Reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A Position Paper

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The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views neither of the PCFF nor of the Swiss Government that funded it.
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Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the following experts for their advice and support:

Prof. Yehudit Auerbach, Bar-Ilan University, Israel; the late Prof. Yaacov Bar-Siman Tov; Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal, School of Education, Tel-Aviv University, Israel; Dr. David Bloomfield, Independent Adviser, Conflict Resolution, former CEO of Glencree, North Ireland; Attorney Hayley Galgut, Independent Academic Lecturer, Human Rights Adviser and Transitional Justice Consultant; Ms. Fakhira Halloon, School of Conflict Analysis and Research, George Mason University, VA, USA; Adv. Sigal Horowitz, Truman Research Institute, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, IL; Prof. Louis Kriesberg, Syracuse University, NY, USA; Prof. John Paul Lederach, Notre Dame University, USA; Dr. Joseph Montville, chair, Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution George Mason University, VA, USA; Prof. Andrew Rigby Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies, Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies, Coventry University, UK.
Abstract

The Reconciliation Position Paper addresses the goals and scope of the reconciliation process between Palestinians and Israelis at the civil society level while the conflict is still unresolved. It argues that reconciliation activities have an important role to play at this point in time and can contribute to ensuring that a future political peace is not only attainable, but also sustainable. It formulates the psychological processes required for reconciliation and lays out the conceptual and theoretical foundations for it. The paper also outlines some of the challenges that need to be overcome by both sides in order for the process to be successful. Chief among these challenges is the conflict's asymmetry (in economic, political, social and military terms), which will determine the nature of the symbolic and tangible concessions that each side expects from the other as part of the reconciliation process. Our paper stresses the crucial importance of both sides recognizing their own responsibility in perpetuating the cycle of violence and fear, while acknowledging that no one party holds the monopoly on moral or immoral behavior, or is purely the victim or the aggressor. It concludes with a list of recommendations for reconciliation-oriented activities in both the pre- and post peace agreement stage.
Introduction

The initial question prompting the writing of this position paper was the role that politicians could and should play in the reconciliation process between Israelis and Palestinians. However, given the absence of a durable peace agreement and after consultation with prominent international and local scholars, it became clear that the focus of this paper needed to shift from the role of the political echelon in reconciliation to that of civil society.

Since its inception as a bi-national organization, the Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF), an Israeli-Palestinian organization of bereaved families, has stressed the psychological aspect of the conflict and fostered the belief that reconciliation between the two peoples is possible notwithstanding a situation of unresolved conflict. Indeed, the PCFF believes that a reconciliation process between Israeli and Palestinians is a precondition for and crucial determinant of lasting peace in the future. While most scholarly discussion of reconciliation has tended to focus on post-conflict periods, this document looks at possibilities for reconciliation in the current pre-peace context.

Commissioned by PCFF and written by Israeli and Palestinian researchers, the position paper reflects and draws on the wisdom of more than a decade's reconciliation activity (PCFF-led dialogue groups, discussions, brainstorming sessions). It is part of a project funded by the Swiss government that looks at the reconciliation processes and mechanisms required in order to avoid the resurgence of violence once a political agreement is reached.
Theoretical Aspects

Reconciliation in Intractable Conflicts

A. Definitions of Reconciliation

Reconciliation deals with the establishment or rehabilitation of peaceful relations between societies that have been subject to a severe and protracted conflict; usually after the achievement of an official resolution (Bar-Tal, 2000; Bloomfield 2006; Lederach 1997).

Reconciliation, asserts Bar-Siman-Tov (2002:66) "is not an essential condition for the ending of an international conflict, but it is a requirement in conflicts characterized as protracted zero-sum conflicts that are similar to internal conflicts and civil wars.”

