Democracy and Human Rights

MAKE ROOM FOR PEACE
Belonging, Partnership and Diversity in Women's Actions for Peace in Israel

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December 2020

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While the share of women in Israeli peace activism has always been significant, their "place around the table" has often been missing, and they have been systematically ex-cluded from decision-making arenas.

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The current study aims to explore the barriers preventing women from taking a more significant role in peace processes, and the interrelationship between these barriers and concepts like diversity, partnership and belonging. The authors point out some ways of expanding the circles of participation and impact.

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Despite the many barriers encountered by women activists in Israeli peace movements, they have managed and still manage to make a change in the Israeli conflicted life reality.

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

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PROLOGUE

The current paper is based on our personal experiences as peace activists. We searched our memory for successes as well as failures and pains. We reviewed the knowledge accumulated both in the field and in the academia, and mainly attempted to express our deep commitment to the advocacy of peace and our faith in the importance of increasing the share of women involved in peace processes.

Some of the issues discussed in this paper have not been openly discussed so far. We wanted to explore them in an open discourse, resonate their importance and, consequently, present a path for action and change.

For the purpose of this paper, we talked to 15 women: Jews and Arabs, older and younger, new and veteran activists, from a variety of ethnicities, religious and secular, and we thank them all for opening up to us and sharing their thoughts, experience and wisdom. We wish to thank the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for the initiative of publishing this project, and their ongoing support of efforts to promote justice and peace in Israel.

INTRODUCTION

This is the reality portrayed in Israeli media in October 2020: the Covid-19 pandemic is running wild, civic protests throughout the state, initial contacts with Lebanon around bilateral agreements and the marine border, the Abraham Accords are signed with the UAE. The plane taking the Israeli delegation to Dubai carries a professional team of women versus 17 men, and not a single female politician.

At the same time, news from the feminist arena in Israel (mostly visible over Zoom screens) report dozens of protests and demonstrations throughout Israel against gender-based violence, the launch of *Ma'arag* – a data base on Women's Policy Agencies, Feminist Organizations and Mechanisms for Gender Equality in Israel (https://maarag.bgu.ac.il/); the publication of the comprehensive paper by Hanna Safran and Dalia Sachs (2020), which reviews the activities of women's peace movements and activism against the occupation over the last three decades, a series of events commemorating Resolution 1325 (UNSC, 2000), Women Wage Peace[1] is granted special consultative status to the UN, while the Coalition of Women for Peace[2], which has been active since 2000, is shut down.

The gap between these two realities is the core of the current paper. We set out to find out what prevents women with many years of experience and commitment from playing a more significant role in peace processes, and the interrelationship between these barriers and concepts like diversity, partnership and belonging.

To address these questions, we used existing literature, while also conducting interviews with new and veteran peace activists, and adding our personal impressions, as activists who have been advocating for peace for many years now. Due to the limited scope of this paper and project, and despite the strong connection between women's peace activism in Israel and in Palestine, this paper will only address the Israeli aspect, and particularly the last two decades, since UNSC Resolution 1325 was adopted.

Resolution 1325, which was adopted by the UN Security Council in October 2000, focuses on the linkage between gender and conflicts. This resolution is the first to acknowledge the various effects of national conflicts on women, the need to defend girls and women against the implications of these conflicts, the contribution of women to peace advocacy and the importance of including them in decision making and conflict resolution processes. Inspired by this resolution, in 2005, Israel added a section (6c) to the Women's Equal Rights Law, calling for the inclusion of women from all groups of society in conflict resolution processes.

Another trend promoting the knowledge about women, peace and security is the growing

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[1] A women's movement striving to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the principles of UN-SCR 1325. For further reading see: https://www.womenwagepeace.org.il.

[2] A feminist organization established in November 2000, which strives to end the conflict and achieve a just peace, while including women in the public discourse: https://coalitionofwomen.org.

documentation of women's activism in social and political issues in Israel. This trend is based on the understanding of the key importance of personal experience and encourages the use of personal memories as a social action. Yifat Gutman (2017) describes this approach as "memory activism" – a strategy aimed at challenging the common narrative about the past, while trying to affect the public discourse and policy. This action of archivism, in addition to the rich and growing corpus of Israeli feminist scholars, many of them also peace activists (e.g., Dafna Izraeli, 1999; Hedva Isachar, 2003, 2009; Erella Shadmi, 2007; Chazan, 1989, 1991, and more) offered a great help when writing this paper, and revealed a fascinating road map, by which we hope to pave new directions and reveal new angles on our way to promoting gender equality and peace.

1

"IN MIXED-GENDER ORGANIZATIONS, WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE SOLDIERS, WHILE MEN TOOK ALL THE GLORY."
(Zehava Gal-On, in an interview with Yuli Novak, 2018)

A historical review of peace movements in Israel suggests that women have always played active roles in peacepromoting organizations, NGOs and initiatives (Sa'ar, Sachs & Aharoni, 2011; Sasson-Levi, 2002, 2003; Harel-Shalev & Dafna-Tequa, 2015, 2016; Herzog, 2003, 2008; Golan, 1997, 2015). Yet, despite their presence in numbers, their representation in interorganizational or official political decision-making centers has been meager (Safran & Sachs, 2020).

The year 2000 has been dramatic for the Israeli public. Following the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation in Camp David, and the launch of the second Intifada, the Israeli peace camp suffered a major blow, and despair was heavily felt (Herman, 2009). Yet, the trend of women's peace movements and NGOs, which had started in the 1980s, was still going strong (Aharoni & Hasson, 2020).

1.1 BEHIND THE SCENES

The sense of being excluded and marginalized in mixed-gender peace organizations was repeated, at some point, in each of the interviews in our study. Merav, a woman in her 30s, is a long time activist in a binational peace NGO that was established in 2006. Merav worked as a program coordinator and moderator for the women's group in the organization as well as a board member. At the beginning of the

interview, she described a facilitating sphere, where she was able to gain status and influence. Yet, toward the end, when we asked questions about her choice to "take it down a notch" and "take a step back", she said: *"At the end of the day, men will always rule over women... It is not because they are bad. Sometimes, they try to do the right thing. It is about their lack of awareness, or maybe they enjoy their lack of awareness"*. Hila, a peace activist with a respectable reputation in academic and feminist circles in Israel and abroad, shared the same notion. Hila was one of the first women to join the leadership of Peace Now[3]. She remembered that when the NGO was established, the founders refused to allow Yuli Tamir[4] to sign the "officers' letter" (1978)[5] that supported the peace with Egypt, despite being an officer herself.

Similar descriptions were documented in Hedva Isachar's book, *Sisters in Peace: Feminist Voices of the Left* (2003). The book includes 25 interviews with women activists in peace movements and human rights organizations, presenting their personal experiences and their feminist and political worldview. The narratives all have something in common: Rela Mazali talked about her activity in the "21st Year" movement. At some point, a women's group was established within the organization, with the aim of having a greater say in decision-making processes. Yet, their suggestions were completely ignored. After the movement was dissolved, Rela said: *"We left*

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[3] A Zionist left Israeli NGO promoting peace through the two-state solution. It was established in 1978, against the background of the peace negotiations with Egypt.

