

**Evaluation  
of the seminar  
'Reality and Hope'  
July 23 – August 2,  
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# 1. Introduction

## *1.1 General introduction*

The organization of COME (Communication Middle East) in its current form was set up in 1991. However, seminars have been organized since 1975. These earlier seminars were held in Jerusalem and organized for theologians and those interested in theology. Europeans, Israelis and Palestinians worked together in these seminars. From this initiative, another project evolved. A small organization was founded, which strove to bring together students of all the conflicting groups in the Middle East together. In these 'meeting seminars' the participants came together in a different place and got to know one another, each in their own identity. These 'meeting seminars' have now been held for over 20 years. Hundreds of Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians and Egyptians have had the opportunity to come closer together in a stable and safe environment.

Since 1991, these initiatives have been joined, establishing the foundation of COME (Communication Middle East). Over the years, the target group became smaller and smaller, being now mainly a meeting place for Israelis and Palestinians. For them a yearly seminar is organized, giving them the opportunity to meet each other in a neutral place.

This report evaluates the seminar held in July/August 2010, which took place in Droushia, Cyprus, and lasted for 11 days. Participants belonged to three circumstantial groups: '67 Palestinians (Palestinians living in the West Bank), '48 Palestinians (Palestinians living inside Israel) and Jewish Israelis. Throughout this document we use the expression 'circumstantial groups' to refer to these three groups. After a description of the program and the evaluation forms, we will discuss in chapter 2 the evaluation by the participants. First, we will give the group characteristics, followed by the results of the questionnaires in numbers and in words. Then we will try to answer the question: which activities during the seminar caused which changes in the participants? We will specify differences between the groups. Chapter 3 contains an evaluation by the organizers, followed in chapter 4 by the conclusions.

The organizers will learn from these evaluations what the participants thought about the program and the activities, and which activities are helping to fulfill the objectives of the seminar. By taking the conclusions into account, we can improve the seminars for future participants and develop it further so it will be more and more beneficent for the participants.

## *1.2 Description of program*

The program of the seminar was put together by the committee. The committee consists of local and Dutch committee members. Even though one of the Dutch members has final responsibility for the seminar, the local committee members have the biggest influence on the program and the selection of the participants. The local members are all former participants of the seminar. Ideally, each circumstantial group has two committee members present at the seminar. During the preparation weekend (in which the program is put together and the selection and preparation of the participants takes place, more local committee members can be involved.

After many years of experience in organizing the seminars, the program is now well developed with every year the same structure. Every year in spring, the committee comes together to prepare the seminar, secure the program, discuss the different sections in the program, determine the theme and talk about the selection of the participants.

This year the theme of the seminar was 'Reality and Hope'. We chose this theme following a discussion during the preparation weekend. One of the committee members said: "We have nothing, no peace, no peace talks, no change in the Gaza Strip. Only a very right-wing,

Israeli government. What will be our hope, living in reality?" This gave us the theme of the seminar.

During the seminar, every day one of the committee members is the chairperson; he/she supervises the day and is responsible for the smooth course of the program for that day.

The first two or three days are used for making personal acquaintances, followed by national acquaintance and group-to-group meetings, after which we can turn to political acquaintance and discussion. Each of these three phases consists of games, meetings, presentations, leisure activities and other specific activities. Halfway through the seminar, an excursion is organized, preferably to a town near the beach. We think that this gives the participants a way to release any tension. Also for the '67 Palestinians, a trip to the beach is very important, because they are not able to visit the beach in Israel. Almost at the end of the seminar, a workshop is given by a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot. They start with an introduction to the conflict in Cyprus, after which they explain the current situation, inter-communal talks and solutions. To the participants this can give another perspective on their own situation. The full program you can find in the appendices.

### *1.3 Description of the evaluation form and analyses*

We have created an evaluation form to be filled in by the participants, which has been attached to this document. This evaluation has been developed on the basis of previous evaluations of the seminars in Cyprus. Several changes have been made, in order to interpret the results better than previously. First, we asked participants to rate both how well the seminar and the specific activities had been organized, and how meaningful this was for them. Second, we asked them about their inner processes, and what had been changing in them during the seminar. Third, we posed open questions, to which they could answer in short sentences. Fourth, we asked them about their socio-demographic background, such as which of the circumstantial groups they felt they belonged to.

The answers of the participants have been inserted in a statistical database-program (SPSS), and a psychologist (JV) has analyzed and reported this data. Numerical data has been analyzed by means and standard deviations (the latter being the variation in answers circling around the mean of all answers), and the numbers of participants with low and with high scores. To interpret the answers, both means and the numbers of low-scores and high-scorers have to be taken into account. Other statistical techniques are explained in footnotes.

## 2. Evaluation by participants

### 2.1. *Group characteristics*

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the group. Twenty-eight persons participated in the seminar, of whom 26 filled in and returned the evaluation form to the organizers. The questions in the evaluation form were filled-in by most participants; the mean number of participants not filling in a question was one per question.

The mean age of the participants was 29 years; 18 were in their twenties, 6 in their thirties and one person was 53 years old. Fourteen participants were men, 11 women (of the 28 participants 15 were men, 13 women). Most of them were well educated: 23 had followed post-secondary school or university. Half of all participants reported that they were not actively religious, six that they were Jewish, three that they were Muslim and two that they were Christian. Twenty persons were employees and five were students.

More than half of all participants felt themselves to belong to Palestinian groups: nine felt affiliated with the '67 Palestinian group and six with the '48 Palestinian group. About one-third of all participants felt themselves to belong to Israeli groups: seven felt themselves Jewish Israeli, and one as Israeli born. Three persons felt that they belonged to another group. Of the 28 participants 17 belonged to the '67 and '48 Palestinian circumstantial groups and 11 belonged to the Jewish Israeli circumstantial group.

### 2.2. *Results in numbers*

#### 2.2.1. *Organization of the seminar: in general and about specific activities*

First, we describe how the participants evaluated the organization of the seminar in general, as shown in table 2. Most participants evaluated the organization of most practical issues of the seminar as good or excellent; i.e., the general organization of the seminar, preparations before the seminar, hotel accommodation, and facilitation by committee members, free time activities, coffee-breaks and allocation of the rooms (i.e. an Israeli, a '67 Palestinian and a '48 Palestinian sharing a room). However, food, transportation and morning activities were moderately organized, and several participants experienced these as poorly or very poorly organized.

According to the participants, the content of the seminar was very well organized with respect to the theme and the small groups, whole group and circumstantial group meetings. The conditions of the seminar were also organized positively, and the organizers provided a good general atmosphere, in respect of being open to what people wanted to say, safety, trust, respect and equality between people.

Table 3 shows how the participants evaluated the organization of specific activities. They reported as good or excellent the organization of almost all activities. Exceptions to this were the film of the Israelis and its discussion, and introduction of the conflict in Cyprus and its discussion; both were organized moderately well according to the participants, and according to several participants these were organized poorly or very poorly. The organization of circumstantial group meetings, films of the '48 and '67 Palestinians, excursion to Paphos and games were all evaluated as excellent.

The answers of the participants regarding the organization of the activities could be summarized<sup>1</sup> in terms of whole-group activities versus activities that were not done in the whole group. The participants evaluated the organization of these two different types of activities completely differently. The organization of whole-group activities was evaluated as better than other activities.

### 2.2.2. *Meaningfulness of the seminar: in general and about specific activities*

Second, we describe how the participants evaluated the extent to which the seminar was experienced as meaningful by them, as shown in table 2. Most practical issues were evaluated as very meaningful, except for the allocation of the rooms which was experienced as moderately meaningful. The content of the seminar was mainly experienced as meaningful, which includes the theme, and discussions in small groups, whole group and circumstantial groups. It was experienced as meaningful, that the general atmosphere was good and open, and that there was safety, trust, respect, acceptance and equality between people.

Table 3 shows to what extent to which the participants evaluated the specific activities as meaningful to themselves. Almost all activities have been evaluated as meaningful or very meaningful. The letter to oneself, preparation of the plays, introduction and discussion about the conflict on Cyprus and the football game were experienced as only moderately meaningful, and several participants rated these as not meaningful at all. The most meaningful activities were: circumstantial group meetings, hike to Lara Beach, films of the '67 and '48 Palestinians, personal appointments, listening exercises, history timeline, hot topics, Palestinian cultural evening and farewell party.

The answers about the meaningfulness of the activities could be summarized under five factors<sup>2</sup>. First: games. Second: activities focused on the training of skills, such as listening, negotiating, positioning, fears and trust. Third: whole-group activities. Fourth: personal meetings. Fifth: conditions of the seminar, such as openness and trust. Roughly speaking, this means for instance that all games were evaluated as (almost) equally meaningful. In future seminars, the organizers could select a smaller number of activities for each of these categories, whilst the seminar could still be experienced as meaningful.