This paper adopts an inclusive and flexible definition of reconciliation as both a goal and a process. While reconciliation has been described as a goal or condition, David Bloomfield defines reconciliation as "the process by means of which the society moves from a divided to a joint future" and as "a process which reshapes the relationship." (Bloomfield, 2006)

Many researchers emphasize the importance of building relationships between people in the course of reconciliation and the need to take into account the conflictual and fractured relations in order to improve cooperation between them, over and above establishing structures and mechanisms essential for creating the basis for peace.

The importance of reconciliation is related to the claim that the resolution of dispute does not ensure perpetual peaceful relations. In order to ensure peaceful relations between the parties in a severe, protracted conflict it is necessary to conduct a process of reconciliation that includes members of both groups in the peace process (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2002; Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).
The most important aspect of reconciliation lies in the construction of persistent peaceful relations between former antagonists that is based upon the support of most members of both sides – developing trust, sensitivity to the needs of the other side, mutual respect and fostering of cooperative relations characterized by equality and justice.

Recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in the use of reconciliation in conflict resolution efforts throughout the world (Sarkin & Daly, 2004). The Oslo Peace Process (1993), however, lacked a reconciliation component. Some people consider this a contributory factor in the collapse of Oslo. Others go so far as to claim that without preparing the societies for the possibility of reconciliation, agreements like these will not be signed in the first place. This paper echoes such thinking.

Reconciliation is considered to be a process, which seeks to achieve a kind of relationship between the parties that is founded on mutual legitimacy. The nature of the relationship between the societies is transformed in a process that involves psychological, social and political change. The public and socially-based granting of legitimacy becomes the cornerstone of mutual recognition and genuine security. Thus, reconciliation is supposed to guard against the relationship relapsing to a level at which the very legitimacy of each side is questioned again. In this sense, reconciliation is expected to bring about a genuine end to the existential conflict between the parties. Research reveals significant differences between the manner in which conflicts are created, sustained and resolved. An established classification of conflicts focuses on two criteria, severity and duration (Azar, 1985, 1990; Azar, Jureidini & McLaurin, 1978). In this vein, Louis Kriesberg proposes a classification of conflicts utilizing tractability as a measure: on one side of the spectrum, tractable conflicts in which the parties in dispute can avoid violence, recognize mutual interests and accept each other's identity and rights. Tractable conflicts, argues Kriesberg, are resolvable through negotiations. However, prolonged conflicts, which involve hatred and repeated violence, are regarded as intractable conflicts. Conflicts of this type are defined as being total and having a zero-sum nature, are perceived as irreconcilable by the members of the
societies involved in the conflict, lasting at least a generation, involving all
society members, requiring great personal investment, and violent (Kriesberg,
1993; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Intractable conflicts are also perceived as
resulting from contradictory goals and interests that are considered essential for
the continued existence of the society (or group) involved, (these include
material issues such as territory and dominance), as well as issues pertaining to
(basic human needs such as) identity, belonging and recognition (Azar, 1990;

B. Reconciliation as a process or outcome of a peace process
The literature disagrees about whether reconciliation is the outcome or the
process itself. Most scholars consider that the reconciliation process takes place
only after a dispute is resolved; some claim that certain reconciliation steps are
necessary beforehand in order to prepare the ground for negotiations and to
facilitate a successful conclusion. (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Bar-Siman-Tov,

Andrew Rigby, researcher and peace activist, draws a distinction between
reconciliation actions carried out at various stages. He suggests distinguishing
between reconciliation initiatives that could take place at any point during a
destructive conflict and the reconciliation action more likely to occur after an
agreement when the existing space for these actions is broader (Rigby, 2001).

This paper proposes that reconciliation should be regarded as a process that can
occur at various stages in a conflict. Reconciliation can begin, even partially,
prior to the signing of a peace agreement and continue after it has been
achieved.
C. Reconciliation as a multi-dimensional process

Reconciliation can be understood as a complex process, operating on multiple dimensions. Verdeja (2009) suggests four such levels: political, institutional, civil society and interpersonal.

The **political dimension** refers to the political elite engaged in negotiation; formal politics such as party politics and major actors outside government who represent defined sectors of the population.