[4] Prof. Yuli Tamir served as the Minister of Education (2006-2009) and Immigration (1999-2001) on behalf of the Labor party and was one of the co-founders of Peace Now.

[5] A letter sent in March 1978 to Prime Minister Menachem Begin, urging him to promote the peace negotiations with Egypt.

with very bad feelings. We were oppressed in a place where we did not expect to hear the words 'women later'". (p. 24). A similar testimony was given by Ivon Deutsch, who was active in organizations like the Jerusalem Campus, the Committee for Solidarity with Bir-Zeit University, and more: *"We took part in discussions and the organization's work, but we mostly remained behind the scenes. The political discourse and its boundaries were dictated by men's leadership, which was almost the only voice heard in demonstrations, public conventions and events, or press conferences"* (p. 127). Interestingly, the sense of exclusion was also felt by women in high academic or military positions. Yehudit, a former senior official in the IDF and the Israeli security system, described her experience in a mixed-gender peace organization of retired officers (lt. colonels or higher), which aimed to promote peace and security: *"They realized it was not politically correct to have no women. They realized it was not looking good, so they decided to add some women, but only for the sake of appearance".*

According to relevant literature, women's marginalization in Israel emerges, first and foremost, from the militarist nature of Israeli society, which holds a republican ethos, defining the individual's status in the community based on his or her contribution to the greater good. Sasson-Levy and Lomsky-Feder (2011) suggest that the main ideal of the republican paradigm is the combat soldier, who represents the highest form of civilian contribution, as he is willing to sacrifice his life for the state. As women are often excluded from the battlefield, they are not perceived as equal to men in their ultimate commitment to the state. This situation is further accentuated by the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the perception of war as an inevitable condition.

The central role of the army and the militarist culture in Israel are also reflected in the refutation of the "feminine peace hypothesis". According to this hypothesis, women in the West tend to support peace and oppose violence

(Scheindling, 2011). Yet, studies conducted in Israel suggest that unlike in Western countries, women in Israel do not show a higher level of support of peace processes or war prevention, and most women identify with the military and with security measures (Golan, 1997). A poll conducted in 2010 even found that most women in Israel tend to vote to the right (Gedalia et al., 2010).

Up until the Oslo Accords (1993), peace movements in Israel were generally ignored by the political establishment, and excluded from peace processes (Hermann, 2009). The Oslo Accords, which were preceded by early negotiations of civil society representatives (Track 2), allowed Israeli and Palestinian women to play a significant role. Their contribution, however, went unnoticed (Aharoni, 2011; Sharoni, 1996). The key status of the army and national security issues in the Israeli public agenda creates an absurd situation, where the people in charge of war are also the ones in charge of making peace (Sasson-Levy & Lomsky-Feder, 2011). This contradiction was well represented by Yossi Beilin, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Oslo Accords, when he tried to explain the scarcity of women in the political arena: *"One possible explanation for the lack of women in Israeli politics is, that since women do not reach high ranks in the army, and since the army plays a key role in war as well as peace processes, women have less to say about it".* (Aharoni, 2011, p. 403).

Another reason for the marginalization of women's political activism has to do with documentation and memory processes. Dalia Sachs and Hanna Safran (2020) argue that women have been prevented from taking an equal part in leadership or the media, just as they have been excluded from the documentation of peace processes in Israel over the years (pp. 3-4). Sachs and Safran describe how feminist writing in the first person, which is based on personal memories, can affect the understanding of the historical sequence, the selection of studied and presented documents, as well as the discussion

and the conclusions. When Yuli Novak, former CEO of Breaking the Silence[6], attempted to find out how women survive in long term political activity she found very few materials (Novak, 2018).

Formal institutions have always tended to position women as field or informal activists (Aharoni, 2016), which also explains why the wide ranged and varied activity of women in Israel over the years has not been translated into political power, and demonstrates the immense difficulty of breaking through these perceptions and taking part in discussions.

2

1325

UNSC Resolution 1325 was approved on October 30, 2000.[7] This was the pinnacle of efforts by feminist researchers and activists to acknowledge the importance of integrating feminist perspective in conflict research and resolution. This UNSC Resolution was the first acknowledgement of the unique influences of conflicts over women, the need to protect women and girls, the great value of women's contribution to conflict resolution and the requirement to integrate women into these processes (Cohn 2013; Shepherd, 2008; Pratt & Richter Devroe, 2011). The resolution was approved by most of the UN members, was translated into more than 100 languages, and inspired dozens of countries to form a national action plan (NAP) aimed to incorporate a gender perspective adapted to the local needs and challenges.

This step was greeted with optimism alongside some suspicion by the Israeli feminist field. Resolution 1325 expanded the opportunities for fruitful and more significant collaborations with the international community. There was hope that these collaborations would offer a better access to resources and cooperation with Palestinian women activists, while putting more pressure on decision makers

(Greenblatt, 2004). The first decade following the resolution was marked by intensive activism: conferences and meetings were held to discuss the resolution's implications on gender issues in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (such as the conference "UNSC Resolution 1325 and its Implications for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", held in 2003), organizations, such as the International Women's Commission, focusing on the integration of women in conflict resolution and opposing any use of force were established (Saragusti, 2009). Additionally, Yuli Tamir and Eti Livni, Knesset Members under Sharon's government at the time, passed the amendment to the Women's Equal Rights Law (section 6c), which argues that women from diverse groups should be integrated in political decision-making processes. By doing so, Israel was the first state to anchor Resolution 1325 in the local law. During the years 2012-2014, women's NGOs like Itach Ma'aki [8], WIPS [9] and Agenda[10] led an action plan that was designed to serve as a basis for the governmental action plan.[11]

Alongside the hope inspired by this resolution, some mentioned the failures and difficulties expected in the process of local adaption. It was argued that the content of the resolution, which

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7 The first resolution about women, peace and security, Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325), was unanimously adopted by United Nations Security Council on 31 October 2000. SCR1325 marked the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict pre-vention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace-building. It also stressed the importance of wom-en's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security: https://www.peacewomen.org/SCR-1325

8 An NGO of advocates for social justice, which was established in 2001 to help women who suffer discrimination through legal means. In recent years, Itach Ma'aki led the advocation of Resolution 1325.

