

Part II

IV) Connecting Palestinian Refugee and Exile Communities



We don't have any connections here with anyone.

(Participant, Youth meeting, Dammam, Saudi Arabia)

Connecting Palestinian Refugee and Exile Communities

1) Individual Connection and Institutional Links

I think it is important not to forget our brothers and sisters inside of 1948 Occupied Palestine because ultimately they are Palestinian too and this is another thing we need to keep in mind when we try to build connections. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).*

As for the relations between the refugees, it is important for us to strengthen the bonds between our camps in Syria and other refugees all over the world. *(Participant, Preparatory Workshop, Jaramana camp, Syria)*

I think that we have to try to keep the links alive and a way to do it is to encourage our children to build relationships with their second cousins in the Middle East. There is no magic solution to this problem but I think the key lies in these meetings. I think that there is a lot of value in educating our children about our roots; our feeling of belonging also counts and this feeling of belonging is in all of us, even without knowing each other many of us feel part of a common movement. *(Participant, Public meeting, Santiago, Chile)*

We suffer from the same thing; we don't have any connections here with anyone. *(Participant, Youth meeting, Dammam, Saudi Arabia)*

The Oslo agreement and its repercussions took the PLO to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and established an Authority that marginalized the PLO's role and paralyzed it and its institutions such as the popular federations. Another impact of Oslo was to dismiss the Right of Return. This is the cause of many of the fears over the Geneva Accords and its attempt to resettle the refugees permanently. There are attempts to crush the Right of Return, hence the emergence of committees in its defence. Yet the communication channels

established in exile up to this moment are not adequate so we demand better communication structures. *(Participant, Preparatory Workshop, Homs (A'ideen) camp, Syria)*

1) Individual Connection and Institutional Links

There could be a spirit of competition between different community organizations in terms of creativity and this could lead to really brilliant work. *(Participant, Youth meeting, Dammam, Saudi Arabia)*

Many from our camp, Baalbek (about 60%) and from the Al-Beqaa area emigrated to Denmark and Sweden. Now we have modern technology like the internet in every camp and we can communicate with our brothers through the internet via e-mail. We tell them about our situation and suffering, we are close to each other. We also see them when they come to visit us, because they are from the community and they will leave eventually. So we sit with them and tell them our concerns and they do the same. They can help us with our problems. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Wavel camp, Lebanon)*

The most difficult thing is being Palestinian and not being able to enter Palestine. This is the most difficult thing for me and this how I felt during my last visit to Palestine. People there are living a great tragedy that I can't describe. To give a simple example, our house is near the airport between the West Bank and Jerusalem, and my father's house is on the opposite side. The street is divided into two parts, one is the West Bank and the other is Jerusalem. I used to go from my father's house to my husband's in five minutes but now it would take five hours to get there. However, I can't visit because I am in the West

Bank and I can't enter if I don't have permission even though the house is on the same street. This is an example of the tragedy in Palestine. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Malmo, Sweden)*

Young Palestinians should go and visit their towns just like the Zionists do through their Birth Right program; after all, there a lot of Palestinians in the world with foreign citizenship. So why not plan visits to Yafa in an organised way and sponsor the youth to go back to their homeland?. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

There is little communication between the members of different Palestinian communities. It is sometimes limited to within families and between relatives through phone calls and visits from one country to another. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Ein el-Hilweh camp, Lebanon)*

I think the phone is the most important tool of communication. If one has relatives elsewhere, then there are the indirect communication channels such as the newspapers and the internet to find out about their news and the same applies to them. *(Participant, Syndicate Meeting, Amman, Jordan).*

What I understood from [participants] is that we should form delegations or committees, organise exchanges and activities and go to Palestine to meet with the people there. We can see how widows live and then convey these images to the people here. People living there can also visit us here. There should also be cultural exchanges like the ones our association arranges. Group of people from here can visit the camps with the goal of meeting the people who are living under the occupation in Palestine's camps so as to witness the violence and oppression being exercised against them. We here are also a community

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I) Individual Connection and Institutional Links

of Palestinian refugees, what is our vision and problems? I hope every one of will answer this question. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Malmo, Sweden)*

As for connections with Palestinians abroad, we should receive delegations from them in the camp, and educate them on the conditions in which Palestinian refugees live in, so that they could pressure their governments to donate money that would help us to rebuild our lives. *(Participant, Workers' meeting, Shatila camp, Lebanon)*

