

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH*

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The Ninth International Peace Award Recipient‡

Thank you, Dean David Rudenstine; Professor Lela Love—my good, good friend, a unique model who inquires with deep academic knowledge and humanistic understanding; Professor Himelstein, who really is my teacher and mentor—he will not tell you how many times he lost sleep because I called hysterically to ask for advice—and dear, wonderful students, Robyn Weinstein and Ben Thompson, who are role models for other students and for all of us.

I stand here honored, humbled, and very happy. This specific day which you have chosen to have this award ceremony is a most special one; a week after Passover, our time of liberation; a day after the Holocaust Memorial Day, when we honor and grieve, together with the many impacted families, the murder of millions during the horror of the Nazi regime; a week before Israel's Memorial Day when we stop our daily routine and remember those who sacrificed their lives for our survival, which in turn is followed by our Independence Day; this year celebrating our 61st anniversary. This, in a nutshell, is who we, as Israelis, are: this togetherness, this history of conflict, these “terms” that define and form our

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† Head of the Israeli Academic Research Institute of Conflict Resolution and Mediation of The College of Management Academic Studies. She was the first woman in Israel to attain the rank of Brigadier General in the Israeli Defense Forces, where she served from 1965–1988. She later became Vice President of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and subsequently a Member of Israel's Knesset from 2006–2009. She has dedicated her career to public service to Israel and to working towards peace. The Award honors General Dotan as representative of a group of people who consistently strive to bring people together in Israel, the broader Middle East, and other war-torn regions using groundbreaking conflict resolution strategies and their own initiative and innovative vision. General Dotan founded the Neve Tzedek Gishur Mediation Center in 1998 together with her colleague, Hanna Kotzer-Sapir. The Center provides mediation services and training in Israel and has been a force to broaden knowledge about mediation to the general population.

‡ Every year the Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution presents the International Advocate for Peace Award to an individual who does exemplary work in the field of conflict resolution and who embodies Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo's passion and commitment to the field of law. For more information on this award, please visit: www.cardozojcr.com. Past Recipients include: President William Jefferson Clinton; Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu; Senator George Mitchell and Seeds of Peace; Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke; Ambassador Dennis Ross; Writer Eve Ensler; Advocate Betty Kaari Murungi; and Professor Jeffrey Sachs.

identity: Liberty, Freedom, Threat, Anti-Semitism, Existence, Independence.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the journey I experienced—not that I like to do so. In fact, I have avoided talking or writing about myself publicly. I overcame my reluctance at the time of the honor of this award for two reasons:

First, my life in a significant sense has very much mirrored these first six decades of the State of Israel with all the conflict and wish for peace. Second, it is in a life lived that I, as well as many others in Israel, in the other lands in the Middle East, and in many other parts of the world beset with conflict, seek and work for peace and whose lives, I believe, give hope for peace. In accepting this award, I wish to honor them, too.

I was born and raised in the new, emerging Israel some months before Israel's formal creation. My Ashkenazi grandparents came to the Middle East from Lithuania, while the Sephardic side has lived in the Middle East since at least the 17th century, having traveled from Egypt and Syria. So as you can tell, and as Jack said, my family is very rooted in Israel.

Personally, I am composed of conflicted values and directions. On the one hand, I was raised to be a “nice Jewish girl”—to smile and to behave nicely. I was not allowed to wear pants. I still don't know how to ride a bicycle because Jewish girls didn't do those kinds of things. But at the same time, I was pushed to excel—to really excel.

My first months were shadowed by Israel's 1948 Independence War, the feelings and values that Israel is our land, and that we need to do everything we can to guard the land and to make sure it will continue—the heritage, tradition, and history that belongs to us in this, the only place in the world where we can guard and protect ourselves, and assure our survival as a people. And, yet, at the very same time, the value of, and the respect and honor for, “the other” was deeply rooted.

In other words, my generation, the generation who was born with Israel and grew up simultaneously with the development of the State, has a very strong sense of belonging, a sense of strength which is rooted in, and evolves from, a unique identity: being a liberal, democratic Jew.

I grew up with wonderful grandmothers who, looking back, were my role models. My Russian grandmother, Sonya, fled to Israel, leaving medical school, as she understood that she would be confronted with the horror of annihilation that faced her family. In

doing so, she, the only survivor of her family, became a citizen of the new city of Tel Aviv—bringing to this new town the culture and style she and her friends knew in Shawley, Lithuania. A master of seven languages, she helped me to learn how to navigate the paths of first decisions, mapping the day-to-day obstacles, giving me tools to manage, opening gates to a bigger world, to different cultures, and to the rich scope of the lives of others (at that time, we had no television, the radio was local, and telephones were few).

