

Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace



A Study on Best Practices of Active Non-violence

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IKV Pax Christi works for peace, reconciliation and justice in the world. We join with people in conflict areas to work on a peaceful and democratic society. We enlist the aid of people in the Netherlands who, like IKV Pax Christi, want to work for political solutions to crises and armed conflicts. IKV Pax Christi combines knowledge, energy and people to attain one single objective: there must be peace!

Pax Christi International is a global Catholic peace movement and network that works to help establish Peace, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and Reconciliation in areas of the world that are torn by conflict. It is grounded in the belief that peace is possible and that vicious cycles of violence and injustice can be broken. Today, the movement has more than 100 Member Organisations active in more than 50 countries and five continents worldwide.

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Cover picture: *In the education program on non-violence children learn that the word Allah is written in your hand. Therefore we should be careful not to hurt other human beings, because we will also hurt Allah in them.*

Utrecht, May 2010

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Preface

The conflicts in Iraq, Israel and Palestine and Lebanon have filled the pages of our newspapers for years. On a daily basis you can see pictures of violence, blood, destruction. These violent conflicts are tough and occupy the minds of people in the whole Middle East. They require political courage to solve them.

In this report we want to show you another side of the conflicts in the Middle East, the side of people who take a stand against violence and work for a nonviolent alternative. The circumstances in which they work are hard; not only the conflicts bring violence, violence has penetrated all aspects of society: from schools to the political arena, from families to the work place. Working to change that requires courage and vision because it is not easily accepted by the society.

Pax Christi International and IKV Pax Christi (Pax Christi Netherlands) worked over the past years to build up a network of support for peace activists in the Middle East and brought them together on different occasions. Today, 7 organisations in the Middle East are member organisations of Pax Christi International, some of them secular, others inspired by Islam or the gospel.

One of the aims of bringing activists from the Middle East together is “linking and learning”. They can learn from each other and we can learn from them. This enriches our international network. To this background,

we agreed on one of the regional consultation meetings to do a number of “best practice studies” in the Middle East. We decided to start with the study of two initiatives for the dissemination of nonviolence that have both been active since the 1980s and as such have been sustainable and able to reach impact. The youth they worked with have now become a generation of leaders and responsible themselves. This study describes the work of the Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace in Hebron, Palestine. The other study that was conducted describes the Pioneering Journey in Nonviolence by Ogarit Younan and Walid Slaybi in Lebanon. The studies describe the practice of these groups; what kind of strategic choices they made, what methodology worked with them, how they cooperated with allies.

We hope that these stories are inspiring for others, that they give readers who are not so familiar with the Middle East a different view on the region and its activists; the challenges they face, and how they give hope to their communities. We hope that the studies inspire other activists in the Middle East on how to deal with the specific problems of the region.

Claudette Werleigh
Secretary General
Pax Christi International
May 2010

1. Introduction

“Our courses are not always called “non-violence,” but we use different methods to show children and youth how they can apply non-violence in their daily lives and in their families. For example, we teach them how to buy good vegetables, fish and meat. There are ways to find out which meat is the best, to check whether it is goat or sheep, to know whether it is local. Often they buy bad products and get into a fight with their parents at home. We don’t want that violence. Instead, we make them feel active and responsible for their families.”
(Nafez Assaily, Director LOWNP)

This simple example illustrates in various ways the specific approach of the Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace Association - LOWNP, based in Hebron, Palestine. Rather than lecturing on non-violence, LOWNP explores ways for children and adults to experience the significance of non-violence themselves and to enhance its practical use at a personal level, in families and at school, as well as in violent situations at a social level. Through such experience-based education in active non-violence, people learn to overcome their grievances and fight for social justice with peaceful means. They are empowered with hope, skills and direction to create a new future with social justice. LOWNP generates solutions to violence and injustice by its non-formal education and through various non-violence campaigns. Its direct work with the people in their daily contexts makes LOWNP an authentic grassroots and community development organisation. Since its establishment in 1986, it has been a pioneering organisation in the field to spread the culture of peace and non-violence among the new generations in Palestine.

The long term goal of LOWNP is to see a Palestinian Gandhi rise up one day, who will lead the nation

through non-violence towards its liberation. Nafez Assaily, the Director of the LOWNP, is convinced that liberation can only come through a Gandhi figure. Although in some articles, Nafez himself is called the Palestinian Gandhi, he strongly rejects this view and underlines that he is only planting the seeds so that a future Palestinian Gandhi can stand up. “Just like the Buddhists in the East are looking for special characteristics in their quest for the new Dalai Lama, so I am looking for special characteristics to find a future Palestinian Gandhi,” Nafez says.



This study on LOWNP is based on the examination of documents, field research and interviews conducted in Hebron and Bethlehem in December 2009 with staff members, volunteers, trainees, children, parents, officials, NGO workers, students, shopkeepers, teachers, and other people involved in or affected by the work of LOWNP. The study has been conducted in cooperation with Dr. Nabil Jondi.



2. How it All Began...

For Nafez, it all began with the movie on Gandhi. As a student in sociology and English at the University of Nablus in 1979, he had to write an essay for the course “Palestinian Studies.” While his fellow students were writing about the Palestinian or the Zionist movement, Nafez discovered an article in an Egyptian journal on the new movie on Gandhi. Apart from predicting how many Oscars the movie would gain, the article explained the philosophy and methods of Gandhi to liberate India from the British occupation. It gave Nafez the idea to write about non-violence for the Palestinian occupied territories. In his essay, “Can non-violence be applied to Palestinians or not?,” he analysed the nature of the Palestinian struggle in those days and came to the conclusion that Palestinians should choose non-violent resistance, because: First, the three million Palestinians are unarmed, are not permitted to own weapons and don’t know how to use weapons; Secondly, Israel controls the boundaries so that Palestinians cannot get access to weapons; Thirdly, Israel continues to Judaize the occupied territories through land confiscation and the building of settlements; Finally, the Palestinians have lost hope that liberation will come from outside, since the Arab countries are not interested anymore in an armed confrontation with Israel. These factors determined the nature of the Palestinian struggle in those days. Therefore, Nafez concluded that the Palestinians should choose non-violent resistance to realise their own liberation. Although he got only 13 out of 20 points, the article was a turning point in his life. It gave him the opportunity to read about non-violence philosophy and methods, and about leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

In 1983, when Nafez was teaching English at a school in Jerusalem, he read an announcement in a newspaper for a workshop at YWCA on “How to get rid of the Occupation?” given by Mubarak Awad. Nafez attended the workshop, which was on non-violence, and told Mubarak Awad at the end of the workshop: “This is what we need! We have to continue on what you are saying.” However, not everyone in the public was that responsive. Since Awad’s Arabic was poor, he used the Arabic word organisation to talk about the non-violence movement,

so people understood that he wanted to replace the PLO, the Organisation, with a non-violent organisation. At that time, it was not appropriate to suggest any form of resistance outside the PLO. Also non-politically affiliated Palestinians verbally attacked Mubarak Awad because of the idea of non-violence. When he was invited to speak at Birzeit University, this caused a lot of consternation among the faculty and students. Philosopher Sari Nusseibeh recounts: “At the time, to put forward the image of yourself as a non-violent person was not kosher in the Palestinian community. You had to put yourself forward as a guy with a gun, with ten guns hanging around your waist and shoulders, or keep silent.”¹

Nafez and Mubarak Awad became friends and together they went to the Palestinian communities to spread the idea of non-violence. “It was hopeless,” says Nafez. “We were accused of being CIA agents, Jordanian agents, and of using the Palestinian market to sell the product of non-violence.” But they continued working. People liked the activities and slowly they discovered the power of non-violence and what Nafez and Awad meant by it. In 1985, after his travels to India to learn more about Gandhi, Awad established the “Palestinian Center for the Study of Non-violence,” based in Jerusalem. The name sounded rather academic, in order not to give the Israeli authorities an excuse to attack it, but in fact it was a centre for the Palestinian non-violence movement. They started translating and publishing books on non-violence in Arabic, such as the catalogue of non-violent resistant methods of Gene Sharp, a world renowned theorist on non-violent resistance, and the book “A Man to Match his Mountains” on Abdul Ghaffar Khan, “the Muslim counterpart of Gandhi.” At the same time, they organised workshops on non-violence, but since not many people were coming to them, they decided to go out to where the people were. This was how the “Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace” was born in 1986. The Book Mobile brought books on non-violence to children in different communities. While bringing the books, the parents used to tell of their various problems. When the Book Mobile would visit them again to exchange the old books for new ones, they would share

¹ Gershom Gorenberg, “The Missing Mahatma: Searching for a Gandhi or Martin Luther King in the West Bank”, <http://southjerusalem.com> (April 2009).

with the parent's tools and strategies to solve their problems in a non-violent way. As such, they empowered people in different areas with non-violent tools. Some of their actions were successful while others were not. In the Old City of Hebron, where settlers started to attack Palestinian shops, the Center set up campaigns to encourage people to go and buy in the Palestinian shops. On lands that were threatened with confiscation, they organised actions with villagers and farmers to plant trees.

During their travels and encounters, Nafez and Mubarak collected data about separated families from Tulkarem in the north to Rafah in the South. They were shocked by the anger and the rage of the affected families and felt that an Intifada, a popular uprising, was being born. In 1986, they launched a family unification campaign and Nafez urged a PLO member in Paris to start a project

on this. However, the PLO did not accept his recommendation at that time. Maybe if they had, they could have organised the unfolding Intifada better, Nafez reflects now. In any case, the PLO member that was contacted in Paris has now become the president of the Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace.

At the outbreak of the first Intifada, the non-violence movement had not yet become a popular movement. No one was willing to challenge the PLO, the only organisation representing the Palestinian people, and no one was ready to oppose Yaser Arafat, the leader of the PLO and a Palestinian national symbol. With his preaching of non-violence, the relative outsider Awad was challenging the basics of Palestinian identity and did not get a broad response.



3. The First Intifada

In the beginning of the First Intifada in 1987, the Palestinian Center for the Study of Non-violence concentrated on internal education, since the Israeli authorities had closed down many schools and organisations. The Center had been cautious to contact the PLO, because they did not want to be arrested by the Israeli authorities on the basis of illegal communication with an illegal organisation. They preferred to continue working instead of becoming heroes.

But gradually some things changed. The official journal of the PLO, "Palestinian Revolution," published a positive article about the activities of the Center, whereas the PLO had been exclusively negative in the beginning. Apparently, the Unified Command of the Intifada had visited the Center anonymously to inquire about non-violent methods. The first underground leaflet they issued in October 1987 called the Palestinians to use non-violence and was signed by the "Non-violent Resistance." Later the Intifada leadership began to issue leaflets in their own name, with a mixed message of violence and non-violence, as such reflecting the differing opinions between the different factions in the Unified Command. Nafez has a whole collection of leaflets at home, which he has thoroughly studied. He noticed that the initially more evident process to kill traitors was increasingly conditioned in the later leaflets. The Center had produced and distributed its poster for the campaign to "eat and drink local products only." A few months later they found the same poster signed with the name "Olives and Figs for Long Years," which later turned out to be the new Hamas organisation. The Center also made itself heard by calling Christians to ring the bells and Muslims to increase the call for prayers from the minarets, as a sign of protest and to make the life of the occupiers more difficult.

