

## A VIEW BEYOND ONE'S OWN NOSE

### Experience abroad

#### Introduction

As a part of the International Meeting 2013, organized and held by the Office for International Affairs at the University College of Teacher Education (UCTE), we had the opportunity to meet Dr. Natur Nazeh from the Al-Qasemi Academic College in Baqa al Gharbiyye. Due to the participation of the Head of the Office for International Affairs at the Tempus „Iris“ project, a bilateral agreement was signed with the Al-Qasemi Academic College, which allows students from the University to complete a two-week study visit with practical work experience at this institution. This study visit was completed in Israel by the authors in the period from June 1st, 2014 to June 13th, 2014. Thereby, we got the chance to get an insight in the Arab education system in Baqa al Gharbiyye / Israel at the host institution Al-Qasemi Academic College.<sup>1</sup> In addition we also visited the Kaye Academic College, where we were warmly welcomed and looked after by Dr. Riva Levenchuk.

#### Study location Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education

The Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education is located in the town of *Baqa al-Gharbiyye* (Arabic: باقة الغربية, Hebrew: באקה אל גרבייה, בקה אל ע'רבייה), a city of about 20,000 inhabitants in the north of Israel. Originally, the College (founded in 1989) served the purpose of studying the Sharia and Islamic culture. In the following years it specialized more and more on several fields of study. Nowadays, students can choose from the following study areas:

- Arabic language and literature
- English language and literature
- Mathematics and Computer Science in elementary school and middle school
- Kindergarten education
- Special needs education

Currently, a total of 1600 students are being assisted and taught by 120 teachers. The students are solely and exclusively Muslims. Meanwhile, there is a great run on the courses at Al-Qasemi College; many students from across the country enrol at this institution. The majority of students are female – this could be seen as a parallel to the UCTE.

This school movement originated from the so-called Sufi-Flow. This is a special trend in Islam, which is characterized by a certain spiritual orientation and is often referred to with the word mysticism.<sup>2</sup> In the broadest sense, comparisons with the Kabbalah teachings in Judaism can be

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qsm.ac.il/Web/> (15.06.2014)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.relinfo.ch/sufismus/info.html> (15.06.2014)

made. Sufism (*Arabic* تَصَوُّف *tasawwuf*, *DMG taṣawwuf*), *Sufiyya* (*Arabic* صُوفِيَّة *Sufiyya*, *DMG ṣūfiyya*) arose between the 9th and 12th century. Followers of Sufism are called „Sufi“ (*Arabic* صُوفِي *Ṣūfi*) or „Derwish“ (*Persian* درویش *darwīsch*).<sup>3</sup> In their doctrine, the followers refer to an "inner sense" of the Koran and in particular to verses that can be related to an individual's relationship or immediacy to God, and to traditions and the entire life of the Prophet Muhammad.

Before our stay in Israel, we informed ourselves about Islam and dealt with one of the recognized religions of the world, since the Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education is located in an area inhabited exclusively by Palestinians. Anyone travelling to the Middle East should have dealt previously with the Arab cultural system, to understand the customs and traditions in this culture and apply them accordingly in daily life in a respectful way. There exactly like here, the behavioural patterns are omnipresent in daily life. Above all, it seemed important to have a broad and founded knowledge of the Muslim faith. On the one hand, to respectfully face Islam and therefore be well prepared for our stay at the College and on the other hand, to be reasonably familiar with the contents of the experience on site and to be able to ask questions, where appropriate.

### **Study visit – Preliminary work**

Thus, the first part of the study period began months before the departure with the elaboration of a theoretical basis, which, in our opinion, is essential as prior knowledge for a study visit in an Arab region. In the course of the literature review it became clear that, at the same time, we have to become more aware of our own prejudices or pre-attitudes toward Islam and the culture in the Middle East before the planned study visit may be carried out. As described by Klingler, people have a tendency to a selective perception and interpretation of new situations or people: *"We are more aware of impressions that meet our pre-settings, as of such, that could refute them, and we interpret them rather in the way, that these pre-settings are confirmed and consolidated."*<sup>4</sup>

In a society in which, due to the media, only the horrors of fanaticism and fundamentalism dominate, it's good, to see, experience and listen to "the other side". We dealt with the question, what associations and images arise, when thinking of the word "Islam". At the same time the pictures, which are present in media content, were on our minds:

- Oppressed women, who must wear headscarves
- Palestinians are extreme and militant
- Muslims do not want to integrate themselves

