

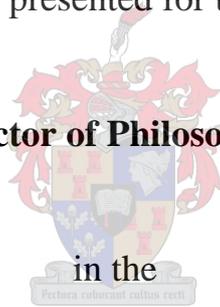
**Why activists? A case-study into  
the self-perceived motivations of  
selected South Africans and Jewish Israelis  
in the Palestinian project**

by

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March 2017

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Marthie Momberg

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## ABSTRACT

Why would one publicly support the Palestinian cause if one is not Palestinian oneself? By exploring answers to this question, this inductive, contextual case study in empirical ethics shares insights on creative, non-violent activism, and envisions another reality, at grassroots level, in respect of a struggle in a geographical site that has special significance to the world's three largest monotheistic religions. It explains steadfast perseverance and hopeful action in an ever-tightening system where the oppressor is lauded and supported by global powers and people of faith.

This study is exploratory, and therefore the research is informed by the research question, rather than by pre-existing or pre-determined theories or hypotheses. The research results are presented in the form of grounded statements.

In their in-depth interviews, the 21 respondents all contextualised the Palestinian *project* (the Palestinians' experience of pain and their struggle for freedom) in terms of Israel and key events of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Along with this historico-political perspective, they suggested a geo-political perspective that is far wider than Historical Palestine.

One of the main findings is the respondents' impressions of intersectionality between the Palestinian project and other struggles for justice in the world, and that the Palestinian project brings these other issues into sharp focus too. The abuse of power, militarism, the fanning of fear, religious fundamentalism and manipulation, greed, racism, classism, sexism and neoliberalism are all seen as forming part of a polarising ethos used to justify oppression. Respondents argued that the points of tangency between the Palestinian struggle and other struggles heighten the global imperative to solve the Palestinian issue. It is this holistic perspective, rather than nationalism or a desire to privilege religion, that inspires the respondents. Their point of departure is not a national state, but the moral state between people from different orientations that should also be realised in equal, dignified political, legal, economic, religious, urban and other rights.

The respondents are driven by their strong desire for consistent, inclusive moral integrity. This dimension is present throughout the four central themes in the data, and their sub-themes, substantiated by nuanced and sometimes diverse views. The analysis starts with an

overview of the triggers, behavioural modes and insights in the initial phase of activism. Then it focuses on moral integrity, respondents' holistic perspectives and their inclusive understanding of altruism, compassion, equality, honesty, truth and openness. It ends with remarks on the perceived urgency for public advocacy, preferred strategies, outcomes and experiences of worthwhileness.

The case study utterly rejects the claim that the Palestinian project forms part of a religious clash. It highlights the detrimental roles of Zionism and Israel's ethos of power abuse under the guise of "protection". All respondents, whether religious or not, deem Zionism – in its secular form, in Judaism and Christianity – to be a gross manipulation of truth, one that vilifies Palestinians. However, inclusive interpretations of religious, spiritual and existential views can inspire activism.

The respondents critiqued the constructs of individualism, dualism, mono-identities, absolutism and self-directed, destructive interconnectivity. Many have found new, profound meaning with people whose values and vision for human dignity they share. Through this, and through their mutuality with the Palestinians, they are already experiencing some aspects of the reality they aspire to.

## OPSOMMING

Waarom sou 'n mens die Palestynse saak publiek ondersteun as jy nie self Palestyns is nie? In die soeke na antwoorde op hierdie vraag bied hierdie induktiewe, kontekstuele gevallestudie op voetsoolvlak in 'n geografiese terrein wat veral beduidend is vir die wêreld se drie grootste monoteïstiese godsdienste, insigte in kreatiewe, nie-gewelddadige weerstand en 'n visie vir 'n andersoortige realiteit. Dit verduidelik volgehoue volharding en hoopvolle aksie binne 'n sisteem van toenemende spanning waarin die onderdrukker geprys en ondersteun word deur globale magte én gelowiges.

Die studie is ondersoekend en daarom is dit gerig deur 'n navorsingsvraag, eerder as deur reeds bestaande of voorafbepaalde teorieë of hipoteses. Die navorsingsresultate is in die vorm van gegronde stellings.

In hul in-diepte onderhoude, het die 21 respondente almal die Palestynse *projek* (die Palestynse ervaring van pyn én hul vryheidstryd) in terme van Israel en sleutelgebeure van die twintigste en die een-en-twintigste eeue gekontekstualiseer. Saam met hierdie histories-politiese perspektief, het hulle 'n breë geo-politiese perspektief voorgestel wat veel wyer strek as Historiese Palestina.

Een van die gevallestudie se kernbevindinge is die persepsie van interseksionaliteit tussen die Palestynse projek en ander strewes na geregtigheid in die wêreld, en dat die Palestynse projek die fokus op die ander strewes verskerp. Magsmisbruik, militarisme, die aanblaas van vrees, godsdienstige fundamentalisme en manipulasie, gierigheid, rassisme, klassebeheptheid, seksisme en neoliberalisme word alles gesien as deel van 'n polariserende etos wat gebruik word om onderdrukking te regverdig. Volgens die respondente is die oplos van die Palestynse kwessie van globale belang juis weens die raakpunte met wêreldkwessies. Hierdie geheelperspektief en nie dié van nasionalisme of godsdienstige bevoorregting nie, inspireer die respondente. Hul vertrekpunt is nie die oprig van 'n nasionale staat nie, maar wel die morele staat tussen mense van verskillende oriëntasies wat ook vergestalt moet word in gelyke, menswaardige, politiese, wetlike, ekonomiese, godsdienstige, stedelike en ander regte.

Die respondente het 'n sterk drang na konsekwente, inklusiewe, morele integriteit. Dié dimensie is teenwoordig in al vier die sentrale temas, die sub-temas en die aanvullende,

genuanseerde en soms uiteenlopende sienings in die data. Die analise begin met 'n oorsig van snellers, gedragsmodi en insigte in die fase van toetrede tot aktivisme. Vandaar fokus dit op morele integriteit, respondente se geheelperspektiewe en hul inklusiewe begrip van altruïsme, deernis, gelykheid, geregtigheid, eerlikheid, waarheid en openheid. Dit eindig met opmerkings oor die dringendheid vir publieke voorspraak, voorkeur strategieë, uitkomst en betekenisvorming.

Die gevallestudie verwerp die aantyging dat die Palestynse projek deel is van 'n godsdienstige botsing geheel en al. Dit belig die skadelike rol van Sionisme en Israel se etos van magsmisbruik onder die dekmantel van "beskerming". Al die respondente, hetsy gelowig of nie, beskou sekulêre, Christelike en Joodse Sionisme as 'n growwe manipulasie van die waarheid wat die Palestyne beswadder. Daarenteen kan inklusiewe vorme van religieuse, spirituele en eksistensiële sieninge aktivisme inspireer.

Die respondente het konstruksies soos individualisme, dualisme, eenduidige identiteit, absolutisme en selfgerigte, destruktiewe interkonnektiwiteit gekritiseer. Talle het nuwe, diepgaande betekenis gevind saam met andere wie se waardes en visie hulle deel. Hierdeur, en ook deur hul onderlinge meelewing met die Palestyne, beleef hulle alreeds iets van die nuwe realiteit waarna hulle streef.

*For my brother, Pieter van Jaarsveld*

*24.02.1964 – 18.12.2016*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress (political party)
BDS	Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions
EAPPI	Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
NC4P	National Coalition for Palestine (South Africa)
oPt	Occupied Palestinian territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PSC	Palestine Solidarity Campaign
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USA/US	United States of America/United States
USACBI	US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel

## INTRODUCTION

Why do non-Palestinian civilians campaign publicly on the relentless, highly contested issue of Israeli oppression of all Palestinians? Why willingly expose oneself to so much violence in its many forms? Is it logical and does it make ethical sense to take sides? Why become and stay involved specifically in the Palestinian struggle rather than in any of the many other causes in the world? What kind of change do activists aspire to? Why are activism, and this research, relevant to anyone with no personal stake in the tensions? Why is this study done under the auspices of the Faculty of Theology?

This research focuses on the views of 21 selected respondents in a single case study, but all the forgoing questions, and more, are pertinent to it. There is a general shortage of scientific data on the ethical orientation of transnational activists in the Palestinian struggle and, more specifically, a lack of empirical information on South African and Jewish Israeli activism. These lacunae, as well as my own experiences and questions as an activist, led to this study.

I first engaged in civilian activism in 2011, and then became intrigued with the multiple reasons for persisting in advocating for Palestinian rights, which many people dismiss as a waste of time, regarding it as an “irresolvable deadlock”, and a “disastrously confused situation”. When I publicly declared my position on Israel and the Palestinians, I met with a flood of outright criticism. Many told me that I had been led astray by “terrorists” and that even God can no longer help me. My own continued commitment made me so curious about the motivations of others who have already been involved for many years that I wanted to investigate their reasons scientifically. I therefore interviewed South African and Jewish Israeli activists in the Palestinian struggle. An analysis of their views and self-perceived impressions is presented in this dissertation.

The dissertation consists of two main parts: Part A positions the study and provides the rationale for it. It explains the scientific process of gathering and exploring the field data, the limitations of the study and the applicability of the findings. Part B presents the analysis of the empirical data and the research results.

Chapter 1 in Part A clarifies the research question and elaborates on it. Thus, it explains the relevance of transnational activism, why the views of South Africans and Jewish Israelis are of interest, why the focus is qualified as “self-perceived”, what is understood as the “Palestinian

project” and why the attention, in this study, is on Palestinians and not on Israelis. This first chapter also provides a general overview of the broader context (and my biasedness) in light of the research question. For this, I draw on both scholarly work and the informal views of (mostly Palestinian) informants. Chapter 2 explains why a case study method with in-depth personal interviews, followed by qualitative, inductive thematic analysis in an exploratory design, was appropriate for this study. Thus, the first two chapters sketch the research context and the scientific methods and methodologies in preparation for the empirical work.

Chapters 3 to 6 in Section B present the views of the 21 respondents. These four chapters are organised around core themes. They are (a) trends in joining the Palestinian struggle; (b) why personal integrity and a global perspective motivate activism; (c) why certain values are deemed particularly relevant and specific to their activism; and (d) the imperative for, and the feasibility of public advocacy, as well as impressions of worthwhileness. Each sub-section in each of the four chapters ends with sub-conclusions that build up to the final research results in Chapter 7. This final chapter also reflects on the contribution and the usability of the findings and it suggests topics for further research.

## PART A: PREAMBLE TO THE CASE STUDY

### 1 POSITIONING AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

#### 1.1 Research topic and question

In 2011, I joined the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). My task was to accompany local people and to monitor human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Before I left South Africa, I prepared a proposal for a different doctoral topic, not knowing that upon my return I would not be able to walk away from what I had witnessed and experienced.

For many years, I have been asking myself how people know how to position their world views. Why do people associate with different values? What makes them change, or shift positions, or not? Is it pure choice and free will? Is it destiny or fate? What informs attitudes and behaviour? How can I align myself with the transcendent, with a higher will or with God in making my life choices? What will the effect of my doing so be? These personal questions became more urgent and pertinent as a result of my exposure to Israel<sup>1</sup> and the Palestinians.<sup>2</sup>

What interests me is how and why people associate themselves with certain ideologies rather than others to express themselves in life. Can it be simply a matter of personal choice? Ever since I became aware of the tension between Israel and the Palestinians I – like many others – wanted to know if there is a way out of the misery and the pain inflicted on so many. Moreover, I wanted to know why non-Palestinian civilians advocate in public for an end to the decades of spiralling violence and destruction.

I am interested in the choices of a particular kind of activist. My aim is not to understand the motivations of those who want to advance exclusivist, polarised, violent or fundamentalist

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, I use the name *Israel* to refer to the modern state within the borders recognised by the international community, since the state has not yet declared its own national boundaries (Sand 2010:286). References to ancient or *Biblical Israel* are qualified as such.

<sup>2</sup> In the context of this study, I use the term *Palestinians* to refer to three groups. The first is the 4.4 million people in the occupied Palestinian territory (the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2013). The second is Arab-Palestinian Israelis. The third is the more than 6.6 million people who became Palestinian refugees as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars, or for other reasons, and who are prohibited by Israel to return to Palestine, or to their former homes in Israel (of which some have been demolished and others are now inhabited by Jewish Israelis).

positions.<sup>3</sup> Rather, I want to investigate the views of activists who choose to advocate for just, peaceful co-habitation through non-violent means, and who respect international law<sup>4</sup> in the Palestinian campaign for human rights, self-determination and a just peace as an alternative to their ongoing oppression. This understanding of the Palestinian project or cause has several connotations and it leaves room for different ways to approach advocacy and activism<sup>5</sup> as discussed in Part B. The study adopts Raheb's definition of the Palestinian project – according to Raheb (2014b:pers.comm.) the term “*Palestinian project*” encapsulates both Palestinians' experiences of ongoing oppression on multiple levels (financial, social, ethnic, legal, theological, ecological, and so forth) and their liberation struggle, which aims for a just solution. The quest of the majority of Palestinians for self-determination is defined by peace aligned with international law, notwithstanding the differences between official governmental and civil tactics. Part B also explains the expectation of Palestinian civil society regarding transnational activism, namely advocacy from those outside the occupied Palestinian territory.

The idea behind my research started with a very broad question:

*Why, from their own perspectives, do South Africans<sup>6</sup> and Jewish Israelis<sup>7</sup> participate in the Palestinian project?*

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<sup>3</sup> *Exclusivism* in this study denotes a distance between the self and the other, based on perceptions of superiority over the supposedly intrinsic insufficient worth of the other. The intensity of exclusivism may vary and/or take different forms, such as separation, oppression, domination, assimilation, rejection, discrimination due to lack of interest, gender exclusion, anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, ethnic cleansing and colonialism. *Inclusivism* refers to a desire to respect humanity's shared right to dignity, and human rights because all lives are valued. It does not refer to the claim that all people actually believe in the same God, or that people from traditions other than one's own have a somewhat distorted or an incomplete idea of God. Such an understanding of inclusivism, even if salvation by this single divine entity is deemed available to people from all religious traditions, may be hierarchical or vertical, because it assumes that there is a preferred, a “complete” or “best” religious tradition. In this study, inclusivism is not viewed from a position of superiority, but rather with a modesty that acknowledges humanity's shared vulnerability and inadequacies. *Pluralism* acknowledges a continuous shift in interpretation and meaning as a result of ongoing processes of interaction, unveiling, discovery and/or redefining. It values diversity and partnerships. It can reflect different ways of looking at the same phenomenon, and/or it can accept that reality itself is pluralistic. If pluralism is regarded as the only option, it may ironically yet again represent a position of exclusivism.

<sup>4</sup> Footnote 89 explains how the term “international law” is used in this study.

<sup>5</sup> Both activism and advocacy work aim for change and in this study, they are seen as assertive inter- and intrapersonal actions to uphold values and laws in unity with, or on behalf of, others in the public arena. Activism aims to modify reality and advocacy supports, pleads or argue in favour of change.

<sup>6</sup> *South Africans* in this study refers to officially registered South African citizens.

<sup>7</sup> The term *Israelis* in this study refers neither to the Israelites of the Bible nor to the nationality of Jews. Israeli society is not perceived as a people nor as a nation in either Zionism or Arab nationalism. The term is used to refer to those segments of world Jewry that intend to immigrate to or “make Aliyah to *Eretz Israel*”, which, according to them, includes the occupied Palestinian territory (Sand 2010:285). Israel's *Citizenship Law* of 1952 created a distinction between citizenship and nationality – a person's citizenship may be Israeli, but the person is also classified in terms of nationality as Jewish, Arab, Druze or ‘Other’ (Ben-Youssef, cited in Ben Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p.). In one case that served before a court, a Jewish person wanted to change his nationality from Jewish to Israeli. His request was unanimously rejected, because the judges decided that he

This core question raises several other questions, which in turn informed the paradigm chosen for this inquiry by means of personal interviews in a case study. In essence, the research explores the self-perceived ethical motivations of specific activists<sup>8</sup> in the Palestinians' non-violent quest for freedom. It asks what these activists perceive as the driving forces that move them to advocate publicly in favour of those who are often ignored, spoken of in muffled tones, or labelled as aggressors – the Palestinians.

## 1.2 Applicability to theology

Why is this study hosted in the Faculty of Theology, rather than in another field in the Humanities? As I have indicated above, this study investigates the ethical motivation of activists to participate in the Palestinian project. Hence, the study is located in the field of empirical ethics,<sup>9</sup> which falls into the group of disciplines dealing with fields such as systematic theology, ethics and public theology, rather than, for example, into the discipline of philosophical ethics. The proposal for the current study in empirical ethics in this group of disciplines was approved by the Faculty of Theology's Research Committee. Section 2.1 explains why experimental ethics was the chosen discipline for this study, as well as what kind of results may be expected. However, it remains necessary to clarify from the start why the research topic may add value to the body of knowledge in *theology*.

I am the first student who, after completing an MPhil in Religion and Culture in Practical Theology, embarked on a doctoral study at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology. The interdisciplinary MPhil programme focused on the dynamic interaction between various interpretations of religious notions and humanity's multiple responses.<sup>10</sup> The current study is also *interdisciplinary* in the sense that the research context and the analysis of the respondents' views require some knowledge of law, politics, economics and history, and the findings may also be relevant to several disciplines. The study is qualitative, highly contextual, inductive and exploratory, and hence does not test any existing theories, as is explained in Chapter 2. The

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was Jewish by nationality, and Israeli nationality does not exist (Sand 2010:290). In this study, I refer to *Jewish Israelis* and *Arab-Palestinian Israelis* to distinguish between these two sectors of Israeli society. Note that many Jewish Israelis do not reside in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Selection criteria for participation in this study are listed in Section 2.6.

<sup>9</sup> Experimental ethics is concerned with collecting empirical data which inform moral action in practical situations (Dunn, Sheehan, Hope & Parker 2012:467).

<sup>10</sup> My elective modules in the Post Graduate Diploma in Theology were Anthropology and Human Identity; Interreligious Hermeneutics; Religion of Texts and Media; Religion Within a Global Culture; and Religion, Culture and Ethics. In the MPhil programme following on from the Diploma, I studied Religion and Media; Religion and Reconciliation; Religion and Economics; Public Religion and Politics and completed a thesis.

empirical investigation focuses on the dynamic praxis of activism in a complex, interrelated, lived experience. It presents a step-by-step analysis of *ethical self-perceived motivations* to engage in activism.

Furthermore, the self-perceived motivations linked to religion may add value to *the role religion plays (or does not play) in the particular context of prolonged violent upheaval*. It should be recognised from the outset that the study's inductive, contextual lens implies a bottom-up, grassroots investigation on activism in a geographical site that has special significance to three of the world's largest religious traditions – Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The Bahá'í faith, which emphasizes the spiritual unity of all humanity, also has its World Centre (main office) in Israel, located in buildings near Acre, in Haifa and in other places. Moreover, the tension between Israel and the Palestinians is often labelled a “religious clash” between Jews and Muslims, and Christian Zionism is also seen as endorsing the modern Israeli state and its relation with the Palestinians.<sup>11</sup> The question of whether, why and how religion does or does not motivate the case study respondents' activism is explored in Section B. The research findings provide insight into religious, spiritual and/or other notions that inform and move these activists, and/or make their activism worthwhile or meaningful.

However, the study is *neither restricted to these three religious traditions, nor interested only in the views of those who believe in God*. The aim is not to evaluate particular theological interpretations, but to reflect how the respondents articulate whether or not, why and how they feel inspired by religious notions. The focus is on why people – whether they are adherents of particular religious traditions, whether they are spiritual, or agnostic – are activists in the Palestinian project. In this framework, themes relating to the role of religion/spirituality and humanism/being human are respectively the second and the third most dominant themes in the case study. The value of theology lies in the interplay between the differences amongst the respondents on the one hand, and the shared aims, values, meaning-making and so forth in a concrete current situation on the other hand.

What then does the case study present in respect of relations with the other – both in the capacity of fellow human beings and in the capacity of God or what is perceived as the

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<sup>11</sup> Other religious traditions in Israel and the oPt are followed by a small minority of the respective populations, for example, Druze, Samaritans or Jehovah's Witnesses (in both the oPt and in Israel) and also the Karaites in Israel (US Department of State 2012:1). Israel scored a rating of zero on the Freedom of Religion Index by the Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Dataset (CIRI) in a number of consecutive investigations until 2011 (Dadoo & Osman 2013:222-223). The latest CIRI information could not be established due to problems with the website. A rating of zero indicates severe and widespread governmental restrictions on religious freedom.

ultimately real? Do those who are not religious also articulate a sense of something over and above the self, and if not, why not? What do they perceive as real and as worthwhile? How do they discern their respective positions and responses? It is precisely because the respondents come from *different orientations* that their respective understandings of theological, religious, spiritual, and/or other notions *are of interest to the sociology of religion*.

Finally, the study and its findings relate to *public theology*. It provides a contextual overview based on scholarly work in the preamble to the case study, and then offers an analysis of plural, ecumenical, grassroots narratives that include secular voices. It explains how and why the research topic relates to perceptions of human rights and human dignity. It also presents the respondents' views on justice and peace where world powers make their own claims for power and control, on the dynamics between religion and social identity, and on why the respondents accept responsibility for advocacy in the face of great resistance. All these dimensions may be of value to public theology. That said, it is important to note that this study does not aim to inform the sociology of religion and/or public theology by prescriptively offering conclusions that can be generalized, but it does the necessary field investigation and groundwork for further research in these disciplines (this is explained in more detail in Chapter 2).

In short, the juxtaposition of and the overlap in the interviewed activists' perceptions of the situation for which the Palestinians have called on global society for help may add some nuances to a *contextualisation of some of the moral questions and understandings tied to religious notions*. It may also add texture to *religious language, and/or theological concepts* in a context that many have come to accept as inevitable and permanent. Precisely because of, and not in spite of, their different backgrounds, the activists' rejection of silence and apathy appeals to theology. Is it not relevant to theologians to take note of why these respondents hold tensions of difference, yet also navigate between religious and other orientations in their praxis of solidarity with the other?

### **1.3 Research rationale**

#### ***1.3.1 From passive oppressor to activist and scholar***

When Jewish American psychologist Mark Braverman reflects on his own conscientising process, and analyses spiritual and psychological forces that drive the debate on Israel-

Palestine, he addresses Jews<sup>12</sup> and Christians<sup>13</sup> alike. He argues that, although the acts of violence committed by Palestinians on Israel should not be dismissed or minimised, “Israel’s overall power and security are not threatened by these acts” (Braverman 2010:24-25). This author states unequivocally that nothing can excuse the systemic crimes committed by the state of Israel against Palestinians, commenting: “What is uncanny and tragic is that in the current discourse, the roles of the combatants are turned upside down: the Jews are portrayed as the victims, and the Palestinians as the aggressors” (Braverman 2010:24). These reflections describe my own emergence from the many myths I used to believe in.

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<sup>12</sup> In this study, the term *Jews* does not refer to an ethnic identity, to a nation, or to any static, homogenous group, but to practising and non-practising adherents of Judaism representing a variety of identities. Butler (2004:113-122) and Ellis (2014) distinguish between different Jewish identities that all relate to the Palestinian issue in different ways. I do not regard such identifications as conclusive, but mention some examples to stress that Jewish identity in the context of the Palestinian project is far from homogenous:

- *Constantinian Jews* are those who enter into a working relationship with governments resulting in “empire deals” (epitomised in “Jews are blessed in America, America blesses Jews”). Due to the aspirational idea of empire that often merges with religious rhetoric, they associate themselves with Jewish State Zionism. They discredit and label those who mention Israel’s discriminatory practices and its breaching of international law as anti-Semitic, as denying the Holocaust and as self-hating Jews. Palestinians are ridiculed as unreasonable, volatile people who lash out against Jews. The suffering of Jews in the Holocaust or Shoah is deemed greater and more significant than the suffering of people in other genocides, such as the Rwandese genocide (Ellis 2014:36-37, 68-69).
- *Progressive Jews* maintain their innocence by denying or minimising the events of 1948. They focus only on the wrongs of the occupation after the 1967 war. To them the creation of the state of Israel is the appropriate response to the Shoah. They also associate themselves with Jewish State Zionism. The misdeeds against Palestinians are regarded as unfortunate, but necessary, for creating a Jewish state, since Jewish homelessness is deemed worse than the plight of the Palestinians. They claim that Israel means no harm to Palestinians, as long as the Palestinians affirm this need. Israel’s peace proposals and Israel’s claims of good intentions for the Palestinians are deemed generous. They argue that the Palestinians’ rejection of Israel’s peace proposals and an exclusive Jewish state prove the backwardness of Palestinians. An increasing number of analysts view Constantinian and Progressive Jews as fellow enablers of the dislocation of Palestinians and the destruction of their land (Ellis 2014:36-37, 122-123).
- *Jews of Conscience* recover the dream of freedom and dignity, together with the harsh reality and the ensuing consequences of establishing a Jewish state in 1948 (Ellis 2014:37). They accept neither Jewish innocence in the creation of the Israeli state, nor the claim that Israel is redemptive in terms of the Holocaust and Jewish victimhood. They steer away from simplistic, one-dimensional truths to seek Jewish power in its various dimensions, and they use a broader framework to analyse historical and current events, institutional relationships, theologies and ideologies that obscure the reality. To them the catastrophe that befell the Palestinians in 1948 is an ongoing, horrifying dislocation and marginalisation of Palestinians and a catastrophe for Jews. Thus, they are aware that the current situation cannot be understood without unveiling the events before 1967. They acknowledge that proposals for solutions that involve a limited freedom in a Palestine that is diminished further is not an appropriate response to historical wrongs, and therefore they question Israel’s partnership with the United States of America (USA). Jews of Conscience reflect on their own role in the enduring injustice and they seek an alternative, inclusive future. They recall the ideas on Homeland Zionism and criticise Israel as a militarised state which overrides other former options, and they suggest a way forward (Ellis 2014:37-40).
- *Still/former Jews* no longer identify with Israel or even Judaism, as they have broken their affiliation with Israel as the vanguard of Jewish empowerment. Moreover, they do so for the sake of the Palestinians. Some leave Israel to stay abroad in their prophetic protest (Ellis 2014:14).

<sup>13</sup> Footnote 60 explains why and how Christian Zionism and Progressive Christians’ views are supportive of the Israeli regime.

In 2010, I attended a lecture by a visiting Canadian Orthodox Jewish scholar, Yakov Rabkin, at the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology at Stellenbosch University. Rabkin, a professor of history at the University of Montreal, explained that not all Jews (including himself) agree with, or even associate, with the state of Israel, and that there is a profound difference between Judaism and Zionism.<sup>14</sup> Zionism, Rabkin said, is a product of European history that tries to transform the transnational and extraterritorial Jewish identity into a national identity. In the process, Jews are transferred from their countries of origin to the oPt to establish political and economic control over the land (Rabkin 2010:11). I did not know this. Even worse, I thought I knew how to think about Israel.

I realised that evening during Rabkin's lecture that my naïve perceptions on Israel had unwittingly been informed by a Zionist narrative. This narrative can be regarded as a "nationalist project" (Braverman 2010:121) that values the "exclusivist and exceptionalist

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<sup>14</sup> *Zionism* is commonly used as an umbrella term for dominant pro-Israel sentiments, but it is important to distinguish between different kinds of Zionism. Zionism as a movement was established as a secular political organization in 1897 under Theodor Herzl (Shavit 2013:3-22, 388). Most European Jews who settled in *Historical Palestine* at the dawn of the twentieth century were secular. A minority were religious, and they had little desire to change the political, economic and social structures. The secular majority desired concrete changes in their material and political circumstances. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the idea of *Homeland Zionism* (a secure identity and place for Jews in a shared land) opposed State Zionism (a Jewish state). However, Homeland Zionism gave way to *State Zionism* (Ellis 2014:28-30, 35-40). Unless indicated otherwise, references in this dissertation to Zionism denotes State Zionism.

The current dominant view of *State Zionism* in Israel and amongst its supporters values Jewish exceptionalism. It presupposes the existence of a Jewish state to protect and to expand the exclusive identity and the well-being of Jews (Ellis 2014:29-30,49). Resistance against State Zionism, a legitimate critique on Jewish triumphalism and exceptionalism, according to Braverman (2010:xiv), should not be confused with anti-Semitism. Dissident Zionist voices, such as those of Shavit (2013), also criticize the state of Israel and its origins. Many Palestinians are Semites, whilst many Jews are not Semites. Today, State Zionism is based on both secular and religious grounds. It welcomes Jews from all over the world to Israel, including those who have no ancestral ties with the land and those who have converted to Judaism only recently.

As a dissenting voice, *Homeland Zionism* represented a quest for a secure identity and a place of safety for European Jewish refugees after the Second World War, but in a shared land. It proposed an institutional infrastructure for an educational, spiritual, cultural and linguistic centre, with Hebrew as a living and spoken language in Historical Palestine (Ellis 2014:30). As advocated by proponents such as Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein and Judah Magnes, Homeland Zionism offered the options of binational, confederation, or federation approaches to Jews who would settle peacefully as neighbours to Palestinians and Arab countries. A communal gathering of Jews in Historical Palestine already fulfilled the dream of a homeland. Arendt, for example, hoped that co-habitation between the Jews and Arabs in Historical Palestine would demonstrate to the world how life can be sustained, rather than destroyed, and hence posited that a small experiential model could serve a greater international need (Ellis 2014:20, 39-41). However, according to Ellis (2014:49-50), an increased Jewish presence in Historical Palestine would have placed pressure on the ideals of self-governance in a non-state form, and the feasibility of a shared Jewish-Arab Palestine in view of the mass migration of European Jews with their different outlook on life is questionable. Therefore, Ellis regards Arendt's ideal of an unsullied bridge between East and West as naïve. Homeland Zionism also had a sense of exceptionalism, but it differed in degree to that of State Zionism. "Arendt, Magnes, Buber and Einstein combined Jewish and Western exceptionalism into a fascinating dynamic of moral and civilizational uplift. Each argued that a Jewish homeland would be an important example for the world and good for their Arab neighbors. Through a Jewish homeland, Jews would be highlighting Jewish contributions to the world as well as Western ethical, political, and economic values to the backward, but expectant, Arab peoples" (Ellis 2014:51). Footnote 60 describes *Christian Zionism*.

elements of Judaism” (Braverman 2010:126). It certainly does not reflect my values. Until then, I assumed that European Jews (all of whom I believed to be descended from the biblical Jews) had returned to a land without a people to rightfully claim a safe place after the atrocities of the Holocaust. I did not realise that the land was already populated by the descendants of Arabs<sup>15</sup> who had lived in the region since the establishment of a vast Arab/Islamic empire that dominated Historical Palestine<sup>16</sup> from the seventh century, along with small indigenous Jewish communities (the remnants of Historical Palestine’s ancient Jewish kingdom) and groups of Christians (the descendants of the world’s first Christians) (Bennis 2012:11).

When Jews began arriving from Western and Eastern Europe and Russia in the late nineteenth century, some sought a safe haven, but others, according to Shavit (2013) sought land to conquer. I was unaware that the establishment of a Zionist state in fact entailed the forceful displacement of 750 000 indigenous Palestinians from 1947 to 1949 (Dimbleby 1979:33-34, Pappé 2013) and that the displacement of Palestinians by Israel and their concomitant loss of land continues relentlessly, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA 2012a:1-2, 2016). The maps in Figure 1 (overleaf) show the Palestinians’ ongoing land loss.

Until then I had not recognised the irony of and contradiction in Israel’s claim to be both a “Jewish” and a “democratic” state (Jeena 2012:3). I thought that all Arabs were Muslims and believed that the conflict was so complex and multi-layered that it was impossible to tell who is right and who is wrong. Hence, I also did not know that, although both parties experience and perform acts of violence, the “overall right of an occupied population to resist a foreign

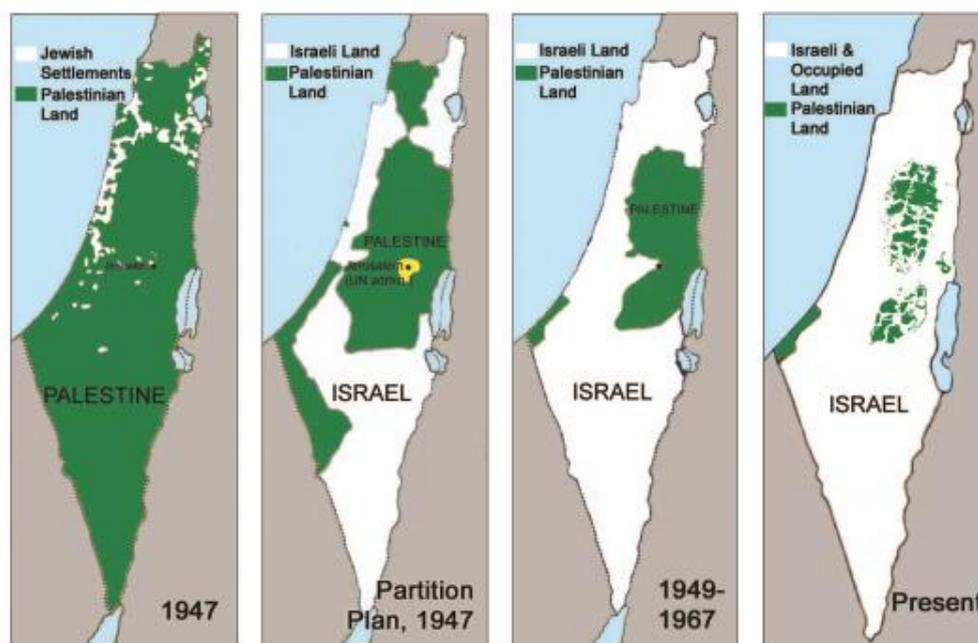
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<sup>15</sup> *Arab* denotes a particular ethnicity also, but not exclusively, associated with Palestinians.

<sup>16</sup> The term *Palestine* has several connotations. *Palestine* (a distinct and identifiable region under the larger Ottoman Turkish control for 400 years), became known as *British Mandate Palestine* when Turkey was defeated in World War I (Bennis 2012:11-12). To distinguish between different periods *Historical Palestine* here denotes the name of the land before the General Assembly of the United Nations partitioned it in 1947 into two separate states: 45 per cent was designated for the Arab majority and was called an “Arab State” and 55 per cent for the Jewish minority, called a “Jewish state”. At that stage the USA and other affluent Western countries refused to receive most of the Yiddish Jews emigrating from Europe, and the United Nations proposed Jerusalem as a separate body under international control. When Zionist leaders proclaimed the state of Israel in May 1948, the territory that was claimed comprised 78 per cent of what used to be the British Mandate or Historical Palestine. Between May 1948 and June 1967, the 22 per cent of the “Arab state” that was left consisted of three sections, controlled by other countries – the Gaza Strip, controlled by Egypt, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem controlled by Jordan. In 1967, Israel took over all three areas by military force. The remaining 22 per cent of Historical Palestine (the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip) are referred to as the *occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)* (Bennis 2012:12-14; Maurer 2012:1503-1508; Sand 2010:280-281). However, on 29 November 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to upgrade the status of the oPt to a “non-member observer state”, and consequently the term *State of Palestine* is now also used. The USA accepts neither this decision nor the State of Palestine’s right to join the International Criminal Court (ICC). As understood here, *Palestine* refers to an envisaged unoccupied entity.

military occupation, including through use of arms against military targets, is recognised as lawful under international law” (Bennis 2012:3). Moreover, I was ignorant of what I have already referred to above as Israel’s systematic, systemic, ongoing, institutionalised oppression and exclusion of the Palestinians, which violates international law on a daily basis (cf. Braverman 2010:348, EAPPI 2009, 2010; Maurer 2012:1506, Oxfam 2012; Russell Tribunal 2011; UNOCHA 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

**Figure 1: Palestinian loss of land from 1947 to 2014 due to Israeli invasion**



The above maps (“If Americans Knew” Office and Orders Coordinator 2014) show an introductory, estimated overview of the ongoing loss of Palestinian land:

- Map 1, on the far left: Historical Palestine under British Mandate in 1947 before the UN partitioned the land into two separate states.
- Map 2, second from the left: In the UN’s partition plan of 1947, 45 per cent was designated for the Arab majority and was called an “Arab State” and 55 per cent for the Jewish minority, called a “Jewish state”.
- Map 3, second from the right: After Jewish Zionist leaders proclaimed the state of Israel in May 1948, Israel claimed 78 per cent of what used to be Historical Palestine. Between May 1948 and June 1967, the 22 per cent of the “Arab state” that was left consisted of the Gaza Strip (controlled by Egypt) and the West Bank and East Jerusalem (controlled by Jordan).
- Map 4, far right: In 1967, Israel took more Palestinian land by military force and since then the remaining 22 per cent of Historical Palestine (the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip) has been called the oPt. Israel continues to displace thousands of Palestinians in Israel and in the oPt and to occupy Palestinian land through the building of settlements, the erection of the Barrier on Palestinian land and by claiming land for military training and agricultural purposes. Israel also restricts Palestinians from accessing their own land, it declines permits to Palestinians to build on their own land and it demolishes existing Palestinian infrastructure such as houses, roads, water sources and schools. Israel has not been held accountable for any of these deeds (UNOCHA 2016).

More detailed maps in A3-size on a variety of topics are available on the UN website, <http://www.ochaopt.org/maps>.

It was unimaginable to me that Israeli and other Jews could actively and purposefully hurt others; it simply felt wrong. Were they not the oppressed – the victim? Did they not deserve a chance after the atrocities of the Holocaust? Had Israel not been doing its utmost for years to establish peace in the region? In short, I was shocked and embarrassed that I, now a post-apartheid South African who desired a more respectful, pluralist world, was actually still maintaining an exclusivist, exceptionalist position, albeit no longer with regard to fellow South Africans. I realised that my naive position, my ignorance and the myths I had believed, sustained an oppressive regime. I felt implicated and considered myself an oppressor by proxy.

When one of the lecturers at the Faculty of Theology told me that he planned to spend some time in the oPt in December 2010, it roused my interest, and I decided to do something similar. A few months later I applied to participate in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). I met a group of Palestinian Christians in Johannesburg soon after I applied, and again in Stellenbosch, when they launched the Afrikaans version of their plea for peace, dignity and justice, called *Kairos Palestina* (2011).<sup>17</sup> It dawned on me for the first time that these Palestinian Christians, descendants of the first Christians, are also Semites, and I once more felt ashamed of my ignorance.

I left from South Africa on 11 September 2011 for my three months' service in the military occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Ecumenical Accompaniers in this programme provide a protective presence to civilians and monitor human rights violations.<sup>18</sup> I had imagined neither the depth and the frequency of human rights violations in the oPt, nor their daily impact on Palestinian civilians.<sup>19</sup> In our respective placements,<sup>20</sup> my colleagues and I

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<sup>17</sup> The Palestinian Kairos Document is inspired by a theological statement issued in 1985 by a group of black South African theologians, based mainly in the black township of Soweto, South Africa. The statement challenged the churches' response to what the authors saw as the vicious policies of the Apartheid state under the State of Emergency declared on 21 July 1985. The Kairos Document evoked strong reaction both in South Africa and globally. This example of contextual theology served as an example for critical writing at decisive moments in several other countries and contexts such as in Brazil, the USA, India, and Palestine. Today Kairos Southern Africa is an ecumenical voice on local and international issues of justice from within the broader Christian community. They are connected to Kairos movements worldwide, which are all inspired by the liberation theology tabled in the 1985 South African Kairos document.

<sup>18</sup> The EAPPI programme of the World Council of Churches ([www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)) started in 2002. It was a response to a call by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem (EAPPI 2009: title page). Trained international volunteers live full-time amongst civilian Palestinians and act as unarmed accompaniers to the local population while observing and reporting human rights violations. Their data is used by the United Nations, the Quartet, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Save the Children and others.

<sup>19</sup> According to Article 55 of The Hague Convention (IV), "the occupying state shall be regarded only as administrator and usufructuary of public buildings, real estate, forests, and agricultural estates belonging to the hostile State, and situated in the occupied country. It must safeguard the capital of these properties, and administer them in accordance with the rules of usufruct" (EAPPI 2010:100). However, in reality, Israel is engaged in ongoing confiscation of land and water resources, demolishing houses and other infrastructure;

daily witnessed and logged multiple violations of international law. At the time, there were more than half a million illegal Israeli settlers living in the occupied West Bank and in East Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> Over and above Israel's institutionalised and militarised oppression, some settlers, often in collaboration with the army, regularly harassed Palestinian men, women and children, and damaged their property.<sup>22</sup>

In the oPt and since my return to South Africa, I have met and worked for the Palestinian project with highly dedicated individuals. They include Muslims, Jews, Christians and others from Israel, South Africa, the oPt and other parts of the world. These people, almost always at their own financial and personal expense, and in the face of great social resistance as a result of exclusivist Zionism or common myths, steadfastly advocate for the Palestinian project through non-violent means.

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evictions, harassment, violence, vandalism and incitement (EAPPI 2010:12-95; UNOCHA 2012a). Israel has illegally erected the "Israeli Wall" and has instituted a regime of checkpoints and transport restrictions. In its discriminatory court system, illegal Israeli settlers use a civil court, but Palestinians have access only to an Israeli military court (EAPPI 2009:24-79). Israel started to build what is commonly known as the Wall in the West Bank in 2002. The Barrier (as it is called by the United Nations) is still under construction. It consists of concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, and a buffer zone. Only 15 per cent runs on the Green Line (the internationally recognised border). According to the International Court of Justice, Israel "has the right, and indeed the duty, to respond in order to protect the life of its citizens. The measures taken are bound nonetheless to remain in conformity with applicable international law" (UNOCHA 2008:4). In its 2004 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice said that the sections of the Barrier that run inside the occupied West Bank and through occupied East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law. The International Court of Justice has called on Israel to end its construction of the Barrier, dismantle the sections already completed, and repeal all legislative measures related to it. UNOCHA (2013:n.p.) states that the Barrier's total length (constructed and projected) is approximately 712 km, more than twice the length of the internationally recognised 1949 Armistice ("Green") Line. About 85 per cent of the route runs inside the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line. If completed as planned, the Barrier will isolate 9.4 per cent of Palestinian land. Nearly half of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and more than 85 per cent of the Israeli settler population are located in the area between the Green Line and the Barrier's route. Around 11 000 Palestinians from 32 communities live between the Barrier and the Green Line, and depend on the granting of permits or special arrangements to be in their own homes.

<sup>20</sup> The farming community of Yanoun where I was stationed needs constant protection. Israeli settlers, after weeks of harassment in 2002, held the unarmed villagers at gunpoint, telling them that the settlers did not want to see the Palestinians in the village by the following week. On 18 October 2002, nearly all the Yanoun residents evacuated the village, and only returned when they were accompanied by Israeli and international activists who were outraged at the situation. Since June 2003 internationals have been stationed in Yanoun. (Mandal 2011:5). My group and I were also responsible for the city of Nablus and its refugee camp, all the villages south of Nablus, and the Jordan Valley. We also worked for shorter periods in other areas to gain wider experience.

<sup>21</sup> The number of Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem has since increased to 650 000 (PressTV 2012). According to UNOCHA (2012b), all these settlers "are illegal under international law as they violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of the occupying power's civilian population into occupied territory. This illegality has been confirmed by the International Court of Justice, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the United Nations Security Council".

<sup>22</sup> The number of incidents of attacks by settlers that resulted in loss of life, injuries and damage to property amongst the Palestinians increased by 32 per cent in 2011 compared to 2010, and by more than 144 per cent compared to 2009 (UNOCHA 2011).

Since my return to South Africa, I have also begun to ask myself: *Why* are some people actively and publicly involved in the plight of an oppressed other when it implies facing so many obstacles? Are they motivated by a sense of solidarity, religious reasons, morals, human rights, a desire for inclusive, pluralistic societies, a consciousness of interconnectedness, or perhaps something else? If more than one of these features are at play, is it possible to define an underpinning driving force? What can I (and perhaps others) learn from such processes in a quest for a more humane world? These questions finally led to this study.

When I reflect on my own involvement, it is not primarily based on empathy, morality, biblically based convictions, or even a desire to adhere to applicable international laws – even though all these factors are clearly important and relevant. These contextualise my actions, but they are not the primary reasons motivating me to work long hours at my own expense, exposing myself to angry criticism and harassment from lobby groups, and scepticism and indifference or even cold distance from some people in my immediate circle.

My own commitment may, to an extent, be ascribed to my nationality. South Africa benefited from the world's solidarity against apartheid during the apartheid struggle, and I feel a sense of obligation to support another people who suffer from a similar crime against humanity.<sup>23</sup> Palestinian civilians (Muslims, Christians and others) have often told me (even in the midst of terrible and seemingly hopeless incidents) that South Africa's transition from apartheid to a democracy in particular offers them hope for their own future.

However, my own position and involvement may stem from a level much deeper than such a sense of national responsibility. When I feel connected to the situation in Palestine-Israel as a South African, it has to do with my increasing sense of interconnectivity. My impression of interrelatedness and the concomitant role of human intention in the quality of the world's consciousness flow from my own existential belonging and my symbolic understanding of

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<sup>23</sup> Several international bodies have compared Israel's practices to those of apartheid. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (United Nations 2002:6) defines apartheid as "the systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime". In 2012, the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination found Israeli policies in the oPt "tantamount to Apartheid" and stated that "many state policies within Israel also violate the prohibition on Apartheid as enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention" (Erakat & Madi 2012). In November 2011, similar findings were made by the Russell Tribunal in Cape Town. Human Rights Watch (2010) published a report titled *Israel/West Bank: Separate and Unequal*, which details Israel's discriminatory practices against Palestinians. A team of scholars and practitioners of international public law from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Israel and the oPt concluded an in-depth report as follows: "Both colonialism and apartheid are prohibited by international law. This Report has found strong evidence to indicate that Israel has violated, and continues to violate, both prohibitions in the occupied Palestinian territory" (Human Sciences Research Council 2009:277).

human relations. In this context, I understand that our attitudes, perceptions and actions have an impact on others and vice versa. Therefore, the acts of an oppressor<sup>24</sup> injure not only the oppressed, but the oppressor too, and the oppressor's partners or allies. This is similar, for example, to Christians in the United States of America's (USA) confession with regard to their country's complacency in both the Holocaust and in the Israel-Palestine matter (Kairos USA 2012:1-2). In my existential framework, the psyche and well-being, not only of the oppressed, but also of the oppressor and its allies, may all be wounded by Israel's actions.

As I witnessed what is happening in Palestine, I became involved, and increasingly experienced an intertwined relationship between the lives of others, my own existence and the enveloping dynamics of our mutual journeys. My life path and my exposure connect me to the plight of the people from Israel and Palestine just as much as I am connected to the plight of the people of my own country. In turn, I am shaped by all these contexts.

In short, my decision to use the context of activism in the Palestinian project for my PhD research is not so much a choice as a given. I feel drawn to it. My desire to understand what drives South African and Jewish Israeli advocacy workers to provide viable alternatives to a narrative that promotes the oppression of Palestinians is therefore personal too. That said, I cannot conclude that my self-assumed national responsibility, my sense of interconnectedness and my quest for human dignity<sup>25</sup> are shared, or play a role, in the motivation of those who advocate for a just peace on behalf of the Palestinians.<sup>26</sup> To understand the motivations of these activists, I need to listen to and learn from activists whom I respect.

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<sup>24</sup> Volf (1996:103-104) argues that notions such as “oppressor” or “victim”, and the categories of oppression and liberation, can provide “combat gear” when both parties claim the higher moral ground and want to win at the cost of the other. Imagining a clear-cut situation with “manifest evil on the one side and indisputable good on the other” in respect of liberation and oppression in an oversimplified manner is unsatisfactory and questionable. Yet it is also impossible to dismiss these categories, as it will make “a mockery of the millions who have suffered at the hands of the violent – battered women, exploited and dehumanized slaves, tortured dissidents, persecuted minorities” (Volf 1996:103). My use of the terms is not intended to deepen a divide, but to reflect the asymmetrical power balance between the Palestinians and Israel.

<sup>25</sup> Louw (2012:1) argues that human dignity and human rights are not interchangeable concepts: it is not satisfactory to point to the *imago Dei* as an anthropological starting point for a theological justification of the value of human beings, as human dignity is more fundamental than human rights. Louw (2012:4) prefers aesthetics as a point of departure, rather than ethics, to focus on “the value and meaning of life” as opposed to “moral issues and the tension between good and evil”, because he sees “being and the mode of human existence” as more fundamental than doing (Louw 2012:5). Hence “human rights should be determined by human dignity” (Louw 2012:21). He concludes that “[i]dentity (characteristics), dignity (meaning and worth), ethos (habitus and pathos) and ethics (responsibility and human rights) describe an interconnected dynamics of networking relationships” (Louw 2012:22). This study accepts that human dignity is inclusive of, but not limited to human rights. Human rights encompass all the laws contained in international law.

<sup>26</sup> Possibly some activists act from a dualistic, separatist orientation, out of concern for justice and dignity for Palestinians only, and may not be concerned with the plight of Jewish Israelis and others who are involved.

### ***1.3.2 A focus on South African and Jewish Israeli civilian activism***

If the research rationale indicates an agenda that aims to transcend practices of exclusion, can or should South African and Jewish Israeli civilian activists be regarded as two unambiguous, clearly definable entities? How appropriate is such an approach in the context of different cultures, religions and nationalities? Is it at all possible to pinpoint the actual reasons why the selected activists act in a seemingly self-sacrificing way, taking and sharing the cause of another? Can one truly grasp what informs their behaviour?

South African neuropsychologist Mark Solms (2011:54) has concluded that

...we humans are uniquely ignorant of our own motivations. We do not know why we do what we do. Our actions are so far removed from the instincts that motivated them (and unconsciously guide them) that we no longer know what we are trying to achieve.

He adds that if we are asked why we do what we do, we are either unable to answer the question, or “in uniquely human fashion” we offer some kind of explanation and end up believing it. “The human capacity for opaque motivation, self-deception and hypocrisy is truly unique” (Solms 2011:55). I accept that many of the stated reasons that inform the respondents’ activism fall beyond the scope of the study and that which is known to contemporary science. Still, it remains relevant to reflect on their self-perceived reasons and to be open to learn from their insights and experiences.

Juarrero (2007:110) asserts that the notion that the identity of, for example, a nation-state, a society or a culture can be found in the unchanging features of that system is outdated. In the initial conditions of complex, dynamic systems there are only “individual – and increasingly individualized – phenomena” (Juarrero 2007:112). Thus, the particular is not static, but has the potential to qualitatively evolve. Therefore, identity as constituting a unity shares that potential. No longer do the physical boundaries of a nation-state confer what identity is (Juarrero 2007:116). Cole (2007:229) goes further, claiming that human beings exist only in some form of society, and that therefore no analysis can begin from the perspective of individuals, or from the perspective of societies, but analysis should rather start from the perspective of people as interdependent social individuals. This does not mean that one should consider only the relation between an individual and a group, as individuality itself can be regarded as relational. Each person is also in relation to her/himself (Huber 2011:104). In light of the potential of such multidimensional relatedness, the perspective of an individual should no longer be limited to that of an isolated case lacking any influence on the whole. Moreover, the distinction between

groups and all that exists is questionable, so it is no longer possible to posit a rigid or a clear-cut division between categories. This then implies that the identities of the 21 individual respondents in this study are not limited by their demographic characteristics.<sup>27</sup> I am interested in their shared reasons for activism in the Palestinian project. However, I am also interested in the unique views of each individual in the context of the case study as a whole.

Another pressing question is why, given the relatively small number of activists, they seem free from the social, religious and political perceptions that perpetuate a marginalisation of Palestinians. Why do they advocate the Palestinian project publicly, in the face of general public resistance?

It seems reasonable to argue that South Africans, after the abolition of apartheid, would respond enthusiastically to a public plea for international solidarity from the Palestinians, especially because the Palestinians' suffering under systemic oppression has also been described as apartheid, as defined in international law. Several organisations and movements in South Africa do indeed offer platforms for volunteers from different religious and cultural backgrounds to pursue the quest for a just peace. In these arenas, Christians,<sup>28</sup> Muslims,<sup>29</sup> Jews<sup>30</sup> and others work alongside one another to advocate change through non-violent means and for ending Israel's oppression of Palestinians. Nevertheless, these South Africans are a

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<sup>27</sup> The demographic details of the individual respondents are summarised in Table 2 in Section 3.1.

<sup>28</sup> Kairos Southern Africa (2010) rejects the exclusivist position of Christian Zionism; it expresses the need for societies that respect all religions. It explains why the situation in the oPt is far worse than that which pertained in apartheid South Africa, and it acknowledges that *A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of the Palestinian suffering* (Kairos Palestine 2009) challenges South African Christians. In April 2011, Palestinian Christians launched the Afrikaans version of *A moment of truth*.

<sup>29</sup> In December 2011, an Islamic response to the Palestinian Kairos document was delivered at the Kairos for Global Justice conference in Bethlehem under the banner *Peace for Life*. It addresses the international community in general and in particular all Jews, Muslims and Palestinian Christians. It recognises the shortcomings of Muslims. It rejects attempts to co-opt Islam for the agenda of empire-building; it confesses a "blanket rubbishing" of all Jews and Judaism. It offers a vision of Islam that is just and compassionate and it acknowledges the sacredness of all of humankind, while maintaining a particular bias towards those whom the Qur'an calls the marginalized on earth. It supports Christian Kairos Palestine's vision for equality, liberty, justice and pluralism and acknowledges Zionist Jews as part of the human family, but strongly rejects their displacement of those who have inhabited the land for centuries.

<sup>30</sup> In 2012, a South African chapter of *Stop the Jewish National Fund* (StopTheJNF) was established to challenge and to stop the activities of the local Jewish National Fund, which supports the "removal of all vestiges of occupied and semi-destroyed Palestinian villages, ongoing destruction of Israeli Bedouin villages in the Negev and other discriminatory measures designed to block the natural expansion of Palestinian towns and villages in Israel" (Desai 2012). StopTheJNF (2012:3) publicly stated that "(o)ur individual consciences, our Jewish tradition and our painful history compel us to declare to the SAJBD, SAZF and to the Israeli government that we will continue to speak out and take a stand for justice and human rights. Taking such a stand is in the very interests of being Jewish. For when we proclaim 'Never Again', we should mean 'Never Again', unconditionally, and to any human being – including the Palestinians" (StopTheJNF 2012:35). (The SAJBD is the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and the SAZF is the South African Zionist Federation.)

minority and they often encounter great resistance from fellow citizens, who maintain exclusivist and/or exceptionalist positions with regard to Israel and its treatment of Palestinians. It is astonishing that those South Africans who oppose pro-Palestinian project activism claim to be progressive in respect of gender, racial discrimination and other human rights issues,<sup>31</sup> but fail to apply the same logic in respect of Israel and the Palestinians. The country's own experience and rejection of apartheid seem insufficient to convince all its citizens to recognise and act on the well-documented, systemic perpetration of human rights violations by Israel in respect of the Palestinians. Thus, one cannot assume that current and/or prior exposure to oppression by or of one's own people guarantees a humane approach to others. As a South African, I am therefore interested in understanding what moves fellow citizens to be activists in the Palestinian project.

I did not want to limit the study to people from my own country and considered the perspectives of Jewish Israelis an obvious next choice. Like the South African activists in the Palestinian project, they too represent a minority voice in their own country.<sup>32</sup> They are citizens of the oppressor state. Israel is the only other state that is implicated in what is described as “apartheid crimes”, which are associated with South Africa. They too risk harsh critique, personal attacks and social isolation, but even more – they risk imprisonment and even death threats when they declare publicly that they can (no longer) support Israel's policies and practices with regard to Palestinians. Moreover, Jews of European origin too have a history of experiencing systemic oppression.

In addition to these reasons, the importance of civilian voices in Israel is highlighted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)<sup>33</sup> In cases when the ICRC's trusted method of confidential dialogue with the government of a party that contravenes International Humanitarian Law (IHL) fails to facilitate the upholding of IHL,<sup>34</sup> Peter Maurer, president of

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<sup>31</sup> The human rights activist Rhoda Kadalie (2012a, 2012b) in *Beeld* and *Die Burger* argues that South Africans should be outspoken on injustice in South Africa, Swaziland, China and elsewhere, but should keep quiet on Israel. South Africa's African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) also actively encourages a pro-Zionist position. They encourage “all Christians, who love their Saviour, Jesus Christ to visit Israel as often as they can, in order to see places where Jesus and His first disciples walked, taught masses and performed miracles. They should visit Judea and Samaria and be informed why Judea and Samaria, which are mentioned in the Bible, have been renamed West Bank, which is not mentioned in the Scriptures” (ACDP 2012; see also Kairos Southern Africa 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Jews in other countries who support the Palestinian struggle are a minority, but an increasing number of them take a public stand (Adelson & Kristol 2012; Masada 2000: n.p.).

<sup>33</sup> The ICRC is widely known as a neutral and independent humanitarian organisation with a policy of confidentiality in respect of the parties in a conflict (Maurer 2012:1504-1509).

<sup>34</sup> International Humanitarian Law is meant to protect the life and dignity of both civilians and combatants, and to strike a balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations. It does not permit or condone

the Red Cross, concludes that the ICRC cannot remain silent “on important discrepancies between public policies and legal frameworks. In such cases, the ICRC believes that it has the responsibility under its humanitarian mission to engage in a more public manner on violations of IHL” (Maurer 2012:1509). In the case of Israel, the ICRC has been unable to engage in any

...meaningful dialogue with the Israeli government on the impact for Palestinians of Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem, the routing of the West Bank Barrier, and the presence and further expansion of Israeli settlements. The Red Cross therefore opted to engage with civil society, academia, and the Israeli public directly in explaining its position regarding the discrepancies between IHL and the Israeli government’s policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (Maurer 2012:1508)<sup>35</sup>

Do the Holocaust and South Africans’ struggle against apartheid play a role in activists’ motivations? How do Jewish Israeli activists engage, for example, with their collective memory and societal pressure? Why and how do they envisage alternatives? How do they see self-empowerment versus interdependent empowerment?

Judith Butler (2004:103) suggests that the ethical framework within which Jews operate

...takes the form of the following question: ‘will we be silent (and be a collaborator with illegitimately violent power), or will we make our voices heard (and be counted among those who did what they could to stop illegitimate violence), even if speaking poses a risk to ourselves’.

Thus, how do the Jewish Israeli activists view the cost of their activism versus the benefit it offers?

The Palestinian project encapsulates both Palestinians’ suffering and their liberation struggle. It is not merely a national or a regional matter. In his book on faith and empire, Mitri Raheb (2014a) argues that a history of successive empires, including the current Western empire, has shaped and continues to shape the context of the ongoing experience of tension in the Middle East.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the ICRC regards the continued alienation of the Palestinian population under

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military initiatives that aim to make permanent changes to occupied territory, to force people to leave their homes, or to confiscate land and resources from civilians (Maurer 2012:1505).

<sup>35</sup> Maurer states that although “the Israeli government has consistently contested that the Fourth Geneva Convention is applicable *de jure* to the situation prevailing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, it does nevertheless accept a *de facto* application of what it calls the ‘humanitarian provisions’ of the Convention. Moreover, the Israeli Supreme Court has clarified that certain provisions of the Convention as well as the rules of the 1907 Hague Regulations reflect customary IHL and are therefore binding on the authorities in the territory” (Maurer 2012:1506). Maurer (2012:1504) reminds us that the customary core of the International Humanitarian Law “is older than the state-based system itself” and therefore “the specific nature and extraordinary significance of IHL in today’s armed conflicts provide a legitimacy beyond the current international system. Far from being outdated, humanitarian law is very much a contemporary and future-oriented body of law”.

<sup>36</sup> Raheb (2014a:39-40) argues that, historically, scholars spoke about biblical Israel’s facing different empires, but have not rejected empire-building by the modern state of Israel, with the exception of a brief comment by

occupation or displaced in refugee camps across the Middle Eastern region as “perhaps the most protracted and entrenched situation” in the region, one which sorely needs correction “to generate hope and stability in the region as a whole” (Maurer 2012:1504).

In our era, the USA is a key stakeholder in the destiny of Israel and Palestine. The close ties between the USA and Israel are often ascribed to a need for security. The US contributes more funding to Israel than it has contributed to any other country since the World War II. Israel, in turn, receives the money under conditions not available to other beneficiaries of the USA, especially regarding military purposes.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the US seems to protect the interests of Israel at the cost of Palestinians.<sup>38</sup> Thus the US can hardly be seen as an honest and impartial broker in the peace talks between Israel and Palestine. During a visit to South Africa, Phyllis Bennis from the Institute for Policy Studies in the US said that if her country was serious about peace, the US would tell Israel to stop its settlement expansion on Palestinian land. Admittedly, the US has done so many times. However, when Israel responds by refusing (as it has continued to do), if the US were serious, it would withhold funding and its protection of Israel in the United Nations (UN). But the US says and does none of this – instead, it continues to fund and protect Israel (Bennis, 2013).

The above situation raises a number of ethical questions. For example, what does it say of global leaders and institutions and how they regard international law? Do their double standards inform or affect South African and Jewish Israeli activism? In other words, are the activists concerned about the plight of the affected people and/or by something more? Does transnational activism also relate to a global morality and society’s commitment to international law? What motivates and enables people to engage in activism on a localised matter with regional implications and global links?

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theologian Norman Gottwald. However, in recent years, the dangers of Christian Zionism and work on Jesus and cultural complexity have brought new insights. Raheb quotes James Crossley’s remark on the “very pro-Israel political attitude in the United States, the UK, and other European countries” that strongly influences perspectives in Jesus Studies with pro-Israel and anti-Arab and Palestinian assumptions (Raheb 2014:39-40).

<sup>37</sup> Israel may use the USA’s military assistance both for research and development in the USA and for military purchases from Israeli manufacturers. Moreover, “U.S. assistance earmarked for Israel is generally delivered in the first 30 days of the fiscal year, while most other recipients normally receive aid in instalments. In addition to receiving U.S. State Department-administered foreign assistance, Israel also receives funds from annual defence appropriations bills for rocket and missile defence programs. Israel pursues some of those programs jointly with the United States” (Sharp 2013: Summary).

<sup>38</sup> On 1 April 2015, the State of Palestine became the 123rd member to join the International Criminal Court. It gives the court a mandate over war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on or from Palestinian territory. The USA does not recognise the State of Palestine and therefore believes it is ineligible to join the International Criminal Court (Human Rights Watch 2015:n.p.).

The urgency of activism that promotes human rights and human dignity is often accelerated by the actions of the oppressor. In a gut-wrenching report on the Australian television programme *Four Corners* (2014), Israel's strategy of arresting children as young as five years old for alleged stone throwing has been exposed as deeply problematic. The programme cites a United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) report (2013) that describes the ill-treatment of children by the Israeli military detention system as widespread, systematic and institutionalized, from the moment of arrest until the child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing. The television programme provides convincing and devastating evidence of all of the above. Despite the rejection of such a strategy by an Israeli official, the television programme builds a case to show Israel's deliberate targeting of children in an attempt to gain intelligence on the leaders of Palestine's non-violent resistance and/or to recruit the children as collaborators for Israel. The viewer sees chilling images of traumatised children whose trust in humanity is shaken: "In no other country are children systematically tried by juvenile military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights" (UNICEF 2013:1). The Australian television programme ends by remarking that violence and oppression occur in cycles. At the moment, it said, Israel is strong. But what will happen when these children come of age?

The UNICEF (2013) report contains 38 specific recommendations on how Israel should improve the protection of Palestinian children in line with international laws, norms and standards. By 2015, two years after the release of the UNICEF report, an update found no significant decrease in reports of alleged human rights violations, and Israel's unlawful policy and practice of forcibly removing Palestinian children from the Palestinian West Bank to Israel in order to detain them has not changed. In 2014, a recorded 551 children were killed in Gaza; thousands more were injured, orphaned and traumatised in so many other ways.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> According to UNOCHA (2015b:n.p.), 2014 was a traumatic year in the oPt. In the Gaza Strip, 1.8 million Palestinians endured the worst escalation of hostilities since 1967. Over 1 500 Palestinian civilians were killed, more than 11 000 were injured and about 100 000 remain displaced. The fatalities included 551 children and 299 women. Moreover, 11 231 Palestinians were injured, including 3 436 children and 3 540 women, 10 per cent of whom suffer permanent disability from their injuries. Over 1 500 Palestinian children were orphaned. In the West Bank, increased confrontations between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli forces resulted in the highest casualty levels in recent years, while settlement expansion and the forced displacement of Palestinians in Area C and in East Jerusalem continued. Overall, about 4.5 million Palestinians in the military-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip are not allowed to exercise basic human rights (UNOCHA 2015b:n.p.)