My Sephardic grandmother, Hemda, was so noble and elegant—even when occupied with nine children and a husband who dedicated his life to learning Kabbalah and Torah. She was tall and beautiful, calm and giving, wise and quiet.

My father's cousin, Maccabi, was one of those who broke the route toward Jerusalem on our Independence Day and died in a battle that carries his name and memory. He became a hero and in many ways my role model when I joined the military and later was to become a general.

My career as an officer in the IDF was a coincidence. My plans were to become a caring doctor, to work perhaps with children or other people who needed a physician. I never thought I was going to be a general. As all Israelis, after finishing high school, I was drafted into the Israel Defense Forces (“IDF”)—the draft being compulsory for both genders. My initial service ended during the Six Day War, and no one, certainly not me, with my personal history, was going to leave IDF at that time.

IDF is a phenomenon unto itself. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, accumulated the stories of Israel's warriors from biblical times up to modern history and formed the credo: “*the obligation became a right to belong, to continue the chain of success.*” Women, going back to the prophet Debora and others, set an example. IDF became a melting pot of the Israeli Society—a mosaic of all young Israelis who put their personal achievements and dreams aside in order to serve our country. IDF is the cradle of the so called “Israeli fraternity,” embodying commitment and maturity.

Becoming a leader in this environment meant a great deal. Being responsible for female soldiers in the most formative period of their lives was, and still is, one of the most challenging and cherished tasks a person, a woman, in Israel could wish for. The value of giving your utmost effort, taking responsibility for others, and sharing with other Israelis' experiences and difficulties, created dynamics of their own. Being in a position of authority, where one

leads by example, helps shape thinking and provides tools for tomorrow, put me, as well as most Israeli officers, in high demand as models in terms of style of operation, inner-strength, and partnership.

The military was and is very powerful in Israel, and being a rooted Israeli, it was considered acceptable for me to continue my leadership role in IDF. And there, at the age of 35, I became the chief of the Women's Corps and received my rank of Colonel by instituting some changes—revolutionary changes—with regard to the vocation of female soldiers within IDF. Being under General Sharon's leadership, I learned the art of strategy, the knowledge to read a "map" and act accordingly, and to analyze the organization's political aspects—all of which I used in order to upgrade and honor the service of women in IDF. This enabled me to open new vocational horizons for the female soldiers and to integrate them respectfully as equals.

Throughout this journey, I was quite lucky: I was able to act within the system—as a "nice Jewish girl"—while still voicing my own perspective—not to detract, but as you say, to enlarge the pie. At that time, it was something I simply felt and needed assistance to "name." The inner strength I had based on my upbringing enabled me to maintain my different way of seeing things and to attract others to join with me. That translated into an increasingly shared wider scope of understanding needs, and provided innovative ways to tackle them. I was able to make the changes that I wanted to make and was generally not perceived as a threat.

I used this approach when dealing with the placement of female soldiers within the ranks. For example, having the courage to go to the artillery general and to tell him that he had to place female soldiers as instructors within that division. He laughed and brushed me off, asking, "Why would I place female soldiers as instructors?" I replied by singing, "Anything you can do, I can do better" and asked him to think about how good his soldiers would be with female instructors. That convinced him, and the other generals soon followed.

As the chief of the Women's Corps during the same period in which we started to hear about feminism, the challenge was two-fold: to develop the female soldiers' professional skills within the Defense Forces and maximize their capacities as soldiers, while at the same time maintaining and strengthening their feminist identities and aspirations.

Please keep in mind that aside from what people generally know about the military duties of defending the State, upon all of these young soldiers' shoulders rested then, as they do now, other responsibilities—teaching Hebrew to new arrivals to Israel, integrating them into the society, assisting underprivileged Israelis by giving them an opportunity to find a proper occupation, preparing them to enter higher education, teaching the elderly, assisting in times of distress, and cultivating the land. These young men and women, in their late adolescent years, were, and are, learning the meaning of these values by carrying them into action.

