

Peace the World Together with Children's Books

Palestinian Children in the Haven of Books

Dear friends, dear participants,

What an excellent theme to invite me to contribute to its discourse. This important and vital theme is very much related to Palestine and Palestinian children from different dimensions, mainly that this conference celebrates IBBY's vision of working with children towards a just and peaceful world.

It is very indicative that Jella Lepman started her great work after the WW II realizing the great need of children affected and traumatized by the war for quality books particularly the children who were also victims of the fascist indoctrination machine.

Peace the World Together with Children's Books what a beautiful goal to aspire with our modern war machinery where civilians and children in particular, are the main victims of wars and conflicts.

Books are magic for Palestinian children they are the Haven of their Lost Childhood. Books are their Haven as they distract them for a short time from their repressive reality and carry them into a beautiful normal world. In Palestine and in Palestinian refugee camps in exile books are a vital healer of their psychological scares and tremendous stress. Our children are traumatized as a result of wars, dispossession, occupation, daily atrocities and oppressive measures. Bibliotherapy and psychosocial activities offer a healing process for our children who are denied from most of their basic rights.

Books nourish the imagination and fantasy of our children and open the door wide to knowledge, learning and critical thinking. Moreover, books introduce them to the lives of other children and cultures. Books are the only passport for Palestinian children to the world, when most of them are denied of real

passports for being refugees in exile or under siege in Gaza; books become their virtual magic carpet.

It was amazing how children went to their library during the atrocious war on Gaza in 2008-09 in Beit Hanoun, which moved temporarily to another secure venue to keep activities with the children on going. The same happened in Ramallah and other places in the Occupied Territory during the 2002 Israeli invasion, children went to Tamer library as soon as the curfew was lifted. This was a manifestation of how children found their safe haven in their second home, the library; a place where they would find their close friends of books and children. Unfortunately it was not possible for them to reach Rafah library where the situation was even worse.

Books are our children's beacon of hope. They read about the tremendous sufferings of other children and how they overcome them. They read Journey to Jo'burg, Chain of Fire, Under the Hawthorn Tree and other translated books, they cry for the suffering of the children and rejoice for the happy ending and the empowerment of children; hope is nourished and they see that one day their story will have a happy ending too. Books open the door to the wider world, to the treasures of the human genius, to cumulative knowledge and wisdom, transcending borders, diversity and cultures.

Consequently books empower our children and youth and transform their perception of education and knowledge and their outlook on society and on the 'other; it also affirms their self – confidence and self-assertion.

Books and education mean a lot to the Palestinian people. Every family and community cherish education, it is considered their main weapon against a powerful enemy. Palestinians who were dispossessed sixty three years ago and occupied forty four years ago, endured uprooting, deprivation, oppression, marginalization and demonization, but never gave up and were determined and resilient to restore their inalienable rights to freedom, return, and self-determination. Palestinians believed that the struggle for books is a struggle for liberation and empowerment against a mighty and ruthless enemy. An enemy enforcing structural terrorism to subjugate the Palestinians and their pursuit of knowledge, since knowledge is power! Education and learning

restored the vitality and identity of the Palestinian people and guaranteed them an outstanding role in the educational, cultural and economic arenas of the Arab world.

However, education was not easy to maintain because of wars and discrimination against Palestinians in the Occupied Territory and inside the Green Line and in exile. During the first Intifada schools and universities were closed for almost four years, it was then when Tamer Institute for Community Education blossomed. Tamer matured to support the Palestinians' endeavour to cherish the road to books, learning and knowledge.

Tamer started the national reading campaign believing that encouraging the habit of reading among children and youth and emphasizing the bond between children and books, will contribute to developing other skills in the field of language, expressive writing, imagination, perception, critical thinking and reasoning. The national reading campaign became a valuable event for tens of community based organizations all over the Occupied Territory, not to be missed or halted for any reason. However, books were not easy to provide with the Israeli censorship. Sending books to besieged Gaza is still very difficult and at times impossible. Even before the last war on Gaza, UNRWA had to struggle for permits to import musical instruments and textbooks into Gaza.

IBBY Children in Crisis Fund started in Gaza at the end of 2007 by establishing and activating two children libraries in cooperation with two community based organizations in the most marginalized and dangerous areas: Rafah and Beit Hanoun. The libraries proved a great success considering the little means provided. They worked as a Bibliotherapy, supported literacy and cemented the bonds between the children and the books. Moreover, they attracted the community mostly mothers, to the library and promoted the habit of reading. The libraries are still functioning but with meagre means.