In an e-mail after receiving the initial good news of the Cape Town Declaration,<sup>40</sup> the then advocacy officer of the World Council of Churches' EAPPI replied that South African activists are not only working to attain justice, but are creating hope – a scarcity in Palestine – “and that is certainly a success in itself! It is this hope that I believe will prevent a return to violence and empower the Palestinian nonviolent movement to take bolder, strategic initiatives to end the occupation” (Hanna, 2012:n.p.). However, despite the declared intentions and promises of the South African Portfolio Committee and its members, representing different political parties, including the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters, to implement the Declaration, it was neither tabled in the South African Parliament nor implemented.

When governments are restricted and global institutions are unable to implement resolutions, there is an increased responsibility on members of the public to step forward as leaders and drivers of social and moral change. The role of activism in the Palestinian project – particularly the kind that may contribute to sustainable, just peace through non-violent means – is important. It is urgent, and it may have bearing on societies far beyond the geographical areas of Israel and Palestine. Perhaps 2014 will be remembered in years to come as the Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, not so much because the UN declared it as such and acted on it,<sup>41</sup> but rather because the world's citizens took to the streets *en masse* to protest against the horrors of the assault on Gaza in the Palestinian summer of 2014.<sup>42</sup> The domain of

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<sup>40</sup> The Cape Town Declaration of 6 February 2104 in solidarity with the people of Palestine, Cuba and Western Sahara was the result of a public conference convened by the South African government's Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation. The stated purpose was not to debate whether action is required, but rather to determine what kind of action is necessary. Different political parties attended the proceedings. The African Christian Democratic Party was the only party to distance itself from the Declaration, together with three members of the public.

<sup>41</sup> In its resolution A/68/12 of 26 November 2013, the General Assembly announced 2014 as the *International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People* (IYSPP). The general aim was to promote solidarity with the people and more specifically to raise

...international awareness of (a) core themes regarding the question of Palestine, as prioritized by the Committee, (b) obstacles to the ongoing peace process, particularly those requiring urgent action such as settlements, Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza and the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and; (c) mobilization of global action towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. (UN 2014)

Qumsiyeh (2015:n.p.) phrased the Palestinian frustration with the outcome as follows: “2014 opened with it being declared by the UN an ‘International year of solidarity with the Palestinian people’ and closed with the UN Security Council under pressure from the Israeli-occupied US government rejecting affirming their own resolutions on applicability of international law in the Occupied Palestinian territory! In between thousands of Palestinians were massacred in 2014 including over 500 children.”

<sup>42</sup> At the time of the assault (July to September 2014), Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela suspended diplomatic relations with Israel (Gligorevic 2014:n.p.). South African human rights groups, religious civil society, political and trade unions groups formed a National Coalition for Palestine (NC4P) with over 30 member organisations to upscale and align their advocacy initiatives. Moreover, 14 organisations from

the tensions between Israel and the Palestinians is no longer restricted to these narrow strips of land in the Middle East<sup>43</sup> and the vested interests of world powers. The Palestinians' rights as human beings are now also being openly and actively discussed in corporate boardrooms, in religious institutions, by human rights groups and other concerned groups and on the streets of cities and towns across the world.

No one knows how the Palestinian issue will unfold. But if it is possible to understand more about a kind of activism that fosters an inclusive human dignity based on equality? If such knowledge can help humanity to influence the dynamics between Israel and the Palestinians constructively, then it may be worth asking the question, to investigate it and, if it is appropriate and possible to do so, to apply such knowledge.

### ***1.3.3 A focus on Palestinians***

Why choose an agenda that opposes the exploitation and the exclusion of Palestinians specifically? Why not focus on Israel, which also suffers violent attacks? Moreover, how does this decision affect academic objectivity?

Talks on Israel and the Palestinians are often positioned as though there is “conflict” between two *equal* entities. As a result, people argue for a “balanced” approach. Such logic masks the real dynamics of the situation, and it paralyses the so-called peace process. It suits the agenda of the Israeli state and its alliance with Western empire. When President Obama, for example, argued against the Palestinians' bid for statehood at the UN in September 2011, he acknowledged that Jews and Israel have a history and a need for recognition and affirmation, but he spoke about the Palestinians as if they had no history, only needs. Obama did not distinguish between the oppressor and the oppressed, and ignored the asymmetrical power relations between them, and spoke as if both sides were equally empowered partners. Obama

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Hiroshima demanded that the Israeli government stop indiscriminate killings and injuries to Palestinian civilians (Tanaka 2014:n.p.). A group of the world's writers, poets and journalists condemned Israel's targeting of specific journalists in Gaza (PEN International 2014:n.p.). In Israel itself, 83 Israeli academics publicly condemned Israel's aggressive military strategy and called for an immediate cease-fire and negotiations in good faith for the end of the occupation, the settlements and a just peace agreement, following an open letter to Israeli scholars signed by 1591 international scholars (Open letter 2014:n.p.). Mass protests characterized the streets of cities on virtually all the continents: London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Cape Town, Nairobi, Algiers, Lebanon, Malta, New York, Oakland, Montreal, Santiago, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Seoul, Karachi, Melbourne, Auckland, Amman, Kolkata, Ecuador, La Paz, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires and in many other places (Robbins, 2014:n.p.).

<sup>43</sup> The term “Middle East” is commonly used, but one needs to ask “in the middle of where?” and “east of what?” The term, coined in the mid-nineteenth century, reflects the ethos of imperial power and colonialism, and it only makes sense from a Eurocentric perspective. Moreover, it poses an identity question, since the boundaries of the Middle East are not clearly defined (Raheb 2014a:43-47).

(2011:n.p.) evoked the suffering of the Holocaust<sup>44</sup> to describe Israel's tenuous security position. He mentioned neither the threat of Israel's military rule nor the ongoing construction of settlements on occupied Palestinian land, nor any other example of Israel's exclusion of the Palestinians. There was no reference to the US's substantial and regular financial support to Israel's military power.<sup>45</sup> In its occupation of Palestine, Israel routinely uses its military force and equipment to disperse non-violent protests, to demolish Palestinian houses and other infrastructure, to restrict transport and movement, to seize land, to arrest children and adult civilians without charging them, and to injure and kill them.<sup>46</sup> Israel's regular military operations in Gaza, on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, as well as the scale of the US's foreign aid to a small country such as Israel raise questions about an agenda of "security" and the US's stake in a regional power base. In short, Obama's words legitimised Israel's oppression of the Palestinians; it ignored Israel's systemic violations of international law and it made no mention of US interests in Israel as a military superpower. Does Obama also consider, for example, the former struggle between the South African apartheid regime and the Anti-Apartheid struggle as a "clash" that necessitated protection of the oppressive regime through financial and military backing by Western powers?

In his address on the same occasion, Palestinian President Abbas in turn did not refer to Jewish history as a variable in the Palestinians' desire to be acknowledged as a state. He mentioned, amongst other issues, the well-documented Nakba – the catastrophe of 1948 when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced and/or became refugees,<sup>47</sup> the havoc created by Israel's military occupation, the ongoing illegal construction of settlements, the plight of Palestinians in Israel and the repeated failure of peace talks. He argued that the protracted "negotiations" between "equal parties" under facilitation of the USA ignore international law and UN resolutions, and are therefore designed to fail, which in turn offers Israel time to annex more Palestinian land:

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<sup>44</sup> American Jewish liberation theologian Mark Ellis (2014:1) argues that the close connection between the Holocaust and the state of Israel became "as central to Jewishness as the rabbis had been for centuries" only after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war when it was named as the epitome of Jewish suffering to which the modern state of Israel was the response.

<sup>45</sup> Israel is a military superpower in the Middle East. According to a report for the US Congress American taxpayers, the USA has given more money to Israel than to any other country since the World War II – an amount which totals "\$118 billion (current, or non-inflation-adjusted, dollars) in bilateral assistance. Almost all U.S. bilateral aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance" (Sharp 2013:2, see also Coren & Feldman 2013). The Bush Administration and the Israeli government agreed to a 10-year, \$30 billion military aid package from 2009 to 2018 (Sharp 2013: Summary).

<sup>46</sup> The Popular Committees of Palestine called on US and international citizens to stop the US military aid that funds the Israeli occupation (Marusek 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Footnote 62 explains that Palestinians are one of the world's largest displaced populations.

The core issue here is that the Israeli government refuses to commit to terms of reference for the negotiations that are based on international law and United Nations resolutions, and that it frantically continues to intensify building of settlements on the territory of the State of Palestine [...] The occupation is racing against time to redraw the borders on our land according to what it wants and to impose a *fait accompli* on the ground that changes the realities and that is undermining the realistic potential for the existence of the State of Palestine. (Abbas 2011:n.p.)

The perception of an Israeli-Palestinian “conflict” that justifies Israel’s militarism, because the Palestinians allegedly repeatedly refuse Israel’s “friendly hand of peace”, is a carefully crafted Zionist message to buy more time.

In this context, De Jong (2012:197) mentions three “founding Zionist myths”. The first is “a land without a people for a people without a land”. The second is Israel’s “sole peaceful intentions” or “self-defence ethos”. Together, these myths support the third myth, namely that Israel has “to live or to perish”. Jews themselves differ about the origin, agenda, policies and practices of the Israeli state. Israel’s New Historians,<sup>48</sup> for example, argue that the official version of Israel’s history cannot be accepted as credible. Based on declassified Israeli government papers, the New Historians unmask key concepts in the official Israeli version of history, such as the role of Britain in establishing a Jewish state, the reason why so many Palestinians became refugees by 1948, the balance of military power, who wanted to destroy whom, and the political will to have peace.

Jewish claims of a peace-desiring Israel that responds only in self-defence to Palestinian “terrorists” are also disputed by Jews outside Israel. During the 2014 assault on Gaza, Elie Wiesel, a well-known Jewish Nobel prize-winning author, and Shmuley Boteach, an American-born Orthodox rabbi, published an advertisement in several prominent newspapers including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Observer* (Plunkett 2014:n.p.). They called on David Cameron and other political leaders to

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<sup>48</sup> The “New Historians” (a term coined by Benny Morris) refers to a small group of Israeli historians including Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Tom Segev, Hillel Cohen, Baruch Kimmerling, Benny Morris and Simha Flapan. They have been challenging the official Israeli view of the events leading up to the declaration of the Jewish Israeli state in 1948 since the early 1980s. Their work takes into account the contents of Israeli government papers that became available after being declassified for thirty years. Although their individual political views and focus areas vary, their work shares core themes. According to the official Israeli narrative, Britain tried to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians voluntarily fled their homes in 1948 in Israel’s courageous War of Independence against an overwhelming, aggressive Arab power, with a coordinated plan to destroy the fledgling Jewish state. The New Historians confirm that Britain tried to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state; but show that the Palestinians were killed, chased out, expelled, or fled out of fear in a human catastrophe when the Israeli militia had the advantage both in numbers and in arms; the Arabs were divided and Israel is primarily to blame for the lack of peace (Pappé 2013:xiv).

condemn what they called “ Hamas’ use of children as human shields” (Boteach & Wiesel 2014:n.p.). However, several Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi Holocaust said: “We are disgusted and outraged by Elie Wiesel’s abuse of our history to justify the unjustifiable: Israel’s wholesale effort to destroy Gaza and the murder of more than 2,000 Palestinians, including many hundreds of children” (International Anti-Zionist Jewish Network 2014:n.p.).

The advertisement by Boteach and Wiesel compared the murder of children during the Holocaust to Hamas’s actions in Gaza.<sup>49</sup> The *Times of London* declined to run the advertisement, and the *Guardian* published a response for free. The StoptheWar Coalition (2014:n.p.), a United Kingdom anti-war organisation, described the statement as a “wildly inaccurate and inflammatory advert from supporters of the state of Israel branding Palestinians opposing Israel in Gaza as ‘child killers’”. They added that this “is especially sickening when Israel’s latest bombardment of Gaza has killed [at that stage] close to 400 Palestinian children. Amnesty International has condemned the deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals by Israel as a war crime” (Rees, German, Colborne, Hearst, Ali, Raine, 2014:n.p.; my insertion). Defence for Children International Palestine (2014:n.p.) in turn reported that Israeli soldiers repeatedly used the teenager Ahmad Abu Raida as a human shield over a period of five days, while the Israel Defense Force held him hostage during Israel’s ground invasion of the Gaza Strip in July 2014.

The radical differences in the narratives lead many of those who are not Jewish or Palestinian to conclude that it is too difficult to grasp what the truth is, how everything started, why the issue continues unabated, how it can be resolved, and why it is worthwhile to be involved in this matter if there are so many other atrocities in the world to oppose. Many give up on what they deem a matter too complex to unravel. They accept the inevitability of a divide between Israel and the Palestinians, seeing it as an obstinate, never-ending tension in which both parties carry equal responsibility. Succumbing to inaction or apathy, they do not realise that opting out in effect does not lead to unbiasedness (as favoured by the pro-Israeli lobby), but to a deepening of the continuing suffering and dispossession. Inaction, silence and the pretence of

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<sup>49</sup> Mamouri (2014:n.p.) argues that Hamas and those who advocate an Islamic State in the broader Arab world have different principles. Hamas fights for political freedom from Israel, whereas the Salafists want a totalitarian Islamic caliphate, calling for the entire Islamic world to be united in a single state. The Israeli issue is secondary to its central goal. South African Muslims have called for responsible use of terms such as “jihadist” and “Islamist” since the human rights abuses of individual groups “have nothing to do with the concept of Jihad which is to ‘struggle’ or ‘strive’ for goodness” (Goga, 2014:n.p.).

“even-handed” or “balanced” talks between equal “sides” strengthen the dominance of the oppressor, and create space for Israel’s ongoing confiscation of land and resources.<sup>50</sup> Such a conceptualisation of the plight of the Palestinians and the people of Israel is one created (and often crafted) by a Zionist peace-and-conflict paradigm.

Academic research on contested spaces raises ethical challenges. In this regard, De Jong (2012:193) argues that the theoretical positioning of a research project and the role of the researcher “are not separate aspects within the ethics debate, but instead should be approached as a dynamic process which requires continuous critical reflexivity”. She posits that after 1967, literature challenging the Zionist version was simultaneously acknowledged as scholarly work, and dismissed by Zionist academics as presenting a hostile Palestinian (or pro-Arab) perspective (De Jong 2012:198). Uncritical acceptance of the necessity of plural narratives, along with pressure regarding bias (if both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli narratives were not treated as equally important) led to a divide in the scholarly work of the mid-seventies. As a result, academics could take sides and tended to focus on either Jewish or Palestinian issues, or on the Israel-Palestine “conflict”. A focus on the “conflict” was (and often still is) perceived as “neutral” in the sense that it indicates an interest in the situation rather than in a particular view, population or experience, and it offers both parties the same level of attention. Judith Butler’s (2004:122-125) concerns regarding the ongoing exclusion of many important distinctions in the mainstream media when the media assume that one can only be pro-Palestinian *or* pro-Israel echoes De Jong’s concerns regarding scholarly work.

The conclusion reached by Allan and Keller<sup>51</sup> in a collection of essays on what a “just peace” entails demonstrates how dangerously the position of even-handedness can tilt over to a deepening of injustice and a questionable peace. Structurally, these two editors give a voice to both the oppressor and the oppressed and they position them as equal partners (Allan & Keller 2006:vii). At first glance their approach seems perfectly “balanced”, “objective” and hence scientifically and morally acceptable. However, if the power dynamics between Israel and the Palestinians is asymmetrical and characterised by systemic, institutionalised injustice, then their approach is deeply problematic at both a scholarly and a moral level.

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<sup>50</sup> The ICRC states that the discrepancies between IHL and Israeli state policies undoubtedly share the “steady loss of Palestinian land, coupled with severe restrictions in terms of movement and access to services. Both the demographic balance and the physical map of the Occupied Palestinian Territory have been transformed over the years, to the clear detriment of Palestinian communities” (quoted in Maurer 2012:1508).

<sup>51</sup> At the time of the publication of the work, Pierre Allan was Professor of Political Science and Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences at the University of Geneva. Alexis Keller was Professor of History of Legal and Political Thought at the same university.

In his essay, Edward Said, a well-known Palestinian-American literary theorist and public intellectual who passed away in 2003, argues that the histories and cultures of different peoples are inextricably linked in symbiotic rather than mutually exclusive terms. In his opinion, justice is not viable if it eliminates the opposition. There will always be a tomorrow in which retribution will be demanded by those who feel that they or their families or their society suffered from injustice. Said (2006:176-194) stresses the need to recognise that the histories of Israeli Jews and the Palestinians have become interwoven and cannot thrive in a dualistic, opposing structure. A just peace characterised by a shared identity and history, even with differences, might be a monumental task, but for Said, an “abridged memory” is not an option that will lead to a sustainable, just peace. In practical terms, he calls for a one-state solution in which Palestinians return to their historical lands in an entirely secular state.

Yossi Beilin, an Israeli politician and scholar with years of experience as a peace negotiator, in turn, argues that the very concept of a “just peace” is dangerous if it is used to reject a viable peace offer in the hope that a better one will come along in the future. Conflict that destroys lives is, he argues, in itself the greatest injustice of all (Beilin 2006:130-148). In their own chapters, editors Allan and Keller (2006) make it clear that they favour a collective process through recognition, renouncement and rule. They argue that the more ambitious goal of peace with justice can lead to smaller chances for success. A desire for a just peace in this sense may even derail the whole enterprise and keep violence alive through the search for justice – hence their mention of a “compromise-driven peace” in respect of Israel and the Palestinians (Allan & Keller 2006:203).

What I wish to highlight here is the method and the underlying assumptions employed in academic conclusions. The inclusion of an Israeli and a Palestinian voice might give a reader an impression that all bases are covered, or that the book follows a balanced approach. But any attempt to consider the arguments of Said and Beilin, for example, on an equal level, or as two sides of the same coin, is fundamentally flawed. Beilin speaks from the perspective of a colonising force *cum* oppressor who claims the right to decide on behalf of the oppressed what they should settle for. From this position, Beilin chooses the moral high ground of the sanctity of life.<sup>52</sup> On the surface, the call to put an end to all killings sounds perfectly plausible and moral, but if it implies that the killings can stop only if and when the Palestinians agree with

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<sup>52</sup> Most lives lost among Israelis and Palestinians are those of Palestinians. The fatality figures for three consecutive years are as follows: 2012 – 272 Palestinians, 7 Israelis; 2013 – 38 Palestinians, 4 Israelis; 2014 – 2 325 Palestinians, 85 Israelis (UNOCHA 2015b:1). A similar trend applies to earlier and subsequent years.

whatever the party in power (a military superpower) deems viable (in negotiations facilitated by the US, which funds Israel's military), it actually deepens the abuse of power and widens the inequality. Allan and Keller (2006:vii) risk the integrity of their findings if they confuse the nature of the tension between the Palestinians and Israel with a binary relationship.

The creation and maintenance of a conflict paradigm in respect of Israel and the Palestinians is an obstruction, and by no means ensures neutrality, objectivity or an equal compromise – it strengthens oppression. The Muslim Voices of Peace for Life (quoted in Kairos Palestine 2012:82-83) ask, for example:

Do 'objectivity,' 'moderation,' and 'both sides' not have contexts? Is 'moderation in matters of manifest injustice' really a virtue? [...] Talking about the 'Jewish-German conflict' or the 'black-white situation' or 'marital problems' in the face of the Holocaust, apartheid or of domestic abuse is no great virtue; it is the path of acquiescence and, ultimately, complicity.

De Jong (2012:199) does not argue against the use of the term "conflict" *per se*, but points out that "neutral" or even-sided terms such as "conflict" and "peace" in the context of Israel and the Palestinians have influenced academic analysis, and label activists in a negative way. The use of such terms facilitates a rigid framework with the categories "pro-Israel", "pro-Palestinian" and "objectivity" or "neutrality". It results in an "us versus them" division; it entrenches inequality in the power relations between the oppressor and the oppressed; and it takes attention away from the lived experience of violence sanctioned by the oppressor (De Jong 2012:199).

De Jong (2012), who turned from being an academic observer to a participating activist and researcher, acknowledges that her position can be seen as a political act, "but so is the largely unquestioned position of 'binary conflict' and its supposed even-handedness". She regards her choice to join the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in 2010 as a "conscious re-positioning towards my research interlocutors as well as towards the theoretical conceptualizations of the peace and conflict paradigm" (De Jong 2012:200).

The research agenda of this study was influenced from the outset by my own activism, along with some personal life questions. The research decisions are nevertheless deliberate, conscious choices. They are neither pro-Israeli nor pro-Palestinian, neither "neutral" nor "objective". I am concerned with both Israeli Jews and Palestinians, who, like me and fellow

South Africans, favour human rights and international law in search of non-violent ways<sup>53</sup> to promote human dignity in flourishing, inclusive or pluralistic societies. Following De Jong's (2012:193) line of thought, I accept that my own ethics influences the investigation's positioning. It has an agenda based on the knowledge and insights available to me at this time, which indeed requires ongoing, recursive, critical reflection.

#### **1.4 Palestinian impressions of transnational non-violent activism**

If you go to Palestine, you'll feel that ultimate despair and ultimate hope are so close together. (Raheb 2014b: pers.comm.)

How do Palestinians perceive non-Palestinian activists? How do they view the role of transnational activism in their project? Do they, for example, differentiate between the roles of South African and Jewish Israeli activists? This study asked a number of Palestinians for their views, but it is beyond the scope of the study to try to address the needs of these Palestinian informants. Therefore, their expectations are not investigated in the empirical study. However, their insider views helped to determine the selection criteria for the respondents who were the focus of the study, they added an important and necessary dimension to the context description and their views helped to ascertain the credibility of the findings.<sup>54</sup>

The original plan was to have informal discussions with a variety of Palestinians from different orientations at an international conference in Bethlehem in December 2014. I travelled via Amman (Jordan). However, the Israeli authorities barred my entrance from Jordan via Allenby Bridge (King Hussein Bridge) into the West Bank (without offering any reasons), so I was not able to attend the conference and was forced to return to Amman.<sup>55</sup> Despite this change in plan, I was still able to meet in person, to Skype or to converse on e-mail with a number of Palestinians and the one Dutch person, who provided insider views on activism in the Palestinian project. None of these informants were pre-selected on the basis of a set of criteria.

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<sup>53</sup> My own choice for non-violence does not ignore or diminish the crisis of conscience others face when they see no other solutions. As a fallible human being, I cannot summarily reject or judge those who decide differently. When he reflects on the turmoil suffered by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for example, Koopman argues that Christians can learn from Bonhoeffer that we are compelled to act in accordance with the Gospel; we must not recoil from our responsibilities towards others; we should not accept that nothing can be done without doing an appropriate analysis that does not romanticize the realities of this world; we should acknowledge our brokenness; we may never have the certainties of a complete and final analysis and we must carry the consequences of our deeds (Koopman 2014:4). Bonhoeffer was imprisoned during the World War II and paid with his life for his alleged involvement in an assassination plot to end the life of Hitler.

<sup>54</sup> The selection criteria are listed in Section 2.7. Table 4 in Section 7.3 considers the study's findings in light of the informants' expectations of transnational activism.

<sup>55</sup> Section 2.6 provides more information on the incident.

The informants with prominent international profiles included Omar Barghouti, one of the founders of the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, and Mitri Raheb, the most widely published Palestinian Christian scholar. Others were Rifat Kassis and Nora Carmi, who both chaired Kairos Palestine at different times, Mazin Qumsiyeh, who is a scholar from the Bethlehem and Birzeit Universities, and Adri Nieuwhof, whose voice is well-known in both the South African Anti-Apartheid struggle and in the Palestinian project. The other contributors were Anis Daraghma, Director and Curator of the Palestine Museum in Cape Town, Mohammed Sami, who studied in South Africa at the time and chaired the University of the Western Cape's Palestinian solidarity organisation, and Mariam Al Ja'ja, a Jordanian Palestinian, who is related to the late Judge Zuayter, who was murdered by the Israeli military at the border post between Jordan and the occupied West Bank in 2014. Al Ja'ja is also Executive Director of the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, who seeks to strengthen the capacity of the Arab peoples to sustain the region's natural resources and gain sovereignty over them, particularly in occupied and in war-torn areas.

I was able to meet with Al Ja'ja in Amman, and with Barghouti and Raheb when they were on speaking tours in South Africa. My contact with Nieuwhof came about as a result of my being denied entry into the occupied West Bank by the Israeli military. All the others were contacts established in South Africa and in the oPt, and we conversed via Skype and e-mail if we could not meet in person.

The discussions were informal, unstructured, collegial discussions, but nevertheless deliberate, since I probed their views on transnational activism in the Palestinian project and also in respect of South African and Jewish Israeli activists. This section summarises key points they raised. The data are marked as being from interview material (for example, Raheb 2014:pers. comm.), e-mails (for example, Qumsiyeh 2014:n.p.), e-mails with documents (for example, Sami 2015:2) and/or an audio-recorded personal or Skype interviews according to the place allocated in the typed transcriptions (for example, Kassis 2014 2:26-27).

The overview of their input starts with some background on the Palestinians' 2005 civil call for global boycotts, divestments and sanctions before highlighting further phases in the liberation struggle. It then turns to their impressions of transnational activism:<sup>56</sup>

The long-standing lack of a united vision amongst Palestinian political leaders, the Palestinian

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<sup>56</sup> Section 2.6 explains why the informants' views are relevant.

public's perception of an ineffective PA<sup>57</sup> and the world's apparent inability to stop the injustices, prompted civil Palestinians<sup>58</sup> to bypass their political leadership and reassert their basic rights (Barghouti 2014a:7). Their call for non-violent resistance in the form of the global BDS campaign against Israel in 2005 has been severely criticised by the Israeli regime and globally by Constantinian and Progressive Jews,<sup>59</sup> as well as by Christian Zionists.<sup>60</sup> However,

<sup>57</sup> The Palestinian National Authority (generally known as the Palestinian Authority or the PA) was established as an interim administrative body after the 1994 Oslo Accords. It was meant to govern until the conclusion of a final peace agreement. It has limited powers and only in areas A and B of the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. In Area A, the PA has civil control and security authority, in Area B, it manages the civil administration while Israel exercises military security control. In Area C, the largest part of the West Bank, most of which is agricultural land, the PA may only provide education and medical services while Israel exercises military control over the rest. Since January 2013, the Fatah-controlled PA rebranded itself as the State of Palestine in official documents after the United Nations recognised Palestine as a non-member UN observer state. The PA has been criticised by many, including Palestinians, for corruption and collaboration with Israel (Ellis 2014:44,173-174). The PA should not be confused with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) that was established in 1964. The PLO is internationally regarded as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, representing them at the United Nations and elsewhere.

<sup>58</sup> Some Palestinians engage in economic, social and political projects with Israelis as "normal" business partners, and not as the occupying power. They are deemed to be profit-driven at the cost of Palestinians' fundamental rights and their aspirations for self-determination. Their mechanisms of social and political control are criticised as structural and leadership obstacles to the anti-colonial struggle (Dana 2014:1, 7-8).

<sup>59</sup> Noam Chomsky (1996:55-56), for example, argues that truth is generally claimed by each party in a contested context. A scholar's responsibility is to act as a moral agent to try to bring to bear factual evidence about matters of human significance to an audience that can do something about it. His own rejection of the BDS campaign has been severely criticized (USACBI, cited in Ben-Youssef, Greenstein, Munayyer, Rosenberg & USACBI 2014:n.p.). Chomsky (2014:n.p.) argues that the post-1967 occupation must be challenged, rather than the notion of a Jewish state, since there seems to be no alternative to a two-state solution and therefore BDS must conform. According to Friedman (2014:n.p.), "it is a bit like the old argument in the apartheid era that no-one should demand majority rule because whites wouldn't change – it gives a veto to those who think that Jewish security can be achieved only by ethnic nationalism." In disputing Chomsky's arguments, Ben-Youssef, on behalf of a Palestinian legal centre in Israel (in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p) comments that Chomsky's emphasis on the plight of only those in the oPt "reinforces a false paradigm that deflects from the problematic nature of the single Israeli regime" that affects all Palestinians, whether in the oPt, in Israel or in the diaspora. For Chomsky (2014:n.p.), the BDS call comes from intellectuals only, and shifts attention away from the Palestinians' plight. Others argue that the BDS call provides a platform to educate and sensitise civil society (Munayyer, in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p). Some claim that the Palestinians have the right to protest freely against Israel's policies and practices (Ben-Youssef, in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p), and that a key lesson from South Africa's example is to follow local agendas (Greenstein, in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p).

<sup>60</sup> Christian Zionism is a movement within Protestant fundamentalism (Ateek 2008:79). It supports State Zionism's political and social agendas. Ateek (2008:80) calls it an "exclusive theology" that focuses on Jews and land rather than an inclusive theology with a focus on Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world. Broadly, Sizer (2004, 2007) argues that Christian Zionism, infused with a neoconservative political ideology, has led millions of Christians in the USA astray from a theology of reconciliation and human dignity in the direction of confrontation and heavy militarism to shift the view of Jesus as a man of peace to Jesus as a militant, anti-Arab crusader. Across the globe, Christian Zionism is underscored by a literal reading of the Bible which transfers the identity of the ancient Israelites to the Jewish Israelis. Christian Zionism, although it was not known by this name at the time, preceded Jewish State Zionism by more than 70 years (Ateek 2008:81). What started as an uncritical reading of the Bible became a political agenda which regards all of current Israel and the oPt as the rightful homeland of Jews. Ateek (2008:80) references Sizer and Burge in listing the basic tenets of Christian Zionism. These tenets can, but do not always, include an apocalyptic theology whereby Jesus will return twice, first secretly to rapture Christian believers to heaven before the end-time battle of Armageddon. Others are that God blesses those who bless Israel and curses those who curse Israel, that the Jewish people are God's chosen people, separate even from "Gentiles" in the church and that God has a special plan for the Jewish people. It is claimed that Jerusalem is the exclusive, undivided, eternal capital of the Jews and that Jerusalem must be rebuilt before Jesus returns. Christian Zionism supports antipathy toward

the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions is supported by the majority of Palestinians (Barghouti 2011:5). The BDS campaign<sup>61</sup> specifies the Palestinians' right to freedom, justice and self-determination by calling for the following:

- the ending of Israel's occupation and colonising of all Arab lands occupied in 1967 and dismantling the Wall;
- recognising the fundamental rights of Israel's Arab-Palestinian citizens to full equality and no discrimination;
- respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as allowed for in UN Resolution 194.<sup>62</sup> (Barghouti 2014a:4-6).

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Arabs and Palestinians. Christian Zionists believe they are faithful to God in their support of Israel. However, not all evangelicals, conservative and fundamentalist Christians are Zionists (Ateek 2008:81). Many who do not declare themselves as Zionists, or believe in an apocalyptic theology, also adopt an ideology of exceptionalism in respect of Israel. Christian Holocaust theology supports Jewish exceptionalism and an exclusive Jewish state, seeking repentance for the sins of anti-Semitism through uncritical support for Israel. Raising the plight of the Palestinians is regarded as an abandonment of the vehicle of repentance (Ellis 2014:43). Even those who are not overtly Christian Zionists, including progressive Christians, often confuse anti-Semitism with being against Zionism. In this context, Walter Brueggemann in his foreword to Braverman's (2010) book, asks Christians to understand that justified criticism of Zionism is not the same as anti-Semitism, but legitimate criticism by those who care about Israel's well-being.

<sup>61</sup> The Palestinian BDS call was launched on 9 July 2005 with overwhelming support of the civil society in occupied Palestine, including more than 170 groups including "all major political parties, refugee rights associations, trade union federations, women's unions, NGO networks, and virtually the entire spectrum of grassroots organizations" (Barghouti 2011:5). They called upon people of conscience all over the world to "impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era" (Barghouti 2011:5).

Governments, organisations, churches and businesses increasingly disinvest, sanction or have academic, consumer and cultural boycotts in respect of Israel and its partners. Examples include the investment firm Morgan Stanley Capital Investment (MSCI Inc.), which disinvested from Caterpillar Inc. (Sobczak 2012); the USA's Quaker Friends Fiduciary Corporation (FFC), which divested from Hewlett-Packard (HP) and from Veolia Environment for its services to Israeli settlements and the dumping of waste on Palestinian land (Solomon 2012); Norway's government-run pension fund, which divested from the Israeli real estate firm Shikun Binui (Reuters 2012); the Norwegian Ministry of Finance, who ended tax deductions for organisations that donate funds to benefit Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land (Aaslund 2012); the Presbyterian Church in the US, which boycotts Israeli products from the oPt (Baltzer 2012) and divested from Hewlett Packard (HP), Motorola Solutions and Caterpillar; the United Methodist Church in the US (United Methodist Kairos Response 2014), which divested from G4S; the Gates Foundation, who sold its shares in G4S (BDS Movement 2014b); and the European Union, which did not renew its contract with G4S (BDS Movement 2012). In South Africa, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa issued a clear statement in support of non-violent Palestinian struggle at the church's national conference on 10 July 2016. More examples are listed on <https://bdsmovement.net/>.

<sup>62</sup> According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA n.d.), Palestinians are one of the world's largest displaced populations. Palestinian refugees are considered those whose normal place of residence was Historical Palestine from 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost their homes and means of livelihood because of the violence in 1948. Of the approximately 900 000 Palestinians, about 750 000 fled or were expelled; the total number of Jewish Israelis at that time was 630 000 (Sand 2010:281). It is difficult to determine the number of Palestinian refugees accurately since not all update their status with the UNRWA. Different sources give different numbers. The Badil Resource Centre, for example, asserts that by the end of 2009, at least 7.1 million (67 per cent) of 10.6 million Palestinians worldwide were forcibly displaced persons. These include approximately 6.6 million refugees and 427 000 internally displaced persons. During Israel's Six Day War of 1967, more Palestinians became refugees and some were displaced for a second time (Gassner 2010:56). Many who fled to Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Libya

One informant, Rifat Kassis,<sup>63</sup> distinguished between different phases in Palestinian activism that preceded the appeal for a global boycott, divestment and sanctions in 2005. He explains that between 1967 and approximately 1975, Palestinian activism was mostly an armed initiative. It changed to organisational development, shifting to a state-building mode, envisaging compromise with Israel. At that time, trade unions flourished, new organisations addressed welfare, and there were non-violent initiatives such as sit-in strikes and demonstrations. However, when the Palestinians' dream for their own state was not realised, a civil uprising against the Israeli occupation, generally known as the First *Intifada*, broke out in 1987.<sup>64</sup> Palestinians took to the streets, engaging in demonstrations, sit-in strikes and stone-

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and Jordan were displaced multiple times (Daraghma 2014 5:24-33). Those in UNRWA areas of operation who meet the Agency's criteria include descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children. Today, about five million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services (UNRWA: n.d.).

Israel does not allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and agricultural land (Sand 2010:281). According to Israel's Absentees Property Law of 1950, the property of non-Jews who were not present at their homes directly before, during, or after Israel's War of Independence were, regardless of the reason, confiscated, nullified and vested with Israel's Custodian of Absentees property. In 1953, Israel passed the Land Requisition Law to legitimise the expropriation of Arab Land (Dadoo & Osman 2013:39). Unlike most refugees and displaced persons in the world, Palestinian refugees' primary obstacle is Israel's denial of their right to reparations, including return, to their homes of origin. Although this right is affirmed by UN Resolution 194 (1948) and Resolution 237 (1967), it has not been enforced. To exacerbate the situation, displaced Palestinians do not have access to civilian courts that might have provided effective remedies and reparations. Munayyer (cited in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p) argues that despite Chomsky's contention that the UN General Assembly Resolution on the right of return is conditional and not part of international law, as it would have been as a Security Council resolution,

...the right of return is backed by international law and it is a human right. The right of return is enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, a declaration that all UN members, including Israel, agree to uphold. It is further enshrined, among other places, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination—two treaties to which Israel is also a state party.

USACBI (cited in Ben-Youssef *et al.* 2014:n.p) adds that General Assembly Resolution 194 does not have enforcement powers, yet the resolution and its multiple subsequent resolutions are grounded firmly in international law, including the United Nations Charter. The actual text of the UN resolution resolves "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return, and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible". According to USACBI, this statement has "immense political and legal force, as well as moral rightness".

<sup>63</sup> Rifat Odeh Kassis is a human rights, political and community activist on local and international platforms. He founded, co-founded and/or participated in several initiatives to strengthen Palestinian advocacy, such as the Palestinian section of Defence for Children International (DCI), the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG), the Keep Hope Alive Campaign, the YMCA/YWCA Joint Advocacy Desk, the Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI) and the Palestinian National Coalition for Christian Organizations in Palestine (PNCCO). In 2005, Kassis joined the World Council of Churches in Geneva to run the EAPPI. At the time of the discussion on transnational activism he was co-author and general coordinator of Kairos Palestine.

<sup>64</sup> The Arabic word *Intifada* means "tremor", "shivering", or "shuddering". In the context of the Palestinian project it is used to refer to civil "uprising", "resistance", or "rebellion". The Second Intifada, or the Al Aqsa *Intifada*, began in September 2000, when Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, which Palestinians regarded as highly provocative. According to Braverman (2010:11), the "outbreak of the Al Aqsa *Intifada* (or 'Second Intifada') is generally understood as the result of the Palestinians' frustration at the failure of the Oslo

throwing, and inflicted damage on Israeli property. The revolt lasted until 1991, when Israel suppressed it.

After the Oslo Accords of 1993, and with the establishment of the PA in 1994 to 1995, most Palestinians thought that the arrival of the PA would signal the beginning of a diplomatic and political process that would result in the restoration of their rights. It turned out to be one of their biggest mistakes, according to Kassis. Palestinians then started to observe rather than be involved, and advocacy and lobbying replaced street activism. In 2000, the Second *Intifada* (uprising) erupted, after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon – in a step regarded as highly provocative – visited the Temple Mount, a site regarded as sacred by Palestinians. Palestinian demonstrators who threw stones at the police were dispersed by the Israeli army with tear gas and rubber bullets<sup>65</sup> and the violence escalated, ending only in 2005.

Within three years after the Second *Intifada* young people started protests in certain areas targeted in particular by the Israeli military and settlers, turning the resistance into a struggle of villages such as Beit Sahour, Bil'in, Al Walajah and others. The struggle became more fragmented than before, without unified leadership, without the ability to mobilise masses on a national level and without the necessary systemic impact. Kassis (2014 2:26-27) commented: "I think it satisfied the Palestinian and the Israeli leadership, because localised resistance here and there doesn't cause any real threat to their projects." When their village protests did not make the news, Palestinians realised that they need the help of the world, so lobbying and raising awareness through advocacy then came to the fore. An "amputated Palestinian leadership" and a "very weak and fragmented scene amongst Arab states" (Kassis 2014 3:2-3) meant that the struggle had to be rethought completely. In 2005, inspired by the South African example, Palestinian intellectuals – supported by 173 Palestinian unions, associations, campaigns, refugee rights associations and organisations – called for a global campaign of broad boycotts, divestment and sanctions, the BDS campaign, against Israel.<sup>66</sup>

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Accords to achieve its promised goals and a reaction to the enormous growth of Jewish-only settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza". The 2014 unrest in Jerusalem is also referred to as the Silent *Intifada*.

<sup>65</sup> The Israeli military uses metal bullets coated with rubber. According to El Fassed and Parry (2002:n.p.), they are regularly used to lethal effect against the Palestinians alongside, not instead of, live ammunition. Both-rubber and plastic-coated metal bullets are capable of entering the skull cavity and also breaking bones.

<sup>66</sup> An extract from the BDS call reads as follows: "Inspired by the South Africans against apartheid and in the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to injustice and oppression, **We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.**" (Barghouti 2014a:240, Barghouti's

Kassis admitted that despite its wide civil support, the BDS campaign was not properly communicated to all Palestinian civilians, which led to a lack of popular recognition of its value. Only now, more than a decade into the campaign, are there initiatives in schools, among youth movements, women's organisations and so forth to inform the general public about the effects of boycott, divestment and sanctions. There is indeed growing appreciation for it, but many Palestinians still continue their old methods of armed resistance, regarding the BDS campaign, conferences, networking and advocacy as pointless. Others deem resistance no longer necessary, instead placing their trust in the political leadership. Kassis (2014 3:37) lamented: "And this is the chaos we live in."

What, then, should be expected from transnational activism? Kassis regarded it as a mistake to think that international efforts will produce a breakthrough. What will determine the solution is, in his opinion, "what we are doing here on the ground,<sup>67</sup> not what's happening in South Africa, or abroad" (Kassis 2014 4:32-35). It is most important, he added, that all international advocacy efforts complement, not replace, the efforts of Palestinians (Kassis 2014 4:35). Adri Nieuwhof, an anti-Apartheid and human rights activist who was also involved in the Dutch BDS projects of the Holland Committee on Southern Africa in the 1980s, expressed a similar view: "I don't think that I can act on behalf of Palestinians. So, if I have power, it's attributed to me by cooperating with Palestinians" (Nieuwhof 2014 1:32-33). She argued that destructive power has to do with a sense of superiority (Nieuwhof 2014 1:39-2:8).

Mitri Raheb<sup>68</sup> stated that transnational activism has some weaknesses. It is not very well organised and coordinated, in his opinion. He believed that many transnational activists engage in a fruitless disagreement about whether there should be a one-state or a two-state solution.

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emphasis, bold). Next to its title page, Judith Butler calls Barghouti's book "conceptually lucid... (and) difficult to refute. He offers a principled position accompanied by nuanced and thorough analyses".

<sup>67</sup> According to Kassis (2014 12:4-9), Palestinians need a credible political leadership with a united vision for a final solution; leaders who will not compromise the needs of the general population for the sake of their own financial interests. The problems caused by a Palestinian private sector that favours their own class and economic interests as they capitalise on the occupation through joint ventures with Israel (and maintain the status quo) at the cost of the Palestinian project must also be solved (Kassis 2014 6:10-7:11, 12:14-27).

<sup>68</sup> Raheb is founder and president of both the Diyar Consortium and the Dar al-Kalima University College in Bethlehem. He is also president of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. He has written 16 books, including *Faith in the face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian eyes, Christianity in the Middle East, I am a Palestinian Christian*; and *Das Reformatorische Erbe unter den Palästinensern*. He is chief editor of the Contextual Theology Series at Diyar Publishing, with titles on the interplay between history, theology and politics in the context of the occupation. Raheb's work has been translated into 11 languages. His contributions have received several awards from the international community, such as the Wittenberg Award from the Luther Center, DC in 2003; an honorary doctorate from Concordia University, Chicago; the International Mohammad Nafi Tschelebi Peace Award of the Central Islam Archive, Germany; the German Peace Award of Aachen, and the German Media Prize.

Some also support the BDS campaign against Israel in principle, but fail to implement the campaign. In this respect, Nieuwhof (2014 5:10-30) stressed that the task of activists is not to support one or the other political party, or to decide on behalf of the Palestinians and Israel how to structure their political solution, but to reveal the inequality in the power balance between the parties. Activists should have a clear sense of where they want to go, how they want to express themselves, and why they do what they do. It is important to steer the agenda in a proactive manner. She warned: “If you want to achieve something, don’t let Zionists mess up your agenda. If they come up with issues that are obviously meant to disturb your activism or to push you in the defence, then you ignore them” (Nieuwhof 2014 6:5-16). She advised activists to focus on what strengthens the advocacy case, and not to enter into endless debates that conceal the power asymmetry, but to retain the initiative (Nieuwhof 2014 6:5-16).

The Palestinian informants painted a vivid picture of partnership, equality and respect in describing the kind of activist who can complement their own efforts. They want to be treated as “fellow human beings, as colleagues and comrades in the struggle”, said Mazin Qumsiyeh<sup>69</sup> (2014:n.p.), a scholar who relocated from the USA to the oPt. Nora Carmi, who at the time of our discussion on transnational activism was the Programme Coordinator of Kairos Palestine and the Global Kairos Coordinator, referred to the African concept of *Ubuntu* in explaining the Palestinian desire to feel like “a people deserving to live in dignity and worthy to be supported” (Carmi 2014:4). Mohammed Sami (2015:3), who studied in South Africa and chaired the University of the Western Cape’s Palestinian Solidarity Association at the time, echoed these sentiments. The ideal activist is well-informed and able “to stand firm and engage pro-actively” (Sami 2015:1; see also Kassis 2014 9:4-5).

On the matter of “neutrality”, Sami (2015:2) asserted that it is not necessary to apologise for standing for justice: “Appeasing both sides doesn’t serve the Palestinians, it causes more harm than good. Nothing is more detrimental than being neutral or throwing accusations at both sides” (Sami 2015:2-3) – it equates the perpetrator and the victim. The ideal activist recognises the connection between justice, equality and full human rights.

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<sup>69</sup> Qumsiyeh, a scholar from Bethlehem and Birzeit Universities, referred to himself as “a Bedouin in cyberspace, a villager at home – striving to stay human” (2014:n.p.). He is director of the main clinical cytogenetic laboratory, the Palestine Museum of Natural History and the Institute for Biodiversity Research. Qumsiyeh has previously worked at the Universities of Tennessee, Duke and Yale. His publications include over 130 scientific papers on topics ranging from biodiversity to cancer and books such as *Mammals of the Holy Land*, *Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human Rights and the Israeli/Palestinian struggle* and *Popular resistance in Palestine: A history of hope and empowerment*.

The baseline for the discussion should be international law and adherence to it by Israel and the Palestinians (Kassis 2014 10:1-13). But, factual knowledge is not enough. Qumsiyeh (2014:n.p) argued for a combination of conscience and factual evidence, calling on activists not to succumb to, or resort to, emotional arguments, adding: “If international law is to mean anything it has to be based on human rights and it has to be applied equally and without hypocrisy.” Activists should also hold onto these values, for “there are no win-lose scenarios, either win-win, or lose-lose” (Qumsiyeh 2014:n.p.). Raheb (2014b:n.p.) also pointed out the notion of a personal appeal in someone who campaigns in the Palestinian project:

It is a person who stands for what he/she feels is right and just. There must be a human connection to someone who has lived part of the Palestinian tragedy. It is extraordinary if an activist in the Palestinian project has not met a Palestinian face-to-face. It is also someone who is sensitive to, and moved by others or the situation. This person feels an inner obligation and has a conviction to play a role and to say or do something to change the situation.

But no amount of knowledge or exposure guarantees that someone will turn into an activist: “If it happens, it is not a decision or a will, but spirit or grace at work. It is a miracle. It means someone is touched. We can’t plan it, it is granted to us” (Raheb 2014b:pers.comm.). The informants who were consulted before the case study all expect a high degree of emotional intelligence, commitment and an exemplary moral orientation from the ideal transnational activist. Moreover, they want to see consistency between and integration of activists’ values and their outer behaviour. Activists should avoid rash and ill-considered actions that not only jeopardize their work and their affiliations, but also harm the Palestinian cause (Carmi 2014:3). Nieuwhof (2014 6:33) warned: “Your activism is a brand...you can harm what has been built...with one stupid action.” Along with a brand goes the ability to discern the best tone and manner for a message. Thus, Nieuwhof (2014 7:4-25) argued, activists need to understand their various audiences and tailor their style accordingly. Whatever the style, all communication must be respectful, at all times. Raheb (2014b:pers.comm.) and Sami (2015:2) also stressed the need for patience and wisdom to discern between what can be changed and what cannot. However, unfortunately, this wisdom, according to Raheb, is often not present amongst activists.

Furthermore, activists’ power should come from an inner source and a righteous, moral cause, not from superiority (Qumsiyeh 2014:n.p.). They should not give up when things look bleak, and they should display honesty and integrity (Sami 2015:2). Carmi (2014:2) spoke about “steadfastness or *sumud*”, an Arabic word meaning resilience, quiet strength and immense

patience in confronting an adversary. *Sumud* is about being firm and consistent, and suggests inner strength and centredness. Carmi used the word “love”, and so did Nieuwhof, who mentioned both “compassion” and “love” as the core values that should drive the activism of South Africans and Jewish Israelis. Nieuwhof (2014 3:6-34, 8:1-8) added independent critical thinking, courage, a work ethic that entails long hours of work without any remuneration, transparency and modesty. But it is also important to “avoid burning out, avoid hate and work hard with love” (Qumsiyeh 2014:n.p.), because the goal is not simply to fix problems, but to shape a better world.

In light of Qumsiyeh’s words, it is not surprising that these (mostly) Palestinian informants believe that if activists preach mutual respect, inclusivism and pluralism for those in troubled circumstances, they should be consistent and also practise it amongst peers.

#### Activists should

...not disrespect each other or undervalue the opinions of each other [...] we must come to terms with the fact that people may support a cause for different reasons and motives, be it religious or self-fulfilment or interest driven. It doesn’t really matter so long as the outcome of all of that is one that protects and respects universal values (Sami 2015:2-3).

This expectation adds to the responsibilities of leaders, for if they “are clear, they can host many people who join for diverse reasons. Their values provide guidance and their hands-on education may assist activists to overcome or learn to deal with certain issues” (Nieuwhof 10:10-12).

Moreover, the tone and manner the informants expect from activists coincided with their own approach to non-violence.<sup>70</sup> I was struck, for example, by the response of Mitri Raheb directly after a rather difficult lunch with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Christian

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<sup>70</sup> Non-violence can be principled, pragmatic, or a combination of the two modes. According to Eddy (2014:445), pragmatic non-violence is primarily informed by strategic and/or practical reasons, while principled non-violence (also called Gandhian non-violence) is based on “soul force”, a belief in the unity of means and ends and also of morality and politics, moral and strategic rejections of violence, acceptance of self-suffering and the refusal to harm others, the desire to transcend hatred and opposition in the pursuit of trust and reconciliation. Ateek (2008:179-180) cites Gandhi to explain that non-violent resistance is the very opposite of weakness, because it is a deliberate action and not a passive response, and it requires inner strength. In Gandhian terms, the wrongdoer is part of an evil system rather than a personification of evil (Eddy 2014:457). Eddy (2014:448-459) further qualifies principled non-violence by linking “tragic” and “comic” dramaturgical styles to the execution of non-violence. He argues that the two modes tend to lead to different outcomes, as they shape the emotional interactions between opponents in diverse ways. If both styles are part of the same continuum, the practice of principled non-violence tends to lean towards the “comic”, which steers towards shaming as opposed to deepening the gulf between opponents. It is a process of imagination as it transcends the “us versus them” paradigm whereby a person becomes an observer of the self while acting. Pragmatic non-violence tends to insult, blame, yell and demonise, and allows limited violence – even if only verbal.

clergy. I felt nauseated by the display of rash behaviour from some Jewish South Africans towards our guest and the hosts of the lunch. Raheb remained calm and clear, despite the many personal insinuations and attacks. In our discussion, directly after the lunch meeting, Raheb commented:

In 2002 when Israel invaded Bethlehem they went into our centre and made it their headquarters. They left us with millions of dollars' damage. They destroyed everything. CNN asked me if I don't get angry. I answered that each time I get angry we start a new project. It is about how to utilise that anger. One always needs to discern. Whatever happens – it is always good to be in control. Then you decide on the agenda and you don't become reactive.<sup>71</sup> (Raheb 2014b:pers.comm.)

In another example, Mariam Al Ja'ja, a Jordanian Palestinian and Executive Director at the Group for the Protection of Nature,<sup>72</sup> argued that the best way to deal with adversity is to find a positive way out through a constructive contribution. When I probed her feelings towards Jewish Israelis after her family's tragedy<sup>73</sup> earlier that year, she acknowledged her initial shock followed by anger: "And then I tried to divert all this anger, because he is not the first to be killed, or the last and besides there are so many children being killed" (Al Ja'ja 2014 19:14-17). She has channelled her energy into her organisation, which assists Palestinian farmers in the oPt and offers work to people from different backgrounds and professions. To be resilient and not to dwell on the daily news was a skill she learned from her mother. When asked if she would be able to live next to a Jewish Israeli, she acknowledged that it might be very difficult to convince her younger niece (whose brother and father died as a result of the deeds of the Israeli military) to do so. In Israel, citizens cannot be distinguished from those with military ties, since all Jewish Israelis are obliged to serve in the army.<sup>74</sup> To Al Ja'ja (2014 22:29), the only way to convince herself and others that there is a way out of the misery is to "think of South Africa".

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<sup>71</sup> The Diyar Consortium consists of a model school, centres for health, political education and culture, plus a college. It was invaded in the Second *Intifada*.

<sup>72</sup> This non-profit, independent organisation specialises in security and sovereignty in natural resources and food in the Arab world, especially in the oPt, since "food is used against Palestinians as a weapon" (Al Ja'ja (1:31-32). Instead of sending food parcels, they buy olive and fruit trees from Palestinian nurseries for farmers. They make extensive use of volunteers; they do not accept conditional foreign institutional money, and they advocate for policy changes on international and regional platforms for food and agriculture.

<sup>73</sup> On 10 March 2014, Raed Zuayter, a distinguished judge and holder of a PhD, was killed by Israeli soldiers when the passengers on his bus were forced to disembark *en route* to the Israeli-managed side of the border. Zuayter was unarmed, but was shot five times when he asked why he was being pushed around by Israeli soldiers. He was a Jordanian citizen of Palestinian origin whose family had fled the Catastrophe of 1948, the war in 1967 and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. He was on his way to the occupied West Bank to collect rental money to pay for an operation on his son. As a result of his death, his sick child could not be treated, and died the same week (Schwartz 2014:n.p.).

<sup>74</sup> Conscientious objectors to the Israeli military are imprisoned and detained.

In my experience these responses are not limited to the few informants in this study. The Kairos Palestine (2009) document, for example, portrays a self-reflective, disciplined tone without avoiding the issue. A poster I photographed in the Al Jiflik office of the Jordan Valley Solidarity Movement (JVSM) in 2011 reads: “Existence is Resistance”. As I sat with rural people whose water sources had been demolished, whose land had been confiscated, with their olive trees cut down, burnt and uprooted, whose houses, schools and roads had been demolished, and whose friends and family had been injured and killed, they told me that their resistance would take the form of restoring the water hole or dam, to plant new trees, and building another house or structure.<sup>75</sup> So many times I had no words for the sheer cruelty I witnessed. Time and again the victims of the destruction and violence turned to me and calmly said that if things could change for South Africans, they can change for them too, Insha’Allah.<sup>76</sup>

In the eyes of the Palestinian informants, theirs is neither the only important struggle, nor is it isolated from the rest of the world. For Carmi (2014:2), the Palestinian cause “reflects the aspirations and rightful demands of all peace-loving peoples”. Hence, there is much to mutually share, learn and do.<sup>77</sup> Carmi did not see the Palestinian liberation struggle as the end point, but said that once they are freed, they will seek the liberation of other oppressed people with the same credibility and accountability they now expect from transnational activists. She argued for a better world, and not merely for a better life for Palestinians. Her attitude spoke of an emotional and a spiritual sensitivity that considers the needs of others, despite her and her people’s physical restrictions. Similarly, Mariam Al Ja’ja (2014 15:1-46, 17:34-18:19) asserted that while Palestine can be seen as a “centre of causes”, there is a connection with regional and global causes, as nationality does not define humanity or misery. The challenge for the international community is that they are both part of the problem and (not yet) part of its solution (Kairos Palestine 2012:93).

The informants were suspicious of activist agendas that focus mostly on nationalism. Qumsiyeh (2014:n.p.), for example, stressed that activists should place “less emphasis on nationalism and more on human rights”. His argument underlines the importance of a

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<sup>75</sup> The Jordan Valley is considered the food basket of the Palestinian West Bank, but most of its water is used by Israeli settlements in the area. Along the Jordan River, the area is zoned as no man’s land, but part of it, close to the river and not visible from the road, is cultivated by Israeli settlers (EAPPI 2011:1).

<sup>76</sup> “God willing” in Arabic.

<sup>77</sup> Two years after its birth, Kairos Palestine, for example, hosted the international Kairos for Global Justice conference to create a global Kairos coalition in which countries focus on both their own local challenges, and on supporting Kairos Palestine.

partnership between the Palestinians' own responsibility and their expectations of other activists. It is also an appeal to transcend limiting paradigms:

It is a journey of awakening at the individual level that is not only spiritual, but also requires concrete action to bring true peace and justice to fruition. We Canaanites, who invented the alphabet, domesticated animals and developed agriculture, and made this arid land into a land of milk and honey, surely can do this. An Arab poet wrote [that] ... if the people one day strive for life, then ultimately destiny will respond and the night will give way and the injustice will be broken. The path to peace is not served by the creation of more states or unjust 'fixes' to perceived demographic 'problems'. It has to do with justice and implementation of human rights and international law. It requires grassroots action to accelerate its arrival but it is the only solution possible in the long term. We can either remain locked in our old mythological and tribal ways, or we can envision a better future and work for it. The choice is obvious. (Qumsiyeh 2015:n.p.; my insertion)

These views are profound, if one takes into account that what is at stake is not a theoretical question, but the hard, physical reality of a response to a people who export produce cultivated on confiscated Palestinian land, attend a university built on a destroyed village, enjoy a picnic in a forest planted over yet another demolished Palestinian village, and live in houses to which Palestinian families still have the keys. It is about a regime that continues to impoverish and diminish Palestinians, that confiscates natural resources and controls air, sea and land with brute military force. It is about access to health and education facilities, and the history and fabric of communities. It is about who may love and marry whom, about who may consume how much water, and about who may breathe, or not.

In our interview, Raheb (2014b:pers.comm.) stated that the essence of the issue at stake is not nationality, but human rights or people's rights. He argued that in their very long history, one that spans several millennia, the Palestinians' group identity kept changing, which means that nationality is not the most important factor of identification for them. Emphasising the shifting land identities of Palestinians, Raheb (2014a:11-13) preferred the term "people of the land" to describe the native inhabitants of the area throughout history.<sup>78</sup> He argued that if the problem is understood with the historical depth of centuries then the current situation becomes part of a larger ongoing pattern of empire-building. This long-term vision in turn allows us to reflect on who the "people of the land" are, and it opens up an opportunity to consider solutions beyond

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<sup>78</sup> They underwent changes in language from Aramaic to Greek to Arabic; changes from Baal to Yahwe; and a shifting group identity from Canaanite to Hittite to Hivite, to Philistine, to Israelite, to Jewish, to Byzantine, to Arab, to Ottoman, to mention only some of the realities that governed the land (first called Canaan, and later also Philistia, Samaria, Judea and Palestine). Raheb (2014a:11-13) recalled how his father, born as an Ottoman citizen in 1905, within the scope of a single lifetime and without moving from Bethlehem, became a citizen of the Palestine Mandate under British rule, of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; by the time of his death, he carried an identity card issued by Israel, which occupies Palestine.

the current options of one versus two states. The implied appeal by Qumsiyeh and Raheb to activists is that they too should move beyond the existing jargon and frameworks linked to the Palestinians' suffering and their liberation struggle (the Palestinian project). The challenge is to find and adopt alternative ways or paradigms that do not perpetuate division, competition, superiority and victory at the cost of humanity.

In turning to their expectations in respect of South African and Jewish Israeli activists, there is no doubt that the informants have particular expectations. As "fellow human beings, they have a moral obligation to act like everyone else. However, being from oppressive societies with a history that is well known gives them additional leverage to speak truth to power" (Qumsiyeh 2014:n.p.) Al Ja'ja (2014 16:8) asserted that South African and Jewish Israeli activism capture the attention of the world. To put it simply, Al Ja'ja appealed to South African and Jewish Israeli civilians to leverage their particular positions, coming from oppressive societies, to help the Palestinians in their project, which is marked by suffering and a struggle for freedom.

They argued that the two groups have distinct roles. South Africa is regarded as an inspiring moral icon (Daraghma 2014 13:26-30; Sami 2015:n.p.) because of its history of overcoming apartheid. Omar Barghouti (2014b:n.p.), co-founder of the BDS movement for Palestinian Rights stressed the role of this country and its civilian activism: "South Africa is extremely important – symbolically, politically and morally. Johannesburg University's cutting of ties with Ben Gurion University was front page news in *Haaretz*. We need concrete successes in South Africa and your politicians tell us that the push must come from you as civilians." The specific lens of South Africans can help translate what they see in the oPt to fellow South Africans in a language they can understand (Al Ja'ja 2014 14:36-15:4; Raheb 2014b:pers.comm.).

Omar Barghouti (2014b:n.p.) also drew on the historical relationship between South Africa and the Palestinians: "We don't beg you, we ask you. We stood with you during apartheid and now we ask what we're entitled to." He pointed out that South Africa lags behind the rest of the world when it comes to engaging in boycotts, divestment and sanctions. My impression from meetings with Barghouti in Cape Town in July 2014 was a clear sense of inner empowerment, coupled with his recognition of the relevancy and unique contributions that South Africans and others in the Palestinian struggle can make, but no dependency on those contributions. He explained that the Palestinians had developed their own model with regard to the global BDS campaign: "We don't follow the South African model. Ours is a consensus movement. We

don't give advice to partners. Partners in different countries share information all the time. We all learn from one another. It is a mutually respected, democratic relationship" (Barghouti 2014b:n.p.).

Daraghma<sup>79</sup> (2014 17:1-25) pointed out that the connection between South Africans and activism in the Palestinian project is about more than history. He referred to the oft-cited words of the late President Nelson Mandela, who said that South Africa's freedom is incomplete without the liberation of the Palestinians. Each time South Africans quote these words of Mandela's, "they mention their *destiny*" (Daraghma 2014 17:13). In other words, for South Africans, these words suggest a connection between the healing of others and the healing of the self. On the one hand, the words carry an appeal to critique and engage with the brokenness of one's own nation, while journeying with the Palestinians. On the other hand, South Africans have an obligation to work towards the liberation of the Palestinians. South African activists are often asked: "Why do you bother with the Palestinians if we still struggle with our own problems?" Mandela's words imply that if South Africans do not see themselves as a significant partner in the lifting of yet another form of apartheid, then our own transformation to a post-apartheid society seems cosmetic, in still addressing only the needs of the immediate self. One is therefore forced to ask whether South Africans can claim to have the moral high ground as they are perceived to have by many in the world. Do South African activists act in self-reflective modes, and with humility, as equal partners in the mutual search for liberation and a better world?

Existing bonds between Palestinians and South African activists are excellent, but Qumsiyeh (2014:n.p.) believed they were limited, and needed to deepen and to involve far more people. Carmi (2014:2) agreed: "Among all countries advocating for the Palestinian cause, the relationship between South African activists and Palestinians is by far the most encouraging and satisfactory. However, we can intensify the connections and I for one, as Global Kairos Coordinator, hope to see improvements in 2015."

Although Palestinians generally find the South African liberation struggle inspiring, they lack detailed knowledge of it – most of the time "we knew nothing about South Africa, nothing...only the name of South Africa and of Mandela. I mean there is no single book on South Africa that was translated into Arabic" (Kassis 2014 12:14-15, 13:1-2, 4-5). Since 1994,

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<sup>79</sup> Dr Anis Daraghma is a Palestinian in the diaspora who specialises in human geography. He is also the Director of the Palestine Museum in Cape Town.

Palestinians know a little more about people such as Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and others, but even today they “don’t know enough about them” (Kassis 2014 13:18). This “paradoxical situation” (Kassis 2014 13:10) of a profound inspiration coupled with a lack of knowledge creates an opportunity to learn more about the local experience. A number of delegations have visited South Africa and the Palestinians, but more initiatives are necessary. There could, for example, also be exchanges between scholars in Islam from Palestine/the Middle East and South Africa.

While the Palestinians can benefit from working with and learning from South Africans, South African solidarity should be strengthened by a solid resistance movement amongst Palestinians under a trustworthy leadership (Kassis 2014 3:30, 4:10, 5:15-20, 12:5, 18:5). Both the internal and the international struggles need to be intensified and accelerated (Kassis 2014 8:23-25). Thus, to Kassis, partnership in activism means to jointly develop and execute well-considered strategies for accelerating the process and achieving the necessary leverage.