9 A center for the promotion of women in Israeli society, which was established by the Van-Leer Insti-tute in 2009.

10 An Israeli center for media strategy that advocates social change through the media.

11 http://www.itach.org.il/wp-content/uploads/tochnit-peula-heb.pdf

does not explicitly negate wars and violent conflicts, does not challenge the use of force as a way of solving conflict situations, and settles instead on ways to resolve them (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). Netta Amar (2004) argued that the resolution lacks enough emphasis on multiculturalism and social rights. Amalia Sa'ar (2004) presented a series of recommendations, which were required, so she argued, to adapt the resolution to the Israeli public and government. Among other things, she claimed, *"we must insist on talking about women's rights and men's proifts. Turning 1325 into an internal resolution in Israel, we must have the courage to face reality. It requires us to be able to phrase women's interests, without falling in the trap of the Orientalist discourse, which uses women to establish cultural superiority"* (p. 53). This statement warns against the danger of biased gender representation paving the path for Western countries to justify political violence against non Western countries" (Mohanty, 2003), or, as phrased by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) *"white men saving brown women from brown men"*, as in the case of the American invasion to Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Another issue addressed by Sa'ar (2004) are the structural barriers in the form of financial and political arrangements that serve specific social strata, and particularly men. This argument is common among feminist activists around the world. They explain that despite their growing role and positions, women's independence and freedom will not be achieved until structural barriers are addressed, such as poverty, authoritative regimes, reduced accessibility to education, housing and more (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). To address these shortcomings, feminist scholars suggest the incorporation of the theory of intersectionality in the resolution's principals. This combination enables the exploration of women's life experiences based on social intersectionality like class, nationality and ethnicity, and their power relations (Crenshaw, 1995), revealing how the reference of women as a single category creates a failure in understanding structures of inequality between women and among social groups in a conflict

(El-Bushra, 2003).

Additionally, the incorporation of intersectionality expands and alternates the meaning of concepts like peace and security, allowing us to explore their subjective meanings for different women (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni, 2007; Women's Safety Index, 2014). This process established the connection between feminist issues and peace issues, while also exposing gaps and disputes between different social groups of women. One example is the decision taken by a group of Palestinian Israeli women citizens to stop their participation in the National Action Plan (NAP) project following a dispute concerning the issue of the occupation and the avoidance of a clear statement against it.

Twenty years of Israeli and international experience suggest that the way to combine gender perspectives with conflict resolution and peace promotion policies and strategies is still a long one. Yet, the path paved by Resolution 1325, which includes impressive victories alongside painful failures, serve as a compass for the future.

3

A MOVEMENT OF YOUR OWN – WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENTS

"I remember one time, when I had lunch with a few colleagues at a diner in central Tel-Aviv. Over lunch, I told them about my activity in Women Wage Peace, and we started talking. Suddenly, a middle-aged man got up from another table, approached us without introducing himself, and started a monologue. The bottom line was: 'I really like and appreciate your activity... but, you know, you are wrong. You should do this and that...' I remember this incident, because it rattled me in so many ways. I tried to imagine myself or one of my women friends overhearing a political argument or discourse in another table, and believing it is her right to barge into the conversation. I tried to understand how my personal space was so easily breached, and I found myself deliberating about my reaction. And most of all, I realized that despite his 'compliments', at the end of the day, this man represented in the most extreme way what I had experienced throughout the process of establishing our movement: Men (usually white and well-off ifnancially) trying to convince me and us that they already know what is right. They know the answer, the way, and we, women, should act as their proxies. Every time I was asked about the establishment of a women's movement instead of a people's movement, this incident came into mind". (Shiri Levinas)

Our review reveals that some of the women who took part in mixed-gender peace movements initiated the establishment of separate women's groups within these organizations (such as the Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Families for Peace, Breaking the Silence, and more). Some continued to be active in these movements behind the scenes, while others chose to leave them and found themselves joining or founding womenled movements. Women's marginalization in mixed-gender peace movements was one of the main reasons for the establishment of separate peace initiatives (Safran & Sachs, 2020). Yet, this development was also supported by additional factors. First, the growing political violence in the region – the second Intifada, the second Lebanon War and the wars against Hamas in Gaza – prompted women to get up and act against these extreme situations, rather than organizing around a specific idea or ideology, which is a recognized phenomenon in women's movements around the world (El-Bushra, 2003). Furthermore, these movements allowed women to find a safe space, where they have been able to act, explore and phrase a distinct position and voice in peace and security issues, offering a safety net of partners sharing the same path (which is not always accepted by their surroundings or in the general public).

This aspect was described in a number of interviews, particularly with young women, who talked about the process of learning and forming their opinions after joining the movement. Safa, a Palestinian Israeli citizen, who is the coordinator of her movement's activities in the north, described it as a *"learning process, which leads to change and doors opening".*

The various movements established advocate different theories of change. The different movements vary in size and composition, in their position concerning the occupation, their views of the linkage between peace and feminism, the cooperation with Palestinian women and

their organizational identity definition (mothers, professionals, activists, representatives). Galia Golan (2015) suggests women's organizations should be divided into the following categories: (1) organizations that perpetuate the gender impact, like Four Mothers or Machsom Watch; (2) those that try to change the gender impact – the approach promoted by Resolution 1325 – like Itach Ma'aki, Forum Dvorah and the International Women's Commission for Peace; (3) those that explicitly reject militarism, like New Profile and the military service refusal movement.

The differences between women's movements have been widely discussed in professional literature and among activists. For instance, as part of the discussion of the term motherhood as a political resource (Aharoni, 2017). Four Mothers[12] actually used motherhood as a strategy (Weiner, 2002, Yassour-Borochowitz & Desivilya-Syna, 2007; Helman & Rapoport, 1997; Shadmi ,2000; Helman, 1999), while others, like Women in Black[13] (Blumen & Halevi, 2009) and the Coalition of Women for Peace went against it (Isachar, 2003). According to Sarai Aharoni (2017), the adoption of the nation's mothers' narrative enhanced women's ability to make a difference and raise hope, while also creating unrealistic expectations about women and eventually preserving their marginal social position (p. 319). Erella Shadmi (2007) offered a different approach, and suggested using values that are perceived as motherly, but not from a physiological point of view, for the promotion of peace. Hearings held during the Summer of 2006 by the International Women's Commission for Peace revealed that women in Israel identify with motherly roles and their attributed values (like empathy, inclusion and compromise), but they are oblivious to the contradiction between their cause and their difficulty of feeling empathy towards the suffering of Palestinian mothers (Limor, 2009), or the dissonance between resisting war and, for example, their pride over their officer son.

While women's peace organizations gained certain achievements in the political arena, their main contribution was in other domains, and was reflected, for instance, in insisting on keeping peace as part of the Israeli public discourse, increasing the number of women joining their causes, and resonating support around the world. It should be mentioned that the largest, most dominant peace movement in Israel today is a women's movement (Women Wage Peace, according to the assessment of Yuval Rahamim, chair of the Peace NGO Forum).

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12 A protest movement established in 1997 following the Helicopter Disaster by four women from north-ern Israel, mothers of soldiers who were serving in Lebanon, who tried to call for a withdrawal of the IDF from Southern Lebanon.

13 An international women's organization that leads non-violent protests against wars, violence and militarism. Established in Israel in 1988.

