years as a communication officer before creating my company in digital marketing in France and Tunisia. In 2019 I created the association "Convivencia" with the object of promoting Mediterranean cultures, the main actions being the organization of events around good living together. From 2021, I started a reconversion in the Management of a social and solidarity enterprise with the ambition to carry a project in the field of professional insertion.

Mohamed Khenissi

Consultant on religious facts and secularism, administrator of various associations and training institutes, particularly on issues related to Islam. Peacemaker (Hermeneo, CINPA), teacher of religious sciences. Involved in the work of FORIF (Forum Islam de France).

Haim Bendao

Rabbi from the community of the 14th and 15th arrondissement of Marseille the northern districts, married with seven children, graduate of the rabbinate of Canada and New York, diploma of specialized educator. He has traveled a lot and had a rather complicated childhood. What makes his character is his openness, his knowledge of living together, respect for others and breaking a lot of dogma.

Kamal Hachkar

French Moroccan independent filmmaker. He was born in Morocco and left his native country at the age of six months with his mother to follow his father, who immigrated to France. His entire childhood was marked by the travels of his father, a laborer. From all those travels, he retained a special affection for the uprooted. He did a master's degree in history at the Sorbonne University and later became a history teacher. In 2012, he made his first feature-length documentary, *Tinghir Jérusalem: les échos du mellah*. The film was screened at numerous festivals around the world, won several awards, and sparked a national debate about Morocco's pluralist identities.

Alain Rozenkier

Member of Hashomer Hatzair in his youth, he lived in the Kibbutz for more than 10 years. Co-founder of the Friends of Shalom Achshav and of Jcall. In addition, in his working life he was a sociologist, "specialist" in aging.

David Chemla

Franco-Israeli founder and former president of La Paix Maintenant in France, founder, and European secretary general of JCall.

Hanna Assouline

Documentary filmmaker, committed to fighting racism and anti-Semitism and sensitive to the issue of relations between Jews and Muslims. Her first film *Les Guerrières de la Paix* tells the story of Israeli and Palestinian women who are members of the Women Wage Peace movement and her second film *À notre tour!* follows the journey of young French Jews and Muslims who fight together against racism and anti-Semitism. Five months ago, in a context of great tension in France, she co-launched a women's movement against racism and anti-Semitism. This movement is called "Les Guerrières de la Paix" as a tribute to the struggle of these Israeli and Palestinian women whose courage, strength and resilience inspired her. The organization affirms that a tolerant dialogue is possible despite differences and divergences and that people can succeed in talking to each other even if they do not agree on everything. One of the goals of the movement is also to promote peace initiatives, to relay them in France to shed light on what brings people together and what brings hope.

3. Narrative report of the sessions

3.1. The first day

In the introduction session, Rafael Tyszblat, president of Connecting Actions, thanked the 18 guests for coming to participate in a 2-day meeting with leaders of French associations of Jewish, Muslim and intercommunity or inter-convictional actors to exchange and learn together on the means to resist the "clash culture", which exists on many important topics, but particularly – and for a long time, now – about Israel and Palestine. He acknowledged that the composition of the room was the result of a preliminary network effort but that the goal was to expand the outreach to more actors carrying more types of activity and covering a larger political spectrum.

He then introduced himself as a "Dialogue entrepreneur" with over 15 years of experience in various organizations such as Soliya, the Muslim Jewish Conference or ROPES, and who recently launched the European Institute for Dialogue, a coalition of 12 European NGOs working to build bridges across divides. He also introduced the whole ALLMEP team, i.e., John Lyndon, Executive Director; Huda Abuarquob, Regional Director, and speaker; Katia Mrowiec-Philipon, Member of ALLMEP's board; and Luisa Siemens, Regional Policy Fellow.

John Lyndon introduced the work of ALLMEP in the region in supporting a network of peacebuilders that bring together Israelis and Palestinians to engage and discuss deeply sensitive issues with regards to the conflict. He underlined that the symposium was an opportunity to see whether this can work in a European context as well, creating a network of Jews, Muslims, Christians and others right across Europe to work with the organizations in the region and to disrupt the binary where the conflict is framed through identity as a zero-sum-game, with often devastating results for communities in Europe, who bear no responsibility for events in the region. He gave an overview of the breadth of organizations within ALLMEP's network all rooted in Jewish/Arab and Israeli/Palestinian partnership and based on the values of peace and equality. With models that covered wide ranges of theories of change—from health, education or environment to advocacy, direct action and research—there exists a network of over 160 peacebuilding groups that French citizens can be in partnership and solidarity with, breaking the partisan binary that too often characterizes how the conflict plays out in France.

After participants introduced themselves, they were invited to share their own and their organizational approaches to discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many confirmed that they simply choose not to engage in such a discussion, mostly due to a perceived lack of know-how and countless experiences of destructive conversations about the topic. Rafael Tyszblat then confirmed that since he started being involved with French nonprofits, he has noticed that very few allow themselves to completely engage in a dialogue on Israel-Palestine. So many disputes have taken place in the family, professional, political context, which have only given rise to fights or relationship breakdowns where everyone ends up thinking that this conflict is so hard that no one will ever manage to discuss it calmly with someone who does not already share the same opinions on the subject. However, he said, it is a mistake to avoid the subject, just as it is a mistake to avoid any very controversial subject, especially if it relates to the identity of each other because it means it is a central subject whose resolution may be an opportunity to restore trust. Talking with people who are different or think differently in a constructive manner is essential and engaging in escalatory debates on social media is not just frustrating, but dangerous for social cohesion.





Rafael Tyszblat then explained that the objective of the two days is to share what Connecting Actions and ALLMEP had been able to observe and experiment in the last years when it comes to the transformative power of authentic and respectful dialogue. This knowledge sharing is supposed to come through 4 elements:

1. Tools:

Acquiring knowledge and skills on constructive communication when addressing the subject of Israel Palestine.

2. Dialogue:

Exchanging on the theme of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through respectful and authentic speech, thus practicing dialogue and facilitation.

3. Testimonies:

Hearing from our Palestinian and Israeli guest speakers who live this conflict in their flesh but who have chosen to build peace despite so many obstacles and who, we believe, can inspire us here.