The other thing is exchange programs that [participant] was talking about. There are many exchange programs taking place but often informally or not very well organised, except for CEPAL which organizes something more regularly. I also think it is very important to support these efforts financially and organizationally and to build more regular communication between refugee communities and Palestinians everywhere. I should also mention that through 'Al-Awda' we have been in touch with communities and organizations working on Palestinians' Right of Return and the rights of Palestinians inside 1948 Occupied Palestine. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

There are mechanisms for activating various things. Delegations are prevented from visiting each other, although this is the most important communication means between the communities, allowing them to study each other's work. When the Palestinian organizations are activated, there would be some sort of healthy competition. *(Participant, Youth meeting, Dammam, Saudi Arabia)*

There are many means of communication including the internet. There are also the visits, phone calls and contacts made which is all communication. *(Participant, Public meeting, Malmo, Sweden)*

I don't think we have the mechanisms that exist for us, to communicate with other Palestinian communities as one community. As an individual I have personally communicated with so many different organizations that come from the Palestinian refugee camps or Palestinian Labour Unions but as a community we don't have these mechanisms and I think we should think about taking concrete steps or building a mechanism as a Palestinian community in Canada. In *Al-Shatat* we should have these mechanisms but we don't. Palestine House should take the lead if they are interested in developing the local community's communication with the Palestinian community at large. That's one of our major shortcomings, the absence of these mechanisms. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

Existing relations [between the Palestinian community in Barcelona and those in Palestine] are a result of many years of communication. Everyone knows each other, and the relationship between Palestinians in Barcelona, Spain and Palestinians in Palestine still exists because we all have, one way or another friends in Palestine, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, or the 48 territories. There is communication through individual relationships; relations that are not within political or union structures. Palestinians who went to Spain or the UK to work or study still has friends in Palestine and Palestinians wherever they are establish relationships with each other. Now I think that strengthening these relationships and organizing them within a certain structure is very important, otherwise those who live in *Al-Shatat* shall remain in *Al-Shatat*. The frustration that the Palestinians in general feel has affected Palestinians inside and outside Palestine like brother [participant] said. In the past, there were Palestinian organizations in Barcelona. It is very hard for us, as Palestinians, to

work without organizations. *(Participant, Public meeting, Barcelona, Spain)*

Communication between Palestinian communities can be achieved through direct contact or the internet. Direct contact can be made by enhancing our Palestinian institutions, like the PLO, and contacting the Palestinian gatherings all over the world through indirect meetings. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Thessalonica, Greece)*

For example, I have read in many articles, or on the internet, that in all European countries there are groups who work for the Right of Return. They hold conferences and seminars. But this work is individual, people in different countries work separately from each other. I would also like to stress that you are, through your study of this issue in a better position than us to call for, for example, the uniting of these different efforts between each country. *(Participant, Public meeting, Malmo, Sweden)*

In Stockholm we communicate with Palestinians beyond Sweden. We have communication with Finland and London, through Palestinian associations. *(Participant, Public meeting, Stockholm, Sweden)*

The role of the community should be established and everyone should agree on this. For example, the Palestinian community in Dammam at least communicated with communities in Riyadh, Qatar, Bahrain and even Europe. They achieved this by agreeing on certain mechanisms of communication and on accomplishing certain political goals. *(Participant, Youth meeting, Dammam, Saudi Arabia)*

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1) Individual Connection and Institutional Links

I suggest that there is coordination between the community and the popular federations so as to hold a Palestinian popular conference and organize the Palestinian communities in Italy. A discussion of this is under way in Italy and it is supposed to bear fruit within the coming period. It is necessary to communicate within Italy and contact other areas in Europe and Palestine through the existing institutions, there are some difficulties but we are trying to overcome them. For example, I know that the Palestinian community in England is strong but I don't think that they have an engineers' union but there are engineers' unions in other areas like Germany and I think that unions can exchange experiences. The idea of the Palestinian Popular Conference in Italy and contacting Palestinians across Europe and Palestine is a means of building the community. Through the PLO?