Although many consider that the first Intifada was a non-violent uprising, in fact, it had both non-violent and violent forms. "Unarmed" indeed did not always mean "non-violent." Actions on the Palestinian side included strikes, boycotts of Israeli products, civil disobedience, flaming rubber, and constructing barricades, but also the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, and car bombs. In the view of LOWNP, the idea of non-violence was gradually absorbed by the resistance movement and had a great impact on the first Intifada. There were people in favour of non-violence who had been afraid to speak about it, but LOWNP gave them a voice and a platform to come out proudly in support of non-violence. "I liked very much that we lighted the candle for the Palestinians," Nafez said, indicating the important role of their work in the first Intifada. However, he noted that this impact did

not know a proper follow-up. One of the biggest challenges, in his view, is the fact that the Palestinians absorb new ideas very slowly. This was especially the case with Arafat and the PLO leadership, who are people from a military background and cannot be converted to a non-violent strategy in one day. Mubarak Awad considered that the Intifada came too early, because not enough people had been converted in their hearts and minds to non-violence yet. He estimated that the development of a popular non-violent resistance movement would take another ten or fifteen years. However, he had no opportunity to finish his work, because he was expelled by Israel in 1988 and moved to the USA.

After the deportation of Mubarak Awad, Nafez took over many responsibilities in the Center. The project of the Book Mobile, for which he was responsible, became an organisation in itself, while the Center as such was closed after a few years. Since its start, LOWNP has always focused on non-violence and gained as such a special place in the landscape of NGOs, many of which are focusing on democracy and human rights.

The Second Intifada, which started in 2000, was more violent than the first one. The harsh crackdown by the Israeli occupation forces during the First Intifada had undermined the belief among Palestinians in non-violent resistance. Therefore, against the background of the collapse of the Camp David Summit / Oslo Peace Process and triggered by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque which was perceived as a deliberate provocation, Palestinians quickly resorted to violence. Although the Second Intifada started with mass demonstrations and strikes, the prompt and harsh Israeli response transformed it quickly into a violent uprising. The heavy human toll on the Palestinian side increased the anger and desire for revenge. The second Intifada was characterised by more military confrontations, suicide bombings and Qassam rockets. Especially the suicide bombings against Israeli civilians caused harsh retaliation from the Israeli side. Israel assassinated many leaders and members of the militant groups. Compared to the first Intifada, only a small percentage of the Palestinian population was effectively involved in the violent resistance. With the death of Yaser Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as president of the Palestinian Authority, a truce was informally declared in 2005. While the harsh retaliation by Israel on the mostly non-violent first Intifada undermined the belief in non-violent resistance among many Palestinians, the harsh retaliation by Israel on the mostly violent second Intifada reduced their belief in violence.

4. The Context of the Occupation and the Argument for Non-violence

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused the mass expulsion of Palestinians at the establishment of Israel, five regional wars (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982), two Palestinian Intifadas (1987-1992 and 2000-2006), and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967.

The physical and structural violence of the last decades has deeply penetrated both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies. Palestinian violence towards the occupier has included Molotov cocktails, stone throwing, suicide-bombings, car bombs, stabbing Israeli citizens, rocket firing and hijacking planes. These manifestations of violence on the Palestinian side confirmed the deep-rooted fear of the Jewish people for annihilation and served as the justification for aggressive actions which were explained as being defensive. Israeli occupation violence has included killing of children and civilians, targeted killings of suspected militants, brutal repression of Palestinian uprisings, arresting and detaining political prisoners, collective punishment, demolishing houses, expropriation of land, and uprooting olive trees.

The commitment to violence on both sides cannot always be explained as defensive or as a means to an end, but also as a result of a deeply ingrained sense of victimhood. Israelis have a widespread sense of ontological victimhood due to their history and many feel they are under attack simply because they are Jews. Palestinians carry a deep sense of injustice after having been driven from their lands and not being able to return. Therefore, many Palestinians prefer the term "Jihad" over "violence" when describing their actions against the Israeli occupier, because it refers to their outcry against injustice. The use of violence is therefore also sometimes just the expression of victimhood and powerlessness in face of the circumstances on both sides.

The working context of the Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace - LOWNP on the Palestinian side is one where people are confronted with violence on a daily level. There is direct physical violence, such as clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers or settlers, but there is also the daily structural violence in the form of the occupation and all the complications and misery that accompany it, such as land confiscations, house demolitions, settlement construction, curfews, and the closure of territories and roads. Every family in Palestine has been affected by this

physical and structural violence, and many have family members who are in jail, injured by the Israeli military or killed. Therefore, it is easy for Palestinians to feel anger, revenge, hate, pain and depression in an environment that is shaped by the structural violence of the occupation. Having been exposed to violence for decades, both from the occupation forces and their own society, and having experienced its impact in their personal lives, many Palestinians believe that only through the use of violence can justice can be achieved, violence can be overcome and problems can be solved. Especially extremist and violent political groups, on both sides, fuel the dynamics of violence to the detriment of negotiated solutions.

While the history and present have been permeated with violence, they have also shown that violence has failed to give the Palestinians a free independent state, has not stopped the growth of settlements, has not led to social justice, and has not won them international support. In short, the use of violence has not led them anywhere. To the contrary, it has led to more violence and perpetuates a vicious circle of retaliation, in which everyone loses. Every instance of violence on Palestinian side has been answered by or even used as an excuse for harsh retaliation on Israeli side and followed by more repression and occupation. As one NGO worker observes: "If we shoot one bullet, we can expect tons of bombs to be thrown on our people. We will lose not only our infrastructure, but many people will be killed." Palestinian rocket fire has not ended Israel's siege of Gaza, but instead resulted in a full-fledged war in which hundreds of Palestinian citizens were killed by massive Israeli force. The suicide attack in Netanya in 2002 resulted in the total re-occupation of all A zones in the occupied territories. The use of violence has effectively led to the entrapment of the Palestinians in increasingly divided territories encircled by a Wall. In addition, it has estranged potential supporters in both Israel and the West.

Due to the asymmetry of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinians can never win militarily. The Israeli side has a significant advantage in terms of military, political and economic power. While the Israeli army is strong and well equipped, Palestinians are not permitted to own weapons individually or collectively, are not well trained, and don't have channels for sufficient weapons import. As one sympathising volunteer observes,

“violence does not make sense, because we do not have a state.” The Palestinian economy is marginalised and the political leadership is relatively weak. While the Palestinians would never be able to win through violence, the Arab countries are also not interested to enter into a military confrontation with Israel to liberate the occupied territories.

Therefore, for LOWNP, violence is no option to improve the situation of the Palestinians, but neither is submission. The alternative to violence is often equated with passiveness and understood as submission to the situation and the enemy. Here, Nafez strongly argues for a responsible and active position in which Palestinians carry part of the responsibility for the situation, since their dispersion and weakness give an opportunity for the occupation, the suffering and the humiliations to continue. Injustice is not the sole responsibility of the perpetrator: Palestinians themselves should take responsibility for the suffering inflicted upon them and take action to change the situation.

At the same time, many Palestinians do not believe in peace anymore. Peace is about giving and taking, but they feel Israel is not giving. The negotiations and the peace process have not brought about any solutions for the fundamental issues of the conflict, such as the sovereignty and territorial boundaries, refugees, the status of Jerusalem, security, political prisoners, the settlements and water. The disillusionments about the peace process create more protest and violence as well.

For all the arguments mentioned above, Nafez strongly advocates the option of active non-violence for Palestinians to end the occupation and achieve social justice. Since violence, peace negotiations and international support have mostly failed, liberation has to come from within the Palestinian community through non-violent resistance. The only resource Palestinians have, are people, so they should develop this resource through education and raising awareness. Non-violent resistance can help to channel the frustration and anger and be an outlet for the internal pressure that is boiling. Pure non-violence could tell Israelis that Palestinians are willing to live next to them. Since Israelis perceive violence as an existential threat, they will only react positively towards non-violence. Through non-violent resistance, they might understand better the injustice of the Palestinian situation and be more willing to compromise in negotiations instead of feeling that something is being taken from them. Worldwide experience has shown that active non-violence is a more efficient strategy than the use of violence. Moreover, through non-violent resistance, the Palestinians would not estrange public opinion and

international support, but would be able to involve them for their cause.

Surpassing the options of violence and submission, active non-violence is often called the “third way.” In view of the context described above, Nafez and other non-violent activists believe it is the only way forward. This does not mean it is a magic formula. Some of the assumptions underlying the choice for non-violent resistance include:

- Non-violent resistance does not guarantee a non-violent response. There is a possibility that non-violent resistance on Palestinian side implies huge sacrifices, victims and wounded, as well as personal losses in terms of property, licenses and permissions.
- Non-violent resistance requires an active stance, the investment of resources, the development of capacities, special trainings and a high degree of organisation and discipline. One should realise that most non-violent activities will be regarded illegal by the opponent’s law enforcement system.
- There is a possibility for discernment and change in every Israeli soldier. They are fulfilling orders from their officers, but they can distinguish right from wrong and always look for a reasonable justification for their actions. They are neither supermen nor cowards.
- The Israeli government is sensitive to domestic and international public opinion, but only to a limited extent, since it is willing to pursue its objectives and maintain the oppression regardless of international pressure.

Since everything else has failed, the time might be ripe to seriously explore the option of non-violent resistance. Several individuals and organisations in the West Bank are vigorously promoting and developing the idea of active non-violence. LOWNP has been one the pioneering organisations in this regard. Both in age and approach, it distinguishes itself from the many NGOs that were established in the wake of the Oslo process, when huge international funds became available some of which the International community used to pacify the Palestinians.

5. Empowerment for Non-violence through Contexts of Daily Life

While LOWNP believes in non-violence as the only effective strategy to end the occupation, it rarely focuses on non-violent actions which directly confront the occupation. In this regard, it distinguishes itself from, for example, the non-violent actions that are organised against the Wall in Bil'in. Instead, LOWNP aims to empower the Palestinians for non-violence through the contexts of their daily lives, whether it is related to social, political, economic or cultural issues. Each of these sectors of life poses serious challenges, directly and indirectly related to the occupation, which can be addressed through non-violent actions. As such, the non-violent actions of LOWNP address serious political, social and cultural issues in the daily lives of Palestinians, while at the same time empowering them in the philosophy and practice of non-violence.

5.1 Security Context

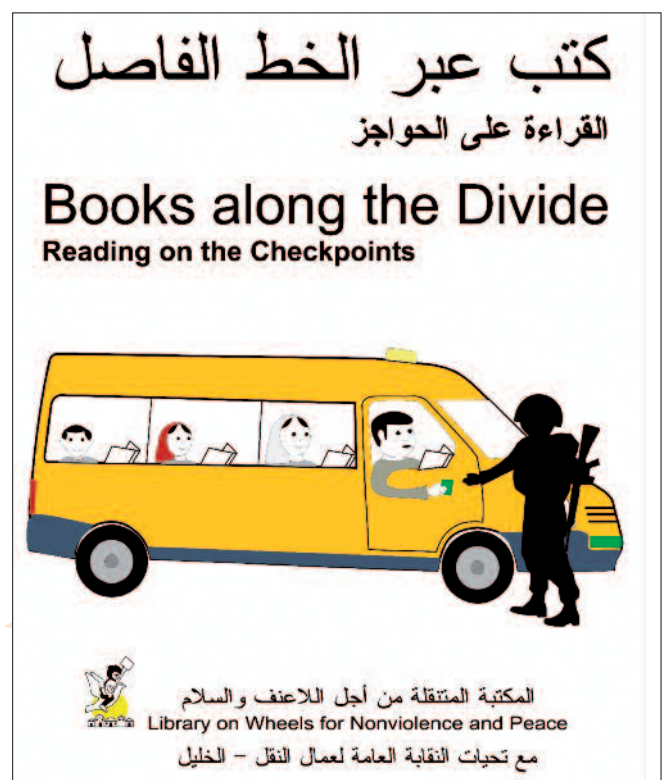
Since the Oslo Peace Agreements, the Palestinian Authority has taken the responsibility to manage the general administration in the West Bank; however, this does not mean they are in control of the whole West Bank, which is divided into A, B, and C-zones. In the C-zones, administration and security are still under full Israeli control. But also in the A-zones, where the administration and security are under control of the Palestinian Authority, Israeli military can enter at any moment and reoccupy the area whenever it chooses. This situation of occupation creates a lot of dissatisfaction and problems within the Palestinian community, not just political but also social and in terms of security. For example, thieves, criminals and murderers commit crimes in A- and B-zones and consequently flee to C-zones, which are under Israeli control. Since the Israeli's are not interested in thieves and criminals, the latter can easily pursue their criminal activities. As a result, people do not feel secure and tend to buy weapons to protect themselves. Then these weapons are not just used to protect them from thieves, but sometimes also in ordinary conflicts which escalate from offenses into physical violence and end with shooting.