Encouraging the culture of reading was accompanied with creative interactive activities. The most important of which was to encourage children to write and express themselves and at times to write their own stories. Interesting stories written and illustrated by children were published annually in **My First Book**

Competition; they were stories about, loss, deprivation, despair, fears, dreams, friendship and hope.

We in the Palestinian section of IBBY were stunned to receive the writings of the children during the last horrendous war on Gaza and immediately after. The writings reflected death, horror and tremendous suffering. Children wrote about hate but it was hate of criminality, occupation, wars and soldiers.

It was devastating for the children to know that three members of Rafah library were killed as a result of Israeli shelling in the criminal war that ended the life of at least 313 children. It is significant to mention that the majority of Gaza children were born into dispossession and misery, their parents and grandparents are refugees who were uprooted from their homes and villages in 1948. Refugees constitute 70% of the total Gaza population of 1,500,202, with unemployment soaring to 45.5%.

However, our endeavour to provide quality books that enhance peace, justice multiculturalism and tolerance still faces many challenges. Some categories of books have an ugly face, in our case books that glorify racism, militarism and wars, something very similar to books in Apartheid South Africa. Racism and demonization of Palestinians and Arabs are embedded in Israeli and Zionist children books whether literature or text books; this started methodically with the birth of the Zionist movement, before the establishment of the state of Israel. Unfortunately, this was the case also of many of the children books published in the West on Israeli or/ and Palestinian children.

Such ugly books should not have any place in our world as they have devastating outcome and nourish the camp of war and hegemony. Moreover, indoctrination and brainwashing of children, is a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Such books justify killing, wars, occupation, under the pretext that the other is savage and backward and does not deserve to live!

An overview: Israeli Hate Children Books

It was Israeli scholars and peace activists who started to write widely about the subject and condemn this racism.

As early as 1974 Tamar Meroz wrote in Ha'aretz:

Scores of children's books published in Israel encourage hatred and contempt for the Arabs. The principle is identical in all these endless serials: the Israeli heroes defeat the stupid Arabs. There is no control over these books, which are swallowed indiscriminately

She quotes an Israeli father who says *"It is really astounding to see to what extent these books hold the children spellbound. In these books there are sadistic horror descriptions, detailed descriptions of cruel treatment and offensive caricatures of the Arabs who are described as wretched cowards. But I cannot succeed in preventing the children from reading them. They are totally hypnotized, why is there a standard for clothes, for articles, for food and for everything else—and no control over children's books?"*

A librarian at a large municipal library says: "They are a disaster, these books; and however much as we recommend classical literature—the children want these books.

[Noam Sheizaf](#) reflects on the subject: *The Israeli incitement problem: A look at a children's book:*

When I was a kid, I loved Danni Din stories. Their hero was wonder-kid Danni Din, which became the worlds' only invisible person ...he dedicated his childhood to helping Israel's security forces. (...) Danni Din's war on Arab terrorists is not unique. Almost every adventure book I remember from my childhood featured at least a handful of evil Arabs

The best known of these books were the "Hassamba" series, featuring a group of kids operating like a secret army unit in the service of Israel's defence...

Another good report on the subject was in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, by Maureen Meehan *"Israeli Textbooks and Children's Literature Promote Racism and Hatred toward Palestinians and Arabs"*. Meehan quotes prominent Israel academics and experts who wrote on the subject.

In his study that covered 124 school textbooks on grammar and Hebrew literature, history, geography and citizenship, Professor Daniel Bar-Tal of Tel Aviv University concluded:

“The early textbooks tended to describe acts of Arabs as hostile, deviant, cruel, immoral, and unfair, with the intention to hurt Jews and to annihilate the State of Israel. Within this frame of reference, Arabs were delegitimized by the use of such labels as ‘robbers,’ ‘bloodthirsty,’ and ‘killers,’” said Professor Bar-Tal, adding that there has been little positive revision in the curriculum over the years.