### 2.2.3. *General changes after the seminar: in general and about specific activities*

Third, we describe the general meaning of the seminar for the participants, and how they felt that they had changed during the seminar. This is shown in table 4.

Overall, most participants evaluated the seminar as a unique meeting. The majority reported that they had met people that they would/could never meet at home, had said what is really important to them, had met people from the other side of the conflict, and had heard ideas, motivations and feelings of people that they would/could never see/hear at home. However, most of them mentioned that they had not spoken of ideas and feelings that they would not speak of at home.

Many inner processes seem to have been taking place within the participants. They reported that they had been thinking a lot, had experienced many emotions, had been doing many things and had been very motivated for the seminar. More specifically, the majority reported that they had been thinking/feeling a lot about themselves and their own national identity. They had

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<sup>1</sup> We asked many questions in the evaluation form. To see the essence of all questions, we used statistical data reduction techniques. By doing this, we tried to group different questions together as one factor/phenomenon. That is: we tried to answer the question whether different activities 'do' the same 'thing' because of the fact that their answers are statistically related or similar to each other. Statistically speaking: we used principal component analysis. The number of factors was decided by the fact that each factor had to explain at least 10% of the variation in answers, had eigenvalues > 1.0, and before a remarkable decline in the scree-plot. All factors had Cronbach's alpha's > .60.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1.

been thinking a lot about their relationships with people from other national groups, and how they look at his/her national identity. Most of them had also been thinking/feeling a lot about their ideas, feelings, images and stereotypes about other people, and had been testing how true these were.

Most participants had been thinking/feeling about the victim-roles and responsibility-roles that they and other people have in the Middle East conflicts. However, they had been thinking more about the responsibility of other people than about their own responsibility.

Regarding the group processes, the majority felt themselves to be part of the whole group (Israelis and Palestinians together) and also as part of their own circumstantial group. However, four individuals did not feel part of the whole group, and one not of his/her own circumstantial group. The participants felt moderately relaxed; 11 felt very relaxed, and eight felt somewhat not relaxed or not relaxed at all.

The majority of participants reported to have learnt lessons during the seminar. However, the experience of having learnt lessons varied much among the participants, which caused moderate overall scores. The lessons that the largest numbers of participants reported to have learnt are: learned new facts about the Middle East conflict, learned to say what is important to them and changed the way how they think/feel about the other groups. Moreover, half of all participants reported to see, more than before the seminar, that people from other national groups are also human being with emotions, pains and motivations.

Many participants (about one-third or half of all participants) reported that they have not learnt a particular lesson during the seminar that we (the organizers) had expected to be learnt; they may have reported this because they already had this knowledge/skill before the seminar, or the seminar had not taught this, or they had not improved this knowledge/skill during the seminar. The lessons most often reported to have not been learnt were: feeling less scared about the conflict, having learned why conflicts exist in the Middle East, seeing the stereotypes that they have of other people, and having learnt to speak with people that they usually do not speak with at home.

All participants concluded that this seminar was very useful for them and they were glad that they had been here. They said that seminars of this kind are in general important for people, and that the organization should continue organizing such seminars in the future.

The majority of participants had been thinking/feeling about what they could do to change the conflict, and to change their daily life at home. The majority wished to change how they live together with people from other national groups, when they return home after the seminar. Almost all of them would like to stay in contact with the people that they have met at this seminar, and would like to be involved in the organization of future seminars.

The answers about the changes during the seminar could be summarized by means of five factors<sup>3</sup>. First: the participants had learnt listening and speaking skills. Second: the participants had learnt new ideas and facts. Third: the participants had been thinking/feeling about the personal and national identity of themselves and of other people. Fourth: the participants had learnt to see other people as human beings, and related to that: to be less scared of other people. Fifth: the participants had been motivated during the seminar, and wished to change their daily lives after the seminar.

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1.

## 2.3. *Results in words*

We also asked the participants to evaluate the seminar in words, in answer to open questions. We did not perform formal qualitative/content analyses on these answers, but generally describe the most reported statements, as the reader may verify for him/herself by reading appendix table number 5.

The participants reported having learnt many lessons during the seminar, and spoke of being changed during the seminar. The most frequently reported messages/changes brought about by the seminar are:

1. seeing the other side of the conflict and understanding their perspective and motives more
2. personalizing/humanizing individuals from the other side more
3. communicating better, i.e. improving listening and speaking skills
4. seeing one's own position and responsibility in the conflict
5. seeing the position and responsibility of other groups in the conflict
6. developing more nuanced / less stereotypical images of individuals of other groups
7. resilience/continuing struggle for peace and equality for own group
8. seeing the complexity of the conflict
9. confirming some (stereotypical) images of other groups

We asked them what they want to do with their experience of the seminar when they are at home. Their most frequently answers are:

1. being more open towards other people in general
2. sharing experience with friends and relatives
3. communicating better with other people in general
4. continuing dialogue with individuals from the other side of the conflict

The participants mentioned good and bad elements in the seminars. The best elements of the seminar were according to the participants:

1. personal and small group meetings
2. whole group discussions

The worst elements were according to them:

1. discussion about the Cyprus conflict
2. late nights (and waking up early)
3. bad hotel facilities

Their answers to the question what should be changed in the seminar varied very much, which made drawing conclusions from these answers difficult.

All participants reported that they would advise other people to participate in future seminars, and mentioned that this seminar was important for them. Many of them would like to continue the seminar with follow-up projects/meetings/seminars, for instance via the internet.

## 2.4. Which activities caused which changes in the participants during the seminar?

The seminar consisted of many activities, and the organizers assumed that these activities would help the participants to develop themselves. The question is: which activities lead to which changes? We tried to predict the changes (described in 2.2.), by means of the meaningfulness of the activities (described in 2.1.)<sup>4</sup>

### *General evaluation*

The *theme of the seminar* contributed to the possibility of saying what is really important for the participants, to think about relationships, to experience the seminar as useful and important. *Small-group discussions* helped to think more during the seminar and being more motivated. *Whole-group discussions* helped participants to reflect on their relationships with other people and to experience the seminar as useful.

The meaning of all practical facilities was not significantly related to changes during the seminar. Exception was the *allocation of the rooms (i.e. an Israeli, a '67 Palestinian and a '48 Palestinian sharing a room)* caused participants to think less about their stereotypes, but changed their ideas/feelings/images of others less (possibly because their ideas/feelings/images were confirmed by their experiences with the other during sharing of the same room). These results are in contrast to our expectations that sharing rooms would help them to think less in stereotypes and change their ideas. This may have been caused by the fact that there is a large variation in the answers of the participants, for instance Israelis experienced the room allocation as better organized than Palestinians (see 2.5.). However, despite the fact that sharing rooms did not seem to be specifically effective, it was mainly experienced as meaningful and well organized by the participants.

In summary, the theme and discussions of the seminar fostered self-reflection and experiencing the seminar as useful and important. Remarkably, the discussions did not help in group bonding, learning communication skills and learning to see others from the perspective of their multiple roles as human-being.

### *Conditions*

*The general good atmosphere* helped the participants to meet other people in ways that they would/could normally not meet, to reflect more on how they could personally change conflicts, to feel part of their circumstantial group, and to think and do more in general during the seminar. *The openness to saying what participants wanted to say* helped them to think more about their

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<sup>4</sup> Statistically speaking: we used regression analyses in which we used one predictor and one predicted variable per analysis, because of the large number of variables and their multicollinearity. Predictors (X) were the variables described in 2.1.; predicted variables were variables in 2.2. We only report regression coefficients (i.e. standardized Beta's) with large effects (i.e. larger than .50), and which were significant ( $p < .01$ ). We speak about causal directions (that is: X predicts Y), but these are *assumed* causations, because we only have one measurement-moment, and we did not measure how participants changed over time and did not compare this with how they had been living before the seminar. The variable regarding 'feeling less about people from other groups' is not presented here, despite the fact that the results showed that participants felt significantly more scared (that is: felt less 'less scared') due to whole-group discussions, sharing rooms between Palestinians and Israelis, the general atmosphere and openness, group-to-group meetings of '48 and '67 Palestinians, and of Israelis with '67 Palestinians. These variables are not further described and used in the conclusions because the variation in the answers between the participants was very large, and large differences existed between subgroups; these regression analyses results seem to have been caused by outliers, that is: some individuals with extremely high scores; without these outliers, the predictions become non-significant. Because of outliers, we also deleted the relationship of the theme of the seminar that seemed to cause participants to think less of other people as human beings.

thoughts/feelings/images about others and to check their accuracy. *Safety, trust, respect, acceptance and equality between the participants* made the experience of the seminar more important and useful for them, caused more reflection on their own role in changing the conflict, helped them to feel part of the circumstantial group, to think more, and to be more motivated.