These were the first superficial and not objective thoughts that came to our minds. For this reason the questions that arose were joined relatively quickly by general questions about the "integration" as well as dealing with "prejudice". If possible, "politicization" or confrontation should be avoided. It was primarily important to us that our contact persons in Israel would tell us their life stories without having to come in some form of defensive stance. With these

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.eslam.de/begriffe/s/sufismus.html> (12.08.2014)

<sup>4</sup> Klingler, Josef: Minderheiten-Vorurteile. In: Integration contra Nationalismus. Handbuch für Erwachsenenbildung. Wieszt, József (ed). DISS, Duisburg 1997, p. 74

considerations, we tried to consider Klingler's recommendations for defusing pre-attitudes or prejudices, in particular the *"Need for orientation of behaviour"*: *We have a need not to behave "wrong" and are, in consequence, under a certain pressure.*<sup>5</sup> It should be shown how to act trustworthy and impartial as a Christian towards a devout Muslim, so that he can be outgoing and self-confident. *"Foreign things, which we must meet and can not avoid, almost always appear threatening at first. It rather has the effect of spontaneous resistance or defence than of interested attention."*<sup>6</sup>

How did we deal with this?

We let it come down to a test!

This resulted in the further questions, which had to be answered on-site.

### **Cultural Differences - What is equal, what is different?**

It was very interesting to observe that students in Israel accepted our "Austrian charm" and our behaviour, quite benevolently. So it was viewed favourably, if we were staying to keep the door open for someone, let the ladies enter the room first or adjusting their chairs for them before sitting down. All this was not an issue, if no male colleague was present. However, if a Palestinian man was near, the situation changed abruptly. It was no longer us who stopped at the door; the women stood back and let us enter first.

It is also a given fact that the greeting ritual of the handshake, common in the West, is limited on same-sex contacts in the Arab culture. You have to get used to it, because for us western-orientated men, it seems rude to not shake the hand of a woman for the greeting. Vice versa, it appears intrusive for Islamic women if a man stretches out his hand and wants to greet her with this gesture.

Hospitality is an integral part of the Palestinian culture. Palestinians are very proud and sensitive people. Since Arabs are (almost) always very polite, they expect the same from their counterparts. Therefore, one should accept an invitation of a Palestinian to come to his home. This is considered polite. However, caution is advised when it comes to communication about sensitive topics such as politics or religion. Even if one's own opinion appears to be acceptable and open-minded, it can be perceived as ignorant and hurtful by the Arab counterpart.

The three main pillars of the Palestinian culture are

- the language (the Arabic language is considered to proclaim the word of God),
- the family and
- above all, the faith.

It is often not easy for Central Europeans to understand the pervasive impact of these three elements on the entire culture. Of course, we immediately recognized positive reactions, if we tried to express the welcome ceremony and the corresponding answers - even if it was just a few Arabic words that we understood to communicate and exchange courtesies.

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<sup>5</sup> cf. at specified location, p. 79f

<sup>6</sup> at specified location., p. 80

Thus, a person in Islam is bound to the community of believers, and is supported by a "group soul". That is why there are misunderstandings in the dialogue of cultures, especially if it comes to human rights. Islam is based on a "We." The Muslim is characterized by heteronomy, by the heteronomous law of God. He seals his own culture off from acculturation and enculturation, he believes that the world must be Islamic. Instead of individual conscience, the group conscience is being accentuated!

In comparison: in Christianity, people are the children of God and the revelation happens in every individual believer by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them. Thus, this belief is based on a creative conception of man. In Christianity the individual is gaining internal autonomy and freedom of self-determination (man as a spiritual being) and is sovereign within the group. There is a kind of reconciliation between individual freedom and fraternal community. But the freedom is formed in polarity. Christianity is not defined by cultures, but by people and individuals in understanding for all people. Humanity is regarded as the entire organism, as the so-called "mystical" Body of Christ. Love emanates from each individual. Christianity is against nationalistic or cultural demarcation of man and against self-determination in the compartmentalization. Love is the only measure and is just a part of the whole. The constraints of cultures or religions are secondary. Christianity is based on the "Me". God cannot be fixed to conditions or circumstances. Religions as institutions speak more of conditions and circumstances. Here, the official churches often violate against their own self-conception.<sup>7</sup> In Judaism, the oldest of the three monotheistic world religions, there is a parallelism both to Christianity as well as to Islam. So the Jews believe that they are God's "Chosen People", Islam sees itself as the "one true faith". Just as in Christianity, the individual is in a central position in the Jewish faith. It is no coincidence that similarities can be found, since all three religions relate to the common progenitor Abraham and are based on him. Despite many similarities and matches (prophets, rituals, values and commandments...) a large wedge has been driven between these three religions in less than 1,000 years. A foreseeable peaceful coexistence in the Holy Land, which is claimed by all three faiths for themselves, seems to be a distant memory. Recent events confirm the current reality in a sad and shocking way.