The **institutional dimension** includes formal institutional mechanisms such as tribunals and truth commissions assembled to investigate the past, address responsibility, and formally recognize victims.

**Civil society** actors can contribute to reconciliation by offering more complex and critical interpretations of the past and by opposing statist accounts that simplify or distort the historical record. NGOs and other civil society groups may help inform concepts of justice and responsibility and can promote the rule of law and mutual respect, since these values require more than legal enforcement.

The **interpersonal level** is where individuals deal with the past by interpreting their personal narratives as part of, or as a complement to, the larger public narrative developed at macro levels. Issues of accountability and recognition are transformed into concerns about personal responsibility, revenge, forgiveness and personal moral transformation (Verdeja, 2009: 20-22).

D. Top-Down and Bottom-up Processes

Some scholars depict reconciliation as a process taking place between populations (Bar-On, 1996); others highlight the role of the national political leadership in launching the (top-down) process (Bargal & Sivan, 2004). We propound a bottom-up process where the initiative starts and is consolidated at the grassroots level and hopefully impacts positively on the national leadership.
E. Basic Dimensions of Reconciliation

Four dimensions are often noted: Truth, justice, recognition, and peace/security

1. Truth: The underlying assumption is that truth-telling promotes the healing of both individuals and societies, and thus advances reconciliation (Biggar, 2001; Lederach, 1999; Asmal, Asmal, & Roberts, 1994). This was made manifest in South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commissions where telling one’s personal story and having it validated was a pre-condition to reconciliation. As noted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing up to reality, is not true reconciliation and will not last.” (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 1998:69). Truth commissions have been hailed by scholars as the instrument most suited to the promotion of reconciliation, if only because they are usually designed specifically for that purpose (Sarkin & Daly, 2004; Minow, 1999).

Kriesberg suggests processes aimed at promoting conflict resolution should include actions whose purpose is to uncover facts/truths that were unknown to considerable parts of the population suffering from the conflict (documentation of atrocities and repression officially denied by the authorities; the preparation of curricula that present the historical narrative of the parties to the conflict from the point of view of each side/rewriting of history; training of journalists and producing radio and television programs, and so on); actions that promote mutual recognition and acknowledgement of a shared humanity.

2. Justice: Some people view the administration of justice as the most important aspect of the process of reconciliation. However, there is disagreement about what justice is and how it should be administered. Several concepts of justice have been proposed by scholars in an attempt to describe the intricate connections between justice and the promotion of peace and reconciliation.

The following briefly discusses key concepts of justice in relation to reconciliation. The transitional justice process covers an array of national and international circumstances aimed at generating significant transition in a liberalizing direction for the nation concerned (Teitel, 2000). In recent years transitional justice is no longer exclusively applied to societies in transition to a liberal democracy (Obel, 2011), but also in post-conflict situations.
Retributive justice is a notion of justice focused on the need to penalize offenders for their crimes. Retributive justice is often administrated through trials, yet scholars have doubted the capacity of trials to promote reconciliation (Ignatieff, 1998). Trials are final while reconciliation demands an open-ended approach (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2005).

Restorative justice aims at promoting social and personal healing. According to the restorative paradigm, crimes are committed first and foremost against other individuals, not the state. Therefore, justice should aim to heal the victim and address the wrongs in an attempt to lessen the risks of recurrence. According to the final report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“SA TRC”), restorative justice "seeks to redefine crime: it shifts the primary focus of crime from the breaking of laws or offences against a faceless state to a perception of crime as violations against human beings ... encourages victims, offenders and the community to be directly involved in resolving conflicts." (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998:126).

Granting amnesty to those who have committed significant human rights violations during a past regime may be the only means of attaining truth. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), amnesty bars any future prosecutions in respect of specific criminal conduct that occurred before the amnesty came into effect. Generally an amnesty refers to conduct that occurred during a specified period or was linked to a particular event, such as an armed conflict (UN OHCHR, 2009). However, under international law, amnesties cannot be granted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide or torture. Furthermore, the duty under international law to provide redress renders unconditional blanket amnesties unlawful in respect of other gross violations of human rights (UN OHCHR, 2009).