4. Action:

Instilling solidarity and collaboration on this and all other divisive issues.

So, the organizers expectations of participants were that, if they appreciated the content, to promote this approach to their respective constituencies and networks. The long-term goal is to deliver this training to educators who are often helpless when facing youth questions and arguments about the Israel Palestine topic - or any other sensitive issues. Being the European country with the most important Muslim and Jewish minorities, the vision is to make France a leading example in the field of dialogue on such divisive issues.

3.1.1. Setting the stage for group engagement

Rafael Tyszblat then introduced some basic principles and rules for a successful dialogue, including the importance of authenticity, i.e., not to hold back one's own views and to really get to the heart of the discussion, while respecting the other's opinions, personal experiences as well as narratives.

He explained that dialogue is not just any conversation and needs clarifications as many people speak about dialogue as if it was just the action of communicating, or as a value. "We need to dialogue" just to say we should talk instead of making war, with the underlying idea that "we have more in common than what divides us". Of course, we are all human and we share the same behaviors. But peace will not come only by saying that. Peace means hard work and dialogue can help if it is grounded on science and craft.

He underlined the importance of facilitators to be multi-partial, meaning that instead of forcing neutrality or faking objectivity, facilitators give equal attention to multiple identities and experiences and - most importantly - to those identities and experiences that might be unheard. Participants then collectively defined the framework for dialogue with specific guidelines for a constructive exchange, which served as the set of rules for the group debates that were to follow:

- Not talking over each other
- Avoiding personal judgment
- No personal attack or verbal violence
- Going to the core issues, not staying on the surface
- Possibility to change one's mind
- Good listening
- Self-awareness
- Positive regard
- Get out of partisan automatism
- Not placing oneself or others as representatives of a group
- Awareness about the various levels of knowledge on the issue
- Awareness about airtime and inclusivity of all participants
- Confidentiality



3.1.2. The identity activity



The audience was then asked to do a first exercise, inspired from Soliya, which consisted in writing down five words to describe their identity then, in a second step, to cross out two of those words. The purpose of this exercise was to start a conversation about the complexity of identities, their interactions with power dynamics and the concept of identity threat. When asked about how they felt during that session, one participant said: “There is some violence in it, because it’s like crossing out a part of yourself. Another attendee said: “It’s a little bit like torture.”

The group also reflected on the fact that it is mostly, if not always, the minority aspect or the “questioned” aspect of one’s identity that is underlined in those activities. For example, many women in the group wrote down “Women” as one of the five words, while none of the men specified their gender. It was pointed out that this is the case as well for aspects of identity such as ethnicity or religion. Rafael Tyszblat pointed out how identity is always defined in comparison to others and there is constantly a dynamic between “the normality” and “the minority” here. The group then reflected on moments and contexts in their past experiences, where they had to hide parts of their identity, especially as Muslims and Jews in the French context. The discussion on this was very active, one participant talked about an incident where he pretended to eat during Ramadan to hide the fact that he was Muslim in the professional context. Another (Jewish) participant pointed out the importance not to hide one’s religious identity as, according to his experience, this way of owning one’s own self would create more respect and decrease antisemitic and islamophobic behavior in France. Rafael Tyszblat concluded this section by pointing out how dealing with identity is like dealing with emotions: The more you try to hide it, the stronger it will come back. Herein, he underlined the importance of having the capacity to have a discussion without negating or threatening the other’s identity.

3.1.3. The tools of dialogue

In a next step the group discussed different ways to define “conflict” and settled on describing it as “an opposition with emotions”, which led to a debate on different terminologies to use for an accurate description for the dynamics at play in the region as well as the role of emotions in conflict and dialogue. Tyszblat then closed the informative session with an overview of different approaches to mediation, with an active involvement of the participants. The following slides show parts of the pedagogical concepts on dialogue that were shared with the participants. The main focus was on basic concepts of a good dialogue, such as the attitude of the participants towards the other, the relevance of the distinction between a debate and a dialogue, and the role and means of the facilitator. It also dealt with how to deal with tensions and conflicts as well as power dynamics in groups. Since many of the participants present represented organizations that work primarily with young people, this part also specifically addressed dialogue with young people.

LES REPÈRES

- Construire la confiance
- Eviter les menaces identitaires
- Ne pas se focaliser sur les faits (pas trop)
- Privilégier le récit d'expériences personnelles
- Aider participants à parler pour eux-mêmes
- Ne pas chercher de solutions trop tôt

LES PRINCIPES D'ENGAGEMENT

Suggestions de règles de bases

- Confidentialité
- Respect
- Authenticité
- Non jugement
- Partage du temps de parole
- Participation volontaire

Débat et Dialogue

Débat

- Confrontation
- Interruptions
- Les participants parlent sans s'écouter
- Les participants parlent en tant que représentants d'un groupe
- Les différences au sein d'un parti sont niées ou minimisées
- Les participants restent sur leurs positions
- On pose des questions pour prouver quelque chose
- On pose des questions fermées
- Les interventions offrent peu de nouvelles informations

Dialogue

- Coopération
- Echange respectueux
- Les participants se répondent
- Les participants parlent pour eux mêmes
- Les différences au sein d'un parti sont normalisées et discutées
- Les participants sont prêts à exprimer des doutes
- On pose des questions pour apprendre quelque chose
- On pose des questions ouvertes
- Les interventions offrent d'avantage d'informations

LES PRINCIPES D'ENGAGEMENT

Suggestions de règles plus élaborées

- Parler pour soi même, sans tenter de représenter un groupe et sans demander aux autres d'être les représentants d'un groupe.
- Eviter de faire de grandes généralisations mais se fonder sur nos connaissances, nos croyances, nos expériences, nos influences, nos sources d'information, etc.
- Eviter de critiquer les points de vue de l'autre.
- Etre patient et tenter de comprendre les désaccords.