During the first sixty-one years of Israel's independence, we've done a lot, and we've achieved a lot, simultaneously. We needed to liberate Jews from distressed or dangerous countries, to absorb them, to cultivate the land, to build a system of education, a culture, and an economy. This is who we are; this is what we built and continue to build. And we hope that one day when things are "okay," we'll have time to make the corrections. But "one day" never comes. It seems that we need to take the time to really look back and look forward and to make those corrections now. "If not now, when?" "אם לא עכשיו, אימתי?"

We have done all that, and continue to do so, because the sense of "it is up to us" governs. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" "אם אין אני לי - מי לי?" I hope I am able to convey the hectic pace of actions and achievements that was always with us. And please remember that all of it was done under a continuous feeling of alert! I have had a constant sense since childhood that someone was trying to harm me or my family just for being a Jewish Israeli. This is part of who I am, like my family, like being the daughter of my parents and now, like being the parent of my children, the grandparent of my grandchildren.

This sense of alertness—this constant and understandable sense of being under attack—is a part of what Israelis feel as a result of being Israelis. We are under constant attack, from which we have developed a deep sense of vulnerability on one hand, and of strength and leaning on our own defense, on the other. "Our sword shall always be ready." "הלנצח תאכל חרב."

While those reasons and that sense of alertness continues—this is our day-to-day life—over time a new reality has emerged for Israelis. The sense of alertness has now broadened and involves a fuller inter-connected context—the respect for the "other" that was also so much a part of my upbringing. "If I am only for myself, what am I?"

“רכשאני לעצמי מה אני?”

By the 90's, my everyday career in the IDF had drawn to a close but was never far behind. I sought ways to understand and deepen this emerging inter-connecting context, which started to form while I was in the military, and was now seeking fuller expression in my everyday life and in the lives of many Israelis.

This was a time when we opened up to a broader understanding of the world through television, faxes, the internet, and all these ever expanding high-tech abilities. There was a feeling that reality was not just wars, not just conflicts; that we can live life differently, that we can look out for ourselves *and* our country in a broader sense that, while including security, was not only about security.

At this time, many people were learning about and discussing the increased formation of a number of NGOs. Meetings with Palestinians started to occur, and there was a rewriting of the curriculum and of books for learning about who we are—Israelis and Palestinians writing together through narratives—new visions in theatre and art. There were Israelis helping Palestinians in many ways, such as crossing checkpoints. In these and other ways, different voices started to be heard, and reality became seen as more multi-dimensional, and more complex—for me and for others.

During this time, drawing upon my experience with bringing stature to women in the IDF, I searched for an innovative angle to integrate women into the emerging opportunities for us to live together in the Middle East. With the help of Mr. Shimon Peres (then Israel's foreign minister, now Israel's president), I initiated the Middle East Career Women's Forum, an NGO that I formed officially in 1995 with career women from Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. The first meeting was in Israel, and then we met in Jordan, Gaza, Ramallah, and Cyprus. I very much appreciated those opportunities. But let me confess my feelings before the first meeting in Tel Aviv in June 1995. I was totally distressed, as a former Israeli general, when it came time to meet face to face with Palestinians. For me, they were an enemy. When the Palestinian women entered that room in Tel Aviv, I fell in love with them because they were so close to who we—Israelis—are. They were mirrors of us, and that new relationship started and has continued.

Part of my immediate family opposed my contact with the Palestinians. I remember very vividly coming back from Gaza after meeting with Arafat and showing the pictures that were taken

at the meeting. Family members were furious, so I had to live schizophrenically in two very different worlds—the past, with its vulnerability and sense of alertness—which I described earlier—and the maybe future of hope, manageable danger and daringness.

Unfortunately, most of our Palestinian friends over time left the region, the day to day realities having produced a lot of new barriers—political, physical and financial—for them to stay or for new Palestinians to join. But we continue to try and our Middle East women’s partnership became stronger and more effective. Just last week, a new horizon appeared when I found out that two of our Jordanian members are now ministers in Jordan.

An issue that was put on the table by our Arab members was why the Israeli group did not include Israeli-Arab career women; a valid question that reflects another phase of complexity. Here we are—liberal Israeli Jewish women—not knowing our most immediate Israeli-Arab partners, not even knowing if there are career Arab women in Israel, who they are, how to connect with them, etc. The immediate response was simply to deny the question, because to admit it would bring “noises” to the process we envisioned. It took us too long to change this way of thinking and to integrate Arab-Israeli women into the process. The outcome was anything but success, and we then realized how important it is to have a third party partner to bring us all to a better understanding.