Daraghma (2014 1:16-3:25) interviewed leaders of all Palestinian political parties and fronts in 2014. He posited that they too consistently ask South African activists to campaign for full sanctions against Israel, despite the opinion of President Abbas and his government. Daraghma (2014 11:14-20) made it clear sanctions do not aim to “chase Israelis into the sea”, for that in itself is a colonial idea. The idea is to disturb the current Israeli system, not to destroy it: “The tactic now, and also the aim of the political parties, including Hamas, is actually to co-exist” (Daraghma 2014 11:17-18). He added: “It’s not about dismissing or erasing Israel” (Daraghma 2014 21:23-28); it is about erasing Israel’s exclusivity and its discrimination against non-Jews to enable a humane co-existence. The need for comprehensive sanctions was supported by Kassis (2014 10:17). However, attaining equal rights and the Right of Return<sup>80</sup> for the millions of refugees is not going to be a merely moral choice – it requires political, economic and social pressure on Israel, and the isolation of Israel. Moreover, Palestinians and Israel need to develop a shared identity and hence Israel also needs ethical pressure to seek a political solution of co-existence (Al Ja’ja 2014 17:3-11; Barghouti 2014b:n.p.). Daraghma, for example, longed to be in touch with ordinary Jewish Israelis such as shopkeepers and farmers in the context of daily

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<sup>80</sup> What is commonly known as the Right of Return in the context of the Palestinian project refers to the right of Palestinian refugees “to return to Palestine, which includes areas that are now part of Israel” (Ellis 2014:149). The right of return to one’s country of origin is a principle, but not customary international law, drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Israel regards the Palestinians’ desire to return to their homes and land as a political claim to be resolved as part of a peace settlement. Israel has also amended the Law of Return to limit the right only to those it regards as “Jews” and their non-Jewish offspring who want to immigrate to Israel (Sand 2010:290-291).

life, as he recalled the days when it was still possible in the district of his home area in the West Bank. He said: “I don’t see a solution without the help of the Jewish Israelis” (Daraghma 2014 20:11).

The Palestinian informants were also specific about what they require from Jewish Israeli activism. Kassis distinguished between two schools of thought on Jewish Israeli activism. One approach seeks cooperation to oppose the occupation and the multiple ways in which it is applied, but “sometimes it is very difficult to differentiate between joint struggling and normalisation” (Kassis 2014 14:32). There is not enough clarity on what is acceptable and what is not and therefore on both sides people “misuse this joint struggle for their own purposes”. In the second school of thought there are common things to address together, such as exposing the effects of the occupation. But to Kassis, the core role of Jewish Israeli activists is to influence their own society: “It’s very difficult for the Palestinians to change it. It’s very difficult for international efforts to change it” (Kassis 2014 14:32-33).

The work of those in the oPt is appreciated, but since “you couldn’t protect me and you couldn’t influence your society, it’s a complete failure” (Kassis 2014 15:1-5). In other words, for Jewish Israelis to work within the oPt does not change the system. It does not mean that Palestinians and Jewish Israelis should not cooperate, but it is necessary to differentiate between *ad hoc* or specific projects to resist, for example, a war, and the need for a joint strategic strategy for the benefit of the broader societies (Kassis 2014 15:10-11). In this regard, Carmi mentioned Jewish Israeli initiatives such as *Breaking the Silence*, *Combatants for Peace* and *Sadaka Reut*, which try to raise awareness amongst their own people on equal citizen rights and ending the occupation. Daraghma (2014 18:9-16) agreed that Jewish Israeli activists need to help their society to step back from a nationalist agenda, and “to come back to humanity”. He would like to see more Jewish Israelis stepping in as partners and acting with wisdom, as opposed to hiding passively (Daraghma 2014 12:24-29). But Sami (2015:1) did not expect change to come about “by virtue of changing the Israeli mentality”. In his view, Jewish Israeli activists should expose Israel’s actions, reframe the Zionist narrative of the events since 1948 and influence international society.

Qumsiyeh (2014:n.p.) appreciates the few Israeli activists who “are comfortable in their own skin. They feel a sense of mission but are not panicked about dire circumstances. They look at Palestinians as partners in the joint struggle”. Raheb (2014b:pers.comm.) refers to these activists as the “human face of Israel” – something it is very important to have: “These people

are prophetic voices and they show us that Israel is not only a military oppressor.” To define the matter as Palestinians versus Israel is “the old narrative” (Raheb 2014b:pers. comm.).

Finally, the informants mentioned some general expectations of practical, hands-on involvement. Over and above the positions, actions and campaigns already mentioned, activists can, for example, help with credible leadership to mobilise people and influence organisations, churches, the youth and so forth (Carmi 2014:2). They can document and communicate human rights violations (Carmi 2014:2; Sami 2015:2) and act as a protective presence, for example, during the annual olive harvest (Raheb 2014b:pers.comm.). Another important aspect is to facilitate conscientious Christian tourism – in that case, places such as Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho and the rest of occupied and Historical Palestine are not painted in the white and blue colours of the Israeli state, but are named as part of occupied Palestine, and time is also spent with the indigenous Palestinian Christians and others (Raheb 2014b:pers.comm.).

The views presented here do not represent those of all Palestinians. Still, they are consistent with what I have encountered since my journey with the Palestinian project started in 2011:

- Palestinians want to be acknowledged, treated with dignity, and live fully in dignified, inclusive and/or plural societies that welcome refugees and those in the diaspora.
- In their journey towards this goal, the Palestinians wish to be equal partners in a global solidarity movement that respects their expectations of activism.
- They expect activists to find ways to move away from attitudes and strategies that deepen imperialism, power abuse and othering.
- Their agenda should be informed by the kind of non-violence that seeks to bridge the divide in favour of constructive, alternative ways to co-exist.
- The task of transnational activists is not to design or to choose political solutions, but to highlight the unequal power balance, to sensitise, educate and mobilise civil society and to put pressure on Israel.
- Mere words are not activism. Practical, hands-on involvement is necessary, for example in the BDS campaign, but also through other means.
- Justice, international law, inclusivity, co-existence, human rights, mutual respect, equality, integrity and compassion and love are key values in both activism and in the envisaged future.
- Activism should not focus on nationalism for its own sake or be divorced from a sense of a shared humanity.

- The Palestinian cause is not isolated from other struggles in the world, or the only one worthy to be involved in.
- The activists, within their own organisations and amongst their peers, should practise what they advocate.
- The ideal activist displays a steadfast resilience and confidence centred in moral convictions and factual evidence. The person has courage, practises critical thinking, works hard in a sustainable manner and uses her/his energy in constructive ways.
- South African and Jewish Israeli activism are very relevant and necessary, but the nature of their actions differs. South Africans are expected to widen and deepen their existing solidarity and practise *Ubuntu* to fulfil their perceived role as a global moral agent or leader. Jewish Israelis need to focus firstly on influencing Jews within and outside of Israel as well as the broader international society.
- Despite a rootedness in particular and different religious traditions (and the territorial and other tensions), the real issue is the spiritual task of opening up to the other to reach a place of ethical co-existence. If they are to fulfil truly complementary roles, South African and Jewish Israeli activists need to develop and/or nurture their inner qualities, and combine these with disciplined, informed, focused outward action. Continuous self-reflection, humility and adjustments are necessary.

### **1.5 A final note on the context of the study**

The divide between Israel and the Palestinians was institutionalised in 1948 with the unilateral declaration of the State of Israel. The confiscation and occupation of Palestinian property since then have turned into an ever-tightening crisis for the Palestinians, who continue to be displaced from their land, with nowhere to go. Palestinians' suffering is marked by an overwhelming number of ongoing, gross and systemic human rights abuses at the hands of Israel. Scholars, human rights monitors and international bodies such as the UN, the ICRC, the World Council of Churches, Human Rights Watch and others have carefully documented these abuses, over decades. Yet there still seems to be no end to the injustices.

The situation raises alarming ethical questions: How is it possible that so many openly side with a systemic oppressor? What does it say about the kind of world we live in? Is there a discrepancy between the legal framework that governs the way this situation is being managed

on the one hand and the norms and values that global society proclaims and lives on the other? These questions cannot be answered here, but they are part of what frames the research context.

In a situation that has remained unresolved for decades, many have given up, or continue to promote destabilisation in favour of their own agendas. But a minority continue despite all the obstacles they encounter in sustaining public campaigns – often at considerable personal expense. This study focuses on the response of individuals in two countries (each with its own history of systemic oppression) and their attempts to end the occupation and exclusivism. What can be learned from their efforts? Chapter 2 explains the structure and the boundaries of this investigation when exploring how and why, from their own perspectives, the 21 case study participants are activists in the Palestinian project.

## 2 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD, FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

An investigation into activism in a longstanding unresolved matter seems daunting, especially if one adds the complexities, the interdependencies and the unexpected events of an increasingly globalised world to the limitations of humanity's capacity to understand the reasons for human responses. Despite these challenges, research into the self-perceived perceptions of human beings is possible, but it requires proper planning, an appropriate strategy with clear boundaries to avoid compromised findings and a well-managed execution which allows for contingencies.

This chapter discusses the research design, method and methodology for what is in essence a qualitative, exploratory case study with 21 South African and Jewish Israeli activists, by means of in-depth interviews that are analysed and interpreted in a hermeneutic, thematic manner.

The study process was by no means a linear process in which one step followed neatly after the other. I followed the steps in the sequence indicated in Table 1, but some of them happened concurrently. For the sake of an overview before describing the various decisions necessary for a scientific process, Table 1 offers a brief summary of the process.

**Table 1: Steps in the research process**

Field work prior to study (2011-2012):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working for three months in the oPt as an ecumenical companion monitoring, logging and reporting human rights violations and accompanying civilians.</li> <li>• Meeting Jewish Israeli and other international activists. Personal experience as an activist in cooperation with South African and international organisations.</li> </ul>
Preparing for the case study (2013-2014):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing literature, including daily developments on various platforms, and writing the research rationale and proposal.</li> <li>• Discerning and describing research design, method and methodologies. Gaining ethical clearance for the study from Stellenbosch University.</li> <li>• Discussions with (mostly) Palestinian informants as input to the research rationale and the selection criteria.</li> <li>• Developing selection criteria and a paradigm of inquiry with semi-structured questions.</li> <li>• Piloting the interview procedure and semi-structured questions with three activists.</li> <li>• Identifying potential respondents, inviting and recruiting them,</li> </ul>

	<p>obtaining their informed consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical training in ATLAS.ti.</li> </ul>
Execution of case study, analysis and report writing (2015-2016):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing 21 South African and Jewish Israeli activists in person, or on Skype (mid-April to mid-June 2015).</li> <li>• Transcription of the field data.</li> <li>• Checking the transcriptions for completeness and correctness. Giving respondents a chance to scrutinise and approve the transcriptions.</li> <li>• Gaining an overall sense of the data. Cyclical analysis of field data: generating initial open codes; creating comments and memos; recoding; linking and/or clustering codes, searching for code families and themes; reviewing themes; observing and noting relations, nuances, contrasts, contradictions and silences; defining and naming themes.</li> <li>• Reporting on themes and sub-themes, supported by arguments and illustrated by verbatim quotes along with continued analysis. Formulating findings and recommendations.</li> </ul>

All the above steps are discussed in more detail in the rest of this chapter.

## 2.1 Empirical ethics as a field of study

The contribution of empirical data to ethical analyses of practical dilemmas is often criticised. However, scholars such as Dunn *et al.* (2012), Lawrence and Curlin (2011) and De Vries and Gordijn (2009) reflect on alternatives to the tension and division between what *ought* to be, what *should be* (normative approaches in ethics) on the one hand, and the *is* relations or non-normative approaches (such as meta-ethics and descriptive ethics)<sup>81</sup> on the other hand. Schmidt (2009:67-68) and Wahman (2011:35) agree that experimental ethics studies the expressions of human agency by investigating people's morality in human life and practice, describing them, empirically, as they are, rather than in prescriptive abstract terms. These are not the only debates on the contribution of empirical ethics.

Musschenga (2010:214) asserts that a typically deductive approach that assumes superior "universal principles binding to all rational beings" is increasingly challenged by an "anti-theory" movement. Anti-theorists may, for example, reject normative ethics as unnecessary,

<sup>81</sup> According to Leget and Borry (2010:232-234) *normative ethics* focuses on the development of ethical theory, norms, principles and rules. *Meta-ethics* studies the assumptions of normative approaches and hence *what is* right and good, whether moral values are objective, how humanity is motivated by ethical attitudes, the meaning of moral terms and reasoning, as well as moral ontology, epistemology and justification. *Descriptive ethics* is also non-normative, like meta-ethics, but it focuses on what *is* the case and not what *ought* to be the case. It investigates moral conduct and beliefs in society or in specific groups.

claiming that moral reasoning happens without foundational moral principles, that normative ethics is undesirable, because it cannot do justice to human uniqueness and particularities, and that it is impossible, because no ethical theory to date has managed to convince everyone. However, Leget and Borry (2010:233) argue that a stark division between normative and non-normative approaches implies that empirical research simply provides the facts, while normative ethics does the tricky work of “defining concepts, building valid arguments, and reaching practical conclusions”. This binary implies that empirical ethics is relegated to a marginal position. Leget and Borry (2010:233) and also Doris and Stich (2005) stress the importance and relevance of empirical investigations. According to Doris and Stich (2005:116), empirical ethics may challenge existing assumptions or add new nuances to understandings, because the data recorded in empirical ethics studies are

...often deeply relevant to important debates, and it is therefore intellectually irresponsible to ignore them. Sometimes empirical findings seem to contradict what particular disputing parties assert or presuppose, while in other cases, they appear to reconfigure the philosophical topography, revealing that certain lines of argument must traverse empirically difficult terrain. Often, philosophers who follow these challenging routes will be forced to make additional empirical conjectures, and these conjectures, in their turn, must be subject to empirical scrutiny. The upshot, we conclude, is that an intellectually responsible philosophical ethics is one that continuously engages the relevant empirical literature.

Leget and Borry (2010) also adopt a relational view, seeing empirical and normative approaches as two dimensions of ethical studies that are intrinsically linked to one another and are equally important. Thus, “(e)mpirical research cannot determine what is good or evil, right of wrong, by itself”, given the inductive nature of such investigation (Leget & Borry 2010:241). It then remains necessary to test empirical findings against normative judgements. However, and notwithstanding the relevance of testing empirical findings against ethical theories, they also point out that a researcher already takes a normative position “from the very moment a problem has been identified and described” (Leget & Borry 2010:242), even if the researcher has every intention of being non-judgemental. In this respect, Wahman (2011:35) comments that experimental ethics is not limited to studying the ground(s) of moral conclusions, “but is part and parcel of generating ethical conclusions themselves”.

According to Leget and Borry (2010:242), for a scientific approach, it is necessary for a researcher to clarify her/his own moral position, because it provides the necessary transparency on the researcher’s ethical and social position and motives. In the context of my study, the identification and description of the problem in Chapter 1 provides a normative framework for

the empirical work. Section 1.3.3, for example, makes it very clear that the position of this research is not neutral or non-judgmental. In addition to the identification and the description of the problem under investigation, the selection criteria for the kind of activist included in the case study are also part of the study's normative paradigm.

## 2.2 Exploratory purpose

Why choose an exploratory approach if so much has already been written about the Palestinian project? Publications, films and other media in general support of transnational non-violent activism in the Palestinian project are increasingly available. They include work by Jewish and South African activists, who often refer to their own experiences in explaining the Palestinian project.<sup>82</sup> A few studies have focused on Jewish Israeli activism, but have not investigated *why* the actors are activists.<sup>83</sup> A sociologist, Eddy (2014:443), who interviewed 25 accompaniers<sup>84</sup> from a variety of countries to investigate principled and pragmatic non-violent activism in the oPt, calls his research a response to a “notable lack of empirical analyses on the prevalence of these nonviolent orientations among activists, and how they might contribute to tactical choices and shape emotional fields of interaction with opponents”. In research on activism relating to the Palestinian project, there are no prior studies specifically on South African activism, and none on activists from both South Africa and Israel. This appears to be a conspicuous oversight given that links between South Africa, Israel and the Palestinian project, have been pointed out explicitly by authors such as Dadoo and Osman (2013), Davis (2003), Hasan (2008), Jeena (2012), *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012), and Zakariyya (2015). This study addresses this gap.

In a project that is tangentially related to my study, in 2012, Clint le Bruyns<sup>85</sup> and I invited individual South African Jews, Muslims and Christians known for their non-violent support of Palestinian rights to write essays for a book we are planning with the working title *Pedagogical*

<sup>82</sup> Recent Jewish Israelis' perspectives in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle are to be found in books by Braverman (2010, 2013), Ellis (2014), Pappé (2014), Peled (2012), Sand (2010) and Shavit (2013). Supportive South African views have been aired, for example, by Dadoo and Osman (2013), Jeena (2012) and the film documentaries *The Village under the Forest* (2013) and *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012).

<sup>83</sup> Margalit (2012) explores the role and impact of dissidents in the Israeli society in the introduction of progressive ideas into the periphery of existing paradigms that challenge mainstream ideologies of exclusion. Naaman (2006) examines some gendered aspects of the occupation from a feminist perspective in Machsom Watch, a human rights organisation of Israeli women that monitors Israeli checkpoints in the occupied West Bank. Pallister-Wilkins (2009) focuses on joint activism between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis.

<sup>84</sup> The role of International accompaniers is to accompany civil Palestinians physically in their daily tasks, while they are farming, go to school, go to clinics and universities, or simply live or move about in their villages. The aim is to protect civilians from on-going harassment by the Israeli military and settlers.

<sup>85</sup> Le Bruyns, Director of and Senior Lecturer in the Theology and Development Programme of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, is known for his activism in the Palestinian project.

*liberation? Reshaping public opinion on Palestine-Israel*. Although this is still a work in progress, it is of interest here. This collection of essays will focus primarily on processes of change, or on how these South Africans have reshaped their identities in order to eventually contribute to re-socialization on perspectives of Palestine and Israel (Le Bruyns & Momberg 2012). The authors do not focus on activism *per se*; the collection contains only South African views, and it does not present an empirical investigation. A reading of the draft essays revealed several insights that might enhance the current study, but the collection has not yet been published, so the material could not be used in this study.

A recent publication relevant to the context of this study is a 2016 book, *Freedom is a constant struggle. Ferguson, Palestine, and the foundations of a movement* by political activist and scholar Angela Davis. The book was edited by human rights activist Frank Barat. Part of the book consists of interviews by Barat with Davis, and the rest consists of essays and talks by Davis. Barat's intention was to understand the work of activists, where and how this work starts, what the foundations for developing a movement are, and the impact of activists' work on them. Despite the insightful information shared by Davis (2016) on Palestinian solidarity and transnational activism, the answers she gives do not engage with the perceptions of South African and Jewish Israeli activists, and represent the perspectives of only one person.

The shortage of scientific data on the ethical orientation of activists in the Palestinian project and the lack of empirical information on South African and Jewish-Israeli activism were two of the main reasons for the exploratory design chosen for my study. This study focuses on activists from two countries deserving ethical reflection as explained in Section 1.3.2. It attempts to identify ethical issues that are relevant to them in the context of the Palestinian project. Thus, in line with Leget and Borry's (2010:234) and Schmidt's (2009:84-85) arguments, the approach is not one of prescriptive applied ethics in which moral theory is the final arbiter, and in which empirical data is of no relevance. This study does not aim to prove or improve any hypotheses or theories, and it does not predict any outcomes. It attempts to gain an overview of the various issues at stake by exploring and discovering in a process that requires flexibility, open-mindedness and primarily inductive reasoning without any *a priori* predictions, as suggested by Stebbins (2001:3-7).

It was important in this research to be open to stimuli and to examine the ideas presented by the activists, including unexpected information, whilst remaining realistic about the aims and the envisaged contribution of the investigation. In the context of these general exploratory aims,

the analysis set out in Section B presents the story of the case study through four broad themes relating to what motivated activism among the responding activists. Each is substantiated by sub-themes and supporting arguments. The limited sample size of 21 respondents in a single case study made it possible to delve fairly deeply into the nuances in perceptions.

The next step in the research involved weaving the themes, sub-themes and sub-conclusions derived from the analysis of the data in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 into *grounded statements*. El Hussein, Hirst, Salyers and Osuji (2014:5-8) point out that using grounded theory as a methodology for inquiry is very time-consuming. Moreover, the results can be incorrect if the coding and selection of data extracts are purposeful, as opposed to being intent on discovery. Grounded theory-based research cannot include or develop assumptions from existing theories, and it is not necessarily suited for generalisation. Despite these and other disadvantages, El Hussein *et al.* (2014:3-5) argue that grounded theory as a methodology also has important advantages. It provides for richness of data and depth, and it fosters creativity. It is unique in its ability to generate concepts by using the logic of constant comparison and frequent memo writing in a reiterative, systematic interaction between data collection, analysis, conceptualisation and presentation that leads to the formulation of hypotheses, theory, or as in this research, to grounded statements because of the case study method.

Thus, the grounded statements, in the form of findings and conclusions in Sections 7.1 and 7.2, are rooted in the empirical data, or can be connected directly to the source data, as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), who first developed and later refined grounded theory in the context of qualitative analysis. They are not informed by, or formulated with the help of, any existing theories (Stebbins 2001:6). Instead, the statements are specific to this case study and there is an intrinsic, reciprocal relation between the outcomes and the empirical data. This also implies that the outcomes of the exploration are more than a descriptive account. The data that were gathered and the conclusions that were reached open up opportunities for future research.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that if a study of this nature identifies some regularities and/or connections, these should not be assumed to demonstrate some natural or causal law, or to predict behaviour – Mouton and Marais (1996:47) explain: “When we say that a person’s activity has been caused by another activity or event, we are, in fact, not saying anything more than that he or she had a reason for behaving in a particular manner.” To emphasise their point, they cite Simon (1982:124-125), who argues that “[s]imilar conditions give rise to similar actions because people appraise their common situations similarly and

because the desires they have or have produced in them incline them toward making similar choices”. Thus, it is possible to explain specific human behaviour without claiming universally applicable motivations.

The purpose of the analysis in this study was to seek an insider’s view of self-perceived meanings assigned to identities, situations, experiences, and so forth. Thus, the study deals with the personal perspectives of individuals grouped into one case study – and therein lies a challenge. The challenge of listening to multiple participants in a single case study is related to the tension between interpretivism and positivism.

As Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012:14-15) explain, *the interpretive school* (stemming from the hermeneutic practice of interpreting meaning in biblical texts<sup>86</sup>) is interested in both personal and social meaning in discourses. The story of each person is the centrepiece of the method, and thus the analysis accepts multiple realities in a collection of personal narratives. The “monogamy of space” of the earlier modern Western era is replaced by a “polygamy of space” (Reader 2008:11). Here, the researcher’s ethnographic commitment is to an essentially contestable reality. *Positivism* is embedded in the more traditional scientific method, and is known for its systematic analytical procedures and the identification of structure, or themes in data. Texts are reduced to codes, themes or other concepts to find patterns in possible relations between the codes. The emphasis is on measurement and quantification in a qualitative approach, facilitated by systematic methods and procedures that are visible to others. It leans towards the notion of an objective reality.

In trying to understand the self-perceived motivations of activists, the challenge in a study such as this one is to tread the fine line between honouring the unique perspectives of the participants on the one hand, and noting patterns, themes or trends across the data corpus<sup>87</sup> on the other. Hence, I used methods and procedures that can be traced by others, and from time to time also quantify responses by referring to the groundedness and/or the density of codes. The groundedness refers to the number of data segments or quotations associated with a particular

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<sup>86</sup> Hermeneutics (derived from the Greek term *hermeneuein*) is an attempt to understand the meaning of different texts in a vibrant tapestry of intertextuality (Smit 1998:276). It aims to engage in ever-deeper levels of unpacking varied, nuanced and changeable layers of information located in various contexts in a way that is deemed appropriate under particular circumstances.

<sup>87</sup> The *data corpus* refers to all the data from all the respondents’ interviews plus any field notes. The *data set* consists of (all or several) individual data items in the data corpus. The data set may vary according to the nature of a particular analysis, such as for a specific research theme, topic or angle. A *data item* is a specific, single interview with an activist. A *data extract* is an individually identified and coded piece of data extracted from a data item. Not all data extracts are used in the final analysis, only those with relevance to the research topic feature (Braun & Clarke 2006:79).

code, while the density indicates the number of links to other codes and memos. But, as Guest *et al.* (2012:15), who are biased towards positivism, point out, the clustering of information is itself a highly interpretive undertaking, and it requires a researcher constantly to refer back to the data set and not to work only with summarised forms of data. I was and remain equally interested in silences, unique views and differences between the activists' perceptions, because these are also part of their self-perceived motivations. Therefore, in addition to working with the data corpus and its codes and themes, in my analysis I was also mindful of each person's individual story and possible themes within the stories of these individuals. Because in the analysis I valued pluralism and took into account both the whole and the individual with her/his similarities and differences, I have chosen not to use terms such as "discrepancies" or "equilibrium", as, according to Joas (2003:17), these are the conceptual tools of modernism.

What I hope to offer is not so much explanations or motivations that can be regarded as certainties, accurate replicable data or even fully coherent answers, but rather some insights on what the specific activists became aware or conscious of in their relational praxis. Perhaps the study will also provide a glimpse of a re-envisioned future, accompanied or facilitated by the behaviour and the convictions of individuals who, given their own limitations, inspire others to accept public responsibility and/or to be supportive of the Palestinians' quest for human rights and dignity, freedom and self-determination.

### **2.3 Qualitative research, a case study design and a contextual lens**

The study set out to listen to people who have lived experiences of being activists in the Palestinian project. It endeavoured to gather and document insights into the nature of inclusive, non-violent activism practised by a sample of South African and Jewish Israeli activists. The specific focus on the perspectives of the activists in searching for in-depth and nuanced descriptions of their self-perceived motivations necessitated a qualitative method over a quantitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on "thick" descriptions, in other words, in-depth and nuanced descriptions that are ideal for gaining insight into the social action(s) (Babbie & Mouton 2001:270), in this case, of specific activists in their specific contexts.

The aim of a case study is to understand activity in important, real-life circumstances to answer complex and/or challenging research questions involving many variables, some of which are not obvious. Thus, it is an empirical enquiry that recognises the context and the larger reality in

which answers are sought from the respondents (Remenyi 2012:7). The type of case study used here is one that focuses on events, roles and relationships (Babbie & Mouton 2001:281).

Because this research is concerned with contextualised events, actions and processes, the thesis begins with immersion in the natural setting (the context), as set out in the first chapter. Then it explores perceived concepts and constructs in the case study. As I have already mentioned, the case study does not use existing theories, or a hypothesis, but presents the lived impressions and motivations of activists. To do this, the study's context is of intrinsic interest, because the activists' responses cannot be understood in a nuanced way without a thorough understanding of the basic socio-political context.

Understanding the broader context required an ongoing awareness of events and circumstances as they unfolded during the course of the study and featured in, or influenced the respondents' views. Babbie and Mouton (2001:282) refer to the natural setting of a study as the "'ecology' or the 'environment', with its notions of multiple, interacting contextualised systems...in which the unit of analysis is embedded". External events such as an increase in violence, decisions by international bodies, changes in legislation, or any other positive or negative significant events coinciding with the interviews may, for example, have had an impact on the respondents' views and their availability. Some examples noted here are the influence of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa that coincided with the South African interviews, the 2014 War on Gaza and its aftermath, and the Israeli election of March 2015.

#### **2.4 A cross-sectional time perspective**

The study focuses on insights into the 21 participants' sources of inspiration *at the time of the interviews* in South Africa and via Skype with respondents abroad, from mid-April to mid-June 2015. Thus the research is essentially synchronic or cross-sectional, not diachronic or longitudinal. This raises a problem inherent to cross-sectional exploratory studies – Babbie and Mouton (2001:92) caution that although they "typically aim at understanding causal processes that occur over time, their conclusions are based on observations made at only one time". Their concern is valid, but it is necessary to reflect briefly whether it applies to my study.

My focus was not *observation* (the method mentioned by Babbie and Mouton), as I was interested in listening to the self-perceived views of the respondents as told from their perspectives. Therefore, a longer time perspective was encouraged in the interviews. The

standard opening question was “How long have you been involved in the Palestinian project?”. This question led almost all the participants into biographical reflections on how their involvement came about, and thus they referred to experiences spread over a longer period, often starting in their childhoods. Thus, the interview material does not represent wholly isolated snap shots, but includes more integrated and textured self-perceived perspectives that embody whole views, including references to collective societal memories, such as the Holocaust and South African apartheid, although the answers were articulated in a defined period. Although past events may have had an impact on an individual respondent’s current position, the focus was on *whether* changes occurred, and if so, *from where to where* the shifts took place, and if and why they had a bearing on the activist’s current position. The intricate dynamics of change processes are not the primary focus of the analysis. At times, it may be very difficult to maintain such clear-cut divisions between processes and their manifestations, but for the sake of transparency and accountability, it is necessary to make the distinction to manage expectations of the study’s findings.

## 2.5 Interdisciplinary approach

The emerging disciplines of Israeli and Palestinian studies draw on and contribute to scholarship in different fields such as history, politics, society, faith and culture (Halper 2008; Jean-Klein 2001; Kaminer 1996, Kassis 2004; Kaufman-Lacusta 2010). All these and other disciplines are relevant to this study’s research context – understanding the background to the study and following the comments of the respondents requires some knowledge of these fields. This implies not so much a multi-disciplinary approach as an interdisciplinary one, as “a process of answering a question, solving a problem or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession” (Tayler 2012:245).

In addition, the respondents’ interpretation of historical events requires some knowledge of the stark contrast between the official Jewish Israeli perspective and Palestinian memory, as well as of how historians and others assume power to enforce a particular version of the past. What is known to Jewish Israelis as “Israel’s War of Independence”, for example, is referred to as the “Catastrophe” (*Nakba*) when Palestinians mention the mass destruction, violence and exodus of 1947 to 1948. Israel’s status as a democracy, the Palestinians’ desire for self-determination, South African internationalism, the pact between the USA and Israel and other political realities also require some political background. The respondents referred to economic agendas in respect of Israel, the Palestinians and global society, to legal aspects pertaining to the special

regime of occupation, human rights in peaceful and in conflict areas, the definition of apartheid in international law, rulings by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, as well as resolutions by the United Nations' General Assembly and its Security Council.<sup>88</sup> Although the study is essentially in the field of empirical ethics, it is difficult to demarcate the boundaries of multiple genres of knowledge in the data; hence the interdisciplinary dimension of the research.

## 2.6 Informal discussions with Palestinian and other informants

A number of informal, unstructured, collegial conversations with Palestinians and a human rights activist from the Netherlands enriched and deepened this thesis's understanding of the research context in preparation for the case study.<sup>89</sup>

There were several reasons for the decision to ask input from informants. In the first instance, the research interest in inclusive and pluralistic approaches presupposed a method that would create space for Palestinians to explain their thoughts on transnational activism. They are not the respondents in the empirical study, but they are part of a civil society that called for transnational activism. Their insider views and lived experiences contributed greatly to my understanding of how they regard the role of international and particularly South African and Jewish Israeli activism. Their input was also useful in discerning the relevance and the consequences of themes in the case study. Although the intention of the case study was not to compare the respondents' views with those of the informants, the informants' contributions were used in Chapter 7 when reflecting on the usability of the case study's findings. In this sense their perspectives assisted with triangulation to enhance the credibility, the transferability

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<sup>88</sup> In this study, international law is regarded all the laws deemed applicable by the United Nations Human Rights Council (2013:4-5) in respect of the relation between Israel and the Palestinians. It consists of International Human Rights Law, which governs respect, protection and the advancement of the full range of social, economic, cultural, civil and political human rights; treaties and rulings by the United Nations Security Council; and the IHL. The IHL offers a critical and universally accepted, legally binding framework to ensure respect for the life and dignity of people in armed, violent conflict, including those under military occupation. It is enshrined in the 1907 Hague Regulations, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and customary IHL (Maurer 2012:1506). The United Nations Human Rights Council states that it also deems other international law frameworks and principles applicable:

(T)he law on state responsibility for internationally-wrongful acts, including third state responsibility, is relevant. International criminal law enables the pursuit of individual criminal responsibility for conduct that amounts to international crimes. In this respect, for example, Palestinian leaders sent identical letters to the Secretary-General and the Security Council on 3 December 2012. Citing article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it stated that 'Israeli settlement activities' constitute war crimes, and that Israel must be held accountable for such act (United Nations Human Rights Council 2013:5).

<sup>89</sup> The views of these informants are presented in Section 1.4.

and the dependability of the findings. Their input also helped to refine the selection criteria listed below, in Section 2.7.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:168) warn researchers against the phenomenon that people who work with outside investigators tend to be atypical, or may be marginalised within their own group as a result of cooperation with researchers. In this case, the Palestinians, already a marginalised society, have called collectively, publicly and officially on the world for non-violent resistance against Israel. They are by no means passive receivers of South African, Jewish Israeli, or any other advocacy, but are activists in their own right and are known in their own society and in international circles. If they experience pressure as a result of assisting this research, such pressure is more likely from official Israeli quarters, which already attempt to intimidate them and suppress their voices.

Nine informants were approached to engage in informal discussions with me. Of these, three are women and six are men, two were then between 20 and 35 years, and the remainder were then between 40 and 60 years. Eight are Palestinian and one person is from the Netherlands. Three are Christians, four are Muslims and two are not religious, and identified themselves as spiritual or agnostic. Four of the Palestinians live in the oPt, one commutes between Israel and South Africa, and three stay in other countries. The University of Stellenbosch Humanities Ethical Committee waived the requirement of signed informed consent forms for those who participated in these informal discussions, and these informants were offered the option of remaining anonymous, but all gave their permission for them to be identified.

I met with the informants on different occasions. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Omar Barghouti visited South Africa in 2014. I also scheduled meetings with key Palestinians from different faiths and organisations at an international conference in Bethlehem<sup>90</sup> later that year. However, I never

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<sup>90</sup> The conference titled *Life with Dignity* was hosted in Bethlehem in December 2014 by Kairos Palestine, on its fifth anniversary. The conference focused on theology and justice; creative, non-violent civil resistance; ethical tourism, tolerance and religious extremism, and envisioning the road ahead. The delegates came from all continents except Australia, and included representatives of the World Council of Churches, the United Nations, Jewish, Muslim and Christian scholars and human rights activists. I was invited to talk about the Southern African perspective. All entries to the oPt are under the military control of Israel. Airport staff are dressed in civil clothes, but are military staff. Visas to enter "Israel" and the oPt are only granted at the two entry points – at Ben Gurion Airport and at the Allenby Bridge/King Hussein Bridge on the border with Jordan. My colleagues and I flew to Amman and planned to enter the West Bank at the Israeli-controlled international border post at Allenby Bridge, because we first met with the South African Ambassador to Jordan on the day of our arrival. However, for no declared reason, the Israeli authorities refused me entry after an 11-hour process of interrogation and various attempts to intimidate and unsettle me. They released me shortly before midnight and my passport was returned on the Jordanian side when I arrived there early the next morning. This incident makes any future entry into Israel and the oPt highly unlikely for me, if not

arrived at the conference itself, as I was denied entry to the West Bank, where Bethlehem is situated, by Israeli authorities on 1 December 2014. After a process of interrogation, they forced me to return to the Jordanian side of the international border post where the South African Ambassador to Jordan at the time, Dr Molefe Tsele, and one of his colleagues, kindly met me shortly before 01.00 the next morning. My forced return, and the hospitality of Dr Tsele and his wife, who hosted me in Amman, the capital of Jordan, opened up an opportunity to visit three members of a Palestinian family who are in Jordan due to the diaspora and who lost a family member at the hands of the Israeli military in March 2014 at the same border post. The in-depth discussion with Mariam Al Ja'ja (2014:pers.comm.) from the Zuayter family turned out to be most fruitful.

Another unintended, but positive development of my refused entry was the contribution of Adri Nieuwhof from the Netherlands. She is known for her activism in respect of both South African apartheid and the Palestinians, and she interviewed me after the incident at the border post. When she heard about my research, she agreed to a Skype discussion on her experience of activism in South Africa and in the Palestinian project.

Back home I pursued talks with local Palestinian contacts and invited those from abroad to either share their views on Skype, or to e-mail their responses to a list of basic questions<sup>91</sup> with the understanding that they were free to raise any other relevant issues. All those who gave input did so without hesitation, and were very understanding regarding the changes in the schedule and format. The discussions were recorded either in e-mails or as transcriptions.

## **2.7 Sampling, selection criteria and recruitment**

One of the characteristics of a case study is its clear-cut focus on singularity, or a unit of analysis without being restricted to an individual person. Thus, the unit of analysis can be a family, a team, a specific group, a community, a country or multiple individual units (Simons 2009:1-14).

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impossible. Visas are granted at Israeli-controlled border posts and cannot be arranged from South Africa. I was not the first South African to be declined entry without a reason. Two colleagues who travelled with me gained entry after seven hours of interrogation. I was intensely aware of the visible and audible aggression of the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians – a trauma these civilians routinely experience when they try to travel. Anis Daraghma describes it as a sea of uncertainty, temporality, emergency and hopelessness. Being barred from a land and people whose destiny I regard as intertwined with my own gave me a glimpse into the profound loss of Palestinian refugees whose return to their property Israel has refused for decades.

<sup>91</sup> The questions are listed in Addendum C.

The study used purposive sampling, which does not allow an equal chance of selection. The sample is neither representative of the entire population, nor random. The choice of participants relies on the discretion of the researcher, and is based on specific selection criteria (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2011:392). Since it is nearly impossible to have in-depth interviews with all South African and Jewish Israeli activists who meet the selection criteria, the respondents were a subset of a larger population and represented a non-probability convenience sample, as described by Babbie and Mouton (2001:166).

The sample size in qualitative research depends on the research aims, but it tends to be small, and is seldom more (and often less) than 20 people (Carey 2013:47). A sample size of 20 with ten South Africans, and ten Jewish Israelis was planned, but in the end, I interviewed a total of 21 activists. The odd number came about because one of the respondents invited to participate was found to hold dual citizenship, in both South Africa and Israel. I decided to retain this person in the sample, but still to interview ten people from each nationality (without dual nationality) to have at least 20 respondents in the case study.

The respondents neither belonged to any pre-selected organisations, nor were they recruited through a defined number of pre-selected organisations. I first called or spoke with activists in my own advocacy circles who seemed to meet the criteria. I also wrote to activists whose work was known to me, either through personal contact or through electronic platforms. Thereafter, I employed snowball sampling to identify the balance of the required number of respondents by asking some participants, as well as a South African colleague, to introduce me to other potential candidates. Thus, the respondents were a mix of personal contacts, people who were introduced to me through mutual contacts and people to whom I wrote without any prior introduction.

The main reason for using two groups in a sample is to allow for contextual differences which make it possible to observe similar and/or diverse properties between them (Emmel 2013:16). It follows that the selection criteria for South Africans and Jewish Israelis were the same, with the exception of citizenship. The citizenship criterion implied, *ipso facto*, that a cultural and/or religious affiliation to Jewishness was an additional criterion for the Israeli respondents – whereas the South African *Constitution* does not discriminate between people with racial, religious and other differences, only Jewish Israeli citizens enjoy the full benefits of the Israeli

state.<sup>92</sup> It should be noted that the term “Jewish” is often understood as purely *cultural*, and does not necessarily imply an affiliation to Judaism as a *religious* orientation.

The selection criteria targeted activists with a non-exclusive ethos, a practice of non-violence and respect for international law. The qualifying age of 20 created space for conscientious objectors (all the respondents who had refused enlistment in the Israeli Defense Force turned out to be older than 20 years). In accordance to the expectations of the Palestinian informants, the respondents had to display sustained commitment over a specified minimum period. In light of the aim to include younger people, the minimum was set at eighteen months.

Gender, age, country/countries of residence, nationalities and religious orientation were noted at the start of each interview, but they were not stratification criteria. Any of these demographics might or might not turn out to be a relevant variable in the analysis, but they were not determining factors in locating the type of case study, or the unit of analysis. Thus, I did not assume *a priori* that, for example, specific religious tradition(s) play a greater role in activism over and above other orientations.<sup>93</sup> Other than making sure that the candidates met the minimum age and that at least ten respondents had South African and at least ten had Jewish Israeli citizenship, I did not ask about gender, age, country/countries of residence,

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<sup>92</sup> Some use the term “ethnic democracy” to describe Israel, which is an “incomplete democracy” or a “low-grade democracy” (Sand 2010:295) because it differentiates between people’s civil rights on ethnic grounds. Others argue that it is not a democracy at all, because an ethnic state that discriminates against parts of its population (the Arabs) cannot be a democratic state (Jeena 2012:5). Both perspectives point out that a Jewish democracy “is not an open, inclusive identity that invites others to become part of it, or to coexist with it on a basis of equality and in symbiosis” (Sand 2010:305). More than 50 laws and other mechanisms regulate Arab Israeli citizenship, based on ethnic and religious identity (ADALAH n.d.). Although Arab-Palestinian Israelis are allowed to participate in Israeli politics and elections, their political parties face legal censure if they criticize the Jewish state or its policies (Dadoo & Osman 2013:53). Thus, non-Jewish Israelis are automatically demarcated as the “other” by their “lesser” citizenship. Laws that discriminate against Arab-Palestinian Israelis include laws regarding absentee properties, land purchase, return, marriage and divorce; various statutes and orders limit their privileges and funding to preserve most public resources for Jewish Israelis (Sand 2010:306). For example, Israel’s health and education budgets for the Arab sector are “per capita, a fraction of those allocated Jewish locales” (Bahour & Jiryis 2014:n.p.). There are about 50 000 Arab-Palestinian Israelis and their descendants currently total about 170 000 people (Sand 2010:281), who remained on their land in those parts of Historical Palestine which became Israel during the violence of 1947 to 1949. They were not part of the more than 80 per cent of Palestinians who fled or were expelled at that time (Dadoo & Osman 2013:39,52). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Israel have since been displaced due to Israel’s on-going expropriation of their land (Bahour & Jiryis 2014:n.p.; Gassner 2010:56). They are largely Sunni Muslims, with smaller numbers of Christians and members of the Arab-Palestinian Druze community. (Arab-Palestinian Druze Israelis are the only non-Jewish citizens who must enlist in the Israel Defense Forces; they enjoy more privileges than other Arab Israelis, but fewer than those of Jewish citizens.)

<sup>93</sup> I use the term “religious tradition” and not “faith tradition” so as to include traditions that do not assume the presence of a God, and/or those that focus on behaviour patterns rather than on faith. See also Table 2, which notes the differences between religious affiliations in the sample.

possible other nationalities and religious orientations before the start of each interview, but deliberately allowed for plurality.

The selection criteria were the following – respondents had to

- have a track record in public non-violent activism of at least eighteen months in the period leading up to the time of the interview;
- have a good command of English;
- be 20 years or older;
- recognise Palestinians as a people who are not only confined to those who live in the oPt, but also reside in Israel and in the diaspora;
- reject the oppression and exclusion of Palestinians;
- agree that both Israel and the Palestinians must adhere to applicable international law, such as the International Human Rights Law and the IHL;
- have South African or full Israeli citizenship.

South Africans were not restricted to specific faith traditions or cultural orientations. They could associate with Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or any other religious orientation, or none, and could be affiliated to or be from any cultural group. However, all citizens from Israel needed to be *Jewish* Israelis (at least in terms of cultural background, as indicated above). As also indicated, one respondent was found to have dual citizenship, so an additional respondent was recruited to ensure no fewer than 20 respondents and this respondent was retained.

Not everyone who was invited to participate replied to the invitation, but most welcomed the opportunity. Everyone who had been approached and who expressed interest received a formal electronic invitation that positioned the research with its core question and stated the selection criteria. Each person was asked to confirm whether s/he met the criteria. I also attached a copy of Stellenbosch University's Informed Consent Form,<sup>94</sup> which specifies the roles and rights of both the participant and the researcher.

## 2.8 Pilot study

Before starting with the process of data collection I tested the recruitment process, the data collection instrument, the interview procedure and the transcription of the interviews with the help of test candidates who met the inclusion criteria of the study. The aim of a pilot study is to

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<sup>94</sup> See Addendum A.

identify possible gaps and shortcomings and to make amendments where necessary (Persaud 2010:1032-1033). Three South Africans (two men and one woman) from Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Western Cape and Gauteng were willing to give critical, constructive feedback and to act as the pilot respondents.

On the whole, the pilot study indicated that the time allowed for the interviews was adequate and the procedure was clear to all, but that the questions and my personal style needed adjustment.

The first interview went well. The pilot respondent was comfortable and shared valuable information. She confirmed my impression of a relaxed, yet stimulating and satisfying discussion. The second interview did not flow as well. It proceeded in a mechanical, almost staccato fashion, resulting in a disjointed, lacklustre, one-dimensional rational conversation. The respondent shared a lot of interesting, useful information, but we agreed that the overall experience was unsatisfactory. It seemed that the switch from a work-related meeting to the interview compromised the tone, manner and quality of the interview. The respondent felt that he was not adequately prepared for the interview, and indicated that he was under pressure due to personal circumstances. My own tiredness shortly after the Allenby Bridge incident also influenced the process negatively. This valuable experience highlighted the need to emphasise to respondents that there is no need to prepare anything, for me to be sensitive to their circumstances and to have enough inner space to facilitate constructive, enjoyable sessions. I subsequently simplified some of the questions and adjusted my style to be more conversational to encourage a better flow. The last pilot respondent responded freely to the questions, and the discussion developed its own dynamic. It was a constructive, interesting interview, and my expectations of insight into the personal motivations of the person were met.

## **2.9 Data collection instruments**

The fieldwork consisted of formal, private, personal, face-to-face interviews, whether in person or on Skype,<sup>95</sup> guided by a general paradigm of inquiry with each respondent. The plan was to interview each respondent at a place of her/his choice, such as the respondent's home, office or another enclosed, undisturbed, private space in the respondent's home city or town. All the South African interviews and that with the respondent with dual citizenship were conducted

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<sup>95</sup> Although qualitative research is usually conducted in the natural setting of the social actors, face-to-face discussions on Skype are accepted as a viable alternative, and this mode was authorised by the University of Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee.

according to plan, except for the interview with R10, who was interviewed on Skype. However, I realised that my chances of gaining a visa to Israel a few months after the incident of my detention on my way to the Bethlehem conference were slim. Even if I were granted a visa to enter, there was a risk that the authorities could put me under surveillance and would compromise the research by harassing the respondents and/or confiscating my equipment. Hence, the interviews with the ten Jewish Israelis were done via Skype.

All agreed to accept the contents of Research Ethics Committee's informed consent form and there were no queries. Those whom I visited signed the form, and so did some of the respondents who were interviewed on Skype. However, most participants abroad consented in a sentence or two on e-mail, or verbally at the start of the call. The interviews were all completed within the envisaged timeframe of one-and-a-half to two hours. All were available at the times and places we agreed upon. In one case I could not gain access to the designated property or reach the respondent in another way, and I consequently interviewed someone else.

The nature of the knowledge sought in this empirical study is sensitive and very personal. I was interested in the activists' own opinions, values, preferences, attitudes, levels of (un)certainity, fears, existential perceptions, levels of commitment; that which allows for intention, moral deliberation, meaning, belonging or a sense of worthwhileness; information on how they view themselves in relation to others, and experience their practice; their motives, goals, roles, strategies, platforms and/or other reasons that inspire them to be activists in the Palestinian project. This implies that I wanted to gain insight into their innermost and perhaps the not-so-clear or even conflicting urges, notions, feelings and cognitions that drive or motivate them to take a public stand.

Probing this kind of information and responding to these kinds of questions required a safe atmosphere of trust and respect, with sufficient space for the respondents to share their views willingly and freely. In other words, the interview process had to allow for what Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) refer to as an authentic discovery of information. In this regard, Babbie and Mouton (2001:291) caution that "[u]nderstanding the meaning construction processes of others is a slow and extremely delicate process". It requires the ability to build rapport; to read and respond to the non-verbal cues of respondents in appropriate, sensitive ways; to listen with the intention to hear, and to elicit the necessary enthusiasm, commitment and responsiveness from the respondents. My position as a co-constructor of knowledge while listening and learning from the respondents was, in the words of Simons (2009:18-19),

...both a political and epistemological point. It signals a potential shift in the power base of who controls knowledge and recognizes the importance of co-constructing perceived reality through the relationships and joint understandings we create in the field. It also provides an opportunity for researchers to take a self-reflexive approach to understanding the case and themselves.

The aim was to allow the respondents to do most of the talking so that they could speak their minds. The questions were therefore open-ended, and respondents were encouraged to elaborate on any ideas they deemed relevant. Each discussion thus developed its own dynamic, as the respondents determined the contents under discussion, while I steered the process of enquiry. For these reasons, the instrument that guided the compilation of the instrument for data collection was a paradigm of inquiry. Core areas were complemented by examples of some basic, open, semi-structured questions that were not informed by any theories or suppositions. The core areas were relevant to all interviews, but the manner and the sequence in which they were introduced changed in accordance with the flow and context of the discussion in each case. Likewise, the proposed questions were not asked in a specific order or formulated in identical ways. Questions that seemed appropriate in the context of the specific person were used. Questions that probed deeper to ask “how” and “why” were particularly important. The aim was to “mine” the information, in other words, to understand and clarify on ever-deeper levels and to seek clarification of even basic concepts and constructs. For example, by asking, “What do you regard as your core responsibility in your activism?” I sought clarification from the respondents, as opposed to prompting them with options such as service, leadership, or social relations.

I did not put all the suggested questions to all the respondents, but some standard questions were posed to all. At the beginning, each respondent was asked how long s/he had been involved in the Palestinian project. Towards the end of each interview, s/he was asked what the respondent regarded as the essence of her/his advocacy task, what the most important thing was to share in respect of the person’s activism, and if there was anything else the respondent wanted to raise or ask.

Activists in the Palestinian project are often interviewed by journalists and on other platforms. This means that there is a risk of interview saturation, and that the activists might have specific expectations regarding the nature of the discussion, as is shown by these two comments:

I’ve been asked that question many times and my usual response is for two reasons. (R3 2015:31)

That's an interesting question [...] I have done so many interviews, as you can imagine, and I have not been asked this question, I'm not sure, it's very interesting. (R20 2015:67-68)

As I tried to pick up cues and/or to unpack "standard answers", the discussions shifted, with their consent, and often under their guidance, to deeper levels:

It became much more of a religious discussion than I had intended, but I'm having fun, it's fine. (R3 2015:108)

I don't know. I don't know. I mean, why is it so important to me? I don't think I can give you a logical answer. I could give you an answer that would horrify me, horrify most of my friends and possibly, although you are with the theology department, maybe it wouldn't horrify you. (R9 2015:36-41)

I mean now we're going onto a completely different realm of discussion, right? (R12 2015:102)

The respondents shared their views openly and often offered unsolicited information, including some personal information far beyond what I expected to receive. There were moments of laughter and passionate outpourings, and at other times the respondents spoke with great hesitation as they tried to find the right words. No-one tried to avoid any questions, however difficult they seemed. They accepted the invitation to answer the questions in a way that made sense to them, and they too wanted to ensure authentic, thorough answers with respect for the questions posed:

Yes, that's as difficult a question as the previous one. (R3 2015:38-39)

You're asking me questions now that I haven't answered for myself, let alone any other human being! (R3 2015:80)

It's a difficult question. (R4 2015:9)

You're allowing me to say very nice things. This is of course one's higher self. You don't always walk into a meeting and say, oh yes, I must remember to be open to the love. (R4 2015:119)

It's a tricky question (R14 2015:110; R17 2015:91)

I think the questions are quite deep and they're quite fundamental questions and they're quite challenging questions [...] It's not a sort of absolute question about how do I really know, because those questions, I don't think are real questions. Nobody really knows if you want to get into that level. I mean you don't really know absolutely, otherwise you can't learn anything. So anybody whether they're a scientist in a laboratory – really a non-contentious, social contentious experiment, or somebody who decides at the Rivonia Trial that he is going to say certain things that puts his life at stake; they don't really know whether that is the right thing until maybe they've done it and even then they may not know. (R7 2015:39-40)

Obviously, it's impossible to answer that question. (R16 2015:20)

Look, I'll run with your question as I want to, okay? (R2 2015:30)

Did I respond to your question? (R2 2015:35)

I still haven't answered the question of why have I recognised this. I'm sorry to be long-winded about this. (R2 2015:77)

I guess you've been asking me lots of questions that I haven't even been thinking about. The initial question... you just wanted my honest conversation. (R4 2015:178)

It was not always easy for participants to respond to some of the questions put to them, yet they responded with honesty. The process turned out to be useful to them too, as they indicated that it was good to clarify things and/or to be offered the opportunity to "think" or "talk it out" (R17 2015:67, R7 2015:82), or simply to share and articulate their motivations:

I don't think of myself as a theologian...But in talking I also realised the centrality of these theological concepts in my own life, which I'm not always aware of. (R2 2015:85)

It's a good question that you've asked, because you've now made me think about other things. (R5 2015:51)

I haven't thought about it that clearly, so actually your questions are being quite useful in clarifying for me. I must admit, when you first started asking the questions, I thought, oh God, you're making deep questions and do I want to go there? Then I thought, now why would I say that? Why do I not want to go there? Why do I feel a type of tiredness and denial? Because why are they challenging? And I feel I have come out of that now. (R7 2015:120-122)

I haven't actually connected those dots for myself so much, except now in this conversation, to be honest with you. I haven't really... (R9 2015:128)

It's been a useful conversation for me as well actually, both in my personal and activist life. (R9 2015:156)

I think in a way very unconsciously that's how it is for me, like it only becomes clear to me when I have a conversation like this. (R9 2015:140)

I don't know if it's being courageous, but why I take the stand, why – I don't know, I think your questions have made me realise that I don't know how to articulate it as much, but I think it's just more of really like an instinctive sort of thing. (R20 2015:112)

There were some interruptions in the interviews due to quick refreshment breaks at the request of the respondents, people who entered offices to ask questions and breaks in the Skype connections, but none of this seemed to have an impact on the quality of the discussions and the depth of the information. The interviews concluded with mutual expressions of gratitude for the chance to engage with the research question. The respondents expressed keen interest in the research findings. In most cases, personal, unrecorded discussions continued from there. Several expressed their appreciation for the chance to speak freely, and one felt exhausted:

I: Is there anything that you would like to ask?

R3: No, you've drained me. (R3 2015:141-142)

I feel that I have to pay you for psychologist services! (R17 2015:82)

It's a privilege for me to say these things, because you don't often talk about it. (R1 2015:121)

Oh, this is so nice to talk. Thank you. It's so nice to tell you all this. (R6 2015:41)

The following served as the paradigm of inquiry:

### **PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH RESEARCH RESPONDENTS**

Participant code:

Date:

Nationality:

Country of residence:

Gender:

Religious association:

Age group: 20-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 61-70; 70 -

### **SETTING THE CONTEXT:**

- Thank the respondent for her/his availability and willingness to participate.
- Ensure that phones are switched off.
- Reiterate research objectives and procedure, what is understood as the Palestinian project and what happens once all the interviews have been recorded.
- Ask the respondent to sign the informed consent form.
- Stress that it is not a discussion of socio-political solutions or advocacy arguments, but about personal reasons and perceptions and that the answers do not have to be perfectly argued or rational, but in accordance with the activist's experiences. Also, stress that there are no expectations or any right or wrong answers, and that the respondent is welcome to add perspectives after the interview if s/he so wishes.
- Confirm confidentiality, anonymity, impartiality and available time.
- Ask if anything needs clarification and ask permission to proceed.

### **CORE AREAS TO PROBE:**

- Specific moral choices/values/social relations that inform the respondent's activism and/or what s/he aspires to.
- Views on the relation between the self and the other.
- The source for generating ethical conclusions.
- The difference in the lives of the self and others in choosing these positions over others.
- The sense of existential meaning and/or belonging and/or worthwhileness the activist derives from these morals, values and social relations.

- The activist's levels of certainty and/or uncertainty with regard to her/his position.
- The strength of the activist's moral commitment to both the public and to peers.

#### **EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:**

- For how long have you been involved in the Palestinian Project?
- Why are you involved in the plight of the Palestinians if you are not one?
- What differentiates you from the Palestinians? What do you share?
- Do you feel that you need to choose between sides? Why/why not?
- Why is it important to you to pursue a public stand? Why not choose prayer, meditation or just influencing your immediate circle?
- Am I right to assume that you try to move beyond a splitting of people into different parties and that you work towards acceptance of one another in inclusive or pluralistic societies? What enables you to do so?
- In light of your own ethical and social views, how do you know how to position yourself in the Palestinian project? In what is it rooted?
- Which values and morals help your advocacy in the Palestinian cause? Please elaborate?
- What difference does it make to choose XYZ? How does it affect your life, those of the people close to you and the lives of the Palestinians? Thus, what do you perceive as the consequences of your position?
- Are you aiming for an end goal? Do you strive for something? Why?
- Do you sometimes doubt what you do or stand for? Why? How do you go about when you are not sure?
- Activists are often under a lot of pressure, feel tired, shocked, traumatised, experience setbacks and disappointments, are provoked or experience hatred, harm, prejudices, discrimination and threats. Can you explain your response to such situations?
- Let's turn for a moment to your interaction with fellow activists. What guides your cooperation and your relation with them? How do you deal with differences or even conflict amongst peers?
- Some people say they have a sense of something outside or over and above themselves that inspire their morals, values and social relations. Can you associate with this idea? In which way? How does it help you in your activism?
- Are you aware of some sense of belonging, or meaning associated with your advocacy

work? Can you describe it? How do you know what is worthwhile and what is not?

- If you could change anything about your ethical choices, what would it be? What difference will it make? How will it affect yourself, your audience and the Palestinians?
- What is the essence of your advocacy task?
- What is the most important thing you want to share with regard to your activism?
- Is there anything else you would like to raise or ask?

#### **CLOSING:**

- Ask the respondent if she/he has any further questions and thank the person.
- Invite the person to review the information once it has been transcribed and before it is analysed.
- Repeat the contact details of the counsellors, study leader and researcher.
- If necessary, inquire about suitable Jewish Israeli candidates.
- Confirm the above per e-mail after the session.

After each session, I thanked each person on e-mail, inviting her/him to send me any further thoughts on the topic and reiterating that s/he could approve the transcription and/or make corrections and/or changes to it once it was ready.

Upon receiving the verbatim transcripts, 11 of the 21 activists responded by clarifying indistinct words or phrases and by approving the transcripts. One asked for a specific organisation to which s/he was not affiliated to also be indicated as “anonymous” to protect the nature of her work. Several said that I was free to use their names and mention all their affiliations. I made all the changes, but kept all the names of the respondents and that of their organisations anonymous.

### **2.10 Analysis and interpretation**

The analysis was inductive, contextual and thematic. I accept that the field data is contextually bound in space and time and did not try to prove any “true” or “final” meaning.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:283), pattern-matching that enhances internal validity and explanation-building, which also informs the construction of grounded statements, are both appropriate to case study analysis. The research used inductive thematic analysis, which entails a bottom-up interpretation of the field data. It did not depart from a particular theory or

hypothesis and there were no upfront commitments that guided the interpretation, other than the research question and interests. That said, neither the respondents nor I are value-free, objective or isolated from the mutually dependent relations of knowledge, emotions, perceptions and power. It is within these boundaries and tensions that the analysis and the interpretation must provide a platform for the voices of others, including varying and/or conflicting perspectives between respondents, and/or within the view of one person.

One of the most important critical skills required to investigate the views of others is the ability to hear their voices on their own terms. This position requires clarification. The exploratory nature of the research, which acknowledges that one does not know what one does not know, calls for a receptive open-mindedness in service of the respondents' views as told from their perspectives. Yet such openness is not a blank sheet, where "anything goes". I have argued in Section 1.3.3 that I am not neutral, but would much rather be accused of being pro-human rights than being "complicit in human rights violations by, consciously or not, reinforcing the status quo of perceptions" (De Jong 2012:193). Still, I cannot escape the possibility that I may influence the study in inappropriate ways, especially in my analysis and interpretation of the field data. To simply note the respondents' answers, completely from their perspectives, is not enough. The study certainly does not espouse "a naïve realist view of qualitative research, where a researcher can simply 'give voice'...to their participants" (Braun & Clarke 2006:80). However, the risk is that stringing together lines from the transcript into an argument creates ample space for a researcher to project her/his own views onto those of others, albeit unconsciously, or even with the very best of intentions. The act of grouping arguments and sub-themes into themes and the consequent highlighting of issues in an attempt to answer the research question implies normative and conceptual reasoning (Dunn *et al.* 2012:7). Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge my role as the researcher in collecting and presenting the data, and my responsibility to construct and present the arguments in accordance with the contents, the tone and the manner of the respective respondents.

Perhaps the biggest and also the most hidden risk is not my politics, but a projection of my own ontological and epistemological existential orientations and my own (inevitably partial) perspective of life. My personal ontological preference favours the notion of different, changing and emerging realities, but it is no guarantee that I am open enough to hear plural perspectives on the respondents' own terms. I might, for example, project my own paradigm onto another, or be closed to the views of someone with a positivist ontology and its

assumption of a world “out there” which is independent of our knowledge of it. Most people are inclined to recognise and view life through their own framework(s), which they often regard as the only possible framework. Even with the best of intentions to investigate the views of others, a researcher can fall short of that aim, because of a personal (and deeply embedded) sense of reality. The projection of one’s own reality view onto those of others is often unintended and may be accompanied by an expressed desire to do quite the opposite. In interpretation, it was my task to distinguish consciously between my perceived felt sense of reality and convictions and those of others. I tried to remain aware of the need to test my understanding as much as possible during the interviews and to be sensitive to any discrepancies between what I thought and what the respondent was saying. On the subtler level of symbolic perceptions, I had to distinguish between my own feelings and those of others in a systematic, logical manner. I was well aware of this risk and took it into account as best I could.

Thematic analysis can be used on different levels. It can reflect reality, or it can unpack the surface of the perceived reality. At an essentialist or realist level, it reports “experiences, meanings and the reality of participants”. If it is applied in a constructionist manner, it investigates how events, realities, meanings, experiences and so forth are the effects of discourses within a society. The contextualist level is located between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism. I use thematic analysis in a contextualist manner to examine how individuals find and make meaning in and of their experiences in a broader social context which impinges on their views (Braun & Clarke 2006:81) to shape and interpret them.

It is important to realise that themes do not simply “emerge” or “surface” from the field data. They are singled out deliberately, and in accordance with the task, the agenda and the values set out in the study (Braun & Clarke 2006:80). Thematic analysis then entails identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes in the data (Braun & Clarke 2006:80). The identification of themes involves organising and clustering data to describe shared fields of interest or concern, or some level of patterned response or meaning in relation to the research question. In this study, in assigning themes, I treated similarities and differences as part of the same continuum, since exceptions, contradictions and silences in information are as important and as relevant as clear-cut patterns. Thus, they all feature within the same theme to provide texture, nuance and depth.

The “size” of a theme (whether descriptive or conceptual) is a question of prevalence. A theme is relevant if it captures something important in relation to the research question, as opposed to the interview questions. In inductive reasoning, such as that used in my study, themes may bear little relevance to the interview questions (Braun & Clarke 2006:82-83). Thus, it is not simply a matter of lumping all the answers to a certain question together and coding them, but rather an intricate, bottom-up task of identifying variables of relevance, coding them and, where appropriate, linking coded fragments or quotes to themes, together with writing conceptual memos (ideas). In fact, in mining field data it is often possible to formulate new or sub-questions that provide additional access points to the data. The analysis and interpretation is a systematic, continuous, recursive, non-linear process of asking questions, and of comparing information from a descriptive level to interpretations at a conceptual level. Questions relevant to this process are, for example: Why is it this and not that? What do I see? How is it different from something else? Why is it expressed like this? The result is a network of multiple interrelated links in a hermeneutic platform from which a researcher filters and groups information, and identifies overlaps, silences and differences.

Analysing and interpreting field data is a time-consuming, lengthy process. I used ATLAS.ti, a software programme that offers an electronic hermeneutic unit for computer-assisted (but not automated) data handling. Each hermeneutic unit serves as a “workbench”, or a “container” for all data relevant to the project, such as the 21 “primary documents” or transcripts, all the codes and their linkages, notes and memos, and network relations. Making the decisions on how to handle, analyse and interpret the data remains the manual task of the investigator, but the electronic accessibility of the software adds transparency, credibility and dependability to the research process (Friese 2014:171). ATLAS.ti allows others to trace the manifold actions and decisions in the qualitative interpretation, because the software records the researcher’s data handling decisions, such as coding, the allocation of themes and meta-themes (or memos and families), queries, co-occurrence, and comments).<sup>96</sup> A systematic, traceable process which allows others to check whether they too can reach the same findings with the same data is important precisely because discernment is crucial in inductive research (how does one know if one has found a thing that gives an answer?).

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<sup>96</sup> Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to “themes”, but ATLAS.ti applies the terms “codes”, “memos” and “families”. ATLAS.ti tracks the groundedness and the density of each code. The groundedness refers to the number of data segments or quotations associated with a particular code. The density refers to the number of links with other codes and memos in the data corpus.

Since the approach in this study was inductive, no descriptive codes (also called a code book) based on ideas of what to expect were formulated and defined before or during the analysis. It was necessary to work through the data corpus a number of times, giving equal consideration to each data item, before generating initial codes. I constantly tried to discern what (from the respondents' perspectives) the issues at stake are.