### **Language acquisition**

Language is the key to education, without language there is no educational success. Only with language you can communicate with others and understand them. Communication is of fundamental importance in our socialization. Language provides equal opportunity in school. Those who master the language are able to communicate. Students of areas in Israel only inhabited by Palestinians predominantly have Arabic as their language of instruction. They can learn the Hebrew language in separate language lessons. However, some students spoke of an aversion against learning the second language, not because it is the language of the majority population, but because they fear that their own language could suffer from it. *These deviations from the "normal expectation" raised fears of a disturbed, threatened or loss-making language development of bilingual raised children. However, considering the psycholinguistic side of language acquisition, this fear is groundless (see, e.g., List 1985. Bialystok / Hakuta 1994). One reason for the more or less clearly noticeable differences on the surface of language production is the already mentioned fact that the learning of other languages is controlled by a nervous*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://antoniojusto.wordpress.com/2010/04/29/islam-und-christentum-unterschiede/> (17.07.2014)

*system elaborated through experience. Each language acquisition, which takes place after the very first phase, is based on the experience of previous language acquisition and is determined by it. The influence affects all linguistic areas: Each new linguistic information passes through the filter of stock of information accumulated with first speech experiences. Also the acquisition of conventional meanings and participation in traditions and the everyday knowledge is influenced by the very first language experiences in this way.*"<sup>8</sup> How important it is to speak several languages could be repeatedly experienced in Israel. As more and more Jews from the former parts of the CIS<sup>9</sup> come to Israel since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian is unofficially the third official language. Nowadays German is heard only sporadically among the Jewish population. After the Shoah and the establishment of Israel, most immigrants came from Germany and Austria. Currently the immigrants come almost entirely from the successor states of the Soviet Union and from Ethiopia<sup>10</sup>. The latter group of immigrants represents a greater challenge in the area of integration for the State of Israel.<sup>11</sup>

Today, by far the largest group of German-speaking people in Israel is the elderly population. German-speaking Jews, who came in the 1920s and 1930s to Palestine<sup>12</sup> in the course of Zionism or later fled there from the Nazis, the so-called Jeckes, retained their German mother tongue. Also, many people ousted the German language and remembered their origin only after many years, because German, the language of the Nazis, was scorned in Israel, even if it was simultaneously the mother tongue of many Jews. Today the acceptance of the German language is equated with the Arabic language especially among the young Israelis. Arabic and German still appear "hostile" to these Jews. There is something "negative" about these two foreign languages. These days, German is very popular among the Arab population in Israel and the learning of this language is becoming very popular. The reason could be that several Palestinian students go to Germany or Austria to study in these countries.

### **The debate about the political situation on-site**

The foreign policy of Israel has two main objectives. One the one hand a peaceful and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict and on the other hand the establishment of diplomatic relations with a number of Muslim countries that do not recognize the country due to the conflict. *"Currently, Israel maintains diplomatic relations with 162 of the 192 member countries of the United Nations. From that, it renewed or included 32 after the Madrid Conference of 1991 and 32 after the signing of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement. With 34 states Israel has no diplomatic relations. The only country in the Western Hemisphere, which maintains no diplomatic relations with Israel, is Cuba, as it traditionally sympathizes with the PLO. In Eastern Asia, North Korea denies the country to establish diplomatic relations, while the mutual non-recognition of Taiwan is based on the one-China policy of the People's Republic. Bhutan traditionally maintains restrictive external relations. Venezuela and Bolivia broke all diplomatic relations with Israel in 2009 after the Gaza War of 2008, because they sympathize with the Palestinians."*<sup>13</sup> Today, the

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<sup>8</sup> Gogolin, Ingrid / Neumann, Ursula / Roth, Hans-Joachim: Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund. Expertise für die Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung. BLK- Materialien zur Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung, Issue 107. Bonn 2003 p. 41f

<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth of Independent States of the former USSR