Confronted with this security situation and after analysing it, LOWNP developed different campaigns to address some of the issues involved.

The "Campaign on Family Weapons" was an awareness raising campaign aimed at reducing the use of violence and weapons in resolving conflicts. LOWNP organised

workshops, non-violent communication trainings, film screenings, sit-ins, petitions, and spread posters. They also organised a campaign on playing chess in order to make people think before they do something. While the message that was transmitted was "to think before you kill someone," the actual aim of the campaign was to help prevent such killings.

The best known campaign related to the security context was "Books along the Divide: Reading on the Checkpoints Campaign." This campaign was launched in the summer of 2007, when people still had to wait very long at the Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. The Public Transportation drivers passing through the checkpoints received a collection of books and stories on non-violence. These collections of books were carefully selected and contained short stories and pockets of non-accumulative knowledge which were suitable for travellers regardless of the moment when they stopped reading. These books were distributed among the passengers during the trip, in order to benefit from the duration of the trip and especially during the waiting time at the checkpoints. The aim of the campaign was threefold: a) it helped people to overcome their anger and frustration by reading; b) it made them acquainted with the philosophy of non-



violence and other new ideas, which can be discussed in the car; and c) it showed the Israeli soldiers that the checkpoints are useless as a punishment method, because one can spend the waiting time with useful activities and enjoy reading. The campaigns were organised in cooperation with the Public Transportation Unions of Hebron and Bethlehem, for whom several workshops were organised. The drivers involved in the campaign were generally volunteers who were positively inclined towards reading and motivated by LOWNP. Their cars carried stickers of the campaign. During and after the campaign, they were also interviewed in order to get feedback on the progress of the campaign and adjust its activities if needed. An estimated 31.000 passengers had been reached, while the campaign was covered by local media and Arab and European TV channels.

5.2 Political Context

The internal political context in Palestine today is characterised by uncertainty and the lack of leadership. Since the coup d'état of Hamas in Gaza, it has not been possible to form a unified Palestinian government. LOWNP does not deal with high level political leaders as such, because it is difficult to contact them and they are not considered as one of the core target groups. Although changing the attitudes of politicians is regarded as important, it is not one of the core activities of LOWNP. Instead, it focuses on education and capacity-building, through which it aims to reach other goals.

On the level of the people, the political context is characterised by lack of participation in political decision-making, lack of civic education and lack of women in decision-making positions. For example, with regard to the official peace process and the negotiations, many of the issues which are directly affecting the people, such as water, refugees, and the settlements, have not yet come to a solution and the people are not involved in the political decision-making. Therefore, LOWNP wants to empower the silent majority to participate in the peace building process and address the issues that directly affect them. For example, they collect around thirty people from an area close to a settlement and ask them what they want the Palestinian negotiators to demand from the Israeli negotiators. The local people answer that they want compensation for the use of their land since 1967, or that they want the settlers to leave completely, or that the settlers in general can stay but those who are violent have to leave. The statements of these people are then sent to the Palestinian Negotiations Department to inform them. This way, the people feel they participate in the democratic system and learn to take responsibility. For LOWNP, democracy does not mean

just to vote, but to bring about a solution for your problems by following it up through the respective institutions. If people know how to do this, they will feel the benefits of democracy more and the achievement of social justice without recurring to non-democratic and non-peaceful means. However, there is a lack of civic education among the people. Therefore, one of the aims of LOWNP is to raise awareness through different campaigns, teach people how democracy works and how they can express their needs, empower them through trainings, and let them discover their capacities. Concretely, they organise trainings and workshops on different issues, such as citizens' rights and duties related to the payment of taxes, the stipulations in the certificate of marriage, or the different types of car insurances and the obliged and optional aspects. In view of the lack of women in decision-making, LOWNP pays attention to consistently include both men and women in their activities.

5.3 Legal Context

The legal context in the West Bank today is characterised by many deficiencies, such as the lack of a decent court system, excessive bureaucracy, the lack of a well-functioning police force, the lack of civic rights, the unequal distribution of opportunities, etc. The efforts of LOWNP in the legal context are mainly focused on civic education and empowerment. For example, people lose a lot of money because they do not know how the legal system works. They do not know how to write an official application at the municipality, where you can pay ten Shekels so that someone writes it for you. Therefore, LOWNP teaches them how to write an application, to whom, and which details to fill in. It explains them how the municipality works and how you can follow up on your case or issues. The trainings start from the concrete problems of the people. They empower women to follow their cases regarding alimony, but also men whose ex-wives refuse to let them to see their children. When people know how the institutions work, they will be less angry and upset and feel more social justice. In women's groups, LOWNP analyses the certificate of marriage, the role of the witness, the guarantees for married women, and the cases when they can say no. They organise excursions for youth to the police station, where they can learn about the stolen cars in Hebron, which are illegal and do not have insurance. Activities are set up for children to give them the opportunity to feel responsible and aware that they too can make their contribution to society, for example as street inspectors. Through its various activities, LOWNP aims to improve people's knowledge of their rights and duties, develop equal accessibility to opportunities, and foster a population which is committed to the rule of law.

5.4 Social Context

The social context in the West Bank today is to a large extent defined by the occupation. Many aspects of the lives of Palestinians are under control of the Israeli administration and military. Almost every daily activity is subject to a comprehensive occupation system that issues and denies permits and licenses. The West Bank is increasingly Judaize through a well-developed plan that is based on the expansion of the settlements. For around 2,5 million Palestinians, there are around 60.000 Israeli military and 500.000 settlers, who are mostly civilian. The violence of the occupation has also increased the violence inside the Palestinian community. Men who have experienced violence at the hands of the Israelis without a possibility to respond, become violent themselves in their own families. For example, a Palestinian man is considered to be the protector of the family, but when the Israeli's humiliate him in front of his family and he cannot react, he will act this out later against his wife and children. There is a lot of violence against women and children in Palestine, which continues in a vicious circle since the children will behave according to what they experience. Women and children generally do not have many opportunities to express themselves. The divorce rate in Palestine today reaches 11% according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2008), which is relatively high. Apart from aggravating the daily life conditions of the Palestinians, the occupation has also created serious gaps of mistrust among the people, at the level of the family as well as on the level of society. By investigating people separately from each other, the Israeli policies increase the mutual distrust in Palestinian society, where the culture of bad rumours is widespread. Society is fragmented and values are eroding. The feeling of a unified national identity of being Palestinian is at risk and there are more identity-based tensions, whether it is between villagers and people in the city, refugees and local people, Christians and Muslims, different groups within one religion, or people from the North and the South West Bank.

63% of the population is under age, while an estimated 10% of them drop out of high school. Many youth are involved in crime. The lack of cultural and recreational opportunities contributes to the feeling of hopelessness. 44% of the boys under 14 are smoking as revealed by the Ministry of Higher Education reports ² Socially engaged Palestinians agree that there is a huge need to plant seeds of peace and non-violence in the

Palestinian families. So far, LOWNP has no specific programs on violence against women, but it has a lot of programs for children and youth, as we will see below. In order to address the need for restoring trust in Palestinian society, LOWNP does not invite professors from universities to talk about the concept of trust, but lets people experience it for themselves “through potatoes,” Nafez said. In a workshop, around 30 people put their watches in a bag which goes around the circle. With closed eyes, the participants have to touch the watches in the bag and keep the watch that they think is theirs. In this round, most of the participants can recognise their watches. In a next round, all participants get a potato which they cannot mark, and they have to recognise it with closed eyes when it goes around the circle. In this round, most participants do not recognise their potato. At the end of the workshop all potatoes are cooked and the participants eat together. This exercise illustrates that when people are familiar with certain materials, like their watches, they have somehow internalised them and can depend on their intuition to take the right decision, i.e. to recognise their watches. However, when they are not familiar, like with the potatoes, they can make mistakes.

5.5 Economic Context

Economically, the situation in the West Bank is very difficult. The unemployment rate is around 20%, living costs are high, 23% of the families are living under the poverty line and there is a lack of investment and development projects. The economic situation is not just a form of structural violence, but it also leads to physical violence, since the stress and frustration make people more violent.

The fact that Israelis sell expired products underground to Palestinian importers has prompted LOWNP to set up an action with child inspectors. In order to make the children feel responsible and to fight against these illegal expired products, they teach them to visit the shops and check the date of expiry. If the product is expired, the child inspectors, who have a badge from the Palestinian Ministry of Economy, warn the shopkeeper and ask him to take the products away. After a few days, they come back to see whether the products have indeed been taken away from the shelves. The aim is not to put a complaint against the shopkeepers, but to make them aware. This action is related to the campaign to Eat and Drink Local Products Only.

² www.mohe.gov.ps/publications/smoking.doc <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/wbgaza-povertyaftereconcrisis.pdf>

Palestinian economy is largely dependent on Israeli products, whether in the form of raw materials or fabricated products. People are using dairy throughout the day, but although there are Palestinian dairy factories, they are mostly using Israeli products. For LOWNP it was very clear that if Palestinians do not want the occupation, they also have to give evidence to that somehow. That is how they started the campaign “Eat and Drink Local Products Only,” which aimed to encourage the consumption of local products and to reduce the consumption of Israeli occupation products. Although very similar to boycott, the campaign was not called “boycott” in order not to give the Israeli authorities an excuse to act against LOWNP as an organisation. With this title, the campaign also brought a more positive message than if it were to be called a boycott campaign. Many workshops, trainings and meetings with factories, shopkeepers and consumers were held to educate Palestinians on the positive aspect of consuming their local products only and to develop the campaign. A huge advertisement campaign was launched throughout the governorate of Hebron in the form of posters, stickers, giant advertisement boards in the streets, and advertisements in local radio and TV. In addition, exhibitions to taste local products and theatre shows were organised. During the campaign, LOWNP held consultations with the shopkeepers, who are responsible for executing the campaign in practice, and organised monitoring visits to the shops to verify the actual sales of local and Israeli products.

The campaign makes people think about the national importance to buy local products, gives ordinary people a sense of citizenship and a national mission, and gives them confidence in their own products and land. It also gives them the feeling that they can resist occupation in other, creative ways. In addition, it urged local Palestinian factories to improve the quality of their products.



Ultimately, increased selling could lead to more employment and less poverty.