The next step concerned the recognition of things that seemed similar, and linking different lines and fragments to the same code. Thus, the codes are markers of that which I noticed in the context of each person's overall view and in relation to the data corpus. The codes are not about observing single words, but arguments, and hence the pieces of text associated with a code ranged between single lines and whole fragments. This was by no means a straightforward process, and nor were the subsequent steps of linking related codes to one another, sorting the different codes into potential clusters, reviewing the codes, themes (or memos) and their respective relations and then trying to define and refine them and to group them into meta-themes (families of issues) with supporting arguments into a broader, overall narrative. To identify and formulate a few large ideas, each substantiated by sub-themes, entailed critical thinking about the entire picture of relations between almost 500 codes, and more than 70 memos. It was not a once-off task that was fully completed before the writing of the dissertation started. In the broader conceptual framework, the selection and sequence of supporting arguments within the larger, overarching arguments continued to take shape to the very last.

There are many ways to present the data in response to the research question and my attempt is only one possibility. I acknowledge the deductive element of my grouping of the information into overarching themes. Nevertheless, I tried my best to portray the authentic, self-perceived motivations of the respondents in plausible, verifiable, nuanced arguments.

### **2.11 Transferability, credibility and dependability versus generalisability, validity and reliability**

How valid and reliable are the findings? In other words, to what degree are they independent of coincidence?

The extent to which findings may or may not be valid has to do with representativeness (Babbie & Mouton 2001:80). The answer to whether or not the findings are valid, and to what

degree, is linked to the tensions in this study between the limitations imposed by the study's exploratory purpose, the sample size (which is not sufficiently large to be statistically representative) and the limited time lens, on the one hand, and the level of detail of the in-depth case study interviews which were qualitatively analysed, on the other. It is necessary to consider all these factors to reach a conclusion on the degree to which the findings may be considered valid and reliable.

There are four reasons for why the study's findings should not be generalised. In the first place, an exploratory study seldom provides definite answers to a research question, since it does not scrutinise every single aspect of the source data. The answers may bring insight and comprehension, breaking new ground and explicating central concepts and constructs, but they tend not to yield detailed, quantitatively accurate, or replicable data (Babbie & Mouton 2001:80). Thus, an exploratory design that does not scrutinise all options from all angles makes the findings inconclusive. In the second place, the sample size cannot be representative of all activists who meet the selection criteria. In the third place, the cross-sectional lens meant that a repetition of the same study at another time may yield different viewpoints. Thus, the conclusions are contextual and not replicable. In the fourth place, other disciplines may point towards complementary, or even different information. For these reasons, the findings and the conclusions are relative, relational and probable.

However, Babbie and Mouton (2001:122) also point out that reliability and validity in in-depth analysis are increased when there is variation and richness in the concepts. But such varied meanings also enlarge the chances for disagreement in how the concepts apply to the research context and question. The analysis in Part B does indeed contain variation and nuance in the respondents' answers. It also shows that all four the core themes and the sub-themes are present in the views of all the respondents. The variation lies in the supporting arguments. Validity, or "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" can be indicated by "construct validity" and "content validity" (Babbie & Mouton 2001:122-123). Section 7.2 in the chapter on findings and conclusions returns to this point to show that the self-perceived motivations in the case study are characterised by both construct and content validity. This implies that the findings of the case study have internal validity, but still cannot be generalised to other activists or even to the same activists if they were to be interviewed in another time period.

How then, can one think about the value of this study?

The way the questions were posed in this study and the manner in which they were analysed applied an interpretive, qualitative paradigm. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:274-276, 309), such a paradigm invites different ways of evaluating validity and reliability, known as the Münchhausen approach. One can, for example, use several sources for data collection and several investigators in a method known as triangulation. In addition, extensive field notes can be taken; the constructed information can be checked with respondents in what is known as member-checks; other researchers may argue the steps and findings in a process of peer review and one or more examiners may run an audit trail on all the relevant research material (Babbie & Mouton 2001:275-276). Thus, the use of multiple methodologies can raise the research above personal biases and limitations embedded into a single methodology. In this study, the respondents' input was complemented by the views of informants and also by sources such as scholarly publications, newspaper articles, websites, documentaries, photographs, e-mails and social media, as explained in Chapter 1. Each respondent also had an opportunity to read through her/his transcript and to make amendments before the start of the analysis. Finally, all the material in the dissertation is subject to an audit trail by the study's supervisors and its examiners. Remenyi (2012:21) argues that, where a case study forms part of interpretative, qualitative research, "it may be more appropriate to refer to the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and usability than to validity, reliability and generalisability". It means that although the findings are not representative, conclusive or replicable, the research process must still be validated as scientific, and the data must have integrity. Section 7.4 reflects in more detail on the integrity of the findings.

## **2.12 Ethical considerations**

This study's exploration of the views of South African and Jewish Israeli activists through in-depth interviews required official institutional ethical clearance from the University of Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee. This Committee is in turn bound by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the *Declaration of Helsinki* and the *Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004*. The Committee classified the study as a high-risk undertaking.

The following steps were taken to limit the risk to the respondents and the data:

- To minimise the interruption of the respondents' normal activities, suitable times and spaces for the interviews were negotiated.

- The respondents confirmed their informed consent<sup>97</sup> before the start of the interviews and thus agreed to the rights of the respondents and researcher. They agreed that their age, gender, religious orientation, country and the information shared during the interview may be used in the study, but not their names and designations. They had the right to direct questions and concerns about the research to the study's supervisor.
- Participation was voluntary and the respondents had the right to withdraw at any time without consequences to them of any kind, and they had the right to refuse to answer some questions. The questions did not probe the psychological dimensions of the respondents' activism, but in case a respondent's participation triggered a need for counselling, s/he was given the name and contact details of a psychologist in her/his country who could debrief the respondent if so required. The investigator reserved the right to withdraw a respondent from the research if circumstances arose which warranted doing so. Such circumstances might entail, for example, a shift in a respondent's ethos, for example, that s/he no longer supported non-violence and/or the basic international laws that regulate humanitarian affairs in peace and in conflict areas. The respondents received no payment for their contributions to this study.
- The safety and the privacy of the respondents were most important, to protect them from possible harassment by people with different viewpoints. On the one hand, it was deemed unlikely that they would have to endure more than they had already experienced as a result of their public advocacy, but on the other hand, the reactions of the public and the authorities cannot be predicted. To limit adverse reactions, the interview schedule and the names and organisations of the respondents are not published.
- The interviews were recorded on a dedicated voice recorder. The recordings were transferred to a password-protected laptop, a flash disk and an external hard drive. The data was secured by regular updates. When not in use, the equipment was locked away and I was the only person with access to it. The original recordings on the voice recorder were erased. As an extra precaution, the copies of the sound files and their transcripts were e-mailed to a safe address.
- A professional transcriber was used. She signed a confidentiality agreement<sup>98</sup> not to disclose any part of the audiotaped discussions or the transcriptions. I checked the almost 500 pages by comparing the recordings and the transcripts to make corrections where necessary. The participants had the right to review and/or edit these recordings and the

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<sup>97</sup> The form is available in Addendum A.

<sup>98</sup> The agreement is available in Addendum B. Personal details are withheld to protect the transcriber's identity.

transcripts until the start of the analysis. The audio-recordings and transcripts will be erased after the degree is awarded, unless there is a need to use them for educational purposes, and then they would only be used if the relevant participant(s) agree(s) to such use in writing.

- The results of the study may be published, but it may not disclose the identities of participants unless they agree to it in writing.

### **2.13 Limitations of, and challenges to, the study**

The study is limited in many respects. The following list may not be exhaustive:

- The investigation is neither about all kinds of activists nor representative of a specific kind of activist.
- Although the presence and involvement of a qualitative researcher was instrumental in the research process, they carry a risk. The interpretation of the data depended, amongst other factors, on my ability to distinguish between my own paradigms, convictions, conceptualisations and feelings and those of others. My best attempt may well be unconvincing.
- The intricate dynamics of change processes are not the primary focus.
- The study required a conversation with several disciplines that fall outside my area of expertise.
- Not all applicable reasons that motivate these activists may have been uncovered. Some of the reasons may change over time, many may have escaped my attention as they did not fall in the range of disciplines applied here, and some may remain hidden because of human nature.
- The findings are not conclusive and have no general, universal or representative value. There is no guarantee that the knowledge gained here is relevant to other contexts or to the same context at another point in time. Further explorations and/or other disciplines may point to complementary or different insights.

### **2.14 Summary**

This qualitative study explores the self-perceived motivations for activism in the Palestinian project of a sample of South African and Jewish Israeli activists. It aims to provide an overview of core issues that drive activism in one of the world's most prolonged tensions, but that have not yet been investigated from the angle adopted in this research project.

The data were generated by means of in-depth personal interviews with a group of 21 activists that met a set of selection criteria. In view of the study's exploratory nature and design, it examined the participants' perceptions of their motivations for involvement in activism. Therefore, the interviews were guided by a paradigm of inquiry that pinpointed core issues complemented by a set of possible questions, rather than by structured, standard questions. Likewise, the codes and the analytical categories were not predetermined. The focus was on an inductive analysis with a primarily exploratory orientation, rather than on hypothesis-driven or confirmatory analysis.

## **PART B: THE CASE STUDY**

The research question asks *why, from their own perspectives, the selected South African and Jewish Israeli activists participate in the Palestinian project.*

This core question raises the following sub-questions: Who are the respondents and what are their focus areas? What alerted them to the relevance of the cause? Why did they cross the divide, if any, between non-involvement and commitment? Why focus on the Palestinian project if there are many worthy causes in the world? How do they contextualise the Palestinian project? How convinced are they that their efforts are necessary? Why persist in the face of so much resistance? What values are relevant to them and why? How do they decide on advocacy strategies and tactics? Are there differences between the reasons of Jewish Israeli and South African respondents to participate in activism? What outcomes do they have in mind? All of these questions and more are addressed in the analysis below.

Part B consists of four chapters organised around four key themes, broadly arranged into the following sections, followed by a reflection on the research results:

3. JOINING THE PALESTINIAN PROJECT
  - 3.1. Introducing the respondents
  - 3.2. Trends in joining the Palestinian project
4. FACING THE SELF AND THE OTHER
  - 4.1. For the sake of personal integrity
  - 4.2. The local site of struggle as part of a broad moral case against othering
5. THREE INTERRELATED VALUE SETS
  - 5.1. Altruistic love and compassion
  - 5.2. Equality and justice
  - 5.3. Honesty, truth and openness
6. STRATEGY, OUTCOMES, MEANING AND WORTHWHILENESS
  - 6.1. The urgency for public advocacy
  - 6.2. Strategy and action in the service of Palestinian needs
  - 6.3. Core tasks and desired outcomes
  - 6.4. Human agency and the feasibility of goals
  - 6.5. Meaning and worthwhileness

Chapter 3 in Part B starts by introducing the case study participants. These respondents' demographic details are summarised in Table 2. Their core focus areas are presented in graphic format in Figure 2, which provides a brief summary of each individual respondent's reasons for approving of, and joining the Palestinian project. The discussion then proceeds to the respondents' reasons for staying committed to activism in the Palestinian project.

Chapter 4 focuses on the distance the respondents perceive between themselves and others in the context of the Palestinian project, and the Palestinian project and other worthy causes in the world. It starts by introducing a crucial aspect of the participants' motivation –their desire to apply their values consistently and live with integrity. Their quest for an inclusive integrity and consistency in their engagements with others was a recurring theme throughout the discussion reported in Part B. The second part of Chapter 4 offers a wider perspective by presenting impressions of the Palestinian project in the context of other struggles.

Chapter 5 focuses on three core intertwined sets of values, namely altruistic love and compassion, equality and justice, as well as honesty, truth and openness. Chapter 6 presents the respondents' views on the nature of and the rationale for their advocacy strategies, the outcomes they aspire to, their expectations and the degree to which they experience worthwhileness or not.

It is important to note that none of these four chapters stands on its own. Each highlights different, but complementary answers to the research question, and aspects of one chapter may be further qualified in another. The constructs of Zionism, religion and humanism are relevant in all these chapters and are addressed throughout Part B.

Throughout Part B, the discussion of themes is substantiated by means of references to the transcription of interviews available in the study's hermeneutic unit in the ATLAS.ti database. Many verbatim quotes from the data corpus illustrate the various points (the year of the interview and ATLAS.ti data location are indicated). Care has been taken to not repeat such quotes, but some are re-used to illustrate specific nuances relevant to the particular point under discussion. Moreover, since this study is not quantitative, not all relevant examples are listed. However, in each instance, a selection that provides a fair representation of the other available examples is given. Each of the main sections in the four chapters concludes with a summary or sub-conclusion of the findings. Chapter 7 highlights the key findings and conclusions of the case study before proposing grounded statements.

### 3 JOINING ACTIVISM IN THE PALESTINIAN PROJECT

How did it all start for each respondent in the case study? Section 3.1 introduces the *individual respondents* in the case study. It provides three means for the reader to distinguish between them. The first is a summary of the respondents' demographic details in table format. The second is a graphic overview of the respective respondents' self-assumed core tasks. The third is a set of brief individual narrative summaries, focusing on each respondent's initial awakening to, recognition of the validity of, and commitment to the Palestinian project. Each section concludes with a list of key reasons given by the respective participants for their activism, cumulatively building an overall picture of their reasons.

The rest of the chapter explores themes *across* the data corpus. The discussion shows that some respondents changed their earlier perspectives on either the Palestinians and/or Israel. For others, the ideals or aims of the Palestinian project resonated with existing interests or ideas, so it did not necessitate any change. I analysed the various perceived organising principles for their joining the Palestinian project, such as its being a choice, a calling, an urge, chance, destiny, instinct, part of being "normal", or another explanation. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of several shared triggers or catalysts for, and some core insights into respondents' processes of awakening and pledging their commitment to activism in the Palestinian project.

I did not ask the respondents directly for information on whether or not they had any preconceived ideas about the Palestinians and/or Israel, about the various principles that underpinned the rise of their commitment or about the triggers, catalysts and core insights into the dynamics between the Palestinians and Israel that they mentioned. These topics were not introduced into the discussions, but when they came up, I did seek clarification and/or prompted the respondents for further details.

#### 3.1 Introducing the respondents

##### 3.1.1 *Demographic details and graphic overview of core foci*

Table 2 (overleaf) lists demographic details on the respondents: age group, nationality, gender, religious affiliation and length of committed activism at the time of the interviews.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The numbers allocated to respondents (R1, R2, and so forth) do not necessarily reflect the sequence of the interviews. For the sake of completeness, note that R1 to R9 and R21 were interviewed in person, and R10 to R20 were interviewed via Skype.

**Table 2: Selected demographic details**

Respondent	Nationality			Gender		Religious association as described by the respondents	Number of years' advocacy					Age				
	SA	JI	US	F	M		1.5	3-9	10-19	20-29	30+	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
1	X	-		-	X	Islamic culture, agnostic/atheist, admires non-dogmatic, humanist positioning of religions					X				X	
2	X	-		-	X	Muslim					X				X	
3	X	-		-	X	Muslim				X			X			
4	X	-		-	X	Muslim			X			X				
5	X	-		X	-	Muslim			X				X			
6	X	-		X	-	Jewish and humanist			X					X		
7	X	-		-	X	Jewish culture, agnostic/atheist with a moral consciousness		X								X
8	X	-		-	X	Christian		X						X		
9	X	-		X	-	Jewish secular	X						X			
10	X	-			X	Christian Evangelical		X							X	
11	-	X		-	X	Jewish secular				X						X
12	-	X		-	X	Jewish pagan			X				X			
13	-	X	X	X	-	Jewish Atheist				X					X	
14	-	X		-	X	Jewish culture, not religious				X					X	
15	-	X		X	-	Jewish secular			X							X
16	-	X		X	-	Jewish culture, not religious			X			X				
17	-	X		X	-	Jewish culture, not religious		X				X				
18	-	X	X	X	-	Jewish culture, reformed and close to secular		X				X				
19		X			X	Jewish culture, not religious			X				X			
20		X		X		Previously Judaism, now not religious due to Zionism		X				X				
21	X	X		X	-	Jewish culture, agnostic		X				X				
	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 2 shows that the 21 research respondents came from different countries, religious orientations, generations and genders. Moreover, the duration of their experiences as activists differed. At the time of the study, R9, for example, had been advocating in the Palestinian project for 18 months – the minimum length of time specified in the study’s selection criteria, but nearly two thirds (13 respondents) had been involved for ten years or more. Almost a quarter (R1, R2, R3, R11, R14) had been activists in the Palestinian project for over 30 years. Most (16 participants) became activists in the Palestinian project before the age of 30.

In Table 2, as I already suggested in Section 2.8, the term “Jewish” does not necessarily refer to religious affiliation. For most Jewish respondents, it actually denotes perceptions of historical, cultural and/or civil identity. Nevertheless, South Africans R6, R7 and R9, and nearly all the Jewish Israelis who later indicated that they were agnostic, atheist, secular, “pagan” or humanist used this term to describe their religious affiliation at the start of their interview. R7 (2015:112-117), for example, explains the meaning of “Jewishness” as follows:

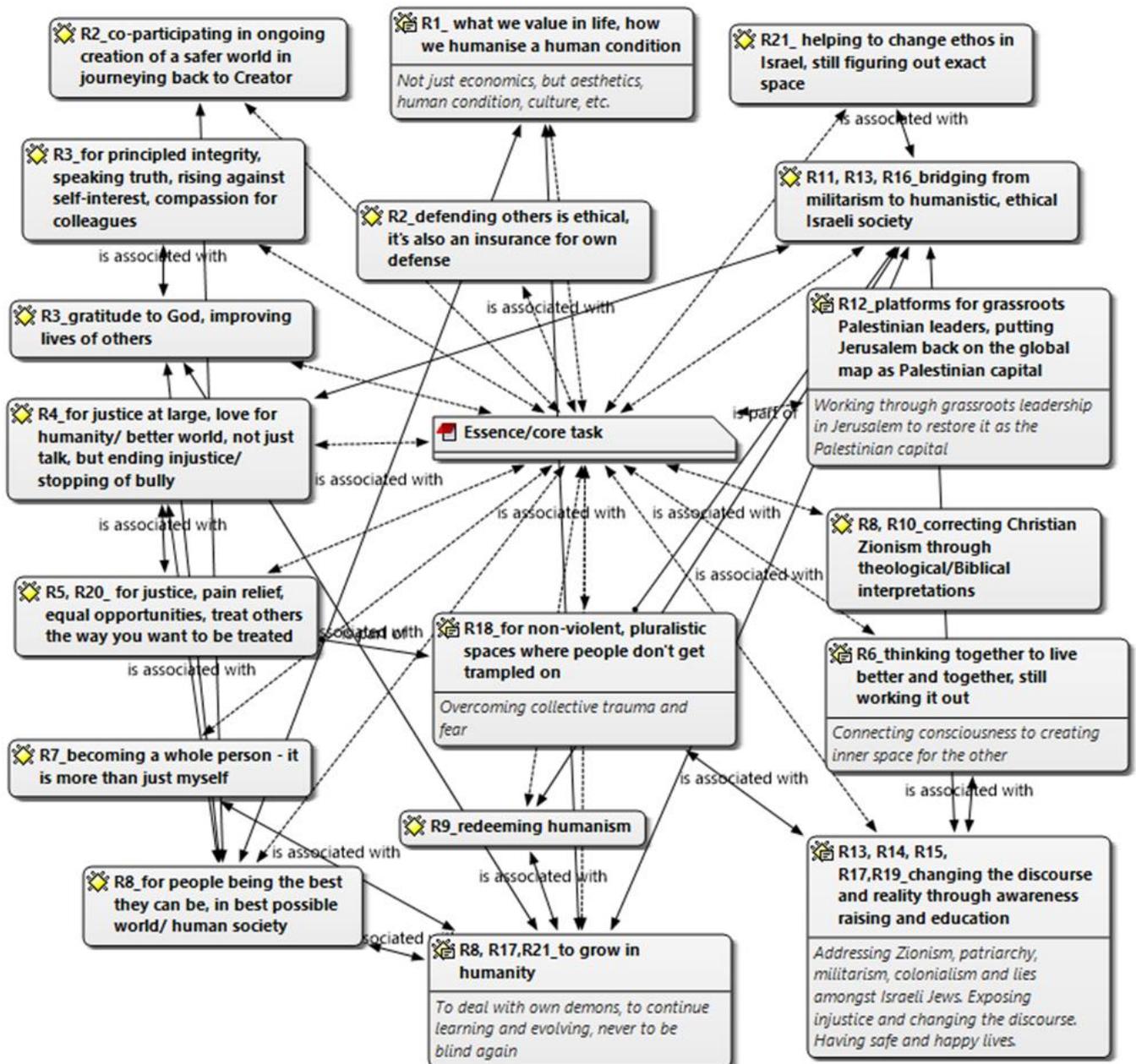
- I: What I find quite interesting is that when I asked about your religious orientation, you added that you’re also Jewish. But your nationality is not Jewish.
- R7: No.
- I: It’s also not your religious tradition.
- R7: No.
- I: What is it?
- R7: It’s a historical experience that I suppose very intensely moulded my, and a whole lot of people’s, personalities in South Africa when we grew up. A large, large part of it is being survivors. [...] It’s also got a much lighter side around the sort of cultural civil, stuff around food, jokes. I suppose the synagogue certainly is the centre of a community. So I think it’s like a community within being a South African citizen.

R20 (2015:11) – the only Jewish Israeli who did not call her herself “Jewish” – said that “today I’m really more Israeli than I am Jewish”, since “my life is really more informed by the culture of the nation” and not by Judaism. For R21 (2015:61-65), her Jewishness is a “cultural affinity” and a link with her family. She does not practise Judaism, but goes to the Synagogue for personal reflection, to listen to “songs that remind me of my grandmother, to feel the comfort around the tunes that I recognise”. R9 (2015:62), who associates with Buddhism, notes that Jewishness is “not actually a blood thing, even though I, like all Jews, I sort of treat it as though it is a blood thing”; it is rather

...an active identification. And I don’t even know what it means for me, because I’m not actually religiously Jewish. But I think for me it just has to do with, ja, a deep identification with the stories that my grandmother told.

Figure 2 provides a graphic overview of the individual respondents' perceived core tasks and/or the essence of their self-assumed advocacy tasks. This is intended to help readers keep track of core variances between the individual participants. The various nodes in Figure 2 and their relations are discussed in Part B, and are summarised in Section 6.3.

**Figure 2: Impressions of the essence of activism and/or core tasks**



### 3.1.2 *Individual narrative accounts*

The individual narrative accounts below offer a third aid to keep track of the respective case study respondents. These accounts provide another point of reference for the thematic discussion in Part B. Each account introduces a respondent, albeit very briefly, focusing on the person's individual account of and for joining the Palestinian project. Each account concludes with lists of other core reasons for each respondent's subsequent activism.

- R1** became an activist in his teens during the South African struggle against apartheid and served his first term as a political prisoner at the age of 16. He grew up in a poor, black family under South Africa's *Group Areas Act* (repealed in 1991), and he recalled being bombarded with messages both overt and subliminal about the lack of worth of black people as "inferior in every respect – intellectually, spiritually, physically, aesthetically" (R1 2015:39). This assault on his self-worth and freedom had a formative influence on his political views, but the South African struggle was only "one of the aspects of my autobiography which made me amenable to struggles in other parts of the world" (R1 2015:12). His awareness of oppression came at a time of an emerging climate of national liberation struggles against racism throughout the world. Black Consciousness in the sense of "Black is Beautiful", "that we are not non-White, that Black is not a phenotype description, but rather a political expression of unity amongst the oppressed" (R1 2015:39) influenced him greatly. He recalled the influence of figures such as Steve Biko, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Paulo Freire, and of movements such as the Black Panther Party, national liberation movements in Africa, the struggle against American Imperialism specifically in Indo-China and in the Vietnam struggle. "Identifying with the Palestinian Struggle was not that difficult" (R1 2015:16-17), but he saw it as one of many struggles in the world at that stage and not as prominent as the liberation struggles in Africa, Asia or South America. His Islamic background may also have played a role in his high school years, but it too was not the defining reason for his sympathy with the Palestinians. What appealed to him more was their suffering great injustices in a shared struggle against colonialism, a struggle in which "their homeland was usurped and people were exiled and they were fighting for national liberation" (R1 2015:26). In his eyes, their then armed resistance was an iconic movement that inspired the South African movement – not because of violence for its own sake, but as "a means towards an end" (R1 2015:33). At the age of 19, R1 lived as a

political refugee in countries with large numbers of other young political refugees, including Palestinians, all of whom fought for national liberation. As he spent time with Palestinians, his identification with their struggle turned into a deep bond or a “visceral tug” (R1 2015:54,57,71), because of shared values such as trust, honesty, camaraderie, solidarity and the value of submitting oneself to the struggle for survival in a mutual struggle against colonialism. Thus, what had started as a desire to uphold the self-worth of South African blacks in a *Zeitgeist* of world-wide revolt against racism and colonialism expanded, for him, into a deep resonance and identification with the Palestinian freedom fighters, once he understood their mutual aspirations and shared values. Upon his return to South Africa in the early 1980s, R1 and his fellow students campaigned in public for the rights of the Palestinians.

R1 mentioned several other reasons for his continued commitment, such as the global relevance of the Palestinian project in a multi-layered matrix, the need for scholarly contributions to unmask Zionist arguments and what he refers to unequivocally as “lies” (R1 2015:104), as well as the importance of the BDS campaign.

- **R2** vividly recalled the suffering of his mother as a factory worker in the clothing industry under South African apartheid and as single parent of six sons in a patriarchal Muslim community. She passed away when R2 was 13 years old. He remembered observing her at night – he and his younger brother, pretending to be asleep, and she waiting for his other brothers to return home. R2 recalled what he sensed as being her emotions at the time, saying that it felt as “raw” as if it had happened yesterday:

How big is the gap between me and primarily the woman who is the other, if you are a male? I’m not a woman. I’m not a woman, but at the same time I carry within me – I carry within me [long pause] I carry within me all the pain that I’ve seen my mother live through. And so, womanhood and the suffering of womanhood is a part of who I am. [...] And you’re awake until two, three in the morning and you internalise all her anxiety and pain. (R2 2015:33)

It is this ability to sense and identify with another’s pain that R2 used to explain his immediate resonance with the Palestinian struggle. As he registered his mother’s feelings and those of other single women in the Cape clothing industry at the time, he recognised the injustice in his own life as a young Coloured person in undemocratic South Africa. He too went to prison in his early teens for “resisting Apartheid and just recognising the wrongness of it all” (R2 2015:70). When he arrived in Pakistan as a 16- or 17-year old, “the penny dropped immediately” (R2 2015:109) when he saw how Muslim women were

being treated in that country, and it led to a life-long commitment to gender justice. When he first went to occupied Palestine in his early twenties, he once more noted the injustice instantly. To him, the injustice against the Palestinians is something that should resonate with everyone, for having a conscience and rising up for the other is what makes us ethical and moral beings. The essence of his response lay in his “understanding of what it means to be human in the ethical and also...in the theological sense” (R2 2015:16). R2 also stressed how different struggles of the marginalised are part of a broader context that needs to be taken into account in advocating for Palestinians’ rights.

He explored his own ethical and theological reasons and why advocating for the rights of others has to do with his own integrity, enrichment and safety. His activism is not driven by a single final goal in the pursuit of nirvana, but by an ongoing responsibility towards a safer world. All these reasons are discussed in the chapters that follow in an attempt to find answers to the research question.

- **R3** became involved in the South African struggle against apartheid. For him, already by the age of 14, this soon included Palestinian solidarity. He was very clear about his reasons: “One is I’m South African and I know what Apartheid means. I’m a Black South African, I understand Apartheid and I can see the similarities between what we suffered and what other people might suffer” (R3 2015:32). He regards the Palestinian project as particularly relevant to South Africans, because of the very close similarities between their oppression and liberation struggles, and therefore senses a special affinity with the Palestinian project. He is Muslim, “therefore [I am] motivated not only by Palestinian Solidarity, but whether I’m talking about xenophobia in South Africa at the moment, or whether I’m talking about the Burmese Struggle, or whatever else, I’m motivated by an Islamic understanding of justice and equality and fairness that drives how I would respond to a whole range of things, certainly the Palestinian issue...as well” (R3 2015:33; my insertion).

R3 mentioned his strong desire to live with integrity and with compassion for the other, and his duty to contribute with the full understanding that everything does not depend on him, or on what is humanly possible. He also talked about the role of religion and the notions of justice, equality, a common humanity, love, compassion, about accountability and responsibility, as well as the need to be public about it.

- R4** was not certain of the actual length of his involvement, because it was difficult to know exactly when his awareness and interest in the matter turned into activism. He first became aware of the Palestinian struggle in his high school years when listening to a South African radio show by Ashwin Desai. The host criticised Israel's using military equipment as a response against stone-throwing Palestinians in the Second *Intifada*. The idea of David and Goliath "struck a chord" (R4 2015:9). Having been raised to be sensitive to the needs of the oppressed, he immediately felt sympathy for the Palestinians and wanted to know more. A number of things then seemed to coincide with his new awareness and interest: he made T-shirts in support of Palestine using a Zapiro cartoon,<sup>100</sup> he participated in the 2001 World Conference against Racism Protest in Durban, and he attended an interfaith summer camp in the USA with Jews, Muslims and others soon after 9/11. The camp's agenda promoted the idea of dialogue as a means to resolve the conflict. R4 wholeheartedly embraced this idea. In a gap year after finishing high school, R4 visited three continents. This included a few months in Israel and the oPt. He sees his time in the Middle East as coincidental – he applied to various places – his other option was spending time at the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands, but the Palestinians answered first. In what he called a "big wake-up call" (R4 2015:14), he learned that the organisation he was about to join in occupied East Jerusalem was not Muslim (at the time he believed all Palestinians to be Muslim), but Christian, and that the people, in fact, see themselves Palestinian first, rather than as Christian, Muslim, or agnostic. His arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv also turned out to be "a huge, a massive awakening" (R4 2015:29). It shattered his belief in dialogue as the means to a solution. After being interrogated for eight hours, he was no longer interested in dialogue and he understood the frustrations of the Palestinians. "Those three months in Palestine taught me more about justice, taught me more about dialogue, but in the pursuit of justice, not dialogue for the sake of it [dialogue]" (R4 2015:21-22; my insertion). To R4, his joining the Palestinian project was the result of a combination of immediate sympathy, but also curiosity, chance, choice, opportunity, destiny, organic development and things that he felt he could not even explain. On the one hand, he made conscious decisions along the way, but on the other, there were other reasons for joining the Palestinian project which are not defined or developed organically and there may even be an element of destiny or a calling to it. He pondered, for example, what caused leading

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<sup>100</sup> Artist Jonathan Shapiro is well known in South Africa for socio-political commentary in his cartoons, under the name of Zapiro.

activists in the South African struggle such as Oliver Tambo and Desmond Tutu to do what they did or still do. Maybe they, too, planned something else, but perhaps their lives were not theirs, or things happened in such a way that they had to become activists. His actions, he said, are for strategic reasons:

I have no desire to hold certain positions in government, I don't. I will do it for as long as I am compelled, for as long as I think it's strategic, but I'm more than happy to do other things with my life. So in that way I have made a choice. And I think that I have certain abilities which are needed in this movement – that I'm contributing. (R4 2015:158)

His activism has to do with a struggle to improve the world, and knowing exactly when and how he committed to activism is not important in his eyes. More relevant to him are the principles that underpin his convictions such honesty, justice, strategy, love, courage and the excitement of being successful.

- **R5** experienced a clear turning point that marked her entry into the Palestinian project. She grew up with a general sympathy with the oppressed and the notion of not being an armchair critic. Yet, despite being active in student politics opposing South African apartheid during her high school years, she could not connect with the Palestinian struggle, “because when you saw on it on TV, it was women with scarves. So I thought, okay, it's Muslims fighting for Muslims” (R5 2015:10) in a Jewish-Muslim conflict. She “just couldn't see this Palestinian issue as a human rights issue in the same way that I saw South Africa” (R5 2015 11). She could also see no connection between the Hindu rituals of her upbringing and her values and socio-political challenges, and it troubled her greatly. Her initial attraction to Islam was its “massive emphasis on human rights, on equality”, which she compared with the human body: “So if your baby finger is sore, your whole body feels the pain. That's exactly what the world is supposed to be” (R5 2015:61). Just before going to university, she converted to Islam, because of the way it resonates with the values she had already adopted. In the first year after obtaining her final degree, she attended the United Nations Racism Conference in Durban:

That conference was a major turning point for me, because it was the first time that the Palestinian issue was being discussed on the same forum and I could see it now on the same level as we did the Cuban issue, as we did Tibet, as we did reparations for slavery, as we did xenophobia, racism issues of the native Americans. ...about 3000 representatives from all over the world...all...spoke about the Palestinian issue in the same breath as all these other issues. That was the first time that I saw that issue in a different light. It wasn't a Muslim issue anymore. (R5 2015:13)

R5's perceptions changed not only because of the above discussions, but also because of the interaction between those whom she had earlier associated with opposing, homogeneous groups. Rabbis and other Jewish Israelis comforted a Palestinian Muslim whose son was killed in the Second *Intifada*. The Palestinian father, in turn, embraced the Jews. These actions called into question the blanket condemnation of Jews she had heard before. Clearly, the non-Zionist Jewish rabbis could not be held responsible for the suffering of the Palestinians, she thought. She also recalled listening to Mercia Andrews – a South African who is neither Muslim nor Indian, and to a Jewish Israeli academic, Professor Uri Davis. What they said, but especially how they were speaking about, the Palestinian issue made her realise for the first time that it was a human rights issue and not a religious clash. What she saw resonated with her own values, and she committed to the Palestinian project.

R5 explained her ensuing activism as being motivated by a desire for equality. She also talked about the importance of social media in amplifying and democratising the Palestinians' voice; the necessity to isolate Israel and to raise awareness – also through interfaith initiatives – and the relevance of the South African contribution.

- **R6** explained her unfolding awareness in tentative, circular sentences, often using subordinate clauses. Her awakening was by no means a clear, linear process: her Jewish upbringing in South Africa taught R6 always to be honest, fair and trustworthy, to do the right thing and help the needy. Yet, despite these values, which are grounded in Jewish ethics, she also thought that Jews had a historical right to all the land in Historical Palestine, and she did not consider the implications for the people who already lived there for centuries: “I just thought, we have the right to everywhere, it's all ours. It was very simple really” (R6 2015:32). Her family were scared of Afrikaans ultra-nationalists during the apartheid years and kept a low profile in politics. Being Jewish meant they always felt under siege. Keeping their heads down implied they could “pass as White, but as soon as we said anything that rocked the boat, we'd stop being White and we'd become Jewish and therefore targeted – so a kind of double consciousness in a way. I think it filtered in quite deeply for me” (R6 2015:14). Her complex “feelings of fear, of paranoia” about the outcome of the South African transition – for if it does not go well, “where do we go?” (R6 2015:32) – paradoxically co-existed with her uncritical acceptance of Israel's land rights and her aspiration to be “a *Mensch*”. The archaeology of her early emotional landscape was an incoherent, dual consciousness in the shadow of

fear, uncertainties and mixed messages. As a young adult, she worked at an ex-liberation combatants' organisation committed to South Africa's post-apartheid social reconstruction and decolonisation. Here she emerged into a mutual process of re-humanising "our collective souls and spirits and how we understand the world" (R6 2015:9). As she listened for hours to veterans of the armed struggle, the issue of the Palestinian struggle often came up. To this R6 always wanted to respond with a "but" in the sense of "but you don't understand what we've been through – a Jewish homeland is necessary for Jews to be safe in the world". However, she found that she could not articulate this sense like this after what she heard from these men and about what they had gone through. Being bound to listen, it dawned on her that the Palestinians were asking for similar things, and that in respect of Israel, the Jewish homeland and the Palestinian struggle, there was "this guff and somehow I'm missing something" (R6 2015:19):

I kept translating back and forth in a way. Not in such clear terms then. It was intuitive and it was fragments, it was the beginning of making connections and then translating and crossing back over and making connections and translating and crossing back over there [...] (M)y colleagues would talk about training in the forests outside Moscow, you know, military training in MK and how they would hear these Arabic songs, liberation songs echoing in the night in the snow in the forest. How it would make them cry, because they didn't understand the language, but they understood the sentiment. That just, kind of, blew me away. I didn't know what to do with any of that, cognitively. I did, I think, I'm – I must have opened up a space somewhere, for that just to be. (R6 2015:23-25)

R6 fell in love with one of the veterans in her group and her "coming alive" as a woman coincided with motherhood. It forced her to face the full reality of her existence – she felt she could not teach her daughter about life without living accordingly. Motherhood gave her a new inner strength and a profound inner expansion that liberated her and shifted her identity from a sense of insecurity to confidence, and from fear to courage. By the time of the Second *Intifada* or uprising, she knew that something was seriously wrong in Israel and that she could no longer support Israel unconditionally. Then came the 2001 World Conference against Racism where she met and witnessed Palestinians and Jewish Israeli activists speaking and interacting for the first time. These encounters "blew my mind" (R6 2015:36). She says:

There is no going back. There is no going back. There is what there is. I mean the people I met were nationalists, but deeply committed to a kind of leftist, a democratic project, a one state inclusive, pluralist, equal rights. Certainly, religion was irrelevant for them. They're secular [...] that was huge, that was a moment for me. (R6 2015:37)

R6 offered richly textured insights on dealing with personal fear, non-involvement and developing inner space for the other and acting on it in public.

- **R7** changed his mind about going on *Aliyah*<sup>101</sup> during his (then compulsory) service in the South African Defence Force in 1970. As a South African from a Zionist Jewish background, the chance to leave home brought the opportunity to break free from an “enormously pressurising” (R7 2015:21) Zionist identity. This does not mean that he became a committed activist at once. His initial advocacy for the rights of the Palestinians consisted mainly of some public talks and writing articles in the late 1970s. It was driven by two things. First, his Jewish identity and growing up “in the shadow of the Holocaust” (R7 2015:16) convinced him that he had to oppose any form of oppression of anybody else. Second, he saw himself as a truth seeker with a certain ability to analyse society and history, differentiating between truth, falsehood and grey areas (R7 2015:27). In his opinion, he did not take an active enough stand in the South African struggle, and for most of his life until a few years ago, also in the Palestinian, struggle. R7 shared how he continuously confronts himself with deep questions. Was it, for example, because he was part of “the academic left, the scared left” who rationalise themselves out of any activism other than intellectual, theoretical publications? As the years passed, R7 increasingly asked himself what role one’s comfort zone plays; how close truth and untruth are to right and wrong – “[k]nowing what you know, why don’t you act?” (R7 2015:20). The issue he grappled with most was the extent of his commitment – was he prepared to follow through on his truth, or only up to a point? He explained his eventual decision to follow through as being part of the answer to the question of what his life is “really all about” (R7 2015:26). His decision to live up to his truth and his principles became the third reason why he eventually committed to activism after four decades of on-and-off involvement. R7 changed from being a Zionist who wanted to go on *Aliyah* to abandoning Judaism altogether because of its entanglement with Zionism.

Today he identifies with being Jewish and agnostic with a moral consciousness. The later chapters in this study provide more detail and insight into his decision to take responsibility for his thoughts, his focus on scholarly verification of historical facts, and his quest for truth and other reasons.

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<sup>101</sup> To “make *Aliyah*” means immigrating to Israel and on this basis to receive full Jewish Israeli citizenship. Hundreds of thousands who immigrate in such a way are settled illegally by Israel in the military-occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

- **R8**'s commitment to the Palestinian project had a theological basis. His first encounter with the Palestinian issue was in 1993, when a religious leader from Jerusalem visited South Africa. R8 took him to meet Muslim leaders and the then Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Desmond Tutu. Over the next 16 years, he read several books on the topic, but it was only when he visited the oPt and Israel in 2009 that his interest deepened to activism. His contact with Palestinian Christians and others at a conference in Bethlehem brought into focus the impact of Zionist manipulation and lies on Christianity. It shocked him to learn from a speaker representing the World Council of Churches about pressure to use the word "Israel" and not "Palestine" in Bible maps. R8 became determined to make this pressure known, and to reverse the myths, by spreading the word that Palestine can be associated with Christ and that Palestinians too are "human beings created in the image of God" (R8 2015:12). Interacting with the Palestinian Christians and listening to their perspectives inspired him greatly and so did the release of their Kairos Palestine document in December 2009.

For R8, his most important motivation is "the theological and Biblical thing...and then all these other reasons get added to that" (R8 2015:43). He also talked about the importance of dignity, equality and language.

- **R9** has had an almost lifelong, distinct discomfort with racial and other forms of stereotyping which started, for her, from a very young age. Her Jewish father and Afrikaans mother (with some Jewish ancestry) did not tell her much about Israel, but the stories of her Zionist grandparents, particularly her grandmother, left her most uncomfortable: "Even from when I was quite young, I could feel there was something wrong with what she was telling me" (R9 2015:11). Expressions such as "the Arabs" reminded her of stereotypical, authoritarian, often hateful classifications such as "the Blacks", or "the homosexuals" and she made "a connection between what I found really disconcerting about racism and what I was hearing about 'the Arabs'" (R9 2015:13). For health reasons, she did not take a public stand in the Palestinian project for most of her life, but she thought about it all along. Finding all kinds of power abuse in race, gender and class abhorrent, she concluded that as a Jew she could be more useful in the Palestinian project than in other struggles she also supports.

She explained her resolve as both a considered, conscious decision and a feeling. R9 did not mention any experiences of conversion or radical changes in her position. She talked about a natural, inherent ability to recognise discrimination, including the oppression of

the Palestinians, since early childhood, and her considered, conscious decision to commit to activism in the Palestinian project. Humanism in particular motivates her activism.

- **R10** first visited Israel as the guest of a South African Jewish Zionist group and, a few years later, he also visited occupied Palestine. During the first visit, he noticed some gaps in the Zionist narrative, but it was only when he met Palestinians in 2009 that he instantly identified with their suffering. What struck him at the time were the parallels between Israeli and South African oppression, such as land dispossession and the role of religion in it, as well as how the military and security agencies bolster these two aspects. His own re-awakened personal memories of South African apartheid intensified his identification with the Palestinian's circumstances:

It re-traumatizes me. When I go through the checkpoints – it's indescribable the terror that goes through you when you remember what it used to be like when I went through road blocks in South Africa. (R10 2015:45)

But how did he know who and what to prioritise in view of the two conflicting narratives he was exposed to? To this, R10 replied that he identified with the victim: "I don't know whether that is instinct, but there is a sense of knowing. Firstly, the big question, the big question that simplifies it for me, is who is suffering in this situation and who is benefiting?" (R10 2015:58). He phrased his solidarity with oppressed communities all over the world, including the Palestinians, as his "pastoral duty" (R10 2015:19), informed by "a defining text in my life...Luke Chapter Four verse 18" (R10 2015:19). When he recognised the oppression of the Palestinians and how the Bible is abused to mislead Christians he pledged his commitment at once.

R10 also spoke about his responsibility in the Christian community to address Zionist Biblical interpretations for the sake of the integrity of the Christian faith; armed resistance; the importance of justice, equality and accountability; why public advocacy is necessary; the need for intellectual rigour in discerning historical and other facts as well as his support for the BDS campaign, and for interfaith collaboration.

- **R11** learned from his father – a Holocaust survivor – that no other people should ever suffer because they are viewed as weak or undesirable. Yet R11 still embraced political, right-wing Zionism when he made *Aliyah* from his native Argentina and settled in Israel as a young man. Despite the fact that he was sensitised to the ideas of human rights and self-determination when growing up in a dictatorial Argentina, he was "convinced that all the land belongs to us, that this is ours; that we should be very polite to Palestinians, but

the land belongs to us. We should give them all their civil rights, but the land belonged to us” (R11 2015:11). In his view, his bridging of the gap between his principles and his views on Israel and the Palestinians was not an automatic step. In a first step, he came to realise the cost of right-wing ideology and war when he was hospitalised as a soldier during the Yom Kippur War. The many wives, sons, daughters and mothers who mourned the death of loved ones made him question the continuous project of expanding Israel into Palestinian-owned land and the cost of war. When he left the hospital, R11 still associated with Zionism, but at once went to a Zionist pacifist organisation to ask “very ashamedly if there is something with which I can help [...] But it was not just a shift in my mind, it was a decision also to be an activist, to do something to try to change the reality on the ground” (R11 2015:14). Over the years his position shifted away from Zionism to pacifism, humanism and “the more radical side of the left” (R11 2015:14). He has been a committed activist for more than four decades.

Other reasons for his activism are his conviction of the urgency to move Israeli society from an ethos of militarism to humanism, and his desire to live with integrity. He also spoke about valuing justice, freedom and political involvement, the personal cost of his work and the extent of his commitment.

- **R12**’s left-wing Zionist family emigrated from the USA to Israel to invest their time in what his parents believed was a “socialist Utopic society to the Kibbutz Movement” (R12 2015:91). Notwithstanding his father’s civil rights activism at the time of the Vietnam War and R12’s upbringing, which fostered social responsibility, he said he had no awareness of the Israeli politics in respect of the Palestinians, and he knew neither Palestinians nor settlers during that period of his life. Military service, yet another platform “to be so active and useful” (R12 2015:16), followed his membership of an Israeli Zionist military youth movement at school. However, what was supposed to be a seamless transition from one platform to the next in his public responsibility became a turnabout. His first military assignment was in the West Bank city of Hebron:

I’ve never met Jewish supremacists before [...] My job was not only to protect them, but it was to enable them, to support them, to help them expand the settlement at the expense of the Palestinian families that were there. It was very confusing. I was in the army during the Second *Intifada*, which was very violent and bloody. We flattened Jenin, we put Nablus under curfew for months on hand. We put the Nativity Church under siege. We locked Arafat and his compound in Ramallah. It was very, very violent. (R12 2015:13-14)

During this time R12 discovered that the Israeli public was deliberately misled. He realised that what the newspapers reported was completely different from what was happening in reality. This in turn led him to discover that what he and others had learned in history class was also misguided (R12 2015:21). The sudden, unexpected disillusionment during his military service felt like a “facade” that had cracked (R12 2015:21, 22, 80, 81). At the time, R12 felt a great need to face his own responsibility in light of his experience and to clarify the anomalies in his upbringing with his family. He especially wanted his mother to understand how “very, very violent” the occupation was, “who these settlers are” and “what is going on essentially” (R12 2015:14). Thus, R12 grew up as a conscientious, socially involved person, who valued responsibility and honesty only to be shocked into realising that his view of the Israeli agenda was severely limited and distorted. Fuelled by anger, he took his first steps as an activist in 2004 by co-founding a platform for Israeli soldiers to share the truth about the Israeli military’s conduct in the oPt with the public. This response, together with addressing the issue with his family and exposing himself to other influences in the world were his first attempts to realign the values of his upbringing with his own life before becoming a full-time activist. His experiences in the military triggered his commitment to activism in the Palestinian project, but accepting responsibility for the well-being of his (now-expanded) community is not new.

R12 now regards his identity as part of something much bigger than a state and a flag. Further analysis of R12’s responses revealed his desire not only to resist but to suggest an alternative society, as well as his practical, grassroots focus on urban development in Jerusalem as an example of what is possible. He strives first and foremost for empowerment, equality and justice, rather than “peace” and “dialogue” for the sake of political stability, awareness or unity if it still implies class and/or economic divisions. Furthermore, he commented on fear, honesty, the Gaia concept and the need for strategic activism.

- **R13** also recalled her family’s commitment to conscientious social involvement in other contexts, such as boycotting Spain when Franco was in power, working with farm workers on strike in California and objecting to the Vietnam War. She already had a sense that it is wrong to occupy another people’s land, “(b)ut when it came to Israel the ideology was changed, it stagnated, because I was told these lies” (R13 2015:26) by people who inherited the same beliefs as she did. At the time, R13 and her parents

believed Zionism was a human rights cause. Her parents sent her from the US to Israel when she was 17 years old. She expected to arrive in a country where she would live in a tent in a desert with barely enough water for a weekly shower. Instead she arrived to a thriving Kibbutz:

I believed then totally that there was nobody who lived here before '48. I believed that! So my education really was learning how to break down my Zionism. That was my shock – that was my revelation, or my revolution. I don't know exactly how to put it, but that was my difficulty (R13 2015:24).

Her change happened gradually, slowly and mainly as an unconscious process over many years. In hindsight, she realised that she must have given her children the basis for choosing not to enlist in the Israeli Defence Force later in their lives. Yet, the way she raised them “wasn't a conscious contribution. It wasn't saying to them, occupation is wrong. It came out later when we started to have these discussions about refusal” (R13 2015:27). But all the time “it was there. It was there” (R13 2015:27). They watched, for example, Jordanian television broadcasts on the First *Intifada*. When the time arrived for his military service, her eldest son and later also her other children's courage and confidence to become conscientious objectors forced her to take stock and to decide where she stood – “[a]nd it was that” (R13 2015:28). She stepped into an active, public role to protect her children from the system and from there assisted many who made similar choices. In her opinion, that was her moment of “coming out of the closet” (R13 2015:34). Others may have regarded her as an activist due to her regular participation in weekly protests against the occupation in the streets of West Jerusalem over a period of six years, but in her own mind that was where her committed activism of over 25 years began.

She also mentioned the need to change the dynamics of fear, lies, patriarchy and militarism in the Israeli society through awareness-raising and a feminist ethos, the importance of equality and humanism, her strong sense of community, the Palestinians' Right of Return, the South African example, the BDS campaign and her desire for a good life for her children and grandchildren in Israel.

- **R14** identified himself as a political educator who, since his teenage years, has been an activist on several issues, including the Palestinian project. His activism in respect of the Palestinians intensified when he refused to do military service in Israel after finishing school, resulting in three jail sentences. He saw his mother, a former communist activist in Argentina, as the basic and first inspiration for his work. There was something in her,

he said, that made him commit to issues of justice. Whenever he sees injustice, especially amongst human beings, he feels he has to accept responsibility and respond to it. He learned from his mother that regimes are full of their own interests and that their misleading of the public should be exposed. From a young age he realised “that all these talking in the name of the nation” and specifically in his own Israeli context were mostly “either false”, or wanted to mobilise people into self-inflicted destructive behaviour (R14 2015:13).

Thus, R14 saw his commitment to the Palestinian project not as a decision, a choice or a change in position, but as something that he grew up with and lives – “I think I like to work and try to make people think, to raise questions, not to take the obvious” (R14 2015:13). He is also motivated by hope, his affinity for working with people, the fact that people can accept responsibility for changing a wrong and becoming co-creators of their own reality, the need to listen to Palestinians, the need for honesty and critical thinking in making judgements, the need to educate the Israeli public on the Nakba and the Right of Return. He recognises that the Palestinian struggle is one of several struggles that marginalise Israeli society.

- **R15** grew up as a Jew in communist Czechoslovakia, where she felt “intensely unfree” and “afraid of the system” (R15 2015:23). Inspired by her belief of Zionism as a national Renaissance movement for Jews, she emigrated to Israel. Then, as a newly-wed 25-year-old, she lived in South Africa for a year. She immediately recognised the race-based discrimination against Black South Africans: “I didn’t for one second think that am I in favour of apartheid. I didn’t have to kind of figure it out. It was very clear” (R15 2015:26). The horror of the Holocaust sensitised her to justice and injustice, a desire for truth and that it should never happen again to anyone. In her year in South Africa, she participated in feminist consciousness-raising groups, and spoke “about your inner most fears, you vis-à-vis men, you vis-à-vis the society” (R15 2015:60). It taught her that “the personal is political. So if you’re aware of the oppression of women, you also become aware of the oppression of anybody else...That was the road to my political awareness” (R15 2015:28). When she returned to Israel she noticed for the first time that non-Palestinians were “waved through” (R15 2015:27) at checkpoints while the Palestinians were searched. She thus recognised systemic injustices in South Africa because of her European experience and what she had learned from the Holocaust, but she registered Israel’s dual standards only after exposure to apartheid South Africa and feminism. On

the one hand, R15 was precise and clear on what motivates her – knowing what being unfree feels like; recognising systemic oppression in Europe and in South Africa and deepening her consciousness with the help of feminism: “I think I’m not speculating. I think these are the reasons” (R15 2015:62). On the other hand, she admitted that not everyone with similar experiences and exposure responds in the same way and, in her case, she also articulated a clear choice:

I: Do you feel that you need to take sides?

R15: How do you mean?

I: Between people, between issues?

R15: Well, what do you think? Am I in favour of occupation, or not in favour of it? Of course I have taken sides. We are women against the occupation. I completely take that side. (R15 2015:18-21)

As a lecturer in Israel, R15 used her English classes to foster independent thinking and to empower Jewish immigrants from North Africa who found it difficult to fit into their new country. Later, when she was teaching students who did not require additional help, it dawned on her that helping those who struggled to reach their full potential as empowered citizens was what she enjoys most. When she felt she had more time, R15 joined an Israeli organisation that campaigns against the occupation and for human rights. R15 also commented on connecting other socio-political issues in Israel with the Palestinian issue and on Jewish Israelis’ militarism.

- **R16** has been a committed Jewish Israeli activist in the Palestinian project for about 12 years – nearly most of her life at the time of the interview. She was politicised with her father during the Second *Intifada*. They went to protests in Israel and to a village on the West Bank, where she witnessed the destruction of Palestinian-owned olive trees when she was 11 or 12 years old: “I guess that was the beginning of my politicisation process that never ended. So that’s how I started being active” (R16 2015:12). By the age of 14, she went on her own to Bil’in for weekly protests against the erection of the Israeli Wall<sup>102</sup> and she continued to do so for three years before focusing her activism on Jerusalem. She talked of a mutual process of radicalisation between her and her father, “obviously some of it was mine, it wasn’t just his” (R16 2015:21). She did not doubt the influence of her upbringing, but said she also thought (or at least wanted to believe) that it was partly her own choice, as her parents never forced her into anything. In fact, they

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<sup>102</sup> Bil’in is a Palestinian village in the West Bank known for its regular protests against the construction of the West Bank Barrier.

discouraged some of her actions because she was still very young. Furthermore, her brother grew up in the same household, yet he chose a very different path:

I just took it [as] that's what worrying parents do. They don't exactly want their fourteen-year-old kids in Bil'in and yet for me, that was something I did choose to do. The other side of it is, knowing that if it was just a question of me following my father's values then my brother and I, for instance, wouldn't have had such different directions in life. So that's kind of knowing, in a sense. (R16 2015:24; my insertion)

R16 felt compelled to act from the minute she realised the injustice. She saw her activism around occupation and militarisation as part of her identity: "Obviously it wasn't normal in the sense that my peers were doing the same, but for me that was what I did" (R16 2015:15-18). She explained why she felt a public stand was necessary, the importance of learning about things outside one's own framework, why she does not take sides between people, global society's responsibility and several other matters.

- **R17** regarded her upbringing and the values she was taught as the most important reasons for her activism. Her parents raised her and her siblings to respect the values of equality, humanism, social involvement, fighting for minority rights and helping those who are weaker in society. They also taught her that the occupation is wrong and she, like R16, participated in demonstrations as a child. Hence, she regarded her commitment as not primarily motivated by the cause itself, but rather by humanism, human rights, equality and feminism. To her it is not enough to support certain values. If one cares enough to relate to the issue, one has to try to improve things: "[W]e have this heritage in our family that it is our responsibility...to take part in our society" (R17 2015:15). In Israel people are taught to not trust Palestinians, and it is a fear that is "very hard to just wipe away" (R17 2015:56). R17 admitted to having elements of this fear. Still, as an adult, she accepted a "political responsibility because I am part of the occupying citizenship" (R17 2015:97).

In essence, her upbringing, her identification with the values of humanism and feminism, her personal connection with the issue, her choice to own up to the responsibility to effect change relate to who and what she is and does. She later expanded on her realisations regarding unarmed, verbal violence during the 2014 War on Gaza, overcoming personal fear, building bridges between people, as well her intuition and being inspired by feminism.

- **R18** is a citizen of both Israel and the USA. She sees herself as someone who has been an activist since she was very young, albeit in different areas. It started at home with the development of a spirituality grounded in the here and now. In this respect, she mentioned the influence of the book *Conversations with God* by Neale Donald Welsh. In high school in the USA, she learned about Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi, and developed an interest in human rights and equality in general. This education also influences her current activism in the Palestinian project: “Something that’s really, really, really strong in me is the American value of not being a bystander and when you see something happening. You have to go do something about it, because being a bystander is even worse than being the person doing it” (R18 2015:97). Her focus on Israel and Palestine gained momentum after a visit to South Africa in 2010. She educated herself on the matter and also became a trained facilitator and conducted dialogue groups between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. This is where it really started for her (R18 2015:12). But this initial involvement was “more internal and quite less political”, because her “real, real formal activism” started about a year before the interview when she turned to “hard-core political” activism (R18 2015:10).

Her commitment was neither a choice nor a decision, but a definite calling that she has to follow, as the part she plays in ending the occupation. Other reasons that shape her activism include her spirituality and her intuition, her views on violence and non-violence and the military, social media, not a striving for “nirvana” and not knowing all but still continuing, her task to build bridges between people, as well as impressions of fear and collective trauma.

- **R19**’s public advocacy started with co-organising the issuing of a statement in 2003 by Israeli Air Force pilots who no longer wanted to participate in air attacks on Palestinian cities. The journey towards his activism, he says, occurred gradually, but certain things stood out more. R19 was raised by upper middle class Jewish-Israeli parents who were well connected to the cultural and the military elite, as well as the political system. He identified strongly with his country, its people and Zionism, and expressed his social commitment through voluntary community work with the disabled, victims of terrorism and families of struggling Jewish Israeli immigrants. He learned to care for others from his parents’ example of always lending a helping hand to orphans and immigrants. In the same vein, many people help their neighbours, friends, family and communities, but the extent of that care depended on the length or the reach of “their hands that hold the

chocolate that feeds the circle around them”. They could be beautiful, generous people who connect with others and bring good to their surroundings, “but some of them have a short hand and they grow just their self, or just their family, or just their tribe, or their religious group, or people that look like them” (R19 2015:12-13). In Israel, he added, many include all the animals around them, but not all the humans. The statement by pilots referred to above and his ensuing commitment come from deep emotional processes and not from rational thinking. Two incidents in 2003 extended his circle of concern to include the Palestinians and their project. In the first, R19 participated in a peace workshop with Palestinian students more or less his own age. He wanted to introduce himself as a rescue pilot against the occupation and not as active in combat. Then the person speaking before him talked about a younger sister who had been paralysed when an Israeli helicopter missile hit their neighbours’ house:

Then came my turn to say, I’m a pilot and I want peace and stuff like that. Of course I couldn’t utter the word pilot. It was suddenly clear to me that something very, very strong, a big part of my identity is connected to the horrible, evil things that happened to his sister. You make this arc, you make this connection suddenly, that for some people it doesn’t matter that you want peace and you are against the occupation. You are an air force pilot and you are flying helicopters, so another helicopter just like yours hit the house of my neighbour and almost killed my sister. (R19 2015:24)

In that instant, he realised that he was part of an army, a state and a social circle “involved in murdering innocent children”, something “that goes through all the layers of justifications, rationalisation, compartmentation... It brought me to a crisis, to an emotional crisis” (R19 2015:20). He felt shame and a strong desire to do something about the situation, as all his rationalisations no longer made sense to him. The second incident R19 referred to was the Israeli border police’s attack on Palestinian students in his dialogue circle. They jailed and tortured his Palestinian friend. He then realised his identity was no longer limited to being a pilot, a Jew, an Israeli, a student. Somehow, he too was a prisoner in the interrogation cell like his friend. He refers to his “old self” as the naïve boy who used to believe his parents, his teachers, his commanders and the system, “because it’s easier, it’s nicer, it’s comforting, it’s settling to believe in a system” (R19 2015:21). That naïve Zionist boy, he said, was also killed with the many Palestinian children who did not survive a particular air attack he recalls. The disturbing discovery of being an implicit part of the killing of others cut through all the layers of his loyal Zionist identity and threw him into an emotional crisis. When he realised that his values were

disconnected from the reality in which he participated, he immediately decided to act. And somehow, somewhere he also realised that his identity had changed, because the gap between himself and the Palestinians narrowed.

R19 commented on notions of care, love and feminism, and on feeling more empowered and happier since he committed to his activism. Other factors that influenced his motivation were his inner sense of security, the danger of striving for some utopia, the relevance of the BDS campaign honesty, critical assessment, and belonging to a global network of activists who share the same values.

- **R20** is a Jewish-Israeli who currently lives and advocates in the USA. She was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2007, when the Second Palestinian *Intifada* launched attacks on civilians in Jerusalem, where she was living at the time. It plunged her into emotional turmoil and the need to discuss the events. At this point, “quite a bit of chance” (R20 2015:15) came into the equation. A friend signed up for a dialogue group between teenagers from occupied East and West Jerusalem and invited her to join for a year. R20, who had never before met or spoken to a Palestinian, thought it sounded like an interesting opportunity. One day, someone in the group “told the story that radically altered my vision of what the Israeli military was” (R20 2015:17). R20 did not share the details of the story, but explained that until that day, she had viewed the Israeli military as a benevolent body. The people serving as soldiers and reservists, like her father, were good people. Seeing them in their uniforms felt familiar and part of the community’s identity, “[s]o the idea that they could do evil things or that in some way it was a dark organisation with oppressive type of things was beyond my imagination” (R20 2015:18). What she heard that day shocked her deeply and left her with many questions. She turned to the internet. At first, she signed up for electronic newsletters from an Israeli group that stands for co-existence. She received these e-mails for a while and then one day simply went to the meeting point to join an initiative by Israelis to accompany Palestinian farmers harvesting olives. From there she also joined protests against the Israeli Wall in Bil’in, and so the picture became clear to her. The many stories she heard had a profound impact on her, and “really, that really could not allow me to continue to think of myself as an underdog, because I understood that these experiences...were nothing like my own and that however scared I was of a bus blow-up, you know, which I very much was, this could not be compared to the kind of daily oppression and life under occupation, which clearly was not my experience” (R20 2015:33). She felt so strongly about it that she became a

conscientious objector, co-signing a refusal letter long before her Draft day. She eventually endured four months of imprisonment and detention for refusing to do military service. Realising the power imbalance and untruths, she reconstructed her identity from a devout Zionist Jew to that of “a human (and) a woman, but not particularly as a Jew”, so her life is more informed by the Jewish culture than by religion.

The rest of the analysis takes into account R20’s views on power, dialogue, the BDS campaign, equality and justice, the South African example, why public involvement is urgent and necessary, and the need to listen to the Palestinians, as well as what she does not know.

- **R21** was born on a kibbutz and had a left-wing Zionist upbringing, based on the idea of an equal-sided issue that calls for a partnership-based two-state solution. Although she had heard about the Arab villages around the kibbutz, she had not questioned “what it meant to have built a kibbutz” (R21 2015:29). Her perceptions started to change when she gained knowledge and new insights in a year-long study programme with Palestinians, Jewish Israelis and internationals. Several reasons gave rise to her enrolment in this live-in programme in Israel. First, she wanted to know more about the Palestinian side, and she wanted to get to know Palestinians over a longer period. She knew she had had quite a narrow view of the occupation and that something was missing in her knowledge and exposure. Second, she wanted to return to Israel from South Africa, where she is still a citizen. The programme sounded like an interesting way to spend time in Israel. Third, she “wanted to push” herself around these issues as she “hadn’t felt challenged” (R21 2015:22). Overall, she thought it was a good and interesting opportunity. At the time of the interview, she looked back on some of her reasons as quite naïve. She had no idea of the extent of the imbalance in power, nor of how the new knowledge and relations resulting from the programme would affect her. “I didn’t expect it to be as emotionally challenging as it would turn out to be, because I was comfortable...in this left-wing Zionist bubble” (R21 2015:27). She added: “It became really kind of heavy and then there was a lot of anger with myself, what I had done up until that point, or thought until that point around it” (R21 2015:27). Despite its being so emotionally taxing, she did not consider leaving the programme, but felt strongly that she could not just turn away: “I wouldn’t let it go” (R20 2015:36). She committed to activism in 2011.

R21 also talked about countering the position of the Zionist Jewish community, feeling

healthier and more honest for acknowledging the reality, acting for the sake of her own integrity, equality, the urgency for public advocacy, the need to unlearn and re-learn, the role of her Israeli citizenship and more.