In summary, the conditions fostered group bonding and motivation during the seminar. Remarkably, the conditions did not cause better learning and communication skills, feeling relaxed and speaking more openly than at home.

#### *Leisure activities*

*Free time activities* caused in general doing more and being more motivated during the seminar. *Coffee/tea breaks* caused experiencing more emotions, doing more, being more motivated, learning to listen to others and experiencing the seminar as useful. The *hike* helped them to meet people in ways that they would/could normally not meet them. The *acquaintance game, football game, quiz night, presentation of plays, and farewell party* helped participants to speak more openly with people that they would/could not speak with at home, taught them to listen better, say what is really important to them, and change their ideas/feelings/images of others.

In summary, leisure activities fostered being involved more emotionally in the seminar, learning speaking/listening skills, and speaking with people that the participants would/could normally not speak with.

#### *Specific activities*

*The exercises about their own, general and group expectations* made the experience of the seminar more important, caused participants to think more, and reflect more on their own role in changing the conflict and how to change their daily lives, and caused more changes in their ideas/feelings/images of others. *Listening exercises* helped the participants to feel more part of the whole group. *Negotiation exercises* made the seminar more important for the participants, motivated them more and helped them to feel more part of the whole group and made the seminar useful for them. *Games of fears and trust* made the seminar feel more important and useful, helped them to listen better, evoked more emotions and gave the feeling of being part of the whole group; it also caused participants to look less at one's own responsibility in the conflict, and to change the ideas/feelings/images of themselves and others less. *The timeline exercise* helped them to realize their own victim-role more.

In summary, the specific activities caused group bonding, improved communication skills, reflection on one's own ideas and role in the conflict.

#### *Presentations*

*The presentation and discussion of films, and the cultural evenings* helped the participants to meet each other in ways that they would/could not meet each other at home, to experience the seminar as more important and useful, experience more feelings, learn to listen better, and reflect more on their relationships with other groups, and especially about one's own national identity and how others think about that. However, both also caused participants to think less about their own responsibility in the conflict (possibly because the focus in presentations was on the other group, who was presenting, and not on one's own group). Additionally, due to the Palestinian and Israeli cultural evenings, the participants felt more part of their own circumstantial group.

In summary, the presentations fostered improvement in communication skills, seeing other sides of the conflict, group bonding and self-reflection on one's relationships with others.

#### *Meetings*

*Group-to-group meetings* helped to change ideas/feelings/images about each other, to reflect about one's own national identity and how others look at it, experience more emotions during the seminar, see better the responsibility of others in the conflict, learn new facts, and caused participants to experience the seminar as more useful.

In summary, group-to-group meetings helped to reflect on the roles, identities and images that one has of oneself and of others.

## 2.5. Differences between groups

We examined whether different groups experienced the seminar significantly differently.<sup>5</sup>

*Older participants* experienced the theme as less meaningful, thought that the negotiation exercises were not organized well, were less active during the seminar, had learnt less to say what is really important to them, and were less motivated to stay in contact with the group after the seminar.

*Men* experienced whole-group meetings and speaking about expectations as less meaningful than women, and were motivated more to become involved in the organization of future seminars.

*More highly educated participants* evaluated the group-to-group meetings as more important than lower educated participants.

*Religious participants* evaluated safety and trust as more meaningful than non-religious participants, and *Jewish participants* evaluated the openness, safety and trust as more meaningful than other participants.

Compared with Palestinians, *Israeli participants* evaluated the room allocation as better organized, experienced facilities as less meaningful, felt less relaxed during the seminar, evaluated fears and trust games as less meaningful, and experienced the group-to-group meeting with '67 Palestinians as more meaningful. All games, plays and excursions were better organized and more meaningful according to them than to Palestinians. More than Palestinians, Israelis had changed their ideas/feelings/ideas about others, and had checked their accuracy. They had also learnt less to listen to others and to say what is really important to them. More than other Israelis and Palestinians, Jewish Israeli participants had experienced more that they could say things during the seminar that they could/would not say at home.

Compared with Israelis, *Palestinian participants* experienced the room allocation as less well organized, evaluated the facilities as more meaningful than Israelis, and evaluated the letter and fears and trust exercises as more meaningful. All games, plays and excursions were worse organized and less meaningful according to them than to Israeli participants. Compared to Israelis, they reported less changes in their ideas/feelings/images of others and more changes in their listening skills and telling others what is really important to them. More than other Palestinians and Israelis, '67 Palestinians reported that they had met people and could say things that they could/would normally not do at home, and evaluated respect as more meaningful. They also reported that the room allocation was organized well, experienced respect as less meaningful to them, reported fewer changes in the way they live their lives, and have learnt less about seeing their own responsibility in the conflict, and have learnt more to see others as human beings.

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<sup>5</sup> Differences were measured with t-tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests; relationships were measured with Spearman Rank-correlations.

### 3. Evaluation by organizers

The organizers of the seminar are overall satisfied with the conduct and the results of the seminar. The seminar was well organized, the participants were motivated and in general quite serious, the committee members worked very well together, and no big problems arose. We will mention a couple of points in more detail.

We held the seminar for the first time in the Palates Apartments Hotel in Droushia, Cyprus. A different hotel in the village of Droushia has been the location for the seminars many times before. Droushia is a quiet village, located ideally in the hills, not far from interesting places and the beach. Part of the hotel was brand new. Unfortunately, the facilities of the hotel were not as good as expected. The conference room was too small for our big group, there was not air-conditioning in every room, and the hotel owner was not flexible at all. This makes the hotel unsuitable for another seminar.

The work with the committee was very satisfying. There is a lot of experience within the committee, which they have already used for many years for the benefit of the seminars. The committee members all have an internal motivation to do something about the situation in Israel and Palestine. During the seminar, they stimulate their participants and try to support them emotionally. Within the committee, there was in the seminar of 2010 a very good atmosphere; the committee members can get along very well together. Participants noticed this: they said to the committee that it was giving the right example of how people from opposite sides in the conflict should behave towards each other.

Palestinian and Israeli participants have different expectations from this kind of seminar. In general we see that Palestinians come to persuade others, to change their ideas; they want to share their own opinions with the Israelis, let them know what the Israeli government is doing to the Palestinians and how bad and difficult daily life is for Palestinians. Israelis in general come to have an open dialogue. They want to be seen as individuals, not as representatives of their national group. In addition, they are more interested in finding solutions than in looking back at historic events. These different expectations are also evident in several studies of similar programs. The suppressor or the strong party in the conflict does not want to be seen as oppressor; the weak party or the oppressed in the conflict feels that finally he has the chance to tell 'the enemy' the truth. As a result of these different expectations, the Israeli participants sometimes feel that they are not heard and that it is impossible for them to talk with the Palestinian participants. Because the seminar of COME lasts long enough (10 or 11 days), there is time for development on both sides, for them to come closer together. We saw a shift in the way participants talked during the seminar. In the evaluation session, participants also say the length of the seminar is a positive element.

Previously, the seminar was often organized from a Tuesday until the Thursday of the following week. In this way, there is one weekend in the program, thus one Shabbat; this makes it easier for religious Jewish participants to participate. On Shabbat, there are various restrictions for them in their behavior. Due to personal circumstances, we decided to hold this year's seminar from Friday until Monday; this meant two weekends - including two Shabbats. We customized the order of activities (no hike on a Shabbat, no activity in which everyone has to write, no game where you have to create something: Jewish religious participants are not able to participate in this). The result of this for the program was a block of three days of introduction, personal acquaintance, a hike, a creative activity, and some other 'soft' activities. The participants soon asked us "when are we really going to start?" They were impatient to begin the discussions and to talk about what really matters to them. Fortunately, the committee members are flexible, thus on the third day we already made some useful adjustments in the program (including the omission of a creative exercise). For next year, we should make sure that there will be just one shabbat in the seminar.

During the seminar, we can see shifts in the behavior of people. Every day we started by sitting in a big circle. After the wake-up activities, the chairperson of the day explained in short the program for that day and he/she made important announcements. During every day, it happened a few times that we sit with the whole group in a large circle. In the first days, participants from the same circumstantial group often sat next to each other. During the week however, this changed. We noticed that more and more participants of different circumstantial groups were sitting together. This can mean that, as the seminar progresses, they feel more comfortable with each other.