4

STOP! A ROADBLOCK AHEAD!
Barriers for participation and impact of women's peace activity

The term "barriers" is usually attached to structural difficulties related to the past or present Israeli reality. Militarism, the Zionist ethos, the idea of the people's army, the Jewish people's history of persecutions, the religion's influence on the state, the approach to minorities and foreigners, Israel's political status in the world, the lack of resources, social gaps, neo-liberal economy and more – those are all recognized barriers for women's' activity in peace movements.

We would like to shed light on additional barriers, which are hidden behind the scenes of those movements. This reflective process allows us to identify alternative paths and additional spheres of impact. At the same time, identifying the hidden barriers at the core of the organizational activity may open new opportunities to women activists, allowing them to change their status without waiting for the institution's recognition or willingness to make room for them.

Our point of departure, as peace activists, is based on the belief that most women in Israel, regardless of their ethnicity, education level or political agenda, strive to live in peace. Most of them may believe it impossible, as suggested by the hearings of the International Women's Commission for Peace (Saragusti, Limor and Haghagh, 2009); many might believe that they cannot promote peace in any way. Yet, we believe, as studies of global peace processes and agreements suggest, that for peace to be achieved and publicly accepted in a certain state, the circle of supporters must include as

many social groups as possible, and enjoy a wide popular support (Wibben, 2011, Rooney, 2006, 2007). Hence, the main barrier we would like to discuss is diversity.

As we understand it, a homogenic peace movement cannot make a significant public impact. Hence, analyzing the characteristics of this barrier and possible ways to overcome it are a crucial measure on our path for change.

The term "diversity" includes multiple aspects, like class, collective identities, privileges, combining struggles, and more. We believe that the lack of diversity in peace movements may be partially related to the "gatekeepers" who dictate the ways by which women's adequacy is measured when they ask to take part in these organizations or suggest different activities.

4.1 THE GATEKEEPERS: A PEACE ACTIVIST = A LEFT-WING FEMINIST?

"Peace activity cannot happen without the call to end the occupation and the militarist patriarchal order" (Safran & Sachs, 2020)

"While I view and deifne myself as a feminist today, and it is part of what I do, I am well aware that I was not born this way. I remember a series of formative events, which happened in various times, when my status as a woman in this world suddenly hit me. The rigidity of my rights and duties, the power relations operated on me and the painful realization that even as a privileged woman, I still

suffer from different forms of oppression" (Shiri Levinas)

The links between feminist paradigms and peace activism has been widely discussed both in the academia and among peace organizations and movements (Wibben, 2011). The body of feminist literature on violent conflicts assumes that the incorporation of the gender perspective is crucial for the understanding of the complexity of a society in conflict (Peterson, 1992). The assimilation of feminist theories into peace and security studies allows us to recognize the gender nature of the conflict's causes, identify its gender impact and present the gender aspects of peace building (Anderlini, 2006). These studies take varied approaches, like the critical-feminist approach to political science (Enloe, 2000; Ni Aolain & Rooney, 2007), the feminist approach to peace studies (Confortini, 2006; Elshtain, 1998), and the approach focusing on gender and nationality (Caprioli et al., 2007; Hudson, et al., 2017; McLeod, 2013). All of those suggest that it is important to acknowledge women's varied modes of action, based on their different positions.

The basic requirement of a feminist self-definition is mostly presented by peace movement activists (Isachar, 2003, 2009; Safran & Sachs, 2020). We, on the other hand, would like to argue that despite the difficulty, the feminist thing to do would be to allow women from diverse positions and backgrounds to take an active part in peace movements. We interviewed Yardena, a religious woman in her 30s who resides in the settlement of Efrat and takes part in a mixed Israeli-Palestinian peace organization. When we asked her if she defines herself as a feminist, her answer was quick and unequivocal: *"Sure, from a young age".* When we presented the same question to Safa, an Israeli Palestinian who works in a mixed peace organization, she hesitated: *"Not one hundred percent feminist – I like being the woman I am... I like being a spoiled feminist".* When we asked Hila, a well known feminist activist in Israel and abroad, if her motivation to be part of a peace

organization has anything to do with her being a feminist, she said: *"I only became a feminist after I got married. My husband was a feminist".* Dalia, another leading peace activist and a researcher, told us about herself and her friends when she first joined the peace movement: *"most of the time, we were not feminists... The feminist discourse was not on the table".*

Even among feminist researchers, we found some who pointed out this threshold requirement for women in peace movements. Terry Greenblatt (2004) mentions in her paper the choice of organizations and activists not to use the word "feminism" to avoid exclusion of women from different social groups, as it may create antagonism. In an opening night of "Archi Parchi", a feminist Mizrahi archive, Netta Amar talked about the time when the activists were hesitating about the definition of their activity as "Mizrahi feminism". According to her, when they wanted to invite women from peripheral neighborhoods to a feminist event, they realized the term was rejecting some of them, while others were completely oblivious of the concept. *"They thought how they could stay true to their goals while still talking to as many women as possible" (Elias, 2020).*

We believe that a feminist identity as a prerequisite for peace activity is a huge barrier for peace organizations in Israel. As declared feminists and peace activists, the promotion of a feminist perspective and thinking is important to us, and we are committed to this cause in our everyday activity. At the same time, we would like to argue that peace movements that avoid presenting this prerequisite actively serve as "gender schools" and offer ample opportunities for the development of a feminist identity. Amalia Sa'ar (2004) suggested that *"the majority of women that dare to discuss women's rights are still afraid of the feminist label... yet, to reach politization, you must go through a feminist deifnition"* (p. 54). We agree with both parts of her argument, but we would like to offer an alternative interpretation, which acknowledges and respects the fear and rejection of the

feminist label. One of the most effective remedies for this condition is being involved in a peace movement, and particularly women's movements, where the feminist activity in practice often leads to a process of feminist self-definition.

"Why didn't I stand with Women in Black? For years, I agonized over the fact that I had not stood with Women in Black, I had not observed roadblocks with Watch, and had not broken down walls that had cut through communities and burdened their residents. I had a lot of interpretations, justiifcations, and stories. Due to the current discussion about the Balfour and the Assi protests – about whether or not the activists should join each other's protests – I realized that the point of departure becomes our measurement. There is a deifnition of radical, feminist peace activists, which also deifnes those who are not". (Nurit Haghagh)

Over the last few years, a number of feminist peace activists have criticized Women Wage Peace for not being feminist, political or leftists enough (Deutsch, 2019; Shadmi, 2017). We, on the other hand, think that the open sphere of self-definition offered by this NGO allowed a lot of women to define themselves, at the end of the day, as feminists. According to our belief, those women were not required to be feminists to become activists; rather, the activism presented the potential of choosing to become a feminist.