Started in 2008, the campaign is still on going. In December 2009, the Minister of Economy called on Palestinians not to buy Israeli settlements products any longer. However, LOWNP wants to boycott all Israeli products, not just those of the settlements. Therefore, it is still looking for channels and contacts to exercise more pressure. For example, through Islamic scholars they plan to contact the Great Imam to ask his support for the boycott of all Israeli products. The position of religious leaders is freer than that of LOWNP. The support of the Imam would challenge those who keep importing Israeli products for which there exists an alternative. LOWNP also cooperates in this regard with the Palestinian Union of NGOs in Hebron. It would like to spread this campaign throughout Palestine. Although it is not called boycott, it also gives a sign to the international community, where a boycott campaign is running, that Palestinians are also doing something in this regard.

5.6 Cultural Context

Although confronted on a daily basis with the Jewish culture and the Hebrew language, most Palestinians do not know much about it and do not really understand it. However, LOWNP finds it important to learn about the tradition of the opponent and break down stereotypes. Israeli newspapers should not appear as strange, but Palestinians should know what they mean. Therefore, LOWNP has organised courses in the Jewish tradition and in Hebrew language which have been attended by teachers and directors of schools, university students, and Palestinian governmental organisations.

Another relevant aspect of the cultural context is the dominant presence of violence in the Muslim / Arab culture and the consequent resistance against the idea of non-violence. Non-violence has a negative connotation. According to the prevailing culture, one should respond with “an eye for an eye.” In order for a Gandhi figure to rise up from the culture, it is believed that a whole cultural revolution is needed. Many people think that non-violence is something from outside. However, one of the staff members of LOWNP has written his thesis on the history of non-violence in Palestine and shows that non-violent resistance is also part of their tradition. He gives an overview of tools for non-violent resistance and shows that these tools can also be Palestinian tools. The thesis has been distributed to many NGOs.

Since Palestinian society is rather traditional and

religious, it is easier and more accepted to talk to the people about non-violence and its tools from the perspective of Islam. Therefore, LOWNP also runs the Islamic Peace Study Program, which aims to highlight the non-violence heritage in Islam and to change religious attitudes towards non-violence. For that, it has interviewed the most important Islamic leaders in Palestine and prepared publications on Islam and the Quran, society, family, etc., which it has distributed all over Palestine. The publications are also part of the libraries, so many children and their parents come to know about them. The staff conducts studies on the Islamic tradition in relation to peace, coexistence and non-violence, and has given workshops with Islamic scholars, in mosques, universities and other organisations. LOWNP cooperated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the framework of this Program. Overall, the Program generated a wide discussion. It made people familiar with the terminology of non-violence and made them understand that non-violence is in accordance with God. When the Islamic Liberation Party was attacking organisations who received funding from abroad, one staff member went with the publications of LOWNP to one of their leaders to ask whether he considered that they were carrying foreign ideas. After the local leader read the publications, he said that LOWNP is actually doing better work than they themselves. It is through the non-violent tradition in Islam that LOWNP hopes to affect Islamic political groups and talk to them about non-violent resistance tools. One of the staff members of LOWNP recalls that the spokesperson of Hamas in Gaza was asked on BBC why they were not shooting at Israelis since they were a resistance movement, to which he answered that they resist by not eating Israeli products and organising demonstrations.

Generally, LOWNP aims to promote the idea of Salaam in Islam, Shalom in Judaism, and Peace in Christianity, understanding of the similarities between the different religious cultures and respect for the differences.

5.6 Local Context of Hebron

Hebron is the biggest Palestinian city and known for its conservative Islamic atmosphere. Tribal laws often dominate state laws and the Palestinian Authority is not very strict in law enforcement, partly because it controls only (H1) zone. The Old City of Hebron is under Israeli military control. Around 600 extremist Jewish settlers live entrenched in the Old City protected by the army. The settlers have been harassing Palestinians and pressuring them to sell or give up their houses. They have made the lives of the inhabitants so miserable, that

many of them have left. The Israeli army has erected road blocks and other obstacles to hinder citizens and prevent potential buyers from reaching the market in the Old City. This has led to the bankruptcy and consequent departure of many Palestinian shopkeepers. Settlers' children have been provoking and harassing the pupils of the Old City's schools. The Temporary International Presence in Hebron, which was installed after the killing of dozens of Palestinians by extremist settler Baruch Goldstein in the Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994, is still staying in the city permanently. Reportedly, the permanent unemployment percentage as well as the crime level has risen. One of the interviewees remarked that Hebron is still suffering from vendetta killings among families. Overall, Hebron is considered to be a city under huge stress with a lot of violence, in the streets, in families, and among the youth. More than in most other cities in Palestine, violence is part of the daily scene in Hebron. It has become part of the culture and the general atmosphere.

Therefore, the mere presence of LOWNP in Hebron is very meaningful in itself. Although its main office is in Ramallah, LOWNP has opened a branch in Hebron, where most of its activities take place. There was no need to focus in Ramallah, since it is home to hundreds of organisations while its population is only one tenth of the population of Hebron. Hebron also has more problems. When LOWNP started to work in Hebron, there were not many NGOs present. The local traditions and the settlement in the Old City make it difficult to work in Hebron. However, LOWNP's work seems to have inspired other NGOs to come as well. Until now, LOWNP is apparently the only organisation in Hebron which works on non-violence and conflict resolution. It is unique in that it educates the local population on non-violence and works with them to fulfil their needs through non-violent means.

LOWNP has launched several campaigns related to the situation in the Old City in Hebron. For example, LOWNP suggested to the Ministry of Religious Affairs to prolong the call for prayers to 24 hours so that the settlers cannot sleep. This was effectively done. As a response, the Israeli occupation forces put the minaret in the Old City to silence, which is a violation of the right of freedom of expression and freedom of religion. LOWNP also organised campaigns to motivate people to stay in the Old City and organised lotteries to support the local shopkeepers.

6. Strategies of the Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace

The examples above show that LOWNP is active in many different contexts of society through a variety of initiatives and campaigns. As mentioned above, people are empowered in the philosophy and practice of non-violence through different contexts of daily life, while at the same time they address their needs and problems in various sectors of life in a non-violent way. All initiatives and campaigns mentioned above aim to prepare a generation which will fight for independence and social justice in Palestine through non-violent means.

Regarding the needs that are selected to work on in the face of their all pervasiveness, it is obviously not possible for LOWNP to cover everything. It depends on the priorities and on the field of action. For example, LOWNP cannot work on mental health. “If we work on everything, we reach nothing,” Nafez says. However, as a principal working method, all projects are based on the problems and needs of society as LOWNP encounters them, not on the needs of LOWNP or the agendas of the donors. It is understood that society defines its own needs. Regardless of whether the task is difficult or not, LOWNP will focus its work based on the importance of the problems that society is facing. In addition, all projects are always embedded in the core value of non-violence.

Although their field of action is wide and their scope of activities very varied, we can nevertheless discern some major strategies in the work of LOWNP.

6.1 Starting from the Local Contexts and Needs of the People

First of all, LOWNP always starts from the local contexts of the people and their actual needs. The idea to start from the needs of the people is motivated by the fact that people will become more active if their own needs are concerned, instead of being frustrated or depressed. In its work over the years, LOWNP has experienced that there are many obstacles that keep people from taking initiative. Through the focus on the personal needs of the people and the use of action oriented campaigns, LOWNP wants to reverse the tendency to rely on others. It gives the people the inspiration and tools to address their own needs through non-violent methods. As such, it brings a message that people should not lose faith in their struggle and it revives their hope. When people learn to solve their own problems in a non-violent way, they can later also address the problem of the occupation.

The concrete needs and local contexts of people can vary, like families, schools or shops. The idea is to inspire people to non-violence from their daily lives, as shown by the example above of buying good products. Another daily reality is the fact that it is sometimes difficult to find your way in the villages, because the streets have no names. Therefore, during Summer Camps, LOWNP takes the children to the streets to count groceries, shoe shops, bakeries, etc., and to make an inventory of a particular area. They then discuss names for the streets and suggest them to the municipalities. When the children succeed in giving a street their name, it gives them a feeling of empowerment, responsibility and citizenship. In another activity, the children go out to inspect their streets and to see whether the lights are functioning, whether the bus stops are decent, or whether there are enough garbage containers. After that, they write a proposal to the mayor of Hebron to develop their street. LOWNP teaches to pay attention to small things in daily life and to follow up on them.

The campaigns on local products or reading at the checkpoints also started from the concrete contexts of daily life. People did not know that actions like these could also be part of the resistance. By adapting and applying the tools and methods of non-violence to local circumstances, LOWNP has made them aware about this.

6.2 Practice-Oriented Approach

Related to the strategy to start from the local contexts and the needs of the people, is the strategic focus on practice, which lets people discover non-violence for them. About the practice oriented approach, Nafez says: “We prepare the ground for them to discover non-violence. We educate. They practice and can discover. We don’t give it on a silver plate and say “Please, take it.” We don’t say that it is good. We are not marketing. We want our people to discover the power of non-violence themselves.” Indeed, LOWNP does not convince people of non-violence, but wants to create the opportunity for them to experience to the fullest that it is to their own advantage.

LOWNP lets the people discover non-violence in very practice oriented ways, since “everyone is tired of theories.” This approach differs, for example, from the approach of the Holy Land Trust, which goes more into theory. In LOWNP, the practice is at the core of the

discussions, which are held within the community and among the participants of the activities.

6.3 Simple Activities

The activities and tools they use are often simple and costless. For example, Nafez has started a little campaign by asking people from abroad to send postcards to his address in East-Jerusalem, mentioning "Palestine" and not "Israel" in the address. The idea was to trigger at least some kind of reaction among the people working in the post office. If they like it, they can deliver it, if not, they can send it back. Some cards arrived, but "Palestine" was crossed out and replaced by "Israel." Other envelopes showed other remarks or carried signs of special attention or consideration from the post officers. Overall, many cards arrived. It is a simple way of activism in which people from abroad can participate and it costs them only the stamp. Another simple and costless activity of LOWNP requires only empty cans and little stones. Children are asked to find empty cans and fill them with little stones to make maracas. In this simple way, they learn it is better to make music with the stones than to throw them at Israeli soldiers. The children even go and play the maracas in front of the Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints, who might start wondering what they are doing there in front of those children who express their desire for freedom by shaking little stones in a can.

6.4 Creativity and Innovation in line with Local Traditions

As an organisation, LOWNP is quite unique compared to other organisations in Hebron due to its new approach to use non-violence in the pursuit of peace. It is a constant laboratory of new ideas and creative activities, which spring forth from joint brainstorming. The innovative and creative approach of the different campaigns, such as reading at the checkpoints, for example, makes more people interested in them than in standard campaigns. At the same time, LOWNP has the vision and the skills to combine creativity and innovation with respect for the local traditions. The society in general is rather traditional and LOWNP serves these local customs and ethics. An example of that is the above-mentioned program for people to discover the power of non-violence in the Islamic tradition.