### **3.1.3 Sub-conclusion**

*Section 3.1 introduced the 21 research respondents by summarising their demographic details in table format and their self-assumed core tasks in graphic format. These are complemented by brief, individual, narrative sketches that focus on reasons for joining the Palestinian project.*

*The brief sketches above indicate that it was not clear to all the respondents from the start that they had a role to play in the Palestinian project. Some made the connection quickly, others took years or even decades to commit to activism. Many held noble values in respect of human rights in general, yet they came to realise that their views on the Palestinians and Israel were not in touch with the reality. The rest of Chapter 3 builds on the information in Section 3.1, presenting patterns specific to reasons for joining the Palestinian project.*

## **3.2 Trends in joining activism in the Palestinian project**

Following on from Section 3.1, Section 3.2 discusses four trends regarding entering the Palestinian project:

- the respondents either confirmed or challenged pre-existing perceptions that they held before committing to activism;
- they ascribed their initial commitment to activism to various organising principles such as chance, choice, normalcy, destiny and intuition;
- they identified triggers and catalysts that played a role in affirming the Palestinian project as a necessary cause; and
- they shared some key insights into these early stages of their activism.

All of the above serve as different points of entry to the question of why, and how the respondents' commitment arose.

### 3.2.1 *Confirming versus challenging pre-existing perceptions*

About half of the participants grasped the dynamics of the Palestinian suffering and their quest for liberation without having to transform former impressions of Israel and the Palestinians. The other half realised that their perceptions in respect of Israel and the Palestinians were out of touch with reality and adjusted their views.

#### 3.2.1.1 *No shift in loyalties*

Ten respondents – R1, R2, R3, R4, R8, R9, R14, R16, R17 and R18 – realised from their introduction to the Palestinians and/or their quest that the Palestinians suffer in the grip of Israel's military occupation. They were all aware of opposing narratives that endorsed the Israeli regime, but these never convinced them. Thus, they *did not alter any vested or treasured attachments* to Israel and the Palestinians before committing to activism. It may have taken them some time to develop a deeper understanding of the issue and/or to formally step into the public domain, but they had immediate sympathy or empathy with the injustices experienced by the Palestinians.

Three South African respondents in this group (R1, R2, R3) felt a general solidarity with the systemic injustices perpetrated in Palestine, commenting that it was “not so difficult” (R1 2015:17) for these to be recognised by a Black South African who had lived under apartheid. In this regard, R2 (2015:70) commented: “It is the recognition, the identification, the ‘oh gosh, this is what happened to us. This is what is worse than what happened to us.’” All three had already committed to the South African anti-apartheid struggle by the time they heard of the Palestinian cause. To all of them, the systemic, oppressive nature of the injustice was clear right from the start. R2 almost searched for words to express how obvious it was to him on his first encounter: “When I first went to Palestine many years ago, the – it was – I can't understand why others cannot get it automatically. So it was just getting it” (R2 2015:70). A similar immediate impression of inhumane power abuse also characterised R9's account, although she is a White South African who was not on the receiving side of apartheid injustices. Like R1, R2 and R3, she did not initially know all the complex details of the situation, and moreover, she had also received a fair share of the Zionist narrative from her grandparents. Yet even as a child, R9 instinctively felt the utmost discomfort “about racism and what I was hearing about the ‘Arabs’” (R9 2015:13). These four South Africans were all struck by a very clear “identification” (R1 2015:23,38; R2 2015:70) with many “similarities”

(R3 2015:32; R9 2015:14) to the South African context, while also recognizing differences between the two contexts (R1 2015:51; R9 2015:14).<sup>103</sup>

The other six respondents (R4, R8, R14, R16, R17, R18) also mentioned the relevance of the South African case to the Palestinian project, but they did not connect it with their first steps towards activism. The common factor was the values they grew up with. R17 (2015:11) expressed it as something that had to do with “humanistic ideas, general human rights, that every person is equal, something very basic, feminine issues. Something very wide actually, not something that has specifically to do with the Palestinians or the occupation, but in a wider sense”. For R14 (2015:13), it was “very, very clear from a very young age” that he should be suspicious of the agendas of regimes, but especially of Israeli nationalism. Where there is injustice or suffering, especially due to “irrelevant categories, or non-just justifications” (R14 2015:20), his mother taught him to respond to the injustice. Likewise, R17 grew up knowing that “we are very much responsible” (R17 2015:17) for the rights of those who are discriminated against in society. She has been active since her childhood. R18 (2015:97-98) grew up with “the American value of not being a bystander”, which prompted her to respond. R16 and her father were jointly conscientised in her early teens. R4 also linked his immediate “sympathy” (R4 2015:9-10) during his high school years to a more general sense of “identification with the oppressed...that was cultivated...in my upbringing and in our house”.

The exception in this sub-group was R8, who is also a veteran from the South African struggle against apartheid. He did not mention his upbringing, his identification with the South African case or humanist principles as primary reasons for his initial commitment to activism in the Palestinian project. However, he also understood the power asymmetry from the start, and he had empathy with the Palestinians. It was only when he realised the role of Zionism in Christianity and how, for example, the text of the Bible is revised and manipulated to omit the word “Palestine” that he became a committed activist. This does not necessarily mean that the values he grew up with did not play a role, but he did not mention his upbringing as one of his motivations during the interview.

The one aspect shared by all ten respondents who did not have to deconstruct existing loyalties on Israel and the Palestinians was their *instant recognition of the dynamics between*

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<sup>103</sup> There are several reasons why these respondents regard the Israeli situation as more challenging than the South African apartheid struggle, as discussed in Sections 4.2 and 6.1.

*Israel and the Palestinians*, and their realisation that they were witnessing unjust dominance and discrimination. Put differently, when these respondents met Palestinians and/or encountered information about their project, *all sensed the systemic nature of the* injustice in respect of an entire people; and/or power imbalance; and/or that all Palestinians are oppressed and stigmatised for the mere fact that they are Palestinian. No respondent saw it as a “conflict” between two equal parties, except for R4, who briefly espoused the argument for interfaith dialogue after his initial impressions of a power imbalance. However, he quickly realised that his impression of a “conflict” was mistaken, since the nature of the tension is systemic oppression. He, too, did not shift from one ideology, or a set of values, to another.

### 3.2.1.2 *Radical shifts in perception*

The other 11 respondents (R5, R6, R7, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15, R19, R20, R21) reported radical shifts, *changing to new understandings from the narratives and/or perceptions that they had previously held*. All 11, including R5, who initially thought that the Palestinian project was part of a “religious clash”, came to realise that they used to embrace twisted truths and distorted facts based on some form of Zionism. For example, R11 (2015:11), R13 (2015:10) and R6 indicated that they used to believe in the claim that “we have the right to everywhere, it’s all ours. It’s very simple, really” (R6 2015:32). Once they recognised the oppressive, exclusivist nature of Zionism, all of them except R5 were deeply unsettled. This recognition confronted R10 (who used to embrace Christian Zionism) and those Jewish respondents who used to embrace Jewish Zionism and who had deeply held ideological and/or religious views. It shattered their idealised view of what they thought was the refuge for Jews after the World War II: “The realisation and the understanding, for example, that I have been committed to a lie, that I had grown up believing that Israel was the only land for the Jews and that there was no other place for the Jews” (R13 2015:10) required “a really, really long educational process” (R13 2015:27). “My turning point was having to understand that Zionism was not the ideology that I was [led] to believe it was” (R13 2015:23; my insertion). She arrived as a teenager in a thriving kibbutz and not in a barren, untamed land as she had been led to believe in the country of her birth, the USA.

When their former perceptions were upset, all the respondents in this sub-group realised that their views were not only factually incorrect, but wholly inappropriate and incongruent with their assumed identities as conscientious, socially-involved, caring citizens with sound values since childhood. They realised that their appreciation for human rights and inclusivity

*“stagnated” (R13 2015:26) when it came to Israel, because of the lies they were told. R5, R6, R10, R11, R13 and R15, for example, were exposed to systemic oppression in countries such as South Africa, Argentina, the USA, Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, but even these experiences did not prevent them from adopting a wholesale belief in mainstream myths on the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. For most of these 11 respondents, their awakening to the Palestinian project was associated with encounters and revelations they had not sought nor expected to find. The new information and impressions clashed with what they had “known” as the “truth” until then. Above all, it confronted them with their own identities raising questions about their integrity. In short, the realisation of discrepancies between their sentiments and the reality slowly but persistently pushed them beyond their ideological boundaries, or it gave them a sense of being catapulted out of their comfort zones.*

The 11 respondents who underwent drastic shifts in perceptions phrased their turnabouts in a variety of sometimes evocative terms. They spoke, for example, of “a major turning point” (R5 2015:13), “a point in my life that things shifted” (R21 2015:9), or a point when “all the pieces began to click together” (R10 2015:13), the “cracking of a façade” (R12 2015:21,22,80,81), and the shattering of “walls” or “barriers” (R19 2015:19,29), a “revelation”, a “revolution” (R13 2015:24) and a “radical” experience or shift (R11 2015:14; R20 2015:8,17), “the road to my political awareness” (R15 2015:28) and “political transformation” (R20 2015:8), or a point of no return or “no going back” (R6 2015:37) and walking away from “enormous pressure” (R7 2015:21).

Especially the Jewish respondents in this group, notably R6, R11, R12, R13, R19, R20 and R21, felt shaken up. They spoke of inner turmoil, emotional upheaval and disintegration when they discovered how far removed their preconceptions were from reality. R12 (2015:74), for example, felt confused during his military service when he realised that there was a gap between what really happened versus what was published in the newspapers. He felt a strong need to come to terms with what had happened during his upbringing: “I’m furious and angry. We were lied to” (R12 2015:20). Hence, he realised that “[o]n religious and spiritual and existential levels I don’t want to live a lie. I lived a lie growing up and I’m furious about it” (R12 2015:74). Or, in the words of R19 (2015:47):

I felt really despair[ing] and miserable before I took this action. I was in an internal turmoil, feeling angry, being upset with the system, with the commanders, the teachers, my parents and everyone. I felt lied to. I felt that everything is a big lie around me. I felt that they turned all of this generation into murderers.

Yet, R19's despair and his giving up of his old beliefs gave him the chance to relate to something new, something better:

So giving up previous beliefs that made you feel despair is not so bad if you find a hopeful alternative. This is the big change. You know you can go down and down and down and things are toppling on you and then you can crash yourself and stay there, or get new hope to direct your objective. And this, this is the empowerment when you find an alternative hope. (R19 2015:48)

R7 actually experienced relief once he accepted the credibility of the Palestinian project, as he felt that he could walk away from something that he no longer wanted to do. Like R7, R15 did not mention any personal upheaval, but spoke about education that sensitised her to the needs of the Palestinians.

Six of those who changed their earlier perceptions (R6, R7, R13, R15, R19, R21) *experienced gradual awakenings*. They are all Jewish people who had previously embraced state Zionism. Their awakenings came through “unlearning and relearning” (R21 2015:139), “making connections and then translating and crossing back over and making connections and translating and crossing back over” (R6 2015:23). Three did not pinpoint the exact reasons for their drastic shift, but highlighted events and realisations. The other three were clear about their reasons. All six re-evaluated their attachments to Israel and the Palestinians and synchronised their adapted views with their identities and values. R6 and R13 did not single out a specific moment, an event or any other experience as decisive in their turning away from Zionism: “So it wasn't done in one moment, it was never... it was never one insight, there was never one aha moment. They [these moments] just accumulated over time. These insights accumulated around Israel, for sure. I started to realise...we've got it horribly wrong” (R6 2015:31). Through “little collections of insights” (R6 2015:31) and “small revelations” (R13 2015:9), they untangled the indoctrination or “brainwashing” (R13 2015:58) and realigned their impressions in “a very, very, very long process” (R13 2015:10). According to R13, her realisation of the injustice had been there for a long time, but taking the actual step of committing to public advocacy came only after decades:

So it was there, it was there. But the actual fact of being able to be, for example, an activist recognising that this is wrong, came much later. It came through understanding pacifism through my son and his refusal to go to the military. It came through the rest of my children deciding not to go to the military and why they did that. So it was a very long process. (R13 2015:10)

Despite not pinpointing any particular catalysts as the only or the most important, both R13 and R19 mentioned triggers or proverbial last straws in the unmasking of the myths they had

believed, such as R13's children's refusal to join the Israeli army. R19 (2015:21) said his shift also came about "gradually, but specific events punched more", such as in his participation in a dialogue group. R7, R15 and R21 were more certain about the reasons for their drastic, but gradual shifts. R7 and R15 both made ideological adjustments quite early in their lives, but it took years before they committed to public advocacy. R7 abandoned Zionism as a young adult, and did some *ad hoc* public advocacy, but he only became a committed activist after decades when he decided to follow through on his convictions. R15 recognised the discrimination against the Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints only after her return from South Africa, where she studied feminism. She formally committed to activism years later when she had the time and more clarity on her role. R21 linked her shift to the insights gained from a year-long study programme.

The other five respondents (R5, R10, R11, R12, R20) who experienced drastic shifts in their convictions talked of *more condensed, sometimes sudden realisations*. It is interesting that both R5 and R10 participated in the South African struggle against apartheid, but at first neither took much notice of or believed in the Palestinian struggle, because they were influenced by Christian Zionist myths in R10's case, and the idea of a religious clash in the case of R5. At that stage, none of them distinguished between Zionist and non-Zionist Jews, and it was only when they recognised the human rights aspect of the Palestinian project that they could associate with this project. For R5, the United Nations' World Conference against Racism was her "big turning point" (R5 2015:17), as it countered her impressions of a Jewish-Muslim struggle that warranted suspicion against all Jews. In retrospect, she realised that much of what she had seen earlier was anti-Semitic, while her positive impressions of non-Zionist Jews at the conference "went against everything that I had heard about Jews when I was growing up" (R5 2015:16). R10, in turn, held uncritical political views of Israel, based on a Zionist Biblical understanding, before he came to recognise that the injustices in the oPt mirrored images from South African apartheid. Moreover, he discovered a crafted misrepresentation of the Bible that he rejected (R10 2015:15). This discovery, together with his identification with the systemic injustice, made him commit to activism at once, with the purpose of addressing the heresy of Christian Zionism.

The three Jewish Israelis all abandoned Zionism over time. R11 eventually shifted from right-wing Zionism and militarism to pacifism and humanism. In the short term, his insight that the cost of war was too high led to committed action after his hospitalisation as a soldier

in the Israeli army. R12 gained his insights in the blood, lies and violence of Israeli military service. He felt confused, distraught and furious when he discovered the falsehoods he had been led to believe about the Israeli military and the country's history. Upon leaving the army, he helped to set up a platform for other soldiers to share similar experiences with the public, and then left Israel to return years later as a full-time activist in a Palestinian organisation. Likewise, R20 was shocked, feeling that her reality was "disintegrating" (R20 2015:18), in a process that started with revelations in her dialogue group and continued with her own research on the Israeli military. Over time, she moved from being a devoted, faith-based Jewish Zionist to identifying only with the values of humanism and feminism.

Like those who immediately grasped the dynamics of the issue, ten respondents in this subgroup came to recognise the gross discrimination against Palestinians, the human rights aspect of the cause, and the skewed power relations in which one party is oppressed and the other dominates as the oppressor. The exception was R11, who did not realise it when he first became an activist, but did so later in his life. Unlike those who immediately resonated with the Palestinian project, this group all felt lied to, and/or had to go through the unpacking of layers of propaganda and falsified information in respect of Israel and the Palestinians.

### 3.2.1.3 *Sub-conclusion*

*Ten, and thus about half of the respondents, realised from their introduction to the Palestinian issue that the human rights issues involved are due to Israel's systemic oppression of the Palestinians. They were all aware of opposing narratives that endorse the Israeli regime, but these never convinced them. Thus, they did not need to abandon any vested or treasured attachments to Israel and the Palestinians before committing to activism. It may have taken them some time to develop a deeper understanding of the issue and/or to step formally into the public domain, but they had immediate sympathy or empathy with the injustices they witnessed. The other 11 underwent radical shifts away from the ideologies, narratives and/or perceptions that they held before joining the Palestinian project. Whether or not the 21 respondents changed their vested loyalties to Israel and/or abandoned their misperceptions about the Palestinian project before committing to this project, their entry into activism was marked by two similarities.*

*Firstly, all 21 respondents recognised the dynamics of the unbalanced power relations between Israel and the Palestinians. They understood, either right from the start, or after*

*becoming sensitised to the fact, that the Palestinians were responding to unjust, systemic oppression and dispossession, and that the arguments that underpinned the claims of the moral integrity of a brave Jewish nation defending itself against ruthless, irrational Palestinian aggressors misconstrued the truth.*

*Secondly, 12 respondents mentioned the positive role of the values learnt during their upbringing (R1, R4, R5, R6, R11, R12, R13, R14, R16, R17, R18 and R19). Some (R6, R11, R12, R13, R19) discovered that they and/or their families and societies did/do not apply these values in respect of the Palestinians, and realised that there was a lack of moral consistency. However, the explanation in Section 3.2.2 shows that all respondents actually ascribed the rise of their activism to the values and life views that were in place before they became activists. (Chapter 4 explores the role of moral consistency in the case study further.)*

### **3.2.2 Perceived organising principles underpinning initial commitment**

Exposure to, or knowledge of the Palestinian project did not guarantee affirmation of it as a just cause with the right to exist. One cannot assume that a compelling awareness of the plight of the Palestinians necessarily leads to a willingness to intervene. R16's brother, for example, was raised in the same household as R16, "and yet he decided on a very different path" (R16 2015:21) – one "can know these things, and still not be active" (R16 2015:24). Likewise, R15's (2015:73) sons did not follow in their mother's footsteps despite associating with her values of active community involvement. R19 (2015:40-41) referred to one of his friends who had the same exposure in life that he did, but who does not care about the Palestinian cause. Why then did the respondents move from recognition and affirmation to committed activism? How would they describe the modes whereby their commitments arose? This section probes the perceived organising principles that underpin the embodiment of the activists' pledge to the Palestinian project in their committing to the project. These organising principles are used to *describe the birth of their commitment*. These included normalcy, chance, a special calling or destiny, choice, a felt sense such as an urge, instinct, intuition and other feelings, corporeal realisations, as well as the inexplicable.

I asked the respondents: "For how long have you been an activist in the Palestinian project?" Interestingly, in almost all cases, the question elicited anecdotal responses, referring to earlier life experiences and cognitions that in hindsight underscored the respondents' current commitment to their activism. R12 (2015:9), for example, answered the question as follows:

“I guess the way I would define that is – I grew up in a youth movement. I have always been active in my community.” In other words, he and others connected their activism to something that was linked to a time or a status *before* being conscious of having a specific commitment to the Palestinian project. The discussion that follows in this section shows that all the respondents – including those who used to prioritise the rights of Israel at the cost of the rights of the Palestinians – framed their current commitment to positive values and life views in terms of *what was already present in their lives by the time* when they became conscious of the Palestinian project. All presented their views from the perspective of their life as a whole, and they saw earlier inclinations such as their beliefs, world views, values and intentions as formative, leading up to their entering the Palestinian project.

Almost half of the respondents articulated their commitment as *natural and normal* and/or as being in pursuit of restoring normality and/or as an obvious outflow of what they already stood for: “It seems to me it’s so natural that if you believe (there is) something you have to fight for, you believe it. So natural that I don’t understand your question. If you believe that something is wrong, you must do something to change it” (R11 2015:16). For R16 (2015:18), committing to the Palestinian project “was what I did, so for me it was normal, it wasn’t some exceptional thing”. Or, as R9 (2015:152) put it, it is “a normal decent thing to do and we shouldn’t have to applaud decency”. Advocacy for the rights of the Palestinians in R9’s eyes is therefore not special or something for which one earns credit, but simply decent, human, and something that should be quite regular.

R2 (2015:145) explained at length and by means of examples from different contexts that his activism is integrated into what he does. To advocate in the Palestinian project is not a “project” to R2, but a part of his “life”.

R3 (2015:9) spoke of his commitment in the same breath as his activism in the South African anti-apartheid struggle when he said that he “got involved in activism which then soon included Palestinian solidarity stuff when I was about 14 years old”. R4 (2015:72) remarked that it is “natural and normal for us to be living amongst each other. It’s just abnormal to separate people”. He argued that relations with the state of Israel and its supporters should not be “normalised” for the sake of politeness, but he added that “we are all for having genuine relations with Israeli comrades in the pursuit of Palestinian freedom” (R4 2015:32). R12 (2015:75-76), R13 (2015:105) and R15 (2015:51-53) and several others echoed the need to change the current abnormality to a place, in the words of R19 (2015:40), “where people

are safe, people are happy, comfortable – all the normal things that everyone wants, but for everyone. That’s it.”

R6 (2015:40) added the perspective that wanting equality for all may sound normal, but to live up to this ideal in practice is not so ordinary. It is much easier, therefore, just to follow “the path that was there” (R6 2015:54), like living for one’s family and for everything else expected by society. R17 (2015:114) offered a contrasting argument, qualifying the notion of fitting in with mainstream sentiments further by pointing out how hard it sometimes is “not to join the craziness and the violentness and the fear” that have become “normal” in Israel.

There was not much emphasis on *coincidence* as an organising principle in the respondents’ pledging themselves to activism in the Palestinian project. However, it was not completely absent from all respondents’ accounts. R20 (2015:15), for example, remarked that “quite a bit of chance came into the equation” when she joined a dialogue group. In the same vein, R21 said she did not seek a suitable study opportunity, but it crossed her path. For R4 (2015:14,147), his opportunity to spend a few months in the oPt was “really just by chance” (R4 2015:14) and he added that were it not for that, he might have ended up as an activist in another field.

In addition to associating with the possibility of coincidence, R4 described his attachment to advocacy in the Palestinian project as a *special calling or destiny*. Referring to South African struggle veterans’ comments, he reflected that perhaps as in their case, the way his life was turning out it too “is not his” (R4 2015:157). Like R4, R6 is not sure to what extent things happened of their own accord or were part of her destiny. She used the tentative term “almost” (R6 2015:122) to weigh up the possibility of a path that chose *her* when she explained her particular style of activism. Likewise, R5 (2015:55) considered a sense of being selected or called for the task without being a hundred per cent sure of whether this was indeed what happened – she said: “[T]he Palestinian cause is the one that I’ve chosen, or it chose me.” R10 has more certainty, as he regarded his unwavering commitment as almost “a missiological task” (R10 2015:15). It revealed itself in the sense of being driven. This sense was shared by R19, although R19 does not associate with a particular religious tradition, as R10 did; “[i]n some way I feel like a missionary” (R19 2015:116). R20 and R18 had no doubt: “It’s definitely my calling [...] I’m doing something that I need to be doing. There is no other – I have no question about it...I cannot not do that” (R18 2015:46); “I felt a deep sense of being on a mission” (R20 2015:76).

Perceiving their activism in the Palestinian project as a coincidence, as a calling or as a normal, decent, human response, did not rule out conscious, carefully considered *choices* as organising principles. For example, R4, who mentioned several organising principles underpinning his activism, said: “Whether it’s destiny or [not]....of course there were choices that were made. I made choices to do what I’m doing” (R4 2015:155; my insertion). The notion of choice – both in joining the project and in choosing this project among a variety of possible causes to join – is a recurring motif in the data corpus. According to the activists, they faced and indeed had options in the Israel-Palestinian matter. Moreover, they recognised their ability to exercise and *embody their positions*, because without doing so, for them, their convictions would be incomplete, or not convincing.

They did not feel locked into silence or apathy because the Palestinian issue is too complex, too long-standing, too hopeless, or for any other reason. For them, silence is also a decision (R7 2015:41-43). They regarded being an “armchair critic” (R5 2015:51), or a hypocrite in the sense of only talking and not doing (R11 2015:16) as insufficient. The respondents felt that simply writing and talking about the issue, as the members of the scared left do (R1 2015:94; R7 2015:20,99), without also “throwing oneself” into the cause (R4 2015:99) jeopardises the respondents’ perceptions of their own integrity.

R14 referred to the many who deny having any options in the Israel-Palestinian matter. He argued that imagining a lack of choice as “the Israeli side is trying to explain it” to the world is actually incorrect, for “there are many choices” (R14 2015:65). These include choosing for or against justice, equality and fairness, for or against being human, between the oppressed and oppressor, between accepting responsibility or not, between violence and non-violence, and so forth. One can walk down the street and choose what one sees (R2 2015:77; R16 2015:73). One may succumb to the aggressive, selfish nature of humanity, or choose to stand up for the other (R19 2015:52). “We can either be drawn to mud” (R2 2015:18-19) by our lower, bigoted selves that thrive on self-interest and self-preservation at the cost of the other, or we may realise our higher selves in associating with the “transcendent whose spirit we carry” (R2 2015:18). “So it’s [a] choice that we have. I’m trying to exercise my choices – for the marginalised” (R2 2015:78-80; my insertion).

Facing up to one’s convictions and finding the “guts” to follow through with committed action, despite fear, shame and/or other reservations (R6 2015:9,120-122; R13 2015:72; R17 2015:48; R21 2015:118-120 and so forth) sometimes seems *inevitable, or appears to gain a*

*momentum* of its own: “Sometimes I do feel like as if I can’t stop” (R4 (2015:151). R7 (2015:100) added in respect of preparing an address to government officials: “Why am I going to say what I’m going to have to say? So I need to work it out. So I need to write it out. But I do feel nevertheless that, as you say, I see myself going down a road which I have emotional ‘pre-barrications’ about, but I make a conscious decision about it.” In other words, having considered opinions remains unsatisfactory if they are not also embodied. To stop at realising the relevance and the importance of the Palestinian project and supporting it, but only in principle, feels unfinished: “It was not just a shift in my mind, it was a decision also to be an activist, to do something to try to change the reality on the ground” (R11 2015:14). Another respondent commented: “I feel that it is important for us to do stuff and that doing is actually being...That you must do, you must be active and you must change and relate and be part of the change, otherwise you’re not worth being” (R17 2015:17-21). For the respondents, not following through with action and not living up to what they perceive as true compromises their integrity.

Furthermore, the activists’ bodies can serve as “processing devices” or compasses toward action. When they do not know how to respond or get stuck in some way, some believed that the physical body itself holds or supplies the necessary information. The impressions can just lie there waiting “to filter up and down and through” (R6 2015:91) in a “different kind of thought process” (R7 2015:74) that occurs while moving and walking. It provides a space in which “everything just starts processing itself” (R6 2015:91). R6 (2012:91) stated: “The body is incredible. It often works ahead of the brain and other kind of cognitive and emotional processing.” When R18, for example, senses herself closing or a tensing up in the midst of public action, she consciously stores the uneasiness in her body to deal with it later. Or if she has to make a decision at once, she has to sense which way to go: “I have developed into a place where, if it is necessary to make a decision right there, I feel it and I know what I need to do” (R18 2015:44).

Whether the respondents referred to the source they use for processing and direction as “intuition” (R6 2015:23,27,128-129; R8 2015:134,161; R17 2015:69-71; R18 2015:43-44), or “instinct” (R8 2015:161; R10 2015:58; R14 2015:98; R20 2015:112) varied. Sometimes both terms were used in the same sentence by the same respondent, such as by R8 (2015:161). Although she used the word “intuitive” a number of times, R6 did not regard the term the most appropriate to describe her sensation of inner knowledge – she said: “I don’t

use that language” (R6 2015:119). There are many examples where the respondents phrased or rephrased their ideas, and used words and phrases such as “as if”, “almost”, or “I think”. However, whatever the appropriate term may be, several respondents admitted to having “a sense of knowing” (R10 2015:58, R16 2015:24). In this regard, R18 (2015:58; my insertion) remarked that there was “something that’s inside of me [that] says: don’t work it out, just keep doing it”. This sense of knowing or wisdom transcended, and was not limited to rational processes and the ego (R6 2015:89). According to R14 (2015:97), it is linked rather to one’s “own capacity” and some “inner point”, but he could not articulate what exactly this point is:

You go beyond the reality and you say, okay, you work from an inner – I don’t know – power that you cannot sometime understand what it is. Maybe some people will say it’s God, this is God who is in us. I think I would say, no, that is the humanity in us and this human instinct or whatever is there to do the things, I think. (R14 2015:98)

*Specific feelings* were also experienced as a pathway or a mode of action through which commitment can arise. R13 (2015:61-62), for example, had “a great sense of guilt, because I didn’t know any better; because I was very young; because I was not educated in the right way. So I feel I do need to contribute to the future”. R17 (2015:129) also referred to notions of “guilt” and “responsibility” as driving forces behind her commitment: “I think it’s a feeling next to guilt. So it’s not guilt, but it has to do with the fact that my life is okay and good and safe and it’s not fair that other people have such a horrible life.” R11 (2015:14), R19 (2015:25) and R20 (2015:32,37) spoke about feeling “ashamed” of their earlier Zionist perceptions and how they used to think about themselves compared to and in relation to the Palestinians.

“Anger” served as “fuel” for their activism, especially anger at lies they were led to believe, that compromised their values and masked how the Palestinians are treated. This anger was then transferred to their activism or leads them to dedicate their emotions in service of advocacy for the rights of the Palestinians (R7 2015:156; R12 2015:23,74-75; R19 2015:45-48; R20 2015:69; R21 2015:36). Thus, their anger did not galvanise them into negativity or hate – quite the opposite:

I’m angry, anger is what fuels it. I think anger is not a bad thing. I think it can be used, if recognised properly it can be used as a wonderful fuel for a movement. (R12 2015:23)

R7 emphasised that it is not so much facts and evidence that galvanise him into action. He ascribed what takes him from being convinced of the legitimacy of the Palestinian project to public activism, amongst other things, to “a very deep sense of outrage” (R7 2015:156). In the case of R20 (2015:67-69), her anger and her ensuing sense of responsibility were also

linked to a sense of urgency or a “mission”. R4 and others described a strong pull to the Palestinian project as feeling “compelled” (R4 2015:158; R14 2015:12; R16 2015:22), “driven”, unable to let the issue go (R2 2015:35; R21 2015:69-70; R20 2015:112), and/or “pushed” (R15 2015:65) toward it. R2, R4 and R17 spoke about the notions of a “flair for drama” or “excitement” that energizes their activism, but it occurs in the course of their action and they did not offer it as a reason for stepping towards commitment.

The data set on joining the Palestinian project clearly contained several organising principles that informed the activists’ commitment. Some seemed very clear and straightforward to articulate – it may be a deliberate choice, a particular feeling or a clear sense of being called to a task. Others seemed to *hover just beyond their grasp or were difficult to express*. Often there was *an interplay* between organising principles. R20, for example, associated with more than one. On the one hand, she explained a logical sequence of events that marked her shift from committed state Zionism to taking up a protective role through her presence in Palestinian farmers’ annual olive harvest. On the other hand, she mentioned the role of chance in her own conscientisation process. As the interview proceeded, she came to realise the possibility of yet more principles and of the fact that she might not even be able to comprehend and/or articulate all the reasons:

...why I take the stand, why – I don’t know, I think your questions have made me realise that I don’t know how to articulate it as much, but I think it’s just more of really like an instinctive sort of thing. I don’t know, I think as I’ve said, I was always very opinionated and once I realised that these are my opinions, like sort of these had to be heard and these voices had to be heard, there just had to be an outcry about this and I was just like I had to shake people out of their complacency. I don’t know, I just felt like I had to – it had to be done. (R20 2015:112)

Like R20, others were also not entirely sure of the exact reasons, or all the reasons, or whether they were perhaps “plotting backwards” (R6 2015:27) in their explanations. R1 (2105:131) described his thoughts as “a stream of consciousness” in his mind. R6 (2015:27) noted: “It’s always hard to produce a narrative after the fact. Maybe I’m imposing a coherence, but I’m just pulling out some of the thoughts and insights in those moments.” R4 mentioned many reasons for his activism, such as curiosity, chance, opportunity, destiny, organic development, the use of his own talents and conscious choices. He added that sometimes things develop according to their own pace: “I don’t sit down and decide on these things. These things happened. Also, one learns every day” (R4 2015:180). However, it did not bother either him or the others not to know all the precise reasons for crossing over from

non-involvement to committed activism: “I’m part of a struggle to make this world a better place and I don’t know why. I can’t – I don’t – I haven’t figured that out as yet. And I’m not uneasy about not having the answers” (R4 2015:47).

At times, the respondents’ comments pointed to a motion of being “pulled” and at other times they had a sense of being “pushed” in the direction of commitment. Despite feeling unsure about the exact reasons, all the respondents sensed and expressed a strong personal appeal to advocate in public, even if the origins of their sense of a personal appeal was “obviously impossible to answer”, as R16 (2015:20) said. Nevertheless, R16 perceived her committed activism as part of her identity. It was “something that’s me” (R16 2015:22). It is so close to the self for R21 (2015:69) that she “couldn’t just let it go. It was as if I was being really dishonest and I was almost stubborn about it”. She took a position unlike that of her family members. It was not something she could run away from; she felt pushed to explore the matter and simply had to confront it as it “was almost a necessity” (R21 2015:70). Likewise, both R15 (2015:101) and R18 (2015:97) stated that they “couldn’t just be a bystander” when they realised the occupation was wrong. For R15 there was some deeper awareness that surpassed logic answers and that she identified with hindsight: “Years later I discovered that all the connections I had were left-wing people. All the friendships and contacts that I had when I thought I was all alone in an unhappy marriage were all very radical left-wing people. Even unconsciously that’s my choice” (R15 2015:66).

Perhaps R11 best summarised the interplay between knowing and not knowing the exact reasons for validating and entering the Palestinian project when this respondent said:

Maybe the war was a catalyst, a catalyst. Maybe without the war sooner or later I would come to the same point, but if I have to put my finger on one element, factor, that takes me from the right to the left, I would say that [was] the experience that I got lying in the hospital during the months after being wounded. (R11 2015:12)

In other words, it was not so easy to pinpoint one single, or even the deepest reason(s) for bridging the space between non-involvement and entering the Palestinian project, but it was *possible to mention triggers*. All the respondents felt they could not turn away from the matter, even if it took them decades to commit to public advocacy. They *organised their responses in a variety of ways, often combining a number of modes* such as acting from a sense of normalcy, experiencing feelings, urges and corporeal sensations, sensing their intuition and/or instinct, contemplating the role of destiny, chance and calling, as well as exercising choices. There were also organising principles that they do not know of and/or

struggled to express. All strongly *sensed a personal appeal* and something within themselves, over and above the logical factual merits of the cause.

### ***3.2.3 Triggers and insights in affirming the Palestinian project***

This section summarises groups of triggers or catalysts, as well as shared insights perceived as factors that helped the respondents to affirm the credibility of the Palestinian project and the necessity to advocate for the rights of the Palestinians.

As I have noted in their personal narratives and in the rest of the discussion above in Chapter 3, for many their activism already started in their childhood, in their teens and/or in their early adult years. Some who were not involved specifically in the Palestinian project early in life were active in different contexts, but others were not involved in any activism during their early years. Whether their activism started early in their lives or not, whether it was the result of a sudden insight, or gradual experiences or some pre-existing inclination, and whether they elaborated on the initial stimulus or merely mentioned it, all noted that they had certain experiences, in the form of encounters and/or events, that alerted them to the Palestinian project and prompted their activism. These triggers were figurative levers that immediately, and/or at later stages, revealed, focused, set off, or increased their insight into their roles to the extent that they perceived these triggers as the factor(s) that stimulated their commitment to the Palestinian project. Sometimes, the respondents only registered the contexts in which they were moved to respond to and/or were awakened to the appeal of the Palestinian project with hindsight, often as part of a series of interventions or sense-impressions. These triggers functioned in the awakening phase, and also motivated and sustained the respondents' continued activism.

*In summary, the case study presents the following triggers:*

*The world's oppressed and other struggles, especially the South African case:* The respondents contextualised their commitment in terms of other struggles for human dignity. These included a few references to caring for animals and the environment, but most were associated with marginalised groups of people. They saw the Palestinian project as part of a larger space and related to other struggles of equality and humanity such as the struggles against apartheid, colonialism, militarism, xenophobia and economic inequality and for human rights. The South African case of apartheid and continued tribal consciousness,

classism, economic disparity and xenophobia<sup>104</sup> were the most grounded code in the case study, with more than 80 references to what can be learned from the good and the bad aspects of the South African struggle.<sup>105</sup> Section 4.2 focuses on the perceived link between the Palestinian project and other contexts, and why it is seen as part of the same broad moral spectrum.

*The contributions of other people:* Several respondents were inspired or sensitised by positive and negative contributions from family members, such as grandparents, parents, siblings, partners and children. Moreover, an array of public figures, writers, intellectuals, activists, and speakers and delegates at conferences such as the 2001 United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban, the various sessions of the Russell Tribunal in different cities, and the 2009 Palestinian conference in Bethlehem were mentioned as inspirational and informative. The mentioned inspirational figures included a variety of activists, intellectuals, clergy and ordinary people from different parts of the world. Some of the people mentioned in the data corpus are well-known public figures and intellectuals such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Paulo Frere, Sheik Avara, Samora Machel, Terry Eagleton, Malcolm X, Gitta Sereny, Claudia Brodie; Jews such as Saul Alinsky, Noam Chomsky, Illan Pappé, Uri Davis, the rabbis of the Neturei Karta; Palestinians such as Muhammad al-Durrah's father, Walid Khalidi, Edward Said, Leila Khaled and Christian Palestinians; as well as South Africans such as Nelson Mandela, Neville Alexander, Steven Friedman, Ronnie Kasrils, Mercia Andrews, Farid Esack, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Zapiro, Ashwin Desai and Beyers Naudé. The respondents also mentioned the negative and positive effects of encounters in dialogue, discussion and debriefing groups, as well as meeting and listening to the Palestinians as discussed in Section 5.3.2.

*Ideologies, spirituality and religion:* The Black Consciousness Movement, Marxism, feminism, humanism; spiritual disciplines and practices such as inner work and meditation, notions of the Transcendent or the ultimate reality without the context of specific traditions, as well as specific religious traditions namely Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, influenced the reasons given for engaging in activism in the case study. Perceptions on the

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<sup>104</sup> Xenophobia in South Africa escalated during the time of the interviews. Most South African respondents commented on the matter. They regard xenophobia against other Africans in South Africa as disgraceful and inhumane, and as part of their concern.

<sup>105</sup> Groundedness refers to the number of times an issue is mentioned in the case study. The density of a code denotes how often it is connected to other codes in the data corpus.

positive and the abusive dimensions of these paradigms are discussed in several of the later chapters of the study.

*Experiences of physical violence:* The cost of and the detrimental role of Israel's military and witnessing their human rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territories; the First and the Second Palestinian *Intifadas*, as well as the sacrifices of armed struggle were all considered stimuli that helped to sensitise the respondents. Their views on violent versus non-violent struggle are shared in Section 5.1.2.

*Finally, the core realisations and insights consistently present amongst all participants noted thus far are the following:*

- The problem between Israel and the Palestinians is not a “conflict” between equal partners, but a systemic, political and militaristic oppression which benefits Israel and in which the Palestinians suffer the most.
- Myths, lies, ignorance and naivety construct and confuse mainstream conversations on the matter.
- There is no deadlock when it comes to the Israel-Palestinian matter – there are several options.
- Human beings have the ability to respond to and to embody the values they embrace.
- The Israel-Palestinian matter appeals to people's values, identity and integrity.

#### **3.2.4 Sub-conclusion**

*The respondents' reasons for joining the Palestinian project as activists can be looked at through various lenses. Chapter 3 presents four angles from which to consider these reasons:*

- *the respondents' individual stories;*
- *whether they confirmed or changed pre-existing perceptions before affirming the Palestinian cause as a worthy project;*
- *their impressions of principles or modes that organised or depicted their initial advocacy commitments; and*
- *key insights they had when committing to activism.*

*These different angles are interwoven, and revealed complementary layers of answers as to why the activists first pledged commitment to active participation in the Palestinian project.*

*However, whether or not the activists' involvement was the outcome of years of exposure and change, and notwithstanding any of their other reasons, the central issue all of these respondents faced and affirmed regarding their committing to activism was a desire to align their existing inner values with the outer reality they encountered in and through the Palestinian project.*

*In view of this finding, Chapter 4 aims to unpack the respondents' mutual quest for synergy between inner and the outer morality. In respect of another reciprocal relation, Chapter 4 also presents their impressions of intersectionality between the Palestinian project and other moral contests and human rights struggles.*

## 4 FACING THE SELF AND THE OTHER

The respondents' commitment to responding to both the suffering of the Palestinians and their liberation struggle – the Palestinian project – is not a once-off act, but a recurring process of deepening and qualifying their pledge as they continue to encounter challenges and insights. Chapter 4 therefore explores two points raised briefly in Chapter 3. The first is the *desire to live with integrity* and the assumed implications thereof for one's own conduct in light of the Palestinian project. The second is the *perceived link between the Palestinian and other struggles*, and why this context increases the need to realise the Palestinian project. From the case study, it seems that both aspects (the one personal, the other representative of a bigger societal picture) are important factors in the positioning and contextualisation of activism in the Palestinian project. The respondents' emphasis both on integrity and on acknowledging links between the Palestinian project and other struggles suggests that these two reasons are not separate and loose-standing; the respondents argue that they have something in common, namely a desire for consistency in applying one's values both privately and publicly.

This chapter thus presents the respondents' perceptions of a moral appeal that cannot be ignored or side-stepped, for two reasons. First, all the respondents want to live with integrity. To them, failure to align their behaviour with the urgent appeal of the Palestinian project means compromising what they stand for in their lives. Second, in their eyes, the nature and the dynamics of the Palestinian project represent a microcosm of the moral challenges also found in other struggles in the world. This implies that their focus on the Palestinian project reflects a concern for a local issue which mirrors the dynamics and the morality of other contexts. These two sub-themes and their interplay are considered from different angles, complemented by quotes from and references to the data.

### 4.1 For the sake of personal integrity

This section focuses on the respondents' strong desire for congruency between their values and life views, and their behaviour in respect of the Palestinians. This particular desire is crucial to their motivation for being activists. The discussion reveals that these activists feel disjointed, and experience discontent, disenchantment and a lack of integration if they remain silent about the systemic injustice in the treatment of the Palestinians. Hence they perceive a need to act in the interests of the other to feel integrated within themselves.

### 4.1.1 *Self-honesty*

All the respondents value *rigorous self-honesty and consistency* in the application of their values. R2 reported that he does not often look at himself in the mirror, but there are times when he wants to do so: “En dan wil ek vir [respondent’s name] in die oë kyk.<sup>106</sup> I will not be able to look at myself if I pass by a situation, however small and insignificant, wherein I saw somebody being hurt and I kept quiet” (R2 2015:39-41). Human beings have a conscience and are able to make a moral call, not only to defend others, but also “to rise against our so-called own interest”, and this is what makes them ethical beings (R2 2015:15). It goes back to the principle of treating others the way you want to be treated. The same ethics that applies to the other also applies to the self:

I act because I have to live with myself. So I speak, because I have to live with myself. So in this there is a sense of self-righteousness, there is a sense of presumptuousness, there is a sense of kind of moral indignation, which assumes that you have the moral high ground. But I’m happy to assume all of those things, with the limitations that future generations may expose me as inadequate, as shallow, as inconsistent, as hypocritical, hopefully only inconsistent, but I think in some phases of my life also hypocritical. (R2 2015:43-43)

R5 (2015:225) used an analogy – if one part of the world is in pain, the whole world should feel it. A failure to speak out about the urgency and the importance of the Palestinian project is perceived as unbearable. It leaves the respondents with a sense of distaste. Speaking up and acting bring a sense of relief. R12 (2015:96), talking about friends who do not face reality and deal with it, said that “it takes more guts to live lies all of our lives. For them to do that and hold it together for so long and to do that, that is a... – I feel free, liberated. I get to explore what’s going on here. I get to work in Ramallah and Bethlehem”. He described his friends as “scared silly” (R12 2015:96) in those cities, because they think every Palestinian is a potential terrorist. Keeping quiet means supporting “the carnage” (R7 2015:41), or, as R1 (2015:94-95) explained, being unprincipled and not speaking truth to power as loudly as he could left him with an “uneasiness – the kind of restlessness I feel because if I don’t do that, I am complicit in the system”.

The same honesty and integration of values and life principles also applied to relations with fellow activists. In this regard, R4 (2015:119) remarked that it is not so easy to live up to one’s own integrity and morality consistently under all circumstances. It was still something of which he continuously had to remind himself: “You sometimes slip up. Your arrogant self

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<sup>106</sup> Translated: “And then I want to look [respondent’s name] in the eye.”

does come out. Your demanding of work from your fellow comrades or staff members or whatever does come out.” R3 (2015:135-136) agreed that the principle of being consistent in one’s behaviour and always speaking the truth must apply everywhere – whether in public, or in peer discussions amongst fellow activists. In all cases, he said, one must have “no fear about speaking that which is correct”, but it must be done with compassion and in full recognition of each other.

An approach of self-honesty and congruency reflects an *inner locus of control*. The respondents do not want to be controlled by other people or by regimes, but prefer to act in accordance with their own morality and integrity: “I try to keep very true to myself” (R17 2015:70). R6’s contention that she has to get to know the “other” within herself no matter what is revealed displays a radical honesty:

Whether that other is radical, evil, but that there is an ‘other’ that is beyond any kind of knowing in my human body and brain...it feels...that it’s something before it can be named and recognised as.... difference, in a way. So it’s not about culture, or language, or religion, or race, or gender, it’s something more primally different, I think. (R6 2015:98-99)

Similarly, R2 (2015:58) said that he was “equally unable to shut up in speaking the truth to myself. It’s not an external thing where I have these outside causes to fight for”. When confronted with other standpoints, these activists remain centred and principled in their support for the Palestinian cause. They recognise it when others try to push patriarchal ideals on them and they do not allow it: “I have an agenda that I really believe in and I’m not going to let anybody knock me off that path” (R13 2015:94). R4 (2015:191) commented:

I at the end of the day control who I am. No-one is going to shape that for me, definitely not when you’re antagonistic towards me. I’m going to remain in charge of the situation. I’m going to decide when I want to raise my voice. I’m going to decide when I’m going to be upset or angry. You’re not going to have that power over me. So I never want to be controlled by the other person.

R11 (2015:22) explained that honouring his values was a conscious decision. He recalled the example of a journalist who asked a demonstrator during the Vietnam War if he believed that the demonstrations would change the government policies:

And the answer of this guy was, ‘I’m not here to change the government policies. I’m here not to allow that the government will change me.’ So maybe this is part of my answer too. I’m trying to do, to fight for justice in order to avoid the government to change me.

A number of those who altered their earlier views on Israel and the Palestinians mentioned experiencing feelings of “shame” (R11 2015:14; R20 2015:32,37; R21 2015:95) and “guilt” (R13 2015:61-62; R17 2015:129) when they discovered discrepancies between their values and the reality. Their responses differed from those of people who refused to face reality fairly and squarely, such as a German audience that R6 addressed on the Palestinian issue and that could not “square up what I was presenting with how they deal with their own history. It was just too much” (R6 2015:127). It also differed from the responses of those who deny or distance themselves from reality to stay in their comfort zone. There is “a weird element of people almost othering and implying that [I], or others that hold similar positions to me, are self-hating. So in a way there is a shame, but then once they start to disassociate with individuals like me, then they can feel comfortable again” (R21 2015:94; my insertion). These respondents did not dissociate from reality, but faced the “basic injustice” of one party’s being systemically advantaged over another (R14 2015:64-65; R10 2015:58). Feeling drawn to integration and not to avoidance, they assimilated the knowledge into their sense of being and doing and re-oriented themselves accordingly:

I think it made me feel a lot of shame and a lot of responsibility. As a result of this meeting also I went out with the feeling that I have to do something. I had to be more involved. I had to make this connection between my job in the military even though I was a reservist and just flying once a week or so. Suddenly all these excuses are irrelevant. (R19 2015:25)

#### ***4.1.2 Addressing the reality of oppression***

The respondents indicated that their sense of integrity is about more than worthy aspirations and objectives. *It involves a deep sense of duty or a responsibility* not to turn away and not simply to carry on with their own lives, but to face the reality of oppression and injustice and to address it (R16 2015:22; R20 2015:67-69; R21 2015:53-54). In this regard, R21 (2015:51) said: “I’m not sure I would be comfortable with myself if I didn’t force myself to confront these things and take a stand on them.” For R10 (2015:19-20), integrating his Christian ministry with being a human rights activist is almost a “pastoral duty” and a “quest to really be pastorally honest”.

R12’s discovery of incongruences between the values of his upbringing and the actual role of the Israeli military led him to question his family, and especially his mother, about his upbringing. He had to address the issue with them “to not step away from the responsibility, because I was raised to be responsible. That was the reason to begin with, to go to the army

and to be so active and useful” (R12 2015:16). R15 explained that integrity is not only about acquiring knowledge, but has practical implications in the sense of allowing space for others to realise their potential. This insight “comes from feminism” (R15 2015:69).

Their sense of having a task to fulfil in light of their desire for congruency is perceived as intertwined with *a literally felt, engrained resonance with the other*. In this respect, R6 talked about how she was able to make space for “other” South Africans within herself and finally also for the Palestinians. She grappled with the idea that anyone would give her/his life for another, but giving birth to her daughter made her realise that it is indeed possible to feel that one is prepared to sacrifice one’s own life for another:

It was a very strange thing. I want to live, but I also, if any time you’re threatened, I will put myself in your place. That feeling gave me a different understanding of oppression, that people don’t necessarily choose causes because it’s cool to be an activist, but that when you’re oppressed you will do anything for your child to have a life. It opened up a very different emotional space in me. (R6 2015:54)

As R4 (2015:56) phrased it in respect of defending the rights of the Palestinians, perhaps “the best that one could do is to stand in front of the bullet, to stand in front of the missile, to give your entire self to that”. Perhaps fortunately, it is not possible, he added, and it may also not be the wisest thing to do.

R1 (2015:54, 57, 71) expressed a literally-felt bond with the Palestinian struggle as a “visceral tug” of mutual interdependence in which the individual becomes secondary to the cause and its values. The bond with the Palestinians was also articulated as the embodied, visceral pathos of refusing to let go of the shared pain and as experience that has been “earned” (R2 2015:35), and as a willingness to sacrifice material gain and physical comfort for the sake of the other (R11 2015:68-72; R16 2015:69). The same values are applied to both the self and the other: “What crazy person would say: I’d stretch myself across so that the worst lot can go across safely?” R3 (2015:74) asked while explaining his sense of justice and compassion, which leaves space for also the “ones who have done to us the greatest injustice”.

The respondents’ impressions of integrity and duty as interlinked aspects that foster congruency have *existential and collective dimensions*. R21 (2015:51-56), for example, explained that her duty concerned more than assuming responsibility for acting in the interest of the other. It goes “much deeper”; it has to do with her sense of the “dignity for what feels right” and so it starts with a responsibility towards herself. R3’s (2015:108) awareness of an

existential dimension related to the way he understood the Koran and his place in the universe in relation to God and to others. At the end of his life, he would like to be able to say that he did not hurt anyone, that he did not destroy creation, and that “I lived a life where, if I saw something that was wrong, I tried to correct it. And that’s it. That’s really the objective, to be able to say that I’ve lived a life of integrity” (R3 2015:103-104).

R7 asked several introspective questions: “If I’m not for myself, who would be for me and if I’m only for myself, what am I?” (R7 2015:26). He added: “You are already going to be 64 this year. So you’ve got limited time on earth and a limited life and what is it all about?” (R7 2015:28). To him, too, it is about something much deeper than being a South African and Jewish and being confronted with the Palestinian cause. The issue of just how far he is prepared to live according to his own truth and principles is for R7 (2015:28) “probably the biggest challenge in my life, it always was and it still is. It’s also a reason for being involved in this particular struggle.” Perhaps he is generalising, R4 said, but

...one of the biggest pursuits of life ... is to live an authentic life [...] because really that goes down to who you are and who you want to be to the world. When you are able to live that authentic life, you’re living your life. You’re not living the life of societal demands or whatever. (R4 2015:40)

Life is not a dress rehearsal. This is it. This is the real thing. (R6 2015:47)

When there is a discrepancy, the respondents *want to narrow the gap* between the privileged self and the compromised other, or the “non-me” – as R2 (2015:26) phrased it, to be able to face themselves and live with themselves. R19 (2015:27) explained an expansion of one’s own identity to human beings who previously were “the other for you” so that “the me and them became one thing in some way”. For him, it does not mean that “the gap” (R19 2015:29) between him and the Palestinians closes, because if one imagines that all “the gaps” can be closed, that is “exactly when we are starting to not be honest and lie to ourselves...I think we are still building those walls, these barriers in our brain and in our mind, that are helping us survive in this impossible world. It’s natural” (R19 2015:29). Or, as R9 (2015:89) pointed out, it is “better not to kind of go on a tour of other people’s lives” such as “doing what the Palestinians are doing. You can never bridge that. You can never understand it. You can never experience it”. R19 tried to break down these walls and barriers, all the while reminding himself that while such obstacles do not disappear, they could become less prominent. To stress his point, R19 referred to a good friend who grew up in the same place as R19 did, who participated in the same dialogue platform as he did, likes the same things

and is similar to him in many ways. When R19 (2015:40) asked this friend why he was doing this while R19 was doing something else, the friend replied that he probably cared less about what happened a little distance from him.

Acknowledging the gap between themselves and the Palestinians, being honest with themselves about the situation and consistently embracing values such as equality, justice and fairness in the context of the Palestinian project – all this is not enough. When asked what difference these values make in respect of the Palestinians, R3 answered as follows:

Well, ultimately the most important thing is what difference does it make to me? Ultimately I'm accountable for what I do. I'm not accountable for what others do. I'm not accountable even for the ultimate results of what I do, but I'm accountable for what I do. So the most important effect of that for me is that I must be able to, you know, that cliché where I lie in bed at night and reflect, say that I've lived my day with integrity. And that's all. That I saw something that was wrong, that I didn't let it pass. It's a difficult one, because I'm not always able to do that, if I were to take my life a day at a time, you know, every night. (R3 2015:96-97)

From a collective perspective, these respondents were generally very aware of being privileged as citizens with full rights in contrast to the Palestinians. There is an intense and personal awareness, especially amongst South African respondents, that they themselves could have *been in the same, or in similar, dire circumstances* as the Palestinians: "It's really only by the mercy of God that we are in the very, very fortunate and privileged positions that we find ourselves in...you always think, that could have been me. That could have been me" (R5 2015:98). They imagined themselves in the "feet" of the other (R2 2015:126), or in their "shoes" (R5 2015:20,61,100,103; R6 2015:28,31,56-60,96), registering and "identifying" with the Palestinians' horrible reality (R1 2015:17,23,28; R2 2015:28; R6 2015:56,58-60; R14 2015:22). Whether one is oppressed or privileged seems like "a mad accident of birth" (R6 2015:28) – anyone could have ended up anywhere. In their view, all human beings are vulnerable; anyone can be reduced "to a refugee, a paperless character. And so anything can happen to us any time. We can be that dispossessed, I can be that evicted tomorrow" (R2 2015:23).

When they act for the "non-me", they want for the other what they desire for themselves. R2 spoke of the reciprocity between himself and the Palestinians, adding that his activism was also practised in the hope that, if the tables were turned and he became dispossessed, somebody would stand up for him. The need for intense mutuality, interconnectedness and

being there for one another was expressed by R1 (2015:55-57) as a profound togetherness and sharing of basic values, such as trust and honesty.

The Jewish Israeli respondents argued that *they had benefited from an unjust system*. This places additional responsibility on their shoulders in view of their desire to live with integrity and hence be consistent in practising their values (R14 2015:64; R16 2015:22,39,73,85-91; R17 2015:133; R19 2015:30,43-45,77). In this regard, R21 (2015:167) remarked: “I think I must acknowledge my identity and my privileges and then try work with that.” The fact that Israel is the occupier means that the onus is on Israeli activists to take the initiative to stop the ongoing human rights abuses (R15 2015:91; R17 2015:97). It is insufficient to stay silent or to be a passive bystander when something is so inherently wrong in one’s society (R11 2015:16; R18 2015:97). R16 (2015:72) agreed that the mere fact that she lives in Israel means she cannot give up on the issue, for she is part of either the problem or the solution, but mostly she is part of both, since she lives in Historical Palestine and advocates for the rights of the Palestinians: “It was kind of a cliché to say, a moral duty, but a feeling that I can’t really ignore it, especially not when it’s done in my name, when everything about me is being a privileged part of this country” (R16 2015:22).

Their impression of a compromised Jewish identity – whether this is perceived as a religious, a cultural or a national construct or a combination of these – is an important motivation for these respondents. They have stepped forward to address the crimes against the Palestinians and the assaults on their personal identity. Like R16, R15 (2015:101) and R11 (2015:9) both explicitly said that an important reason for their involvement was that they could not simply watch Israel’s perpetration of injustice without speaking up about it. R18 (2015:97) said:

So the answer to your question and your research question and my personal life, is that I can’t see this happening and not do anything about it. I can’t see the violence and the anger and the fear, the huge fear that’s happening and happening in my name and just stand by and not do anything with it.

In fact, *all* the Jewish respondents (R6, R7, R9, and R11 to R21) were of the opinion that they had a pivotal or an integral task, as well as a strategic responsibility in the Palestinian project precisely because of their cultural and/or religious Jewishness, and/or their Israeli citizenship (R9 2015:15,88-89; R16 2015:66-67; R17 2015:91,152; R18 2015:42; R20 2015:69; R21 2015:126-131).

Their audiences are Zionist Jews inside and outside of Israel, as well as others, since their task is to inform and raise awareness in Israeli society, and in the world community (R15 2015:10). Their concern is not only with radical right-wing Zionists, but also with liberal, left-wing Zionists (R21 2015:38). R9 (2015:57) explained: “I have to make myself visible, Jewishly visible” to appeal to the integrity of Jews who support the Israeli regime. Granted, Zionists might still try to dismiss her as a self-hater, “but I’m a fly in the ointment in a way that a Muslim can’t be a fly in the ointment, an atheist or a non-Jew can’t be a fly in the ointment. The ointment says there are none of us. So I’m a fly in that ointment” (R9 2015:15), because people need to know that it is not true that all Jews support the Israeli state and its policies and practices in respect of the Palestinians. She added:

As a non-Israeli, it is very powerful especially when the Zionist Fed and the South African ... Jewish Board of Deputies, and all of that are constantly speaking in the name of Jews in our totality. There is something very powerful about constantly being that pernicky little voice that says, “Well, I am Jewish and you say that you’re speaking for all of us, but actually I don’t – I don’t agree. All these other Jews don’t agree, so actually you’re a liar and you’re abusing my name to another project that has nothing to do with me and that I’m not interested in supporting. (R9 2015:20)

R7 (2015:118) expressed it as “a very strong feeling about being Jewish and it’s got to do with that vital thing, that cultural thing and it’s got to do with...where you stand on Israel...You can’t avoid that”. Other Jewish respondents agreed that they could not keep quiet if they were implicated in the oppression of the Palestinians in the name of Jews and/or Israel, and so they declared that what was being done was “not in my name” (R11 2015:9; R15 2015:101; R16 2015:22; R18 2015:98). At the same time, R9 and R21 said that they do not want to be mere token voices or to impose their Jewishness. Moreover, they do not want to be seen as better or superior to fellow Jews who do not agree with them. Several of these activists focus on non-Jewish international audiences because they think this is where Jewish activists can have the biggest impact by creating awareness of the many myths and lies in respect of Israel’s military oppression of the Palestinians.

One of the key messages the respondents felt they had to convey to international audiences was that the Israeli regime is working against the interests of both Jews in Israel, and of Jews worldwide. According to R14 (2015:61-62), the Israeli government is giving people reason to hate Jews as a collective because it claims to act in the name of all Jews. This in turn means that it is jeopardising the safety of Jews everywhere. The international community must help Israel to end the occupation and “to save this country from ourselves, to save us from

ourselves” (R11 2015:100; R15 2015:12). According to R11 and R15, Germans and others who care for Israel and want to support it should not support discriminatory practices, but should put pressure on the Israeli government to end the occupation. Especially as Jews, they could not allow the suffering of another people because of their own history of being persecuted (R7 2015:16; R11 2015:9; R15 2015:25, 55; R16 2015:56). “To condone what Israel is doing, is actually not helping Israel, it’s harming Israel” (R15 2015:12). Thus, the Jewish Israeli respondents were also concerned with the integrity of the Israeli state and the entire Jewish people and their ethics. In their views, all Jews and all Israelis should not be lumped together or be seen to support Israel’s exploitation, exclusion and violations in respect of the Palestinians (R13 2015:69; R15 2015:116).

#### ***4.1.3 Facing fears, comfort zones and the cost of activism***

How willing are the respondents to challenge the system and to be open about it? R7 (2015:30), for example, highlighted tension between one’s truth and one’s comfort zone. He has contemplated the question of whether he would be willing to pay with his life for the sake of the other, as the Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoefer did under the Nazis, or whether he would be willing to turn away from the enticements of a secure position, family, a house, children and comfort. If the risk of being an activist in the Palestinian project is too high, it could mean that one would be pressurised to adapt one’s truth according to the risk that one faces, and in turn one jeopardises one’s integrity.

According to R19 (2015:42), Jewish Israelis are faced with the difference between the level of discomfort of making their support for the Palestinian project known in public, and their level of belonging to the established system where they are seen as siding with their peers and friends in arms. By the end of the 2014 War on Gaza, R16 and her colleagues, for example, pondered how many of their privileges they were prepared to give up in their attempt to effect change:

And these are conversations that you always have and you look at, you know, White South African anti-apartheid activists, who were willing to live underground, or in prison for years and years and years and you don’t really see that here. So it’s also a question of how much of our privileges are we actually willing to give up for these things that we claim to believe in. Obviously, things like the oppression of Gaza make you rethink that, right? (R16 2015:91)

When Jewish respondents perceive no genuine, open desire for moral consistency in the comments of people close to them, the respondents feel “complicit” (R21 2015:131), and

“dirty and exhausted” (R9 2015:42). Those without a Muslim background spoke of feeling lonely, isolated and/or not being able to get through to loved ones, family and friends. They have lost friends and the support of their communities and/or have experienced alienation from family members as a result of their views and activism (R8 2015:102-105,108; R9 2015:57; R13 2015:92; R15 2015:92; R17 2015:127; R18 2015:29,46; R9 2015:57; R13 2015:92; R15 2015:92; R19 2015:30,116; R21 2015:36,43,109,111,116-117). Especially the Jewish respondents (but not all of them) were weary. “I think the most personal cost would be my parents,” R21 (2015:43) said, since they expected her to hold a different position.

All of them, irrespective of their backgrounds, often sustained private and public verbal and other attacks for sticking their heads out “above the parapet” where a lot of people wait to see “if these heads pop up” so that they can throw “missiles, and they’re quite vicious missiles” at them (R7 2015:39). These verbal attacks are often “intensely personal, trying to attack your character” (R5 2015:117), often in “vulgar” language (R5 2015:127) that brands them “liars” (R9 2015:57), “terror-loving, Hamas-supporting, anti-Semites” (R5 2015:129,131), “traitors” and “outcasts” (R15 2015:104, R19 2015:44-45), “toyi-toyers” (R19 2015:32) and “self-hating Jews” (R7 2015:123, R21 2015:94). They are accused of committing “class suicide and race suicide” (R6 2015:52) and of being “so radical, they’re almost terrorists” (R21 2015:95).

The cost to their activism affects their finances (R11 2015:54-56), physical health and the amount of energy and time they spend on themselves and their personal needs (R1 2015:55; R2 2015:78-80; R4 2015:139,162; R6 2015:115,135; R7 2015:66-67). R14, R16 and R20 have all spent months in detention and in prison in Israel for refusing to do military service. In fact, R14 has been jailed three times for that reason. R16 (2015:69) and R11 (2015:72-74) have “literally been beaten up” by Jewish Israeli settlers in the course of their activism. R11’s children and his wife have also been physically attacked in public by right-wing Jewish Israelis (R11 2015:88). “Jerusalem is such a right-wing and religious and fundamentalist city” that someone who is a leftist or a “peacemaker” pays a price – without any doubt (R11 2015:18).

The respondents also mentioned their own fear. In some circles one can feel afraid about who one is aligning oneself with, and sense some anti-Semitism (R21 2015:118-120). One Jewish Israeli activist felt fear as she does not understand Arabic, and does not know what is being

said on the streets (R17 2015:48-57); and R6 (2015:122) expressed the fear of exploring and thinking aloud with others. In fact, R6 (2015:49) mentioned a whole mix of fears:

I don't know if I'm ever going to feel like I got my shit together. I'm always going to have this feeling of being a little girl scratching her head, thinking, oh, isn't this world complicated on the one hand and on the other, always feeling like, well, it is complicated, but you can also do things and you can also have a say. It is, you live, you're here, now. ... you know I've always hidden behind my fear. There is fear of fear and then there's fear of dying and then there is fear of physical pain and then there is fear of being a bad girl, then there is a fear of doing something controversial and being wrong. There is a fear of doing anything and being wrong. There is a fear of people not liking me, of not being liked, of not being approved. There is a fear of all, so all – the whole cupboard full, colour coded, of different kinds of fear.