3. Recognition: refers to acknowledging the identity of the Other, their right to exist, their pain and the injustice done to them. Some theories suggest that remorse must be expressed by representatives of the groups or by the public for injustices perpetrated; others however consider that counter-productive. Scholars have theorized that a major underlying cause of intractable conflicts between nations and groups is to be found in cycles of humiliation and rage
Recognition is a reciprocal relation whereby subjects see each other as equally entitled to respect. The idea that recognition is fundamental to stable healthy identities has been developed by a number of scholars (Taylor, 1994; Honneth, 1995; Benjamin, 1988). Taylor argued that the same holds for entire groups that are consistently oppressed or suffer discrimination - "a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves." (1994: 25)

Victim recognition is a crucial element of reconciliation and individuals who suffered massive wrongs need their worth and dignity as fellow humans recognized (Verdeja 2009, 56). The idea of respect as recognition of a person's inherent dignity emerges, according to Verdeja, in many settings. Survivors from Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa and North America often frame human rights violations not only as physical and emotional harms, but also as moral wrongs. Verdeja uses the terms "victim recognition" and "victim acknowledgment" in the broader sense of status parity that includes both symbolic and material components.

In addition to the above-mentioned symbolic component of reconciliation, there is also a significant material component. This may include a number of initiatives such as financial compensation, political and structural change, increased development programs etc.

A recent report by the United Nations Secretary General claims a link between reparations programs aiding victims of gross human rights violations and the promotion of social reconciliation and confidence in the state, leading to a more stable and durable peace in post-conflict societies. Reparations can also reduce community resentment and strengthen victims’ participation in reconstruction efforts (UN Secretary-General, 2011).
4. Peace/security – While peace is often considered simply the absence of any structural violence ("negative peace"), the goal of reconciliation is to achieve a "positive peace", which confers a sense of security and ease on both sides. This entails meaningful well-being for both individuals and collectives, safeguarded by constitutional stipulations and changes in state policies and security services.

Current political context
Since the failure of the Oslo Declaration of Principles, the Israeli Palestinian conflict has reversed its course and both communities have experienced further alienation and distancing. The Separation Wall has made interaction virtually impossible.

Caught between the spread of the Hamas ideology and Israeli right-wing government policy, the Israeli-Palestinian peace camp is stymied. During the past several decades, both societies have undergone radicalization and are more willing to support acts of violence. Many Palestinians are opposed to any form of dialogue and cooperation with Israelis as they view it as a step towards the normalization of the iniquitous status quo. The challenge is to break the vicious circle in which extremism on one side nourishes extremism on the other.

The asymmetric nature of the conflict is a major challenge to reconciliation. The vast differences in economic, political and military structures between the two sides are impossible to balance in the process of reconciliation. The Israeli-Palestinian process of reconciliation has to adopt creative measures to respond to this asymmetric reality. Furthermore, this asymmetric dynamic should determine the nature of the symbolic and tangible concessions that each side expects from the other as part of the reconciliation process. Jews in Israel must come to terms with the existence of the Palestinian people and their collective rights to self-determination, and conversely that Palestinians must come to terms with the collective national rights of the Jews.

Some researchers suggest that the dominant majority make greater concessions in the immediate and short-term for a sustainable peace agreement. They argue that Israeli expectations that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state are
unrealistic while the occupation persists and in the absence of a Palestinian state. In a similar vein, Palestinian demands that Israel accept responsibility for human rights violations such as the Naqba are likely to lessen the willingness of the Israeli-Jewish public to support peace.