LES RÔLES DU FACILITATEUR

- Etre garant du cadre
- Gérer le processus sans prendre de décision ni contribuer sur le fond de la conversation. Il s'agit d'aider les participants à mieux communiquer et à gérer leurs propres problèmes.
- Structurer la conversation
- Favoriser clarté et compréhension
- Aider la discussion à garder le cap et à progresser
- S'assurer de la participation de tous





LES OUTILS DU FACILITATEUR

- Écoute active et empathique par les reformulations et résumés
Discours, émotions, besoins, doutes, croyances, valeurs, sens, idéal...
- *Ecoute méta cognitive par les observations sur la dynamique de groupe*
Mode d'expression, déséquilibre, conflit, évitement, focale...
- *Maïeutique par le questionnement*
Sur le ressenti, les expériences, les perceptions et le sens...
- *Miroir des émotions: toujours en proposition*
Signes de reconnaissance des émotions, besoins, valeurs, idéaux...
- *Rassemblement des choses exprimées par les synthèses*
Valeurs, besoins, reconnaissance de chacun, des points communs, des différences, rencontre transculturelle, création de sens...

GÉRER LES CONFLITS ET TENSIONS DANS LE GROUPE

- Continuer la conversation!
- Rappeler aux participants que le but est de comprendre
- Ramener la conversation vers l'angle personnel
- Faire des miroirs et des résumés
- Faire un tour de table
- Se rappeler que le conflit est positif
- *Normaliser l'expérience.*
- S'assurer que personne ne se sent blessé ou menacé.
- Eventuellement faire un renversement des rôles
- Si les participants s'attaquent vraiment, leur rappeler les règles
- Leur rappeler l'objectif des discussions
- Si la tension est trop forte, changer de sujet
- Faire une pause
- Faire plus de miroirs!

GÉRER LES DYNAMIQUES DE POUVOIR

Le dialogue n'est pas aveugle aux déséquilibres des pouvoirs. Il les reconnaît et il en donne la responsabilité au groupe.

On repère les dynamiques de pouvoir par :

- le langage
- le choix des mots (qui ont une connotation de pouvoir)
- le choix du cadre de référence.
- la durée d'expression
- le ratio émotionnel vs. analytique
- les réactions émotionnelles vs la froideur théorique

On gère les dynamiques de pouvoir :

- en aidant le groupe à se rendre compte de ces dynamiques: les observations
- en faisant des sous groupes
- en *normalisant* ces dynamiques

LE DIALOGUE AVEC LES JEUNES

- Matériel pédagogique adapté
- Education équilibrée sur le conflit
- Dialogue

➤ Les mêmes principes sont valables:

- importance de l'établissement collectif d'un cadre,
- la construction de la confiance,
- la posture multi-partiale et l'inclusion de tous,
- Les questions qui aident la compréhension des enjeux
- La reformulation

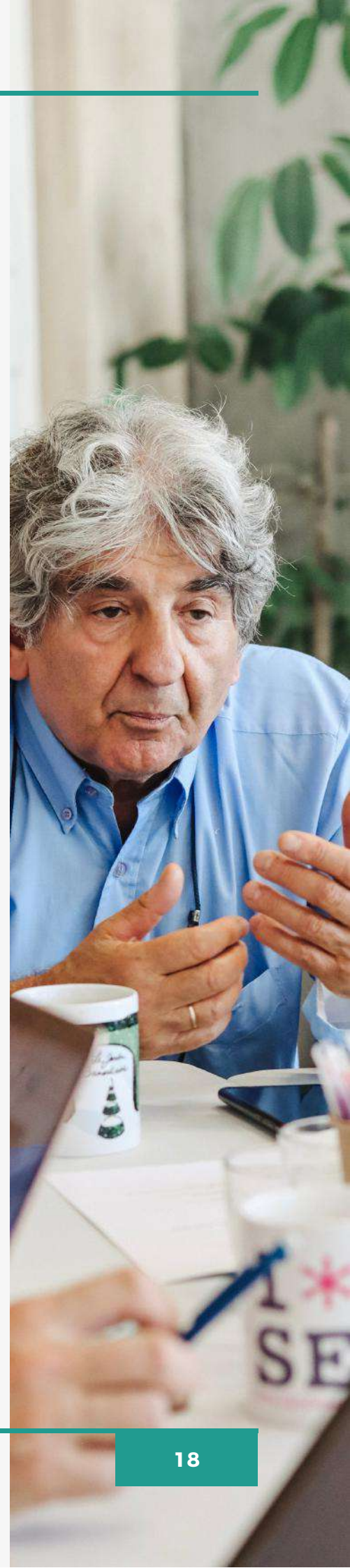
Tout dépend aussi du contexte, de l'objectif de la conversation

- Prendre l'occasion d'un conflit (mode pompier)
- Eduquer sur le long terme

3.1.4 Testimonies from Israel and Palestine

After that, Huda Abuarquob, Regional Director of ALLMEP and Yuval Rahamim, Israeli Director of the Parents Circle Families Forum addressed the audience in talking about their own ways into peacebuilding and the realities and struggles they face daily - both as activists and as human beings living in a conflict zone and under the Israeli occupation. They also drew a link to the situation in France, with Mr Rahamim stating: "I think we have exported this conflict abroad, now it's time to export peace". Both speakers laid an emphasis on the role of emotions, the need to humanize the other side and overcome victimhood as well as the importance of education and Youth. Mrs. Abuarquob also laid out the work she is doing to empower women in peacebuilding. Their testimonies were followed by an extensive Q&A session and an active exchange between the speakers and the audience, tackling the role of memory and national narratives, social media, religion, and the inclusion of "spoilers" into peacebuilding efforts, paired with a need to untangle peace from left-wing politics and include controversial figures such as Islamists, settlers and the national-religious groups from both sides into the debate. The discussions also revolved around the probabilities of a one- or two-state-solution, the role that French citizens and other external actors can play to support peace efforts in the region, as well as the possibility of a fair and just portrayal of both sides and narratives that are at play in the conflict. The discussion was heated, while respectful and honest.

This session was meant not only to inform the group about the reality of the conflict but also to show that being exposed to such personal testimonies of suffering and resilience in a conflict really helps to take a step back and re-examine one's role as a third party.



3.1.5. Dialogue practice session

This was followed by a first “dialogue practice session”, where two groups of around 9 participants were asked to single out one aspect of what was touched upon during and engage in a dialogue around this.

