

A Resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian through a Gender Lens

Proposal submitted by Dr. Adina Friedman

Israeli-Palestinian peace often seems unattainable. Despite occasional minor “successes”, attempts at reaching a sustainable resolution to the conflict have largely failed. There are a number of causes for this; a (if not *the*) one that is cross-cutting is the almost complete lack of women in any meaningful decision-making positions. This is important not only because more than half the population (women and groups of underprivileged men) is not equally represented or involved in decision making, but also because feminine and other marginalized voices – that could in fact be conducive to peace - are not present.

Israeli and Palestinian (and other Middle Eastern) societies - their cultures, norms, power structures, and national ethos - are highly masculinized. This has implications for all aspects of life, and definitely for war and peace.

On the very rare occasion that a woman is seen in decision-making circles, she usually must be “more man than a man”: in order to ascend to the position in the first place, and in order to survive in it thereafter. Having a “token woman” here and there does nothing to correct gender imbalance, and may even obscure it even more. In other words, “counting the women” is less important than making sure women – and “feminine” perspectives -count.

This presentation will apply a gender lens to the conflict and the process. It will look at both the representation of women, and at the integrity of what are often considered “feminine” ideals, behaviors, and norms in the peace field. It will propose the types of changes that need to take place for Israeli and Palestinian societies to become less “masculinized”, chauvinistic, and patriarchal – changes that are critical for any real peace to be attained.

In addition, it will apply a gender lens to agreements reached between Israel and other countries in the region and similarly assess how sustainable those are likely to be, and how conducive they are to real, lasting peace between those countries as well between Palestinians and Israelis.

Dr. Adina Friedman researches, writes, and teaches on conflict resolution and peacebuilding at large, and specifically on conflict and peacebuilding in the MENA, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and gender.