Unfortunately we haven't reached an understanding with the representatives here, and we hope to overcome this problem because we all recognize the PLO as the only legitimate representative in Italy. There have been a number of popular activities conducted by the federations and based on the Palestinian political situation and perspective; there are political and cultural activities amongst Palestinians in Italy levels. Of course the number of participants differs according to the social and cultural conditions. *(Participant, Public meeting, Padua, Italy).*

Channels of communication should be organized. The Refugees Affairs Department, which organizes the PLO in the camps should be activated. There are many shared concerns and problems between the Palestinian camps. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Beirut, Lebanon)*

We need to have representatives in every community across the world, so that we can find out what is happening with Palestinians such as those in Iraq, that's an incredible situation that nobody is even addressing. *(Participant, Public meeting, Detroit, Michigan, United States)*

We need to improve our ability to communicate with the national community. Our representative here is the PLO which comes from the organizations with which we can communicate. Through Fateh and in particular the active students' office of Fateh, we can communicate with the different organizations in Lebanon. At the local level, we communicate through the popular committees in every camp by holding international and local meetings every two months. *(Participant, Students' meeting, Rashidieh camp, Lebanon)*

We have a big problem, I don't want to go into details but in short, the process of communication ought to go through the proper channels and the community should communicate through the Palestinian representative in Spain. But unfortunately, Palestinian representatives in Spain and Europe have become negligent and the consulate doesn't really care about the people and communities living inside Palestine. Sometimes, when we need something from the home country, we are obliged, as individuals and as communities; to call the PA or the PLO, yet this isn't right. There is no cooperation. *(Participant, Public meeting, Barcelona, Spain)*

I suggest forming a general association of Palestinian refugees all over the world based on their locations, through the PLO. Everybody has agreed in this meeting that representation would be to a general association which would elect a higher committee that can define an internal

system with the mission of conducting research on Palestinian refugees throughout the world. Secondly, I suggest that we communicate with the refugees all over the world. Thirdly, by achieving representation of all the Palestinian refugees we can construct a comprehensive vision and platform that everyone is agreed upon. This is the view of Palestinian refugees and we don't recognize any suggestion that does not entail our return to Palestine. Thank you. *(Participant, Public meeting, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates)*

Concerning the structures within the community and communication through the institutions, there is communication between the General Union of Palestinian Women and the General Union of Palestinian Students across the different camps and this could be furthered through workshops, events on national anniversaries, and exhibitions. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Ein el-Hilweh camp, Lebanon)*

We should have organizations for Palestinian professors, film makers, musicians, etc so we can build professional networks. This is something we could do over the internet but it would be really good if the word was spread amongst Palestinian communities. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

An international conference for the Union of Doctors and Pharmacists was held in Cairo, Egypt. They asked us to send two Union members in Germany, the chief and the deputy-chief, to participate in the conference as part of the Palestinian delegation. But six of us went and after some discussion those six were accepted as delegates to the conference. We were the biggest delegation at the conference and so were successful in passing our policies. For example, how to recognize certificates, how to hold scientific conferences and guidelines on how to conduct

scientific research. This institution is a successful one and its work is prominent here. It has established enough projects in Gaza Strip and the West Bank to prove its value to people and have a strong enough voice to be heard, even its reports are taken into consideration by the legislative council. Its letters to the legislative council are read to the council, and we receive responses from many different organisations.

So if your organisation is successful in the country in which it operates it will be influential both at home and in the Palestinian Authority and PLO. A powerful organisation that is strong at every level can be successful in furthering its aims and demands through the Palestinian National Authority and even the PLO. *(Participant, Syndicate Meeting, Berlin, Germany)*

I think student groups have been really vital in communication between Palestinians in my experience. We have the Arab Student Collective and there is an Arab group at [University of] Western [Ontario], just having a student presence is important in itself too. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

I think that communication between Palestinian communities can be achieved through reactivating the role of the unions and other civic institutions, which in turn means reactivating the students' role within certain structures. Students, workers and women should meet amongst themselves so that afterwards general follow up conferences can be held. For example, they can, say every six months, discuss any new events or ideas through cultural camps. *(Participant, Students' meeting, Nahr el-Bared camp, Lebanon)*

I think Badil in Bethlehem is a civic structure that could operate as a means of communication

between refugee communities, with the civic structure here working in partnership with it. A partnership between Al-Awda in Canada and Badil could build communication and champion the rights of refugees in *Al-Shatat* or Palestine. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