At the end of each day, as a committee we sat together and evaluated briefly the past day, and discussed the program for the next day. Any problems, remarks or details, concerning the seminar, the participants or the committee members, are discussed in these committee meetings. This can range from a discussion that one of the members held with a participant, a problem with the hotel, an outburst of anger by a participant during the day, to certain feelings that developed within one circumstantial group. The committee discussed these and decided together what was the best thing to do. These meetings were good and useful.

On the last day of the seminar, participants shared what they had discovered in recent days and how they had experienced this. According to this evaluation session, the seminar was very useful for participants: to re-evaluate their views and to think about themselves and their opinions. Participants often reported that they evolved, but some also said that they went through a difficult and emotional journey. They called it a life-changing experience and very important for them.

In the evaluation session, we asked the participants to answer one or more of the questions: what was the best experience, what will you take from the seminar, and what did you learn? We sat in a circle and the participants took turns, so everyone got the opportunity to say something. One of the things that more people said was that personalization was very important: you hear human stories and you get personal relations. An Israeli participant said: "I am on a political level less hopeful, but I am more hopeful about the personal relations. I was not aware of the persons behind the other side. I notice a small shift in my political views." A Palestinian participant said: "I thought Israelis think that we are unequal creatures, but I changed my mind. This seminar stimulates me to work for more peaceful struggle."

Some participants made a remark about the seminar being emotionally hard. It was a tough journey for them; some of them see and hear things, which they see or hear for the first time and are difficult for them. This can be a film, a personal story, a conversation or a discussion. Or something else, for example, a Jewish Israeli participant said: "For me the most emotional event was the Palestinian cultural evening. It was very emotional to see that the games of their [Palestinian] childhood, which we played during the Palestinian cultural evening, are very similar to our games." As a committee, we have noticed this before, during small groups or big group discussions and personal meetings. In the evaluation meeting which will take place in November, we will discuss this further and think of ways to tackle this.

The overall feeling during the evaluation session was positive. Participants said it was an important experience for them and they were glad that they have participated. However, participants had different feelings about what the effect of the seminar will be on the longer term. An Israeli participant stated it like this: "I am grateful for this opportunity. I need to digest, to see if I am really changed." A '67 Palestinian said: "This seminar is very tricky. I did not want to like Israelis. But if you play with them, this happens: you like them. It takes so much effort to shut people up. I love to hate them. But it doesn't stay." Another Palestinian participant mentioned: "It was a long and emotional journey. In the letter to myself, I put a couple of questions. I was very cynical on the first day: what am I doing here? Now I feel that it is very important, I learned a lot. I did not change my opinions, but now I believe that dialogue is not bad. I believe we can change society from inside."

The committee was happy, but not surprised, by the positive evaluation session. During the seminar, this feeling was already manifesting itself to the organizers.

# 4. Conclusions

## 4.1. Summary for COME

Recently, the Dutch organizers of COME have formulated the purposes of the seminars<sup>6</sup>. The questions in the evaluation forms have been devised in line with these formulations (see table 4). Below, we summarize the results of this evaluation of the seminar by answering to what extent the seminar has fulfilled the purposes, conditions and method of COME.

### 4.1.1. Purposes

The general purpose of COME has been fulfilled, that is: a seminar has been organized, in which Israeli and Palestinian youth have been able to meet each other in the context of the conflict in the Middle East.

The six specific purposes also seem to have been fulfilled, according to the evaluations of the participants.

1. The seminar has offered participants a possibility to meet people from the other side of the conflict that they could/would normally not meet.

2. In contrast with the expectations of COME, participants did not experience this seminar as particularly teaching them to express ideas and feelings that they could/would not do at home. We hypothesize that this could be attributed to the fact that most participants had not *learnt* to express themselves freely, because they already felt free to express themselves at home; we have no more data to understand this finding; additional non-ambiguous questions should be added in the evaluation of future seminars.

3. A small majority of the participants said that they had also learnt to see people from other national groups more as human beings with emotions, pains and motivations.

4. The participants have seen and/or heard ideas, motivations and feelings of people from the other side of the conflict that they would/could normally not see.

5. The participants reported that they had been reflecting on themselves: a. they reported having reflected upon their ideas/feelings/images about themselves and about others; b. they had tested the ideas/feelings/images that they had of others; c. they had been thinking about their own national identity; d. they had been reflecting on the ways in which others think about their identity; e. they had been thinking about themselves as being both victim and responsible in the conflict, and about others as both being victim and responsible in the conflict; otherwise formulated, they had learnt to see others more as complete human beings instead of black-and-white enemies or heroes.

6. Many participants reported that they had been thinking how they could change their role in the conflict, and that they would like to change how they live together with people from other groups, and they would like to change their daily lives.

There is a hidden assumption in the purposes of COME. It is assumed that inner processes and changes are more fostered in Israelis and Palestinians, when they participate in seminars that merely focus on meeting, doing activities with each other and listening to the other side of the conflict, than when they participate in peace-seminars that focus on explicitly creating theoretical and/or political bridges and harmony. We have no data on other seminars with which to compare our seminar with, but our results suggest that ‘simply’ doing leisure activities together, giving presentations to each other and group-to-group meetings do indeed lead to changes (see 2.4.). Activities that were most in line with peace seminars - that is: the specific activities that we organized - also caused self-reflection and learning communication skills in

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<sup>6</sup> See document ‘doelstelling en methode van stichting COME’

participants, but these activities seemed almost as effective as the other activities during the seminar.

#### *4.1.2 Conditions*

COME has formulated several conditions under which the seminars have to be organized. The participants' evaluations seem to confirm that these conditions have been present, and are important in fostering self-reflection, group bonding and motivation in the participants. These conditions are: openness, respect, equality, being able to experience (and not deny) emotions, internal motivation, and relaxedness.

The seminar has been organized by the local committee members, who have used their own social networks to ask people to participate. The group was not 'as broad and a-selective as possible', as evidenced by the high educational level of the participants.

The absence of 'hidden agendas' and 'no pretence' have not been measured and can therefore not be evaluated.

#### *4.1.3 Method*

COME has formulated several methodic aspects of the seminar. The Dutch organization has facilitated the seminar, by organizing finances and the physical facilities of a hotel in Cyprus, where rooms have been shared between Israelis and Palestinians (despite the fact that sharing rooms did not seem to be specifically effective, it was mainly experienced as meaningful). Two Dutch coordinators have been present during the meetings to mediate when needed, and to make sure that the conditions were met.

The Israeli and Palestinian committee members have organized the content of the seminar together, and with the Dutch committee members they have evaluated each day as well as the development of the seminar. All participants have been speaking English, and have been informed about the purpose, content, conditions and method of the seminar. There have been acquaintance games, and several possibilities to learn to know each other personally. Several activities have been done together, both regarding the conflict (e.g. the negotiation game, fears and trust exercises) and free-time activities (e.g. football game, excursions). Factual knowledge has been shared with each other in discussions of the whole group, small groups, circumstantial groups and group-to-group meetings. There have been listening exercises, and national acquaintance activities such as cultural evenings and films. Political opinions have been shared during the discussions. Theoretical explanations and expertise have not been used very explicitly during the seminar, but participants have shared theories and facts with each other.

## *4.2. General conclusions*

In summary, this seminar fulfilled the expectations of the organizers regarding the purposes, conditions and method of COME. The participants had mainly evaluated the organization as good or excellent, and experienced most activities as meaningful to them. During the seminar, many inner processes and group processes were at work in the participants, and many of them reported that they had changed their opinions and feelings about the conflict during the seminar, and intended to change their role in the conflict and to change their daily lives at home. All participants had described the seminar as important and useful. A Jewish Israeli participant put it this way: "For me personally the seminar is very important, I am going back as a different person." A '48 Palestinian said: "This was a life changing experience. Everything starts with communication." Another Israeli participant put it like this: "It is a very important seminar. I want to believe that it will affect people's life. It is very important to have a follow-up meeting. I

have many questions. If we want to change reality, people should change their whole life, they should change themselves. I will go back with a lot of new motivation to do something.”

The organizers of the seminar are overall satisfied with the conduct and the results of the seminar. The seminar was well organized; no big problems arose. From our experience with the hotel (owner) and the remarks of the participants, we conclude that we are not going to the same hotel next year.

The committee members worked very well together. The atmosphere between them was positive, respectful and stimulating. There is a lot of experience within the committee, which the members use for the benefit of the seminars. During the seminar, the local committee members stimulate their participants and try to support them emotionally. The participants were motivated and in general quite serious. They participated actively in all the activities, were open to meet other people and met each other in a respectful way. Hearing and reading their evaluations, the only conclusion we can make is that we have to keep organizing these seminars, so more Palestinians and Israelis can have this experience.

