Chapter 7

Removing Oneself to the Peace
“The Fact That I Was There Is Wrong”

Moving Toward Peace

As with their Palestinian counterparts, the decision by Israeli participants to renounce violence and the decision to join Combatants for Peace (CFP) were two distinct yet interrelated decisions. Most of the participants described their decision to join CFP as part of a larger developmental process, a culmination of past experiences, knowledge, and decisions.

Past Experiences

Participants described past experiences in their youth or young adulthood that they felt had influenced their later decision to join CFP. These included prior experiences meeting Palestinians, early attentiveness to political events and/or involvement in youth social, political and/or peace movements.

For example, one participant said that she was exposed to Palestinians at a young age, and those experiences led her to realize that Palestinians were “normal people” and that they were suffering. However, her parents held a different viewpoint. They thought that Palestinians were responsible for their own situation because they committed acts of violence. They told her that Palestinians could not be trusted. She perceived a contradiction between what she observed and what she was taught, which led to a
discomfort with the discourse in her home and disagreements with her parents.

I think that the fact that my father work with Palestinians when I was very young and I know this that they are OK. They are normal people. And my father and my mother never teach me to look or to think on Palestinians as human beings or as miserable. Contrary. They think that this is their problem. They send bombs to Israel... I'm listening to this text all the time in my home, in my place but I never felt comfortable with that. I remember that I say to myself, it's not alright what they say... when we are watching TV... And my father would [say], “They are animals. Who they think they are?” I will say, “Hey, why do you say that? You work with them, you see that they—” [He said,] “No you can’t trust them; don’t believe what you see.”

—Israeli member of CFP

Another participant spoke of becoming more politically aware and attentive to events during his teenage years. He recalled reading an early report on torture that had been written by an Israeli human rights group.

And at that time I was already—following you can say. I remember that B'Tselem published a report on torture by Israeli security forces—and I read that. That was’93, ’94. So I was about already 15 or 16.

—Israeli member of CFP

A couple of participants had been involved in left-wing political youth movements.

I joined the youth movement of the Labor Party in Israel... I went on from the political youth movement to a... more of a socialist movement. Which is also, you can say it’s related to the left wing.

—Israeli member of CFP

Broadened Horizons and Dialectical Challenges

Participants also described later experiences as they grew older that began to broaden their horizons or to challenge previous understandings and led them to think about the need for a different approach. These included experiencing the violence personally, meeting Palestinians, witnessing actions they felt were unjust, and hearing alternate viewpoints expressed by peace activists and in books or movies.