Participants were then reminded of the spirit of the dialogue, in the French context:

- This is not a problem-solving workshop and we are not going to try to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We will try to better manage our conversations and our relations here, in France.
- We are also not going to dwell more than necessary on the ancient or recent history of this conflict.
- Moreover, we are not obliged to be experts, on the contrary: we will try to get closer to our personal feelings to better understand what is at stake.
- As we do not necessarily have the same opinions on this conflict, it can be useful to Practice through dialogue what we encourage others to do, which is to be helpful instead of importing the conflict.
- The goal is to try to understand each other better and learn from the differences.

The participants were to take turns in facilitating the process, sticking to the framework that was agreed upon at the beginning of the session and using the basic tools covered. This group discussion went on for 90 minutes and was followed by feedback and a conclusion session, where participants accentuated the progress they made in the conversation over the course of the dialogue and how - despite some polarizing points of view - the framework that was agreed upon was respected and the discussions were fruitful. One member of the group said: “There was a moment of tension as well, but we managed to stay respectful”. Another participant stressed: “Even when we were not all of the same opinion, we did not judge each other”. The day was closed by a debate on the question of how to determine whether, in a debate, people are really saying what they think. Participants reflected on the different tools of dialogue from their individual backgrounds and their daily work within their associations. One mentioned that, in his daily work with youth in the socially marginalized neighborhoods in French cities, you “don’t have two hours to explain your position to them. Dialogue, there, is basically about making sure that nobody feels attacked for their identity”.



3.2. The second day

The second day started with a reflection on what had been talked about up to that point. One participant mentioned that there was a lack of information in the group and that some people are only “partly informed” on things and lack “an idea of the big picture”, which then led to a discussion about the different sources of information one can and should or should not rely on when educating oneself on the conflict. However, it was also mentioned that “dialogue is not the right forum to establish facts. However, it’s the best chance to find a common truth”. In general, participants shared very honestly about their daily jobs as facilitators in different associations across France. One said: “In my experience, I saw that if you work with youth, you always feel like going two steps forward and three backwards.” Others shared some of the frustration they feel when talking about the conflict in the French context but also mentioned how the testimonies of the activists from the previous day had encouraged them in doing this: “It is true that this conflict has lasted decades and you can have the impression that it is all fruitless, all this conversation about it. You have a moment when you are just annoyed. But it was good to hear from Huda that hope is what we need to never lose.”

Ali Abu Awad, one of the keynote speakers of the day also engaged in the dialogue with participants, talking about the importance of including regional activists in the conversations on the conflict abroad and the role that dialogue can play, as well as the danger of having “just dialogue” without moving on from there and “creating change”. One participant suggested to develop a more comprehensive training on dialogue between Jewish and Muslim communities in France and to take the example of this symposium and “organize more of this, lasting longer than only this seminar. We need to collaborate with each other. We need to share material”.

In the next portion, John Lyndon presented the results of a Youth Poll that ALLMEP commissioned together with the United States Institute for Peace on the attitude of Israeli and Palestinian Youth (15-21 years old) towards each other and the conflict. The results give reasons for concern and show the necessity for action and the need for an increase in the support for civil society people-to-people peacebuilding efforts. John Lyndon underlined the fact that “there is a responsibility and an opportunity to take action”.

He then gave an overview of some of the organizations taking action toward peace, covering many of the themes that preoccupied the French community leaders present (e.g: youth, education, the environment etc.), as well as sharing data that demonstrated the impact of these programs.





Our Mission



Providing capacity-building support and visibility to amplify the voices and impact of our member organizations in the region

Adding stability in times of crisis, fostering cooperation that increases impact



Securing and scaling funding to radically expand trust-building interactions between Israelis and Palestinians



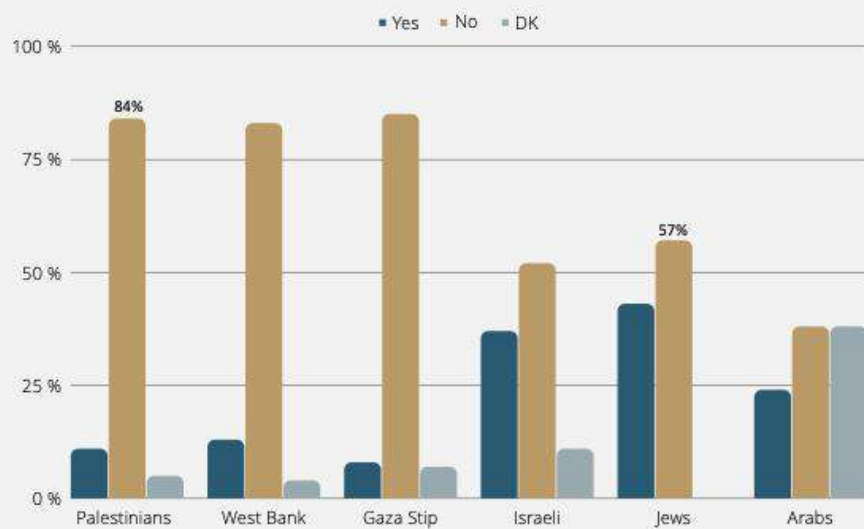
Connecting individuals and groups to create a critical mass that live and act in support of peace.



Building an environment conducive to peace over the long term.

KEY FINDINGS: RESPECTING HISTORICAL CLAIMS OF THE OTHER SIDE:

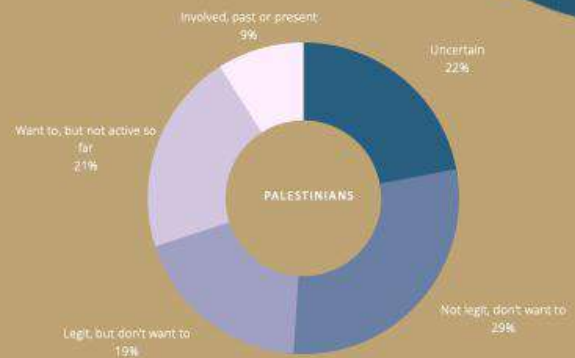
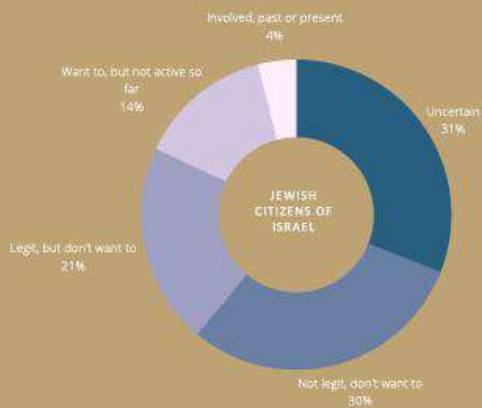
"IN YOUR OPINION, DO PALESTINIANS/ISRAELIS HAVE A LEGITIMATE HISTORIC AND RELIGIOUS CONNECTION TO THE LAND?"