She also quotes the Israeli writer/researcher Adir Cohen who wrote the book *An Ugly Face in the Mirror* which is a study of the nature of children’s education and nurturing in Israel. One section of the book was based on the results of a survey ... He found that *“Seventy five percent of the children described the “Arab” as a murderer, one who kidnaps children, a criminal and a terrorist. Eighty per cent said they saw the Arab as someone dirty with a terrifying face. Ninety per cent of the students stated they believe that Palestinians have no rights whatsoever to the land in Israel or Palestine.*

Meehan mentions that *‘Palestinian national and civil identity is never touched upon’* One Israeli public high school said: *“Our books basically tell us that everything the Jews do is fine and legitimate and Arabs are wrong and violent and are trying to exterminate us”*

A passionate advocate to end racism and brainwashing in Israel’s children books is Nurit Peled-Elhanan who calls this process ***Education or mind infection?*** Peled is an Israeli peace activist, a professor of language and education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and lost her daughter in a suicidal attack in Jerusalem. She studied the content of Israeli school books for the past five years, and her account is put in a book ***Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*** which is currently being published in the UK. *In an article in the Observer she says*

I keep asking myself, what are the means by which good Israeli children are turned into murdering monsters, what are the means by which they are so mind-infected as to kill and torture and humiliate other children, their parents and grandparents, and sacrifice their own life for nothing but the folly and megalomania of their chiefs

(,,,) We must all ask our children's forgiveness for not being more alert, for not fighting hard enough to keep our promises for a better world, for not refusing the evil viruses before and for letting them be the victims of the horrible, mental infection we are all suffering from, to look at their innocent, astonished, disillusioned small faces and ask ourselves: why does that streak of blood rip the petal of their cheek??? She describes what she found as racism— but, more than that, racism that prepares young Israelis for their compulsory military service.

Asked if Palestinian school books also reflect a certain dogma, Peled-Elhanan says” *they distinguish between Zionists and Jews. "They make this distinction all the time. They are against Zionists, not against Jews."*

Israel imposes the curriculum on the Palestinian schools inside Israel and it forbids them from studying al- Nakkba (the Dispossession and Tragedy of the Palestinians) and is escalating its racist laws and regulations to hinder any teaching or commemoration al- Nakkba day. A member of the Knesset said: *Teaching al- Nakba in Israel's schools is incitement.* Moreover, last week Israel imposed its racist curriculum on Palestinians in East Jerusalem which is part of the Occupied Territory. The Civil Campaign for Preserving the Palestinian Curriculum in East Jerusalem issued an appeal saying: *“While casting a blind eye to the gradual deterioration of Palestinian schools, however, Israel is simultaneously now imposing a targeted change in the curriculum, aimed at further Judaizing the city and diluting Palestinian culture and identity.”*

The world is more and more aware of the similarities between Israeli racism and that of Apartheid South Africa. The famous Swedish writer Henning Mankell, who participated in the Palestine Festival of Literature 2010 in the Palestinian Occupied Territory, compared Israeli racism to racism of the Apartheid government of South Africa.

It is interesting to see what the prominent South African British writer Beverley Naidoo says about racist books in Apartheid South Africa. Naidoo exposed the subject through talks and writings. In a lecture to IBBY Congress (2002) she says: *For generations, South Africa’s children, black and white, learned radicalised histories. White Europeans controlled the narratives in books and were the gatekeepers to the world of literacy and literature. For generations, if*

black people appeared in fiction, it was largely in one of three ways: as savage, servant, or comic buffoon....

Of course this was not just in South Africa. One of the most successful series of children's books in print during my childhood (and still in print) is that of Babar. The illustrations in Picnic at Babar's (1) not only powerfully reflected social, political relations but helped to construct and reinforce in millions of young readers' minds that black Africans were more animal than human.

The prominent American writer Elsa Marston covered the subject extensively in many of her articles and lectures. In her important article *Palestinians in Fiction for Young People* in Wasafiri she says "The political struggle between the Palestinians and Israel has gone through dramatic changes over the last sixty years, which have been reflected in literature for young people.

(...) Three main categories emerge: books that clearly advance the Zionist objective; books with an Israeli perspective but less manifestly colonialist; and those that represent a Palestinian viewpoint

Marston gives example of each category and ends at an optimistic note: *Today's literature for young people is forcing open doors that have long been locked by the prevailing view, especially in the United States, that the Palestinian voice did not merit publication. Authors and publishers are now rising to the challenge of being open-minded, imaginative in the sense of 'wearing the other's shoes', and courageous in speaking painful truths.*

Naidoo gives a similar picture of what was the situation in relation to South Africa; she says that in the early 1980s "the vast majority of so called nonfiction books for children about South Africa in Britain totally misrepresented the country". However, Naidoo wrote a very interesting book on the subject "Through Whose Eyes? Exploring racism: reader, text and context" pointing that the reader interaction with the text is influenced by the social milieu and other learning resources...