<sup>10</sup> The so-called Falashas

<sup>11</sup> cf. H.-Ch. Rössle in: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/naher-osten/aethiopische-einwanderer-in-israel-das-ende-einer-3000-jahre-langen-reise-12551681.html> (15.06.2014)

<sup>12</sup> At that time British protectorate

<sup>13</sup> Israel's Diplomatic Missions Abroad: Status of relations, Update: October 1st, 2007 (15.06.2014)

most important ally of the state of Israel is the USA. This leads to a certain dependence on the superpower and its geopolitical interests. So the Israeli government and the Israeli people must accept the criticism regarding their housing development policy and the associated occupation of the West Bank. On the other hand, condemnations of Israeli military actions against Palestinian targets mostly get through at the United Nations, because as a permanent member of the Security Council, the USA are blocking a resolution by a veto. This foreign policy means that Israel has no diplomatic relationship with any additional member of the Arab League, with the exception of Egypt and Jordan, with which Israel signed a peace treaty in 1979 /1994. African countries<sup>14</sup>, that are predominantly Muslim, also do not accept the State of Israel and also condemn the policy in dealing with the Arab population.

Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize the State of Israel. Today, both countries maintain a close relationship - not just economically. Turkey, besides the United States, is an important military ally and NATO member. Since 1983, both countries have maintained an additional secret military agreement. Both countries feel threatened due to the acquired Syrian support by terrorist groups. In recent years, however, the relationship with Turkey leveled off. The reasons are to be found in the Palestinian issue, which is criticized by President Erdogan. A situation which is more relevant than ever, considering the current crisis<sup>15</sup> and the military events in their country.

### **Study visit - Personal key experiences**

During the two-week stay in northern Israel we often met young Palestinians, who have lived and learned in German-speaking areas during their studies. Even the rector of Al-Qasemi College spoke perfect German with a Swiss accent.<sup>16</sup>

To understand another key experience, you first need to know the pillars of religious practice - certain rituals that are demanded by all devout Muslims. They are sometimes called the "Pillars of Islam". One of these pillars will now be briefly described. The first pillar represents the Islamic Creed, the Shahada (literally witness). It says: "I testify that there is no divinity but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God". With this two-part formula the Muslim professes to strict monotheism (as Jews and Christians do) in the first part, and to Muhammad's prophetic mission and to his revelation, to the Koran, and thus Islam itself in the second part. This differentiates the Muslim from the followers of other religions. Those who speak the creed in full consciousness in front of two witnesses, are considered to be Muslim. These words are the first words a newborn gets whispered in his ear. Muslims strive to have them on their lips at the moment of death.<sup>17</sup>

During the bus ride to Jerusalem a few Islamic pilgrims tried to induce us to express this creed in Arabic, to be recognized as Muslims in their eyes. Since we had researched on Islam as already mentioned, this process was known to us. In the experienced situation - sitting on the bus and

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<sup>14</sup> Mali, Chad, and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which is in turn not recognized as a non-UN member

<sup>15</sup> IS troops and the Caliphate of the terrorist group on the ground of today's Iraq and Syria, declared in June 2014

<sup>16</sup> The Rector spent several years in Switzerland and also studied in Germany

<sup>17</sup> cf. Jamal, J. Elias: Islam. In: Hawkins, Bradley K. / Wilson, Brain / Shuttuck, Cybelle / Jamal, J. Elias / Cohn-Sherbok, Dan: Die fünf Weltreligionen. Geschichte, Lehren, Perspektiven. Erfstadt. 2007, p. 61f

without actual retreat – it felt strange and disrespectful towards our religion. Nevertheless, it was necessary to remain self-possessed, friendly and respectful.

As in China, there is a compulsory military service for both sexes in Israel. Men have to complete three years in the armed forces and women are required to do at least two years of military service. Israeli Arabs (Muslims and Christians, but not Druze) and all non-Jewish, pregnant or married women are exempted from military service. It was strange to see that Israeli people, doing basic military training, were travelling with loaded machine guns, even if they obviously were driving home by public transport. It was a surreal image, as they had their M16 rifles shouldered as they boarded the bus, wearing casual sandals on their feet.