Some years later, when I myself became a mediator, I was able to engage with Bedouins from the Negev, the southern area of Israel. Those long years of “engagement” had enlightened cultural thoughts, needs and values. Time had influenced the Bedouin community. Leadership was different; the Sheikh was not the only power. Education and academia changed ways of thinking and developed new clashes amongst the Bedouin themselves. The change in habitat—from wandering to stone housing—also contributed to the transition. The Israeli government has not, unfortunately to this day, dealt properly with the situation. I found myself using the language and skills of mediation to build bridges of trust and understanding in order to try to find ways to interact and live with mutual respect. The main concept had to do with enabling the Bedouins to be themselves and develop their own best practices—like camel and goat products as part of their first agricultural cooperative, the practice of desert medicine, and the start of Bedouin businesses—and to do all of that with the benefit of 21st century knowledge.

And then there are the remarkable Bedouin women who are a chapter by themselves. These capable women have become the voice for change, be it grounded in developing education for babies and youth, ethnic cuisine for Bedouin school children, their creative involvement with the Social Security Administration for their communities, and other initiatives. The road is still long, but the first successes are there.

But let me step back. Searching for ways of creating engagement and dialogue across perceived divisions led me to explore the emerging field of mediation. With my friend and colleague, Deputy Inspector-General (Ret.) Hanna Kotzer-Sapir, we traveled to New York to study with Jack Himmelstein and Gary Friedman, and luckily so, because their approach to dealing with conflict—with its focus on understanding—resonated deeply with us and the challenges we face in Israel. We felt richer, with a broadening awareness and new tools.

I know mediation sounds so basic, but try to find out whether you have the time and energy needed to try to understand what the “other” is saying. That is the challenge for the mediator—to work at fully understanding the different parties with their differing perspectives, and hopefully to help the parties understand each other. What made it particularly difficult were the layers of values, culture, and norms that permeate the conflicts we have long encountered daily in Israel and the Middle East. The challenges were and are enormous. If we add intentions—good or bad—that underlie the words, the challenges and outcomes are even harder to cope with, and the path of understanding is constantly tested.

And then there was an appreciation for ways of understanding conflict itself. In particular, our focus expanded beyond the *what*, or substance, of conflict to include *how* we talk about that substance and *why*. Some of this perspective had been there in one way or another in my earlier years of work in the military, at least implicitly. But this approach, which resonated so deeply for us, provided new concepts, a new appreciation for the multi-dimensional nature of working with conflict, new ways to focus, and new tools. This proved enormously helpful.

When we returned to Israel, our appreciation for this new perspective grew and deepened. During 1998, we founded the first Israeli Mediation Center, the *Neve Tzedek Gishur* Mediation Center (*Gesher* means “bridge,” while *Gishur* means “bridging”). Some years later, with Dean Tamar Gidron, we initiated the first Israeli Academic Research Institute for Conflict Resolution, Medi-

ation & Consensus Building at the Academic College of Management. We invited Jack and Gary to teach in Israel, and since 1999 we have been teaching courses for students of law, business, and economics, as well as for the wider professional community including lawyers, business people, and others, while practicing mediation as well.

The last few years presented a new opportunity as I was called back into public life. In late 2005, General Sharon asked me to join *Kadima* (then a new party he had founded) and to become a Knesset Member (“MK”). Given the opportunity, and given that it was General Sharon—who had taught me so much and supported me so much when I needed it—I accepted. I was elected to the Knesset and served as an MK. Once in the Knesset, I realized that I had been granted a kind of gift to touch upon and further pursue, in this unique arena, the possibilities of change for a better future.

Looking back to these unique years, I am most proud of the fact that our “consensus building” approach was respected, that the language of conflict resolution *so* relevant to dealing with human relations was also relevant—and needed—throughout the political arena. The Knesset is certainly a contentious institution, with very real differences, as they should be. By finding ways to include a focus on the *how* and *why* of dealing with those differences, a new dialogue often emerged. It was evident to me, and often to others, that when you listen, others listen as well. As a result, the product of the content discussed is richer and more cherished. For me, for others, and sometimes for the outcome, the differences were real.