6.5 Cause Trouble, but Not Too Confrontational

With regard to the opponent, the strategy of LOWNP is to confront the other and "to cause trouble." Nafez is very clear that he is not so much interested in attending

workshops with like-minded people on Israeli side to build good relations and share a common understanding, since this will not resolve the issues. Rather than working with Israeli groups who already support the Palestinian cause, he is more interested in facing Likud members, for example, because they still have to change their attitudes and minds towards non-violence. The non-violent approach does not entail to punish the opponent, but to change his/her attitudes through non-violence. However, since attitudes cannot be changed easily, Nafez emphasises that it is necessary to provoke the opponent, to exercise pressure and to cause him trouble. In his understanding, non-violence can never be 100 per cent pure, since it entails some psychological and social pain. Although non-violent action cannot be ideal, it is necessary to change attitudes in order to change unjust systems. Therefore, the actions and campaigns envisioned should cause the Israeli opponent "money, efforts and time." "It is our job to annoy them," Nafez says. For example, the Israeli soldiers are not considered responsible for their actions, because they receive orders from military officers who receive their orders from politicians. Although LOWNP has nothing against the soldiers, it aims to annoy them enough without hurting them, so that they will speak to their officers. If it is not possible to change the attitudes of the commanders with regard to the use of missiles, the non-violent activists can destroy the missiles with a hammer, which causes the Israeli opponent money, effort and time. Generally, LOWNP is ready to initiate any project or campaign that addresses the needs of people and society, regardless of the reactions or obstacles they might face. "The braveness of LOWNP stems from its unique projects others are not brave enough to carry," one NGO worker observes. "From my point of view, the projects of LOWNP entail many risks, but they always manage to cope with these difficulties and achieve their goals."

At the same time, the campaigns and initiatives of LOWNP are generally not political or aggressive, but conducted in a smart and sometimes indirect way. LOWNP uses an ad hoc approach with regard to the precarious balance of confrontation and reconciliation. Sometimes dialogue is possible and the issue might be resolved by talking only. Sometimes an issue can be discussed through dialogue, but it is not possible to come to a solution. In this case, a non-violent campaign or action can be initiated. In other cases, it is not possible to have a dialogue, so a non-violent campaign or action is initiated to come to a dialogue. In any case, Nafez says, LOWNP works on an issue until it is resolved. It is very clear that they do not shun confrontation, but at the same time it seems that they will not go into direct confrontations if not necessary. They especially

seem to shun from direct actions against the occupation, whether for strategic or capacity reasons. Other organisations, like the Holy Land Trust, are more confrontational and put themselves at the frontline of the occupation.

6.6 Focus on Children and Youth...

Although the activities of LOWNP involve both adults and children and people from all sectors of life, LOWNP has made a strategic choice to focus its activities on children and youth. Taking into account that Palestinians absorb new ideas very slowly, LOWNP considers it more rewarding to work with young minds. In addition, the children in Hebron have very few opportunities today to express themselves.

6.7 ... through Empowerment and Education

The overall approach of LOWNP to focus on empowerment and education and the strategic choice to focus on children have, combined, led to various projects, several of which have become the core business of LOWNP.

Crucial for LOWNP's work to prepare a new generation is its collection of books and other material to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. LOWNP collects these materials, stores them and makes them available in different forms for beneficiaries to discover the power of non-violence. LOWNP believes that books can really change people and play an important role in the education process. The collection of materials serves the development of LOWNP's projects, but is also available for study and for all interested individuals and organisations in Palestine. As such, it contributes to the spread of the concepts and culture of non-violence.

For children, these materials are made accessible through both fixed libraries and the Book Mobile. There is a fixed library in the Old City of Hebron, in the offices of LOWNP in Hebron, and in Ramallah. The Book Mobile travels to more marginalised and remote places around Hebron which do not have access to libraries and where few books are available. Every week it visits several schools in villages in the surrounding areas. Because of its special form and appearance, children are attracted to this Book Mobile and enthusiastic to go inside. The Book Mobile contains books on non-violence, but also books related to the school curriculum and on topics of wider interest. They are important to encourage the children to read and to improve their reading level. It exposes them to different kinds of information, which benefits their education and their growth and development in general. If during its visits, the staff of

the Book Mobile hears about problems of the children or the villagers, they encourage them to use non-violent means to find solutions. In places where the Book Mobile cannot pass due to the conditions of the roads or because the roads are blocked, it functions as the "Library on Donkeys."



In the House of Non-violence – HoN in Hebron the children and the youth can experience and explore the ideas and methods of peace, coexistence and non-violence as a way of life. The House of Non-violence is a place where children and youth can learn about non-violence, follow trainings, develop their capabilities and talents, and practice the methods of daily conflict transformation and non-violence. Through field activities and campaigns they learn to organise themselves. Educated and empowered from HoN, the youth can go back to their families, schools, youth centres and communities to work as mediators and spread the methods of non-violence. As such, the House of Non-violence activates the role of children and youth in their communities and trains them to take up leadership roles in society. By sharing their knowledge and expertise with other youth, they can encourage others to explore the power of non-violence. Students especially have become more involved in the work of LOWNP lately, and function as agents of change in the universities.

Non-violence is understood in a holistic and comprehensive way and therefore implies educating a new generation in non-violence as a way of life. Therefore, HoN does not only organise trainings on non-violence and conflict transformation, but also a wide range of other activities the whole year round, such as film screenings, fun activities, artistic activities, such as drama and theatre, courses in the Jewish tradition and Hebrew language, courses in English language, special activities for young women, stress relief sessions, actions

for Gaza, etc. The fun activities are an integral part of the approach of LOWNP, since they do not only attract people to the activities and campaigns, but also show that active non-violence is fun. HoN is a place where children and youth can learn to express themselves through different forms of arts, such as drama, music and storytelling. It is a place for social interaction where they can get to know one another and feel they belong to one people. It is a free space to explore new ideas. LOWNP offers a kind of education which the children do not get at school, where the education is focused on the text books, or at home, where the parents focus on other responsibilities.

The children in Hebron often come from violent backgrounds and situations and some are beaten by their father, by teachers, by cousins and brothers. Therefore, HoN also pays attention to the dimension of personal and inner peace through the organisation of meditation sessions and art therapy to work out conflicts. The field activities and campaigns allow the youth to constructively channel their anger and frustrations. Courses on time management and different processes on trust, truth and respect also aim to reduce inner tension. One of the children said: "I get angry when someone hits me or when others are fighting. When we come here with anger, we spend a

few hours and when we go home we can spread the idea of non-violence." They say that there is no violence in HoN and the trainers treat the children smoothly and with understanding. Those who lose a game are not punished, but have to tell a joke.

Through its various educational and training activities, the youth, who are so often confused and insecure because of the current living circumstances, are given an opportunity to regain a sense of security and self-confidence. One of these projects is the Children Parliament for Non-violence, which was initiated in Hebron in January 2006. This project addresses issues of violence which children in society are confronted with and aims to educate children on the importance of non-violent means to defend their rights. It offers training in non-violent communication at family, school and society level and fosters increased self-esteem. In 2008, the Parliament counted 60 children (20 boys and 40 girls).

In order to make non-violence a structural part of the education of children, LOWNP would like to include it in the school textbooks and curriculum in Palestine. It could therefore work together with one of its partners who work on the development of the curriculum in Palestinian schools.



7. Inspiration and Motivation

As an organisation, LOWNP has no well-articulated sources of inspiration and motivation. In fact, staff members and people involved can all have their own inspiration and motivation, whether it comes from Islam or Christianity, from communism or other sources. However, the work of LOWNP over the years has to a large extent been developed by its Director, Nafez Assaily, and shaped by his personal inspiration and motivation. For Nafez, non-violence is a principle and not just a tactic. It is a principle in his daily life as well as in political and social life, but a principle that is used on a strategic level.

His inspiration comes largely from religion, but solely. As a young boy, he would not enter into any fights, because he had no brothers that could back him up. He went to a Roman Catholic primary school, to a Coptic Orthodox secondary school and then to the university in Nablus. This background of three different religions would contribute to shape his philosophy on non-violence. Nafez says about himself that he was really a normal child who would play “Arab and Jew,” or “police and thief.” The turning point came when he saw the movie on Gandhi.

As a Muslim, he follows mostly the Sufi tradition in Islam. In particular, there are four principles which really inspire him. First of all, the value of the human being is crucial, because God lives in every human being. Nafez explains this to children and adults alike by showing how the name of Allah is written in the palm of our hands. Holding his hand up with the thumb and forefinger together and the other fingers extended, he shows that his fingers spell “Allah” in Arabic.



Therefore, we should be careful not to hurt other human beings, because we would hurt Allah in them. At the same time, hurting others will also hurt Allah which we have in ourselves. Even in the people who are fighting us we should see Allah, because if you hate someone, you hate Allah in them. This does not mean that you should submit to them, but you should resist without violence and without hurting Allah in that human being. In this philosophy, killing a human being is of course considered a sin. The second principle is the purity of the soul or the spirit, in contrast to the impurity of the body. Upon death, Allah accepts the pure soul, which belongs to Him, but the impure body is buried in the earth. Therefore, one should distinguish the presence of the spirit from the activities of the body. We can judge the activities of a person, but not the person as such. The third principle is the unity of life. We water plants and trees, and when we eat the fruits, we drink the same water that the plants and trees absorbed. Israeli's and Palestinians, human beings and animals, all drink the same water and breathe the same air. The fourth principle, coming from Marshall Rosenberg, is non-violent communication, not just with the other, but also with the environment and the planet.

Nafez has developed his own inspiration from different sources, not only from Sufism and Islam, but also from the prophets of the Old Testament, the Roman Catholic Church, Buddhism and secular sources. This inspiration stays with him all the time. “Sometimes I am sad, but never angry. Being angry is a personal choice. If I am angry, it is because I want to be angry. Nothing outside me can make me angry,” Nafez says. He tells that his wife sometimes gets angry at him, because he never gets angry. Even when he lost his eye in a fight in a mosque in 1991, or when the Israelis confiscated his land, he never felt a desire for revenge, but resisted non-violently. “Violence is no option for me at all,” Nafez says: “There is no cause that can bring me to hurt any human being.” Such an attitude can be trained, but it requires a lot of patience.

It is this deeply held inspiration and motivation that affects the people when they listen to Nafez, because his words reflect his non-violent stance and he makes non-violence into a personal experience.

8. The Olive and the Gun: Non-violence and the Resistance Movement

As a proponent of non-violence in Palestine, LOWNP is aware of its special relationship to the resistance movement in general and pays special attention to its message towards those advocating violent resistance. As Nafez explains, when PLO leader Yasser Arafat was speaking for the UN in 1973, he held an olive branch in one hand and a gun in the other, showing that both hands are part of the same body. While LOWNP is in favour of the olive branch and takes responsibility for it, it does not deny the existence of the other hand. It does not condemn the armed struggle, nor does it try to stop it, because doing so it would be stopped by its own people. "If I would say I am against the armed struggle, it would mean I am not a good Palestinian," Nafez says. In fact, the Israeli authorities had hoped that Palestinians themselves would make an end to the non-violent resistance campaigns in Palestine. If LOWNP did not position itself in a smart way, it would have outplayed itself from the start.

Some organisations in Palestine openly advocate for non-violent resistance. However, most political parties in Palestine focus on resistance with violent means with an option for non-violent means if they would be more effective. However, while many Palestinians are open to believe that non-violence can work in other contexts, such as India and South Africa, they do not believe it can work in the context of the occupation when faced with an opponent like Israel. They argue that the 2nd Intifada has been practically over since 2005, but the checkpoints remain, land is stolen, and settlements increase. Therefore, they argue that non-violence is not very effective in their case. Some political parties believe that the occupation can only be ended by violence, and they have their own armed groups to support this view. Recently, however, the Fatah party seems to have made a shift by choosing for non-violent resistance with a violent option if needed. In its Party Congress in Bethlehem in August 2009, Fatah included "popular resistance" in its political agenda and referred to the non-violent actions in Bil'in. "Popular resistance" means resistance supported by the whole population, but in the local vocabulary it is understood as the opposite of the "armed struggle." Nafez regrets that they did not speak out clearly and did not call it "popular non-violent resistance." If he was in Abu Mazen's place, he says, he would declare non-violence officially as the political agenda, give back all the weapons to Israel and be with the people on the streets to carry out non-violent actions. Non-violent action is a necessary

component to negotiations. In his speech at the Red Sea Summit in 2005 in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and President Bush from the USA, Abu Mazen declared that the Palestinians are ready to recognise the Holocaust and have the right to resist the occupation with non-violent means. Sharon, however, did not declare anything publicly and continued building settlements, which made Abu Mazen very angry. Not just Abu Mazen, but many Palestinians feel that peaceful negotiations lead to nothing. They are no longer open to negotiations or peace with Israel. Therefore, Nafez states very clearly that negotiations without non-violent action are useless. Already in 1994, Nafez told Arafat that non-violent action can strengthen the Palestinian negotiations at the table.