KEY FINDINGS: ENGAGING THE OTHER

"Do you want to be/are you already involved in social change/political activity i.e., youth groups, NGOs, politics, media, with Israelis/Palestinians?" (Israelis, Palestinians)

Observation:
29% of Palestinians and 30% of Israeli Jews think cross-border activities are illegitimate

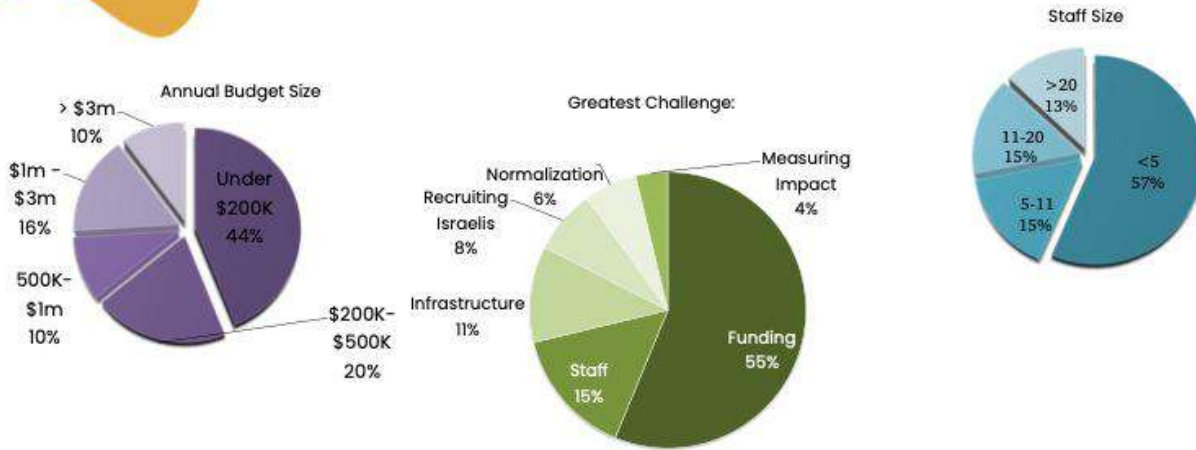


Evolution of Field by Era

Historical turning points	Active initiatives founded	Percentage of current field
Second Intifada and aftermath (2001-2017)	98	59.8%
Oslo Period (1994-2000)	32	19.5%
First Intifada/Madrid (1988-1993)	16	9.8%
Camp David, Lebanon War (1977-1987)	12	7.3%
Previous	6	3.7%
Total	164	100%

55% of crossborder peacebuilding NGOs named funding as their biggest challenge- only 6% cited normalization

Pre-COVID Scale of the Crossborder Peacebuilding Field



Source: 'The State of Civil Society Peacebuilding Efforts', Research by Ansal-Tikva, Data Collected: November 2019 - January 2020. Sample size: 55 Cross-Border & East Jerusalem Organizations working with Israelis & Palestinians

Efficacy of Peacebuilding Programming: Building Trust & Disrupting Separation

Peace building creates trust and empathy between the two peoples.



Of participants in a project led by PCFF were more willing to work for peace



Of participants felt more trust and empathy towards the other community



Reported increased levels of acknowledgment and knowledge about the other narrative

Source: Kahanoff, M., & Shibly, N. (2014). Evaluation of the History through the Human Eye Project. USAID/CMM.

Efficacy of Peacebuilding Programming: Delivering Policy Change & Seeding New Ideas



Sikkuy's advocacy led to the 922 Directive, delivering NIS 12bn to Arab communities



EcoPeace has helped Israel double its water supply to the Palestinian Authority



A Land for All introduced the confederated two-states model into policy discourse



Mosaica's Rabbi Melchior & Sheikh Darwish laid groundwork for Mansour Abbas decision and first ever Arab Party in Israeli governing coalition



ALLMEP doubled permit quota for peacebuilders

Efficacy of Peacebuilding Programming: Developing leaders who prioritize peace & have relationships across the divide



Peacebuilding
creates
leaders *and*
constituencies for
peace



of participants in a program run by Seeds of Peace went on to dedicate their careers to peacebuilding work.

Source: BICOM & Fathom: A future for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, 12 July 2017. Available at: <http://fathomjournal.org/a-future-for-israeli-palestinian-peacebuilding/>

Efficacy of Peacebuilding Programming: Reaching into new communities, delivering tangible returns



Peace building
changes attitudes
and transforms lives

90%

of participants in Olive Oil Across Borders project run by the Near East Foundation said that they trusted the other community more after being in the program, which also generated \$25m in revenue for farmers.

77%

indicated
intention to
continue cross-
border
cooperation

Source: BICOM & Fathom: A future for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, 12 July 2017. Available at: <http://fathomjournal.org/a-future-for-israeli-palestinian-peacebuilding/>

Subsequently, Ali Abu Awwad, founder of the Taghyeer Movement and Roots/Shorashim/Judur and Rabbi Nava Hefetz, Director of Rabbis for Human Rights addressed the audience in talking about their past and everyday life as peace activists, working mostly in the occupied territories. Mrs Abu Awwad talked about the Palestinian identity and how it developed and changed over time in the course of changing political realities and shared insights into his past as a political prisoner of Israel, the loss of his brother to the conflict and his paths from wanting revenge to fighting for peace. He also shared how seeing a Jewish Mother crying over the death of her child changed his heart in realizing fully for the first time that the other side suffers as much as his people do. Rabbi Hefetz shared insights of her work at Rabbis for Human rights, especially the way she engages with young Israelis in the pre-military-academies she leads and how she sees the current status of Israel and the ongoing occupation of the Palestinians from a point of view that comes from both Judaism and Humanism. She also shared some insights in the activism that she is engaged in, fighting alongside Palestinians for their right to have access to their own land and the attacks she and her colleagues have to endure from extremist settlers.

