
The Atkin Paper Series

The social- psychology
of non- radicalisation:
How not to become a
terrorist and why

Sagit Yehoshua

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About Sagit Yehoshua

Sagit Yehoshua joined ICSR as an Atkin Research Fellow for Winter 2009. Sagit holds a Bachelors degree in criminology and Middle East studies and a Masters degree in Applied Criminology from Bar Ilan University at Ramat-Gan, Israel. Sagit is currently a PhD Candidate, at Bar-Ilan University, with her dissertation on the *Profiles of Leaders of Terrorist Groups*. Sagit has focused her studies on the psychology of terrorism and the profiles of terrorist groups and leaders. The research has involved years of interviewing the leaders of major terrorist organisations in Israeli prisons. Sagit is also a lecturer at Bar Ilan University in the Department of Criminology. She has both designed and taught a course on Profiling of Terrorism in the Diploma Program for Profiling and is a Research Fellow at Institute of Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Inter-Disciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel.

Summary

This paper deals with the social psychology of non-radical individuals who are not involved in any violent or terrorist activities. The focus is on the role of the family and its advantages in influencing ones behaviour. Furthermore, normalisation is also looked at as another influential factor.

The paper compares successful and unsuccessful radicalisation processes in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It looks at three different groups. The first group is Arab Muslims born in an Arab country that moved to the UK for studies or work. Second is Arab Muslims born in Israel/Palestine that also came to the UK for similar reasons. The last group is leaders of terrorist organisations such as: Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad, who were interviewed by the researcher in Israeli prisons.

The comparison between the three groups emphasises the different perceptions and attitudes of the groups towards the Arab Israeli conflict in general and the issues of the use of violence and normalisation with Israel and Israelis specifically. The main findings suggests that a good social background and family status leads to the opening of opportunities and options to deal with the frustrating situation, and therefore those individuals have the ability to choose a better solution. Normalisation with Israelis also has an important role in this process of preferring a non violent solutions.



The social- psychology of non- radicalisation: How not to become a terrorist and why

By Sagit Yehoshua

Introduction

Why do some people become involved in terrorist violence while others do not? The question of what makes terrorists different from those who feel equally passionate about a particular issue but decide to engage in non-violent action or, indeed, do nothing at all has preoccupied a whole field of researchers. In many ways, it is the central question for those interested in the issue of radicalisation.

Many studies examine the pathways of those who ended up in violent movements (for an overview and critique, see Veldhuis and Staun, 2009). The weakness that most of these studies share is the lack of a 'control group'. If we only study those individuals who end up in terrorist groups, we are unlikely to find out what makes them different from those who did not. It will be impossible to identify which factors have been significant in their radicalisation and which ones have not, because we have no 'unsuccessful' radicalisation processes to compare them to. Only by looking at individuals with similar characteristics and background who did not join violent groups will the differences become clear, and it is only by understanding these differences that effective prevention and counter-radicalisation strategies can be formulated.

This research attempts to compare successful with unsuccessful radicalisation processes in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It looks at three different groups:

- (1) *Non-Palestinian Arabs*: Arab Muslims who were born in an Arab country outside Palestine, moved to the UK for studies or work, and are not involved with a violent and/or terrorist organisation.

- (2) *Palestinians*: Palestinian Muslims who were born in Israel or Palestine, came to the UK for studies or work, and are not involved with a violent and/or terrorist organisation.

(3) *Violent Palestinians*: leaders of Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad, who were interviewed by the author in Israeli prisons.

Though based on a relatively small sample, the paper attempts to establish whether there are significant differences between the members of the three groups and, more generally, between those who became violent (Group 3) and those who did not (Groups 1 and 2). Particular attention has been paid to the role of the family; opportunities for non-violent contention; and the effects of human interaction and face-to-face contact with members of the other side (i.e., Israelis).