I really think that communication between here and the Palestinian territories is weak and I think we can definitely strengthen it by being more involved with our government here. Our government is the most able to change things in Palestine, whether in the refugee camps or the Occupied Territories. This is from the perspective of a second generation American born Palestinian, that's the way I see it at least. *(Participant, Public meeting, Chicago, Illinois, United States)*

2) Collective Work

There is nothing to prevent you, while you are living here in Denmark from supporting Palestinian camps in Arab countries and in Palestine. We, in Denmark, must organize so we can help other Palestinian communities in *Al-Shatat* as much as we can, while also supporting those in Palestine. If our government or any other cannot not help us, why don't we help each other? This is one aim of the project. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Hillerod, Denmark)*

a. Forms of Support

What are needed are structures and mechanisms that would allow us to communicate with each other. These mechanisms and structures should of course be already built on an established political base that expresses our interests, goals, and aspirations. The issue here is to be able to impose our demands on the European Union, or at least to be able to tell Europe and other international

institutions that you can't ignore us, that we exist, and this is our path and our aspirations. That we have a program, that we feel powerful within these frameworks and structures, and that the European Union and European society are both inconsistent in their approach to us. I am focusing on European society simply because neither Egypt nor Jordan or Saudi Arabia are at the centre of political decision-making. The centres of political decision are America and Europe. Now, whether we like it or not, this is the truth. So we ought to become a pressure group in the different nations of Europe in order to influence the decision-makers and in the PLO through insisting upon the fundamentals. *(Participant, Public meeting, Malmo, Sweden)*

We don't care about this project; it is a matter of interest to the refugees in the camps. My job is to support them, and we are ready to give support, and we are willing to explain, through the Palestinian Embassy, the difficult conditions in which the refugees live. As for me, if they offered me a villa in Lebanon, I wouldn't live in it more than one month, also if they offered me a villa in Saudi Arabia, I would refuse it, why? Because I live comfortably in Denmark. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Hillerod, Denmark)*

To serve Palestinians in Palestine and the neighbouring countries, those of us in Europe and Canada should, as Palestinians, collect donations and send them to our people in the camps to help them at least with the hardships they face daily. *(Participant, Public meeting, Montreal, Canada)*

I am not a member of the administrative body of the Union of Palestinian Physicians and Pharmacists. This institution hasn't worked with the PA institutions but with Palestinian civic organisations in Bethlehem and Ramallah. Some

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2) Collective Work a. Forms of Support

It is important that Palestinian organizations internationally support Palestinian universities and the educational infrastructure, through groups such as 'Friends of Al-Najah' or 'Friends of Birzeit'. We should have international coordination to help support these institutions and that can't be done in Canada alone. We should try to raise money from the United States and South America - where there are very rich Palestinian communities - they could actually work to develop our universities. .
(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)

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2) Collective Work

b. Solidarity Initiatives and Projects

There was a time when the people living in this shelter couldn't afford to pay their electricity bills so students from inside Palestine volunteered to pay them. This was possible because there was good communication between inside and outside Palestine. (Participant, Syndicate meeting, Hurriya shelter, Baghdad, Iraq)

time ago, several organisations in Bethlehem and Beit Sahur warned that the Israelis want to completely destroy Palestinian traditions, and they asked for financial support to face this Israeli attack, and a delegation from this institution went and gave them four thousand euros. Also, the federation has granted another four thousand euro to associations for the disabled. In addition, the medical delegation has conducted about 500 surgical operations for Palestinian patients in these cities, with a complete program for the medical treatment. (Participant, Syndicate Meeting, Berlin, Germany).

The question is how to communicate? You assumed that we have the means to, but what are they? There are organisations working to build links between Palestinians. For example, I am a member of a program called "From Family to Family" whereby families here adopt families in Palestine by donating 100 dollars a month. We can do this as a Palestinian community in Greece. It isn't really necessary to contact individual people, we can go through institutions. I went to Al-Bireh Association and asked them for some materials in order to organize a bazaar for them. When we form a committee, it will liaise with the Al-Bireh Association. It's difficult to contact individuals, so we should engage with established institutions. (Participant, Women's meeting, Athens, Greece)

I think we should have structures here that reflect our different circumstances. As a Palestinian in Canada my main concerns are not economic, but I may want to give financial support to Palestinians in exile. I think a lot of us here would like to provide such support but are discouraged by the lack of transparency. So we demand to have transparency reports issued by the various Palestinian social solidarity organisations. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).