The testimonies were followed by a Q & A session, where the speakers answered questions on the role of settlements and illegal outposts as well as the social situation in Israel and the inequity between Mishrachi and Sephardi Jews. Afterwards, the audience again separated into two groups to engage in an in-depth discussion, where they were joined by the speakers and were given the task to formulate concrete next step ideas to not export the conflict to France but to actively engage with the other and in that way supporting the peace efforts in the region. They discussed ways to engage on the political level as well as ideas to work on the community level, especially with youth from the Parisian "Banlieues". In the final conclusion sessions, participants collected concrete ideas for individual and joint action, i.e., inter alia, doing documentations to inform youth in France about the conflict, transmitting the message of not importing the conflict to France but to export the message of peacemakers, Informing Imams about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and training them in dialogue facilitation skills, organizing trips to the region, cooperating with each other through events and briefings on the conflict, campaigning to pressure the French government to support the NGOs in the region and build connections (through a joint webpage) between NGOs in France and in Israel/Palestine.

4. Final program element being framed as the public event at Mairie de Paris Centre

The final program element of the 2-day symposium was a panel discussion that was co-organized by ALLMEP, Connecting Actions, Les Guerrières de la Paix and Kaleidoscope with the four speakers that were present during the seminar as well: Huda Abuarquob; Nava Hefetz, Ali Abu Awad, and Yuval Rahamin, taking place in the Mairie de Paris Centre, moderated by Hanna Assouline, filmmaker, and founder of Les Guerrières de la Paix. The event was open for the public and attended by around 60 people. The speakers shared their testimonies again and presented the work of their respective organizations. They urged the audience to advocate in front of their government and in their own communities for the work of civil society organizations in the region. Mrs. Abuarquob said “ALLMEP exists to make (our member) organizations part of a larger community. For them to know that they have friends all over the world. For them to know that they have people that believe in them. This is more important than the financial support.”

The conversation covered how the international community can stand in solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians who are working together, rather than allowing it to further divide communities overseas. As Yuval Rahamin said, “what we want to export to Europe is peace– not this conflict.” While Nava Hefetz channeled the work and words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel about the need for a collective effort: “in a free society: few are guilty, but all are responsible.” There were moving testimonies from both Ali and Yuval– each of whom have lost close family members to the conflict– on the role of grief in helping to create both a shared sense of empathy, but also commitment toward ending the conflict, and of not falling into the trap of perpetual victimhood. As Ali said:

“I am the result of this madness. But I have decided not to be a victim. I have decided instead to change the madness.”

The audience was very engaged in asking questions to the speakers afterwards, tackling issues such as the portrayal of Israel in the media, the role of settlements construction for the peace process etc. As usual, there was some partisan questioning from audience members representing one “side”. But there was clear unity and common cause from the Israeli/Palestinians on the panel, helping to disrupt the zero/sum nature that too many debates on this issue fall into.



5. Testimonials from participants

Reactions from symposium participants were overall very positive. One participant said that she appreciated that in the frame of the symposium, she was able to finally “speak about the elephant in the room”, as she normally experiences “frustration on the debate on this topic”. Others also concluded that they felt more clarity now with regards to the role of French citizens vis à vis the conflict:

“It really touched me that the activists yesterday said that it is not only them and there’s communities fighting for them. And it is not our responsibility and our burden to solve the conflict from France, it is our responsibility to listen to those from the region and it was reassuring to see that there’s people working towards peace in the region, it was a message of hope for me.”

The audience expressed willingness to engage further with each other and the organizations and activists in the region:

“I am happy to see that there’s others who are thinking about this. Sometimes you can feel like you are a bit alone in this fight. I would love for this to be just the beginning of a long journey together.”

Another participant shared that, on a personal level, it helped him to “analyze my situation as a Jew living in France”.



6. Plans/ideas for future interventions

For Connecting Actions, this symposium was the result of a long effort of network building among community based and inter community organizations and actors, to show the value in reflecting on our responsibility to contribute to a constructive public discourse around divisive issues, such as the Israel-Palestine situation. The objective was to “give a taste” of what a professional dialogue facilitation skills training could look like and to get the participants’ full attention on the need to spread that knowledge. The objective now is to equip more leaders as well as more educators with these tools and skills, to prevent French youth to import a conflict that is not theirs and help them build a culture of dialogue.

For ALLMEP, “The Middle East in Dialogue” was the starting point for further interventions in France and the whole European Union, many of which have frustratingly been on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The symposium showed us that there is both the interest and the need for further engagement. We have several possibilities in mind, all based on the results of the dialogue, the implementation of which depends on the resources available.

As Europeans, our role is not to find a solution – that is for Israelis and Palestinians – but we have a responsibility to encourage our governments here in Europe to support them and their efforts. We could have joint campaigns that go beyond usual pro-Israel/pro-Palestine framing. As many participants suggested during the discussion, we also need to do exchanges between youth of the region and those in France. One starting point for this could be the Interfaith Tours that are organized by Coexister, one of the organizations that were represented at the symposium, bringing youth delegations in both directions. Another need that was mentioned is having a crisis communications team and strategies for disseminating content from peacebuilding organizations on social networks to combat conspiracies and fake news that circulate regularly, but especially when violence erupts in the region. What was also discussed actively in the symposium was the need to teach the history of both Palestinians and Jews. One issue identified was that there are many versions of that history. Ideally, we would have to tell all the versions, which is a difficult, if not impossible task. However, a starting point for this could be a common website to share resources, history, and dual narrative lessons, and to pool the content from Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding organizations and the NGOs in France working to support their efforts, so that all can connect with each other.