### *4.3. Suggestions for future seminars*

After evaluating the seminar, we can make a list of 17 proposals for future seminars, which we have learnt from this seminar,

1. Overall the seminar seems to have been effective and useful; the evaluations of the participants do not give us reason to conduct fundamental changes to the program and the seminar.

2. For reasons mentioned in chapter 3, we will not go back to the same hotel. For future seminars, we will have to rethink the place where we hold the seminar (a hotel, a campsite, a hostel?), make sure the food is well organized for everyone (including the religious Jewish participants) and try to arrange better buses than this year.

3. The workshop about the Cyprus conflict has been evaluated by participants very diversely. Some think it is very useful, and some think it adds nothing to the seminar. We have to think if we still want to keep this in the program. If yes, then we have to program it in a different way to this year (not deleting the break after lunch), because the timing was specifically a problem for many participants.

4. The films should be prepared better by the committee members or participants, so during the seminar, there will be no technical problems with them.

5. The most meaningful activities (which were: circumstantial group meetings, hike to Lara Beach, films of the '67 and '48 Palestinians, personal appointments, listening exercises, history timeline, hot topics, Palestinian cultural evening and farewell party) we should leave in the program of the seminar.

6. Concerning the moderately or not meaningful activities (which were: the letter to oneself, preparation of the plays, introduction and discussion about the conflict in Cyprus and the football game), we should ask ourselves if it is useful to keep them in the program of the seminar.

7. Roughly speaking, all games were evaluated as (almost) equally meaningful. In future seminars, the organizers could select a smaller number of activities for each of these categories, while still keeping the seminar as a meaningful experience.

8. The program should include enough whole group discussions, which have to be balanced and alternated with small groups discussions and group-to-group meetings.

9. We have defined five different types of activities (see 2.2.2.). It is important to keep activities of each type in the program, especially the important groups: leisure activities, specific skills training activities and group-to-group meetings. Each one of these has proven to be effective in fulfilling the objectives of the seminar and of COME.

10. Emotionally the seminar seems to be quite hard for participants. We should think of a way to offer a possibility for them to unload their emotions. This could be by having a trust person present during the seminar. A trust person can be a psychologist for example; however, and as we have heard from the Palestinian committee members, Palestinians will not feel comfortable with this. Also, we could program a session for each participant with a committee member or create a 'peer-to-peer buddy system', to enable participants to talk about the emotional aspects of taking part in the seminar.

11. As mentioned in chapter 3, we should make sure there will be just one Shabbat day during the seminar.

12. We might arrange a session of evaluation halfway through the seminar, so possible problems can be taken into account.

13. The conditions of the seminar should always be maintained. The committee should be focused on this, and possibly we can give the conditions before the seminar to the participants, so they can abide by them.

14. Respect for religions is an important issue. Religious participants experience this as important for them.

15. The organizers should keep in mind that also less well educated people should be selected for participation; in addition, there should be a balance in the age of the participants.

16. Respect and equality should always be the basis for interaction. Consequently, it is possible that in some cases participants feel that they cannot always express themselves as they would wish. The organizers should be aware of this and should try to give them opportunities to unload their emotions and anger in another way (for example in a circumstantial group meeting or with people who have the same opinions).

17. The committee members could think about possibilities for organizing follow-up meetings or other possible ways in which participants may stay in contact with each other after the seminar.

## 5. Afterword and acknowledgements

We have a positive feeling about this years' seminar. As the organizing foundation, we can learn a lot from the evaluation of the seminar, to further develop and improve it. The positive results give us the motivation to continue to organize them. Participants see very clearly the benefits of participation in the seminar. A Palestinian participant put it like this: "The seminars are necessary. They propose encounter and dialogue with oneself and with the other, which are necessary and important steps on the long way to resolve this conflict."

We would like to take here the opportunity to thank the local committee members very much for the excellent job they did before, during and after the seminar. Without their motivation, experience and hard work the seminar would not have been as successful as it was.

It is only due to the financial aid of the supporters of the COME foundation, that it is possible to organize these seminars. We would like to thank them for this. This support is very much appreciated by the board of COME, by the committee members and last but not least, by the participants. Without this support, we would not be able to give the participants this important experience.

When on the last day we heard a '67 Palestinian participant say: "Thank you committee, for giving me the opportunity to meet in person - for the first time in my life - Israelis. Thank you Israelis, for treating me equally", then we are again deeply aware of the importance of this work, and the necessity that COME keeps organizing these seminars.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the participants, who contributed much to this seminar, and who were very much motivated to meet the other people in an open, respectful way and were keen to learn new perspectives and new skills.

Maaïke Hoffer  
Joël Vos

September 2010

# Appendices

## Program

### **Friday, 23 July 2010: welcome**

Chairperson: Maaïke and Iris

- 12.30 Arrival in the hotel
  - Division of the rooms
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Welcome
  - Practical issues
  - Acquaintance games
  - Write a letter to yourself
- 18.45 Leave to tavern
- 19.00 Welcome drink
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting

### **Saturday, 24 July 2010: listening**

Chairperson: Reut

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Acquaintance games
- 11.00 Coffee-tea break
- 11.15 Expectations: general, group
- 13.00 Lunch
  - Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Listening exercise: storyteller, observer, listener
- 18.30 Group meeting
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting

### **Sunday, 25 July 2010: hike to Lara beach**

Chairperson: Rawan

- 06.30 Waking up
- 07.00 Hike to Lara beach
- 14.00 Back to the hotel
- 18.00 Fears and trust
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting

### **Monday, 26 July 2010: Hot Topics**

Chairperson: Anton

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 History Timeline

- 11.15 Coffee-tea break
- 11.30 Conclusions History Timeline
- 12.00 Group meeting
- 13.00 Lunch
  - Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Hot topic (1)
- 18.00 Short break
- 18.15 Personal appointments (1)
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting

### **Tuesday, 27 July 2010: group-to-group**

Chairperson: Riad

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Preparation group-to-group meeting
- 11.00 Coffee-tea break
- 11.15 Group-to-group meeting ('48 Pal-Isr)
- 13.00 Lunch
  - Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Group-to-group meeting (Isr-'67)
- 18.00 Group-to-group meeting ('48-'67)
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting

### **Tuesday, 28 July 2010: Film**

Chairperson: Shadi

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Film ('67 Pal)
- 11.00 Coffee-tea break
- 11.15 Discussion about the film
- 12.15 Personal appointments (2)
- 13.00 Lunch
  - Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Hot topics (2)
- 18.00 Preparation Palestinian cultural evening
- 20.00 Dinner
- 20.30 COME committee meeting
- 21.30 Palestinian cultural evening

**Thursday, 29 July 2010: excursion to Paphos**

Chairperson: Reut

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Introduction of the plays
- 11.00 Departure to Paphos
- 19.00 Return to hotel
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting
- 22.00 Quiz night

**Friday, 30 July 2010: film**

Chairperson: Rawan

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Positioning game: questions yes/no
- 10.00 Film (Israeli)
- 11.00 Coffee-tea break
- 11.15 Discussion about film
- 12.00 Group meeting
- 13.00 Lunch
- Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Preparation of the play
- 18.00 Hot topic (3)
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 COME committee meeting
- 22.00 Hangout

**Saturday, 31 July 2010: Cyprus**

Chairperson: Zaki

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Negotiations game
- 11.00 Coffee-tea break
- 11.15 Discussion negotiations game
- 12.30 Preparation of the plays
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Conflict in Cyprus

- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Conflict in Cyprus, discussion in small groups
- 18.00 Preparation Israeli cultural evening
- 20.00 Dinner
- 21.00 Israeli cultural evening

**Sunday 1 August 2010: plays**

Chairperson: Riad

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Film ('48 Pal)
- 11.15 Coffee-tea break
- 11.30 Discussion about film
- 12.30 Personal appointment (3)
- 13.00 Lunch
- Free time
- 16.00 Coffee-tea break
- 16.15 Preparation of the plays
- 17.30 Presentation of the plays
- 18.30 Football game
- 20.00 Dinner
- 20.45 COME committee meeting
- 21.30 Farewell party

**Monday, 2 August 2010: evaluation**

Chairperson: Maaïke and Iris

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Wake-up activities
- 09.15 Letters
- Written evaluation
- 10.45 Pictures
- 11.15 Coffee-tea break
- 11.30 Oral evaluation
- Web
- 13.30 Check-out
- 14.00 Group meeting
- 15.00 Lunch
- 15.30 COME committee meeting
- 17.00 Departure

