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Peace-building Efforts in Palestine A Preliminary Analysis

This paper will attempt to document the range of peace-building efforts in Palestine and to conduct a preliminary analysis of these efforts. This process will aim to identify lessons learnt in these peace-building efforts – defined as any efforts aimed to resolve the conflict through non-military means. Due to space limitations this paper will only provide a short characterisation of these conflicts. It will not attempt to analyse the peace-building efforts in Israel, except when they are joint Palestinian/Israeli activities, due to the author's insufficient knowledge of the internal Israeli peace-building activities.

Palestinian/Israeli conflict is a vertical 'independence' conflict, where a large proportion of the population is in conflict with an occupying military force. As such, a great proportion of the population in Palestine has been actively involved in the struggle for independence (for instance, the first 'intifada' or popular uprising). Palestinian claims for independence and status as an occupied territory has been recognised under international law and UN resolutions. In addition, this conflict is one of the conflicts most commonly intervened in throughout the world and among the longest (more than 50 years).

Palestine has had a great range of peace-building initiatives. As noted above, non-violent resistance has been widespread and often spontaneous among the population, political/diplomatic efforts (including Track II diplomacy) to work for peace by members of the two parties, and member of other countries, have been more or less continuous throughout the conflict, cooperation on issues of joint concern has been ongoing, people-to-people dialogues have become more popular in the previous 10-15 years, and peace-education/building programmes within Palestine have also increased dramatically in the last 5-10 years. Human rights and development programmes, which indirectly contribute to peace-building, have been widespread and extensive for at least 20 years. Of these, political/diplomatic initiatives, non-violent resistance, and cooperation on issues of joint concern appear to be most useful in moving towards a resolution of the conflict in the medium term, while internal peace-education/building programmes and human rights/development programmes are important for sustaining and supporting a resolution in the long-term. In this conflict the key question is to assess which of the many peace-building initiatives are most effective, and in what form.

Themes to be explored in this paper include the relationship between foreign and local peace building initiatives, and the relationship between political and grassroots or community peace-building.

Amanda Melville completed her PhD thesis at the University of Melbourne on 'Conflict Appraisal by Muslims and Anglo-Australians: The role of identity.' She went on to be the Director of the Conflict resolution Centre in Gaza, and then worked for UNICEF on the West Bank. She is currently working for UNICEF in Indonesia.