The Kind Hearts fundraiser is one means of communication between Palestinians here and Palestinians in Palestine that I've noticed. I think it's a great fundraiser; it was a way for me in the US to donate to Palestinians in refugee camps, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (Participant, Public meeting, Chicago, Illinois, United States)

I can assure you that there are people who donate money. There is a Palestinian family living in Al-Thalia I know of which is very poor. I went to see them personally and they said that they were in need of 8000-10000 Saudi Riyals. The children dropped out of school because their father left them, and they don't have residency status. We contacted someone who we thought might be able to help them and he said that he would once he was satisfied that this was the amount they really needed. There are people who are willing to donate money but there needs to be trust. (Participant, Public meeting, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia)

I think that vigorous advocacy within our community would be the strongest way of supporting Palestine. Giving to charities is also extremely important but supporting things like hospitals and sending food should be the minimum we do because to me, these things are bare essentials for survival. (Participant, Public meeting, Chicago, Illinois, United States)

b. Solidarity Initiatives and Projects

They could at least hold events that remind people of Palestinian refugees who live here and inside Palestine. There should be festivals and celebrations to remember the refugees and to strengthen the relationship between Palestinian people in Al-Shatat and in Palestine. (Participant, Students' meeting, Wavel Camp, Lebanon).

We should encourage Palestinian students to engage in exchange programs, and highlight the importance of establishing connections with Palestinian universities and university students in Palestine. Supporting campaigns like Birzeit's University's 'Right to Education' campaign is something we can do on campus and a way of supporting people back home. . (Participant, Students' meeting, Sydney, Australia)

I don't know, but there are various ideas on how to connect with Palestinian refugee communities, but work could be done inside Palestine and the camps. Sometimes people in the activist community or the student movement in Canada, sometimes they spend a lot time- which is good- doing leaflets or fact sheets. Maybe we can delegate these tasks to our families back in the refugee camps. People there could design courses for us; they could develop curricula to help teach Arabic here. This could help provide employment in Lebanon's camps for example. You don't have to be in Canada to create a curriculum or booklet to help in teaching Arabic or such things. We have to think about this matter in terms of creating jobs inside the camps while developing our capacities. People there are actually help us immensely and we can support them financially. So when we talk about programs in terms of Arabic language or history of Palestine or different other things cultural things whether its tatriz [embroidery] or dabka [Palestinian traditional dancing] or singing or preserving our oral history these things can be done with groups in refugee camps so that we can create something for them. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).

We can communicate with migrant Palestinians through the internet. We should establish relations with the Palestinians abroad and write to them

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2) Collective Work b. Solidarity Initiatives and Projects

about the help we need in order to implement our projects. We are living in a very difficult situation and they should help us raise our living standards. (Participant, Public Meeting, Beirut, Lebanon)

The Palestinians who live in Europe have a responsibility to organize demonstrations and support Palestinians living in the Arab countries financially and morally in order to help them to return to Palestine. Also, the Palestinians in Europe must support the Palestinian Embassies here so they can effectively represent us. (Participant, Public Meeting, Hillerod, Denmark).

Before we contact people in Europe, we should first contact our people who are in Palestine who don't know anything about us. They say that the most miserable camps are in Gaza so we should make contact with refugees there and establish a close relationship with our people, one should go to her brother for help before her neighbour. Of course we know that things aren't achieved through talking or through a political. We urgently need to seek help from our brothers before we can turn to other people, after that we can address others through satellite channels. . (Participant, Women's meeting, Burj el-Barajneh, Lebanon)

We should create a library of all the martyrs of the Palestinian cause. We don't actually have our own Palestinian Calendar, we are forced to celebrate all the Canadian martyrs from World War One but we should celebrate our own martyrs and other people who serve the cause. For example when I was in Lebanon we used to celebrate teachers on certain days, maybe we can

hold a regular Palestinian Teachers Day which can be celebrated world wide. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).