The paper will demonstrate that family status – and the increase in opportunities associated with it – seems to increase the likelihood of opting against violence. Furthermore, the paper shows that individuals who had regular interactions with Israelis were less likely to become attracted to using violent means – even if they strongly disagreed with the policies of the Israeli government. This second finding would appear to support the argument that ‘normalisation’ – that is, the increase in human contacts between Israelis and their Arab neighbours, whether Palestinian or other Arabs – is a significant factor in promoting peace ‘from the bottom up’ and makes terrorism less likely.

The paper will begin with a brief review of the relevant literature. This will be followed by a description of the context and methodology, and an overview of the findings. In the final section, the findings will be summarised and implications will be spelled out.

Literature review: the social psychology of terrorism

‘Terrorism is a complex and multivariate phenomenon. It appears in many different forms, in many parts of the world and is used in the pursuit of many different objectives. It occurs in democracies, autocracies and transitional states and in developed, underdeveloped and developing economies. It is practiced by adherents of many religions and by adherents of none’. (Richardson, 2006).

Upon reading Louise Richardson’s eloquent comments, it almost seems pointless to make any systematic attempt to establish a common denominator that makes terrorism – and its perpetrators, the terrorists – different from the rest. At the same time, there has of course been much research into the phenomenon, which has helped researchers and policymakers come to grips with what often seems like an enigma.

At the most basic level, any act of terrorism is a collective action, a political act taken in the name of a group based on different factors such as ethnicity, religion, nationalism or ideological orientation. Otherwise, it can be considered common criminal behaviour, driven by self-interest and not by an ideology or religious beliefs (Gupta 2007).

Furthermore, Horgan (2009) emphasises the importance of understanding the individual terrorist and the ways in which other relevant issues such as group dynamics or structures influence him or her. Terrorists, he points out, make choices

within the context in which they find themselves – just like any other people (Taylor and Horgan, 2006). Indeed, Crenshaw (1998) comments, ‘terrorism is not the direct result of social conditions but of individuals’ perceptions of those conditions’. Those perceptions are developed through social processes and interaction (Stephen & Sutton, 2009).

The literature on terrorist characteristics is wide and diverse. Although Whittaker (2004) claims that rather than finding hypothetical profiles of personality it is rare to find some solid facts, he details some influence factors such as peer pressure, availability of opportunities, lack of success in life, poorly structured families, alienation, and a sense of being exploited and marginalised in the community. ‘The terrorist is “action orientated”, aggressive, keen to find excitement, with a fair measure of intolerance and a readiness to find fault with others but not necessarily violent by nature’ (Whittaker, 2004).

As for the sociocultural context, Post (2004) argues that terrorist recruits sacrifice their individual identity to that of the collective one. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of group dynamics and the potential for groups to take riskier decisions than individuals. Turk (2004) adds that the typical terrorist comes from relatively wealthy regions and appears to be motivated by political-ideological motives rather than economic ones.

During the 1990s, the world was exposed to new types of religiously inspired terrorism, in which Islamist terrorism plays a significant part (Hudson, 1999). Since 11 September 2001, a major effort has been made to find the characteristics of potential Islamist terrorist threats or activities (Schbley & Mccayley, 2005).

Sageman’s research (2004) concentrated on the social, personal and situational variables of 172 Salafi-jihadi terrorists. According to this research, members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious families, who grew up with strong positive values of religion and concern for their families. However, moving to different countries started a process of radicalisation as a result of their feelings of alienation, underemployment and discrimination from the host societies.

Research conducted by Berrebi (2007) presents a statistical analysis of the determinants of participation in terrorist activities by members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad between the late 1980s and May 2002. The resulting evidence suggests that participation in movements such as Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or becoming a suicide bomber, is related to higher education and standard of living, while being married significantly reduces the probability of participation in terrorist activities.

Context: The Arab Israeli conflict

As pointed out in the introduction, this study does not investigate terrorist radicalisation per se, but concentrates on radicalisation processes in the context of one particular conflict in which terrorism has been used.