As said earlier, politicians and political leaders have not been one of the direct target groups of LOWNP. However, through its various activities and campaigns LOWNP wants to affect policies and make politicians adopt non-violent tools. For example, the Minister of Social Affairs had ordered her staff to use only local products in the ministerial offices. LOWNP supported her decision with an article in the Al Quds newspaper in June 2009 and appealed to the Prime Minister to extend this decision to all ministries. One month later, the Minister of Interior announced the same decision. Sometimes LOWNP influences politicians indirectly through its campaigns, posters and demonstrations. The campaign on family weapons was not directed against arms producers, but the authorities decided to target them after the campaign of LOWNP.

LOWNP has also given non-violent trainings to the police and to members of Fatah, courses on the Jewish tradition to the staff of the ministries, and courses on non-violent communication to the Palestinian security services. Since LOWNP acknowledges that it is important to change attitudes, it is looking for new ways to reach new groups, such as politicians, local leaders of Fatah and religious and political hardliners. One of the ideas is to set up a separate affiliation of LOWNP or a NGO, which would work closer with Fatah and be in direct contact with Abu Mazen. Being independent, this organisation would not be able to tell Fatah leaders to pursue non-violence only, but it could support their knowledge and practice of non-violence and help them to define and implement the decisions of the recent Fatah Congress. It could organise workshops on non-violence, discussions and brainstorming sessions to develop the idea and strategy of Fatah.

9. Local Cooperation and International Networks

In Hebron, LOWNP has cooperated with many other organisations in dozens of activities and especially in its different campaigns. For example, the Society Development Charity for Culture and Ideology is a partner in the campaign on local products and stopped buying any Israeli products in its Charity. They feel they share the same goal as LOWNP to help the Palestinian people and they strongly believe that non-violence is a good tool to develop society and counter the occupation. The Drivers Union of Hebron played a crucial role in the campaign on reading at the checkpoints. It hopes that LOWNP will involve its drivers in a new project or train them to deal non-violently with different types of passengers. The International Palestinian Youth League is a partner of LOWNP and regularly sends young volunteers to LOWNP. Since they want to focus more on non-violence in their work with the youth, they will ask LOWNP for trainings and expertise. Also the municipality of Hebron has supported LOWNP in different ways, by providing facilities for meetings, inviting the population at large for some activities of LOWNP, or giving space in factories to have an exposition on local products. By providing organisational support, the municipality implies that it agrees with the work or the specific campaigns of LOWNP.

LOWNP enjoys the respect of other organisations and institutions in Hebron for its general contribution to Palestinian society as well as for its specific programs and activities. LOWNP is a member of the National Union of Palestinian Public Organisations (Hebron Branch) and has also presided over this Union for some time. Through its program on non-violence and Islam, it has managed to effectively take away some of the apprehensions of the local population towards LOWNP and its activities.

In the rest of Palestine, LOWNP works only occasionally together with other organisations. Especially with the Holy Land Trust LOWNP works very much on the same line, i.e. they both have a holistic and comprehensive understanding of non-violence and aim at community building and raising a generation for whom non-violence is a way of life. Together, they organise trainings in non-violence, alternative media, alternative tourism and leadership training. In the whole of Palestine today, there are between twenty and thirty organisations which work on non-violence. All have their specific focus areas and

activities, such as Middle East Non-violence and Democracy (MEND), Stop the Wall Campaign, groups in Bil'in, and the Rapprochement Center in Beit Sahour. Due to a lack of direct communication, they often do not know what the others are doing exactly. There is a huge lack of cooperation and networking among these different organisations working on non-violence. Although there have been some attempts to bring them together, it was not followed up. That is why some consider that there is still no non-violence movement in Palestine today, although the seeds have been planted for twenty years.

Initiatives have also been taken to develop an Arab non-violence network in the region, of which LOWNP would be a member as well, but this network is still in its starting phase.³ LOWNP is also member of the regional network of LACR.

LOWNP is supported internationally by individuals and friend groups, such as in the Netherlands, and development organisations such as CCFD or Cordaid. It is also part of international networks such as Pax Christi and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. These international partnerships are important for LOWNP, not just because of the financial support, but also because Pax Christi can lobby for Palestine at the national and international levels, or Cordaid organises interesting workshops in the Middle East. The inspiration and moral support that LOWNP receives from its international partners are greatly valued, and their touching visits are very much appreciated. Nafez says: "I feel they feel our situation and the injustice of it. And they are committed to empower us. We are not isolated internationally."

The international support and presence have contributed to the success of non-violence in Palestine, since it convinced part of the Palestinians that non-violence is something positive. However, it is important that the Palestinians themselves are on the front line and the international presence remains on the second line. The international community can contribute significantly by providing direct and indirect support for capacity-building. From the US governments, LOWNP does not expect much, "because it does not change its attitudes towards our issues."

³ This refers to the Network for Nonviolence in the Arab Countries

10. Seeds and Fruits

It is clear that LOWNP is a pioneering organisation in Palestine doing important work to educate and train a new generation and spread a culture of peace and non-violence. However, it is not easy to measure the impact of its work. A discussion has been going on in and outside the field of peacebuilding on the possibilities and ways of measuring the impact of peacebuilding initiatives. While impact assessment methodologies are being developed for various aspects of peacebuilding, there is still a lack of such methodologies to assess the short and long term impact of education and empowerment initiatives, one of the major focus areas of LOWNP. LOWNP itself does not seem to have used clear monitoring and evaluating tools. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the impact of the work of LOWNP on Palestinian society over all these years. The conclusions of this study are based on anecdotal evidence. If its major aim is to plant seeds, we can see that some seeds have been lost, others are still there in the form of seeds, some seeds have sprouted, and others are bearing fruits.

The mere fact that LOWNP has been able to function in Hebron for so many years, is in itself a proof of success, according to one NGO worker. In our view, one of the biggest achievements of LOWNP is its contribution to change the stereotypical thinking about non-violence in Palestinian society and to make it acceptable, or, at least discussable. Twenty years ago, non-violence was not very much known. It was perceived as a dirty word and related to CIA conspiracies, betrayal and non-patriotism. Now it has become a common term. Although there is still a lot of opposition towards non-violence in Palestinian society, at least there is more openness to discuss it. Even the president and the prime minister have talked about peaceful means of resistance and Fatah has included it in its political program. This is not the direct result of the activities of LOWNP alone, but LOWNP has influenced this transformation through consistent work over many years together with other organisations such as Holy Land Trust, MEND, Stop the Wall Campaign, the Rapprochement Center in Beit Sahour, and non-violent protesters in Bil'in and other villages. LOWNP has definitely contributed to the acceptance of non-violence in the local communities through its very practical approach as well as its approach to discover non-violence through the Islamic tradition. Some trainees and volunteers say that when they talk about peace and non-violence in general, they receive a lot of opposition. However, when they talk about what they do in practice and link it to Islam, friends and family become interested.

As Nafez says, “we have helped the Palestinians to make a step in the right direction.” At least, non-violence has become a full-fledged option now and maybe if there will be a third Intifada, it will be a non-violent one.

Despite this big achievement, even the advocates of non-violent resistance have to admit that the blossoming of a real non-violent Palestinian resistance movement has not yet taken place. Even when more and more people understand that violence has not worked and non-violence is the only option, it has not yet been translated into practice on a larger scale. In addition, it seems that the belief in violence among core groups of the armed resistance has not become less and few strong supporters of violence have converted to non-violence. Moreover, there were also disappointing cases when people turned towards violence after being with LOWNP for many years, because they felt violence is the only option to deal with the rigid mentality of the occupier.

Although for Nafez non-violence is a principle and a way of life, in the general discourse of LOWNP non-violence is often presented as a more efficient method than the use of violence. This prevailing argument for the effectiveness of non-violence prevents it from spreading as a principle and way of life in the larger society. When non-violence seems to lose its effectiveness, it can easily be dropped. As one Hamas supporter reports: “I can use non-violence if I see it is useful, but at this moment it is not a useful tool. I would use non-violence when it is effective, not when it is not effective.” By not presenting non-violence as a principle and a way of life, the response among people to non-violence can be more superficial or temporary. Some might even just proclaim non-violence because there is funding available for it.

LOWNP has reached an estimated 50,000 people over the last 20 years. The children who borrowed books from LOWNP in the 1980s are now 25 years old. According to the staff of LOWNP, some of them are leading the non-violent resistance in Bil'in, Ni'lin, Om-Salamoona, and other villages. Others who have been touched by the work of LOWNP are now working in the Palestinian Security Services. Some 20-agers might not remember the books of LOWNP, but others remember that they got to know about non-violence through LOWNP.

One of the staff members estimates that around 40% of the people in Hebron know LOWNP. They get to know LOWNP through its campaigns and Book Mobile,

through advertisements or announcements, or through meeting people from the staff. Most of the NGO's in Hebron knows about LOWNP, as well as many staff from different ministries that have branches in Hebron and have invited LOWNP to different activities and workshops. Among the students and university teachers in Hebron, an estimated 80% knows about LOWNP, since the students have to fulfil 20 hours of community service and LOWNP is one of the possibilities. In the Old City, LOWNP is not so well known, since many of its citizens came from outside Hebron and have a low economic status, which means non-violent education is often not one of their priorities.

The snowball-effect plays an important role in the capacity of LOWNP to reach out to the population at large. As one of the children said: "I told my friends about LOWNP and they also came. And my friends told their cousins and they also came." Parents tell about LOWNP to befriended families, who also start sending their children to LOWNP. The children tell about LOWNP in school, for example in the framework of some campaigns, and the other children in the class get to know: "I told my whole class not to buy Israeli products, and the majority responded positively." The teacher of LOWNP involves the school teachers in certain home tasks.

The people who know LOWNP generally consider that it has a good reputation and it enjoys their trust. It is respected by the people for its approach, which takes care of Palestinian interests. There is a general appreciation for the personal qualities of Nafez and his ability to communicate with many people in the communities, as well as for his creativity, innovation, vision, intelligent approach and running of LOWNP.

LOWNP definitely has a good impact on the grassroots level, because it really spreads within local communities and works within the local contexts of the people. It brings different perspectives to the people and lets them discover the tools and effectiveness of non-violence in a practical way. People testify how, thanks to LOWNP, non-violence has become more than just a word. It has changed their ideas about non-violence, enhanced their sense of citizenship, empowered them to defend their rights, increased their self-esteem and self-confidence, and developed their practical and social skills.