There are millions of problems inside Palestine and we, who are living here in much better conditions than Palestinians inside Palestine can help with our voices by speaking out in support of the Palestinians living there, this is the most important

I think that [participant]'s idea is good as well because we need to have a way of having a constant link as opposed to the casual ones we have now. At the moment, when we want to support something in Palestine it's usually aid oriented, sort of casual and lacking in direction. For example, the case of the ambulances that were sent from Toronto when the Intifada first broke out which I think are still waiting at the port in 'Aqaba in Jordan. They never got to Palestine because they were not allowed in by customs, nobody had checked for that possibility. First of all I think we should drop the idea that the only way we can support Palestine is through aid because political support is a very important and necessary thing to do. I felt we made a step in that direction when we supported political prisoners and it would be good if we extended political action to other issues. This needs to be looked into. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)

thing. For example, we can sign petitions on the internet for the release of a prisoner. We must participate effectively and seriously and we must be faster. We are too slow to do anything; it takes months for us to hold a conference and days to say anything. We must find the motivation within ourselves and become more effective. . (Participant, Public meeting, London, United Kingdom)

So many Palestinians are struggling around the world and before anything can be achieved they need to establish their own organizations in their own cities, like we have all over the United States. We should have somebody who would volunteer to arrange committees because Palestinians in Palestine are depending on what we do here. They are the ones who are being killed, the ones with children killed in their own schools. They are

just concerned about the effects of war but there is no war here, we live happily with no worries. Life is decent here for Palestinians, so we should create a good, strong supportive organization because they need us more than anyone else. They should have people they can turn to. Every community in Palestine communicate to us because in America nobody knows anything about what is going on, there is just Al-Jazeera. The United States is trying to stop them from telling the truth about the situation, people here just don't have a clue about what is going on. Before we can do anything here our organizations need to be strengthened so we can work as much as possible for people in Palestine. (Participant, Public meeting, Detroit, Michigan, United States)

We should discuss compiling a book that lists all the publications from Palestine, which includes a record of where they were printed. There could also be a book of every publishing house in Palestine to encourage people working in this field. We need to create Palestinian trade directories and lists of teachers and martyrs, for example. This creates a buzz in the community and builds communication between people in Al-Shatat and elsewhere. We need to decide how to organise all these things – whether they

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2) Collective Work

b. Solidarity Initiatives and Projects

would be done centrally or locally. There used to exist something through which we can work and address necessities, which is how we built the PLO, for example. So this would create a buzz of communication that could produce something. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).*

We can gather old books on World Book Day and send them to a camp in Lebanon for example, and we can do the same with the toys. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Athens, Greece)*

We should compile a really good archive of all the films made about Palestine made by Palestinians. That way we could have a catalogue of the films out there and what they are about which people all around the world can have access to. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).*

Concerning the Palestinian people in Lebanon, we suggest first that conferences and meetings for the camps' residents are held. The location of these conferences is not important, the essential point is for Palestinians to come together and obtain information about the camps. The refugee camps in Lebanon have been divided since we came from Palestine. We came from different cities in Palestine; Haifa, Yafa, Tabaria, Akka, Luby, and Frada and we went to Ein el-Hilweh camp but then we had to go to different places. We still have the same mentality. We are supposed to be one nation with one mindset but we all suffered from emigration. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Wavel camp, Lebanon)*

This is a suggestion. We should call for a European conference in which all Palestinian communities can participate. That project would have to be mobilised for in an active and timely manner. This

will ensure communication between communities. For, although individual work can lead to good results, we need to have a large conference so that the Palestinian community would be heard in its entirety and that way the community can interact effectively with the project. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark).*

We should engage with the different communities and organisations. They should include the factions and the PLO institutions in Palestine, the labour and doctor federations, conferences that are being held abroad by the International Labour Organization and the Right of Return meetings that are being also held in Europe. We should meet on the basis of trust and cooperation to confront the issues we face and also discuss the problems in Lebanon. Communication between the different communities can be conducted through visits and via the internet. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Wavel Camp, Lebanon).*

A conference was held two years ago in Brussels about International Women's Day and they wanted people to speak. But the Israelis prevented the two speakers, Al-Amiry and Ashrawi from attending. Although it was very far away, I was lucky and managed to go. I ran into a woman there I know from Paris and I asked her if she came here in the same way I did and she said that she only knew she could attend at the last minute. We were both sitting alone, while two Israeli women took questions from people representing several Israeli organizations from all over Europe. They led the conference while there were no Palestinians there to represent us, even the Palestinians in Brussels didn't know about the conference. There is something missing in our communication with each other. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Athens, Greece)*

We should set up an international summer camp for Palestinian children. It would provide an opportunity for children from different Palestinian communities to come together. It could start with at least one in each continent if it's too difficult for children to travel from one country to another. In North America for example there should be a place for Palestinian children to interact and build relationships and that could be done through coordination between different refugee communities. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