Amongst my many responsibilities as a member of the Knesset, I was able to successfully initiate laws, two of which are major bills that were enacted into law. The first bill—built on my work with equality for women in the IDF, with the Middle East Career Women’s Forum, with the Bedouins, and in other contexts—is a gender bill, according to which every new proposed legislation needs to be reviewed for its gender implications, where it seems that the bill may, directly or indirectly, have an effect on equality between men and women. The second is a national security bill which establishes the work of the Israeli National Security staff. This law stresses the need of a professional-interdisciplinary body to advise the Israeli Prime Minister and the Israeli government on issues of defense and foreign policy, and specifies *how* this body is to work and sets its activities.

I was able to open new horizons of hope and support to the 1500 families who were evacuated from *Gush Katif* in Gaza. While

stressing my different political views and listening to theirs, we joined together to focus on their needs. I fought for each one of them to be treated appropriately—with respect and in terms of their actual life solutions. This is fair, right, and necessary for them, as well as for the viability of the evolving make-up of the Israeli society.

This approach to, and language, of conflict resolution is, of course, also relevant to and critically needed in all international discussions about the Middle East, as was evident at those in which I have participated. I was the Knesset representative in NATO's group of parliamentarians as well as in the European Parliament. I have also participated in "second track" negotiations over the years. In doing so, I had the opportunity to meet with Palestinians, Jordanians, and others who seek to find a way to develop meaningful dialogue. In these and other ways, I have been able to maintain direct dialogue with Palestinian friends, colleagues, and others from throughout the Middle East in search of a greater mutual understanding.

Aware of the importance of such dialogue and the need for understanding, last year I joined with my colleagues, Hanna Kotzer-Sapir and Tamar Gidron, in spearheading a new venture under the auspices of the Academic Institute for Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building. "Deepening the Dialogue" is designed to bring together Israelis and Palestinians who have been involved, in one way or another, with the search for peace together with experts on conflict resolution. Our goal is to discover ways to deepen the dialogue between us and, in doing so, between our people.

In our first meeting at the end of last year, we sought to reach beyond the political context—the *what* of our differences—to include *who* we are, *how* we talk with one another, and *how* the process can be introduced to the larger public in both lands. This proved to be an important inquiry, and we plan future dialogues that seek to build on both the promise and challenge of deepening our dialogue. For me, and for others, the search continues to discover and honor ways that respect our differences as well as our connections. As of this writing, we had a second round table meeting—this time in order to *understand* the text of the Arab Initiative. In doing so, we believe we came to *understand* the different messages regarding the Arab world and culture.

Peace is a very big word and to receive this peace award is, for me, very significant and meaningful. What I can share with you is

that the process and involvement in mega issues requires courage, being able to read the map as it is, not telling ourselves all kinds of dreams, fairytales, or Hollywood stories. We have to read the map and act according to its truth. In order to find ways to change the map, we need backbone, we need partners, we need feedback. Creating change feels very lonely. Without a valid legitimacy that the road is worthwhile and the possibility to join with “others”, the journey seems almost impossible. Your decision to grant me this award brings to those of us who struggle, a breeze of comforting wind along the journey.

It’s difficult to live in the Middle East. It’s difficult to be Israeli, but it’s wonderful. It’s very challenging to cope and to do what is needed, but we have to do it.

We need to engage with “the other.” When I heard President Obama say “engagement” when he was elected, I was smiling, really smiling, because for the first time, a highly respected international leader echoed what I felt. In my political life, I have often said that engagement is a very nice word. Others have looked at me and said that I was very naïve. But I think that I am not naïve, and that this is the way to go: to find partners, to search for roads, and to seek assistance.

I am lucky to have a network of wonderful friends and family. Their support and guidance has been invaluable. I believe that it is not easy to be my children, to share what a mother should give to her children with so many “others.” I’m proud of them and look with wonder and gratitude to see that they continue the path of giving and acknowledging others. I thank my friend and business partner Hanna Kotzer-Sapir who showed me the meaning of compassion and conciliation; to Professor Ann Bloom, who is here with us tonight and who has been my feminist mentor since the seventies; to Professor Love who has taught me the beauty of strength and modesty; and to my friend, teacher, and mentor, Professor Jack Himmelstein, who *invented* my new abilities; and to all the other wonderful people who have helped me along the way, and are therefore a part of this award.

I am lucky to be a part of this wonderful generation of activism, a generation that built the country that helps to absorb, educate, and lead our wonderful Israel. I am lucky to receive today this significant award on behalf of those people in Israel and in other parts of the world who are seeking ways toward, and working

for, peace. I am pleased and proud to accept it on behalf of all those people seeking to be a *mensh*—a human being in the sense of all that connects us. This is peace. Thank you.