Like terrorism, the conflict between Israel and the Arab world is multi-faceted. It is rooted in history and religion and in the last decades has been overlaid with the products of nationalist movements, the search for self-determination and the fight for possession of independent territory. Even the British, during the end of their mandate over Palestine, could not find a suitable and mutually acceptable plan for the division of Palestine between the Jewish Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs (Quandt, 2008).

Since the end of the British mandate, a number of different dimensions have been added to the conflict. From 1950, it expanded to encompass pan-Arab nationalism rather than just the Palestinian version: Israel was portrayed as a Western imperialist state intending to prevent Arab unity. Later, the territorial states in the Middle East took over pan-Arabism with the added aspect of Islamisation, which has changed the conflict to a battle between two different religions – Islam and Judaism (Litvak, 1998). While struggling over possession of the land and the right to claim it, the Jews assert that Israel is traditionally theirs as promised to them by God. Furthermore, after years of persecution and endless pogroms, the Jews consider Israel the only safe haven from ongoing anti-Semitism and hate (Bregman, 2002). On the other hand the Arabs of Palestine also regard Palestine as their land, based on similar religious reasons, and cannot understand why they have to endure such hardship because the Jews suffered from anti-Semitism (Bregman, 2002).

The Arab-Israeli conflict – one of the most complicated conflicts in the world – is divided between the Israeli-Palestinian level and the global level. The problem is an Israeli-Palestinian problem, but the solution can only come with the cooperation of the Arab world and other powerful nations (Shlaim, 2006). Since 1991 there has been a considerable effort made towards finding a suitable solution to the conflict, starting with the Madrid conference in 1991, the Oslo peace accords of 1993, and Oslo II in 1995, which opened the situation up to the possibility of normalisation and collaboration between Israelis and the Arab world in general, and the Palestinians in particular. This process, however, has failed dramatically, as demonstrated by the failure of the Camp David summit in 2000 and the outbreak of the bloody second intifada (Bregman, 2005 and Shlaim, 2006).

Methodology

The study is qualitative, based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews that focus on life stories. The interviews included questions regarding the interviewees' past and social background, with a focus on the stages he went through in life and his opinions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ethical principles that are used in qualitative studies were adhered to in this research; accordingly, the purpose and procedure of the research was clarified to the interviewees, they were promised anonymity during

the process of the research and at the publishing of the results, and they also had the freedom to answer or to refuse to answer questions.

The interviewees were Arab Muslims, from 3 different groups:

(1) *Non-Palestinian Arabs*: Arab Muslims who were born in an Arab country outside Palestine, moved to the UK for studies or work, and are not involved with a violent and/or terrorist organisation. The five individuals interviewed for this study were from Egypt, Libya, Syria, Qatar, and Lebanon respectively.

(2) *Palestinians*: Palestinian Muslims who were born in Israel or Palestine, came to the UK for studies or work, and are not involved with a violent and/or terrorist organisation. Five such individuals were interviewed: two from Jerusalem, one from Hebron, and two from Ramallah.

(3) *Violent Palestinians*: Leaders of Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad, who were interviewed by the author in Israeli prisons. In this category, eighteen individuals were interviewed.

With the exception of Group 3, the interviews were conducted in London. The average duration of each interview was two hours, and data was recorded verbatim, in writing, by the researcher. Additional meetings were held with academic experts in this area, and activists and leaders of Islamic or non-Islamic social movements.

Findings

Opportunities

'Even with all I have gone through in my life I have never turned to violence because I saw other possibilities for actions, I was exposed to other solutions. Other people turn to violence because they are so angry and frustrated but they have never seen other options, they think it is the only way'. (Palestinian interviewee, Group 2)

The main finding of this research supports the fact that going the way of non-radicalisation is mostly a matter of opportunities. Most of the people that are financially able to study in London come from wealthy families and have the opportunity to leave their countries in order to experience a different society and atmosphere. An example of this can be seen in the words of an Arab interviewee from Group 1: *'I had a very good and privileged childhood, I come from a middle class family, I'm the oldest son in a family of two kids, and my sister is currently working in Geneva. School was fun, I really enjoyed school'*.

