

Proposal for the Mediation Process for Conflict Resolution & Transformation

Prepared by Sheri Wander

The following is a proposal to **begin** a process of conflict resolution within ICPJ

Why is such a process needed?

- 1) Unless ICPJ deals with both the presenting and underlying conflicts and issues of the current situation they can not truly move forward. The issues will continue to surface in the work of ICPJ, the relationships of members, and the relationship of ICPJ to the larger community.
- 2) Individuals "on all sides" of the issue have been personally hurt. A formal process of conflict resolution has the potential to allow everyone to be heard, to feel heard and to move us forward towards a process of conflict transformation and healing.
- 3) To model for the wider community a process of nonviolent conflict resolution and to have the wider community see all parties attempt to hear each other.
- 4) The honest and respectful communication that such a process requires is an integral part of nonviolence, giving us the opportunity to put our beliefs into practice in a personal way.
- 5) Most parties involved in this conflict will continue in a variety of ways to be involved in Middle East justice issues. Therefore, we are likely to be working "near each other" even if not strictly speaking "working together".
- 6) Whatever the outcome a process of conflict resolution can help with closure both for those who choose to stay and those who leave.
- 7) The injustice and violence in Palestine/Israel demands to be addressed, we can not do that well when enmeshed in violent conflict ourselves

Goals:

- 1) To **begin** a process of healing
- 2) To establish ways to "be" with each other as we all continue to work for justice in the Middle East in this community

- 3) To establish realistic expectations for working "with" or "near" each other
- 4) To move forward toward the potential for conflict transformation
- 5) To establish a common understanding of the presenting and underlying conflicts, their roots, and factors that contributed to escalation in order to "do it differently" in the future

Potential Roadblocks:

- 1) Unrealistic expectations
- 2) Key participants/stakeholders unwilling to participate
- 3) Lack of commitment to the process from "either side"
- 4) Mediators/Facilitators who see themselves as "representing" one party or the other rather than advocating for a fair process or are not trained/experienced in conflict resolution and mediation.

Resources needed:

- 1) Money -
 - (a) Reimbursement for mediator/facilitator expenses.
 - (b) Stipends for 3 "outside"* facilitators/mediators
- 2) Time- staff, board, and volunteer time for phone interviews w/ outside facilitators, and for meeting time

* It is not likely an individual within this community can truly be 100% "outside" the conflict. For the purpose of this proposal "outside" can be assumed to mean not a "stakeholder" in the present conflicts, and someone who can advocate for a fair process rather than any certain side.

** If I am one of the outside facilitators I pledge to donate at least 1/2 my stipend back to ICPJ

The process itself

1) The ICPJ steering committee (or a subcommittee there of, empowered to make decisions about this process) chooses a facilitator/mediator. The group who refers to themselves as "the METF in exile" also chooses a facilitator/mediator. These 2 individuals meet and choose a 3rd person to work as a facilitator/mediator. **All 3 of these individuals must be acceptable to all parties.**

2) These 3 individuals meet to design a process best suitable for this situation.

What follows then in steps 3- 7 may be altered somewhat, based on the wisdom of the 3. However, this should give a good enough idea of what will come to allow for decisions to be made.

3) The mediators interview each participant individually to get a more complete understating of the presenting and underlying issues, what the expectations are for the conflict resolution process, and what will feel like a "win" or a "waste of time" to the various participants.

4) Based on information from these interviews, mediators may meet separately with "each side"

5) Reports based on the information gathered in steps 3 and 4 above is presented to all parties and mediators establish guidelines, ground rules, and boundaries for a mediation/conflict resolution.

6) A quorum from SC, the current METF and those who have left both groups attend a minimum of 2 face to face facilitated conflict resolution/mediation sessions. (more may be negotiated at these meetings)

7) Wrap-up and closure may occur with a final report from the facilitators proposing next steps, a final meeting, or simply a formal way to say "good-bye" to those choosing to move on to work on this issue in other ways.

My involvement

In spite of some initial misgivings I am excited about the potential to work with all parties. I think there is a lot of hope for some movement toward healing and moving forward without this conflict and its residual effects/aftershocks undermining our ability to work effectively for peace and justice.

I also, however, am unwilling to spend the resources on doing so if all parties are not committed to good faith effort and to removing potential roadblocks. With that in mind my involvement would rest on the following conditions:

- 1) All 3 mediators disclose up front their personal biases and connections to those involved
- 2) All 3 mediators have some training and/or background in mediation, conflict resolution and/or conflict transformation.
- 3) All 3 mediators are acceptable to all parties
- 4) A quorum of affected parties from "all sides" are involved, and committed to the process
- 5) Everyone enters with realistic expectations
- 6) Those involved commit to complete the process. Leaving the process after one of 2 meetings or "in the middle" often means leaving when things are at points of high emotion and tends to create more problems than it solves.

Submitted respectfully and in Peace, Sheri Wander