On a Friday afternoon, when we arrived in Benyamina at the station, we wanted to take the bus to Baqa al-Gharbiyye to our accommodation. We were well aware that no work should be done on the Sabbath, but thought that the public buses would operate until the evening. But already around 3:00 pm the bus rides were stopped (at least in Palestinian territories). We were looking around and seeking advice at the train station, when a young soldier asked us where we wanted to go. We told him where we were hosted and he asked: "Why there? This is a dangerous place to be!" He added that we could only drive to Baqa al-Gharbiyye with a taxi. So we went to the taxi stand and wanted to take a taxi to the end of our journey. At the beginning, the taxi drivers principally agreed to take us, but when we explained where, namely in a Palestinian part of Israel, they no longer wanted to take us there – none of them. The reason given was: "Too dangerous, too dangerous!" Among themselves, the taxi drivers spoke in Russian. Since we both know Slavic languages, we also started to communicate in Russian with the taxi drivers. They shook their heads in disbelief – how could we dare to live in such a dangerous area? Finally, for an additional charge of 100 percent, we were taken to our desired destination. It turned out in the course of the discussions and negotiations that it was the language that acted as a link between the taxi drivers and us.

### **Study visit – an insight into school life**

The Jewish-Arab primary school or kindergarten "Bridge over the Wadi" in Kafr Qari'a represents surely a possible path to a better common future for the Land of Israel and the entire region. These schools are still very little used and accepted in the population. Only when both cultures are consciously lived and supported from the start, this may result in an advantage for the overall development in this region and the people living there. Especially in this area, it is not self-evident that so many Jewish parents send their children to this Jewish-Arab school. The majority of northern Israel and around the region of Baqa is Arabic. Both languages are well maintained and supported. The children grow up with both languages and speak them without any accent.

"Hand in Hand" schools are unique in Israel, because they live integrated bilingualism (Hebrew and Arabic) and multiculturalism and expand, in addition to the existing and mandatory curriculum, the curriculum of the elementary school according to it. There are always two teachers (both Jewish and Arab) present in the classroom and the students are taught at all grade levels in both Hebrew and Arabic. The subject of "political education" is also on the schedule. The children at this school think differently about the conflict in Israel, and recognize that there

is more than one truth. They recognize this by learning with and from each other. When two teachers from different cultures understand each other well, this serves as an exemplary model for children and parents. The active multilingualism of Arab students was very impressive to all of us. Iwrit (Modern Hebrew) and Arabic are the official languages in Israel and thus embedded in the curriculum of the Arab primary schools as a compulsory subject. In the second grade (in many Arab primary schools already in the first grade) extra English lessons are held. Therefore, it is not surprising that most Arabs speak at least three languages after school. However, among Israeli students across the country there are only a few Arabic-speaking people.

Since we completed the team teacher training in May 2014 it was exciting to see how this form of bilingual teaching is implemented in other countries. Two teachers work together in a class and provide more equal opportunities and enrichment for their students due to the intensive support. This Jewish-Arab school symbolizes respect, tolerance and appreciation for us, in a not so peaceful region. Especially as a teacher, you have the opportunity to make a difference and to change whatever needs the support of parents and the local environment. During the guest visits and working in small groups, we were able to apply the experience that we had collected in our team teacher training and also recognized parallels to the bilingual primary schools in Carinthia...

During our two-week study visit we had not only the opportunity to visit several schools, but also two Israeli education centres. Conducted interviews with colleagues, especially Dr. Natur Nazez (Al-Qasemi Academic College) and Dr. Riva Levenchuk (Kaye Academic College) and detailed information about the individual schools can be found in our learning- and research diaries, which were written according to guidelines of Altrichter / Posch, as well as in our personal and individual reflections. Within the short-term, 14-day school practice, we were able to stretch a pedagogical introductory arc over the entire Arab-Israeli educational system - from the day nursery, over the kindergarten to college.

### **Academic Colleges**

- Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education in Baqa al Garbiyye (Arabic College)
- Kaye Academic College of Education in Beer Sheva (Israeli College)

### **Educational establishments**

- “Hand in Hand – Bridge over the Wadi“ Kindergarten / Elementary School in Kafr Qari’a
- Al- Qasemi Day Nursery/Kindergarten in Baqa al Garbiyye
- Al-Qasemi Elementary School in Baqa al Garbiyye
- Al-Qasemi Middle School in Baqa al Garbiyye
- Al-Qasemi High School in Baqa al Garbiyye
- Al Hekma Elementary School in Baqa al Garbiyye
- Kafr Qari’a Middle School
- Kafr Qari’a High School
- Al-Farooq Elementary School in Baqa-Jatt