'We read what we are' or 'we are what we read'? As readers, we come to books not as culturally neutral, but with ready-made lenses. Yet the claim is made that books can sometimes change our ways of seeing".

The Problem of Censorship

The third dimension that affects books related to Palestine is the problem of long years of attempted censorship, mostly successful, on Palestinian and pro - Palestinian books on any literature related to our Nakba - our dispossession, to occupation and the horrendous daily life of our children in the Western world. This grave problem censored the Palestinian story and silenced the voices of our children. Luckily in the last few years censorship is combated, the change is rather dramatic, though, the urge to censor justice still rules over some racists and xenophobic circles.

Censorship in the aim of concealing the Palestinian story is vividly faced and exposed by individuals and organizations that cherish and defend quality books, freedom of expression and multi-cultural books. The questions that should be asked are why, where and how voices for justice are silenced?!

It is very interesting to expose how three quality books were treated by two polarized worlds. Some Jewish communities, and I prefer to say Zionist because they are influenced by the Zionist discourse and ideology, were desperate to censor three quality children books because they do not like the world to hear the real story of the Palestinians; they want the distorted version of Israel to dominate world public opinion, as it has done for decades! To further realise this aim, they continue to equate anti- Zionism with anti – Semitism and to consider the criticism of Israeli occupation, oppression and atrocities with anti-Jewishness!

The three books are nicely written and offer realistic images of Palestinian children living under occupation; children with fears and dreams struggling for survival and for their rights.

The three writers and their books are very well known to most of you so I will introduce them briefly:

1. ***Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*** by the prominent Canadian writer Deborah Ellis, published by Groundwood Books (2004)

Deborah Ellis begins her carefully balanced book by expressing her concern for the plight of civilians, especially children caught in situations of war. Her book is a first-hand account of the lives of Palestinian and Israeli children.

Ellis, whose work has been translated into 17 languages and whose book was short listed for many awards and won one award, had to face great pressure

from Jewish groups wanting to censor the book as anti-Israeli. The book is based on interviews made by Ellis with Palestinian and Israeli children.

"...a moving, sometimes chilling, expression of the disruption and distress created in young people's lives by the on-going conflict in the Middle East, as well as a reminder of the human capacity for hope and renewal."

- Quill & Quire

"Here is a balanced and thought-provoking work recommended for school and public libraries."

- Multicultural Review

"The Canadian Jewish Congress has put pressure on the OLA and Ontario school boards to remove the book from its Silver Birch reading program, an independent reading program for children in Grades 4 to 6 in the pretext that it is not suitable for children"

Three Wishes was ultimately banned from elementary school libraries by the Toronto District School Board despite massive opposition including editorials in the major papers, etc. No other school board banned it despite intense pressure. What happened is that librarians asked the kids not to return the book to them but simply to circulate it among themselves

PEN Canada expressed its opposition to Toronto District School Board's decision to restrict access for younger children to Deborah Ellis's award-winning book, Three Wishes *"This action sets a dangerous precedent, which might well encourage future protests against a wide-variety of books whose subject matter is objectionable to one group or another..."*

The Publisher of the book Patsy Aldana the ex- president of IBBY, said that the book sold many more copies than it would have otherwise do, as a result of the efforts to ban it.

Three Wishes was also published in the US, UK, Australia and Germany.

In one interview Ellis talked about how war and other tragedies created by adults affect children: *"If children are tough enough to be bombed and starved, they are tough enough to read about it." Adults are not protecting children by keeping them from reading about these subjects, she added, "We are protecting ourselves from the question, 'What are you doing to make the world better?'"*

2. **A Little Piece of Ground** (2003) published by Macmillan by the prominent British writer Elizabeth Laird with the Palestinian writer Sonia Nimr, is about Palestinian youth in Ramallah during the second Intifada and the Israeli invasion. The book faced vigorous pressure from Jewish groups to ban it.