This finding can be reinforced by a comparison with the Palestinian terrorist prisoners group, as most of them described the lack of opportunities and the terrible situation they faced which limited their possibilities in life. *'The situation at home was*

very hard, my father barely worked. At the age of 16 I left school and went to work because my father got sick, I worked at a garage during the day and in a Coca Cola factory at nights. My brother Ali was a shahid (martyred) that was killed by the IDF, my other brother is a prisoner here with me and the fourth one does not deal with politics, he is sick and needs special treatment in Jordan' (Fatah leader in prison, Group 3).

The finding of this research reveals a big difference between the Palestinian interviewees and other Arab Muslims interviewed. On the matter of opportunities, it seems that the Palestinians feel very privileged to have lived in good conditions and to have had the chance to explore the world and be opened up to different cultures and ideas while most of the population in Palestine in general face a situation of just trying to survive and have very limited opportunities. *'You hear stories from different sides and you start to feel depressed. My parents were afraid and did not let me go out of the house. I also had a family in Gaza so I saw what happened there, they are in much worse situation and are just looking for a way to survive'* (Palestinian interviewee, Group 2).

The Arabs that participated did not indicate any thoughts of feeling unique or privileged in their situation compared to other Arab Muslims in their countries. This perhaps shows that there are strong community bonds in the Palestinian community and awareness of the situation of other Palestinians in the area.

Activism

Another difference among the groups is the participation in movements and activities related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among the Palestinian terrorist prisoners, involvement in organisations is obvious, as one of the Hamas leaders in prison (Group 3) argued: *'I do not understand how it is possible that there are people outside that are not active in any organisation. How people can suffer in this situation without objecting to the occupation, they are cowards, going through suffering and humiliation and to not object. I think it is not normal. I had to act, I cannot see myself watching my nation suffer and not do anything'*.

Most of the non-violent Palestinians interviewed were involved in different movements, like OneVoice or other NGO groups. A Palestinian interviewee (Group 2) detailed: *'I was a student at Al-Quds University, while the second intifada was at its strongest and the IDF was carrying out lots of operations in refugee camps. I organised students at the university to help the community- painting and cleaning houses that were damaged, etc. I also joined the UN and other NGO organisations as a translator and I helped to document everything that happened there. Later I even joined OneVoice in order to find a proper solution'*.

The other Arabs did not mention any participation in activities related to the conflict, as can be seen with an Arab interviewee (Group 1): *'I have close family in Gaza and we have good connections with them. During the war we talked to them and heard about the terrible situation they were in, but I never thought of doing something active against it'*. Though some of them did join NGOs, it was not related directly to the conflict. *'At the age of eighteen I went to study medicine for five years*

and after that I had a six months break and was active at a human rights NGO. I am interested in the conflict, I hear what is going on there, but I was never active in something related to it. I have never even come across any opportunity to join any organisation or violent action, it just did not come across me ever' (Arab interviewee, Group 1).

Opinions on the use of violence

Here each group has a different view. Among the Arab Muslim group the use of violence was never taken into consideration. They have heard of different organisations aimed at dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, but never came across an opportunity to join them or felt the need to do so. *'I never came across any opportunity to commit a violent act, I believe that extremist Muslims are not Muslims and that Islam does not meet extremity in any way and does not deal with it'* (Arab interviewee, Group 1).

On the other hand, the Palestinian group can understand the need and passion to use violence, but prefer to use non-violent methods. This is related to the first category mentioned, as there were opportunities for them to see and explore alternatives for objecting to the frustrating situation. A Palestinian interviewee (Group 2) explained, *'Even with what I went through I never turned to violence because I saw other possibilities; I was exposed to other solutions. Other people turn to violence because they are so angry and frustrated but they have never seen other options so they think it is the only way'*. This argument is expressed further by an Islamic Jihad prisoner (Group 3) who claimed, *'I did not kill them because I do not like them. It is because they occupied my land and destroyed my life. If there was another way I would have used it, we do not like blood and we do not like to kill and to be in prison, I am just a person who wants to live'*.