We want to communicate with all of the Palestinian communities in Europe, especially with our community in neighbouring Sweden. We would like to organise exchanges between our children, the generation of the future here and the Palestinian children in Sweden. During this communication process we can exchange our thoughts and benefit from each other's. If there isn't a communication procedure and an elected committee in every region, it will be impossible for us to talk about anything. *(Participant, Syndicate Meeting, Hillerod, Denmark).*

What about Palestine programs and summer camps that are run annually by many different organizations? Some are even part funded by the EU for Palestinians living in Europe; we should look at establishing programs like these to send Palestinian youth here to experience Palestine and learn more about the struggle by visiting the homeland. *(Participant, Students' meeting, Sydney, Australia)*

There should be regular contact with the Arab communities abroad, I mean by that the broad range of Palestinian communities so that our voice is heard by them and so that they know what is happening. Another basic demand is for twinning between Palestinians inside and outside

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2) Collective Work

c. Media, Internet, and Databases

Palestine in order to solve and study the current issues. For example, there are the elections and reforms which are being conducted in the Palestinian Authority. Sometimes we consider that we can play an important role and we must participate. Other times, we think that we should not participate. We also demand the activation of these institutions so as to convey our opinion and point of view to people inside Palestine and for people there to inform us of what is happening so that we can take on our responsibilities as a Palestinian people. Finally, we demand twinning meetings between communities. These are the issues we are raising and whoever has an opinion which they want to voice is welcome to do that. There is also the involvement of the media which should be big. The media has a role in Beirut camps where it highlights the social and security issues. (Participant, Women's meeting, Beddawi camp, Lebanon)

The twinning idea is wonderful but I don't think that twinning should be between the municipality of the city of Toronto and another refugee population, I think it should be between the Shatat community itself here and other Palestinian exile communities, apart from the government of Canada or the structures of authority that we have here. For example we could have a sort of scholarship fund here that could help other Palestinians from another community and vice versa, or women's groups here that support women's groups somewhere else in *Al-Shatat*. I don't think that the government of Canada should be involved in any kind of way in solidarity or communication between Palestinian exile communities. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)

There is also the issue of establishing communication between Palestinian communities. A study in Britain which categorises the different

Palestinian communities in Europe along with their qualifications and academic backgrounds found that the Scandinavian countries had the biggest share of illiterate Palestinian labour, which is reflected in their different forms of employment, their contributions to the Palestinian cause and their degree of awareness. This doesn't mean that we don't have educated people. There are educated people and university graduates but not as many as in Britain, for example. There are fewer and they don't cooperate with each other. I just want to give you an idea of how to build communication between this community in Sweden and the other communities. As you said, this can be done through newspapers and radio channels or both. I consider myself educated but the twinning thing is beyond my capabilities, I don't have the technical capability to find ways for twinning. (Participant, Public meeting, Uppsala, Sweden)

Sometimes there is twinning between two countries or two cities and they have cultural, social, or sport exchanges. For example, a delegation from here would go there every year to communicate and establish better relations with them. What do you think of this? Is implementing it in a certain city or camp in Palestine or any other area a good thing?

The problem with this is that we can't do anything without the approval of our parents and they're always afraid and suggest that we wait until the situation calms down. But when will the situation calm down? We have been living in this situation for 55 years and even if we want to visit another university in Palestine they won't agree and would feel worried. (Participant, Students' meeting, Stockholm/Uppsala, Sweden)

c. Media, Internet, and Databases

The media – well I think things like websites, newspapers in different languages, radio stations, satellites stations and the PLO runs and connects the different communities. There is no reason why we shouldn't have a Palestinian newspaper that is published all around the world in different languages as a way of connecting us or a website like that, or a satellite TV station that people from all around the world can see could be effective. (Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)