"You are from the right… What are you even doing here?" This sentence was said to Rachel, a woman in her 50s from the town of Ofakim. Rachel came with some volunteer friends to a seminar under the title "Building a Shared Future",[14] aimed to educate women about peace and security issues. During an argument in one of the sessions, Rachel protested against what she perceived as an attack on IDF soldiers. In response, one of the participants told her: *"You are from the right… What are you even doing here?"* In a conversation held with Rachel and

her friends later, they said that while this was the only upfront comment, they had felt alienated, labeled and not necessarily welcomed, even though they did not regret coming to the seminar. We believe that integrating women from the Israeli political right is critical if we want to expand the circles of peace supporters in Israeli society. Yardena, who was mentioned earlier in this paper, told me how, through her involvement in the peace movement, she realized how *"our reality is related to the military regime… and its implications over the Palestinian population"*. The exclusion of populations with a right-wing tendency hinders the activity of peace and leftwing organizations. According to Olga, a veteran peace activist who established an NGO that advocates peace concepts among FSU immigrants: *"I protested. Where are the materials in Russian? The left just sold them… I don't get it, the left's disregard of this crowd"*.

During my activity in Hosen Kehilati,[15] as a PhD student and a member of the NGO, I met quite a few men and women who, while refusing to accept the definition of "occupied territories", were willing to give them up for a sense of security and peace. In an interview, I asked Yael, an Ofakim resident in her 50s, about her memories from the period of the disengagement from Gaza: *"Yes, there are some territories I would not give back. There are some I would. I support peace, I love peace. I say I want peace and quiet, no matter the price. I don't want soldiers to die. I don't want anyone to die, whether it is from our side or theirs. Because it pains them just like it pains us. But there are some territories I would not give back. I loved [Gush Katif], we had many friends there"*.

The internal contradictions in the text were repeated in different forms. While we cannot deduct from the narratives about the interviewees' support of a peace agreement, we can definitely note an opportunity for a dialogue and discourse about women and peace. Another example was a visit we had in

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14 A training project for 500 women about women, peace and security, which was sponsored by the EU, together with Itach Ma'aki, Women Wage Peace and the Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace.

15 An NGO founded by the residents of Ofakim and academics, dedicated for a multi-aspect community development in times of emergency and in day-to-day life: https://www.facebook.com/groups/253340828109512

Yeruham the day after the elections in 2014, which brought yet another victory to the Likud party, headed by Binyamin Netanyahu. We went to Yeruham with another friend from Woman Wage Peace for an initial meeting with local women. After the meeting, we went to a cafe in town. When the owner served us our drinks, we asked her who she voted for. She said: *"Guess"*. We tried, unsuccessfully, and then she surprised us: *"I voted for Meretz, but this was the last time I voted for them"*. When we wondered about it, she explained: *"We are 12 people around here who vote for Meretz. We begged them for materials, signs, some help. No one responded and no one came"*. This notion is also supported by Erella Shadmi, who describes how, during one of the meetings of the Coalition of Women for Peace, she offered to approach women who are identified with Shas[16]: *"I offered to talk to women from Shas, and everyone blew up… How dare I talk differently about Shas? I said I can talk, and I do talk to women from Shas. I said it in a conference of Women in Black and the Coalition, and they were furious at me"* (Isachar, 2003, p. 131).

One last word about the occupation (to which we, of course, strongly object). *"After the launching a meeting of Women Wage Peace, my ifrst phone call was to a Palestinian friend and colleague from Hebron, who heads an organization that coordinates the activity of peace NGOs in Palestine. I told her about the movement and the vision, and I mentioned that our intention was to create an Israeli, rather than a binational movement, and asked for her opinion. Her response was: 'Thank God, it is about time. The best thing you can do to help us get free of the occupation is to promote peace among your own public'"*. (Shiri Levinas)

Our call to eliminate the prerequisite of being part of the political left and resisting the occupation does not suggest the lack of support or belief in the importance of organizations and activities that actively fight the occupation. Yet, we believe that peace advocacy can also work in other ways, which also serve peace. Hence, instead of disregarding other paths that lead to the same destination, we must explore the common junctions.

4.2 "WE CALLED THOSE WE KNEW"

Israeli women's positions regarding civil rights differ based on social class and other collective identities like nationality (Arabs/Jews), religiosity (religious/secular), sexual identity (LGBT) or ethnicity (Mizrahi/Ashkenazi) (Berkovitch, 1997; Herzog, 1998; Aharoni, 2016). Peace organizations are traditionally more accessible for Ashkenazi, educated, middle-class women (Isachar, 2003). Peace activist Debbi Lerman tells: *"We also failed because we were unable to leave behind our very speciifc deifnition: Petit bourgeois, Ashkenazi women, most of us from urban areas. (There are some women from Kibbutzim, but no one from Moshavim or peripheral towns) … and we weren't able to expand"* (Isachar, 2003, p. 72). The absence of Mizrahi, Arab, of Russian or Ethiopian origin, blue-collar, poor, religious and other women stands out (Herman, 2009), and encouraged some of these organizations to make an effort and expand their target audience. In order to try and change the share of participation of women from diverse social groups, who tend to be absent in peace activities, several organizations offered paid jobs in different projects. This way, the organizations were hoping to increase diversity and open the door for diverse women to join their activity. Orna, a Mizrahi social activist who was employed by a peace organization, summarized her experience as a project manager: *"We failed to deliver"*. The same feeling was expressed in additional interviews, and it seems that the women were perceived as representatives of their communities, expecting them to attract a greater audience of women, which created a sense of exclusion and disappointment among many of them.

The organizational expectation of women to serve as "recruiters" was extended to volunteers as well. Sentences like: *"I want you*

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16 A Mizrahi ultra-orthodox party

to get a crowd", "how many did you bring with you?", "where are her women?" were directed to new activists, while the "natural" activists were not expected to do the same. When an activist from a central town (like Ramat Hasharon) was hired for a job, no one expected other women from the same town to join the movement. But when a Mizrahi woman from Kiryat Malachi had a job, the explicit and implicit demand was that other women from her town would join the movement. Additionally, the desire to increase diversity often leads to misrepresentation, where the few diverse representatives are used by the organization as "presenters". Sapir Slutzker Amran, a Mizrahi social activist, said: *"The Mizrahi women activists were expected to bring more women to demonstrations, for color's sake, but they were excluded from decision making processes".* She believes *"this is the reason that until today, Mizrahi women are still a minority in feminist or human right organizations"* (Elias, 2020). A similar feeling was expressed in an interview with Shula, from Ofakim, who had been active in Women Wage Peace movement, and said she felt like a "poster girl" for the movement.