Table 1. Group characteristics

	Mean (sd)	Number (% of all)
Participants		
- Total number		28 (100%)
- Evaluation given to organizers		26 (93%)
Age	28 (6.6)	
Gender		
- Male		14 (56%)
- Female		11 (44%)
Highest education		
- No education		0
- Primary school		0
- Secondary school		2 (8%)
- Post-secondary school		1 (4%)
- University		22 (88%)
Actively religious		
- No		13 (51%)
- Muslim		3 (13%)
- Jewish		6 (24%)
- Christian		2 (8%)
- Druz		0
- Other		1 (4%)
Employment		
- Employed		20 (80%)
- Unemployed		0
- Student only		5 (20%)
- Raising children only		0
To which circumstantial group do you feel that you belong?		
- '48 Palestinian		6 (23%)
- '67 Palestinian		9 (35%)
- Jewish Israeli		7 (27%)
- Born-Israeli		1 (4%)
- Migrant-Israeli		0
- Other		3 (12%)

Table 2. General evaluation in numbers: organization and meaningfulness

	Activity	How good/bad was this organized? 1: excellent - 5: very bad			How meaningful was this to you? 1: absolutely meaningful - 5: absolutely not meaningful		
		Mean (sd)	N scores of 1/2	N scores of 4/5	Mean (sd)	N scores of 1/2	N scores of 4/5
<b>Practical issues of seminar</b>	Preparation before the seminar, by the committee members	1.7 (.7)	22	0	Not asked, because not applicable		
	Hotel Accommodation	2.1 (.8)	20	0			
	Food in the hotel	2.7 (.9)	12	5			
	Transportation	2.4 (1.4)	17	7			
	Organization	1.5 (.6)	25	0			
	Wake up activities	2.3 (1.2)	17	5			
	Facilitation by the committee members	1.4 (.5)	25	0	1.6 (.7)	21	0
	Free time activities (swimming pool, Paphos, etc.)	1.3 (.5)	24	0	1.4 (.7)	24	0
	Coffee-tea breaks	1.4 (.6)	25	0	1.6 (1.0)	18	1
	Division of the rooms	2.0 (1.0)	16	2	2.4 (1.1)	11	2
<b>Content of seminar</b>	Theme of the seminar	1.8 (.9)	21	1	2.2 (.9)	16	2
	Small group Discussions	1.6 (.6)	25	0	1.4 (.5)	25	0
	Whole group discussions	1.7 (.7)	22	0	1.9 (.9)	18	0
	Circumstantial group meetings	1.5 (.6)	25	0	1.4 (.7)	21	0
<b>Conditions of seminar</b>	General atmosphere in the seminar	1.8 (.7)	22	0	1.6 (.8)	24	1
	Openness to say what I want	1.5 (.6)	24	0	1.4 (.5)	24	0
	Safety and trust between people	1.9 (.7)	21	0	1.8 (1.1)	22	2
	Respect and acceptance between people	2.0 (.7)	20	0	1.9 (.8)	19	0
	Equality between people	1.7 (1.1)	23	2	1.7 (.7)	20	2

Table 3. Evaluation of specific activities in numbers: organization and meaningfulness

Date	Activity	How good/bad was this organized? 1: excellent - 5: very bad			How meaningful was this to you? 1: absolutely meaningful - 5: absolutely not meaningful		
		Mean (sd)	N scores of 1/2	N scores of 4/5	Mean (sd)	N scores of 1/2	N scores of 4/5
23 July	Acquaintance games	1.9 (1.0)	23	0	2.0 (1.4)	19	2
	Letter to yourself	2.0 (1.4)	19	4	2.6 (1.4)	15	8
24 July	Personal expectations	1.9 (1.2)	21	3	1.8 (1.1)	19	2
	General expectations	1.9 (1.3)	21	3	2.0 (1.0)	18	4
	Group expectations	1.9 (1.2)	22	3	1.8 (1.2)	19	3
	Listening exercises	1.5 (.9)	22	2	1.6 (.8)	20	0
25 July	Hike to Lara Beach	1.2 (.4)	25	0	1.3 (.6)	22	0
	Games of Fears and Trust	1.6 (.7)	22	0	1.8 (.8)	19	0
	Discussion about fears and trusts	1.6 (.9)	22	2	1.8 (.9)	20	1
26 July	History Timeline and discussion	1.6 (.6)	24	0	1.6 (.7)	24	0
	Hot Topics	1.8 (.7)	23	1	1.6 (.6)	23	0
	Personal appointments	1.5 (.7)	22	0	1.5 (.9)	21	1
27 July	Preparation of the group to group meeting	1.6 (.7)	22	0	1.8 (.8)	20	0
	Group to group meeting (Israelis – '48 Pal)	1.4 (.7)	15	0	1.3 (.5)	16	0
	Group to group meeting (Israelis – '67 Pal)	1.4 (.7)	18	0	1.7 (.8)	15	0
	Group to group meeting ('67 Pal – '48 Pal)	1.4 (.5)	16	0	1.3 (.5)	15	0
28 July	Film of the '67 Palestinians	1.4 (.8)	24	0	1.4 (.6)	22	1
	Discussion about the film of the '67 Pal.	1.4 (.6)	24	0	1.4 (.8)	24	1
	Palestinian cultural evening	1.2 (.4)	26	0	1.6 (1.0)	24	1
29 July	Introduction of the plays and theme of the seminar	2.0 (.9)	18	1	2.5 (1.1)	13	3
	Excursion to Paphos	1.4 (.6)	25	0	2.0 (1.4)	17	4
	Quiz night	1.2 (.6)	25	1	2.0 (1.4)	17	4
30 July	Positioning game: Questions yes / no	1.6 (.7)	22	0	1.77 (.7)	20	0

	Film of the Israelis	2.4 (1.3)	16	6	2.0 (1.1)	17	2
	Discussion about the film of the Israelis	1.9 (1.0)	20	2	1.9 (.9)	19	1
	Preparation of the plays	2.6 (1.1)	12	6	2.8 (1.2)	9	6
31 July	Negotiations game	1.7 (.8)	21	1	2.1 (.9)	19	2
	Discussion about the negotiation game	1.8 (.8)	22	1	2.2 (1.1)	17	2
	Introduction of the conflict in Cyprus	2.7 (1.5)	12	9	2.5 (1.4)	14	7
	Discussion in small groups about the conflict in Cyprus	3.1 (1.3)	10	10	3.2 (1.5)	10	11
	Israeli cultural evening	2.0 (1.0)	17	1	2.3 (1.3)	15	3
1 Aug	Film of the '48 Palestinians	1.2 (.5)	25	0	1.6 (1.0)	21	0
	Discussion about the film of the '48 Palestinians	1.5 (.9)	21	1	1.6 (.8)	20	0
	Presentation of plays	2.0 (1.1)	18	2	2.3 (1.2)	14	4
	Football game	1.9 (1.0)	16	2	2.8 (1.2)	9	5
	Farewell party	1.4 (.6)	23	0	1.5 (.7)	21	0

Table 4. General changes after the seminar

	Statement	How much do you agree? 1: completely agree – 5: completely disagree		
		Mean (sd)	N scores of 1/2	N scores of 4/5
<b>Unique-ness of seminar</b>	I have met people that I would/could never meet at home	2.1 (1.5)	19	6
	I have said ideas and feelings that I would/could never say at home	3.7 (1.5)	8	18
	I have said what is really important to me	1.9 (.7)	21	0
	I have met people from the other side of the conflict	1.5 (1.1)	22	2
	I have seen and/or heard the ideas, motivations and feelings of people from the other side of the conflict, that I would/could never see/hear at home	2.0 (1.5)	19	4
<b>Inner processes</b>	I have been thinking a lot	1.6 (1.0)	22	1
	I have dealt with a lot of emotions	1.9 (1.1)	20	3
	I have been doing a lot	1.8 (1.0)	21	2
	I was very motivated	1.9 (.8)	22	1