If I want to publish a magazine it shouldn't be limited to reflecting only opinions; but should also enlighten people and educate them for example, about their country: Palestine! If you create a satellite channel for the refugees, Palestinians will constantly watch it. Media has a great role to play in enabling us to be able to communicate with each other. It is also a means of education. With the media we can kill two birds with one stone. In addition, it is a safe way to express our views. The satellite channel can reduce the distance between refugees, however far from each other they are. It can reduce the distance between refugees in Lebanon or Syria and the emigration countries like Europe, America, Canada and Australia. Through this channel we will feel closer to one another. We can also convey our thoughts and suggestions through the "chat room" on the internet or through "Yahoo Messenger". Why can't the refugees have a similar global website? As refugees, we are scattered all over the world. Why don't we establish a meeting place for the youth? Given the opportunity, surely these young men and women would meet with each other every year and make their voices heard. There is freedom abroad. (Participant, Women's Preparatory Meeting, Amman, Jordan)

Connecting Palestinian Refugee and Exile Communities

2) Collective Work c. Media, Internet, and Databases

I want to talk about the global satellite channel that has been discussed. This channel would be a means to express the opinions of established institutions. So first we should create such institutions and then we can establish the satellite channel. We haven't yet agreed whether this channel will be global or local? We want it global, for its aim is to enable communication between the different refugee communities wherever they are. I was wondering whether there is, for example, a Palestinian satellite channel, how many people watch it? No one. There is the Al-Manar channel, how many people watch it? Very few. There is also Al-Jazeera, which shows thousands of programs about the refugees. But this is not primarily a means of communication, bringing people to talk about the refugees. I'm not talking about Al-Manar. We want a channel for the five million refugees!. *(Participant, Women's Preparatory Meeting, Amman, Jordan).*

We can communicate via the Palestinian Satellite Channel and talk on it about the community's activities. We can also conduct interviews on the Satellite Channel and we could pay a fee. If this project was also applied to the camps in the Arab countries, it would work. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Hillerod, Denmark).*

In my first intervention I talked about communicating with our Palestinian brothers before communicating with the media, which I described as a very important tool. Israel is way ahead of us when it comes to the media. It works on improving its use of media, because it considers the media to be a very important tool. Through the media we can enter the houses of our brothers in Palestine whom we haven't forgotten, and who haven't forgotten us. Palestinian television can display daily images from the camps in Lebanon

and convey the suffering that their residents go through. It can air a special program about camps in Lebanon to illustrate to the whole world what it's like in Lebanon and its camps. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Burj el-Barajneh, Lebanon)*

I suggest that, if possible, a satellite channel be created. It would help to connect the Palestinian communities in exile. I think that there is a loan for you from the English Parliament and the European Union, from the humanitarian organisations in Europe. I know a lot about this. I mean that anything that is not well financed cannot be successful. So if you have a loan, use it to do something international so that we can convey our views to the international public, its politicians and media. . *(Participant, Public meeting, Rome, Italy)*

Communication should be at the national level and communicating through the internet is the best way between the different communities in Lebanon and other countries. My first suggestion is that we create a channel of communication through the internet between Palestinian communities and the camps here. That's at the national level. *(Participant, Students' meeting, Wavel Camp, Lebanon).*

I want to reiterate some of the activities that have been going on. I think that the web has actually revolutionized the connections between people, individuals and groups, We should mention for instance www.PalestineRemembered.com because I think that sort of thing needs to be a lot more supported and publicized. It's exactly what we are talking about, it's a place where people can exchange names, try to find relatives and find out stuff about their village, etc, which I think is important. One of my demands would be to support that sort of effort because they actually

rely on individual effort and it's a lot of work for one person to be doing in their own time and budget. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada)*

We need political literature that could be sent over the internet. People can write on different topics and we can correspond with each other. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Thessalonica, Greece)*

Building on the idea of the newspaper is the idea of having a directory, like a database of current contact information. It would include the email addresses and numbers of all the Palestine organizations and people who want to be contacted. *(Participant, Public Meeting, Toronto, Canada).*

We need to have access to each other; some kind of database even if it's accessed through a computer; through files, an email system or some kind of newsletter. *(Participant, Public meeting, Detroit, Michigan, United States)*

I would love to see an online database in the shape of a world map, where Palestinians can leave their contact information.

Their interests could also be listed. It could be in something like an Art files format, a resource website. *(Participant, Students' meeting, Sydney, Australia)*

The role of the media is pivotal today. If there is a war, what is the role of the media? The average person in the camp wants a link with UNRWA and any other organisation. Where is the media? There is a missing link here. The media's role here is weak when it should play a bigger part in communication; after all, it influences everything in the world. Where is the Palestinian media? Where is the media that feels people's pain?. *(Participant, Women's meeting, Wavel camp, Lebanon)*