Another phenomenon that reflects the desire to reach diverse population groups can be described as the "romanticization of those who are far away, and the demonization of those who are close by", or "the desire to reach the field". It seems that peace movements often strive to organize activities in far away, "exotic" communities, while scrutinizing groups that are already on their side. Orna tells us she was specifically sent to a low socioeconomic neighborhood in one of the large cities to establish a group of Mizrahi women that would focus on music and peace. The result was that the women did come to the meetings but rejected the peace discourse. Dita Bitterman, a peace activist, told in an interview: *"Despite our efforts, we weren't able to expand our reach, and now we are trying, through a work group, to expand our activity to towns and neighborhoods. So far, with no success"* (Isachar, 2003, p. 147). The choice to launch projects and activities among

socially marginalized groups (like in Katamon neighborhood in Jerusalem, or in Shapira neighborhood in Tel Aviv) made it hard to find partners and led to ongoing disappointments, despair and desire to give up the strong efforts that do not yield any result.

The diversity challenge is complicated and requires commitment, awareness of privileges and power positions, willingness to pay prices and a continuous effort. In the face of this challenge, organizations that base their change theory on the participation of diverse groups of women are often tempted to make an overuse or even a cynical use of identity politics. We argue that if we want to turn diversity from a slogan into reality, we must act in a number of ways. Diversity should be reflected in roles, representation, decision making processes and resource accessibility in the organizations (like appearances in the media and in conferences, connections with international and local entities, paid jobs, physical accessibility, etc.), recognizing the differences and the contribution of different women. The ideal way to create diversity is to include different types of women as early as the establishment of the movement, allowing these women to take an equal and active role in the definition of change theory, target audiences, goals and vision. This description is somewhat utopian – as many movements are already established and active, and a new movement, if established in the future, would probably be launched by women who know each other.

Hence, the first step in changing an existing organization is to recognize the privileges of the movement's activists. The privileges discourse is often resisted, particularly among social activists, who dedicate their time and energy to the greater good. Most of us find it difficult to distinguish between hardships we experienced and privileges offered to us based on our affiliation with a specific social group. Thus, for example, in workshops dedicated to this issue, many activist women interpreted the question about privileges as a statement that their struggles, hardships and

efforts are unimportant compared to those of underprivileged groups. Furthermore, the mere question: "Does the option of volunteering in a peace movement reflect a privilege?" raised a lot of confusion and discomfort. One reflection of the difficulty of dealing with privileges can be found in a quote by Erella Shadmi in *Sisters in Peace* (Isachar, 2003). In her quote, she refers to her experience in the Coalition of Women for Peace to reach out to other groups of women: *"Apparently, this women's sisterhood is extremely Ashkenazi. And because of this blindness, which I think is characteristic of privileged groups, we did not notice that we enforced our discourse everywhere"* (p. 513).

The privileges discourse should not be comfortable or easy. On the contrary: the discomfort triggered by this discourse can be used to expand awareness of inequalities. The recognition of privileges allows us to approach or connect with new audiences, while challenging our previous basic assumptions (in terms of activities' accessibility, hours, transportation, costs, language and more). This conclusion can be demonstrated by multiple examples we have encountered throughout our years of activity. Yet, we struggled to find studies in Israel that focus on this issue.

As for the issue of reaching out to distant communities in terms of social positions (see p. 17) – we believe that the expansion of the circle of activists can be facilitated by cooperating with organizations and groups that are more representative of the Israeli mainstream, like Na'amat, WIZO, mayoral advisors on the status of women, women's councils in local municipalities, and so on, which naturally include a women from a larger variety of groups in society, including members of disadvantaged groups.

4.2.1 "The garden is locked, no road leads to it…" (Rachel, 1928) – Accessibility to knowledge and information

The lack of accessibility to knowledge and information is another significant barrier that prevents diversity in women's peace organizations. Unlike the barriers we have reviewed so far, we believe that this specific barrier can be easily overcome, once we develop awareness and commitment to this issue. Veteran activists often assume that the codes, operation modes, norms and informal knowledge are known and open to all, and the English language and the possibilities offered by being versed in this language are accessible to all. This assumption often leaves newcomers, and particularly those who are first generation activist, outside.

"I got a key to the door without the entrance code. The last few months have been, among other things, a personal journey. I tried to wonder about my feelings during some of the activities I have been a part of. I have dealt in the past with issues of identity and class. I knew I was invited to join as a Mizrahi woman, and yet, I felt lucky to be invited. It was painful to realize that my partial knowledge of English was a barrier. I was happy that at least my daughter did not face this obstacle. I heard friends from my elementary school who thought 'teacher' was the name of their teacher (while in fact, his name was Shraga). What else happened there? Why was I left with a sense of a missed opportunity? I thought about this image of getting a key to the front door, with no entrance code. The code was obviously known to the 'owners', while I was a visitor in new, challenging, intriguing, and hopeful ifelds. It reenforced the notion that we need a simple, wooden front door, with an old-fashioned key. Not doors that only open for speciifc ifngerprints". (Nurit Haghagh)

An organization wishing to expand its circle of activists must create an inviting learning and experiencing sphere. We believe that the participation in women's peace organizations holds a strong potential for the participants' development of perceptions, abilities and skills. In fact, this is one of the most important benefits of joining a social movement, where women volunteer their time and efforts. To

mitigate the gaps between veteran and new activists, as well as between professionals and beginners, we suggest dedicating a consistent time and place for learning and exploration of the organization's main issues and decision-making processes. We also suggest dedicating time to the development of skills, such as public speaking, meeting moderation, writing, and so on, and forming routine meetings for new activists. These activities, which represent the organization's commitment to knowledge decentralization and accessibility, can allow a diverse group of women to feel a sense of belonging and meaning.

4.3 IRRELEVANT

The common perception in Israel renders women's opinions on peace and security issues irrelevant. This barrier includes an additional significant layer – the fact that many women perceive themselves as "irrelevant". *"This is just my opinion", "why me?", "I don't know enough about it"* and other statements in the same spirit are often expressed by activist women regardless of their status, experience or expertise, when they are asked to talk about themselves, appear before a public or in the media, or represent their organization (Novak, 2018). When we asked our interviewees how they got to a specific role or position, even women with a long record of activism in the past and present said it was *"just luck"*, as if they had forgotten the motivation, dedication, skills and capabilities they had acquired throughout their lives – a phenomenon that was also pointed out by Hagit Shahar in her study about women's leadership in organizations (Shahar-Pereira, 2020).

