Building Bridges Among Israelis, Palestinians and Norwegians

Bridging the Gap: A Journey of Reconciliation

By Jonathan McRay

The concept of reconciliation is often associated with forgiveness, a process that can be challenging and complex. Reconciliation involves not only the act of forgiving but also the process of transforming relationships and building trust. In this context, the term "reconciliation" is used to describe a process of repairing relationships and restoring trust between individuals, groups, or nations.

The goal of reconciliation is to create a new atmosphere of understanding and cooperation between former adversaries. This process requires a willingness to listen, learn, and grow together. It often involves acknowledging past harm and working to overcome the barriers that have divided people in the past.

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Historical Narratives of the Israeli and Palestinian Peoples

E very Passover, the Jewish people remember God’s deliverance from slavery. In Egypt, Jews recount how in every generation there is a child who must recount this story. They tell the story of their ancestors to keep it alive. History is their inheritance, their past and their future. But for the Palestinian people, it is much more than that. It is a constant reminder of the suffering of their people and the tragedy of their loss. It is a story of resilience and determination, of hope and faith. But it is also a story of pain and struggle, of injustice and oppression.

The lectures concerning the Israeli and Palestinian narratives were a part of Musalaha’s experimental, two-day conference held in Jerusalem on October 4-5. The experimental, intense conference proved to be very successful, especially for the participants who had a rich historical and religious connection. They strongly proffer their contributions, either as upholders or as critique from the Crusaders and Ottomans to the Israelis. One of the most valuable conclusions was that the Palestinian problem cannot be defined historically, but rather as a political and social construct. This has important implications for the future of the region.

The two-day conference was very challenging. The purpose was to allow them to be informed and to inform the other, to add and subtract, to inform and be informed. The lectures concerning the Israeli and Palestinian narratives were very different, but they both strongly proclaimed their historical narratives as their own. The Middle East is volatile, there is always a threat of war, but there is also a need for peace. Peace is possible, but it requires understanding and reconciliation. The lectures concerning the Israeli and Palestinian narratives were a step towards this understanding.

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