**Psychological dimensions**

The Israeli Palestinian conflict has been classified as intractable. In these kinds of conflict a socio-psychological infrastructure is developed that enables members of society to cope with the stress and fear induced by long-term violent conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007:26-27). This infrastructure promotes selective perceptions that simplify a complex reality into a uniform picture, one that is black-and-white and allows for no flexibility or negotiation. It is expressed in the words of the leaders and by the media, in the curricula of the education system, in cultural symbols and so on.

It becomes a matter of good vs. evil, moral vs. immoral. Each side sees the other as the aggressor; each side views itself as the righteous victim. The trauma suffered by both sides limits their ability to trust and makes reconciliation even harder to achieve.

The reconciliation process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict depends thus on each side changing its basic attitudes towards the other side and towards the conflict in general.

In addition, certain scholars claim that the reconciliation process is bound up with coming to terms with the past, and that the suffering, injustice and unfairness that have played a role in the conflict have to be exposed and acknowledged. (Bashir, 2010; Rouhana, 2010; Verdeja, 2009)
Reconciliation and the PCFF

The PCFF considers reconciliation on the interpersonal and civic levels possible and even crucial at this juncture. While a peace agreement is still not within sight, trust and openness are precursors to and catalysts for any lasting peace.

Reconciliation considerations that arose during uni- and bi-national dialogues¹ that took place within the PCFF discussions relate to:

* Recognition and taking responsibility: the outcome of reconciliation should be recognition and acceptance of responsibility for the injustices that each side has perpetrated. There needs to be some understanding on the part of the Palestinians that even in victimhood, acts of violence can be carried out, and even in the context of just armed resistance, human rights violations (such as terrorist acts against civilians) are sometimes committed. At the same time, Israelis need to acknowledge their responsibility for the events of 1948 (the Palestinian Naqba), and more recently for the ongoing injustice and violence of the Occupation.

* Sense of security: On the Palestinian side, the ongoing Occupation and their historic displacement have been a major source of a sense of victimhood and vulnerability, making it difficult to develop a critical viewpoint and to come to grips with their own acts of aggression against Israeli civilians. The demands of the Israeli public for personal security might only be possible after a significant dismantling of the Occupation has occurred.

¹ These perceptions were expressed in a series of uni-and bi-national meetings on the subject (PCFF office Tel Aviv, 6.10.11; PCFF office Beit Jala 5.12.11; PCFF office Beit Jala, 22-23.12.11).
Unique challenges in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

* Promoting reconciliation prior to signing a peace agreement: the difficulty in recognizing the right of the other side becomes more intense when the struggle is ongoing, especially when recognition is seen as detrimental to the fight for freedom from the Occupation.

* Promoting reconciliation in an asymmetric context: the conflict has produced asymmetric power relations and vast differences in economic, political and military structures. The asymmetric power relations should determine the nature of the symbolic and tangible concessions that each side expects from the other as part of the reconciliation process. Some researchers suggest that the dominant majority make greater concessions in the immediate and short-term for a sustainable peace agreement. They argue that Israeli expectations that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state are unrealistic while the Occupation persists.

* Demanding mutuality in the context of asymmetric power relations: we propose that the granting of recognition be seen as an ethical and political obligation, while arguing that there is no moral equivalence between the crimes perpetrated by systemic state oppression and those committed in the context of just opposition or liberation struggle.

* Psychological: in order to cope with the stress and fear induced by long-term violent conflict, society members have turned a complex reality into a black and white picture that allows no room for flexibility or negotiation. A more nuanced perception of the conflict should be cultivated among both civil societies.
A. Specific Palestinian Challenges

* Normalization - Palestinians find it hard to talk about reconciliation at this stage of the conflict because they think that actively promoting reconciliation is tantamount to condoning the ongoing Occupation.

* Threats from the internal governments and authorities.

* Requesting that Palestinians acknowledge violence committed gives rise to the notion that violence is a crime under the law, whereas they see violence as a tool to attain freedom.

* Inequality of the partnership presents a challenge to joint action.