Another explanation from the Palestinian interviewees is the role of the family in being protective and strongly objecting to participating in violence. A Palestinian interviewee (Group 2) detailed, *'I did not use violence because I came from a protected family and school, we were never allowed to go outside and throw stones or join the Shabab [reference to the children that take part in violent acts against the Israeli army in the streets]... Apart from my parents there were other people that educated us and made sure that we would not act in a violent way, such as our teachers and extended family'*.

Among the Palestinian terrorist prisoners the role of the family is more complicated. Although some of them came from middle-class families, with minimal relations with terrorist organisations, the majority grew up in large, downtrodden families, from a very low socio-economic situation. Some parents were well known for their role in the organisations or were unable to prevent their children from joining, as can be seen from the story of a Fatah leader in prison (Group 3). *'I am thirty-three years old and have five brothers and five sisters. The situation was bad, I have one brother here with me in prison. I got married when I was sixteen and I have five kids. My mother is at home not working and my father was murdered, he was stabbed to*

death and tortured with cigarette burns because he was accused of collaborating with Israel. This was not true but we could not do anything against the attackers because they are a big family and I am afraid for the sake of my children'.

The Palestinian terrorist prisoners obviously have committed acts of violence and the majority of them believe it was necessary in order to end the occupation. Although most of them feel that they would not do it again and that they have paid the price and sacrificed enough, they still strongly support their acts and their necessity for the cause. *'I admit to doing all the things I was accused of, of course I admit it, but that is only because of what has been done to me, all the injustices of the expulsion of my father from our land, etc. That is why I believe in my actions and support them. I do not call it violence but liberation; I am causing damage to the one that caused me damage. I will never hurt somebody that did not hurt me'* (Hamas leader in prison, Group 3).

Feelings toward Israel and Israelis

The attitude towards Israel among the groups moved from apathy to extremely strong emotions, but all three groups shared a common view of disagreement with the policies and actions taken by the Israeli government toward Palestinians.

The Arab group showed an interest in the ongoing situation. They stated that they are being updated by friends, family or the media and have some solid opinions against the evil being done, in their view, to the Palestinians by the Israelis. Yet, as previously mentioned, none of them felt any urge to take an active role in trying to solve or change the situation. Furthermore, only a minority of them referenced the phenomena of anti-normalisation between Israelis and Arabs around the world. An Arab interviewee (Group 1) detailed, *'I think that there is a rise of movements around the Arab world, that promotes anti-normalisation with Israel. It is a common phenomena these days and people are afraid to be blacklisted because they may have connections with Israelis. It is a big problem in the Arab world and a huge hindrance for peace but it is mostly because of the ongoing occupation and the policy of the Israeli government toward Palestinians and the Arab world'*.

On the other hand, the Palestinian group (Group 2) and Palestinian terrorist prisoners group (Group 3) expressed strong, passionate emotions towards the subject but expressed different patterns of handling these feelings. While the Palestinian group (Group 2) expressed their hatred towards Israel and Israelis at their adolescence, during their activities with nonviolent movements their emotions of hate changed to a better understanding of the situation and the fact that Israelis have to face difficulties themselves. *'I was a student at Al Quds University during the second intifada and the IDF carried out lots of operations in refugee camps... it was so emotionally horrifying, and I hated Israel so much, I did not consider them as human beings. That was the trigger for me to act towards a solution; I hated Israel so much and that was what made me want a solution so badly. But while I started to look for this I met Israelis and made Israeli friends so now I see them as humans again'* (Palestinian interviewee, Group 2).

The Palestinian terrorist prisoners (Group 3) went through a different process of separating Israel as an occupier and Israeli citizens. They have expressed strong and extreme emotions of hate and anger toward the occupation and the Israeli state but have no problem talking freely and in a friendly way with the researcher or even admitting having Israeli friends outside prison. As one of the Fatah prisoners tried to explain, *'I just wanted to help my nation to get rid of the occupation. Do not look at me like that, I did not kill in order to kill, we saw the pictures of the Israeli victims and the Palestinians. We want to live, they are the occupiers, not us. The problem is the occupation not the Israeli people. [In answer to the question that the researcher asked: But you killed a person not the occupation?] Why he is in my land? He is an occupier, he knows that he hurt me... we want peace; the Israeli government is responsible for the Israeli and Palestinians victims'*.