	I have been thinking/feeling a lot about myself	2.0 (1.4)	16	2
	I have been thinking/feeling about the ideas, feelings or images that I have of other people	2.0 (1.0)	17	1
	I have been thinking/feeling about my national identity and/or about the national group that I belong to	1.7 (1.1)	21	2
	I have been looking at the way how other people think/feel about my national identity	1.8 (1.1)	21	3
	I have been thinking/feeling about my stereotypes that I have of people	2.2 (1.2)	18	4
	I have been testing how accurate and true my feelings/ideas/images about other people are	2.2 (1.0)	18	3
	I have been thinking/feelings about my relationships with other people from other groups	1.8 (1.0)	21	2
	I have been thinking/feeling about how I am a victim of the conflicts between different groups in the Middle-East	2.1 (1.1)	18	2
	I have been thinking/feeling about how I am responsible in the conflicts between groups in the Middle-East	2.4 (1.4)	16	8
	I have been thinking/feeling about how other people are victims in the conflicts between groups in the Middle-East	2.0 (1.0)	18	3
	I have been thinking/feeling how other people are responsible for the conflicts between groups in the Middle-East	1.6 (1.0)	22	2
<b>Group process- Es</b>	I felt part of the whole group (Israelis and Palestinians)	2.3 (1.0)	22	4
	I felt part of my own circumstantial group	1.5 (.8)	23	1
	I felt relaxed	2.8 (1.1)	11	8
<b>Lessons learnt during the seminar</b>	I have learnt how to speak with people that I usually do not speak with at home	2.7 (1.4)	12	13
	I learned to listen to other people	2.5 (1.4)	15	7
	I learned to say what is important to me	2.4 (1.3)	17	4
	I learned new facts about the conflicts between groups in the Middle East	2.1 (1.0)	19	2
	I learned why there are conflicts between groups in the Middle East	3.2 (1.4)	9	15
	I have changed my ideas, feelings and/or images of other people	2.9 (1.1)	10	7
	I see now that I have many stereotypes of other people	3.2 (1.1)	8	13
	I feel less scared now about the conflict in the Middle East	4.1 (1.1)	3	20
	I feel less scared now to meet people from other national groups	2.9 (1.3)	11	6
	More than before the seminar, I can see now that people from other national groups are also human beings with emotions, pains and motivations	2.7 (1.2)	13	7
	I have changed how I think/feel about my own group	3.0 (1.5)	9	9
	I have changed how I think/feel about the other groups	2.7 (2.0)	14	7

<b>Conclusions about the meaning of the seminar</b>	This seminar was very useful to me	1.7 (.8)	22	1
	I am glad that I have been at this seminar	1.2 (.4)	26	0
	This kind of seminars is important	1.2 (.4)	26	0
	The organization should continue organizing this seminar in the future	1.2 (.4)	26	0
<b>Personal follow-up</b>	I have been thinking/feeling about what I could do/change in the conflicts between groups	1.9 (1.0)	21	3
	I have been thinking/feeling about how I can change my daily life at home	2.3 (1.5)	17	5
	I want to change how I live together with other people from other national groups, when I return home	2.4 (1.4)	16	5
	I would like to keep in contact with the people that I met here	1.2 (.5)	23	0
	I would like to be involved in the organization of future seminars	2.0 (1.2)	22	4

**Table 5. Answers to the open questions**

*What are the five most important experiences, lessons or messages that you will take home from this seminar? Describe them in such a way, that other people can understand it.*

**1<sup>st</sup> important experience/lesson/message**

In a democracy, citizens take responsibility for government actions.

Non-political: great to fill time with thought provoking activities.

See the other side as individuals with differences.

Be more tolerant.

Chance for negotiation is smaller than I thought.

Narrative of the other side is totally different than mine.

Palestinians have the right to live in a state and peace.

There are people of high quality in each group.

Together with the other side, we can work to change society and to end occupation.

We need to listen to the other side.

Never underestimate yourself.

I have learnt how to explain my perspective to others.

Listen more.

I am against suicide bombings, they are hurtful more than useful.

People should change themselves and then reality.

First step to resolve conflict is listening and knowing the other side's pain.

Hear story of the other side.

Meeting people from the other side.

People want to change, you just need to try.

Much less chance on agreement than I thought, now in favour of unilateral withdrawal from territories.

Israeli people are very different from each other.

Lesson to a people that you don't like.

Personalizing: knowing deeply people who suffer from occupation and discrimination in Israel.

Conversation with a settler demonstrated how dangerous settlers' ideology is.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> important experience/lesson/message**

Conflict must end soon or we are all doomed.

Jewish Zionist ideology is engraved in Israeli mind, it makes them blind for their governments 'bad doing'.

Having civilized discussions.

Improve communication.

My thoughts were one sided.

Reality of individuals is different from declarations and announcements.

'48 Palestinians are also suffering.

No need to create one community of Jews and Arabs.

Other side is ignorant of our struggle.

Some of other side will never change.

No solution for Israeli continuous violent attacks.

Reevaluate myself and my identity.

Understand the other.

Listen more than speak.

There is no such thing as human simple meeting.

Trust is needed to think about solution.

Understand what my country is doing/has done.

There are things we will never agree about.

Spectrum of society is wide and things might not be as simple as I sometimes tend to think.

Understanding of sensitivity in terminology for '48 Palestinians.

Some Israelis don't know about Palestinians and their life.

Learning more about the other group.

Feeling more motivations to be more active, to change.

Lesson: listening.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> important experience/lesson/message**

We have to find realistic solutions; it will not be just solution.

Less hope for a solution.

Being in neutral place, to disconnect from daily tensed reality.

Self-discipline and self-control.

Learned the other side's point of view.

Very complicated conflict, be more realistic about solving it.

Soldiers are humans.

Many people enjoy the same things.

Realization that '48 Palestinians are the same people.

Other side has different members with different way of thinking.

Not all Israelis are the same, but they all help their government.

Reconnect to my identity.

Be optimistic.

'48 Palestinians are milestone of Palestinian case.

Two states is the only real solution.

Taking responsibility and recognizing other side's suffering makes talking easier.

Get friends from the other side.

I learned important things about myself.

Think before you speak and let it not be emotional and factless.

Amazement how I saw that some Palestinians really feel that an Israeli Jew could not see him as equal.

I taught some of the Israelis about our life.

Peaceful resistance.

Israeli Arabs are part of Palestinian nation.

Meeting about the Cyprus conflict was educating and enlightening.

**4<sup>th</sup> important experience/lesson/message**

Great to talk to others in their own language.

I learned the emotional connection from the Israeli side with the land.

My people are hateful (but not me).

Special and meaningful to meet wonderful people.

Be more patriotic.

Changing situation will not go fast.

Normalization is not so bad if it leads to good change.

Other side may hurt you, and you him, without both of you knowing it.

Never have preconception.

Don't judge a person based on his way of thinking.

Be joyful.

Talk more to Israelis so they realize what effect their government has on my land.

Conflict is very complex, you have to see and know the other side and search for partners.

Meeting other people from my nationality.

Dealing with inner conflict.

There are great people at the other side, hand in hand a change can be made.

Being forced to confront personal issues of age and relationships with younger people.

'48 Palestinians have more information about Palestinian issue than '67 Palestinians.

'48 Palestinians are an integral part of Palestinian case.

A lot to learn from the Cyprus conflict.

Never lose hope or determination.

**5<sup>th</sup> important experience/lesson/message**

Knowledge, I don't blame the world any more for not knowing.

We can make a big difference.

Seeing needs of other group pays off.

It is okay to like people from the other side.

To solve the conflict changes must be made inside each society.

Conflict will not end unless the Israeli society changes, or with violence against the Israeli army.

Listen to the narrative of others, in order to widen my perspective.

Love life.

Israeli street is fractioned.

Show the other conflict side.

Understand how bad and complicated the situation is.

Listening is important, I learned to filter and give concrete reply.

People have different motivations to come to the seminar, but these broke down.

Liking Palestinian culture.

Circumstantial group whose members are all impressive and whose answers fit together in accordance.

*Have your ideas, feelings or images about other people changed? If yes, describe how these have changed.*

I didn't come with stereotypes.

Images became stronger.

No, but I've learned to accept them more.

I saw ideas about others, which I tend to ignore.

I still cannot describe it.

More open minded and aware of other sides believes. But opinions didn't change.

Education is important for all groups.  
Feelings about liking the other side changed. Ideas and views did not change.  
Not everyone of other side has the same way of thinking.  
I thought some people were politically conservative, but they were not.  
Some were blinded by media and they changed and saw the real image.  
I always thought Israeli soldiers are inhuman, now I realize that me and IDF are victims of same government.  
I didn't meet people from other side before, so it was very important to see that they are just like me.  
First I thought people just want to make statements, later I saw that most of the people want to hear and learn also.  
Some images towards people changed in positive way, the other side is motivated for development and is maturely aware.  
Appreciation of some and dislike for others, no matter if they are Palestinian or Israeli.  
I noticed a change in the Israeli group.  
I think Israelis are brainwashed, they have to learn more about their leaders and what they are doing.  
Deepening understanding.  
Feelings for this Israeli group stopped being hateful.  
My feeling about individuals changed, I look at human being of each one.  
My feelings about the conflict of '48 Palestinians changed.