Yet, despite all these fears and the difficulty of leaving one's comfort zone, the respondents preferred the route of facing such difficulties above maintaining or ignoring disparity and double standards. Their preferences contrast with R12's description of his friends, who are very aware that "something is really, really wrong", but are "very, very afraid to break their reality" by asking the right questions, or by asking at all. He said: "They don't want to know. They don't want to address what happened in Gaza – that Israel killed 2 000 people" (R12 2015:93). Instead, they continue with their daily jobs and to raise their families – too scared that "life will shatter around them" (R12 2015:93-96). In the same vein, R19 felt he may be branded "a lefty" by those who are still in the system, but he feels empowered, safer, and more secure and without "this super big conflict inside", unlike his friends (R19 2015:32).

The case study abounded with examples of perseverance, passion and dedication. It is "the thing that makes me most passionate," R17 (2015:141) claimed. Many framed their societal responsibilities in the Palestinian project as life tasks and they made it clear that accommodating pressure on their personal comfort was "not done out of a saviour mentality. It's done out of that authenticity, that you want to live that life of courage. You want to, if needs be, do what is necessary" (R4 2015:62). R4 did not know if he had the kind of courage always to do what is necessary, but felt that time would tell. On the whole, *not much was said about being courageous, and when the topic was raised, the cause was prioritised over any possible bravery* by the activists. R4 (2015:79-81), for example, did not even think of himself as an activist and had never defined himself as one. He said: "It's just what I do. I wouldn't want to own that label. It seems like too much of emphasis on yourself. It's not about you. These causes are far bigger than you." R6 (2015:51) briefly mentioned developing her own "little slice of courage" through her daughter (but contextualised this as having

courage for life in general) and R7 mentioned his gathering of inner strength to go public. Other respondents downplayed the role of courage in their activism even further. R12 (2015:96) believes that it takes more guts to live with lies than to engage in activism, and R9 (2015:75-81) pointed out that in the Jewish community alternative voices are accommodated, and hence she felt that her advocacy was not a huge act of courage. However, she thought that her spiritual work, which confronts deep inner issues, took “an enormous amount of courage. That’s a courageous thing to do. It’s not always that one has that. I appear not to have that, because I slide on and off” (R9 2015:112). R20 (2015:111-112) also doubted whether she was courageous. R13 (2015:40-45) steered the discussion in a different direction when she was asked what it takes from her. When asked what gave him courage, R11 (2015:103-104) simply answered: “Yom Kippur” with reference to his earlier explanation of changing his mind when hospitalised during the war of 1973. With that, he was done with the topic. R12 (2015:41), R16 (2015:22,39,73,85-90) and R19 (2015:30-31,45) did not experience their activism as hard, and reminded themselves that they have very good lives in Israel with many privileges, merely because they are Jewish. The case study provided no evidence that courage was perceived as a prominent driving force. Activism may be uncomfortable and costly, but these respondents gave themselves willingly to the cause. If there is a cost, they said, they were “not complaining about it” (R4 2015:162).

*In their self-reflection, they acknowledged that they are fallible human beings and that it is important to admit to one’s own weaknesses and “issues”* (R6 2015:89-94; R7 2015:136,143; R8 2015:157). R2 (2015:58) acknowledged that he is “appalled” by his own behaviour and insensitivity at times and berates himself, “not in a negative kind of way, you know, I’m good for nothing, or have this kind of insecurity and so on”, but because he is conscious of his ability “to be harsh and indifferent” to other people. Similarly, R3 (2015:84) said: “I’m quite willing to admit that I’m wrong” (for example, about certain tactics and strategies). “People are human and they do make mistakes, but those mistakes can be rectified if one is honest,” R1 (2015:107) noted. R4 (2015:184) knew that he was “flawed” and made mistakes, but said: “I try to rectify it, try to apologise for it, because at the end we are human. We do mess up often” (R4 2015:121). R16 said:

Obviously, I critique myself all the time. Hopefully, and at least some of the time, I also learn how to change from that critique which is always harder than just criticising. As far as doubting the fundamental values that I have – no. There is a level where that’s just – it’s become part of my identity. So I don’t doubt that. I definitely can and do doubt the tactics and strategies. (R16 2015:83)

All the respondents agreed with R16's sentiment. *Their doubts were about what the most appropriate strategies, tactics, methods and ways of conduct are.* They never doubted their involvement in the struggle, their values and principles, or whether they should remain committed to the Palestinian project (R3 2015:84; R4 2015:184; R5 2015:135; R8 2015:108; R10 2015:120; R15 2015:62-63; R19 2015:83-84). They ask and check themselves all the time, to ascertain whether they are doing their best, whether they are truly altruistic and not selfish. They wondered how they can go about helping other people to see what they see, how to not simply replace one dogma or ideology with another. They pondered whether what they do will have the desired effect and whether what they try to do is really doable. It is necessary to check oneself all the time to not take oneself too seriously, be ego-driven and feel more important than the cause itself (R1 2015:107; R3 2015:120; R19 2015:79-80). R19 added that if one loses all doubts, there may be something wrong. For too much of the time – before he recognised the validity of the Palestinian project and committed – he had no doubts. Now he deliberately makes space for his doubts to make sure that he is not simply replacing one dogma with another, and he doubts lots of things:

I have doubts about what of this energy and motivation is from altruism and what part is from other things, you know, my own issues, but this is like a small part of the thoughts [...] Different things are motivating us to be part of this struggle and it is important that we will admit the reasons and (acknowledge) that these reasons are not always super, super idealistic and pure, but just to admit and be honest with yourself. Be active, but don't pretend to be pure as a God, or something like that. (R19 2015:79-80; my insertion)

R19 (2015:84), for example, continuously weighs up what the right and/or the most appropriate tactics and strategies are, how to connect gender, religious and so many other things with the Palestinian project, and what exactly he struggles for: “I think it's important to be alert all the time” and not just to go with the flow without assessing why, what and how one advocates. As circumstances arise the activists also tend to question the conduct of fellow activists (R1 2015:81-82; R3 2015:84; R5 2015:135; R7 2015:76; R8 2015:114; R10 2015:120; R11 2015:51-56; R16 2015:71-73; R17 2015:87; R18 2015:20,58; R19 2015:84; R20 2015:109-110; R21 2015:116-118).

Not even when it becomes hard do they try to escape their self-assumed responsibilities or commitments. When asked about it, they answered with passion and clarity: “No, no, I never, I never, never try to escape it” (R2 2015:78-80). R8 (2015:108) said: “I never, ever, ever doubt that it is correct to be on the side of Palestinian people. Never ever, there is absolutely

no doubt in my mind.” He was utterly convinced of the cause, but he admitted to sometimes doubting the methods used (R8 2015:114). R10 (2015:127) emphasised that he felt that God was saying to him to “never, ever, ever forget what you’ve learned in your own struggle, because it is an important part of the witness of Christianity in this world”. R3 (2015:136) added:

I think the most important thing for an activist is that we should be able to lead principled lives, lives of integrity, that we should have no fear about speaking that which is correct, to use the term, even if it is against ourselves and our own interests and that we must endeavour to be able to do that together in recognition of each other and with all compassion that we can muster. I think activism requires lots of compassion – or rather activists need lots of compassion.

#### **4.1.4 Sub-conclusion**

*All the South African and Jewish Israeli respondents affirmed the critical role of personal integrity in their activism. In this context, having integrity means being authentic, genuine, whole, undivided and consistent in applying morally sound values. It requires rigorous honesty at multiple levels, and it is characterised by an internal locus of control. Integrity is not a self-directed nurturing of personal interests that isolates the self from the other.*

*The gap between the privileged self and the reality of the Palestinians elicited feelings of general discomfort, shame and guilt. Moreover, it led to a profound sense of responsibility not to turn away from that discrepancy, and to face the reality to narrow the gap as far as possible. Avoiding or turning away from the Palestinian project, and/or recognising its validity without being actively involved was perceived as deeply unsettling and unsatisfactory, and as a disgrace to the self.*

*The self-assumed obligation and responsibility to act where there is discrimination is characterised by both personal and collective moral duties. The South African activists’ sense of integrity obliges them to act because they realise that they too could have been in the shoes of the Palestinians. The Jewish Israeli respondents sense an additional, special responsibility since they are privileged citizens in an oppressive state. They are adamant that Jews are not a homogenous group that all condone Zionism and Israel’s abuses in the name of Jewishness. They act because of the harm done to the Palestinians, but also because of the harm Israel inflicts on itself.*

*All the respondents willingly accept the risks and the cost of their activism. Their involvement is not a statement of courage, bravery, being “cool”, or a fluctuating*

*commitment, but part of a personal desire for consistency in moral integrity marked by continuous self-reflection. Although the notion of integrity is isolated for the sake of the analysis, it is a dimension that permeates all the key themes in the case study.*

In a next step, the analysis turned to the respondents' impressions of relations between the Palestinian project and other worthy causes.

#### **4.2 The local site of struggle as part of a broad moral case against othering**

Whereas the previous section focused on the respondents' personal sense of integrity, or their sense of self as a reason for their activism, this section explains their relation to the Palestinian project as a site of othering in a wider context. The central idea presented here is that the respondents do not position their work as a religious or a nationalist project, or as something which is geographically defined and in need of only a political or a structural solution. They do not single out the Palestinian project as the only one worthy to be involved in. They see it as part of a larger ethical struggle that applies to terrains beyond the Palestinian project. They are concerned with the underlying dynamics, the consciousness and/or mind-sets at play, and they note connections between the Palestinian project and many other struggles for equality, human dignity and justice.

Because they see the Palestinian project as a microcosm of the macrocosm of interconnected global issues and/or as a pivotal project, their activism in a local context is part of a broad moral case against othering. Thus, the discussion shows that they are acutely aware of interactions and tensions between the bigger picture and the particularity of the Palestinian project. They have reflected on why it necessitates their involvement and why it is necessary to position their activism in the Palestinian project in a broader perspective.

The code for impressions of a larger pursuit and/or connections to other struggles – from the perspectives of density and groundedness – was the second most prominent in the data corpus. No fewer than 61 data extracts are linked to this code, and it has a bearing on more than ten other codes and themes. Although I did not explicitly ask about this issue, it was frequently raised; the respondents were not prompted to talk about some bigger picture. Yet they all framed their activism in the Palestinian project as part of broader moral quest.

### 4.2.1 *Having a wider lens*

Section 4.1 has already mentioned the respondents' desire to narrow the gap between the self and the other. The perspective I want to highlight here is that the respondents also experienced their *inclusive selves as expansive identities* that cross over to the "other". In this respect R15 (2015:127) talked of the widening of horizons, and R6 (2015:52) said that her inner expansion was her liberation.

Besides picturing themselves in the shoes of the Palestinians, they also imagine themselves in the shoes of their target audiences, including people from other religious orientations (R5 2015:20; R2 2015:126-127). Members of the audience could even be people with different ideological views, such as Jewish Israeli right-wing Zionists who yell "Death to the Arabs!" in the streets of Jerusalem (R18 2015:87). R18 said she tries to "take that space and be there to listen" with the hope that things will change in them: "I really try. It doesn't always work, but I really try" (R18 2015:91). To explain the difference between himself and fellow activists and those in Israel who are not involved in the Palestinian project, R19 compared it to sharing chocolate: "There are beautiful, generous people everywhere who want to help others", but their reach "depends on the length of their hands that hold the choc that feeds the circle around them" (R19 2015:12-13). Some feed only their family, their neighbours, their community, "or just their tribe, or their religious group, or people that look like them" (R19 2015:12-13). In his case, at some point his identity

...was expanded to no longer include any more injustice, the pilot, the Jew, the Israeli, the student or whatever. In one way or another I was also a prisoner in the interrogation cell, experienced the system from that side. So if I need to summarise it, it's the expansion of your identity to something that is including other human beings that previously were the other for you and now the me and them became one thing in some way. (R19 2015:27)

R19 (2015:73) sees himself as belonging to "something much bigger than the circle of activists in Israel". He is one of many like-minded people who share the same world-view and who participate in projects that occur "parallel to this struggle here". These people "don't care just about the Palestinians...they care about the refugees in their own countries and they care about the gap between rich and poor in their community" (R19 2015:74). Or, as R1 (2015:129) put it: "You can't be in solidarity with Palestinians, but turn a blind eye to other struggles and to the contradictions in our own society, including the wrong, corruption and nepotism and inequality." What these and other examples in the data corpus share is the notion of the self as an inclusive, expansive identity that stretches beyond the conventional

confinements and interests of societal, cultural, religious, ideological, national, continental and other boundaries.

#### **4.2.2 *Power, greed and militarism linked to regional and global contexts***

Without exception, all the respondents saw *connections and overlaps between the Palestinian project and other current and former struggles* against “othering” in the world. They mentioned issues of gender, xenophobia, racism, Orientalism, militarism, greed and poverty; the struggles of Western Sahara, Tibet, Cuba, Swaziland, the Congolese, Vietnam, Indo-China and the Balkans. They recalled the persecution of Jews and the Rwandese, the suffering of Afrikaner families under British rule, the oppression of Africans, native Americans and Australian Aborigines, slavery, colonialization, imperialism and many others.

R2 (2015:12-13) indicated that the question of why he as a non-Palestinian has taken up the Palestinian cause if he is not Palestinian is actually the same ethical question as why Jews took up the cause of African Americans in the USA during the Civil Rights Movement; why men adopt the cause for female gender justice; or why humans stand up for animal rights. It is the same ethical question in different contexts, and humans have the capacity to be ethical.

R1 (2015:73) followed a similar line of thought in phrasing the connections between human rights struggles and the desire for an ethical response as follows:

The struggle against racism...what Edward Said tried to tell us about Orientalism and the other...the context of our country...the xenophobia, all of that forms a particular matrix in my mind. They are not separate issues. Fighting xenophobia in our country, or fighting for the rights of refugees in Europe...or fighting against Islamophobia...understanding how the arms trade works...the role of the US and of Israel, all of that [is] linked in very definite ways in my mind, not just in a visceral, emotional, sentimental way, but through my scholarship around neo-liberalism today, corporate globalisation. What are the building blocks? It's not just economics. It is culture, it is aesthetics, it is about how do we humanise a human condition. What do we value?

The rejection of a dominant hegemonic, anti-human world outlook is a notion conveyed from several angles and throughout the data corpus. There are no ambiguities about the Palestinian matter as a burning, local site of othering that reverberates throughout the world, setting off alarm bells on multi-faceted tones of othering and dehumanisation elsewhere in the world. *The Palestinian project is seen as a special, focused lens for global issues.* The injustice against the Palestinians “is a bigger issue. It’s an issue of colonialism, it’s an issue of occupation” and one of “apartheid. It’s an issue of international law” (R3 2015:25); “racism” (R9 2015:13) and “economic exploitation” (R3 2015:42; R12 2015:63-68,131-140; R16

2015:98). The dehumanisation takes the shape of “power abuse” (R9 2015:15), “violence”, “war” and “militarism” and it is part of a global, colonialist, arms industry that destroys infrastructure, uproots, displaces, imprisons and kills people (R1 2015:42; R6 2016:69,101-103; R7 2015:155; R12 2015:75,91; R13 2015:17,19; R16 2015:98-103). It is part of a conversation that transcends the borders of Israel-Palestine when the trails of Israeli money and ammunition, funded by the USA, lead into countries such as South Sudan and Eritrea in a global project of militarisation (R16 2015:100).

R6 explained how countries associated with current or past gross systemic injustices against humanity bring into focus and enlarge the challenges of being human. Places such as Germany, Palestine, Israel and South Africa make visible, or bring into sharper focus “under a microscope what so many places in the world experienced which is discrimination, segregation, living as refugees, living precarious lives, being hounded out at any moment, or the threat of that”. She added that these countries bring home intensely

...aspects of those experiences that tell us more about what it means to be a human being, or what it can mean, how difficult it is to be a *Mensch*. Why it’s easier to swim with the stream, why it’s easier to not step out and liberate ourselves. (R6 2015:82-83)

The Palestinian struggle, which is sometimes thought of as so big and so complex, is “actually just a small thing within the bigger scheme of things, but it’s very fundamental to the bigger scheme of things”, as R8 (2015:127) pointed out with reference to the interpretation of texts in the Bible and the Torah. Both R8 and R10 are deeply concerned about Christian Zionism. R10 (2015:41), for example, commented on how people of faith “relocate their faith on the side of the military and the security establishments”. Thus, instead of standing with the weak and powerless, Christians are often in alliance with the powerful. It happened during South Africa’s apartheid, he said, and it is how people relate to Israel. Christians from all over the world support “the Zionist state believing that it is Biblical to do so” and they simply disregard “those who suffer helplessly” (R10 2015:41-43).

There is also a perceived link between the Palestinian project and the global political economy’s ethics and its valuation of humanity and militarism. R1 (2015:73) mentioned the ideology of empire, “the role of Israel as a warrior fundamentalist state, the role of high-tech security and the armaments industry, the role of the industrial military, some add congressional complex of the USA and how it fits into that”. He also mentioned various other struggles that are linked to the oppression of the Palestinians: “It was only later that I began to understand the pivotal role of the Palestinian Struggle, not just for the region, but for the

world” (R1 2015:73). Moreover, “Israel, Palestine, South Africa... each immersion...takes me to a cross-over and then brings me back again with different eyes” (R6 2015:69) – R6 argued that militarism and other forms of violence, such as the violence of exclusion and the violence of reducing people to categories, effect a collective existential consciousness and dehumanise people. War allows an otherness in humans to come out and it is “the most brutal and bestial of any kind of expression of energy” (R6 2015:101). War cannot be accepted as a permanent state, in her opinion, and it is a global challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The respondents’ involvement in the Palestinian project also bring into focus their concern regarding *issues of “othering” in their own societies*. The South African respondents’ accounts wove links between their own national issues and the Palestinian context as if they are two sides of the same coin that belong together and should be spoken of in the same breath. It does not imply that they see the two situations as identical, but it does convey the perceived interrelatedness between issues, values, consciousness and responsibilities. Put differently, the South African respondents assumed responsibility in this project because of the intersections between their local anti-apartheid and other societal struggles and the Palestinian project. They noted obvious and graphic similarities: struggling against colonialism, land dispossession enforced by militarisation, systemic discrimination justified by manipulation of the Bible, the Torah and/or social Darwinism in the service of political power, the imprisonment and exile of people, and the portrayal of the oppressed as nameless “tickers” in the media as R5 called it (R1 2015:12,25-28; R2 2015:69-70,108-109,199-202; R3 2015:32,35; R5 2015:27,33; R6 2015:68; R7 2015:97; R10 2015:39-43,108). Because of the close similarity between South African apartheid, the oppression of the Palestinians and their respective liberation struggles, presents a particular kind of attachment to South Africans which may not be experienced by people from Brazil, for example, because they have not suffered from apartheid. (R3 2015: 27). Moreover, South Africans “have a deep responsibility” towards other people who struggle, and specifically towards the Palestinian people, because they stood with South Africans in their struggle against apartheid (R8 2015:143,48).<sup>107</sup> The shared issue is that of being oppressed and not some other affinity (R2 2015:35; R4 2015:77). R3 (2015:37) noted that if the Palestinians, after their liberation, were

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<sup>107</sup> The image of South Africa as a moral icon can be questioned, since there is “no inherent and automatic affinity with the Palestinian Struggle that should be assumed” (R4 2015:166). R8 (2015:143-144) shared concern about how “South Africa is perceived across the world”. Despite their responsibility towards the marginalised, the ruling party, for example, pays mere lip service to support for the Palestinians. They claim to support BDS, but do not implement sanctions. R1 (2015:109) agreed that it was not possible to see the nation as uniform, and it may be more appropriate to talk of fluidity and various tributaries.

to oppress the Jewish Israelis, he would still be in solidarity with the oppressed and advocate for no oppression of Jews.

There are also imagined similarities with the South African case in respect of the period beyond occupation. R1, R5, R8, R10 and R12 envisage that the Palestinians' suffering will not end if the occupation is abolished, just as the marginalisation of Black South Africans did not stop with the end of apartheid. In this respect R1 (2015:57-58,67) and R5 (2015:217) referred to corrupting influences in the Palestinian elite in Ramallah, who are "selling out" their people for the sake of material gain, making money from the occupation, just as some Black people made money from apartheid in South Africa. R8 (2015:99) pleads for a deeper engagement over and above the aims of liberation, since democracy does not rule out corruption:

I think that they will experience what we experience now. There are tendencies that they are going that way already. And similarly with us...even before 1994 even while the ANC was in exile, we ignored those things. They were already there. I don't think Jacob Zuma started to be corrupt only now. These things happened when they were in exile even. But we ignored that and thought it will go away...but these sorts of things don't go away. So it's...imperative for...us and the Palestinians to compare notes, both this side of freedom and the other side and share what we are going through, with the hope that they can avoid...the mistakes that we couldn't. (R10 2015:105-106)

R12 (2015:52-68) agreed with R10, saying: "[W]e're making very similar mistakes right now." There may be a "Mandela moment" in Palestine, but by then the economic power "will already be in Zionist hands".

Although the apartheid analogy resonates with Israeli authoritarianism, the hatred and the racism, in some ways the analogy is inappropriate, since there are many deep differences. Despite similarities, the Palestinians face far greater obstacles than Black South Africans did under apartheid. For example, even the most racist South Africans never imagined a country without Black people; Israel can dispense of cheap Palestinian labour by acquiring migrant labour, and Israel wants all the land, but without the Palestinians (R1 2015:51; R2 2015:102; R5 2015:36; R9 2015:14). They "squeeze" the Palestinians out by "the gentle under-funding" of their clinics and schools, "limiting their water supplies...or just refusing permission to extend their homes, or just bombing the hell out of them, bombing them out of existence" (R2 2015:106-107). R1 (2015:42) added that the Israelis test armaments on civilians. Moreover, South Africa was not defended by an "international White lobby", as Israel is, and

the ongoing “barbarism” of Islam was not played off against the idea of a country as a bastion of “democracy” (R2 2015:100-102; R8 2015:21).

Jewish Israeli respondents also regarded the South African case as relevant to the Palestinian project, but their reflections were not as detailed as those of the South African respondents. R12 remarked on the possibility that economic classism may replace racial discrimination. R13 (2015:76) raised the issues of reconciliation and forgiveness with reference to South Africa; R14 (2015:80) mentioned the cost of liberation; R15 indicated her exposure to feminism and anti-apartheid work; and R20 noted the value of meeting with South African delegations to increase understanding of the parallels. R16 (2015:95-97) saw South Africa as one of several places to learn from, as it is not possible to have precise comparisons between scenarios, but it is possible to learn and to be inspired.

Besides being concerned about Israel as the occupying power and its Zionism, all the activists from Israel were worried about their society’s patriarchal and militarist ethos, Israel’s nuclear reactor in Dimona, which can also destroy Palestinians (R13 2015:69), the controlled conventional and social media that mislead the Israeli public (R12 2015:82-83; R17 2015:110), the funding of the occupation at the cost of the Israeli public (R11 2015:52), and neo-liberal economic policies (R12 2015:107-108). R14 (101-104) highlighted a problematic divide in Israeli society – those who advocate for a better economic system are also often Zionists who do not care about the wellbeing of the Palestinians; those who advocate for the rights of the Palestinians in turn do not care about neo-liberal economics. The challenge is how to address both issues in a holistic manner.

Israel’s military industry complex, the paramilitary industry and the economic incentive to maintain and deepen the occupation is part of a much bigger conversation that transcends the borders of Israel-Palestine:

If you start to follow the money and the ammunition you find yourself in South Sudan and then in Eritrea with Israeli weapons. So in many ways that analysis makes it even more depressing when you see how global these mechanisms are and the role of not only the US, but also Israel in militarising the world in many ways. But yes, it’s definitely part of my analysis even if it’s a rather dim one. (R16 2015:100)

In fact, the code used for the need to overcome the effects of a collective consciousness characterised by *patriarchy and militarism in favour of feminism and humanism* had the highest density in the data corpus. Its many associations with other codes heightened its significance in the case study. According to the respondents, a patriarchal, militarist ethos

protects, facilitates and advances the Zionist movement's violent response to anti-Semitism and what flows from it – a security paradigm in which militarisation is both a response to Jewish fear and a perpetuation of that “fear and siege” mentality, requiring Jewish Israelis to remain in a constant “state of emergency” because “everybody is going to throw us into the sea” (R13 2015:35-36).

More and more people are falling beneath the poverty lines, and more and more people are unemployed on the Palestinian side and we're ethnically cleansing people and we're responsible for Israeli attacks on Gaza, and we're doing it out of fear. We're spoon-fed fear from the day we're born! We talk about Pharaoh in Egypt and Hitler in Germany and Ahmadinejad in Iran and whoever it is. Everybody was spoon-fed fear all of our lives and I think we all deserve to transcend that, to overcome that and to live in a place that doesn't have to be based on that. (R12 205:75)

Especially Jewish Israeli respondents mentioned the undesirable nature of a group identity which subscribes to values of superiority and militarism (R11, R12, R13, R15, R16, R17, R21). R13 noted the destructive ethos of militarism in Israel:

If we're not fearful, for example, of the Lebanese, then we should be fearful of Hezbollah. And if we're not fearful of the Hezbollah then we should be fearful of the Syrians and if we're not fearful of the Syrians, we should be fearful of the Palestinians. If we're not fearful of Palestinians, then we should be fearful of Iran. So there is always something to be fearful of and to protect ourselves from all the time. This is why we need such a large army and this is why we are always inducted into some kind of military. (R13 2015:20)

“We've become clearly a colonialist arms industry. That's our biggest industry now,” R12 (2015:162) said. Moreover, Israel's nuclear reactor puts both Israelis and Palestinians at risk:

Should anything happen to the nuclear reactor in Dimona it would destroy Palestine as well. On the other hand, we use weapons of mass destruction in order to control Gaza ... so I think it's very, very important to give us the visibility and make sure that our voices go out to Palestinians and to the world. (R13 2015:69)

R11 (2015:92) argued: “Our job is to bridge between this militarist period we're facing now, to the new one, to the humanistic, prophetic, more Jewish ethical, moral way.” Israel, he stated, is “in the middle of a kind of a kind of fight or competition between two main approaches. One is the humanistic approach and the other is the militarist approach (R11 2015:30). It is time, he said, “to become again a humanistic state ... my dream is a place where people can live ... in peace ... with our neighbours (R11 2015:31). This shift towards a caring, communal, interconnected ethos is a task that will not be finished on the day that the occupation ends. Another respondent commented:

When you look at a militaristic society, you look at who has the power and who has the influence. It's not just about ... men or women ... I'm not talking about gender in that

sense. We're talking about feminism in the sense of negotiation, we're talking about compromise, we're talking about equality, we're talking about [the idea] that everything is not to automatically pick up a gun and shoot. (R13 2015:49; my insertion)

The fear-fed militarism and militarism-fed fear is compounded by the idea that the state of Israel is “the last and the only safe place for Jews”. This idea is used to justify a closed society, the immobilisation of people in order to continue the occupation, the acquisition of a military arsenal to defend Israel against the “whole” Arab world, and the refusal to grant Palestinians’ Right of Return because it might alter Israel’s demography.

All these strategies are connected to agendas of economic and political dominance, patriarchy, fascism, racism and gender discrimination. But, in an ironic twist – the respondents argued – Israel’s entrenched militarism and its “fear and siege” ethos of “othering” against the Palestinians *have become self-destructive*. As a result, the notion of Israel as a democracy is questioned, while the Palestinians’ suffering also continues to be entrenched (R6 2015:69; R11 2015:30-35; R12 2015:107; R13 2015:17-19,48-49,68,104-106; R15 2015:36-49; R16 2015:102-103; R17 2015:133; R21 2015:44-45). Especially Jewish respondents argued that the Israeli ethos seeps through to affect various levels of Jewish society in a damaging manner. Jewish Israelis who are activists in the Palestinian project are vilified and shamed as people who are radical and cannot be taken seriously. Ethiopian Jewish Israelis, who are treated as second class citizens in Israel because of their skin colour, in turn “have to compensate by being more racist to Palestinians, being so militarised, proving their army skills” (R21 2015:161). When male and female Israeli soldiers finish their compulsory military service, in which the focus is to maintain the occupation of the Palestinians, “they go into different industries, or they go to government, or they go into education and so they continue to influence this ongoing sense of need for occupation in order to keep us safe” (R13 2015:50). The idea of “living on our sword” – the claim that fighting is the only way that Jewish Israelis can exist – is not sustainable. It leaves this society “in a terrible state of mind” (R16 2015:105). For R15 (2015:42), the way Israel compromises its democracy by occupying the Palestinian territories is the “conceptual reason” for her advocacy. “You can’t occupy for 50 years and it has no effect on your society. There is no way around it,” R15 (2015:37) warned, since the compulsory army training and the fear and siege paradigm evoke typical declarations such as “I love my country; I’ll do everything so that my mother can sleep in peace. It’s the Palestinians who are to blame. They throw rockets”. But the Israeli society is “brainwashed...when kids go to

school – from the age of 15 or 14 – they already dress them and get them ready for the army. So it's very difficult" (R15 2015:78). R5 spoke with much emotion about Israel's treatment of Palestinian children:

The DCI report. They described in detail like an 11-year-old who the soldiers come in, in the middle of the night, tie their hands up, it's dark, they're not even speaking in a language that you understand. You don't have your parents. That was the chapter that affected me the most, because as I said, before I had written that chapter, I had written a whole chapter about all the different massacres, Sabra and Shatila, Deir Yassin, Pillar of Defence, [the Gaza] Cast Lead [Massacre] and all of that and there it was really about statistics. And I had to say I felt desensitised. But when I had written that chapter about the kids.... (R5 2015:102-103)

None of the respondents felt comfortable about the idea of raising children and grandchildren in a society where people "look forward to going to an army and hold guns and impose power onto another group of people" (R21 2015:45; R16 2015:105; R13 2015:105-106):

So it spreads out. The suffering begins with Israeli Palestinian citizens. Then it goes to the Ethiopian citizens. Then it goes to the poor people ... So because the country is so busy with the occupation, there is less attention to the democratic society and it suffers. And people don't see the connection [...] Democracy and occupation don't go together. So if you occupy for 50 years, your democratic society suffers, your democracy suffers. In addition, if are used to pushing around and screaming, or whatever to Palestinians, then you sometimes scream at your children, at your workers, at your wife. There is much more violence in Israeli society. People are racist, not only towards Palestinians, but towards everybody [...] We see a world where everybody hates us. We are the victims of the whole world. That's not very democratic and healthy for the society to see us still as a victim, right? There is also a kind of a distortion of the world-view, because you have to protect yourself as an occupier. (R15 2015:40-42)

South Africans such as R1, R2, R5, R6, R7, R9 and R10 also mentioned Israel's militarism and its ramifications for the Palestinians. However, the South Africans' comments were not as detailed as those of their Jewish Israeli counterparts when they acknowledged the detrimental role of Israel's militarism and the significance of moving away from the notion of militarism, not only for the sake of ending the oppression of the Palestinians, but also to enable a healthier, more humanist and humane Israeli society. R11, R13 and R16 and to an extent R14, R15 and R17 regarded this issue as a core reason for their activism. R20 raises funds for Palestinian political prisoners. R14, R16 and R20 have served several terms in prison and in detention for refusing national service in the Israeli Defense Force, which is instrumental in Israel's military occupation.

It was noteworthy that the topic of a militaristic ethos *per se* was phrased neither as a prominent theme nor as a pertinent reason for activism by the South African respondents,

even though several South Africans were admittedly outspoken about Israel's war machinery, its physical violence and the harsh conditions of political prisoners (R2 2015:107; R4 2015:9) and they all spoke of the Palestinians' suffering as a result of the military occupation. R7 (2015:155) mentioned Israel's war on Gaza and its other forms of military power as an important reason for his activism. R1 spoke of Israel as one of the world's four biggest military superpowers, with "the latest equipment that field tests its armaments on the bodies of Palestinian men, women and of course children" and also acts as "an exporter of some of the most ghastly weapons" such as "cluster bombs of white phosphorous" as "methods of controlling Palestinians, not just in Gaza, but in the West Bank, etcetera" (R1 2015:42). R5 (2015:102-103) recalled how hard it was for her to read a *Defense for Children* report containing details such as those mentioned above on the treatment of Palestinian children who were tied up at night in the dark, not addressing them in a language they understand, and in the absence of their parents.

Nevertheless, most of the South African respondents did not name or single out the notion of a militarist ethos in Israel and/or its connection with a wider security complex as a pertinent reason for their activism, except for R1, R6, R7 and R9. R1 (2015:73) referred to Israel as a militarised fundamentalist state in a broader context of the world's arms trade. R6 (2015:69) said: "I feel there is a space in which militarism...affects a collective existential consciousness" and finds expression in different kinds of violence that dehumanises. She suggested that war cannot be accepted as a permanent state or even as a permanent exception, and that it is a global challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (R6 2015:101-103). R7 (2015:103-104) and R9 (2015:98) endorsed a boycott of G4S.<sup>108</sup> In this context, R16's (2015:99) remark that the issue of militarism in Israel is not a focus in transnational activism calls for attention. R16, who is Jewish Israeli, argued that supporters of the Palestinian project from other parts of the world find it easier to relate to boycotts of settler produce than to the military industry associated with the oppression of the Palestinians.

Those who see Israel as a vulnerable country that suffers unjustly often attack activists in the Palestinian project for allegedly unfairly focusing on the Palestinian project. However, the opposite is actually true, because if Israel is being singled out in the world, then it is to advance the Israeli regime's interests. R5, for example, pointed out that Israel is funded and maintained primarily by the USA and "that perception of democracy is then maintained and

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<sup>108</sup> G4S is the third largest corporation in the world and it is responsible for the repressive treatment of Israel's political prisoners (Davis 2016:55).

sustained by the rest of the world” (R5 2015:232). She argued that this relationship leads to a perception of business as usual in the sense of normal diplomatic, sporting, cultural, political and economic ties with Israel: “There is never a question of sanctions as there is with Iran, or with North Korea. So the need to speak out against Israel is greater in the light of that” (R5 2015:232).

*No-one focuses on Israel because of some vendetta or because it is the only worthy cause.* “Singling out Israel” is “absolute rubbish”, according to R2 (2015:109-110), who then listed the many issues in which he is involved, but he admitted he can do only so much, for “I have only 24 hours in a day”. Activists are limited to what they can do in 24 hours per day (R4 2015:99; R10 2015:154). R5 is just as concerned about various other trouble spots around the world, and “if I’m not vocal about it, it doesn’t mean that I don’t care” (R5 2015:42). If she had more hours in day, she “would certainly devote it to other issues, certainly speak about it in the same way that I speak about the Palestinian issue” (R5 2015:227). Her sentiment was echoed by R8, whose limitations in terms of time, and his desire to be as effective as possible, restrict the number of issues he can take on. From the perspective of R9 (2015:53-57) this struggle does not matter more to her than others, but as a South African Jew she can play a strategic role and make more of a difference in this cause than in others. R18 was the only Jewish Israeli who commented on this matter. However, she too had been confronted:

So, people always ask me, well, if you’re a human rights activist then why are you only active in the Palestinian scene and not in any other scene right now, or why aren’t you in Syria, or why aren’t you anywhere else, or what about the Haredi – the Ultra-Orthodox here and I’m like, you know, what’s being done in my name, that’s what I can’t, I can’t – I have to be there first. (R18 2015:98)

The issue of having limited time was mentioned more than 40 times in the data corpus and the respondents were well aware of the tension between their desire to do more and their human capacity. All the activists are generally very busy people who often juggle between professional careers and voluntary activism. “It would help if we had 40 hour days,” R3 (2015:132) said. According to R18 (2015:68) people joke that she actually fits 40 hours into her day, and R5 (2015:227) wished for “60 hours in a day”. Since many Christians condemn the ISIS killings, but few condemn the killing of Palestinians, R8 deliberately takes a stronger public stand when a child in Gaza gets killed, because “so many people will not do it and I know where the need is” (R8 2015:56). R13 (2015:87,102) and R17 (2015:135) wished they could be full-time activists without having to earn an income too. “What I fear is the

unbelievable challenge of what we also want to do and have to do. There are too few of us who do it,” R15 (2015:38) lamented.

Given that they have only 24 hours a day, “you have to pick your battles. But even if you pick your battles, you must always take a bow into the directions of the larger” (R2 2015:55). They simply cannot do it all, because of limited time and resources (R6 2015:134; R8 2015:42,56; R10 2015:154). “If I have to try to be everywhere, I’m not going to be anywhere,” R4 (2015:99) said. The challenge for activists in the Palestinian struggle, he argued, is showing, or building links between the Palestinian project and other struggles for their audiences, so that these audiences also understand it:

You will always in my talks pick up that this man is committed to gender justice [...] You’ll see that I’m opposed to xenophobia. You’ll see that I’m opposed to homophobia. The theme is the Palestinians, but I throw all of these elements into it. So I think you choose your central terrain of battle at the moment, but you must always give me an indication that you are seeing the larger picture. I can’t hold you accountable for not fighting all the battles. We are human beings, we have 24 hours in a day, but I do want you to give me an idea that you understand that this is part of a larger picture. (R2 2015:56)

For R2 it is important to deliberately and for strategic reasons position the Palestinian cause *not in isolation from, nor in ignorance of other struggles*. Humans are not accountable for fighting all the battles (R2 2015:56), but he wants activists to illustrate their understanding of a larger picture. In his own public talks he builds up “a moral case all along, all the time” (R2 2015:169). Positioning the project as part of a broad moral case helps people to realise the nature of the dynamics at stake. Other activists also noted that if you want to win people over you have to make them aware of the “bigger picture” (R5 2015:37). To this end R11 (2015:52) and R13 (2015:56) explained to their communities the impact of the cost of the occupation and militarism on Israeli society. It is often a cumbersome process to facilitate an understanding of dynamics that allow abuse and marginalisation. R13 used the example of abuse and subjugation in unhealthy sexual relations in her attempt to explain the dynamics of oppressing others. Like R2, she too starts with examples known to her audience in building up a general moral case. Everybody is against sexual abuse, she said, but not all know how to recognise it and how to distinguish between demeaning and good sex. “So you open it up and you start talking and you break down these barriers or these taboos that you were not able to talk about before. ...So you talk about those kinds of things. You do it through the back door” (R13 2015:56).

### 4.2.3 *Positive and negative roles of religion*

The role of religion in the broadest sense as a way to associate with God, others and the universe (as framed, for example, by R3 2015:108) is an important dimension of the case study. The code linked to ideologies and religious traditions was the fourth most dominant in the data corpus. Here it is raised in its role in the broad moral context that drew the attention of the respondents.

First, it is important to note that the respondents did *not ascribe the tension between the Palestinians and Israel to a religious clash* by the respondents. They do not see these tensions as a Muslim struggle (R1 2015:125; R2 2015:13; R3 2015:25,33; R4 2015:15; R5 2015:11,13,31,199), nor do they see their activism as a struggle against Judaism (R2 2015:156-208; R4 2015:31; R5 2015:16; R8 2015:70-93; R9 2015:65). They believe that arguments that pretend religion is the issue are a distraction to cover up the race-based discrimination (R12 2015:28-29). R3 (2015:47) commented: “I’m an Islamic activist. But the issue is not an Islamic issue. The issue is a human rights issue”. He added:

It’s an issue of colonialism, it’s an issue of occupation, it is an issue as we now very glibly say...of apartheid. It’s an issue of international law. And I don’t believe that Palestinians are going to win their liberation simply by saying as some Islamists, people in Hamas used to say that, they say less now, Palestine is an Islamic endowment. Or to make the argument that Palestinians should be free because this is the land of Jesus...You argue it on the basis of international law. You argue it on the basis of human rights, etcetera, because that’s the issue. I think that the Zionist project deploys Judaism very effectively for political purpose. So it’s the political purpose that needs to be attacked, not the religion that’s deployed for it. And in attacking it you attack it politically, not by deploying other religions against it. That doesn’t make any sense. (R3 2015:25)

R3’s words echo the sentiments of all who associate to a greater or a lesser extent with specific religious traditions (R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R8 and R10). They may be religious and act because of religious convictions, or may be inspired by the ethics of a specific tradition in addition to also being humanist, like R6, but none regard the core issue as religious. Several warned against falling into the trap of viewing the tension as a struggle between Jews and Muslims (R1 2015:125; R3 2015:20; R4 2015:31; R6 2015:37; R8 2015:9,57,82) since Judaism (R3 2015:25), Islam (R2 2015:101) and Christianity (R8 2015:11,38,53; R10 2015:15,156,169) are all abused and harnessed by people to obscure (R5 2015:205) Israel’s political aims. However, Zionist interpretations of Judaism and Christianity, the desire to correct these misinterpretations and the world’s ignorance of the non-Zionist stance of Christians in Palestine can be a core focus for activism. R8 (2015:38,53) and R10 consider

the integrity of the Gospel to be at stake – “Israel, who are meant to be the light to the world according to the Old Testament ... have become darkness to the world, represented God as a man, a God of no justice”, and the world needs to remind Israel of it (R10 2015:81):

The image of God of Christianity...has been so dragged in the mud by, first the Israeli State, the Zionist state, but also by the Christian Western Zionism and the complacency of the rest of the Christian world. So my crusade so to speak as a Christian activist who take seriously God (is because) ....my own faith is at stake. (R10 2015:169)

Then it should be noted that all the Jewish Israeli respondents (none of whom associates with any specific faith tradition) and the South African respondents mentioned secular and religious *Zionism's exclusivist position*, its conflation of religion with state and economic power, and the associated myths and lies as the ideological framework for othering the Palestinians. In Israel, religion is “entangled” with “Zionist ideology” (R20 2015:9):

The Zionist ideology in my opinion is very much the root of this whole problem. It's a set of colonial ideology, but what makes it so powerful and so easy to identify with for so many people is the story of the Holocaust and the narrative of the Jews as the ultimate oppressed group. (R20 2015:58)

The respondents stressed the role of each and every person in associating or not associating with the discriminatory state ideology. They acknowledged that the value systems of people and institutions and their interpretations of religious traditions vary, and that there are options. Thus, religion and any other ideology can be interpreted in different ways (R2 2015:170; R3 2015:25,35; R6 2015:17). In South Africa, for example, “Christianity was utilised both in order to justify apartheid as well as in order to justify the struggle against apartheid” (R3 2015:35) and in Israel, ultra-orthodox Jewish communities are actually often anti-Zionist, despite the general entanglement of political Zionism and Judaism in Israel (R20 2015:8-9).<sup>109</sup> However, the “bigger picture” in respect of Palestinians is generally “obscured by religion” (R5 2015:38), or rather by how people view the three Abrahamic faiths in the context of the Palestinian project.

Next, all who associate to an extent with one of the three Abrahamic faiths (R2, R3, R4, R5, R8, R10), or who grew up with the ethics of a specific tradition (R6), agreed that religious elements and symbolism are indeed of significance, especially because Jerusalem is so strongly associated with Christianity, Islam and Judaism. *Yet they neither advocate for the rights of one religion over another, nor claim a city or a piece of land exclusively for the*

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<sup>109</sup> Section 5.2.3 unpacks the various ways in which the respondents perceive religion, how it influences their activism and why they see Zionism as destructive and as warranting their activism.

sake of religion. When people like R2 (2015:18), R3 (2015:92-93), R5 (2015:14,228), R6 (2015:16) and R8 (2015:11) expressly said that their faiths infuse their activism, they contextualised their theologies as inclusive, ethical guiding principles and they did so *with respect for the roles of other traditions*. To free the Al Aqsa mosque in occupied East Jerusalem may resonate with most Muslims,<sup>110</sup> but what convinces R5, for example, is the human rights aspect and its relation to so many other systemic injustices:

You can say part of the reason is to free Al Aqsa. But if you're speaking to a largely non-Muslim audience – free a mosque? Is that what it comes down to, the place where people pray? So are you trying to tell me that when people are humiliated at checkpoints, that's not so important? When there are settlements, that's not so important? ...When they're humiliated on a daily basis, when they're denied land, when their land is stolen from them, whatever it is, that's not important? (R5 2015:31)

R12 (2015:28, 29, 117), who is not religious, understands the symbolic value of Jerusalem as a “golden city of the three religions”, but at the same time it does not drive his activism. “I really believe it's a holy city for the three religions. I'm not a big biblical person. I don't really care that they say King David took a walk over there, or Christ took a walk up that way, for me that's symbolically speaking” (R12 2015:115). His concern and his activism are focused on countering the manipulation of urban reality to serve agendas of power and resource-grabbing. Except for R12, Jewish Israelis did not comment on the relevance or lack thereof of religious sites in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho, Nazareth, Bethlehem and elsewhere.<sup>111</sup>

Whether religious or not, the respondents generally highlight the relevance of *inclusive, pluralistic co-operation* with people and organisations of faith and others. It is clear that they value liaisons outside their own cultural, national and religious platforms (R1 2015:125; R5 2015:20,29,197,199-200; R7 2015:10; R12 2015:43; R13 2015:59; R15 2015:83; R19 2015:65,74; R20 2015:49; R21 2015:15). R8, for example, described his positive experiences of pluralism with international groups at the Cape Town and New York sessions of the Russell Tribunal (2015:85) and with local fellow activists in Cape Town:

You sit in meetings with people who are Whites, Blacks or Coloured, Indian whatever...Muslim, Christian, Jewish, atheist and perhaps even other religions as well...in a church hall in...Cape Town and suddenly you are struck by the fact that this meeting is quite unique, because here are White Jewish activists who also happen to be atheist, but they are sitting in a Christian church hall. There are people from different

<sup>110</sup> The Al Aqsa mosque in the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem is regarded the third holiest site in Islam.

<sup>111</sup> The Jewish Israeli respondents did not associate with Judaism, but several of them and some non-religious South Africans were inspired by spiritual and religious concepts, as indicated in Table 2.

churches sitting here. There are Muslims sitting in the same hall and sometimes there are people who even live next to each other, Christians and Muslims who don't often talk to one another, but here suddenly they are sitting in the same hall and talking about this particular issue. I think just for social cohesion in this society it's just such a good thing. I just find myself in these spaces where it's just been so whole, you know. It just felt so good. (R8 2015:83)

R8 and R4, for example, added that the Palestinian project also opens up opportunities for friendships and co-operation between people from different faiths: "So it's a bigger space than just Palestine and Israel" (R8 2015:97). The same inclusive and/or pluralistic sentiment applies to those motivated by other traditions and ideologies, such as Marxism (R1), Buddhism (R9) and humanism. The following example also explains why such pluralism enriches activism in the Palestinian project:

Here you have a Jewish woman sitting in the USA...who contacted this Muslim guy in South Africa...who was then put in touch with some Israeli comrades who were working on a statement. Here you have a crossing of different cultures. You have a Jew, you have a Muslim, you have the Palestinians themselves that first issued the call...and so it's in the pursuit of the cultural boycott that we learned about each other...this is where we found each other. (R4 2015:31)

However, such plural activist spaces can, from time to time, also be problematic. R21 (2015:118) explained that she was concerned when there were anti-Semitic statements in public, "like the Dlamini comments around loving Hitler". At such times, she asks herself if she is careful enough regarding whom she works with. Sometimes she clearly feels that everyone is on the same page, but at other times she gets the impression that she needs to enquire more closely about where people are coming from: "I don't think that there is much anti-Semitism, but maybe if there is, maybe I haven't interrogated that or even given it a chance to look at in the past and whether I'm making the right decision around that."

There is no doubt about the respondents in the case study's being concerned about the abuse of religion and ideologies in obscuring, distracting and manipulating public opinion and in promoting exclusivist power. The correction of such notions is a reason for activism for many.<sup>112</sup>

#### **4.2.4 *Limited impressions of ecological injustice***

Ecological abuse and hegemony as reasons for activism took up very little space in the case study. The focus was more on the plight of human beings, and not so much on environmental

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<sup>112</sup> The drive to correct Zionist myths and lies is discussed in more detail in Section 5.3.2.

injustices such as Israeli's dumping of waste, including hazardous and toxic waste, into the West Bank; Israel's domination of water resources to the detriment of Palestinian soil, animals and vegetation, the ongoing destruction of Palestinian dams, water cisterns and wells, and its diversion of the Jordan River's headwaters; Israel's destruction of over 500 villages and the associated fields and replacing them with European pine trees and urban development; its ongoing uprooting and spoiling of orchards and crops, and so forth.

The respondents are not insensitive to environmental justice, as there are general references to it, for example, by R2 (2015:44), R4 (2015:68) and R8 (2015:124).<sup>113</sup> However, they did not posit the ecological dimension of the oppression of the Palestinians as reasons for their advocacy. R13 (2015:54) briefly mentioned Israel's planting of forests over destroyed Palestinian villages and how the global Jewish community is led to believe that their contributions to the Jewish National Fund supports the greening of Israel. However, her remark was a response to a specific question on lies, and her answer was framed as such. In contrast to R13's brief comment, R6's remarks on Israel's covering up of demolished Palestinian villages in the above way in the name of an eco-strategy – as portrayed, for example, in the film *The Village Under the Forest (2013)* – were not elicited by a specific question. For R6, the issues of unethical greening and the abuse of environmental arguments to mask human rights violations is indeed an important component of her activism. R12 (whose advocacy focuses on urban development in Jerusalem) also expressly mentioned the ecological impact of the occupation. He explained that for the first time in 2000 years and since the building of the Wall, it has become illegal to sell local fruit and vegetables in Jerusalem's Old City. Only the produce of an Israeli corporation – recently bought by a Chinese company – may be sold there. He drew attention to the interrelation between monetary aims and natural resources:

We've changed the way we use water. We've changed the way we grow food. We've changed our diets. We've changed the biblical roads. We have bypass roads around the biblical cities that Palestinians live in to introduce an economy that allows McDonalds and multi-national corporations to take over. We're not healthy for this place. We're not caring for it. We're ruining it. We're destroying it in the name of greed and fear. (R12 2015:77)

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<sup>113</sup> Several respondents (R2 2015:109-110; R5 2015:40-42; R10 2015:19; R11 2015:94-96; R12 2015:9; R13 2015:65; R17 2015:152) spoke about current, past or desired advocacy to promote responsible, just, ethical engagement between humans, animals and the environment.

#### 4.2.5 *Not nationalism, but an inclusive consciousness*

The greater focus was on *multifaceted impressions of patriarchal socio-political hegemony, policies of supremacy, imperialism, neo-liberalism and the unlawful acquisition of resources* combined with dominance through physical and other forms of violence by the world's "fourth biggest military power" (R1 2015:42), all to satisfy greed, a desire for power and other forms of self-interest. These impressions were part of what R1 (2015:73-74) called a "matrix", or a web of interconnected agendas that allow and foster state violence and oppression in respect of the Palestinians, but also in other contexts "driven by a 'dog-eat-dog world'" where people want more and more (R1 2015:66). Thus, in this sense, too, the respondents' involvement in the Palestinian project occurs in *the context of a much bigger project*. It is "part of a larger struggle...to make this world a better place" (R4 2015:47). It is much bigger than just "a Palestinian versus Israel, or versus Jew thing...but it also is that in an immediate sense" (R7 2015:160).

None of the participants support a primary focus of nationalistic aims. An appropriate political structural improvement is not irrelevant to them, but *the notion of nationalism is not their point of departure* (R11 2015:9; R15 2015:101; R16 2015:8,22; R18 2015:96-98). In fact, the case study findings contain no indication of an agenda primarily steered by nationalism. In reference to Israel R14 (2015:13), for example, is suspicious of "talking in the name of the nation and for the sake of the nation", as any agenda that is primarily argued from the perspective of what is good for the nation can mislead people and eventually cause more harm (R14 2015:79). South Africans such as R1 (2015:12), R3 (2015:33), R8 (2015:143) and R10 (2015:13-15) also linked their citizenship and their local experiences with a special responsibility towards the Palestinians, but they, too, steered clear of nationalistic ideals.

Although the dominant implied sentiment among participants was in favour of an inclusive one state solution, the respondents generally *did not focus on the nature of a future political structure* per se as the reason for their activism. R1 (2015:26) was inspired by national liberation struggles early in his activism, but now frames the Palestinian matter as part of a larger ethical project. Thus, he does not yearn for "a pure state in any form" and he sees the political solution as part of an ongoing discussion (R1 2015:67). Other South Africans (R3 2015:56; R4 2015:94-96; R5 2015:219) agreed that it is not their task to determine the details of a political structure for a future Palestine. However, that does not mean that they have no

personal preferences. R4, for example, stated that it is practically and morally wrong to divide people, as South African apartheid proved: “It’s such a fake and such an artificial thing to try” (R4 2015:73), for it is “natural and normal” (R4 2015:72) for people to live side by side as fellow citizens with equal rights. Several others also expressed their preference for an inclusive one-state solution with equal rights for all (R6 2015:37; R7 2015:160; R10 2015:96; R20 2015:51; R21 2015:15). In this respect, R17 and R13 mentioned the relevance of the Right of Return and/or for Palestinians (including the internally displaced, refugees and those in the diaspora) to be awarded reparations for their lost property and for the hardships. “I don’t care if it’s one state or two states, even though personally I don’t think race-based separation makes any sense at all,” R12 (2015:48) said. He warned that Israel is actually preparing for a one-state solution in which the economic and the state power will be Zionist-dominated: “The world will celebrate the end of the occupation, but in truth Palestinians will not have regained the land, will not have control over the education curriculums, will not even be able to choose their own flag” (R12 2015:64).

None of the respondents spent much time talking about structural, political solutions. In short, the matter of a political solution is not seen as insignificant or irrelevant, but nationalism and the exact political structure is not perceived as one of the core driving forces in the case study. When the respondents referred to their national and cultural identities, it was to stress their responsibility to change mind-sets and attitudes to ensure full access to human rights for all. Jewish Israelis also expressed their desire for safe, happy lives for themselves and their families.

Respondents’ deeper concerns were with *the fundamental positions, or the underlying dynamics and the consciousness* that either enabled the exclusion and the oppression of the Palestinians and others, or enabled inclusive human flourishing. Herein respondents perceived their nationality as placing a special responsibility on their shoulders. R9 (2015:108) talked of the kind of compassion that facilitates non-reactive compassion: “A person who reaches a particular stage of consciousness is just a much better person to have in your environment and in the world than any other sort of person” (R9 2015:110). R12 phrased his understanding of the relation between his civil task, the immediacy of the Palestinian project and its connection with other struggles in terms of the Gaia concept:

It’s a consciousness shift, understanding that I belong to the world. I don’t belong to a state. I don’t have a flag. And we’re understanding that all over the world together – the Gaia concept – local to global. We’re not just theoretically discussing it on an academic

level, we understand it, we feel it. What's happening in Nepal has everything to do with what's happening in Palestine. But we also understand it on practical levels. We have to pay attention to the fact also – back to the political, but it's not political – it's the Israeli occupation forces training the police forces in Baltimore. If you're a young Black man in Baltimore today, you're going to be treated the same way that a young Palestinian man will be treated in Hebron, because they're the same. Because they use the same rubber bullets and the same tear gas and they're trained together. It's not just on spiritual levels. It's very practical. The neo-liberal economic policies that young couples are dealing with all over the world, whether it's Tel Aviv, or Ramallah, or Melbourne and Madrid, they're very similar and the protests are very similar as well. (R12 2015:106-107)

Knowing what to focus on is about linking one's consciousness with one's community participation, according to R12: “By empowering our local communities we're empowering the global resistance, the global shift” (R12 2015:152). R17 (2015:144) added that “our lives are like small particles or very important, so very small events can have a really big impact”. Both R17 and R12 expressed reasons informed by the notion of a dynamic reciprocal relation between the local and the global, and between the personal, the collective and different contexts:

The whole idea is human rights at large and because I was born in this nation, in this time, that this is what I'm supposed to do. But like every place it has their own issues and their own wrongs and bad things are happening. I do believe actually that it's so important for people to take care of your own area. There are so many bad things happening also in Europe with the Eritreans and the Sudanese and you know, with the immigrants and asylum seekers. And I think that if I would live there, if I would live in a different place, I would hope to believe that I would take part in a different discourse or civil rights movement to fight it. (R17 2015:152)

According to R12, people with such consciousness link the practicalities of local community participation to their responsibilities in a global shift:

I: What you are saying is that literally every act, every thought, everything that every person does, counts. Is it the kind of responsibility that you accept?

R12: I'm hoping that that's what's happening, ja. That's what I feel is taking place around us. When it comes to that moment, is it a *Pachamama* moment? That's the way the *Pachamama* moment is happening. Someone can write a PhD about it, but never actually put a finger on the shift that's happening. But witnessing the beginning with the Arab Revolutions in the Arab countries, to occupy Wall Street and a shift in consciousness therein with people saying, oh, this is about me. (R12 2015:109-110)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> The word *Pachamama* is used in the spirituality of the indigenous people of the Andes to refer to the Earth Mother.

#### 4.2.6 *Intersectionality between the local and the global through urban planning*

R12 advocates *for putting Jerusalem back onto on the global map*. He was the only one in the case study who specified this agenda<sup>115</sup> and he explained it as both urgent and important. Israel is still the only state to recognise Jerusalem as its capital and the embassies to Israel are still in Tel Aviv, but it is changing and the change is supported by Western political leaders:

Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird came to visit Tzipi Livni in the Sheikh Jarrah office, ... that was an enormous acknowledgement of Israeli sovereignty in occupied Jerusalem. A few months later Julie Bishop, the Foreign Minister in Australia, said it's time to stop using the term 'occupied' when we say 'occupied' in East Jerusalem, it's time we just say East Jerusalem. That status quo around the world is shifting. Hillary Clinton as Foreign Minister in the US three years ago said the road to peace is paved between Ramallah and Jerusalem, referring to Ramallah as the Palestinian capital and Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. That's an enormous international moment. That's the break of an enormous historic status quo and we all let that slide. (R12 2015:143)

Statements such as the above by political figures contribute to Israel's expropriation of occupied East Jerusalem, in R12's opinion. There is rapid ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Their houses are taken and occupied by Jewish Israeli settlers and their shops and industries are closed down. The younger Palestinian generation cannot make a living and the older generation will no longer be there in 20 years. It means that Al Quds, or Palestinian Jerusalem, is about to disappear.<sup>116</sup> In addition to the socio-political issues, R12 mentioned ecological and moral problems: "We're causing the deterioration of the world around us. The Jerusalem that we conquered and we occupied, we didn't inherit it, we stole Jerusalem from the stewards of the city and we have completely transformed it in ways we have not yet come to terms with" (R12 2015:76). Jerusalem has the potential to make people happy, he added, but people – also Israelis – in the city "are miserable. They're unhappy people...Not that we don't have beautiful music and not that there isn't a beautiful heritage, but overall living in Jerusalem is an unhappy experience". It does not have to be this way, he passionately declared, there is another way.

R12 saw the Gaia consciousness that transcends national boundaries, or the interconnectedness between the local and the global, as playing out in different ways. It ranges from the intercontinental transfer of military skills and equipment to the manner in which one uses resources and engages with the environment, local and global politics. It is

<sup>115</sup> R16 also stated that she loved the city and wanted it to look different, but her activism and the work of others who advocate in the city focuses more on human rights and education and not on urban planning or the city *per se*.

<sup>116</sup> 'Al-Quds' is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem.

about realising that politicians at the level of the UN and other global organisations are not going to resolve the problems:

They're going to be resolved here on a local level. I decide what's sold in my supermarket. I decide how I spend my water and my local resources and that by empowering our local communities we're empowering the global resistance, the global shift. (R12 2015:108)

To focus on the role of Jerusalem as an economic capital and also to present it as an example of how the issues in the Palestinian project can be dealt with has strategic value, R12 argues. Through proper urban planning, it can become a model or an example for co-habitation in other metropolises, and therefore it has the potential to be an important leverage point in the Palestinian project. To R12 his role in Jerusalem is to put Jerusalem back on the global map, because of the enormous potential of what Jerusalem can offer in the context of the Palestinian project (R12 2015:75):

So for me I focus on Jerusalem, both because symbolically it has both Israel and Palestine within it and if we figure out a practical solution in Jerusalem for a freedom of movement, access to healthcare, better education and higher education, then if it's figured out in the larger metropolis, then we will be able to figure it out in the other metropolises as well. This one is the most challenging nut to crack. In any kind of political negotiation or discussion over the years Jerusalem has always been left to the end of the discussion. And I say, no, I don't want to talk about anything else! I want to talk about Jerusalem first, about the refugees that deserve to come home to Jerusalem and about jobs in Jerusalem and about how we use water and what food we eat and the right to vote. (R12 2015:32-33)

R12's approach to the particular practicalities of Jerusalem (alongside his awareness of the global consciousness and the need for a shift to a healthy interdependence that fosters inclusivity and pluralism) underlines other respondents' emphasis on the interplay between the self, the Palestinians and a bigger context. It also affirms the need to contextualise advocacy as such. Embracing more worlds enriches and expands his life (R2 2015:124-127), for "that many more times I am a human being. And so the quest for inclusivity is the quest of self-enrichment. It is a quest to experience life to the fullest that I possibly can". Jewish Israeli respondents' work serves their dream for a better country – a society that is safe, happy and comfortable (R13 2015:63,104-106; R19 2015:50; R12 2015:75) where "one day all these friends whom I lost will be back", once they realise that R19 and other activists "were right all along" and that all can live together (R19 2015:118).

#### 4.2.7 Sub-conclusion

*Chapter 4 starts with the respondents' impressions of the importance of living with consistency and integrity. To be consistent in one's approach to life is central. However, the respondents perceived links not only between themselves and their peers, their societies and the reality of the Palestinian project. The Palestinian project, they argued, also brings into focus the alarming, self-destructive ethos of the Jewish Israeli society, as well as other global struggles of "othering".*

*Activism, as described by the respondents in this case study, does not target an isolated project locked into space and time as the only one worthy to be involved in. The respondents perceived themselves as operating in a multi-faceted project consisting of a combination of issues overlapping with many others. They located themselves and their work in the localised space and time of state violence against the Palestinians, but they noted the intersectionality between this systemic violence and in many other issues in the world. Their attention and their inspiration comprise a much broader awareness of a variety of struggles to resist oppression and marginalisation. To them, the particularities of the Palestinian oppression are embedded in regional (particularly Israeli) and global issues of militarism, imperialism, patriarchy and neo-liberalism.*

*Their concern for the Palestinian project, for problems in their own local South African and Israeli contexts and for other issues, are all part of the same matrix of problems. The Palestinian project does not duplicate these other causes, but it mirrors and crystalizes them, or it brings them into sharper focus. Thus, these activists saw the Palestinian project as a very important site of reflection for global issues in their perceptions of a broad moral case against othering.*

*Moreover, there is a constant fluctuation between the particular and the general, or the relevance of the immediate in the shape of the self and one's own society, and the relevance of an extended identity that can be associated with the Palestinian project, other struggles and a global consciousness. The respondents were cognisant of the plight of all Palestinians – those in the occupied territories, those living in Israel, those in exile who are forbidden to return and those in the diaspora. The case of South Africa is a pertinent and an often raised context that the respondents deemed relevant to the Palestinian project. The links between militarism and economic hegemony in Israel's oppression of the Palestinians is a source of*

*big concern to them. The example of urban planning in Jerusalem illustrates an advocacy focus on urban planning for one city that may have greater applicability to the wider Palestinian project.*

*These activists' commitments were informed by political, ideological, ethical and religious aspects as well as notions of interrelatedness between the local and the global and – to a very limited extent – an ecological awareness, but not by nationalist ideals and/or by religious exclusivism. There is respect for differences between religious traditions and an appreciation for pluralistic co-operation. In fact, the case study respondents utterly reject the claim that the Palestinian project is a religious clash, and instead highlight the detrimental roles of Zionism and Israel's militarist ethos of domination and power abuse under the guise of "protection" that co-exists within a self-destructive ethos.*

*The respondents' desire for solid personal integrity and their understanding of the Palestinian project as part of a broad moral case against othering were two closely knit motivations for their activism. Both reasons were underscored by an appreciation for the needs and the reality of others outside their own societies. Both have to do with inclusive, moral consistency. Next, Chapter 5 takes a closer look at the most prominent values expressed by the respondents in the case study.*

## 5 THREE INTERRELATED VALUE SETS

In Chapter 4, I have presented findings regarding the respondents' core desire for inclusive moral integrity, and their perspectives on the Palestinian project within a broader moral case. Following on from this, Chapter 5 focuses on the core values the respondents deem essential to their activism. All these values – shared by all – underscore their desire for a more humane way forward:

I want equality, I want freedom, I want peace, I want justice, but then the bottom line, I want to – I want to be living a nice and comfortable life, to be safe and to be happy and now for me to be feeling safe and happy and relaxed it means that I have to be part of quite a crazy struggle. (R19 2015:81)

The above comment illustrates how intertwined and interdependent the respondents' impressions of values and their desire for a better life are – so much so that they find it very difficult to discuss one value without mentioning the others. Compassion and altruistic love, for example, have an impact on their understandings of justice and equality. Likewise, impressions of honesty and the degree of truth influence the practice of altruistic love and justice. In the end, it is also about experiencing relief in one's own life if the marginalised other (the Palestinians) have dignified lives too.