* The difficulty and pain of reconciling with the losses of the past. To recognize Jewish/Israeli existence implies coming to terms with what was lost, and will never be regained; in other words, recognizing the impossibility of turning the clock back to a time before Zionism. This contradicts the current nostalgia among the Palestinian public, especially amongst the refugees of 1948, for their former homes which they still hope to regain.

The Palestinians presented the following requests to their Jewish Israeli colleagues in order to advance reconciliation:

* To take a clear stand against the legitimacy of the Occupation.

* To be more active on the Palestinian street (as opposed to merely in lectures and conferences).

* To connect and respond to the everyday lives of the Palestinians – to their basic needs and not only focus on changing the Palestinians' mindset.

* To establish a cultural, educational mechanism to assist the Palestinians disseminate the culture of non-violence and reconciliation.
Palestinians have asked Israeli peace activists again and again to challenge the different forms of Occupation structure (by refusing to serve in the army; rejecting certain laws; boycotting certain companies; engaging in solidarity action on the ground e.g. confronting soldiers and settlers etc.). Jewish Israeli individuals and groups willing to engage in such actions have gained significant recognition and credibility among Palestinian peace activists and the public.

**B. Specific Jewish Israeli Challenges**

* Working within an indifferent, passive or even hostile environment, imbued with existential anxiety and a "siege mentality"; a society that surrounds itself with walls. A one-sided negative picture of Palestinians, nurtured by the media, makes it more difficult to convey a different message.

* Defense mechanisms are active in serving denial and result in the selective reception of information.

* Coping with the injustices of the past, as requested by Palestinians, is a difficult and painful task for Israelis. The demand that the historical and ongoing injustices they perpetrate on the Palestinian population comes at the risk of shattering the Israelis' self-image.

* The need to increase trust and demonstrate mutuality in the reconciliation process – the need to convince Israeli Jews that there is indeed a Palestinian partner in the process. In this context, the Israelis requested that their Palestinian colleagues publicly condemn cases of physical violence in order to make it easier for them to promote the message of reconciliation. A second request that was made of the Palestinians was that they try to understand the difficulty Israelis have in opposing the army, since the army is a crucial, if not the main, component of Israeli identity.
Reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, PCFF 2014

Recommendations

The following recommendations of the researchers are divided into pre-and post-peace agreement. Pre-peace agreement activities, which were the main focus of this paper, include projects and processes generated by Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations which are required to promote popular support for the concessions each side would have to make in order for peace to be attained. Post-peace agreement activities will be conducted by official Israeli and Palestinian state bodies with the goal of reducing the likelihood of a return of violence and in order to promote the psychological changes needed for a lasting peace.

A. Pre-Peace Agreement Activities and Processes

We suggest distinguishing between activities conducted in a bi-national setting which enable or require cooperation between representatives of the two communities, and activities directed exclusively at one of the societies and conducted in a uni-national setting.

*Bi-national processes facilitate:*

- Mutual acquaintance, learning about the different narratives of the conflict, acknowledging the Other's point of view and identity.

- Humanization of the other, developing mutual understanding and empathy.

- Building trust and fostering hope.

- Encouraging active participation.

Within the bi-national process we further distinguish between public activity, conducted in large groups, and small group activity within a more intimate setting: Public activity is intended to raise awareness within the general public. The messages conveyed should reflect the consensus in order to be effective.
Examples include: mass gatherings (in support of peace), protest rallies (against Occupation or discrimination), memorial assemblies (honoring the fallen on both sides), and the use of mass media and online social networking services such as Facebook. Public activities are also intended to put pressure on decision-makers to take action to promote peace. Activity in small groups allows for more sensitive dialogue between the participating members of the groups and is able to promote profound change.

**Uni-national processes facilitate:**

- Facing negative emotions accumulated in the course of the prolonged conflict (guilt, vulnerability, shame, hatred etc) within a protected environment.

- Examining the excessive militarization in both societies and more specifically, developing awareness of the deep negative impact of the Occupation on social, economic, moral and cultural environment of both societies.