Another example can be seen from an Islamic Jihad prisoner. *'The only problem I have is with the occupation not with the Jews... there are two different lines, maybe you will say it is hard to separate between them but I am doing the separation. The first line is me as a person, I am sad and angry inside me, for everything that has happened, even for the soldiers I have killed with my bare hands, but on the other hand as a person who lives under occupation, I am telling you that every soldier has to die. My problem is not with Sagit [reference to the researcher], because she is a Jew or an Israeli, my problem is with the occupation, it took my life. I separate between the people as people and the people as a symbol of the occupation'*.

In both examples it can be seen that the interviewees do not refer directly to the researcher even though she is Israeli and sitting in front of them, but are talking about a third body – 'they are the occupiers', 'why is he in my land', 'my problem is not with Sagit' – which reinforces the separation argument.

Relation to religion

Apart from the Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners, who stated that they are religious Muslims that practice Islam and that their lives are guided by it, the majority of the interviewees do not define themselves as religious Muslims. Most of them declare themselves to be believers, but do not practice the religion. This can be emphasised by the words of a Palestinian interviewee (Group 2): *'If I need to describe myself then I will say I am half religious- yes and no, I am a believer but do not practice'*.

Discussion

'Consent with the goals of the movement or with the ethical ideology of the group, along with structured characteristics that draw the individual to act, is a script of an activist profile' (McAdam, 1986).

Opp (1988) adds that one of the important factors of activism in social movements is grievance and a sense of inequality. Furthermore, he argues that there are different effects of social movement participation and grievances before and after a critical incident.

The findings of this research show that the group of Arabs (Group 1) that were less exposed to the effects and outcomes of the Arab-Israeli conflict felt less urge to participate in activities or social movements related to the conflict.

In the case of the two Palestinian groups, the situation is different. Both groups experienced the conflict and were aware of the effects of it, although Group 2 experienced much of it from second sources such as family, friends or from their work. Their families have the ability to expose them to other experiences and ways of handling the situation and therefore they were able to consider an efficient way of participating in non-violent activities in order to try and solve the conflict.

The other group of Palestinians, the terrorist leaders in prison, mostly suffered from the outcomes of the conflict, with exposure to extreme radical behaviour and violence. In most cases the participants got caught up in a loop of frustration and despair which led them to believe that they had no chance of getting out of it in any other way but through violent means.

Another important outcome from these findings relates to the attempts by religious Muslim movements, with Al Qaeda at the forefront, to widen the Israeli-Palestinian problem to an Islamist-Israeli one that puts the whole Muslim world against Israel, as can be seen from the words of Sheikh Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, deputy head of Al Qaeda: *'My Islamic nation, the Zionist-Crusaders' attack demonstrated many facts which were relevant to our Muslim nation without being blurred or obscured... if we fail to defend ourselves and wage jihad, then the fighter jets, bombers and bulldozers which have bombarded Gaza, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia will one day bombard Riyadh, Cairo, Algeria and Islamabad... whoever surrounds Gaza and joins in blocking the mujahedeen inside from obtaining weapons is an enemy of Islam and Muslims and they must be stopped and made an example of'* (3 February 2009, portal: nefafoundation.org).

This approach can damage any hopes of achieving progress in solving the conflict, although the people that really care about the outcome and are suffering and therefore take action, whether violent or non-violent, are the Palestinians themselves. They are the ones that desperately need a solution and an end to the conflict while other Muslims and Arab countries do not suffer directly from it and therefore do not feel the urge to use reasonable and urgent means to solve it. Furthermore, as can be seen from this research, most of the interviewees were not religious and were not affected by it.

