

## ‘ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY...

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/pal2105.doc.htm>

### **Secretary-General Says Peace Has to Be Promoted Not Only at Political Level, But at Grass Roots**

Key excerpts:

SHAAZKA BEYERLE, a Senior Adviser at the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict in Washington D.C., focusing on the bottom-up approach to the conflict, noted that, to date, the discourse of change had been a top-down approach. It was a “statist” model in which State actors or elites externally prescribed solutions or interventions for an end to the conflict and peace. However she wished to underscore how people could be an active force of change through organized, unified, grass-roots, non-violent campaigns, a model that was bottom-up and home-grown.

Stronger parties rarely, if ever, gave up power willingly — they had to be pressured to make concessions, Ms. Beyerle noted. However, the historic record showed that collective, strategic application of civic action, including civil disobedience, strikes and boycotts, could produce power shifts in asymmetric conflicts. Today new forms were emerging, including Internet interventions via Facebook and other Web forums. And the historical record showed that it was an effective method: from 1900 to 2006, major non-violent campaigns had achieved success 53 per cent of the time, versus 26 per cent of violent resistance campaigns.

Palestinians had a legacy of non-violent civil resistance dating back to British rule, and there had been a sustained effort for the past eight years now focused on the destruction of the barrier wall and on putting an end to the occupation, Ms. Beyerle said. A broad-based, popular Palestinian movement targeting the occupation had the potential to lay the foundation for lasting peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestine, by harnessing the voices and the demands of the silent, more moderate majority of the population on both sides. Moreover, peace was not something easily imposed from above. If the parties on the ground did not want peace, the only place top-down solutions would achieve peace was on paper.

Ms. Beyerle did not feel that international community support was the determining factor in the success of a non-violent movement. However, the international community could play a huge role in supporting those non-violent movements, as had been done in East Timor. Among the ways the international community could help was through expanding the arena of the non-violent struggle beyond its setting; it could provide solidarity; it could provide exposure, through media coverage and diplomatic reports; it could provide legitimacy; it could act as a witness; provide knowledge and know-how; and, critically, it could provide protection for non-violent leaders and activists.

In the ensuing discussion, Ms. BEYERLE clarified that she was not talking about sitting back and doing nothing. She was talking about active resistance. However, she eschewed the use of violence in doing so, as it gave the other side an excuse to use ever greater oppression and shredded any gains made on the ground.