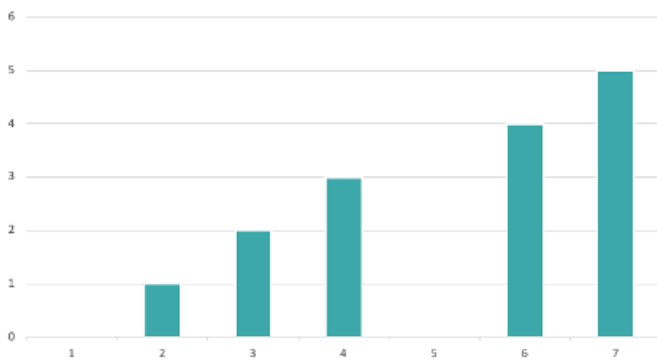


Here, we could focus on films, viral videos, podcasts that can appeal to young French stakeholders. Participants also suggested (potentially joint) training of Imams, Rabbis, and community leaders, who are highly influential in their communities in France and could act as multipliers. Furthermore, the Muslim organizations that were represented at the event emphasized the need to show the diversity of Islam in France, and to focus on a multi-layered and diverse image of Islam. One of the most requested interventions was a campaign to show the French public the work of NGOs in the region and to push for better ways of the French government to support those NGOs. One way to reach this goal could be via an independent international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, based on the International Fund for Ireland, which ALLMEP is discussing with several governments worldwide.

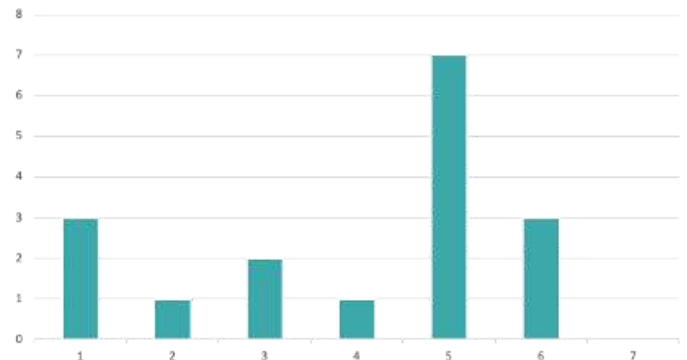
7. Participant Surveys

To be able to measure the impact and effects of the symposium, pre- and post-survey were conducted with the participants, asking for their attitudes on different aspects related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as their experience with facilitation and dialogue in this context. Generally, it was noticeable that there were fewer extreme positions after the two days than before. The opinions on the question of the level of agreement with the statement “I find it difficult to hear speeches that condemn Israel or excuse Palestine”, were rather diverse in both pre- and post-survey, which shows the group’s heterogeneity on the issue. While three of the 18 participants strongly agreed, three strongly disagreed. The majority of participants placed themselves in the middle, implying that they are not sure about their level of agreement with the statement.

I find it difficult to hear speeches that condemn Palestine or excuse Israel



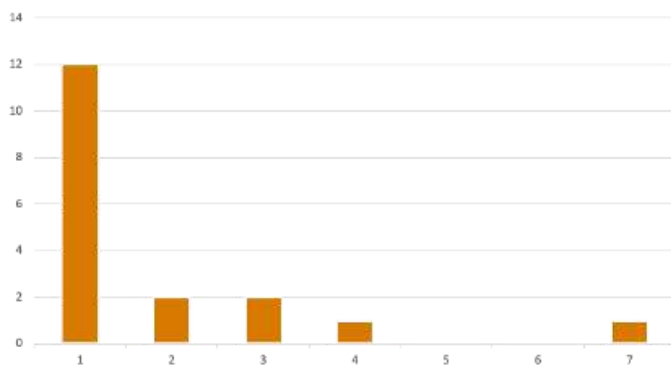
Pre-Survey Results



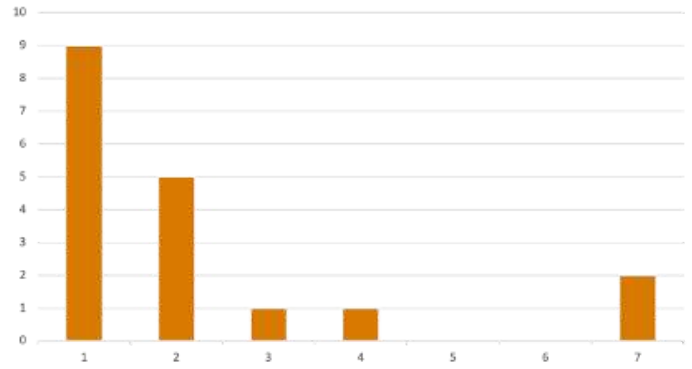
Post-Survey Results

On the other hand, when asked about the opposite statement, i.e. “I find it difficult to hear speeches that condemn Palestine or excuse Israel”, in the pre-survey, the biggest percentage of participants chose the option “strongly agree”. This was not a surprising result for the organizers who were aware that most participants were from the left of the political spectrum. In the post-survey, none of the participants chose the most extreme option. Furthermore, while the majority stated before the symposium that they think dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians is possible, the opinions on whether dialogue between pro-Israelis and pro-Palestinians in France would also be possible, were more varied. This was an important insight in the conversations that followed, with the question of why it should be more difficult for French citizens to cooperate with one another than it is for Israelis and Palestinians, dealing with considerably greater structural challenges and violence. It confirmed to organizers the relevance of doing this symposium in France, where the “importation” of the conflict sometimes becomes more dire than the conflict itself. After the symposium, the participants were slightly more optimistic about this, with the majority of people disagreeing with that statement.