- Addressing infringements of the basic political rights in each society; promoting civic identity.

- Challenging the political governance structures and procedures that have led to corruption and/or Occupation.

- Examining each side’s/ one's own historical narrative.

- Instilling hope and encouraging creative thinking towards resolution of the conflict.

It is crucial that members of both societies feel free, in a uni-national setting, to discuss the unpleasant aspects of their collective past and to acknowledge their involvement in the conflict and take responsibility for injustices done to the other. Later stages would allow both sides to humanize the other side as a stepping stone towards a stable peace. The voices of victims of the conflict are
important to such a process and can be effective catalysts for wider society involvement in the future.

B. The possible role of the PCFF
The various functions of the PCFF in the context of promoting reconciliation can be summed up as follows:

*Breaking the cycle of vengeance* – strengthening trust in the other and in the possibility of reconciliation.

*Processing the loss* – sharing the pain of the loss.

*Advancing recognition and mutual appreciation* – providing a safe space in which to hear the voice of the other, allowing him to tell his story.

*Exposing the truth and coping with the past* – talking about past injustices, hurt and shame; using the past as a basis for a more enlightened future; expressing rather than repressing collective trauma.

C. Specific activities that may be carried out by the PCFF
The PCFF has been operating several educational programs aimed at transformation of beliefs and attitudes in recent years. Most of this work is bi-national. We offer in addition:

1. **Commissions for Dealing with the Past**
The knowledge and experience gained during the last twenty years in which truth and reconciliation commissions were utilized internationally to deal with the violent legacy of conflict could be effectively deployed in the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the form of uni-national gatherings that help citizens come to terms with the past and thus facilitate healing. Such sessions validate and empower victims through the telling of their personal stories. Once a person’s story is told and acknowledged, real healing can begin to take place.
2. Reconciliation and Peace School

A Reconciliation and Peace School would serve to educate the general public of both Israeli and Palestinian societies regarding the socio-psychological dimensions of conflict resolution. The PCFF will provide the infrastructure for such a school, drawing on more than a decade’s experience in the field. However, the school will also educate PCFF members, as well as other prominent peace activists, in theory, research findings, as well as in international and national initiatives aimed at the resolution of conflicts which are protracted and violent.

3. Socio-Psychological / Reconciliation Seminars for Politicians

The writers recommend that the PCFF offer politicians (Members of Knesset, local, municipal leaders, prominent leaders and decision-makers) seminars that convey the socio-psychological needs of each society as well as the role each society plays in blocking a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The seminars will reflect the need for uni-national and bi-national work in dismantling old stereotypes, attitudes and fears.

4. Post-Peace Agreement Activities and Processes

The writers recommend that the PCFF provide Israeli and Palestinian delegations to the current peace talks with detailed documentation, including international law as it pertains to conflict situations, and outlining the transitional justice processes successfully implemented in other conflicts. The document will explore acts of memorialization, commissions for dealing with the past, reparations and other routes aimed at promoting a solid psychological basis for peace.
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Court Cases

Reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A Position Paper

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The PCFF regards reconciliation as multi-dimensional, involving the restructuring of relations between hostile communities. This involves working from the bottom up, transforming civil society attitudes and beliefs, and dismantling the oft-rehearsed narratives which are used by both sides to justify and perpetuate the conflict. The goal of the PCFF is to create a more critical, compassionate and nuanced public able to take in the complexity of its respective personal and historic situations, and willing to work for change from within—from within themselves as individuals as well as from within civil society as a whole. Only within these parameters is there any possibility of a permanent change in the protracted status quo and a chance of a sustainable just peace. By starting small (if the personal level can be called small), the PCFF believes it can end big.

The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) is an organization made up of more than 600 Palestinian and Israeli bereaved families, who have all lost an immediate family member in the conflict. The PCFF works to promote reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis through dialogue and mutual understanding.

http://www.theparentscircle.com

Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), February 2014