The campaigns yield concrete results and effectively cost Israel time, money and efforts. For example, the campaign on local products has contributed to an increase in the sale of some local products with 3% for drinks and 5% for dairy, according to the data of local factories in Hebron. The fact that after 4 months in the campaign on reading at the checkpoints, the Israeli soldiers started collecting the books and delaying the taxis, is seen as a sign of success. Similarly, Nafez argues

that the Israeli authorities would not have deported Mubarak Awad if they had not considered non-violence dangerous and effective. Through the non-violent campaigns, the Palestinians also won more sympathy from the Israeli and the international public opinion. The local people get a better understanding of the issues which are addressed in the campaigns.

The campaign on reading at the checkpoints has been successful in terms of the large number of people who benefited from reading the books, spent their waiting time in a useful way and got the feeling that they overcame the Israeli soldiers who often provoke the drivers and passengers. The campaign was generally well approved by the passengers, some of whom were calling to extend this campaign to all taxis. Many people liked the campaign because of its uniqueness. It was well prepared and designed. Also the General Director of the Drivers Union in Hebron thinks the campaign was a very positive experience. He does not have data on its concrete impact, but bases himself on the reactions he received from drivers and passengers. The fact that the campaign was covered by local and Arab media contributed to its success.

The campaign on local products has made people more aware and made them think. It showed them how non-violent tools can be used in an intelligent way. People understand that "Drink and Eat Local Products Only" means in fact "Do not drink or eat Israeli products." It showed them that, conducted in a smart way, the campaigns do not break any law so that the Israeli authorities cannot punish them. The campaign has also made people more aware about their own local products, stimulated the factories in Hebron district to improve the quality of their products, increased a sense of ownership, and encouraged people to work in a team. There is a general sense that this campaign should be continued and extended to the whole of Palestine. It will take time, however, for the campaign to yield more results, because raising awareness and changing eating habits takes time.

The Book Mobile has worked with fifteen schools and has reached thousands of children over the years. They work not only in Hebron, but also in villages and refugee camps. In some of these places there are no books at all. Even when the schools have a library, teachers observe that the Book Mobile motivates children more to read. Not only does it come in a van and on wheels, but the books of the Book Mobile are also attractive and focus on a new topic which is not part of the school curriculum. It is not always clear, however, to what extent all the borrowed books are effectively read and how they concretely improve the

reading level, academic knowledge or practice of non-violence of the children. Although the aim of the Book Mobile was not just to provide books but also to train the children in non-violence, this idea has not been realised so far due to lack of funds.

One of the strongest contributions of LOWNP is the vibrant education on non-violence that it offers children and youth in the conservative city of Hebron. The children who attend the activities of LOWNP really seem to grasp its message. They learned not to buy Israeli products, because “Israeli products cause destruction: it helps the Israeli economy and with the benefits they buy airplanes and arms.” Another child adds: “We don’t have weapons ourselves, but if we don’t buy Israeli products we make them weak without waging war.” They believe in non-violence, because non-violence helps the society to progress and makes it peaceful, without conflicts and without arms, and brings peace to the families. They are also aware that if they would use violence, the Israeli’s are stronger and would use more violence against them: “We cause destruction of our own society and infrastructure, our people will be killed. Therefore, we will fight them with non-violent tools.” One child remarks that “if our grandfathers had not used violence, we would not be in such a bad situation now.” They also understand that they do not

have weapons to confront Israel’s big power, but they can confront it with education: “We should study hard and become modern people who think deeply. Then we can overcome Israeli occupation through progress, knowledge and education.” They aim to reach their goals not with violence, but by using the power of the mind and striving towards understanding: “The strong person uses his mind, not his fists.” They believe in the effectiveness of non-violence, because “through violence you don’t gain anything, you cannot succeed. Gandhi also liberated India without weapons.” One child also says it is important not to hurt anyone.

Through the numerous different activities, the children inculcate values of patience, trust, truth and tolerance. They like the lectures, in which they learn about the different types and tools of non-violence, about non-violence in Islam, about practical ways to use non-violence in their lives, and about other topics “that might help us to develop our society.” For example, two brothers said they learned to abstain from verbal and physical confrontation and to strive for reconciliation whenever one of their peers wanted to provoke or attack them. They said that LOWNP taught them how to understand human feelings and motives of anger as well as how to conceive the needs of others, so that they can help people who are upset to calm down. If it does



not work, they try to avoid the person or inform schoolteachers and their parents to help them to cope with the case. These examples indicate that children really inculcate the training sessions of LOWNP. They also enjoy the trips, visits and campaigns on the streets, or the visit to the Wall to paint drawings. They watched the movie on Gandhi and learnt how he liberated his country through non-violence. LOWNP is also a place where they can just enjoy, play games and have fun. One child says: "I come here when I am angry. Then I play and use breathing exercises." In addition, they make new friends and feel they belong to each other and can share their thoughts and feelings in a group which accepts them. During the Summer Camps, they get to know children from different regions in Palestine as well as from Europe and the USA, with whom they stay in contact through email. The courses in English language they also find very useful. One day the children made the letters "LOWNP" with their bodies to show their gratitude to the staff of the Organisation.

By working with the children, LOWNP also hopes to involve the parents in the ideas and activities on non-violence. This seems to be working, since all children who were interviewed confirmed that they talk at home about what they do in LOWNP. They said that their parents were all in favour and adopt the ideas and practices of LOWNP: "Otherwise they would not send us here." One of the parents testifies that she had a general idea about LOWNP, but went more deeply into it since her children started attending the activities. She would like to encourage her children to pursue non-violent studies later. Some of the parents read the books that their children borrow from LOWNP. For one parent,

LOWNP is the only place where she feels her daughters are in good hands and she feels deeply secure when they are there.

Parents have also noticed changes in their children. For example, they have become more active, more self-confident, more creative, or their personality has more developed. One parent's sons attended LOWNP activities five years ago, but till today they are talking about it to their friends and are motivated to live, work and behave non-violently. The parents appreciate the variety of educational activities at LOWNP, from English language to leadership skills: "Neither school nor home give as much as LOWNP is giving them." They see the benefit of attending LOWNP not just in terms of education, but also because it is much better than watching TV at home and "getting stressed by seeing all the crimes of the occupation." The parents also see their children becoming friends with children from other schools in Hebron or from other parts of Palestine.

As far as the staff of LOWNP is concerned, some believe strongly in non-violence, while others are positively changing while working at LOWNP. Also the volunteers are positively affected by LOWNP: "When we see people reading and raising their level of education, when we see children smiling, when we solve a conflict between two families, it is also good for us, for our lives, and reduces our tensions."

For all its work, LOWNP has received several awards, such as the Gamilial Chair for Peace and Justice Award, the Fellowship of Reconciliation Award [picture] and the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award.



11. Challenges

After twenty years, one of the biggest challenges for LOWNP still remains the prejudices and the lack of understanding on non-violence in Palestinian society, especially in Hebron. There are many constraints in the local context, culture and social and political structures, which hinder the acceptance of non-violent ideas and tools. As the vice-president of LOWNP remarked: “There are no ears in society to listen to non-violence.” Many people consider violence the only possible tool of resistance against violence. There is a widespread perception that non-violence is equal to submission and implies dropping your rights to resist. Therefore, advocates of non-violence are easily seen as cowards, traitors, or collaborators with the West. The idea of non-violence has not yet been conceptualised in the broader Palestinian community and many people still do not understand how non-violence can help them to achieve their goals. Since the full name of LOWNP includes the word “peace,” people think immediately about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and understand it as “normalisation.” They do not understand that it is also about peace among Palestinians and peace at home. Non-violence also refers on a deeper level to the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation, but “the Palestinians have not yet come to understand that it is time to reconcile,” says Mubarak Awad.

Therefore, it is very difficult for organisations working on non-violence to continue working and showing that they are providing a new way of resistance. They always have to start from a defensive position instead of a proactive position from which they could easily mobilise. Also LOWNP has to start with explaining that it really cares about the people and their situation and with breaking the stereotypes that they would be traitors. However, LOWNP did not despair at any moment. In order to address the social rejection of non-violence, they came up with innovative tools and materials which proved to be helpful for the people. Many people changed their minds and attitudes when they experienced the fruitful effects of the non-violent education and the campaigns.

Organisations working for social development are faced with the big challenge of moving people effectively from passivity to action, or from non-resistance to resistance. The majority is poor and poorly educated and not interested in any activities. Many are busy with finding ways to survive and earn money and do not have time to read or take part in any social activities. Others are

occupied with personal problems or “are only interested in sports.” Also many people have lost hope and are desperate. They do not believe anymore that anything can work and they do not care anymore. For them, LOWNP is just another organisation out there to make money. The victim mentality is widespread, as well as the feeling that everyone is against the Palestinians. Nafez remarks that Palestinians find themselves in fact “under zero” with regard to all aspects of life, and need activities of social defence “to get on zero level.” Only from there will it be possible to impart the methods and skills of non-violence to start rising above level zero. For example, activities to preserve the Palestinian heritage have nothing to do with non-violent resistance, but is a matter of social defence, he says.

If there would be more awareness, people would be more affected and involved in the resistance movement. Because moving people from non-resistance to non-violent action is a matter of educating society, most non-violent activists in Palestine think that it will still take many years to bring about a successful non-violent resistance movement.

The fact that the political leadership in Palestine has not fully embraced non-violence remains another challenge. Although they have accepted non-violence to some extent, they do not see it as the way to reach their goals and are hesitant to embrace it as their strategy. In their minds, violence still works.

The challenges for LOWNP are further multiplied by the fact that its activities are concentrated in Hebron, which is considered a special case in the whole of Palestine. The same target groups in Ramallah would be much more open minded, it is said. Hebron is known for its conservatism and more controlled by traditional laws than other places in Palestine. For example, many people are against mixed trainings for boys and girls and oppose such activities. The people might affirm that they want change, but in fact they are afraid of changes and find it difficult to adopt them. They do not easily absorb new ideas and “need more time for progress.” One parent remarks that the teenagers of Hebron are talking like his grandfathers: they adhere to old rules and reject any changes. Any organisation that wants to work in Hebron first has to align itself with the traditional laws and culture and only then it can spread its own message. It is not easy for LOWNP to exist in Hebron with its title and mission, because many people

believe that Jihad is the only way to resist Israel. Some Muslim leaders have criticised LOWNP for its approach and concepts, but they became more accepting after the staff of LOWNP met with them and explained more about what they do. Now LOWNP has no problems anymore with religious leaders. Despite these specific challenges, the staff of LOWNP does not share the view that Hebron would be a lost case and continues doing all it can to help the city.

Apart from challenges related to the environment, LOWNP also faces some challenges related to its organisation. The biggest challenge is undoubtedly the lack of staff and funding. The Palestinian Authority is not supporting LOWNP financially. Nafez thinks this might be because they are afraid of the empowerment resulting from non-violence, which does not only deal with the occupation but with all forms of injustice. The uncertainty of the financial situation also results in regular turnover of staff. As a result, LOWNP had to redirect some successful programs, such as the House of Non-violence, and loses some of the people it has trained. It also cannot extend successful activities and programs to other regions and groups which would benefit. With its limited resources, LOWNP cannot even cover the whole of Hebron district or set up initiatives to deal with the harmful plants around the seeds of non-violence. Also the Program on Peace in Islam needs much more resources and dedication in order to be able

to achieve its objectives. There is also a need for more books in the libraries that are operating. LOWNP is also limited in its possibilities to set up new programs and activities. For example, the fact that LOWNP does not focus on actions against the spread of settlements is mainly due to lack of capacity. Let alone that LOWNP would be able to focus on non-violence in the Arab region. LOWNP is also not well known enough in the broader society. Compared to its wide variety of activities, it does not get the desired coverage in the media.