Laird, who has written various quality books, says: *I deliberately choose to focus on issues such as war, street children, disability or child abuse. This is not really the case. My starting point is themes such as courage, endurance, forgiveness and love.*

The Guardian that covered the hot debate surrounding the book in an article: ***Children's author faces Jewish wrath*** said:

Macmillan has received three demands for the book to be pulped, and many bookshops are worried about stocking it, lest it provoke further protests from Jewish groups. So far, most of the attacks on Laird have come from North America, led by a chain of Canadian bookshops which made the first "vitriolic" complaint to her publisher. It is understood that others have come from Jewish pressure groups.

Phyllis Simon, co-owner of Kidsbooks, in her campaign to suppress its publication posted on a Web site called Hasafran, a forum of the Association of Jewish Libraries: *"I am left with a profound sense of shock and disgust at the irresponsible decision to publish what I feel is a racist, inflammatory and totally one-sided piece of propaganda at a time when efforts are being made to resolve this conflict."*

What is alarming about all this, not that people can differ in their evaluation of books, but that they can use all kind of pressure and lobbying to censor the book!

However, Macmillan stood firmly behind the author and commented by saying *"We thought long and hard about whether it was responsible to go ahead. We were aware it might provoke a range of opinions."*

The book has received a wide international recognition; it has co-editions in at least 13 countries, including the USA as it was reprinted by Haymarket Books in 2006 so things are changing even here!

The book won the Hampshire Book Award and was shortlisted to many awards ... It was chosen in 2007 by USBBY-CBC as one of the Outstanding International Books "Building Bridges through Children's and Young Adult Books"

Haymarket Books dedicates the book to the memory of Rachel Corrie, the young American peace activist who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer. The mother of Rachel Corrie writes: "In *A Little Piece of Ground*, Elizabeth Laird creates a captivating metaphor for the Israeli occupation that allows young and old to witness it through the salvaged play of Palestine youth."

3. *The Shepherd's Granddaughter* (2008) by the prominent writer Anne Laurel Carter published by Groundwood Books is about the life of Amani, the shepherd's granddaughter, a teenager girl living with her extended family in Hebron in the Palestinian Occupied Territory and how her life is traumatized by the atrocities of Israeli occupation forces and settlers..

Carter had also to face Jewish Incitement which was not as successful as in the case of the two above mentioned books published few years earlier. The world is moving forward, though not enough!

B'Nai Brith Canada had complained that *The Shepherd's Granddaughter* was "vehemently anti-Israel" and had asked that the book — currently part of a province-wide reading program for Grades 7 and 8 students — be removed and was disappointed with the Toronto District School Board's decision to keep it in the schools.

This book was also "*under review by Toronto's public school board after complaints by Jewish groups that it is "anti-Israel."* Fortunately the Toronto District School Board had a new chair and a new director thus the book was not banned despite a major effort to do so.

In an interview with the Star, Carter says: ***The controversy "made people think"***.

(...) I do feel very sensitive to (the Jewish) audience and I wrote with that audience in mind, knowing how hard it is to hear these stories. But having seen the occupation and how very hard it is for Palestinians, and being so shocked by what I saw there, I tried to tell it in a way that maybe they could hear it.

The Shepherd's Granddaughter received many awards and recognitions from Kirkus, USBBY Outstanding International Books List, The Canadian Library Association, Jane Addams Children's Book Awards and The International Reading Association.

Professor Fouad Moughrabi commented on two of these books and similar ones by saying: *More importantly, we now have, for the first time, portraits of Palestinian children as normal human beings engaged in the daily struggle for survival (...) This is quite remarkable because the Palestinian, as a human being, still does not exist. His or her identity continues to be submerged under various labels he is a terrorist, or a religious fanatic, a hater of Jews, a moderate or an extremist.*

Ending censorship enriches the world of books and knowledge and cements the struggle for peace and justice. However, there is still a long way to go. Only three weeks ago the British Education Secretary Michael Gove stopped eight schools sending pupils to Tottenham Palestine Literature Festival. Jeremy Corbyn, an MP who supported the festival, said: *"It was a great opportunity for children to understand the wealth and joy of Palestinian literature and a little of the history of the region. It's not in any way biased, but a festival which encourages children to broaden their horizons. The children were looking forward to it."*

And, here in California Pro-Israel organizations pressured the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland to cancel an upcoming exhibition of drawings made by Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip. However, the art exhibit opened in the courtyard outside of the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland to a tremendous crowd of supporters

The process of *Peace the World Together with Children's Books* is tough and challenging, but we are on the Road and this dream will, definitely, become a reality! The outstanding role of our IBBY family deserves deep appreciation

specially the USBBY for its exceptional work on endorsing books which promote peace and integrity. Voices defiant of censorship and siege are getting louder and the world community is joining us in our struggle and endeavors to achieve liberation and peace. Thus Palestinian children and children of the world will enjoy their childhood in a peaceful egalitarian world!