The values discussed in Chapter 5 are compassion and altruistic love, justice and equality as well as honesty and truth. All these values – presented here in three sets – are perceived as overlapping concentric circles around the axis of a shared humanity where all human lives have equal value, making discrimination unacceptable. The discussion shows that the respondents try to practise what they preach, since they strive for moral consistency in their multidirectional, multilevel relations with the self and the other – be they fellow activists, target audiences, the Palestinians, opponents, the ultimately real, and so forth. Thus, the respondents aspire to, and value expanded altruistic selves (not narrow, selfish interests) in a plural experience of the world in which their opponents' humanity is also recognised and valued. On the one hand, such positions embody their desire for consistency and integrity in relations with all stakeholders in the Palestinian project. On the other hand, it underlines their understanding of the Palestinian project as a site of struggle in a broader moral case against othering.

Other values were mentioned in the data corpus, but to a more limited extent. They were mutual respect (R7 2015:149; R16 2015:52) and freedom (R3 2015:42; R19 2015:81; R21

2015:60). Both these values were contextualised as part of “equality” and “justice” as expressed by, for example, R3 (R 2015:36): “[S]o it is justice, fairness, equality, you know, all of those things that form part of that broad umbrella of what is justice”.

Since the respondents see these values as inherently and dynamically connected, the chapter should be read as a whole to gain a fuller understanding of multiple dimensions of each value.

## 5.1 Altruistic love and compassion

R9 (2015:32-35) spoke about Frantz Fanon’s understanding of humanism in a similar way as R1 (2015:16). R9 expressed a deep conviction that not only White lives but every single life matters – whether it is the life of a gay, lesbian, transgendered, Black, or any other person that she differs from, even the lives of those whose actions she despises. She ascribed her consciousness and her desire to embrace humanism fully to her meditation and the teachings of the Buddha (R9 2015:43-50). I return to R9’s views on humanism later in the chapter, but for now I want to highlight the simple clarity of her perception:

- I: You seem to have a very clear sense that it is about a much, much bigger issue, bigger than the planet even. Do I understand you correctly?
- R9: Yes, exactly, ja. No, it’s more like an issue of what is the correct – what is the moral way of being in the world until you transcend the world, but while you’re in the world, in the physical material world, what is the ethical posture that you – what is a good way to be? What is a good person? (R9 2015:51-52)

The answer to her question – “What is a good person?” – is part of what is presented in this chapter. R2 and R6 qualified the notion of the “good person” as “being a *Mensch*”. What makes us ethical or moral beings is

...that we have a choice to take decisions against ourselves. And so this idea of rising up for the other, this is a barometer of whether you are human in the non-anthropological, non-biological sense. If you are a *Mensch*, if you are a *Mensch*. (R2 2015:15)

R2’s aforementioned comment builds on R9’s response in the sense that being a good person, or a moral being, means having an all-inclusive conscience and concern for the other. In a similar manner, R3 (2015:74) used the example of offering one’s own body as a bridge so that even those whom one dislikes, or who have done nothing to deserve a chance, can also cross the divide and be saved from tumbling down into the abyss. Defending one’s own rights is not proof of being committed to human rights; one proves this when defending the rights of others (R2 2015:21).

But just how easy is it for the respondents to act with the kind of humanity they associate with “being good”? R6 recalled how her parents taught her what it means to be “a *Mensch* – a human being” (R6 2015:116). Later, when attending an orthodox Jewish school, she realised “that all the stuff that I learnt about being a *Mensch* had grounds of practice in Jewish ethics”. However, what she learned at home and at school never taught her to be a *Mensch* in respect of the Palestinians too. R6’s story of growing up with sound morals, yet remaining selective in applying them when it came to the Palestinians, was one of several in the case study. For R6, the stories of three countries tied to her family history – South Africa, Israel and Germany – show “how difficult it is to be a *Mensch*. Why it’s easier to swim with the stream, why it’s easier to not step out and liberate ourselves” (R6 2015:83). Although the reasons for acting inhumanely are not part of the focus of this research, it is nevertheless relevant to note that however difficult it is to be a *Mensch*, it is *a challenge the respondents do not want to avoid*. To remain sensitised not only to the cause, but to the lives of each single person is an ongoing call:

It’s something I actually ask myself now, am I becoming desensitised? Like yesterday, somebody was killed at one of those non-violent protests, right. So it was a person that died, but because I see it every few days, it doesn’t affect me sometimes in the way that it should, that a person died, like a human being died. I think part of the reason why I want to make sure that there is this human perspective, is that people must remain sensitised. (R5 2015:22)

When exploring the dimensions of being a *Mensch*, Section 5.1 shares impressions on compassion for the suffering of the oppressed, but also for the oppressive other and for fellow activists. Thus, it explores their sense of altruism in respect of the suffering of the Palestinians, but also in respect of situations and people who respond with hate, anger, violence and oppressive deeds.

### ***5.1.1 In the face of pain and suffering***

In cultivating inner space for the other, “the ego is very invested in wanting to push everything away” (R6 2015:94) and so it requires effort to create such space for others within oneself:

- I: What gives you that ability, because clearly not everyone has it? Is it a conscious choice? Is it something that you sense? Is it something that’s just there?
- R6: I don’t know. I think there must be something there, but it’s also something that’s being chosen and cultivated. It must be – I can’t believe that it’s only something for people who suddenly find that they can access that and everyone else can’t. There has to be, I think that ethical and emotional kind of behaviours can be learned and taught and shared. It has to be. I mean that has to be. (R6 2015:95-96)

R19 (2015:17-19), R7 (2015:16) and many others explained that the narrowing of the gap between oneself and the other, the expansion of one's identity and committing to activism have to do with *deep emotional processes* and not with rational ones.

R10 (2015:45), for example, felt re-traumatised and experienced an “indescribable terror”, because of the resemblance of Israeli checkpoints to road blocks under South African apartheid. It was this personal identification with the Palestinians' suffering that triggered his activism. R20's words were filled with heartache. In her young life, she has already seen what humiliation, fear and violence look like and “ja, I feel it, I feel it very much, ja. Ja, I feel it very strongly” (R20 2015:98). “It's just so clearly wrong to see this pain. I hate to see it. It makes me sad ... I just feel like the pain has to be – it has to be alleviated, it has to go away” (R20 2015:95). The bottom line is to end the suffering, since it is quite evident that power abuse is at the root of the suffering and it is also quite clear how the situation could be changed to improve human beings' lives, as R21 (2015:138-143) explained.

R2 willingly claimed ownership of the painful experiences of the Palestinians to the extent that their hurt becomes part of his own humanity: “I refuse to let it die. I am a human being only to the extent that I refuse to let the pain of other people that I've earned ... die” (R2 2015:37). All that he has seen, also elsewhere, lives with him, he says: “I'm not a Palestinian wannabe ... I don't have a fascination for Palestinians.... And so they're not me, but a part of me, a part of them has become a part of mine, without any kind of romanticism” (R2 2015:35). There is something in R2 that simply does not allow him to “keep [his] mouth shut” when others are hurt (R2 2015:41-42).

R7 explained that identifying with the pain of the Palestinians does not necessarily presuppose one's physical presence where and when it happens. He has never been to the occupied Palestinian territory, but he too clearly recognises and identifies with the suffering, because there is enough information readily available on the internet and elsewhere. A large part of his motivation is “the terrible destruction on Gaza, the killing of civilians, of children, phosphorus bombs, rockets going through buildings”, as reported in the 2008 Goldstone Report, seeing videos of people's houses being destroyed and “children going hysterical”, learning from Israeli soldiers how they go into houses in the occupied West Bank to terrorise people randomly, and accounts of checkpoints with long rows of people who are humiliated:

I have a flashback to people in the Warsaw ghetto, so you could say it's all about Jews again, but it's not really; it's just, how do I connect with it? But that's a very strong emotion in these moments. (R7 2015:155)

There is indeed a deep sympathy in the case study for the suffering of Jews and the mark it leaves on human history (R1 2015:51,76; R2 2015:156,169,194-198,208; R3 2015:58,67; R5 2015:37; R8 2015:40,85). There is also a recognition that the injuries inflicted by the Holocaust have not healed. According to R20, Israeli Jews have never transcended their “mentality of helplessness”. Jewish suffering is not only part of their historical narrative (R20 2015:60), but also “very much our family narrative” since all “know survivors intimately”. Their experience of the Shoah

...has really formed how we see the world and how we see ourselves and so most of us live in some sort of sense of perpetual fear. Also, it has a lot to do with imagination. Our imagination is limited, because we can only imagine ourselves against the segregation. And that is not unique to Israelis. Most people in the world still today can only imagine themselves living in some sort of segregation from other human beings that they view as dangerous or different ... we just can't – we lack the imagination; we think that ... if we end the occupation and we kind of disintegrate the Jewish state, most of us think that's the end of life as we know it, that people will die. Jews will be drowned in the sea or something, as opposed to an understanding that social relations will change, social capital and maybe other capital will be redistributed, but survival, life will continue. It will just be under a very different regime of power. (R20 2015:60-62)

All the respondents who referred to it agreed that the pain of *the Shoah (Holocaust)* does not justify Israel's infliction of pain and its dehumanisation of the Palestinians. R20 and several others are deeply concerned about the risks of claiming victimhood, vulnerability, heroism and brave moral behaviour to justify Israel's repression of the Palestinians (R5 2015:35-36; R14 2015:61; R15 2015: R21 2015:155). However, they perceive the memory of the Shoah to be unjustly manipulated and abused to position Jewish suffering as superior to the suffering of others:

I've told you about what I learned from the Holocaust. Not that we are the best and everything, but that it was horrible, cruel, unjust and that as we were selected and tortured and exterminated, we learned that we can't do it to somebody else. (R15 2015:55)

R9 went so far as to say that many Jews are “self-indulgent about the Holocaust”. It will always be a blemish on human history, like slavery and colonialism, but many nurture the memory in a way that shields them from their moral responsibilities:

If anybody says anything, you just pull out the issue of the Holocaust. I mean it is a card now, that people play the Holocaust card, for sure, which is terrible, because you should be able to invoke the Holocaust when it actually matters. (R9 2015:64)

R9's intention is not to compare the systemic transgressions of Israel and Nazi Germany. In her view the point is not to argue whether one is worse or better than the other, since they are not the same. The reason for bringing that history into the equation is that one cannot suffer that way "and then think that it's okay to make other people suffer that way. It's like being abused. It's like becoming a paedophile, because you were the victim of a paedophile" (R9 2015:63). R21 spoke of a collective Jewish psychology that is unwilling to confront their involvement in inflicting ongoing pain on the Palestinians. From her own perspective, she said, she cannot heal herself and move forward without confronting the painful past, including the events of 1948, and "acknowledging it as part of your humanness ... there is something really broken" in Jewish society (R21 2015:46). Israeli and Jewish Zionists have dehumanised themselves deeply, and from this low point they justify anything without considering "what the consequences are on a human level. So my concern is around that and my hope is that perhaps something can change that people might acknowledge their actions and the human impact thereof more" (R21 2015:153). Or, as R14 (2015:61) said in respect of fellow Jews' hateful behaviour in Jerusalem, "they behaved so ugly and so violently towards Palestinians around them and ... so inhumane ... that we put ourselves in danger". Thus, when R2, who is Muslim, weeps at the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem (Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust), he does so for several reasons. First, he weeps

... for the inexhaustible capacity of human beings to inflict injury on other human beings, all of us, all of us. This isn't the Germans. It wasn't the Nazis. It was human beings under a certain set of circumstances. I and you possibly do the same thing. So I just weep at that. (R2 2015:198)

In a similar manner, R1 (2015:76) argues that people are not monsters; they are human beings who carry out monstrous acts. R2 also weeps for those who constructed the museum but did not give any thought for the five million other people, besides Jews, who were also killed by the Nazis. There is no sign pointing to those who were sexually different or the Romani, or of all the others that were also killed, such as differently abled people, communists, trade unionists, Jehovah's Witnesses, anarchists, Slavic peoples and resistance fighters. No, said R2, the museum focuses exclusively on the six million Jews who were murdered. He described how the ideological and architectural display of the museum is channelled into an Israeli ideal to leave visitors with a carefully constructed, but skewed impression, hiding how the Palestinians have paid, and continue to pay, the price of Europe's persecution of the Jews (R1 2015:51; R7 2015:123):

The third thing that I cry for is how this genuine suffering, genuine suffering, deep suffering, trauma of the Jews, how it is channelled as you are being channelled in this

museum, channelled to reach a forced outcome. The ideological political modern state of Israel is the only answer to all the suffering that you have endured. So they channelize you and your feelings and your feelings about Nazis and suffering, they channelize it into an ideal. The answer to the suffering of the Jews isn't the rights of all of humankind, you know – universal rights, universal respect, the world never again for anybody. It's 'never again to us Jews'. So it's a politicisation – the manipulation of the Holocaust. And finally, this museum from beginning to end, nearly a kilometre long...is built on ethnically cleansed Palestinian land! (R2 2015:201-202)

The point of bringing the matter of Jewish suffering into the discussion is to illustrate the respondents' compassion for both Jewish and Palestinian victims of repression and their position that Jewish pain can never justify the hurt inflicted on the Palestinians. To do so amounts to not being a *Mensch* – it shows no consistency in values and it lacks integrity. Hence, the Jewish Israeli respondents were adamant that they cannot be silent when they are implicated in injustices committed in the name of their Jewishness. Their message and their constant refrain is “not in my name” (R9 2015:20; R11 2015:9; R15 2015:101; R16 2015:22; R18 2015:98).

Anti-Semitism is never morally tenable (R1 2015:76; R2 2015:182-184; R5 2015:135; R8 2015:40,73,93; R9 2015:95); likewise, the pain inflicted on the Palestinians cannot be tolerated. It is precisely the suffering of an entire people that urges many to speak out (R2 2015:198-202, R5 2015:61, R6 2015:58-60, R7 2015:16; R14 2015:20, R18 2015:91): “I can't keep silent for various reasons, but one is that people are suffering really” (R21 2015:102). To be Jewish and to have grown up in “the shadow of the Holocaust” and to have been “victims of a terrible crime and oppression, genocide” means that one “should learn from that and be opposed to any form of oppression to anybody else” (R7 2015:16). R11 confirmed the same sentiment; for him, his Jewish history is the main reason for his activism:

We as Jewish people suffered so much, because we were the weak side in the game and because the world allowed this crime to happen ... we as Jewish people with Jewish ethical values ... were made an example of suffering on the earth. We cannot allow that subsequently this happens to others and we cannot allow that we as a country, as a sovereign country, do it to others. This is the Judaism from where I grew up. This is the message that I get from my family. (R11 2015:9)

We are here, on this planet, to love one another, it is what we are about, R8 (2015:114,129) argued with reference to the example of Jesus. He recalled how the late Stéphane Hessel, a Holocaust concentration camp survivor, quoted from Shakespeare on what love is when he presented the case of the Palestinian project at the Russell Tribunal. R4 (2015:77-79, 87,180) had no doubt that the first thing that informs his activism is an underlying “love for the other

person's humanity". This altruism and compassion for another's humanity need to be there, he said, whether in the context of xenophobia, racism, domestic abuse, or in the Palestinian context. It is about *having this love and not necessarily about some special affinity for the Palestinians* (R2 2015:35), or simply walking around with "wide open arms, willing to hug everyone to express this love" (R4 2015:79).

Although it may be difficult to explain exactly what this love is and where it comes from, the respondents do not doubt the profoundness and the depth of it:

It comes from a, I don't know, a desire, something, I don't know, a religious motivation. I see that I've been always quite successful in trying to get people to think and to see injustices. Once I kind of identified this strength in me, it pushed me to develop it further [...] I respond to my own capacity, let's say, I use my own capacity. But, of course, it's coming from an inner point that I wouldn't know exactly how to try to say it, I'm not sure ... to answer you. I will say maybe love to people is one inner source, or motivation. Yes, of course it's there, but maybe I don't know, it's difficult to address it or to explain it, I don't know. (R14 2015:96-97)

### **5.1.2 When facing anger, violence, the enemy and provocation**

*The respondents' compassion is marked by their rejection of activism motivated by hatred* (R8 2015:89; R9 2015:53-56). In their views, hatred can actually stoke up more negative emotions between opponents and deepen existing divides between them. It is "hard to be angry all the time", R17 (2015:105) noted. During the 2014 War on Gaza, when there were a lot of angry exchanges on Facebook between Israeli friends, R17 expected "more 'feminism'", which she described as "more understanding of complexity, more critical thinking" (R17 2015:110). But she noted angry comments that displayed yet another kind of violence. It does not help to remain silent, but creating more hate and more animosity also does not help (R17 2015:120). R6, R8, R9, R17 and R18 oppose activism through hatred, and consciously try to align their messages with their conduct, their tone and manner by not capitalising on hatred, but rather fostering a more inclusive, plural society:

I was putting something out and I had to stand by it. I couldn't put out hate. I couldn't put out something that I couldn't stand by completely. The choice in how we made the film was that I would rather be accused of not being political enough and radical enough, than putting out something that can be used to create hate. (R6 2015:123)

I know that part of my destiny or my calling here is to connect between people. So that means Palestinians and Israelis. ... we're religious and secular ... we're LGBT and straight, it means connecting and kind of making a more – I hate the word tolerant – so I guess it's making a more available world and an open world to live in. (R18 2015:62)

Since the study's selection criteria required commitment to non-violent resistance, to which all agreed, I did not introduce the possibility of violent resistance in the interviews. However, several respondents raised various options, ranging from principled non-violent positions to non-judgmental comments on armed resistance and even potential support for armed resistance. They made it clear that their preference for creative non-violent resistance is *not necessarily a blanket condemnation against violent resistance*, and it is also not a rejection of those Palestinians who do resist their military occupation through armed struggle.

Especially the South African respondents (R1, R6, R7, R8, R10), but not only they, raised the matter of armed struggle, usually with reference to the South African anti-apartheid struggle. R20 (2015:32), for example, brought the perspective of power asymmetry into the discussion when she remarked that however scared she is of being in a bus blown up by Palestinians, she cannot regard herself an underdog, given the imbalance in the power structures. Her remark, and also those of the other respondents, stressed the danger of over-simplified positions on armed resistance.

South African respondents R7 and R8 leaned towards principled rejection of violent resistance, but not in an absolute sense; R8 accepted that others may have different viewpoints; R7 mentioned the possibility of contemplating justified alternatives. R7 (2015:92) and R15 (2015:78) also briefly pointed out that Palestinians' use of rockets that injure Israeli civilians is indeed a war crime. R7 (2015:151) argued that in discerning between violent and non-violent strategies the "real question is, 'Do these means justify that particular end?'" He wrestled with the concept of "truth" in relation to one's own "comfort zone" (R7 2015:28), in trying to decide what he would have done if he were a trapped Palestinian. Since he was not in that position, and since he sees things as he does now, R7 accepted principled non-violence both as a strategy in the Palestinian project, and as a value:

If you actually want to change it, then you must have quite a deep discussion about the principle. So it puts me into a very ambiguous – ambiguous is actually too mild a word – it puts me into a torturous relationship with rocket fire into civilian areas, understanding the context all the time. (R7 2015:153)

R8's preference for non-violent resistance was informed by his Christian beliefs and the argument that violence is "destructive of everything" (R8 2015:162). Yet, in the South African struggle, he did not denounce his "fellow activists who decided to become members

of MK” (R8 2015:114), although when he was asked to join the armed resistance, he refused. Similarly, R8 does not judge those Palestinians who see no other option.<sup>117</sup>

R1 took a pragmatic stand and explained that his former preference for violent resistance in the South African and Palestinian struggles was not “an attraction to violence for violence’s sake” (R1 2015:34). Nor was it in any way “‘fetishizing’ violence” (R1 2015:34). When he was still in high school, he saw it as a response to intense suffering, as part of the overarching empathy and as a “sacrifice” over personal, material needs (R1 205:34) after attempts to “peacefully bring about change failed”. His peers in the South African anti-apartheid struggle were gunned down, imprisoned, tortured and banned (R1 2015:32). During those days, Leila Khaled, a Black Arab Muslim woman “with all the stereotypes that existed”, who took up a gun to fight her oppressors, inspired him (R1 2015:35). His gravitation towards violent resistance during the South African struggle was a means to an end and a way of “fighting back, of taking control, of agency”, as explained in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skins White Masks, the Wretched of the Earth*” (R1 2015:40). Now, decades later, R1 does not take a principled position against Palestinian armed resistance, because of this background and his deep empathy for their position:

I am certainly for a non-violent struggle, because I think it might be the most effective in this context through the BDS Campaign, but I would find it very problematic to make the issue of Palestinian armed struggle as a point where I stop supporting Palestinians, even those who for better or worse feel that the armed struggle does have a role to play. I think it would be hypocritical to rail against the Palestinians, for doing that particularly where quite often they don’t see any way out. [...] I have no doubt that when the Boycott Movement starts playing a role against apartheid Israel as it did in our country in the 80s, they will have a complete rethink of the role of the armed struggle, but up until that point, whether it’s strategic or wise or not, we can have our opinions, I think it would be unfair ... to make demands of the Palestinian Movement. (R1 2015:43-45)

R1 made a plea for understanding violent resistance from the perspective of someone who feels so disempowered and deprived of options when facing overwhelming discrimination on every level of being human, and so dedicated to a cause which seems bigger than one’s own desire for life, that violent resistance becomes a viable alternative. It is precisely this willingness to sacrifice not only one’s life, but also offering one’s “moral clean space” (R6 2015:27) for the sake of something bigger than oneself that R6 came to understand in her work with veterans from South Africa’s armed struggle:

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<sup>117</sup> MK is an acronym for uMkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of South Africa’s then banned African National Congress. It was co-founded by Nelson Mandela in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre.

They chose armed struggle, not because they're herocised and romanticised armed revolution. They were very clear about that. They felt that no-one acknowledged that when they chose armed struggle they crossed a moral line that they didn't necessarily want to choose and that they knew their soul would pay a price for it and they felt that was entirely dishonoured and invisible. (R6 2015:25)

Together with these veterans, R6 went "through a very profound process...of trying to understand together what does life mean if the choice to kill yourself is a better option. What are the prospects of life?" (R6 2015:55). Through understanding her family's history in Germany under the Nazis and her own in South Africa she gradually grasped how these very same questions apply to the Palestinian armed resistance:

We could all have been anyone. So that was a huge moment for me – these little collections of insights, like 'Oh my God, so you are the people I feared'. And then translation into 'So does that mean Palestinians aren't all these kind of scary terrorists who want to kill me and my brethren?'. (R6 2015:31)

What if the only way left to create meaning for oneself in a devastating situation was if one's life "is connected to...the act of choosing to die? ... I don't think we've really honoured what that means, you know, in that moment in that time, after the mess of Oslo" (R6 2015:60). Her current stance on violence versus non-violence is "a ground that shifts all the time" (R6 2015:61):

R6: I don't exactly know what violence and non-violence are, you know in distinction to one another. I think that if states are armed, the fact that we live in a world where war is more profitable than peace in a way doesn't allow me to take a kind of unconditional position on that. I know where my heart is.

I: Where is it?

R6: It's so hard to make judgements. My heart is in a space that feels that violence has its own energy and its own logic ... it loses control of its energy and its life and its logic. And that it burns like a fire into the future. In a way the only hope I think we have of stopping – not one, where I have a way of stopping it is somehow interrupting it, stopping its course, is to refuse its logic. (R2 2015:62-64)

R10 was the only respondent who said he would support violent resistance without hesitation if the Palestinians were to ask for it. He argued that violence is sinful, but that it can be "just" (R10 2015:82). He would first try to warn Palestinians that "violence does not stand a chance against the super power" and that it will inflict further pain on them, but if they said that taking a violent stance could not hurt them more than their current situation, but would advance their cause, "then I would support them" (R10 2015:59-64). R10's plea was that violent and non-violent resistance should be seen as "complementary" and not as being in opposition to one another (R10 2015:69). At a later stage, he talked about the need to

...see beyond the immediacy of the desperation and to insist that this is not the final story. Another future is possible, not because one is optimistic, but because one has this thing called faith...So I think that people who are in the predicament that Palestinians are, or any other group that are oppressed against very heavy odds, the best gift we can give them, is this ability to know that another future is possible and that it is guaranteed by God. So that's why in my advocacy I'll pray that it will – I will leave people believing more in God helping their struggle than that they can in their own hands or strength do. (R10 2015:92)

But what happens *when the activists get provoked*, because of their involvement in the Palestinian project? Their responses varied. R7 mentioned the creative power of challenging fellow activists as his comments and ideas stir, agitate and get new ideas going. It is not “something to be scared of and to pull back from, but it should be done in a mindful and in a responsible manner” (R7 2015:134). It means, for example, consulting others and changing or refining one's ideas in a social process.

Some respondents said they are not easily provoked, because they have great self-control (R2 2015:154). In the end, it is about power, R2 argued, and one's own power is the reason for restraining one's temper or allowing one's temper to flare. He advocated against categories of power and powerlessness, because everyone is powerful “in relation to other weaker categories” (R2 2015:65-66). Such provocation can also traumatise, and some have had to step back to centre themselves before they could respond in honesty and without attacking the other person (R6 2015:112-115; R7 2015:74,90-93; R18 2015:56-58; R20 2015:101-102; R21 2015:82-92). Others felt very upset because of responses by people close to them from whom they expected more. Such incidents tire them and leave them with a sense of distaste (R9 2015:42; R21 2015:82-85):

I'm a human being, so I do get provoked. My preference is not to get provoked. My preference is that even when provocative or even hurtful things are said, that I just move along. I don't always succeed and sometimes I get more provoked than I like. But ja, I can't think of an example to give you, but I always regret it thereafter. (R3 2015:79)

Nevertheless, several (R8 2015:102-103; R12 2015:85-93; R17 2015:99,109; R19 2015:32,116; R20 2015:95) stressed their desire to maintain bonds with family and friends, despite radically different opinions on the Palestinian project. R9, for example, chose not to give up on the cause despite exchanges with family members in

... long, unbelievably, racist diatribes every time we spend time together, to the extent that I leave feeling dirty and exhausted. I can't understand those kinds of people. I can't understand – I don't understand – I don't understand that, but I feel like ... I will fight for a world in which they cannot do what they do – and I will not let any of that go. (R9 2015:42)

R9 still continues talking to the Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. These groups, she explained, tend to speak in the name of all Jews as if they had a single, united voice, and so there is something very powerful in saying,

Well, I am Jewish and you say that you're speaking for all of us, but actually I don't – I don't agree. All these other Jews don't agree, so actually you're a liar and you're abusing my name to another project that has nothing to do with me and that I'm not interested in supporting. (R9 2015:20)

Likewise, R21 does not disconnect from Jewish Zionist organisations for strategic reasons, since people can change. “So I do take a side, but I'm purposefully trying to not disconnect completely. I hold the position and I'm not scared” to stand by it and to converse about it (R21 2015:40).

At times, some opted not to be drawn into discussions where there was no mutual intention of an honest and sincere encounter, as R5 (2015:130-131) mentioned. Similarly, R13 commented:

I avoid it. There is no point, if I get provoked there is no point in me returning the confrontation ... I have an agenda that I really believe in and I'm not going to let anybody knock me off that path. So if I'm having a confrontation with somebody whom I won't be able to convince anyway, someone who is not looking to talk to me as an equal and say, okay, I'm willing to consider your point of view and I want you to consider mine. This is more about forcing their patriarchal ideals on me. And so I walk off. I don't get into confrontations. I've learned it's not worth the energy. (R13 2015:94-95)

For R18 thoughts on “violent and non-violent approaches to social change” are often part of her inner reflection. Her instincts guide her towards non-violence, but she is aware that violence “shakes up the system” (R18 2015:20). When she is in a violent situation, her approach is to sense the appropriate response by “always checking where I am in a situation and what I feel” and only responding with what feels good in her body (R18 2015:20). It helped her to remain “grounded” when a street art performance by Palestinians and Israelis combined with a peaceful demonstration was disrupted by the police, who threw smoke bombs and arrested three people. It was a situation, she says, where she could easily “freak out”, but

...I stayed put and I was fine. I was taking it away and I was storing it in a place where I would deal with it later, ...it was chaotic, but I was there. I was grounded and I was fine and it was working and when I saw people that were doing something that the energy wasn't good for, like yelling back at the police or getting angry, then I was there to try to help calm that. I think that's something that's definitely an effect of my spiritual work. (R18 2015:24-25)

Most are not motivated by the idea of public confrontation and clashes, but R2 and R4 indicated that they feel energized when they are able to capitalise on these situations and use them to advance their agenda. In hostile situations, for example, R2 (2015:154-159) over-dramatizes accusations of being anti-Semitic thrown at him by Zionists to demonstrate that the very opposite is actually true; “I’m sharpening it into a rhetorical weapon in some ways, because I’m also a public orator. I need to be effective” (R2 2015:190). R4 admitted to sometimes feeling energised in incidents of provocation, but he dislikes getting angry:

I must say it’s exciting sometimes to be provoked ... I like debates, because I don’t get angry. I actually tried in the last debate that I had to become angry, because I was told that I’m way too kind and I need to be more aggressive in debates. So in the last debate I deliberately had to be aggressive. I don’t feel good afterwards, you know.

Instead, R4 prefers to become “arrogant”, which in effect means that he sits “back and I listen to their crap and then I tell them very nicely why they told me crap” (R4 2015:122). In the end, he is in control of who he is:

No-one is going to shape that for me, definitely not when you’re antagonistic towards me. I’m going to remain in charge of the situation. I’m going to decide when I want to raise my voice. I’m going to decide when I’m going to be upset or angry. You’re not going to have that power over me. So I never want to be controlled by the other person. (R4 2015:191)

Thus, both R2 and R4 harness anger in interacting with hostile audiences as a tactical tool, and do not show anger as they have no other inner resources. In an incident after a public protest when the Israeli lobby brought their own security and then closed up a public road in Johannesburg, which meant that none of the BDS supporters could use the street, R4 decided not to back down: “I decided that I want to prove to them together with others, that they’re not going to stop me. And that they’re wrong”:

...five, six of us walked and shouted at them, ‘This is not your country, back off, you don’t control this.’ [...] People could perceive us actively provoking these big security guys. So I don’t mind fighting, I don’t mind putting myself out there sometimes. I do make calculated assessments. I don’t know whether I would have done it if I was only by myself, but I don’t mind making some people feel uncomfortable – the Dead Sea cosmetics person. I’m not into winning them over. I don’t mind provoking them to make them uneasy and hoping that uneasiness will assist them in realising they’re wrong. Just like I wouldn’t mind telling somebody that abuses their wife, that what you are doing is wrong and I won’t mind provoking this man. So it is a complicated question about when one is provoked. (R4 2015:128-131)

But, like R13 and others who do not want to force their opinions on, or control, others, R4 agreed that to be angry is not the point:

I can’t control you. I don’t want to control you. I have no interest in controlling you. I have no interest in having power of you or dominating you, but I want to be the captain of my ship. (R4 2015:193)

The more dominant view expressed in respect of violence and non-violence was phrased in terms of not wanting to get rid of “the enemy” (R1 2015:42, R3 2015:53; R8 2015:79,114), or *to seek vengeance in any way*. Neither the intention to retaliate, nor the word “retaliation” is present in the data corpus. Their response is not one of “an eye for eye”, but one of “love” for one’s opponent (R8 2015:79, 114). R8 mentioned the Israeli regime, and also fellow South Africans who differ from his views, such as the local Jewish Board of Deputies. They are not his enemy, he said, and he genuinely does not hate them: “I think they are probably misguided and I think it’s weird that human beings can – can...” (R8 2015:89); the words ultimately failed him in his desire to express his understanding of their justification of Israel’s policies and practices in respect of the Palestinians.

Several other respondents shared the sentiment of not rejecting their opponents: “My enemy is not less of a human being to me” (R9 2015:42). R9 and R17 (2015:109) do not want Zionist Jewish Israelis to be driven out or obliterated, but want them not to harm others and call on them to accept the possibility of redeeming themselves. From a Muslim perspective, R3 (2015:74-75) explained that if one can imagine God’s unfathomable compassion, love and mercy that also applies “to the ones who have done to us the greatest injustice, the ones who have hurt us in unimaginable ways ... if we can, then we can be compassionate” in respect of all.

R6 took the argument of having and not having an enemy further by suggesting that in principle no single human being can “ever, ever, ever” be her enemy if she refuses the logic of such opposition. Not “even the one who says I’m their enemy ... I mean to refuse the lion means that everyone can be my child or my parent – everyone, [even] the most vile torturer” (R6 2015:64; my insertion):

But that doesn’t mean I don’t struggle with trying to really live that. I mean it just plays out with all my hypocrisies and warts and all come out in those situations, but my heart knows that the only way to stop violence is to refuse its logic. My heart also knows that’s so much easier said than done. (R6 2015:65)

Compassion and appreciation for the humanity of the oppressed and the oppressor should be extended to those in one’s own inner circle: “That love that you share for the Palestinians, you have to share it here” (R4 2015:109). But R4 added that one needs to practise what one preaches and be open to receive the positive energy, the nourishment and love from fellow activists, friends, family and supporters. R21 gained strength and hope from the camaraderie and joint work, but qualified it as follows: “I wouldn’t necessarily say that I’m motivated by

it in of itself” (R21 2015:114). R4 (2015:111-112) found solace and support in “the lunches that you have, the suppers that you have, the late night talking to each other. I haven’t thought about this, but now that you’re talking about it, it’s vital in the long run, I guess”. He argued that without it “you can become a very pessimistic, isolated bitter person” and he believed that those who do not have this love, tended to give up on advocacy (R4 2015:112). R3 (2015:138) also drew attention to the interaction between showing and receiving mutual compassion: “I think too many activists get destroyed, because the other activists around them are not compassionate enough.” R3 (2015:128) explained that activists tend to think of one another too much as comrades, and not as brothers and sisters – they work and struggle together, but they do not get into one another’s houses. This is somehow divorced from the joint work, and it should not be like that. R3 called for openness, combined with compassion, between activists. To stress his point, he mentioned a practice from an earlier context where activists were able to critique one another in a safe space with the aim to improve their relations and the work:

So we’d usually end with a meal, you know, at the end of the second day – have supper and pray and then we leave. So ... after the prayer we’d sit together and it would be in the circle, it would be an open discussion and you can say whatever you like about the movement, or others in the movement and within the committee, or yourself, as critical as you like and no-one is allowed to defend themselves. So you know, I could sit there and just having prayed etcetera and say, you know, I think the way that Marthie deals with other people on the executive committee, but more than that, the way that she deals with people at lower levels of the organisation, is really bad. It’s bad for her, it’s bad for the movement and, for example, the thing that you said yesterday to this person. You just have to accept that, whether it’s right or wrong, you’re not allowed to defend yourself. And so everyone gets to speak. And that’s that kind of openness, I think. (R3 2015:126)

Thus, *support from fellow activists* was seen as result of activism, and not as a reason for activism, but nevertheless it is an element that *helps to sustain activism*. I have drawn attention to this as part of the discussion because it demonstrates the consistency in these activists’ application of values. Such compassion and altruistic love for all, according to R4 (2015:51), creates “a better, a more peaceful, a more loving world, a safer world, a world where you’re allowed to be, where you’re allowed to be a human, where you’re allowed to be a person”. It also allows for honesty and prompts one to stand up to the bullies and to call them out. However, he added that this kind of behaviour is part of one’s higher self and not something he always lived up to: “You don’t always walk into a meeting and say, oh yes, I must remember to be open to the love. This is something that you have to continuously have

to remind yourself’ (R4 2015:119). Or, as R9 put it, it requires inner discipline, but it is worth it, because

... the world is a shinier and nicer place. I mean it makes a difference – if you are a person who is kind of deeply capable of non-reactive compassion, life is more pleasant where you are, around you. And a person who has reached a certain stage of meditation, they can never steal from it. For example, if all the colonists ... were setting out to colonise and suddenly achieved full kind of Buddhist consciousness, it would have been impossible for them to do what they did, because it isn’t just structural. It is about your psychology and your spirituality. If you’ve reached a certain stage of consciousness, which I haven’t, you cannot steal from other people. You cannot hurt other people. You cannot dehumanise other people. (R9 2015:107-108)

### **5.1.3 Sub-conclusion**

*The respondents’ activism is not based on hatred, or the desire to wipe out the enemy. To express compassion and altruistic love in activism requires one to be a Mensch and hence to act in the interest of another because of a shared humanity, and not because of a special affinity to one group over another.*

*According to the respondents, it is not easy to face the pain of the Palestinians, but it is easier than turning away from it. They regard inflicting pain on the Palestinians because of one’s own history of abuse, such as in the Jewish Holocaust, as intolerable and as something that must stop. The ongoing abuse and violence hurt both the Palestinians and Israel.*

*Especially South African respondents shared varied responses in respect of violent versus non-violent strategies, but on the whole, the respondents in this case study lean towards non-violent resistance, and try to avoid or manage provocation in such a way that they do not become destructive. They felt they cannot condemn Palestinians who do resist the military occupation through armed struggle.*

*To infuse the space and the interaction between activists with the same kind of altruistic love and compassion they pledge for the other can enrich and nourish activism. However, the respondents saw such love as something that flowed out of their activism, and not as a reason for that activism. Still, it is a necessary element of their activism, because of their commitment to integrity and consistency in living their values. Moreover, altruistic love and compassion amongst colleagues or comrades was perceived to sustain activism.*

## 5.2 Equality and justice

The notion of “equality” was referred to almost 40 times in the data corpus and was qualified from several angles. “Justice” was mentioned just as often and was also qualified in several ways. What is broadly called “equality” and “justice” are here qualified as the idea that *all human lives have the same value*, and therefore discrimination is not acceptable. “Justice” is not understood as “requit”, but as “restoration”. In other words, “equality” and “justice” are not only understood in political and legal terms such as “democracy” or “human rights”, but also as reflections of what it means to be human, or rather, what it means to foster an inclusive, flourishing humanity.

The respondents in this case study shared their impressions of justice and equality, and their desire for mutuality between justice and equality in several contexts. Justice affects equality, and vice versa. There were arguments for institutionalised equality and justice in law and in civil-religious-economic-political rights and opportunities. There were also arguments for internalised, personal positions that foster and express equality and justice as a basic framework for life that needs to be embodied in one’s personal attitude and in one’s interactions. The discussion below starts with these views.

### 5.2.1 Equality as a basic life contract

The respondents consider equality a *foundation from where to approach life*. In fact, some thought this value is so obvious that they did not believe it warrants further explanation. R16, for example, explained that her sense of equality was the basis for her activism. She is willing to discuss what is true and what is not with those who differ from her, but within a framework of equality, she remarked:

I’ll admit that anything outside of that framework is very hard for me to really listen to, to really interact with and I don’t think that’s going to affect me or change my mind. But, first of all, within that framework is a lot of space. Secondly, I think it is really important for me to also learn from things that are outside of that framework, not in order to change, but in order to understand that in my own framework also, by seeing what’s outside of it. (R16 2015:47-50)

R17 (2015:10-13) made a similar comment:

I: What draws you to the struggle, besides the fact that your family is involved?  
 R17: Humanistic ideas, general human rights, that every person is equal, something very basic, feminine issues. Something very wide actually, not something that has specifically to do with the Palestinians or the occupation, but in a wider sense.

I: So it is a general outlook on life?

R17: Yes, in effect.

When asked why living in an equal society was so important to him, R12 (2015:71-73) could hardly believe the question. “Why is it important to live in an equal society?” he repeated in an incredulous manner, before realising that I wanted to hear how he would express it in his own words. When I posed a similar question to R13, after she too had talked about equality as if it is a self-evident value, she replied: “It just is. I don’t know. I don’t want to be better than somebody else. I want to be equal to them. I haven’t really thought about why equality is important to me” (R13 2015:77-78). Someone may be richer or poorer, “as long as there is a mutual respect between myself and others and...I don’t in any way oppress anyone and they don’t oppress me, I think that’s what equality means in the long run” (R13 2015:79). Later, as is evident from the discussion below, R12, R13 and others elaborated on how they understand equality and justice and why it motivates their activism.

The idea of *applying the same measure to all* on the basis of a shared humanity is another personal position that is shared widely. R9 (2015:93) mentioned the need for “moral consistency” in one’s responses to people and situations. Having the same rights for all is part of “the basic level of communication” (R16 2015:54-56). It does not matter whether one is young or old, or one is seen as more or less senior than someone else in one’s community (R13 2015:56) or among fellow activists, respondents value “critical equality” (R7 2015:148). Equality is the thing that one tries to instil in one’s children and “it’s something that resonates in all religions, you treat other people in the way that you’d like to be treated and that’s about as simple as it gets” (R5 2015:98). Justice and equality are perceived as overriding values, no matter what one’s religion or culture is. Thus, R2 (2015:169-208), for example, criticises Muslims, the Western world and Jews alike, while also empathising with Jews, Palestinians and others who are excluded and oppressed. Likewise, R8 and R3 emphasised that they do not side with a people, but with values:

We must not say that, oh, because they are Christians, we must now stand more with them than with other people, who are Muslim. A Christian child and a Muslim child that gets killed, honestly in God’s eyes, there are no differences, I cannot see it. Unless there is something that I don’t see. But I am a hundred per cent convinced in my soul, in my mind, in my heart that God cares as deeply for the Muslim child as God cares for the Christian child. (R8 2015:55)

Let’s say Palestinians were to begin their liberation tomorrow and were to exact unjust revenge on Jewish Israelis. From that perspective, my solidarity should immediately

change from Palestinians to Jewish Israelis or to Jews at the time. And so it is that kind of notion. (R3 2015:37)

R8 and R17 extended the argument of consistency in justice and equality to the self. In this regard, R17 (2015:17) explained: “I have a very clear stance of injustice and it bothers me, I take it very into myself and I feel that it is important for us to do stuff and that doing is actually being.” It is important to her that people “do”, and are “active” in relating to and in being part of the change to be worthy. R8 felt that he could not be involved in the struggle for humanisation and expect others to change if he, too, did not do the hard, inner work to become the best he can be. For R8 (2015:119), it was not just about the Palestinians’ oppression, but also about building a more humane world. The essence of his activism “is about people – individuals becoming the best they can be and building the best human society that can possibly be built” (R8 2015:162). If his activism did not strive to influence both individuals and societies to be the best and to grow in humanity, it would be useless or not worthwhile. It would be a mere ego trip or something else, but it should be “about building relationships, better humanity, better everything” (R8 2015:162):

I don’t think I can with much integrity talk about humanity if I don’t work on that within myself and deal with my own demons and so on, ja, all the time. So I think there is for me that, that translates into something bigger. (R8 2015:157)

The above understanding of a basic life contract whereby all human lives matter (R9 2015:36-41; R1 2015:16) is breached in the relation between Israel and the Palestinians. There is, for example,

...just the mere unfairness of the whole thing ... Christian Europe being anti-Semitic, putting the Jews through that trauma of the Holocaust and then not taking responsibility for that, but putting that responsibility onto another people in another geographical space. You know, just the normal human unfairness of all of that. (R8 2015:40)

The discrimination, or the breach of equality as a basic life contract, in the Palestinian context takes the shape of an institutional crime against humanity that violates international law, as discussed in Section 5.2.4 below. But it is also “about apartheid and it’s about human rights and it’s about – some people being less than human” R5 (2015:35). Both R5 and R2, as well as several others, stated that the scale and the depth of Israel’s violations in respect of the Palestinians surpassed apartheid as it was practised in South Africa. In South Africa, Black people were reduced to a labour force that could be exploited. But for Israel,

...it’s about getting rid of people entirely, using whatever means necessary. Whether it’s force, whether it’s humiliating them to such an extent that they just give up and leave, or

whether it's just pounding people into subservience. So the bigger picture is about human beings. (R5 2015:36)

The most racist South Africans never imagined a country without Blacks. They needed Blacks, they needed Blacks as domestic workers, as nannies, as labour on the mines and so on, but a South Africa without Blacks, subservient Blacks, obsequious Blacks!?! [...] The vast majority of Israelis are yearning for a land without Palestinians. It's not a madness. It is connected to the idea of ingathering. When your State is founded on the principle that this State is a place for all the Jews to be gathered in from the world, and your State is a limited State, then you have to think of ways of squeezing other people out. That ways of squeezing may range from the gentle under-funding of their clinics and of their schools, limiting their water supplies, a gentle kind of squeezing, or just refusing permission to extend their homes, or just bombing the hell out of them, bombing them out of existence. (R2 2015:102-105)

### 5.2.2 *Transcending verbal and relational categorisation*

Regarding equality and justice as a basic approach according to which all lives matter to the same degree has implications for one's attitude, conduct and interaction with others. The respondents made it clear that they detest the categorisation of people as a means to judge, repress, or limit people according to one-dimensional identities. Ethnicity, nationalities, religions, cultures and other *categories do not "lock" one into an identity* (R1 2015:110; R19 2015:64). R1 pointed out that culture is not static. One can associate with different elements in a variety of cultures, for example, in the South African context:

And the river flows into the sea – that sense of fluidity. So we have various tributaries in our country. The most important is an African tributary, but we have European, Asian, the new immigrant, ...and this river flows into the ocean of humanity. So ... culture is not static...I can appreciate classical music, or opera, or ballet ... appreciate choral singing. I might not be religious, or I might not come from a Christian background. Or I can appreciate songs in isiZulu, or I can appreciate the ability of our indigenous people, the Koisian ... And that should become our common humanity. (R1 2015:109-110)

R15 (2015:23-28) argued against discrimination in a variety of contexts – under communism in her birth country in Europe, Jewish suffering in the Holocaust, Black people suffering under South African apartheid and Jewish Israelis' treatment of Palestinians and others whom they regard as inferior. Her time in South Africa has sensitised her toward feminist values which posit that the “personal is political” and therefore if one is aware of the “oppression of women, you also become aware of the oppression of anybody else” (R15 2015:28):

I came back to Israel and noticed that when we went through the checkpoints from Be'er Sheva to Jerusalem that ... the White people are waved through, and the Black people, which is the Palestinians, are being searched. Definitely there is this thing that the

Israelis are European. Although there are Jews from North Africa, it's a ... kind of Western European type of American culture type of population, which the Palestinians are not, right. When Israelis go to India to hike in the Himalayas and to smoke dope after their army service, they treat the Indians the way they treat the Palestinians, because that's the only "other" they know – and the Indians look more like Palestinians than like Israelis. It's shocking. It's shocking. It is shocking. (R15 2015:27)

According to R14 (2015:41), "we categorise all the time" for a variety of reasons, but he qualified this: people should not be reduced to categories to be discriminated against. One should apply "critical thinking" (R7 2015:47; R14 2015:19,25,94) with "intellectual rigour" (R10 2015:122) in respect of power relations and ascertain what such relations mean in specific contexts. When people jump to conclusions, "those categories...become an injustice in itself" (R14 2015:41-43). If one does not do one's "homework with regard to countries in bleeding" (R10 2015:122) through critical thinking in interaction with others, with radical honesty and with factual evidence to avoid dogma, othering and shallow responses, one arrives at a "limited ideology and very superficial", as in the case of Zionism and Marxism (R7 2015:47).

R1 also commented on Marxism, admitting that earlier in his life he would not have distinguished between moralism and morality, for example, to calculate the historical grievances of people, how rulers use these, and how not to use unjust blanket categorisations for people. Since then, a fellow South African, Neville Alexander, inspired R1 by applying ethics and later also humanism for his political economy analyses. It helps one to understand that Israel uses the memory of the Holocaust just as the suffering of thousands of Afrikaner families in the concentration camps under British rule played a role in justifying apartheid. Understanding it from a human perspective means "we become anti-racist. We fight against racism, but we see the other not as less human, but we understand the context that makes them do what they do" (R1 2015:76). Fifteen years ago, "I would say, this is just moralising and I'm not interested in that, because it was that dogmatic way. We had easy formulas. We were Marxist and this is it. As soon as you started talking about that you were not Marxist enough." But the Marxism he got to understand in later years has a profound ethical dimension, as opposed to a Marxism that conveniently justifies acquisitiveness, self-aggrandisement and the looting of the public resources in the name of Marxism. The extent of R1's and R7's difference and/or agreement on Marxism cannot be resolved here and it is not the focus. What is relevant here is the aim they share, namely to avoid ill-considered, absolute "truths" so that they can appreciate all human lives.

Respondents also distinguished between different ways of positioning and using language. Language can, for example, categorise unjustly, or it can defy false boundaries between people. Language can confuse, deceive, paralyse and clarify, empower and disempower, as well as humanise and dehumanise. Therefore, *one's vocabulary and one's tone and manner in stringing together words* can be important advocacy tools to articulate the value of all human lives consistently. Especially R6, R8, R9 and R12 warned that where language obscures the reality, it deepens inequality. R8 mentioned how words such as “ Hamas”, “terror”, and a “thousand rockets” are often used deliberately to steer the attention away from power asymmetry, human rights, international law, statistics, and so forth. Likewise, “Arab”, “Muslim,” “Palestine”, “Philistine,” “Israel”, “terrorism” and “suicide bombing” are words loaded with assumptions, and these words are often equated with “Palestinians” (R5 2015:25; R8 2015:11-22). They call for all these terms and more to be properly unpacked, detoxified and contextualised as part of their and others’ activism.

The same principle applies to the unjust lumping together of Israeli citizens to imply, for example, that “those Israelis are all occupiers” (R13 2015:67). The Israelis are not just “those Israelis over there”, but people with different political views and approaches, and it is important to understand that many Jewish Israelis are doing their best to end the occupation (R13 2015:108). R6 (2015:15) expressed a similar sentiment: “I hate using the word Zionist now, because it just seems to say too much and too little.” Already in the opening stages of her interview, R9 (2015:9) clarified that she rejects “sterile binary of anti- and pro-politics”: “I don’t see myself as an anti-anything, even though I am completely opposed to modern political Zionism.” R9 is neither anti-Zionist nor pro-Palestinian, but deliberately associates with the cause of “Palestinian solidarity activism”, as it takes one out of the division (R9 2015:9).

In light of the respondents’ common emphasis on appropriate vocabulary, it is noteworthy that three contested terms were used in this case study, namely “conflict”, “occupation” and “peace”. The term “occupation” was often used by the respondents as opposed to more encompassing terms such as “oppression”, “marginalisation” or “exclusion” to include also those Palestinians not living in the oPt, namely Arab-Palestinian Israelis and Palestinian refugees. All the respondents – whether Jewish Israeli or South African – except for R1, R2 and R4, used the noun “occupation” when they talked about the situation as a whole and many did so several times. The term limits the conversation to the oPt, and it implies that the

tension between the Palestinians and Israel dates back to 1967 when the military occupation started, as opposed to the Nakba in 1948, when hundreds of thousands became refugees. Moreover, it excludes the ongoing displacement and marginalisation of Palestinians in Israel. Nevertheless, it was most definitely neither the intention nor the self-perceived aim of the respondents to limit the discussion only to a part of the Palestinian population, since most of them strongly support the BDS campaign<sup>118</sup> (as discussed in Section 5.2.4). All of them also agreed to the selection criteria that specified the study's understanding of "Palestinians" to include those who live outside the oPt.

The word "conflict" occurred only six times in participant responses, mostly in responses by Jewish Israelis (R11 2015:80; R14 2015:101; R16 2015:99; R18 2015:09 and R21 2015:22,29) plus one South African Jewish respondent (R9 2015:81). None of the respondents *argued in favour* of the term conflict as such, and they were clear about the asymmetric power abuse, but their *language* – albeit to a very limited extent – neglected the Palestinian experience of injustice and oppression, which is underscored by power asymmetry and imperialism, and not by tension due to a "dispute" or a "clash", as the term "conflict" may imply – especially in the eyes of the public.

The word "peace" also elicited contrasting views. On the one hand, two Jewish Israeli respondents identified themselves as part of the leftist "peace camp" (R11 2015:10) and/or as "peace activists" (R15 2015:10,85,116,119). At the same time, R15 (2015:78) admitted that "peace" in Israel currently goes hand in hand with militarism and oppression, to which she and R11 are both strongly opposed. By contrast, R12 was vehement: "I've thrown 'peace' out long time ago, we don't use the term 'peace' in our office at all. The term 'democracy' we're about to throw out as well" (R12 2015:128). He argued that the term "peace" as used in the context of Israel tends to confuse issues relating to the Palestinian project, since it "never entails justice and equality .... So we're not a peace movement. I refuse to be a peace movement, which means right now I'm part of the solidarity movement, which is in solidarity with the resistance" (R12 2015:48). Likewise, if "democracy" is not linked to values such as honesty, equality and restorative justice, the word turns into meaningless, insincere political jargon. R7 explained how Zionists compromised the idea of "peace" as a friendly gesture toward the Palestinians, who then "bit the hand of peace that came to them" (R7 2015:21,33). He pointed out that the Zionist's framing of innocent, good-natured

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<sup>118</sup> Section 1.4 lists the aims of the BDS campaign.

“peace” and their accusations in respect of the Palestinians are meant to obscure the memory of the Nakba, when the indigenous inhabitants of hundreds of Palestinian villages were killed, or displaced or fled. R13 (2015:90) highlighted yet more confusion regarding the meaning of “peace” in the context of political leadership:

Our leaders are giving us double messages, like this woman who said, ‘God gave us Palestine’. So if I heard it, the Palestinians also heard it, right. Their leaders also give them double messages. On the one hand they say, ‘yes, we will make peace’ and on the other hand they say, ‘we’ll defeat Israel and we’ll defeat Zionism’ and so the leaders also complicate matters.

To explain myths about Israel’s systemic crimes against the Palestinians to people who deem Israel a superior, untouchable entity may require a different kind of language. Someone like R8, for example, supports using “the language of oppression” to explain the facts on how Historical Palestine was divided by the United Nations and how the land of the Palestinians continues to shrink because of ongoing Israeli invasions. Such language may help people to understand the reality:

If you ... use other words like oppressed and oppressor, then it becomes clearer to many people to say, okay, ... Israel was going to be 55 per cent of the land and Palestine was going to be 45 per cent of the land. So people begin to understand that. Then you say, but by the time you get to Oslo...and you explain the percentage in terms of the population, then people begin to understand. How can it be that a minority group take so much of the land? And so by Oslo it took 78 per cent versus 22 per cent? And now they’re even building on the 22 per cent? Most human beings who have a sense of fairness in them, and it is fortunate for humanity that we at least we have, then begin to say, ‘But that can’t be right’. (R8 2015:22-23)

In what seems to be a contrasting approach, R6 feels particularly strongly about steering away from “oppressor language” that aims to advocate the Palestinian cause, but actually entrenches division and opposition: “‘Oppressor language’ [is] not a language that fits in my skin” (R6 2015:119; my insertion). She prefers a style of joint thinking with her audiences to co-search and co-explore another kind of language. Her style draws on and connects the meta and the micro and the intersections between prayer and meditation. “When there is no lion, you can’t attack”, so she risks self-exposure and vulnerability to the extent that she often feels “naked in public” (R6 2015:126). Recalling a discussion in Germany after the screening of a film when the audience verbally attacked her because they could not square up the film’s message with how they dealt with their own history, she said:

It was just too much. They need a Jewish victim, I understand that. That was very hard and ... I reflected that back to them. Not as an accusation, but as really understanding. I felt this is an incredibly painful challenge that’s specific to Germany. So I honoured that

as well ... the boundaries to what they're working with, can't admit the Palestinian, because the way they're dealing with their Jewish victim, can't make room for a Jewish perpetrator ... I never tried to take it away. It's not my job to take anything away. Just to find ways to think together. It's really quite small actually. It's not big, I mean it's really, really small. Thinking together is something we so never experiment with. (R6 2015:127)

Though she finds it difficult, she persists in her intuitive, slightly hesitant, self-reflective approach:

I use a more metaphorical and a more poetic language. I feel it authentically connects my heart to and with others and I think that opens up a space for ... a different way of engaging and understanding. Something that's less complete and finished, it's not a political kind of concept. It's not an argument that's thought through from A to Z and then published as a tract or a manifesto. (R6 2015:120)

Both R8 and R6 stressed the need not to become trapped in “oppressive language”, but rather to engage in a language of love, even for one's enemy. “It's a completely different language to eye-for-an-eye language. It's a complete different thing” (R8 2015:80). He suggests that there is a need to develop this vocabulary, so that not only Christians can understand it, but also others, including Zionists. It may well be that different audiences require different kinds of messages and different styles of communication, as R11 (2015:52) proposed.

R18 shares the Palestinian story in Hebrew on the internet to reach mainstream Jewish audiences in Israel: “We're writing ‘occupation’ when it is ‘occupation’. We're writing words that are a bit difficult for the mainstream to hear, because that is exactly the place it has to be ... to see that there are other narratives” (R18 2015:42). For R14, to embody her impression of an interlinked relation between equality and justice is an ongoing journey of discovery. She has learnt Arabic to help her bridge the sense of separation and her fear when she cannot understand Palestinians on the streets of her city:

I: Why are you trying to overcome this fear? I mean you could just be left-wing and support the ending of the oppression and take part in protests and all of that, but you are actually working to overcome this fear. Why do you do it?

R17: That's a really good question. I think, I think it's a pattern of my life, to try and do stuff that seem to be very distant and far away from me. Like trying to pass bridges is something that I do, that I have been doing all my life. I'm very interested and fascinated by people who are different from me in the sense that they grew up in a different environment than where I am. And I think maybe because I'm, I'm like thinking it out with you, but maybe because I believe that every person is equal, that people are one, equal and good and have the same sense of justice, in that sense, then I would want to prove it to myself every time that – I think maybe that's one of the reasons. (R17 2015: 65-67)

### 5.2.3 *As informed by religion*

A lot was said in the interviews about inclusive and plural understandings of religion and how they inform equality and justice in the Palestinian project. These comments came from those who called themselves religious, but also from others. The basic argument in this subsection is that the respondents in the case study presented different ways to position oneself in respect of religion. Their understanding is that sacred texts enlighten equality for all, but judgement is not the task of human beings. Moreover, notwithstanding different perceptions of religion, all held similar values, such as equality and justice. Although the immediate focus in this section is how religion informs the values of justice and equality, the respondents' understandings of what religion is (and is not) is an additional and an important finding of Part B. As noted here, it illustrates the respondents' appreciation for diversity in religious orientations.

There are various ways by which respondents associate or do not associate with religion as part of their lives and they acknowledged *various options when it comes to positioning specific religious traditions*. If there are “six billion religious people in the world, I would say that there are then probably six billion religions” (R3 2015:108). “Every religion has its own ethics and people and institutions pervert that, or people reclaim that and reorient that and reactivate it” (R6 2015:17) as is evident also in R8's and R10's distinctions between Zionist and non-Zionist interpretations of Christianity. As R10 (2015:90) pointed out, in the context of the Palestinian project, Judaism, Islam and Christianity all “need to repent and recover the justice and the humaneness” that inspire them. Likewise, R2 (2015:110,190) referred to inhumane, exclusivist practices in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. R2 (2015:18), who often quoted from the Koran and explained his activism as infused with theology, does not think of himself as religious, although he realised that he might have come across as religious in his interview: “[I]t's not how I imagine myself. And perhaps I am more religious than what I imagine myself to be” (R2 2015:217).

R20, who used to be a devoted Zionist Jew, left her synagogue due to the general “entanglement of religion in Israel with the Zionist ideology” and her strong desire for equal opportunities for Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. Yet she is also aware of “many ultra-orthodox communities, arguably the most religious, who are actually anti-Zionist” (R20 2015:9). In fact, all the respondents perceived *Zionism as deeply problematic* (R2 2015:63-64; R5 2015:230-232; R12 2015:7; R15 2015:56). To explain how unacceptable Zionism is

to the respondents, I refer to an incident recalled by R2. As he entered the hall in which he was due to deliver a public address, Zionists verbally attacked R2 and they continued to employ intimidation tactics during his talk. Being familiar with such attempts, R2 started off by explaining his deep compassion for Jewish suffering, but also for many other kinds of oppression. He then came to the point where he said,

R2: If you insist on narrowing and reducing your Jewish identity to a narrow, bigoted, state political, ideological, mean, little human being wrapped up in yourself whose implications of your definition of Jewishness must mean the destruction of the Palestinians, homelessness for the Palestinians, because you have defined your Jewishness in ideological political terms, not in a broader universal ethics – a God for all – then I’m sorry, fuck you and your understanding of Jewish.

I: And you say it like that?

R2: Oh yes, yes, yes. Then they’re lost, because the argument is framed in the context. They can’t be seen to be against the context of gender equality, the context of feminism, this is a liberal audience. (R2 2015:170-172)

R20 (2015:58) considered Zionism “very much the root of this whole problem”. They objected to Zionism’s merging of the transnational, extraterritorial Jewish identity with the national identity of the modern Israel and the Israel in the Torah and in the Bible. Zionism is an important theme throughout Part B, and Section 5.3.2 summarises the various aspects of Zionism that give rise to activism.

Although all the activists strongly objected to Zionism, only R8 and R10 named opposition to *religious Zionism* as a core reason of their activism. R8 and R10 – the only Christian respondents in the case study – strongly reject Christian Zionism and they are motivated by the need to unmask its fallacies (R10 2015:15,122; R8 2015:12). According to R8, what is particularly disconcerting about the Israel-Palestine issue is that many Zionists claim that Genesis 1 and 2 apply only to them and to no-one else. Part of the struggle is to reclaim that *all* are created in the image of God and “affirming that truth for all humanity, not just for some” (R8 2015:123). The credibility of the church and how non-Christians perceive Christianity is at stake, R8 argued. Therefore, it is important not to be silent when political parties such as South Africa’s African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) publicly support Zionist Israel, and to make it known that there are also Christian voices who understand the need for justice and hear the voice of the oppressed (R8 2015:57).

In terms of his belief that “God is a just God”, by implication R10 (2015:81) regards justice very important. He is especially concerned about the prevalence of Zionism amongst evangelical Christians. Because evangelicalism is globally largely controlled by White

Christians, he argued, the theological meanings and levers are strongly influenced by a White Western world-view, informed especially by Europeans and North Americans. To a large extent these views shape what Evangelicals read (R10 2015:128):

My task is to enlighten ... the Evangelical community, so that the power of Christian Zionism does not grow, or is limited ... And I believe that South Africa is a very important pot in which you cook the antidote to counter Christian Zionism. (R10 2015:156)

*Two thirds of the respondents (R1, R7, R9, R11–R21)* indicated at the start of their interviews that they *were not religious*. Of these, both R1 and R7 articulated their admiration for religions that speak to an ethical life and a shared humanity. R1 came from an Islamic culture, but he no longer associates himself with only one tradition. He is not an agnostic or atheist, but regards himself as an admirer of religions that speak to an ethical life, opposing oppression and fostering a shared humanity. To be “dogmatically opposed to religion is problematic” (R1 2015:5). The following interaction with R13 may give the impression that she rejected religion altogether:

I: I know that you are not religious, right?

R13: Yes.

I: But is there a sense of something – and I’m not calling it God, but something over and above yourself outside of yourself that you feel a connection to and feel that that thing that we don’t, or cannot express or grasp, that it ...(interruption)

R13: Not at all.

I: ...guides you? None of that?

R13: No. None of that. It’s sort of like I would be a really bad alcoholic at AA. You know, I don’t have that higher being feeling. I would be terrible. I don’t have it. No I don’t believe in it. It opposes my common sense of nature. I just – I have to be responsible for my own actions and don’t depend, or consult, or pray to a higher being. For me and my personal responsibility.

I: I’m so glad I asked, thank you.