"When we established Women Wage Peace, we often heard the question 'what do you know about security issues?' We quickly realized that this question was also asked by the activists themselves: 'what do I know about security issues?' To allow the women activists to answer this question, we had to create workshops to discuss this issue, and presented a research by leading feminist scholars, which included examples of women who had

advocated peace with no 'formal training' (which is characteristic of many women's peace movements). We gave them some readymade answers (for example, the answer 'when you say security, what do you mean?'), and mainly stressed the point that we are sure they do understand (or, as my daughter once told me: 'it's not that you don't know, mom, you just don't remember that you do know'). I remember that before the launching event, which was held during the Sderot Conference, I called many men and women and asked them 'what do women know about security issues?' The varied responses, all based on different rationales, were presented in the opening session". (Shiri Levinas)

We suggest that peace organizations (whether they are led by women or mixed-gender) should create safe learning spheres of relevant issues, like different models of women who were peace activists, the history of women in peace movements, Resolution 1325, feminist theories and different aspects of the conflict, allowing them to experiment and find their independent voice and position. Women should be exposed to experts in the field, while allowing them to express their knowledge in their own voice and language. They should be trained in conflict transformation and handling opposition. This is a crucial skill for peace activists, but most of the women in these organizations lack the knowledge and experience required for it. Supporting female activists is a powerful leverage and tool that can be used to create commitment and expand diversity. Ayala, a senior official who serves as the head of the UN delegation to countries in conflict, mentioned that one of the feelings burdening her is the fact that she was not "supported" and prepared for the roles and challenges she has been facing (with the greatest level of professionalism, which is deeply appreciated).

Finally, we suggest that we shed the fear that we or other women may "not know enough", or that I, as a woman, "don't know enough", thus allowing women who for whom this knowledge and these experiences are still new to make their voices heard within or outside of the organization.

4.4 THE PEOPLE'S ENEMIES – VIOLENCE

Activism is a world that can be exposed to various forms of violence. This violence can be physical or verbal; it takes the form of marginalization, threats to the families, or labeling and exclusion from various social circles. Dealing with these types of violence, when it is directed toward women peace activists, and particularly those who oppose the occupation, is not an easy task. Women who are exposed to them are affected mentally and physically and are sometimes deterred from participating in further activities (Aharoni, 2019, p. 21). In 2017, the Coalition of Women for Peace and Women's Security Index[17] published a report about the safety and unsafety of activists from a feminist point of view. The report analyzed instances of civil or military violence and detailed the fears and concerns of women activists. Half of the participants in the survey said that their activity level is not as high as they would like it to be, because they are concerned about their safety. This finding raises concerns when discussing the "expanding the circle of activity" (p. 9).

The differences between types and scope of violence are often related to social positions and identities of the activists (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni, 2007). An activist of Ethiopian origin was quoted in the report saying: *"I encounter harsh violence, particularly in my activity against racism toward Ethiopians. I am an Ethiopian woman; therefore, I experience a lot of racism that includes sexual assault or physical violence and very humiliating treatment while stating the fact that the color of my skin is the motive. Police forces very often arrest me and use derogatory names like 'a piece of shit'"* (p. 3).

The ambition and efforts to create partnerships with women from diverse groups should take into account the different price paid for activism by different population groups. When "pushing" activists to take an active part in activities that collide with their community norms, we must be very careful, be aware of their experiences and provide defense and solidarity upon need. To understand the different types and effects of violence on different women, we must maintain open channels of sharing, consultation and help.

4.5 PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

One of the only countries where women's involvement in conflict resolution processes was translated into political power was Rwanda. Since more than a decade Rwanda leads the world in the share of women in the parliament (61.3%). One of the key factors that promoted the success of Rwandan women was the mechanism of sharing and mobility created after the conflict was resolved. Rwanda established women's councils at the local, regional, district and national levels, which share activities, resource allocation (knowledge, funds and trainings) and a constant dialogue. Each council chair is also a member of the mixed-gender council, which guarantees the representation of women's needs and activities in their region (Mutamba and Izabiliza, 2005). At the same time, women are guaranteed at least 30% representation in mixed-gender councils (Powley, 2005).

This way, the needs and priorities of various populations are reflected in policies and legislations (for instance, in the change of inheritance laws and incorporating women in local conflict resolution mechanisms – Gacaca),[18] investment in higher accessibility of education for girls, women health centers, and

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17 A project of six feminist organizations that attempted to measure the level of women's safety in a variety of fields (financial, health, domestic violence, sexual violence, and more: https://wsindex.net).

18 In 2001, Rwanda revived a traditional conflict resolution mechanism of Gacaca – a community-based system of justice that took place outdoors and dealt primarily with property crimes and small grievances. Has been reestablished in every cell to deal with crimes of genocide. Powley, E. Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women, in Rwanda's Transition, 2003, Report for the office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, (OSAGI), United Nations

more (Mutamba and Izabiliza, 2005). We believe that this case study can serve as a model, which should be explored and implemented in Israel, as well as in other countries.

Another mechanism we believe may increase participation in peace organization is the use of hearings. The hearing, which is held in a women's circle, each of them getting the time and place to present her position, is a means to an end, but also a political act at the same time. The meeting itself is an opportunity for change (the fact that I am interested in hearing your opinion is important for itself), and so are the talking, the listening and the linkages between discussing the past, the present and the future (Haghagh, 2009, p. 39). The practice has been tested by the International Women's Commission for Peace, which held women's meetings around the country, trying to assess their positions on peace and security issues. The data collected was a far cry from the positions of the organizing group. Yet, it offered an insight into the complexity of various positions, and created an opportunity for women who had never been asked about these issues to become part of the discourse and knowledge creation.

The Popular Congress for Peace,[19] which was held by Minds of Peace, was also based on public participation. The congress' activity, which lasted for two years, brought together multiple hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian citizens around tables in the public sphere, where they discussed the conditions for ending the conflict and signing a peace agreement. An article published by *Kotereth* magazine (May 13, 2017) cites Ayelet, a 56-year-old woman from Jaffa, who said she came to the meeting *"to get out of the despair and start doing something".* While Lubna, from the Arab city of Qalansuwa in the Triangle Area, a teacher in HaKfar HaYarok school who took part in the discussions, said: *"This was the first time I joined such an event, and it was very exciting. I was happy to translate to the young people who came from Jenin. It is important*

for us to hear each other. I think this is something that can bring change. There are Arabs here who, for the ifrst time, heard there are Jews who want to end the occupation and want two states for two peoples, as well as Jewish guys who heard for the ifrst time that there are Arabs who also want peace". (Kovacs, 2017).

In both examples (hearings and public participation), the peace discourse is made accessible to wider audiences, becoming a political act in the public sphere. An act we believe is necessary to expand the partnership in peace organizations and initiatives.

4.6 COMBINING STRUGGLES

Feminist literature about peace and security establishes the linkage between gender inequality and conflicts, and reenforces the understanding that women's safety is associated with national security (Herzog, 2008). The expansion of the security concept (as discussed in the section about Resolution 1325) suggests that peace and security advocation also includes issues related to health, education, housing, gender violence, ecology and more. This expansion, which encourages the combination of different struggles, seems logical and required more than ever before. Hence, for example, in 2003, the town of Shlomi held a conference under the title *Kishurim* ("linkages"), which advocated for the combination of struggles for issues like war and peace, social justice and environmental justice. One of the most notable posters in the conference was presented by Dirty Laundry.[20] The poster demonstrated through graphics and words the desired combination of issues like peace, social justice and sexual identity. Similarly, Yvonne Deutsch, in her book *The Independent Left in Israel* (2019) suggests that "activism relies on the connection between oppressions, both in activity content and in creating a diverse group, with multiple voices heard equally" (p. 128).