One of the biggest differences with the Austrian schools is immediately apparent. Each school in Israel is closely monitored and surrounded by high fences. To enter a school, you always have to pass a security check and locked gates. Another difference with the Austrian public schools is the obligation of wearing school uniforms, which – after some initial scepticism - can be an advantage in a country like Israel, where the gap between rich and poor is very large. All children are equal by wearing the same clothes. It cannot be recognized immediately by outward appearances which social background these children have. Unlike in Austria, the school system is designed in Israel. At the age of five Israeli children attend a preschool type (Gan Chova), whose visit is mandatory in the year before the start of school. At six years of age, children start school. Together, children and young people attend a general education comprehensive school, which they complete with graduation (Bagrut) in 12th grade. The majority of pupils attend school for 12 years, a smaller part leave after 10th grade. This is how long compulsory education lasts. For highly talented children, who belong to the three percent of the best students of their school class and have passed appropriate qualification exams, special scholarships for outstanding pupils are being offered. These additional courses take place beyond the normal curriculum, and can range up to special all-day schools for highly talented children. We received this information in the course of discussions with Dr. Riva Levenchuk, who works at Kaye Academic College. The number of students in each class is also different from our school system - the upper limit in Israeli schools is 40 students per class.

During our visits in various schools, the teachers told us that lately, the situation in schools have changed immensely. Savings and / or reductions in the field of education are also in Israel's public schools part of everyday life. There are strong similarities to the Austrian savings policy regarding education spending. Nevertheless, we noticed that teachers do everything possible to counteract a lack of education and try to eliminate various deficiencies with a lot of initiative and commitment. Regarding our school practice and the guest visit, it should be mentioned that we were the first Europeans who had visited these schools. So not only the students observed us as two "exotics", also the teachers did - but they never treated us as such.

Sometimes we felt like Ministers from another country. Everyone wanted to talk to us and gave us the feeling of being an important person. The modesty of the individual teacher touched and fascinated us equally. We had previously only rarely felt such warm treatment in Austrian schools. Among students and teachers Austria has an extremely high popularity to this day. We see reasons in the fact that Austria was the first country (Bruno Kreisky policy), which conducted diplomatic talks with the PLO and Yasser Arafat.<sup>18</sup>

### **Final considerations**

At the time of the study visit in Israel we never had the feeling of being housed in an area where it could be dangerous for us. As already mentioned, we experienced the Palestinians we met as extremely friendly and hospitable people. We felt sincerely welcome in the neighbourhood in which we lived. We even had the subjective feeling and speculated, that our coming had been announced in advance and we were under special protection. Nevertheless, the feeling could never be eliminated that Israel's policy runs some kind of exclusion policy regarding its second ethnic group, the Palestinians, which reminded us of apartheid in South Africa. It was perceived

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<sup>18</sup> <http://derstandard.at/1329870183859/Buchtipp-Wie-Bruno-Kreisky-die-PLO-salonfaehig-machte> (15.Juni 2015)

that there is an attempt to suppress Palestinian residential areas economically as well as infrastructural and make them dependent. Electricity and water can always be turned off arbitrarily. This knowledge paralyzed and generated dependency feelings and the "feeling of freedom", which predominate in the home country, was suddenly missing.

In several conversations with the teachers in the region of Baqa we learned that there is not a single Arab university for Israeli Arabs in Israel. For example, if you want to study medicine as a Palestinian, you have to go abroad. Although you can register at the universities to study medicine, but the opportunity to be taken as an Arab is practically zero. Even the pursuit of various professions (police, military, pilots) in the country is prohibited and not allowed. As long as the Knesset holds on to this policy, there will be - based on this inequality - probably no peace in Israel.

In order to achieve a solid and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there can only be one together and not against each other, a mutual respecting and negotiating with each other. The most important thing would be to build a basic mutual trust as the basis of all negotiations and set small steps in reaching out to each other and getting to know the different cultures. In the many interviews that we conducted in mid-June 2014, this way of thinking seemed to find its way into the people's minds. However, it was probably again levelled to the ground by mutual throwing of bombs and grenades, by suffering and death on both sides - at the time of writing this statement (July 2014). After our return from the study visit, we heard first reports of the kidnapping of three Jewish students to the West Bank. It is very difficult to put into words how great our disappointment was after the bombardment of Israel by Hamas and the outbreak of hostilities. After bombardment of Beer Sheva there was great concern about our friends there. It is hard to believe that we had stayed there not long ago.

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