Although LOWNP has many local partners, it does not have many structural partnerships. Sometimes LOWNP is carrying out an activity on its own, while it would have been much more effective to cooperate with other organizations. However, it happens that other organisations first want to receive funding before they start an activity, they do not want to do the hard field work, or they want to execute an activity on themselves. The lack of more structural cooperation with NGO's and governmental institutions is acknowledged as a major deficiency in LOWNP. In addition, there is also a lack of cooperation with other organisations in Palestine who are working on non-violence. In terms of leadership, there is a need for more qualified people committed to non-violence who can spread and use its tools in a professional way in Palestinian society.

12. Sample of Recommendations

If the children would work for LOWNP, they would hang more posters in the street, set up new campaigns, and post on internet and in newspapers to let more people know about LOWNP. They would buy more books and more cars to distribute the books. In their view, the experience in Hebron should be spread to other cities in Palestine, to Gaza, and to the whole world.

Many people support the idea that LOWNP has to extend its activities to the whole of Palestine. This could to some extent threaten its strength of being rooted in a local community, but possibly LOWNP could take root in other communities too. LOWNP should think of new initiatives to reach and involve more people in their activities and campaigns. Through intelligent publicity

they should inform the broader public better of their campaigns in the area and the nature of their programs. Special programs can be set up to increase the trust. The more people understand the work of LOWNP, the more they will support it. LOWNP could involve more influential people in society, such as journalists, for whom a workshop on non-violence can be organised. The media should become more involved in the campaigns of LOWNP and in making its message known to the world. They could also focus more on involving the students, who are with around 25.000 in the four universities of Hebron. In view of the needs of society, LOWNP might think of setting up a special program on domestic violence. It would also be good to do more research on the impact of their work in the field.





13. Conclusion

The Library on Wheels for Non-violence and Peace is definitely playing a crucial role in spreading a culture of peace and non-violence in Hebron. Although it has developed its own unique approach in a specific context, some aspects of its approach and strategies might well be interesting for other non-violent organisations in the world.

LOWNP has developed a comprehensive approach to spread the culture of peace and non-violence among the new generations in Palestine. Its work is thoroughly based in the communities themselves and in the local contexts of the people. LOWNP operates in the field through practice, not in offices through theory. Although there is a lot of resistance against the idea of non-violence, LOWNP manages to introduce the idea and methods of non-violence in a way so that the people become interested. This is done by linking the idea of non-violence to the local traditions and to Islam, but also by the continuous development of innovative methods and the constant focus on the needs of the people. All activities and programs of LOWNP are based on the concrete needs of the people, and can therefore generate more interest and involvement, even among the silent majorities. The close connection with the needs of the people also guarantees a continuous flow of innovation and creativity. Through ever new activities and campaigns for new contexts and new needs, non-violent tools and methods find their way into the people's minds and attitudes and in the community as a whole. This way, opportunities are created for people to discover non-violence for themselves. They become aware that such activities can also be part of the resistance, which they did not know before. Through the specific approach of LOWNP, non-violence enters the daily contexts of the people, while at the same time it addresses their specific needs. The campaigns of LOWNP address serious political, social and cultural issues in the daily lives of Palestinians. Through the campaigns, people learn about the ideology and practice of non-violence and develop their skills to address their own needs in a non-violent way. As such, LOWNP manages to train people on how to use non-violent tools and let them practice with it. When the people experience for themselves the fruitful effects of the non-violent education and campaigns, they gain a sense of hope again. They can get an idea of how to achieve peace through non-violence and are empowered for non-violent resistance against the occupation one day.

LOWNP has greatly contributed to the Palestinian non-

violent movement by providing people with the actual practice of non-violent methods and tools. Although non-violent tools were available before, there was a lack of opportunity and guidance for people on how to use them without being seen as cowards or traitors. The expertise of LOWNP over the years has made it into a hotbed of increasing knowledge and awareness on non-violence. The unique value of LOWNP is also that it works with children on a steady basis. Children, whose minds are still more flexible, get acquainted with non-violence from an early stage in a playful manner and can grow up as trees which bear much fruit.

Over the years, LOWNP has planted many seeds of non-violence. However, a popular non-violent resistance movement has not yet blossomed and Nafez has still not found the Gandhi for Palestine. Maybe if LOWNP would be more explicit about the human values underlying the choice for non-violence instead of presenting non-violence mostly in a discourse of effectiveness, the seeds it is planting would grow longer roots. Despite the challenges and the obstacles, LOWNP continues its work in a context which is not easy and far from self-evident. They seem to be the only organisation in Hebron which talks about non-violence and conflict resolution. But LOWNP chooses to work where it feels its help is most needed, even if they have to transplant their library on donkeys. Maybe most of all, LOWNP is a hopeful presence and a living testimony that another reality and another way of life is possible for Palestinians to gain their rights and live in peace.



Annex 1: List of Documents

Assaily Nafez, *Nonviolent Strategy in the Occupied Territories*, PowerPoint Presentation.

LOWNP, *Annual Reports 2006, 2007, 2008*.

Assaily Nafez, *The Palestinian Options: Violence, Submission or the Third Option Nonviolent Resistance?* paper.

LOWNP, *Strategic Plan* (internal document).

Gorenberg Gershom, *The Missing Mahatma: Searching for a Gandhi or Martin Luther King in the West Bank*, <http://southjerusalem.com> (April 2009).

LOWNP, *Strategy: Challenges, Interventions, Results* (internal document).

Annex 2: List of Interviews December 2010

Municipality of Hebron	Abdul Aziz Nofal
International Youth League - Palestine	Adli Da'ana
Community Development Society	Akram Shawar
Board of Directors - LOWNP	Aws Mujahed
Staff - LOWNP	Basem Raba'I
University Student - LOWNP	Bashar Siad Ahmad
Palestinian Child Club -Volunteer LOWNP	Bashar Farashat
Al-Quds SchoolBook	Book Mobile circulation
Taha Raja'ai School	Mobile circulation
Staff - LOWNP	Dalal Amayreh
Parent	Fatenah Al-Hamouri
General Assembly - LOWNP	Mohamed Ja'bari
Nonviolence International	Mubarak Awad
University Student - LOWNP	Murad Arafah
Staff - LOWNP	Nafez Assaily
University Student - LOWNP	Nibal Mahariq
Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation	Noah Salameh
Holyland Trust	Sami Awad
Vice Governor of Hebron	Dr. Samir Abu Znaid
Different Stores	Shopkeepers
Ministry of Education - LOWNP	Talab Abu Sabah
Board of Directors - LOWNP	Wael Hijazi
School Students - LOWNP	Young adults focus Group

Annex3: Terms of Reference

Best Practice Study Peace building project in the Middle East

Introduction

The Dutch peace movement IKV Pax Christi and the international peace movement Pax Christi International have cooperated on building a network of peace groups in the Middle East since 2003. Today, 7 organisations from the Middle East are member organisations of Pax Christi International.⁴ Together, Pax Christi Netherlands/IKV Pax Christi and Pax Christi International organised four regional consultation meetings in the Middle East.

These meetings had the following aims:

- sharing analysis
- linking and learning
- joint strategy development and activity planning

In response to the need shared by partner organisations, to benefit more from the linking and learning potential of the network, we decided at the last consultation meeting of May 2008 in Larnaca to carry out two best practice studies of active nonviolence in the Middle East. The two studies will analyse projects carried out by two Pax Christi International and/or IKV Pax Christi partners in the two countries in the Middle East where we have most experience with active nonviolence: Lebanon and the West Bank. Since PCI is planning to do similar studies of active nonviolence examples in other parts of the world, the studies will be part of a series that will facilitate world-wide linking and learning on this subject within the PCI network. PCI and IKVPC also aim to organise cross-regional seminars where the best practices from all over the world can be shared and learned. (Research studies are preparation for that)

Objectives

The objectives of the best practice studies are:

- Making available the learning experiences of active nonviolence projects in two countries with the largest experience in nonviolence in the Middle East, Lebanon and Palestine, to other partners and the civil society at large in the Middle East, to the world wide PCI network and to other organisations in the Netherlands and Europe that IKV Pax Christi and Pax Christi International cooperate with on peace building.

- Documenting learning experiences in the Middle East in order to contribute to the internal learning processes inside IKV Pax Christi and Pax Christi international, with the aim of strengthening their peace building strategies.

Objects of study

IKV Pax Christi and Pax Christi International identified the following projects as the objects of the two best practice studies:

1. Pioneer Experience in Lebanon and the Region since 25 years in 2 initiatives: BILAD Project and the Arab University for Non-Violence by the Lebanese Association for Civil Rights
2. The dissemination of nonviolence in Hebron by the Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace

Research questions

The studies will analyse the following aspects of the identified projects:

1. Vision and mission: On what vision and mission is the project based? What understanding and vision of nonviolence? What is the inner inspiration and motivation to choose, act and live non-violently?
2. Context: What is the context of the project? How does the context affect the project? How did the implementing organisation respond to changes in the context?
3. Methodology: What methodology was chosen? Why? Which steps were taken?
(Target group choice, intervention strategy)
4. Partnerships: What partners were involved in the project? What was their role? What added value was reached through these partnerships? What was the role of regional networks?
5. Outcome: What changes were achieved on the target group level? How do stakeholders estimate the value of the project? How did the project get political relevance?
6. Model: Can a model be derived from the project? In terms of methodology, engaging target groups, advocacy?
7. Lessons learnt?

⁴ Association Justice et Miséricorde and Lebanese Association for Civil Rights in Lebanon, Arab Women Media Center in Jordan, Arab Educational Institute, Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation and Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace in Palestine and CEOSS in Egypt.

N.B. In coordination with the researcher and partner organisation, a detailed ToR will be prepared for each study.

Product

The best practice studies will each result in a report of around 30 pages in English or Arabic. IKV Pax Christi will publish each best practice study in a publication in both English and Arabic language in hard copy and PDF.

Methodology

The research will include the following elements but can include other:

- Defining the appropriate research methodology, including development of the appropriate questionnaires, in coordination with the contact person at IKV Pax Christi/PCI
- Document study, literature research (incl. empirical study, output)
- Interviews with the organisations that implemented the projects on the basis of the questionnaire
- Interviews with other stakeholders (target groups, partners, other actors in the same field, beneficiary community) on the basis of the questionnaire
- If possible witnessing the project in action

Planning

The estimated duration for the two best practice studies is, on the basis of a team of 2 researchers per study, a total of 40 research days including:

4 (2x1x2) days preparation of study, defining ToR, questionnaires

8 (2x2x2) days document study

14 (2x7) days interviews

4 (2x1x2) days for sharing findings research team

10 (2x5) days report writing

Of which an estimated 24 research days for the main researcher (2 studiesx12 days) and 8 research days for each local researcher.

To be carried out preferably between 15 November 2009 and 15 January 2010.

Proposed planning:

Before 25 November: research plan ready (final definition of research questions, overview of available documents and list of interviewees, etc.)

29 Nov- 13 Dec: Field research in Hebron and Lebanon

15 January: First draft report ready

End of January 2010: Final report ready.

Results of each of these stages will be shared with Marjolein Wijninckx, reference person for the studies at IKV Pax Christi.

Division of tasks in research team:

1 Main researcher:

- Preparing detailed research plan
- Responsible for research planning, research results and reports
- Main writer of the final reports

2 local researchers (1 for Lebanon and 1 for Hebron):

- Preparing field research, interviews
- Doing part of documents study and interviews
- Contribute to the report

The main researcher and local researcher will together

- agree on specific task division
- formulate research findings and conclusions