I would like to end with what the famous American writer Alice Walker said in her article "*Why I'm joining the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza*"

I see children, all children, as humanity's most precious resource, because it will be to them that the care of the planet will always be left. One child must never be set above another, even in casual conversation, not to mention in speeches that circle the globe.

Yes it is the child, after all "*the child is the father of the man*"!

Writings of Children in PBBY Children in Crisis Libraries: On the last Criminal War on Gaza (Extracts from the writings)

I Wouldn't Sleep so as not to Dream

Rana Rafik Al-Basyouni

I started seeing every night in my dreams the scenes of those martyrs and wounded, I would wake up scared, I became unable to study, and when I try to remember anything ... the worse was ... the tanks that bombard their shells on sleeping people's homes; and I wouldn't sleep so as not to dream and be scared that something will happen to me or to my parents. I wish these days won't return and there will be peace and security...

Isn't it my Right to Live Happily?

Amal Al-Hissi

... I was afraid each minute and asked myself whether I'm going to live or die, I couldn't sleep as I thought all the time of this same question: Isn't it my right to live happily in security and peace, without fear? To have parks, we are tired of playing on the street, even there, we are afraid.

... What have we done that we should be hurt and die? The Israeli army followed us to our homes and we ran away to a place we thought safe but they reached it, so where do we go? Tell me where? What have we done to them?

What are we to do? I am very afraid and I want to live. I don't want to die! But I want to say that I am an innocent Palestinian child. I don't carry a weapon but only a book and a pencil to learn.

They Killed Everything We Love

Lamis Audeh

... My sister Hanin was injured in the leg and we took her to hospital. The second shell hit the staircase and we couldn't walk on it, and the third hit the roof and destroyed the water barrels and burned the hay arbour on our roof, and caused a huge fire, so we escaped from the house and took nothing with us, not even the slippers.

...The F16 planes bombarded, and we saw them on the ground dying. The two girls were killed, and Ismail was seriously wounded and bled. ...Why did the Israelis kill them when they had done nothing to them, I hate the Zionists who destroyed our home and injured my sister and the children, and killed everything we love!

We Little Children Hate War

Isra' Nidal Sehwal

The Israelis destroyed the houses and many people were killed. I hope there wouldn't be another war on any country; we little children hate war and hate those who like killing and destroying.

Why do they oppress us?

Yusra Al-Basyoni

Even when people came out of their homes carrying white flags, Israelis threw phosphoric fire grenades on them; which it was said on television that it's forbidden internationally, and that it burns the body, and we saw how it burned the small children.

Why do they do this to us, what have we done for them? We are steadfast on the land of Gaza and we tell its people that victory is coming if God be willing

Writings of Children in PBBY Children in Crisis Libraries: Writings on Peace

A Palestinian Boy Dreaming of Peace

Salsabeel Hassan

(...) I see with my imagination a day when I open my window and see the sun of security and peace with no sounds of shells and smell of death. I see birds and see eyes filled with joy and children playing and yelling from joy.

I imagine myself going to school without military checkpoints keeping me late. I sit in my chair and see my friends and not pictures of them (...) I see the pigeon of peace singing and taking the olive branch and giving us a kiss of security....

Suddenly I wake from my coma to the yelling of my sisters, and the disaster was that there were martyrs in our neighbourhood; people were screaming from fear and panic as the planes were bombarding and bulldozers destroying the olive trees and our garden in which we used to play.

The peace pigeon was killed and the olive branch fell, and I say that peace is still hidden under the curtain of war.

Peace

Nawal al-Hissi (8 years)

What does peace mean?

It means safety and security

Oh lord of peace, lord of peace

I sleep with no fear from the sound of airplanes

Oh lord of peace, lord of peace

I play with no fear from the shooting tanks

Oh lord of peace, lord of peace

I go to my school with no fear from the sound of shells

Oh lord of peace, lord of peace

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