*Have you changed your ideas, feelings or images of yourself? If yes, describe how these have changed.*

I was naive, ignoring the pain, living my life.  
I evaluated my life.  
Understand more why people do things.  
Make my mind about issues.  
Points of view changed, maybe myself as well.  
More aware and sensitive of situation and how it affects people.  
Think more about my people and surroundings.  
In my daily life, I don't connect to my identity.  
It was emphasized.  
Ideas has been emphasized.  
I am not sure any more what is right and wrong; I rethink again and again.  
My image about myself: I am much more open minded than I thought I would be.  
Milestone in my ongoing self-development process, it helped me understand some parts of my personality better.  
Image of me as left wing Zionist changed.  
Rethinking over-protectiveness of Israel and my justification of it; strengthening importance of acting towards change.  
Feelings about conflict are more confused.  
I went through inner struggles.  
Confused, I think I broke some of my principles.  
I feel that I belong to Palestine.  
All that I believed is now confusing me.

*How would you like to use your experiences from this seminar at home?*

Be more active.

I don't know.

Combine being clear in ideas and open minded, respectful.

Use skills to deal with 'wider' population of other group.

I don't know.

Share experience with family and friends.

Talking to people is not normalization.

Give other people chance to experience something similar.

I am not sure.

In my family: you need to think and listen to the other side before giving your opinion.

Teach people how to listen, how to not stereotype.

Try to work more on myself and people around me.

Listen more and learn more.

Advocate more for my case amongst Israeli citizens using discourse they would understand.

I started to write an article from my impressions.

Try to listen, understand, see the human in people, as a chance to change reality.

Tell friend and family; read more; keep thinking; join a website dealing with conflict.

Learn more; talk to people in my society; be more active about conflict.

Motivation and tools for interpersonal relations with people you don't agree with.

Use films; terminology; reexamine how we present Palestinian narrative; biggest challenge how I can integrate ideas and feelings in personal life.

I don't know yet.

To take things easier and to be relaxed.

Show films; working in bilingual school; donate to Adallah; be more serious in buying Pal products; learn which political party has the peace agenda I am looking for; spread these things among friends and family.

I learned many useful things for my work (as interpreter in dialogue groups) and for personal encounters.

*What was the best part of the seminar?*

Personal appointments.

Making '48 Palestinian friends, becoming a better speaker, learning things about myself.

Meeting new people, going into personal issues with them.

Forced to deal with hard issues.

Hike Lara beach.

Personal appointments and cultural evenings.

Films.

'48 Palestinian film (the Salt of the Sea).

Meeting and connecting between '48 and '67 Palestinians, changing significantly minds of some Israelis.

Personal appointments.

Group to group discussion.

Showing the other another narrative.

Hot topics, films.

Quiz night.

'67 Palestinian film (the Iron Wall), Palestinian cultural night.

Personal meetings.

Meeting wonderful people.

Combination of fun and important talking.

Meeting people and have a real conversation with them.  
When the groups started to mix and barriers between people became less.  
Small group discussions.  
Paphos.  
Small group discussions and personal appointments.  
Movies, personal meetings, cultural nights, small group discussions.  
Group discussions.

*What was the worst part of the seminar?*

Heat, lack of sleep  
Forced love between Israelis and Palestinians, but we go home to oppression.  
Shock of lying in negotiations, not thinking about general benefit.  
Many emotions can create heavy load, can create dilemmas.  
A bit too much, my brain was overloaded.  
Beginning: I was shocked about reaction of '67 Palestinians on me.  
Cyprus conflict, very tiring.  
Continuous talks.  
Dealing with emotions of hate and love towards the other side.  
Cyprus conflict.  
Tight schedule.  
9 hour wake-up after alcoholic night.  
Wake up, program full of activities.  
Conference room.  
Cyprus conflict.  
Conference room.  
Travel in bus, waking up at 8 o'clock.  
Cyprus conflict.  
Cyprus conflict: everyone was tired.  
First day, everyone was tired.  
Late night social stuff.  
Cyprus conflict.  
Discussion after '67 Palestinian film, the atmosphere then and the reaction from the Israelis.  
Non motivational theatre making.  
Hotel, no good facilities and the owner was awful.

*Would you advise your friends and/or relatives to participate in this seminar? Why yes? Or why not?*

Yes, it is important, a life changing experience.  
Yes, just the ones I trust to represent Palestine in strong way.  
Yes, it is clearing ideas and perspectives.  
Yes, a life changing experience.  
Yes, it is a very important experience; everyone should meet and talk with the other side.  
Yes, a unique personal experience.  
Yes, it is enjoyable, enriching, reevaluation of oneself.  
Yes, good experience for self-development.  
Yes, if they are open and patient and respectful to other side.  
Yes, great experience, they will learn much.  
Yes, it is a must.  
Yes, it is important to learn how Israelis think about the conflict.

Yes, very exciting.  
Yes, enriching to learn how counterpart thinks.  
For sure! Every blind Israeli should come here.  
Yes, if people care to change reality according to clear principles, not by erasing our pain.  
Yes, it is most important to every Israeli living in Israel.  
Some yes.  
Yes, it is a must, it helps you develop personally and teaches you a lot.  
Yes, important experience.  
Yes, it is a wonderful experience to meet other group and share many things.  
Yes, it really does make a difference in your own character and in others.  
Yes, it is very influential.  
Yes, it is an excellent frame for those who do not normally meet the other side, and extremely educating and empowering.

*What is your personal opinion about this kind of seminars?*

Important but not enough.  
Confusing. I am against normalization, but it is good to learn others' ideology and frame our struggle more clearly.  
Positive, they may change people from inside.  
Important as first step to a fair solution.  
Very advocating.  
The only active thing we can do.  
Good and important.  
Great initiative.  
Very good, ultimately beneficial.  
Really interesting, hope I can do it again.  
Great thing, it makes us do what we cannot do.  
Important way of improving the reality.  
Very important, but hopefully I also can organize it in my area.  
Useful, I encourage it.  
It should be held constantly, to bridge gap between Israelis and Palestinians.  
Important but also difficult, there should be continuation, 10 days is not enough.  
Important opportunity to listen and discuss the problematic issues.  
Very important.  
Very important, but not enough, it is the first step for me.  
Important, they give participants a wider perspective.  
Important, but not sure about the long term impact.  
I like these seminars.  
It is good, I hope it makes a difference in the way of thinking.  
Really important, but needs more seriousness and opportunity for activism planning, peace plans discussions.  
Necessary, encounter and dialogue with oneself and the other are important and necessary steps on the long way to resolving this conflict.

*According to your opinion, what should be added, deleted or emphasized in the program?*

More personal appointments and circumstantial group meetings.  
More really free time.  
Suggestions for future acts.  
'Where are you from'-activity: I feel sorry I didn't share my past story with group.  
More fun.

More activities away from hotel.  
Palestinian refugees group.  
Change the movies method to open discussion.  
More group meeting.  
More lectures from professionals.  
People from other nationalities.  
Palestinian refugees group.  
More free time and more group meetings.  
More time for narrative discussion.  
More values clarification triggers like films and yes/no.  
Schedule is great.  
Activism, practical peace talks and negotiations.  
A little less volume.  
Delete the fee, make a less tight schedule so people can focus more.  
Less talking.  
Delete one of the small group discussions.  
Less small group meetings.  
Delete the 150 euro fee.  
Delete the plays.  
Strengthen the theme or don't bother with it.  
Change the play activity.

*How can we give this seminar a follow-up, if needed or if wanted?*

I don't know.  
Whole group meeting, to see changes or not.  
Building joined projects together, educate people.  
Three day seminar after one or two years.  
Nice, but I don't know how.  
Something! Keep in contact and continue the process.  
Talk to people about this experience, help organize following seminars.  
Meet as a group.  
Follow-up is not needed.  
Group meeting inside Israel / Palestine.  
Facebook, website.  
Follow-up meeting in home country; communicate via emails.  
Follow-up is wanted to deepen experience so people can really change.  
Helping organizing, taking part as committee, convince people to participate.  
Group meeting somewhere next month; contact form.  
Some kind of follow-up, with our group.  
Follow-up for everyone to discuss how it was to go back to society and daily life.  
Something structured, but when and where, I don't know.  
I don't know.  
Follow-up meetings with group back home.  
Needed and wanted, I need to think what and how.  
Follow-up meeting, in Ramallah, Jerusalem or Beit Jalla?

*Do you have further remarks, comments, criticisms and positive or negative additions to your opinions?*

Well built; good; the plays were difficult; more emotional support.  
More detailed schedule before.

Thank you.

Thank you! Personally important, I am going back as a different person.

Too long until we finally started, it gave a tensed atmosphere.

Committee did a perfect job.

A lot of effort.

Thank you COME!

Go on committee, you are doing a great job.

Great program but too intense.

Thank you people.

Thank you for nice time.

I need to think about some opinions more deeply.

Thank you, I could see there was a lot of thinking behind everything; for me it was a pleasure and very difficult same time.

Keep good work up!

Really good methods and games, thank you very much!