Yet, we might consider the option that a

19 An NGO advocating an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement through group meetings and public partici-pation.
20 A queer group established in 2001 with the aim of fighting the occupation.

measure of this kind might lead to distancing and/or avoidance of women from different groups from being part of peace organizations. The call to integrate different causes is sometimes perceived as saying: "Why don't you join my cause? Why were you not present at my demonstration?" searching for the connection in numbers. We must closely consider if this call takes into account the different social positions, priorities, accessibility to resources, and more than that, the collision of values or goals that might evolve. For example, in a conversation with peace activists about the struggle around the Assi stream, they explained that they avoided supporting the struggle because they did not want to lose supporters for peace activities.

Peace organizations cannot be active in all social struggles for justice, equality and peace, but they can be aware of the connection between security and social rights, welcoming the activity that is taking place in this field, and recognizing the relative contribution of each organization trying to change the Israeli reality.

4.7 RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION

The history of women's activity in peace organizations is important both practically and ideologically. When activism is anchored in a historical sequence, it gives a sense of power, encouraging people to view themselves as part of this sequence. Yet, we find that women in new peace organizations are often unaware or do not appreciate the activities that took place before them, thus weakening the accumulative power of women's actions for peace. This argument is supported by the words of Yvonne Deutsch (2019), who argues that *"historical awareness is crucial at any age. Women Wage Peace has been the only group that manages, since 2014, to get thousands of women into the streets every fall, demanding a political agreement... [yet] they ignore the history of women's peace and protest movements"* (p. 128). At the same time, we found that women who did try to find the historical linkages often struggled to find sources and materials. According to Sapir Slutzker Amran, *"as a young Mizrahi feminist, I feel disconnected. We do not have enough knowledge transferred to us from the founding generation and from other groups about their activities. I want to see that there is meaning to my activism today. To know that there have been successes, to know how they dealt with the same dilemmas with which we deal today. This learning is crucial to us. When I act to continue something that has been done in the past, it makes me feel less alone, knowing there is a community that can support me and continue my work. The essence is the connections in this chain"* (Elias, 2020).

We believe that to preserve the historical chain and motivate a wide range peace activity of women in Israel, the responsibility must be shared by both veterans and newcomers. The newcomers must ask, seek and acknowledge the contribution and knowledge of the veterans. Part of the reason for this "gap" is the desire of new organizations to differentiate themselves and create a separate institutional identity. Yet, we believe that the price of this gap between the past and the present is too high, and eventually might delay our success. The veterans, on their part, must present the knowledge, the stories, successes and challenges, while also reaching out and encouraging new interpretations to the struggle for peace and the modes of operation, seeing the newcomers as their successors and not as rivals.

COMING TO AN END

Despite the many barriers encountered by women activists in Israeli peace movements, they have managed and still manage to make a change in the Israeli conflicted life reality. Their intensive and persistent activity helps us expand our interpretation of the terms "peace" and "security", thus creating a deeper understanding of the conflict and its implications for the Israeli population, connecting women's personal unsafety to the lack of national security (Herzog, 2008), and inspiring women around the world (one prime example is Women in Black, which became an international movement still active today; another example is the choice to grant Women Wage Peace the status of an advisor to the UN).

As mentioned, Resolution 1325 supports women's activism for peace, and helps, among other issues, in promoting the demand to integrate women, fund raising, learning and inspiration from other women's movement around the globe (such as in Liberia, Rwanda, Colombia, The Philippines, and more), in enriching the knowledge made available to women on the issue of "women, peace and security" (through initiatives like Building a Shared Future, Marching for Peace, Young Politicians and more), encouraging women's activism in this field, etc. We suggest Resolution 1325 should be viewed as an opportunity for political activity, which explores women's positions and encourages them to act for peace. Women's activism for peace is a continuous activity. Hence, as suggested by Tamar Rapoport (2004), *"we are required to explore under which conditions the potential linkage between women and peace*

is materialized, intensiifed or dissolved, and what it means in light of the violent, coercive security discourse and the gender regime in Israeli society. What brings some women to stick to feminism and peace inducing activity, and what prevents women who are located further away from the hegemony (due to class, ethnicity or age) to connect to them" (p. 159).

In addition to the contributions mentioned above, the intensive activity of women in peace organization has also served as a form of resistance against the patriarchal and hegemonic structures in Israeli society, which shutters traditional representations and stereotypes concerning women's roles in peace and security processes, determined to raise public discourse about peace, again and again, keeping the hope for peace alive.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Shiri Levinas – Specializes in conflict transformation (transforming conflict situations into opportunities for change) and activism, in issues of national conflicts and gender. In August 2014, Levinas joined an initiative by Michal Barak and Irit Tamir to establish a women's movement for peace, called Women Wage Peace. During the first two years of the movement, Levinas dedicated the majority of her time and efforts to the estab-lishment of the movement and the promotion of its causes. Among other things, she worked on phrasing the movement's principles, leading a diverse team and forming a training program for spokeswomen and coordinators. Two years ago, she left the movement; some of the reasons for this decision are presented in the current paper, while others should be detailed in another paper. Today, she is working on her Ph.D. dissertation, titled Narratives of Women in the Periphery who Live in the Shade of a Violent Conflict. The work is based on interviews with approximately 40 women from the town of Ofakim. At the same time, she continues to lead programs for women's training in the politics of peace and teach conflict transformation.

Nurit Haghagh – CEO of Diversity in Action – development and moderation of diver-sity-sensitive programs. A Mizrahi feminist activist, board member and former CEO at HaKeshet HaDemocratit HaMizrahit. Haghagh has been a peace activist for the last three decades, part of the International Women's Commission for Peace (2005-2010) and currently active at Women Wage Peace. Board member at Itach Ma'aki – Women Lawyers for Social Justice. A partner in various social initiatives aimed to promote an equal and just society. One of the leaders of the Young Na'amat project, supported by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

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MAKE ROOM FOR PEACE

Belonging, Partnership and Diversity in Women's Actions for Peace in Israel

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While the share of women in Israeli peace activism has always been significant, their "place around the table" has often been missing, and they have been sys-tematically excluded from decision-making arenas. Marking the 20th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325, the current study aims to explore the barriers pre-venting women from taking a more significant role in peace processes, and the inter-relationship between these barriers and con-cepts like diversity, partnership and belong-ing. To address these questions, the authors used existing literature, while also conducting interviews with new and veteran peace activ-ists, and adding their personal impressions, as activists who have been advocating for peace for many years. Levinas and Haghagh point out that despite the many barriers encoun-tered by women activ-ists in Israeli peace movements, they have managed and still man-age to make a change in the Israeli conflicted life reality. The authors also suggest some ways of expanding the circles of participation and impact.

You will find additional information on the topic here:
http://www.fes.org.il/de/israeli-germaneuropean-relations

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