

*A message from Robi Damelin, Parents Circle - Families Forum, Palestinian and Israeli Families for Reconciliation*

So many experts, so much violence, so much news, self-justification, blaming and death. Such tragic times bring out the fear mongers from all sides convincing us all that violence is the only way, in the belief that “we are right”.

How many more people need to die before we realize the need for compromise and a new way of acting? We cannot go on with the same old patterns leading to more and more violence which fuels up the conflict. We the bereaved families of this world can tell you that nothing, no need to be right, no proving of points, no piece of land, is worth the life of our children who are screaming out from their graves for us to stop the killing and insanity.

Yet, once again we have to ask, who will console the families of the dead and wounded? Who will convince them that their lives were worth losing because of decisions made by careless and unthinking leaders?

How long will it take until we understand that temporary security measures lead to long-term hatred and perpetuate the conflict? “Let’s impose blockades, let’s attack, let’s deprive people of freedom of movement”, we say to ourselves. Why can’t we understand that freedom of movement is a basic human right and depriving others of it will surely not lead to security? We cannot keep putting plasters on the wound. As the recent tragedy has shown once again, the solutions cannot be those which force us to take measures which will only end in more loss of blood and destroy all possibilities for reconciliation.

So let’s blame the Israelis, no, lets blame the peace-makers on the boats, no, lets blame the leaders. But who put them there ? Sorry, but the blame game just makes us feel better about ourselves so that we do not have to give up our national pride, or our allegiances, or our dogmatic attachment to ideas. But where is the contribution we can make to changing the situation and creating a more peaceful world?

Couldn’t we all for a moment in the midst of this madness just imagine the future of our children? Once they are grown, will they too have to be lowered onto the decks of ships in order to prove a point? Or will their leaders have a more generous and wise spirit and understand that violence begets violence? Will there be a spirit of compromise, leading to a safer future for us all?

And so, what can we all do, we are just citizens of the madness. I, for one believe that we must all take a stand and demand that the world leaders become involved, not in taking sides and blaming one side or the other, but in finding a way to put

an end to the violence and look for a lasting solution. Such a solution cannot be achieved merely through paper agreements. It must include a reconciliation process. Otherwise we will have another cease-fire and not peace.

We at the Parents Circle Families Forum have recognized from the depths of our pain and loss that there is no revenge for the loss of a loved one and that we, the Palestinians and Israelis in the group will work towards an understanding of the Other's needs which will in turn lead to a possibility for reconciliation and -- dare we use the word -- peace.

Robi Damelin, in the Name of David my beloved son who lost his life in the conflict.

Parents Circle - Families Forum

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