I think that dialogue is impossible between Israelis and Palestinians

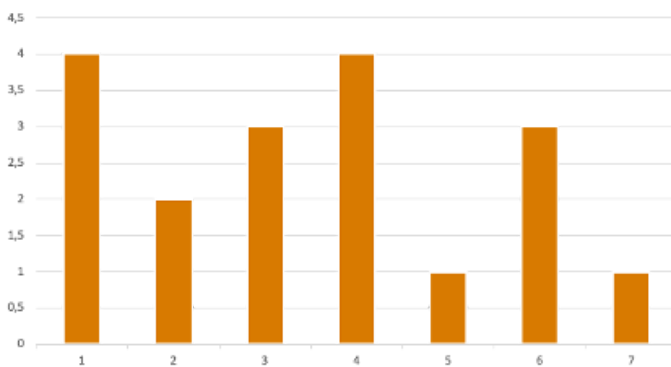


Pre-Survey Results

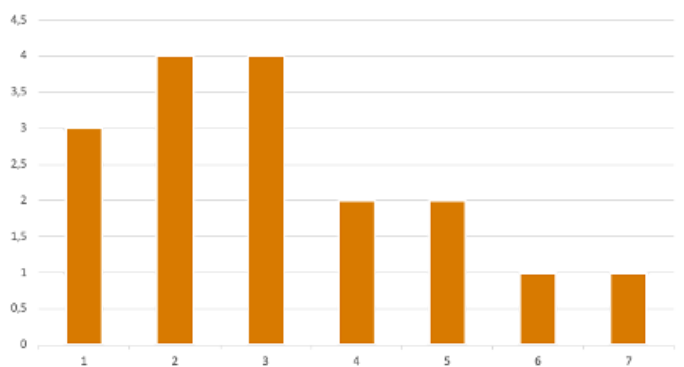


Post-Survey Results

I think that dialogue is impossible between pro-Israelis and pro-Palestinians

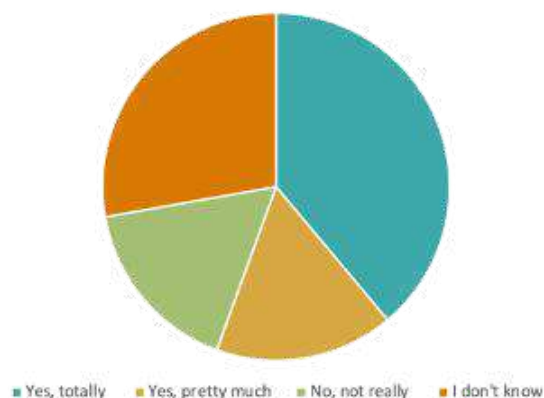


Pre-Survey Results

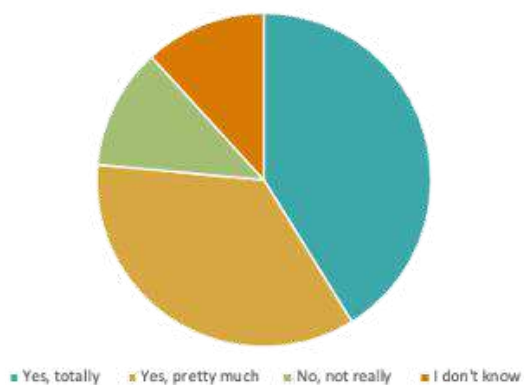


Post-Survey Results

I feel ready to organize spaces of dialogue on the subject of Israel-Palestine for people who have difficult opinions on this subject



Pre-Survey Results



Post-Survey Results

When asked about their readiness to facilitate dialogues about Israel-Palestine, more than half of the participants said they felt ready to do so before taking part in the symposium, while around a quarter said they did not feel prepared to do it. The percentages were almost identical for the question of whether participants felt ready to organize spaces of dialogue, meaning they would not even be the ones actively facilitating the process. In the post-survey, participants were more self-confident when asked whether they would be ready to organize spaces of dialogue about Israel-Palestine with around 75 % feeling ready in comparison to around 55 % prior to the symposium.

Around 90 % of participants also indicated a willingness to build partnerships with other French associations to contribute to a better social cohesion and understanding between communities. It is also noticeable that the group was very diverse with regards to the degree that the organizations they represented had addressed the subject of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before, with around 30% never addressing it, as well as 30 % often and around 40 % sometimes doing so.

One participant stated:

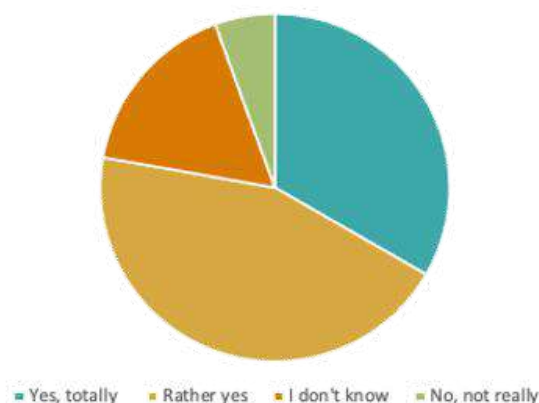
“This is considered a sensitive subject and our volunteers do not have the tools to address it calmly. We rarely talk about it.”

Another participant expressed her reason of avoiding the topic in the following way:

“My association until now has been interested in the issues of living together and cultural exchange between communities. However, until now, we have avoided tackling subjects related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because we are not familiar with the subject and to avoid any overflow. We remain open to the question of opening our field of action, in the future, to this sensitive subject”

When asked about whether they had acquired new tools to approach a conversation about Israel-Palestine during the symposium, the majority of participants indicated that they did so indeed, indicating an overall success of the event.

During the symposium, I acquired new tools to better approach a conversation about Israel-Palestine



A questionnaire on the participant's satisfaction with the different sections confirmed that success. Here, it was noticeable that especially the interventions of the peacebuilding practitioners were rated highest by attendees

8. Conclusion

This initiative, the first of its kind in France, has been the outcome of a long networking effort led by ALLMEP and Connecting Actions to engage with local civil society organizations within and between French communities. The process took longer than expected due to COVID-19, but the results demonstrate that there is a base for cooperation among these groups, and for profound partnership with peacebuilders in Israel and Palestine. That partnership can be as shallow as sharing social media content and educating stakeholders about their work, or as deep as joint campaigns and programs or exchange visits between the region and France.

For the process to continue and deepen, strategic funding will be required so that a long-term plan can be developed, with the goal of building a strong network of resilient youth movements, leaders, and educators, able to put an end to the importation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and instead build a culture of civil discourse and solidarity with the region's peacebuilders. It is evident that the knowledge, skills, and tools delivered during this symposium are direly needed, even among those who have extensive knowledge of the topic. Provided they get appropriate support, ALLMEP and Connecting Actions, who initiated this event, are ready to continue this collaboration to increase its outreach and maximize its impact, for the benefit of the French and the Israeli-Palestinian societies.