This leads to another aspect of the conflict: normalisation. Mi'Ari (1999) collected data in 1994 from a sample of 270 students in Birzeit University, in Ramallah, which studied the attitudes of Palestinian students toward cultural normalisation with Israel. He found that despite the fact of the ongoing occupation, a major proportion of Palestinian students supported normalising cultural relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Support for normalisation is significantly associated with social or working class background.

Since carrying out that research in 1999 there have been almost no updated researches found on this issue of normalisation among Arabs and Palestinians with Israelis, and there is a sense that there is no involvement or interest in this subject, neither from academia or the public. This research indicates the phenomenon of anti-normalisation among the Arab and Muslim world in general and the Palestinians in particular. The participants detailed that they were aware of the ongoing situation of anti-normalisation movements across the Arab and Muslim world, even among the Palestinians following events since 2000. The fact that it was also difficult to find participants to agree to cooperate with research conducted by an Israeli is further proof of this; though the researcher approached all kinds of organisations and personal connections, there was almost no willingness to talk and participate.

Among the groups that did participate there was a different attitude towards cooperating with the research. The Arabs (Group 1) claimed to possess a very open and free attitude, stating that they have no problem talking to or even socialising with Israelis, but during the meetings there was still a barrier and suspicions towards the researcher. Perhaps some of it can be explained by the words of a Muslim interviewee: *'I used to consider myself very accepting toward Jewish people and Israelis, but whenever I talked to Jews I had the fact that they were Jews in the back of my mind and it did not allow me to open up and to feel free whilst talking to them. I am aware of this now because I am in a different place but back then I could not notice that'*.

With the Palestinians (Groups 2 and 3) the attitude was of suspicion before the interview took place but during the conversation there was openness and a sharing of information. There was a feeling that the researcher and participant felt like they were familiar with one another and were trying to find some understanding, even if it was only on a personal level.

Summary

The main findings of this research deal with two major issues related to taking part in violent activities. The first one is the social background of the individual, with a focus on the financial status and the role of the family in influencing them. While the finding here is that a good financial status leads to the opening of opportunities and options to deal with the frustrating situation, and therefore having the ability to choose a better solution, there are other researches that claim the opposite (see Sageman, 2004 and Berrebi, 2007). Therefore, it is essential to note the importance of taking into consideration other factors that can affect the decision of a person to take part

in violent acts such as his social surroundings, religion and even personality. Though good financial status and family support, as this research indicates, is important it has to be taken as one factor in a wider profile related to the phenomenon of participating in violent activities.

The second issue is the relationship between the two peoples, meaning normalisation. It seems like there is a tendency towards anti-normalisation and it has been getting worse since the collapse of the peace accords and with events since 2000. On both sides there are feelings of despair because of the situation and the uselessness of the peace process that has led to a rise in the number of anti-normalisation movements and the election of more extreme and uncompromising governments and representatives, such as Hamas in the last democratic elections in Gaza and the right-wing movements in Israel.

'The experience of normalisation in the context of the Egyptian-Israeli or the Jordanian-Israeli peace has not produced any form of dominance for Israel over Egypt or Jordan. It appears to be the other way around as the Arab world's power in relation to Israel increases with every step of normalisation' (Said Aly, 2003).

Mallat (2003) argues that 'maybe those who are forced to "talk" with Israeli Jews every day can break the impasse. For those that are against normalisation, would speaking with Israelis not mean giving up the last card- that of recognition? For those who support engaging in a robust debate across the barrier, can Palestinians (and Arabs generally) call for a solution where Jews and non-Jews should live with each other if they cannot speak with Israelis in the first place? This is also true for Israeli Jews, should any call for "normalization" become serious. Are they prepared to live with Palestinians? Or is talking just for the sake of talking?'

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ICSR is a unique partnership of King's College London, the University of Pennsylvania, the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Israel), and the Regional Centre for Conflict Prevention Amman (Jordan). Its aim is to counter the growth of radicalisation and political violence by bringing together knowledge and leadership. For more information, see [**www.icsr.info**](http://www.icsr.info)

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