R13: Ja, ja. I don’t have any relationship with God or anything that I would think be a higher being in any way. I don’t even know how to start even exploring something like that. You know, I just have more a sense of commitment to humanity and a belief in humanity, I think, for me that’s the way to put it. (R13 117-122)

However, as illustrated below R13 (2015:71) is one of only two respondents who explicitly mentioned the right to religious freedom for all. Thus, she does not use her personal position to force her ideas onto others, or to reject options that have meaning for others. Therefore, she too *acknowledged diversity in religious association*. R7 (2015:111) was another example. He tried to “be a very religious Jew” in his teens, but “it was all forced” and all about “terrible things” and “conquest”, such as “how many of the Midianites and the Philistines you take, how many of the women you’re allowed to kill before you become uncivilised” and

how many kids one may kill to prevent them from turning into warriors that “conquer and control”. He could not identify with “the tyranny” of a Lord that one is supposed to love with all one’s heart, soul and might. Yet, he acknowledged he was intrigued by other interpretations in Judaism. Since he does not associate with “a deity or a bigger spirit”, but rather with “a bigger truth”, R7 calls himself an atheist or agnostic with a moral consciousness (R7 2015:5), but he also has

...a deep respect for people in the sort of church faith community who get involved in activism and just do a lot of community work, but who don’t become pious and who don’t put the rules in me. As soon as they step back, I become very interested in their faith symbols. I’m quite fascinated by what does God mean for you. You’re asking certain questions. You’re asking and I get very fascinated about them. So I’m not even close to that. (R7 2015:110)

The aforementioned comments all have a bearing on positioning to specific religious traditions. However, at least a third of the respondents – whether they are adherents of specific traditions or not – articulated *religion as a relation, not only to (a) God, but as a sense of belonging* in a wider sense to include, for example, the earth, nature, all sentient beings and the cosmos. Religion is understood as referring to more than rituals (R1 2015:116; R5 2015:59) – “[i]t’s a world view, it is symbolism, it’s culture and, I think, with space for those people who are not religious, but it might be profoundly spiritual and ethical” (R1 2015:116). For R3, his position in the Palestinian project and his notion of religion “comes from the way that I understand the Koran really, ... and how I understand my place in the universe and my place in relation to God and in relation to others” (R3 2015:108). R8 (2015:126-127) also mentioned a cosmic connection that transcends space and time:

It is reaching back all the way to right at the beginning of all creation ... I really believe that so strongly. It’s not something that has come to me quickly. It came very slowly, very slowly over several years. It came through people like Tutu, through Richard Raw ... people like that who opened my eyes to those kinds of perspectives and actually makes me completely humble, because I’m no different to any other human being on this earth. I’m connected with all that is on this earth, with planet earth, whatever, with the cosmos. But I’m also connected to people who came millions of years ago, I’m also connected to them. And whether they had heard about Jesus or not, is not the point. They had a sense of there is something bigger, you know, than myself. And so this Palestinian Struggle, which sometimes is thought of [as] so big, it’s actually just a small thing within the bigger scheme of things.

R2 (2015:219) has a clear sense of the essence of his spiritual task in his activism. It is to “participate with others in the ongoing creation of a world wherein it is safe for people to be people, children to be children and other sentient beings to be other sentient beings”, but with

“the awareness that all of this is part of a journeying back to our creator” where he needs to “render an account” of all his actions.

Others struggled to express their thoughts on this topic. When I probed them on the issue, R19 and R21 struggled to find the words for what they wanted to convey, and both of them articulated the notions of interconnectedness. R21 steered away from monotheism and a patriarchal, linear relation, while R19 expressed a non-theistic harmony with nature and people:

- I: I know you are agnostic, but you are also interested in religions. Without talking about a God or a specific religion, some people perceive something over and above themselves that assists their choices. Do you sense something like that?
- R21: Ja, I suppose I may just find it hard to articulate though. I’m not sure what exactly this is, but there is something that would be beyond me that – I don’t think perhaps it’s a person. I suppose – the thing that I don’t see is a person looking down on me, but I do feel the sense of – I’m small in comparison to something wider. (R21 2015:136-137)
- R19: I want to live in an environment where we’re closer to each other and where there is...harmony with the rest of the life and the nature around us [...] if I was religious like believing in God or things like that, I probably would have said something along these lines, but I don’t have that part in me, so my best way is to call it harmony and more friendship. ...Some time ago...I said that in some way I feel like a missionary. You know, it sounds negative to someone that [is] not religious like me, but in a way practically I have the motivation of a missionary who wants to have all people around him believe in justice and equality and live in harmony and stuff like that. (R19 2015:115-116; my insertion)

R14 framed his sense of religion as the responsibility to act and to transcend a not-yet reality in the hope of a better dispensation:

I know that there is a kind of religious element in my work. At the beginning when you asked me if I’m religious or not, for a second I thought about it, because basically I’m an atheist in the common way. I mean I’m very, very secular. I don’t practice ... I don’t give value for my own inner life to religious practices or beliefs, what we usually call religion ... But at the same time I have to say that the notion of hope to make the world better and to stick to it, like to stick to the act and to do when I see the injustice and to take responsibility, this in itself maybe is the definition of religion, action in a way, because we transcend something, you go beyond the reality and you say, okay, you work from an inner – I don’t know – power that you cannot sometime[s] understand what it is. Maybe some people will say it’s God, this is God who is in us. I think I would say, no, that is the humanity in us and this human instinct or whatever is there to do the things, I think. (R14 2015:98)

For R6 (2016:n.p.), her Jewishness and humanism co-exist in a hybridized, shifting identity. While she did not associate with Judaic rituals in a conventional sense, she appreciated the

sensible, empowered “way of being in life” in Jewish ethics. To remain attuned with Judaism in this sense brought a comforting sense of belonging. She neither dissociated herself from the particularity of Judaism, nor was she limited to it. Her ability to embrace, enjoy, cultivate and maintain difference “starts inside” and is beyond “culture, or language, or religion, or race, or gender” or any other conventional categories. It is something wholly different and much deeper (R6 2015:89-99). R6 consciously embraced the tensions and contradictions of being both Jewish and a humanist as a dynamic state of being. Moreover, she refused to resolve these.

Thus, the findings of the case study suggest that religion can be *an expression of specific religious traditions, albeit positioned in different ways*. It can also be perceived as *a wider concept*, and it can be a *combination of both options*. From the perspective of justice and equality, the case study presents a clear and a respectful appreciation for *diversity* in one’s orientation to religion.

All of those who identified themselves as adherents to specific religious traditions (R2, R3, R4, R5, R8, R10) indicated that *their religious convictions influence their perceptions of equality and justice, but to varying degrees*. R8 (2015:11,18,22,37,43,95) expressly ascribed his activism to his theological motivation, and specifically to his objection to how Christianity is used to suppress the Palestinian perspective. R3 (2015:42) argued from Islam that the political oppression of Palestinians, their economic exploitation, the denial of their freedom of expression and movement, are unjust. For R3 and R10, their faith(s), together with the South African experience of apartheid made them amenable to the Palestinian project. To stand with those who are oppressed is part of what defines his life, and therefore it is to him almost “a pastoral duty” (R10 2015:19). R3 immediately identified with the suffering of the Palestinians once he connected it to his own experiences under South African apartheid:

Because I’m South African, secondly because I’m Muslim. And saying because I’m Muslim is not because Palestinians are Muslims. But because I’m Muslim and ... therefore motivated not only with Palestinian Solidarity, but whether I’m talking about xenophobia in South Africa at the moment, or whether I’m talking about the Burmese Struggle, or whatever else, I’m motivated by an Islamic understanding of justice and equality and fairness that drives how I would respond to a whole range of things, certainly the Palestinian issue ... as well. (R3 2015:33)

R4 and R5 did not highlight their faiths as a conclusive factor in understanding equality and justice. For R4 (2015:48), Islam is only one possible reason for his activism, and he

elaborated on the value of ecumenical activism in the pursuit of justice, because of values shared between people from different religious orientations. “Whether it’s Islam, or Christianity, or Judaism, or any other religion, there is generally an emphasis on justice and human rights. You can find all the different sayings and traditions about justice in all of them” (R5 2015:228). R5’s attraction to politics and human rights preceded her conversion to Islam. Thus, Islam provided the religious framework for her values, but her drive to commit was not defined by a particular tradition. Both R4 and R5 emphasised justice in articulating the essence of their activism. R4 argued justice from the perspective of the other’s humanity in the “combination of the larger struggle for justice, for love, for a better world” (R4 2015:180). R5 explained:

What drives me, from a Muslim – even from a human perspective, is that emphasis of justice. And treating people the way that you would like them to treat you. If you were in a particular situation, you would want others to speak on your behalf. As South Africans we already had that. We were silent, we were prevented from speaking and the world spoke for us. So now it’s simply a matter of doing the same for others. (R5 2015:228)

The six respondents referred to above are from different traditions, but they share the conviction that *all people have dignity, a common humanity, yearn for free lives and are equal in the eyes of God*: “And so if you and I are equal in the eyes of God, then how can I feel that you are inferior to me – even if you’ve committed the worst atrocities?” (R3 2015:66). All carry “the Spirit of God”, are infused with the Spirit (or the Breath) of the Transcendent (R2 2015:18; R3 2015:64-65), or, in Christian terms, are “created in the image of God” (R8 2015:12,36; R10 2015:87-88). Thus, one person is not superior to another (R5 2015:65) and everyone has an obligation to recognise this. It boils “down to the very basic, basic, basic things of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2, that we were all created in the image of God, you know – equally” (R8 2015:122). “This was drilled into us, in South Africa for many years .... There is just no compromise on that one. In a way that’s almost enough, you almost don’t need other reasons to be involved” (R8 2015:36).

Moreover, *God and human beings are perceived as not equal*. According to R10 (2015:175), one remains “ultimately accountable to God, both during their struggle and after that struggle is won”. R2 (2015:86) emphasised that he never confuses himself with God,

I’m an instrument, I’m an instrument in the hands of God in the shaping of this world. I never confuse myself with God, okay. And my intentions with God’s intentions – this kind of religious fundamentalist arrogance – I never.... But I do consider myself as a means, as one of the tools that is being used.

Human beings should not trespass onto God’s domain by judging others (R3 2015:68), or by speaking on behalf of God (R2 2015:127). Yet R8 (2015:22,36,95) emphatically and repeatedly stated that “God is on the side of the oppressed”. If they were considered on their own, without the context of his other comments on equality in respect of everyone in the Palestinian project, R8’s statements might seem to contradict the sentiments of R3 and R1. R1 (2015:75) argued that the use of religious texts, or some identification with God to claim superior ideological positions is abusive. God may, for example, have mercy on those whom humans judge, according to R1. It may sound ridiculous, but only if one does not accept that humanity’s understanding of the world is minuscule compared to God’s plan and compassion. Justice depends on where you place yourself (R3 2015:40) – and R3 remarked that his imagination is very limited (R3 2015:67):

I really feel myself entirely inadequate and feel it would be incorrect for me to say, as some others do, that Ariel Sharon is going to hell, for example, and for that matter that Hitler is going to hell. I have no clue how God works, right, and whether there is something in Hitler’s life that actually redeems him. [...] Whether we are oppressors or oppressed – at one level and there is a divine being at another level. Some of us are not closer to Him than others. That must always be kept in mind, otherwise struggles can make us bitter, they can make us angry and they can make us forget our own humanity and the humanity of other people. I think that, as an individual, is for me is very important, but I think that that is very important for struggles, because if we don’t see the humanity of other people, including our enemies, then just struggles can easily become unjust. (R3 2015:58)

Humanists and those who identified themselves as secular, agnostic, atheist, pagan or spiritual *without being religious*<sup>119</sup> sometimes also motivated their positions on equality and justice *in reference to religious traditions*. For R6 (2015:16), being a *Mensch* is rooted in Jewish ethics, but humanism also frames her search for a better way of living together (R6 2015:129). R16 (2015:54-56), who identified herself as not religious, cited the Torah to support her view of equality as treating others – fellow activists, opponents and the oppressed – the way one wants to be treated by them. R11 (2015:9), who is secular, in turn argued that Israel may not oppress the Palestinians, according to the way he understood the Judaism of his upbringing and prophets such as Jeremiah, Isaiah and Amos. For him, justice refers to the idea of not discriminating, oppressing and dominating, and it features prominently in his personal set of values (R11 2015:26). R1 (2015:52), who grew up Islamic and now considers himself as post-paradigmatic with an appreciation for a non-dogmatic, humanist positioning of religious traditions, in struggling against “injustice and inequality and oppression” draws

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<sup>119</sup> Only one third of the participants identified themselves as adherents of religious traditions (see Table 2).

on the example of Judas Iscariot to explain the dangers of “selling out” the noble principles justice and equality for all to personal agendas of power or money (R1 2015:67). R9, who described herself as secular, has been inspired by the teachings of the Buddha to protect the humanity of the other. Thus, one does not stop the perpetrator out of fear, anger, or hatred, but as part of one’s meditation. One stops them because they are violating humanity and one has “a moral obligation to do everything to stop them ... but that doesn’t make them less human to you” (R9 2015:55). What the Buddha taught in respect of meditation and ethical conduct was to become increasingly aware of whatever one encounters, but in the least reactive way through a purified mind. One’s response then comes from this purified place. It helps to “always take right action with other people, deeply human action with other people, no matter who they are or what they are” (R9 2015:47).

The deep bond between people from so many religious (and other) orientations in the case study is evident and should not be underestimated. Whether they are devoted believers or have no experiences of spirituality, they sense an inextricable connection with others. R19 (2015:54), who is not religious, spoke about how encouraging it is to him to belong to a movement with transnational activists who share the same ethics in their support for the Palestinian and for other projects. For R1 (2015:110), it is about one’s being; it is about one’s “uneasiness and anxieties” and admitting one’s own frailties, contradictions and mistakes (R1 2015:106). “What is the glue? It’s these values. It’s these ethics,” (R1 2015:110), he concluded by referring to solidarity, trust, honesty and justice in a shared humanity.

To reiterate: the general understanding amongst those who associated with specific religious traditions and those who did not, but still referenced some tradition, was that their readings of sacred texts call for equality and justice amongst human beings. The sentiment of a mutual interdependence between justice and equality was also affirmed by those who were not overtly religious. Thus, just as the nature of Palestinian project is not religious, *the shared factor between the activists was not religion, but their values*. However, the correction of specifically religious Christian Zionism elicited strong responses in two of the respondents in the case study.

#### 5.2.4 *In institutionalised systems*

The discussion now turns from internalised, personal notions of equality and justice to institutionalised forms of these values in law, religion, the economy and public services through urban planning.

##### 5.2.4.1 *The legal apparatus*

There are several reasons why laws and their enforcement motivate activism in the context of the equality and justice in the Palestinian project. Overall, the respondents highlighted Israel's discriminatory legal system, the need for restorative justice in respect of the Palestinians, in particular in respect of their Right of Return, the selective use of international law and how apartheid as a crime against humanity is understood in international law.<sup>120</sup>

The South African respondents' comments on the legal apparatus mostly took the form of brief statements. R8 (2015:86) raised *international society's failure to implement and uphold international law* consistently in respect of all countries and peoples when he mentioned the "limits of law and exceptionalism" as opposed to a "social compact where everyone is treated the same way". Both R3 (2015:25,93) and R4 (2015:27) contextualised their activism in general as a response to violations of international law.

The respondents object to legal neglect and abusive laws. They mentioned many violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws, such as Israel's unlawful demolition of Palestinian homes, the killing and displacement of civilians and the continued erection of the illegal Israeli Wall. However, they did not discuss specific international laws other than mentioning two international legal aspects that motivate their activism, namely the *Palestinians' Right of Return and the definition of apartheid in international law*. R14 has dedicated his activism to the education of the public – in particular Jewish Israelis – about the Nakba, which preceded the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, and the Palestinians' concomitant Right of Return.<sup>121</sup> Several others (mostly Jewish Israelis) also mentioned the relevance of advocacy on the Right of Return. In Israel, the topic of the Nakba is almost taboo – by law (R12 2015:60) and because of power and/or fear (R7 2015:33; R10 2015:121; R17 2015:110) and/or people's ignorance on or dismissal of the event (R4 2015:27).

<sup>120</sup> International law is often cited by international organisations in their reports on the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians as explained in Footnotes 34, 35 and 88.

<sup>121</sup> Footnote 80 explains that citizens' right of return to their countries of origin is a legal principle, but not customary in international law. For more on the Palestinian Catastrophe, see Sections 1.3.3 and 2.5.

However, from the perspective of especially Jewish Israeli respondents it should be brought into the open:

Maybe because I'm an immigrant myself, I'm not fearful of that. I've learned a lot from the organisation called ADRID which is the Association for the Internally Displaced Palestinians within Israel. Their contention is that there are 280 000 Palestinians who have been displaced within Israel proper and that there is enough room for everyone. There are calculations and everything. The second thing is to allow other Palestinians to come back, or to get reparations for the land and the property lost and for the hardships. So I think that's another thing that we have to reckon with. I think the Right of Return is what everybody is really afraid of, because we did terrible things to people, you know. So I think that is what makes a lot of people fearful. I think that is what makes a lot of Israelis who might be more left-wing fearful, because the moment you're a true humanist you have to also accept the Right of Return. (R13 2015:72)

Israel is increasingly referred to as an "*apartheid regime*" and almost all the respondents contextualised Israel's actions in terms of apartheid practices (R1 2015:45,75; R2 2015:107,136; R3 2015:25,32; R5 2015:16,23,30,31,35,89,172,188; R7 2015:91; R9 2015:14; R12 2015:52,54; R13 2015:76; R14 2015:129-133; R15 2015:134; R21 2015:89-90). All the South African and almost all the Jewish Israeli respondents referred to impressions of South African apartheid when contextualising their activism: "Obviously I don't have to convince you that Israel is an apartheid state" (R19 2015:31); "[w]e're all very clear on the parallels. We are both semi-colonial states, implementing an apartheid regime based on racial and ethnic parameters" (R20 2015:55).

However, to compare Israeli apartheid to the former situation in South Africa is an incomplete and incorrect analogy (R9 2015:14). R14 (2015:128-132) explained that advocacy in the Palestinian project must highlight that "apartheid" should be understood in terms of the definition in international law and should not be confused with the South African case, as many do.<sup>122</sup> Thus, it is relevant to know how and why international law defines "apartheid" and to distinguish between South African and Israeli apartheid. This point is critical, R14 said, because otherwise the Zionist lobby delegitimise the entire argument by proving that the two situations are not the same. Herein he sees a shared role between especially South African and Jewish Israeli activists and also a role for South African civilians and their government, because of the special significance of the country and its history.

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<sup>122</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002:6) defines apartheid as "the systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime".

In addition to the relevance of international law in promoting and inhibiting the Palestinian project, the respondents in the case study also focused on *Israel's own discriminatory legal apparatus*. In a more general remark, R6 (2015:110) mentioned the danger of institutionalising and/or legalising criminal, discriminatory practices against humanity. She referred to Nazi Germany and the material and human losses of her own family to draw attention to how Israel institutionalises the oppression of all Palestinians, including the rights of refugees who are not allowed to return and those who live in Israel. Israel's current legal system and hence its laws, its practices and its double military and civil court system (R13 2015:42-45; R14 2015:65; R15 2015:38) are perceived to discriminate so blatantly that these factors also motivated activism in the case study. R3 (2015:23), for example, noted how the religious establishment in Israel supports the country's legal apparatus:

The Israelis, as much as the leadership of the Zionist Movement, are largely atheists who very effectively mobilised the Jewish religion and used that. In fact, there is a kind of compact, if you like, between the secular even atheist Zionist Movement with the Jewish religious establishment. So that the Jewish religious establishment has some power in Israeli politics and Israeli laws, etcetera, in order to provide that religious cover. So religion is very much part of it there.

Especially the Jewish Israeli respondents spoke about the discriminatory Israeli legal system and its enforcement as reasons for their advocacy. Multiple Israeli "draconian laws ... to keep people silent" (R13 2015:42) are listed on the civil rights website of the Association of Citizens' Rights in Israel:

People should understand the facts, I mean it's not international law, it's our national law [...] If one part of a couple is Israeli and is married to a Palestinian from the West Bank, they're kept apart. (R13 2015:45)

R5 (2015:115) used real-life human stories in her writing to explain, for example, the discriminatory marriage law that segregates families in Israel. Israeli citizens, including Jewish Israelis, may also not, for example, support the non-violent BDS campaign. "If I go out and talk about not buying Soda Stream, they can sue me personally for loss of income" (R13 2015:42).<sup>123</sup> R16 (2015:44) called the "very clear" division between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis "structural" and "systematic":

And it's legal, it's an official one and I mean I'm sure you know, after all you know everything about legal official divisions. I mean it's naïve to try and claim that that is not part of reality. It is and it's a big part. So there is a huge amount of division, a huge amount of it. (R16 2015:41)

<sup>123</sup> The international consumer boycott against this producer of fizzy drink machines, which used to have a factory in an industrial park adjoining an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank, came to an end early in 2016 when Soda Stream withdrew from the occupied West Bank.

If R12, as a White Ashkenazi Jewish Israeli, and a Palestinian friend are both detained, double standards apply. Legally speaking, if R12 and his colleagues protest together,

...the Israeli authorities can hold me for a day, 24 hours, before they have to release me unless I'm brought to see a judge. They can hold my Palestinian colleagues for eight days for the same protest, arrested at the same time, for the exact same thing. (R12 2015:88)

If one were to explain the situation to others, most people in the world would agree, “yes, this is injustice” (R14 2015:65). Israel continues to motivate its double system as the only choice open to it,<sup>124</sup> but for R14, the discrimination of having two kinds of courts (civil and military) that advantage illegal Jewish Israeli settlers over Palestinians is so blatant that no-one can miss it and he has no doubt that he has to advocate against this unequal, unjust legal system:

For me it's so clear that living in such a small territory with the Historical Palestine heritage – whatever we call it – the name doesn't matter, but we live in such a small territory and there are two main classes of people here defined by the regime with two systems of justice and law that privilege the Jewish one and under-privilege the Palestinians on so many levels. This is basic injustice. It's something for me that is so clear. (R14 2015:64)

According to R12 (2015:59-61), recent Israeli governments have been passing laws that do not seem “to make sense”. The Nakba Laws, for example, prohibit Israeli institutions from commemorating or mentioning the Nakba in curricula. The state is also privatising national parks – mostly Jewish National Fund parks – established on confiscated Palestinian land. There is also an imminent constitutional law that will declare Israel a Jewish nation state. “Was anybody questioning that Israel was a Jewish state? No. Why pass an institutional law, a constitutional law?” (R12 2015:61). According to R12, it is important to take note of the intentions underlying the passing of these laws:

In fifteen years, after we have our Mandela moment, and the occupation is over and Palestinians receive citizenship, they're going to need even a fifty per cent vote to change the flag. They'll need a special majority to change the constitutional law to change that flag. When they want to teach Nakba history, the Nakba law will have already [been] passed ten years ago. When a refugee comes back with a deed saying, I own land in this forest, the forest would have already been sold ten, fifteen years ago. The Government will say, we're sorry, it's in private hands, we can't do anything about it. The industry will already be in Zionist hands. (R12 2015:62)

R21 (2015:59) thinks that embracing equality and justice is not just part of a general global *Zeitgeist*, but it has to do with power. Israel's abuse of power, which results in inequality and

<sup>124</sup> As noted earlier in Section 3.2.2, R14 said there are actually many choices for or against justice, equality and fairness; for or against being human; between the oppressed and oppressor; to accept responsibility or not; between violence and non-violence and so forth.

diminishes the Palestinians' power to go about their daily lives, pains her. Equality and therefore also empowerment, she argued, are about evening out experiences in the sense that all should have the same opportunities and these *should be enshrined in a constitution* (R21 2015:60). Both R10 (2015:84) and R12 (2015:27, 31, 69-70) mentioned *the need for restorative justice* for the Palestinians. None of the respondents suggested that the abolition of the unjust legal apparatus would automatically guarantee dignified lives for the Palestinians, but it is part of what is necessary for equality and justice.

#### 5.2.4.2 *Religious freedom*

It is noteworthy that there were *very few remarks in the data corpus on religious freedom for Palestinians*. It may have been implied by some, or even by several, when they argued that no-one should be discriminated against because of some category. The few specific remarks regarding religious freedom were brief and formed part of references to other inequalities.

However, the respondents' comments reflected consistency with regard to the religious identities and rights of others over and above one's own. R3, who is a devoted Muslim, and R13, who adamantly denied any affiliation with religion and spirituality, both mentioned the Palestinians' right to religious freedom. Both did so in the same breath as they demanded political and economic equality, the right of movement to travel freely between towns and cities and the right to work where one wishes (R3 2015:42; R13 2015:71). R1, who grew up as a Muslim and who currently appreciates all traditions that stand against oppression and for a shared humanity, stated that having either a Jewish-only state or a Muslim-only state would be disastrous:

So I think that a democratic pluralist society where people have all the rights that they should have regardless of their religion, regardless of their ethnicity, whether they are Arab or Jewish or anyone else, Muslim or Christian or adherence to Judaism, or atheist. ... is a society that is possible. (R1 2015:119)

#### 5.2.4.3 *Economic aspects*

The economic dimension of equality and justice was *emphasised mostly by the Jewish Israeli respondents*, and especially by R12. The South Africans did not raise the need to rebuild the Palestinian economy and focused more on the eradication of othering, the upholding of human rights and human dignity, as well as inclusive, plural co-existence where people are free to associate with whom and what they want. However, all the South African respondents strongly supported the international BDS campaign, which implies the application of economic measures *in activism*.

Among the South African respondents, therefore, the impoverished Palestinian economy and public infrastructure did not feature much. There were a few exceptions. R1 commented in principle on economic equality (R1 2015:66). A brief remark was made by R3 (2015:42) on the “economic exploitation of Palestinians”. R5 (2015:217) pointed out that some Palestinians benefitted financially from the occupation through their ties with Israeli businesses, as if there were a normal situation, and that Israel is “funded”, “sustained” and “maintained by the United States primarily” (R5 2015:232).

The economic dimension of justice and equality seemed more pertinent to Jewish Israeli respondents, who commented on Israel’s demolition of homes and other infrastructure in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem (R16 2015:12; R20 2015:20; R21 2015:107) and on Israel’s grand scale destruction and killing in Gaza (R1 2015:191; R7 2015:108,155; R8 2015:55; R12 2015:93; R13 2015:69; R16 2015:90; R17 2015:114; R21 2015:84). However, these comments were mostly brief, and were embedded in respondents’ discussion of overall injustice. They were possibly shared with the understanding that I, as the researcher, was already familiar with the context. Comments on land and resource dispossession and other forms of inequality and injustice were also embedded in the aforementioned remarks on the Nakba and the Palestinians’ Right of Return. For R2 (2015:106-107), these manifestations of discrimination, “or the genocide at some other levels”, are not accidental, but deliberate acts of getting rid of people through “ethnic cleansing”, as R12 (2015:70,142) and R19 (2015:52) specifically called it. R11 (2015:52) and R13 (2015:41-42) used the financial impact of war and occupation on the Israeli society, and hence Israel’s imperialist agenda, to campaign for the end of the occupation, as such arguments may appeal to supporters of the Jewish state. R13 (2015:42) explained: “Having a war every few years – what does it mean? You can see that the government really has to tell its lies to encourage people to stay enlisted all the time.”

According to R1 (2015:73), R12 (2015:77-108), R13 (2015:41-42) and R16 (2015:98-100), and Israel’s neo-liberal economics, the military-industrial complex and Israel’s ties with power bases such as the USA require transnational advocacy. The entanglement of Israel’s economy and militarism means that, in the end, Israel is the “least safe place for a Jew to be Jewish” (R16 2015:103). Social, political and economic contradictions bring “uneasiness”, an “overwhelming sadness that many can’t put their fingers on” (R1 2015:90), and “unhappy experiences” (R12 2015:75) that are wrong (R3 2015:75). Such discontent and inequalities, such squandering of potential, R1 and R12 argued, force one to think differently and to seek

better ways of organising society (R1 2015:90):

We can do better! That's basically it. We can do much, much better! It shouldn't be so difficult. The potential of this place is enormous. We all know that. We grew up with that message for sure. Instead of the most amazing potential, we're going the exact opposite direction. (R12 2015:78)

R16 added that transnational activism with regard to economic factors – including making a profit due to the occupation, over and above the boycott of settler produce – is important:

I've been working a lot around issues around the military industry complex in this country and the paramilitary industry, the economic interest in maintaining the conflict and the occupation beyond obviously the settler produce, which is most spoken about and which is more accessible to the people around the world to talk about, to boycott and so on, much more than the military industry which is attached to it. (R16 2015:99)

Other than the remarks by R1, the South Africans' economic focus in their advocacy indeed seemed to focus on the BDS campaign and did not extend to the larger vested economic interests and hegemony. As may have been noted thus far, the respondents in the case study expressed broad and strong *support for the international non-violent BDS campaign*. The need for it, its benefits and its link with the South African case were often mentioned in the case study (R1 2015:44-46, 127-128; R2 2015:88-95,112,157,164; R4 2015:31,98, 112,168-174; R5 2015:165, 212-216; R7 2015:9,45,73,102,135; R8 2015:33,61,70,111,144; R9 2015:23,91,95-98; R10 2015:69,150; R12 2015:50:58; R13 2015:21,41-42; R14 2015:133; R17 2015:89; R18 2015:52-54; R19 2015:58; R20 2015:50-55). The following examples illustrate the general sentiment in the case study:

I am totally pro-BDS as a tactic. ...it's proved to be a very effective tactic in other struggles...like our own. So I'm completely for it, I don't oppose them in that way whatsoever. I think everyone should get behind it. (R9 2015:91-92)

I believe wholeheartedly in the BDS movement and in its principles that it upholds and the end goal of the movement.... BDS has a fabulous strategy and has proven effective both in the South African case and already now in our case, I think it's proven effective daily, it's wonderful. And so I think my main role is to really support Palestinian Struggle and support their demands. (R20 2015:50)

In respect of a comparison with the South African case, R5 perceived mainstream Jewish Israeli voters as indoctrinated; therefore, a change in the system will not arrive by itself, but may do so through international pressure in the form of BDS. Likewise, she says, in South Africa the apartheid government

...didn't just one day have a change of heart. They were dragged kicking and screaming to the negotiations table, because of the response of the rest of the world...that's why the medium term goal would be the complete isolation of Israel. That I think is going to make the difference. (R5 2015:195)

Amongst other things, the BDS campaign calls for the economic isolation of Israel and its businesses, as well as for the Right of Return for millions of Palestinians, who fled or were displaced from their homes and land. To “a very, very materialistic nation where everybody has to keep up with the Jones’s” (R13 2015:41), combined with occupation expenses, the BDS campaign poses a real threat. She stated that the momentum of BDS compelled the Israeli government to appoint a minister to counter the work of BDS. According to R13, who also referred to the relevance of the South African case, “it’s the only way I think that things are going to get moved” (R13 2015:21).

However, some South African respondents perceived BDS South Africa’s alliance with one political party – the African National Congress (ANC) – as problematic. They do not regard the ANC as very pro-Palestinian, because what the party says differs from what it does. The ANC has members who have deep business interests within Israel, so “it’s not ever going to be an ally” (R9 2015:92). Similarly, R8 remarked that ANC resolutions about the plight of the Palestinians and BDS sounded perfect, but the problem was that these were not implemented and that it is unlikely to happen in future,

... simply because ... elites meet with each other at certain spaces, whether it be at Davos, or at trade meetings or whatever ... They make pacts and agreements with each other and sometimes they even warn each other. (R8 2015:144)

The South African solidarity movement, in which BDS South Africa plays a critical role – at least from the perspective of the respondents – needs to be open to all parties and not just the ANC, they argued. R1 (2015:127) commented as follows:

When we talk about BDS, we mean sanctions as well. And if there is one country that should have sanctions, it’s South Africa, given that Israel supported the apartheid regime and given that the present people in power, or in government are the ones who called for sanctions against apartheid South Africa. That just does not gel for me and I refuse to be quiet about that.

#### 5.2.4.4 *Public infrastructure and services*

R12’s views on justice and equality from an economic perspective deserve special attention. He was the only person in the case study to talk extensively about the need to restore the Palestinians’ *neglected and destroyed infrastructure and build an independent, healthy economy*. He offered passionate arguments on change in Jerusalem to serve as a nexus of what is possible in the other Palestinian and Israeli metropolises. East Jerusalem, he says, has suffered from ethnic cleansing and Israel’s deliberate dismantling of the Palestinian economy. It is a metropole that includes a whole district with junctions across the Jordan

Valley to Amman, up the coast to Beirut and across the desert to Baghdad. But if Israel keeps the illegal Wall as it is, and if Israel continues to displace Palestinian Jerusalemites as they currently do, all that economic potential is lost. As it is, at the moment the Wall separates the city's central business district from the Palestinians' work force and their business district:

By doing that, they're causing thousands of Palestinian businesses to shut down and the unemployment rates to rocket in the suburbs. That's not rocket science. That's not even, that is not religious. That has nothing to do with whether you're Jewish, Muslim or Christian, or the Biblical narratives of King David, or where the Temple Mount is placed. That has to do with urban planning. (R12 2015:28)

For me it's gone economically, it's gone the way we use resources, heritage, sewerage... That's why Jerusalem has to be front and centre [...] Jerusalem is not just a religious capital. It's not just symbolic, it's also an economic capital. (R12 2015:146-147)

R12 also argued that there is a link between socio-political and economic rights and discrimination. Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem have neither political representation, nor the right to vote. They suffer from neglect on all levels – from poor “waste management, how often the garbage truck comes, through to hospitals” (R12 2015:148). Since 1995, the oppression of these Palestinians has been exacerbated by the financial agreement between Israel and the PA, he says. Neo-liberal capitalism in Israel-Palestine started when the Israeli Shekel replaced the Jordanian Dinar in the West Bank and the Egyptian pound in Gaza. Since the Paris Protocol, Israel has control over Palestinians' income, their export taxes and their value added tax (VAT).<sup>125</sup> “It was a two-state solution based on a one-state economy that was based on the new Israeli Shekel, a coin that Israel only lodged...in 1985” (R12 2015:131). To make matters even worse, the international aid system benefits Israel and it keeps the Palestinians dependent, since the flow of funds is not guaranteed over longer periods:

The whole world is paying – the European Union is paying 750 million Euros a year now to the PA for state building. Australia spends 500 million Aussie dollars a year. All funds go to the Bank of Israel, it is taxed and then it's used to pay the Palestinian Authority salaries and pension funds. By definition they're subcontractors to the Israeli occupation. Their job is to take care of those municipal responsibilities. It's not a political slogan, it's their contract. If they do something wrong, Israel will withhold civil

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<sup>125</sup> The Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, signed on 29 April 1994, was incorporated with minor amendments into the Oslo II Accord of September 1995. This protocol was meant to apply to an interim period of five years, but it is still in place. It specifies that Israel controls all Palestinian borders and hence Palestine also has no direct access to the world economy. Moreover, Israel is in charge of Palestinian customs, taxes, labour, agriculture, industry and tourism and the New Israeli Shekel (NIS) is used as currency in the occupied Palestinian territories. Palestinians may not use their own currency. All Palestinian imports are subject to Israeli supervision and Israel has sole control over the collection of import taxes and VAT. As of 2016, the Rafah Border Crossing is controlled by Egypt, but Egypt supports the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

services. That happens every once in a while. That's the contract. The rest of it, Area C, is given to the United Nations and the NGOs to administer and they can only administer the things in short-term increments, which keep Palestinians dependant economically on humanitarian aid. It's a 'brilliant' system. (R12 2015:134-136)

While the dire circumstances of the Palestinians are not the focus of this study, the points mentioned above contextualised the reasons for R12's activism. He argued from the perspective of a range of local and international discriminatory practices – the structure whereby international aid is supplied, his first-hand experience of other parts of the world that function better and his appreciation for the Gaia concept.<sup>126</sup> All of these perspectives have informed his *advocacy for practical, grassroots change*:

I: You are talking about a change in systems, right? Systemic change in the world?

R12: Sure, but at least locally in Jerusalem.

I: But Jerusalem is connected to the rest of the world – to Europe, to the United States, to everywhere, to religions, to everything. That's why I'm saying it's viewed by many as a pinnacle point. It's a mammoth task that you're taking on.

R12: If we manage to open Jericho Road and let people from Abu Dis and Al'Elzariya come back, walk back to work and back to the hospitals and visit family and let the fruits and vegetables come back through Jericho Road to be sold in the Old City market, then Jerusalem will breathe again. It doesn't have to be so difficult. (R12 2015:137-140)

R12 maintains that activists need to understand the Israeli regime's strategy for passing new laws that prepare for continued Zionist domination:

I: So it's about exercising economic power to mask political power?

R12: I think that's absolutely what's happening now. I think Israeli politicians know exactly what they're doing as they pass these laws. Even though everybody is asking why is this relevant? What's the point in doing this? I think that's the point. We're preparing for a one-state solution, but a one-state solution that is completely Zionist-dominated. And the world will celebrate the end of the occupation, but in truth Palestinians will not have regained the land, will not have control over the education curriculums, will not even be able to choose their own flag.

I: You are highlighting that if we think that it is a political, or an ethical, or a human rights issue ...(interruption)

R12: It is not.

I: It is not. It is an issue of pure greed and power, but it is expressed through having an economic hold on people. And that is what we are struggling with in South Africa.

R12: Not original. Not original in Northern Island, not original in Ireland itself, not original in any colonialist context. But we're not paying attention as a movement, we're missing it. It's happening right under our nose and we're not learning lessons from previous economies. (R12 2015:63-68)

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<sup>126</sup> R12's comments on the Gaia concept are presented in Section 4.2.

For this reason, R12 wants the international community to help the Palestinian grassroots leaders to become economically independent to develop a viable vision and he appeals to the broader solidarity movement to do the same (R12 2015:124). Since there is currently no platform, no substance and no international support to develop such dreams and visions, R12 *regards urban planning in Jerusalem as urgent and important*. He grew up learning about Moses, King David, Solomon and Christ and the need to find peace between Jews and Muslims or Arabs, “but that has nothing to do with running a city. That is a complete distraction from the practical realities of making sure people have jobs and that there is proper infrastructure and enough schools for everybody to go to” (R12 2015:29). When R12 and his colleagues speak with Palestinians about the need for urban planning and a vision for the city, the first things Palestinians ask are question such as “Will this get me a job? Am I going to be able to make it to the clinic for the birth of my baby? Will there be enough schools for my kids to go to?” And the answer, according to R12, is “no, it’s not, right now. But this is what we have to talk about now” (R12 2015:38):

Nobody is talking about infrastructure, hospitals and access to healthcare. Nobody is talking about employment and what the next generation is going to need in terms of developing new industrial zones, waste management and how we deal with sewerage and the drainage. Nobody is talking about education. Nobody is talking about gender and gender roles in this massive society. This is the capital! This is the largest city! No-one is talking about it and no-one has talked about it in 20 years, except the Israeli settler movement who have the blueprints already submitted at municipal level and they’re implementing them and they don’t include Palestinians. By definition the only infrastructure plans that are created for Jerusalem don’t have Palestinians in them in 20 years. None of it is under discussion! (R12 2015:37)

### **5.2.5 Sub-conclusion**

*There is no doubt among the respondents that all human lives matter equally and therefore the same yardstick – based on a shared humanity – applies to all. They consider equality a basic framework from which to approach life, and it is part of the respondents’ desire for integrity and moral consistency. Justice is understood within this framework as a means to restore. It is necessary to hone one’s conduct, language, tone and manner in such a way that they signify inclusivity, equality and justice for all parties in the Palestinian project.*

*Such an ethos of a common humanity must be evident in one’s entire conduct. Therefore, it is necessary to address incongruences between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The respondents argued passionately against the marginalisation and discrimination of Palestinians by restricting their identity to culture, ethnicity, nationality, religious tradition,*

*or any other kind of unjust categorisation. Instead of trying to divide and to establish lineages of reduction and/or superiority they call for overcoming the boundaries between the Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. At this point their focus is on the Palestinians and on correcting the discrimination against them.*

*The findings of the case study presented a variety of options in respect of religion. These include adherence to specific religious traditions and/or understanding religion in existential or other terms. The respondents acknowledged options in religious association and they appreciate those that foster justice and equality. Although these values and the relationships between them were argued from different perspectives, such as Christianity, Islam, Marxism, feminism, atheism and so forth, none of the respondents claimed ownership for her/his understanding of justice and equality as exclusive to only her/his convictions, or spoke from positions of superior religiosity, or on behalf of God. No matter what their personal religious convictions are, all shared the commitment to justice and equality as interconnected values within the framework of a shared humanity.*

*In addition to the respondents' internalised, personal positions on justice and equality, they argued that these values should be institutionalised and applied in international and Israeli law, in the Palestinian economy, in religious freedom for all and in the practicalities of urban planning. In respect of such planning, Jerusalem was cited as a case in point. There is broad support among the respondents for non-violent resistance through the international BDS campaign.*

*Just as compassion and altruistic love need to be applied with integrity and consistency, equality and justice are seen as values that need to be embraced and embodied in respect of all parties in the Palestinian project – the oppressed, the oppressor, audiences, the public and fellow activists. In light of this inclusive understanding, the respondents mentioned state Zionism, Christian Zionism, Israeli apartheid, all of Israel's double standards that divide Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, as well as Israel's embedded ways of oppressing the Palestinians as unacceptable disturbances that need to be solved. The call for equality and restorative justice was regarded as very important to activism.*

### 5.3 Honesty, truth and openness

This section focuses largely on Zionism and the respondents' desire for transparent, honest societies. It also provides a summary of what is perceived as the common lies, myths and silences that obscure the Palestinian project, and it presents the respondents' thoughts on how they discern what is true from what is not.

#### 5.3.1 *For honest and transparent societies*

The case study revealed intense discontent with carefully manufactured Zionist lies to sidestep and to hide the truth from the public. *The starting point* for working towards justice is “*to see the injustice*” (R14 2015:24, my emphasis). R14 was jailed three times for refusing to serve in the Israeli army. These experiences in prison made him “see” what it is like to be treated as the “bad guy” when society puts one behind bars. He suggested that the Palestinians see this reality, but it is all too “obvious that most Israelis are so blind to the reality”. As a professional activist who has done a lot of work among Palestinians and Jewish Israelis over the years, R14 frequently noted how his fellow Jewish Israeli citizens in their first encounters with Palestinians “are so shocked”. Their verbal responses are typically violent, “but most of the time they are so helpless, they have no – they are so shocked, they don’t know – most of the things they don’t know” (R14 2015:23). They are clueless about “so many wrongs” and their “ideas about Arabs” are mostly “simply false”. When they meet with Palestinians, they discover what is already “so clear” to the Palestinians. The Palestinians see the injustices, “and I think we should be very aware of their voices. So this is the basic level, to see the injustice” (R14 2015:24).

R21 explained how her former ideas were shattered:

I was born on a kibbutz in the North. I had grown up hearing about the Arab villages around, but I hadn’t interrogated what it meant to have built a kibbutz ... what it had meant. I knew ... that the conflict was terrible, but I saw it much more as a two-sided issue. And then when I started really unpacking the imbalance – I mean I knew there was an occupation, I didn’t deny it, but somehow I suppose all the narratives around the other side not ever agreeing .... So I thought it was much more balanced than it turned out to be in reality. (R21 2015:29)

Honesty and trust are *basic, but critical and profound, values in the Palestinian struggle for freedom* (R1 2015:54-57,102,129; R14 2015:91-94). R12 singled out honesty as essential if one truly wants equality:

I: Why is having an equal society important to you?

R12: Why is it important to live in an equal society?

I: I want to hear your words.

R12: I think it's important to live in an honest society, to begin with. And I think right now we are all being very dishonest. We don't speak truth. When the Israelis and the Zionist movement say we're the only democracy in the Middle East we're lying entirely. That is a lie. First and foremost, I think it's important that we come to terms with ourselves, that we're honest with ourselves. That's the first step. It's an enormous one. And I think on religious and spiritual and existential levels I don't want to live a lie. I lived a lie growing up and I'm furious about it and I think too many people are living – whether they know it or not – in a dishonest reality. And we deserve better. We deserve to live truth. (R12 2015:71-74)

R12 rebelled against the misrepresentation of history. He was horrified by the silence in Israeli society about the Nakba and the skewed mainstream narrative at the cost of Palestinians and other marginalised citizens such as Moroccan, Iraqi and Kurdish Jewish Israelis, due to Israel's so-called democracy, which is actually “based on racist ideologies”: “We've rewritten history that is more convenient – not for Israelis, but for wealthy Israelis” (R12 2015:22). Civilians deserve to know the truth about the origin of Israel and the reality of the Palestinians “to make conscious decisions on personal and community and national levels” (R12 2015:22). There is an onus on Jewish Israelis to find out what really happened; they should not naively believe what they are told: “It's comforting, it's settling to believe in a system. Wherever you are, it makes your life nicer” (R19 2015:21). In his case, his “naïve parts were also killed together with those children” in Gaza.

The respondents *want to live in honest societies devoid of Zionist myths and lies*. Here too their desire for consistency in applying their values means that they are concerned both with the Palestinians and with their own communities. From the preceding discussion in Part B, it should be clear by now that when respondents became disenchanted, it gave rise to their activism – once they realised that they had previously been “committed to a lie” (R13 2015:10,26) in believing Zionism a virtuous option, and once they found that it contrasted with their desire for integrated consistency in the application of their values. Yet, even among those who never regarded themselves as Zionists, some unwittingly also used to accept Zionist “truths”, without realising how vested and embedded the Zionism narrative is in mainstream perceptions. R4, for example, used to believe in the idea of interfaith dialogue as a constructive approach to solve the problem, and R5 thought the Israeli-Palestinian issue was a religious clash.

The idea of Israel as a healthy democracy is a misnomer (R1 2015:119; R2 205:101; R5 2015:229-232, R12 2015:74,128). R15 listed several reasons for saying that it is inappropriate to laud Israel as a democracy. Arab-Palestinian Israelis are elected to the Parliament, but they may not dispute the Jewish state. Since 1948, not a single Palestinian city has been established. Because there is population growth and because Palestinians are not granted building permits, they build illegally. R15 explained that this is only one way through which Israeli democracy suffers. Her fellow citizens in general do not see this dichotomy, or the systemic discrimination against Palestinians in Israel, because of Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and in Gaza, so her core focus is to help the Israeli society "see" the occupation and its destructive and detrimental impact on everyone and the state (R15 2015:125). To this end, her organisation has already taken approximately 2 000 Israelis to visit the occupied Palestinian territory, and

...it shocked them. It was exactly like under (South African) apartheid. How many people from Rondebosch or Constantia have ever been to Gugulethu? It was very convenient that you didn't see it. You lead your White life very nicely without knowing what was going on. (R15 2015:32)

If one holds a false belief that Israel is a true and a healthy democracy and one ignores the unbearable tension between democracy and oppression, one is clinging to an illusion:

If you think that we have the most moral army in the world and we are the chosen people and we have a democracy, then you can't at the same time see yourself as an oppressor, as a racist and all of that. So you prefer the better definition. The Israelis are definitely totally convinced that we have the most moral army in the world and that we are the chosen people. (R15 2015:33)

R3 (2015:120,126), R7 (134-136) and R8 also spoke of the necessity for honesty and openness in activist circles. R8, for example, deliberately enters into discussions with activists who sound anti-Semitic. He tries to facilitate a space for them to freely say what they think and he uses it "as an opportunity to humanise the conversation, to create nuances in that conversation. To give it a richer texture, so that the person himself or herself can also be humanised through the process of activism" (R8 2015: 91-92).

The respondents experienced public myths about the Palestinians and about Israel's role in their oppression as *lies orchestrated and manufactured* by the Israeli regime, Zionists and related organisations, institutions, churches, businesses, and so forth. The Jewish National Fund, for example, raises money all over the world – including in South Africa – for the so-called greening of the desert. In reality, the trees are used to cover up demolished Palestinian

villages in an attempt to erase memories. The South African Zionist Federation and the Homecoming Revolution actively encourage South Africans to immigrate to illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory (R5 2015:123; R13 2105: 52-54). Zionism is entrenched in society, for example, in most South African (R5 2015:26) and Israeli (R12 2015:21) school syllabi, in South African and other churches (R8 2015:11-12; R10 2015:138), and in South African and Israeli synagogues (R13 2015:23; R20 2015:8-9; R21 2015:84). It is also part of Israel's compulsory military education (R15 2015:35-37). The silence of intellectuals afraid to make "career limiting" moves if they were to speak "truth to power" is complicit too (R1 2015:94).

Moreover, South African and Israeli politicians (R8 2015:57; R10 2015: 130-134; R17 2015:110) and a "very well-funded, sophisticated lobby group" (R5 2015:144) that spends "a huge amount of resources, millions of US dollars on getting their particular narrative out" (R8 2015:60) actively promote Christian, Jewish and secular state Zionism to lure the public into believing falsehoods. Israel's citizens are exposed to

... Israeli news which is only in Hebrew, not in English. So we don't get a lot of the critical voices from around the world, definitely don't speak Arabic, so we definitely don't get that critical voice. We don't get it. The Israeli media is very controlled. It's not so different from other media. Our three newspapers are just as controlled as Australia's media and the US media. (Indistinct 38:03) hands out the most widely spread newspaper for free on Israeli corners for years now. He is a staunch supporter of Netanyahu and there are two other newspapers. There is the *Yedioth Ahronoth*, the largest newspaper that's owned by the same people that own the cell phone companies and the cable TV networks that run the (indistinct name 38:35) news programmes in a very staunchly right-wing way connected to Netanyahu's government. *Maariv* right now is edited by a man who has been convicted of belonging to [a] Jewish supremacist terrorist organisation that tried to blow up the Al-Aqsa mosque in the 1980s. People don't realise this, but these are the people that control our media. *Haaretz* is the last one that people quote. Israel ran into some major economic problems over the last few years and the way out was to let Sheldon Adelson print the Netanyahu propaganda newspaper in the *Haaretz* print shop. So Sheldon Adelson is also involved with *Haaretz*. That's our media, that's what we can say. (R12 2015:82-83)

Furthermore, *Jews in both countries deliberately mask or hide Israel's discrimination in the public sphere*. They keep discussions on the topic to themselves and discourage fellow Jews from speaking out. They want them to "just keep quiet", or to "keep it in the community at least" and to not talk "about these things in such a public way ... to air the dirty laundry so publicly" (R21 2015:91-92). R11 (2015:101-104) reported that in his experience international Jewish audiences usually say "yes, we understand, but please don't say it very

loudly, ... leave it inside the community, don't make a noise" because they do not want the "gentiles" to become part of

... this internal [issue]. But this is what they say when we are in front of each other. In public they don't have the courage to come and to say, yes, you are right and we should disconnect ourselves from the Israel embassy. And the Germans they usually say, yes, it's true what you say, but maybe the next generation will be able to make the shift. We cannot do it.

In contrast to such Jews, the respondents sought integration between what they stand for and their societies. It took R13 (2015:59) years before she could explain and talk openly about her activism to her own community. It was something she could not do earlier. Finally sharing with her community that she, with other women in Israel, in Germany and in Palestine, were all working for something better affirmed her sense of integrity. Being honest with one's local Jewish society about one's advocacy can, actually, bring a sense of relief and even unexpected appreciation (R13 2015:59-60) when one gets rid of a "mask" (R17 2015:108), or a "false comfort" (R21 2015:48-49):

I feel much better now. I feel much healthier, even though it's so challenging, but there is something around having dug at the truth ... I can't carry on being blind. It's not comfortable and easy, but there is something that is more real, it's more honest ... So there is a bit of healing there. (R21 2015:49)

The desire to live with transparency and openness in one's society underlines the respondents' emphasis on moral integrity and consistency in their relations. Some (R7, R8, R9, R12 and R19) stressed that they did not want to erase friendships and bonds with their family and communities, although they want them to share their own inclusive values:

I don't want to solicit myself from the whole large Israeli community. I want to change Israel, I would want for Israel to be different, but I would want for the people living here to continue living here. (R17 2015:109)

### ***5.3.2 To unmask the heresy of Zionism***

*It is important to the respondents to unmask a plethora of lies and myths in the mainstream narrative about Israel and the Palestinians and to show alternatives. If one reads the code linked to myths and lies together with the code that denies the perception of the Palestinian project as part of a religious clash, perceptions on myths and lies form one of the three most grounded issues in the case study. From an intellectual and a scholarly perspective, there is*

...the desire and the need and the anxiety to correct the distortions, the falsifications, the obfuscations, the canards. It's a deeply felt scholarly endeavour that you have a role to play in cataloguing. Or if you want to sound Christian about it, to be witness to, to write

about, to express your views, to challenge power, to challenge the lies. (R1 2015:103-104)

For R13, R14, R15 and R17, their desire to sensitise and educate the public about the dishonesties, injustices, the damaging effects of patriarchy, colonialism, militarism and Zionism, as well as the desire to change the mainstream discourse on the Palestinian project, forms the essence of their advocacy tasks. Furthermore, the core tasks of R11, R16 and R21 to change the ethos in Israel are also related to the correction of misperceptions. Speaking the truth is essential to R3, while R8 and R10 want to address the wrongs of Christian Zionism. Thus, almost half of the respondents' desire to bring falsities into the open and to correct these misperceptions are at the heart of their self-perceived motivations for activism in the Palestinian project.

The preceding sections in Part B already contain many examples of the Zionist perceptions that gave rise to these activists' work. The main kinds of dishonesties in need of correction are summarised below, without repeating all the above examples. Each reason is merely mentioned and accompanied by a few references.

*These activists oppose several myths and lies, such as the following:*

- the claim that the horror of the Holocaust was exclusive to Jews, and therefore protecting Jewish lives is more important than protecting other lives (R2 2015:201-202; R9 2015:64; R15 2015:25,55);
- the abuse of the memory of the Holocaust to justify the oppression of the Palestinians (R9 2015:64; R21 2015:153);
- the claim that Jews have all the right to all the land (R6 2015:32; R11 2015:11; R13 2015:10), exclusive to Jews only, and without the Palestinians (R1 2015:51; R2 2015:102);
- the pretence that all Jews agree that Israel is the only safe place for them (R13 2015:26,50; R15 2015:49,51; R16 2015:103; R18 2015:100);
- the positioning of Israel as “the underdog” that came into its own through a “miracle” complemented by the sheer bravery of “courageous Jews” who are “up against all these Arab terrorists” (R5 2015:26; R7 2015:37);
- the portrayal of Zionism and its Kibbutz movement as a socialist Utopian society (R12 2015:91; R13 2015:26,34);

- the belief that Israel is a harsh land that was civilised by immigrant Jews (R13 2015:26);
- the omission of the Nakba from history curricula and the denial of the destruction and occupation of hundreds of Palestinian villages coupled with mass displacement associated with the Nakba before, during and after 1948 (R7 2015:32,36-37; R12 2015:20,60; R13 2015:52-54; R14 2015:68; R21 2015:46,171);
- the denial of ongoing marginalisation through “ethnic cleansing” and displacement of Palestinians, and Israel’s ongoing illegal confiscation of Palestinian land and resources, and the ensuing economic exploitation of Palestinians (R1 2015:73; R8 2015:23; R12 2015:70,75,142);
- the pretence that money donated to the Jewish National Fund is for an ecological project when the project actually tries to erase the memories of the Nakba, by using the greening project to cover up demolished Palestinian villages in Israel (R13 2015:54);
- the deliberate confusion of the issue with a religious clash (R5 2015:16; R8 2015:70-93; R9 2015:65; R12 2015:28-19);
- the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism (R2 2015:155-156; 171-176; R8 2015:71);
- the claim that Jewish and Christian Zionism with all its many permutations is the truth and is morally sound (R8 2015:11-12;17-22,38-39; R10 2015:169; R15 2015:33; R20 2015:58);
- the active promotion of fear as a valid reason for the suppression of Palestinians and pretending that there are no choices or alternatives (R13 2015:20; R14 2015:65);
- the claim that all Palestinians are “potential terrorists” (R5 2015:23,25-29; R6 2015:31; R7 2015:41; R8 2015:13,18; R12 2015:96; R15 2015:35,108,127; R19 2015:144);
- the claim that Israel has “the most moral army in the world” (R15 2015:33) that bravely defends the country against hostile Palestinians (R18 2015:41-42; R12 2015:20);
- the hiding of the fact that Israel is a regional military super power (R10 2015:41) with nuclear weapons that also threaten the Palestinians (R13 2015:17,69);
- the praise of Israel as a “bastion of civilisation and democracy” in the Middle East (R2 2015:101; R5 2015:229,230-232; R6 2015:37; R12 2015:74,128; R15 2015:33-42) with no double standards for citizenship or civil service that disadvantages Palestinians (R12

2015:34; R13 2015:42-45), and with every reason to commemorate Israel's Day of Independence (R21 2015:171);

- the argument that Israel is “singled” out for criticism by the world (R2 2015:92,110; R5 2015:229);
- the pretence that the USA is an impartial broker (R8 2015:23,144) with respect for international law pertaining to Israel and the Palestinians (R5 2015:201,232);
- the portrayal of the issue as a “conflict” that requires a solution of “peace” through “dialogue” and “negotiation” (R4 2015:21-22; R12 2015:29,40); and
- the application of double standards by saying one thing and doing another in respect of Israel, like the South African government (R1 2015:129; R9 2015:92).

The misrepresentation and the *inappropriate application of dialogue* in the context of the Palestinian project has not been raised thus far in Part B, but it also warrants attention.

The idea of “dialogue” and its role in the Palestinian project elicited strong, varied and seemingly opposing views that need to be unpacked. At the outset, it seemed as if some respondents (R8, R9, R18 and R19) derived value from dialogue, while others (R4, R12, R13 and R20) were clearly opposed to the practice. However, when one takes a closer look, all the respondents stressed the same point. Talks between people from opposing sides are insincere and lead nowhere if these discussions do not acknowledge the power asymmetry and the systemic oppression.

R8 qualified why he, as a South African, supports “dialogue”, but not “debate”, with the South African Zionist lobby:

I firmly believe in dialogue, not necessarily in debate. Dialogue is listening, respectful listening. Dialogue creates space for people, almost like a safe space – so saying to the person from the Jewish Board of Deputies, ‘You are not my enemy. I mean you, I don’t hate you.’ I genuinely don’t hate them. (R8 2015:89-89)

Yet R8 (2015:70) pointed out that discussions between activists in the Palestinian project and Zionists “cannot be ping-pong and equal”, given the asymmetric power relations between Israel and the Palestinians. It is not about “you say that; I will say this. You say that, I will say this” (R8 2015:65). He is not neutral in such discussions, but “on the side of the truth, of justice. I am against oppression. That must be hundred per cent clear to whomever I speak to. But there might be details that I’m willing to engage on a bit more” (R8 2015:91) such as the effects of anti-Semitism.

But R4 shared a different sentiment. He is wary of the motives of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and argues that they have replaced dialogue “for the sake of it” with a “much more sophisticated version”, in which they “use the idea of religious difference or ethnic difference” and anti-Semitism to reel one “into an endless conversation. So instead of talking about sanctions” (R4 2015:30), they keep one busy under the guise of bringing people together, but it leads nowhere.

R17 remarked that “what counts for the one, counts for the other too. When she is told, for example, “but they’re shooting from schools”, R17 in turn asks: “But where are Israel’s headquarters? And the answer is in the centre of Tel Aviv, just under the biggest mall” (R17 2015:118). R18 (2015:12) and R19 (2015:22) had positive associations with dialogue or workshops with Palestinians. It was where their respective conscientising processes started, and both later became facilitators of such groups. R20 (2015:18), for example, explained that her impressions of what the Israeli military is and what life in Israel entails were radically altered in a dialogue group. Her shocking realisations turned her benevolent impressions of the military upside down and it triggered her conscientising process. Yet, R20 (2015:15) is “adamantly opposed to dialogue groups today”. The awakening that led to her change was “definitely the exception”, since all the other Jewish Israelis in her group ended up enrolling for military service. She has never “encountered any dialogue group that has ever done a good job of addressing the power difference” (R20 2015:36). In her opinion it might be impossible to create an honest space for discussion without addressing the injustice. Like R20, R12 and R4 also affirmed the danger of being lured into so-called balanced, equal discussions between Israeli supporters and Palestinians in which the power asymmetry is sidestepped in both the nature of the contents and in the structure of the interaction:

I work in a Palestinian organisation, but I don’t work directly in the field anymore. It’s too much of a distraction and it’s not my job to convince people to talk to Israelis. I don’t think Israelis and Palestinians need to get along. This is not about dialogue and co-existence or peace. I think that’s also a big distraction. I think that happens when we can meet on an equal field and we can have a discussion. When we both have our mortgage paid off and if someone doesn’t have a bulldozer in front of their house, then maybe we can start talking, but until then I have no need to force somebody to accept me. (R12 2015:40)

It is easy to miss these dynamics if one is not informed, as R4 explained. He recalled an encounter with an interfaith dialogue camp in the USA when he was still at school. It was one of the best weeks in his life – a “really wonderful” camp – he says. At the time, the idea of interfaith dialogue sounded great, and it was something he believed in wholeheartedly as a

means to resolve issues, for one just has to listen to the other. His enthusiasm turned into a rude awakening when he realised how the interfaith camp misconstrued reality:

That myth was shattered the day I landed in Tel Aviv. I landed in Tel Aviv and I spent eight hours in interrogation and I wasn't interested in dialogue any more. I was not interested in dialogue and I could understand why people are frustrated and why they don't want to dialogue. Those three months in Palestine taught me more about justice, taught me more about dialogue, but in the pursuit of justice, not dialogue for the sake of it. That is what the interfaith camp was for the most part about. (R4 2015:21-22)

When he finally arrived in the occupied Palestinian territory, R4 – as a Muslim – worked in a Palestinian Christian organisation in pursuit of liberation. It was in that pursuit that he learned what it means to have a Sunday service, that there are different denominations and practices, how Easter and Christmas are celebrated. Hence he gained an appreciation for the values that people from different faiths have in common. The problem with interfaith dialogue, according to R4, is that it is often used to frustrate or to sabotage a pursuit of justice. For example, to get Muslims and Jews together merely to talk about their differences is precisely like the peace process, which leads nowhere:

So let's get Israelis and Palestinians together, let's just get them actually into an endless conversation. So I'm not saying the conversation is wrong. But let's have a conversation in the pursuit of resolving this. Let us have an understanding that international law is the basis. Let's just have some primary things that we have to take as a given and then we can learn how to share this land or this piece of cake, whatever the issue is. For as long you are going to hold the entire cake and we're just going to be talking about our differences, I'm sorry, I'm getting hungry here, on this side of the table. I can talk about what your culture means to you and what your whatever means to you, but you're eating and I'm not. And that cake was mine, by the way, that you stole actually. I'm willing to share the cake with you. I'm giving in to that at least. Now can you give in to certain things? Can you first accept that the cake was mine? And can we have a discussion about how we're going to share this cake, instead of talking about each other's cultures for the sake of it? (R4 2015:25-27)

Generally speaking, dialogue groups between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis are not enough to “undermine years of brainwashing...the narrative in Israel is so overwhelming and so omnipresent” (R20 2015:31). In hindsight, R20 (2015:32) thinks of her dialogue group as “terrible”, because despite having one Palestinian and one Israeli facilitator, they never discussed the power difference. In her group, the Jewish Israelis considered themselves the “underdog” and looked upon the Palestinians as a neighbouring enemy without any idea that to arrive at the dialogue group discussion venue, the Jewish Israelis simply had to take a bus while the Palestinians had to go through checkpoints and live under their occupation.

It's inappropriate to bring an oppressor and an oppressed in the same room, to speak as equals when they are not equals. The one group is clearly, actively oppressing the other. And there is a huge power difference and I also don't think that it was appropriate for the same reason during South African apartheid to bring, I would assume, Blacks and Whites together in a room as though they were peers, for they are not peers. Some are ruling the others. And so it's a very strange idea to bring the rulers and the ruled together [...] In retrospect, I think what on earth, what must it have been like for the Palestinians to come in and hear us? There was yelling in the group and there were accusations thrown across the room. For a Palestinian who was living under our occupation, to hear us then complaining or accusing them of things, how inappropriate, you know. So I feel very ashamed in retrospect of our behaviour. (R20 2015:35)

R20 argued that now is not the time for truth and reconciliation committees: "Dialogue groups will be necessary, but the day after the occupation, not while it is still ongoing" (R20 2015:40). R10 agreed:

I advocate reconciliation after justice. If you put reconciliation this side of justice, you are bound to compromise all reconciliation and justice. So I think the safe place for reconciliation is to put it after justice. For example, when Mandela went to Betsie Verwoerd's house and had coffee – it is correct that you must do that, not before he went to the Rivonia Trial and before '94. So you first need to resolve the big contradiction of injustice and then you can go and have coffee with Betsie and say, let bygones be bygones, let's reconcile. (R10 2015:84)

For now, dialogue forums in Israel are instruments that try to falsely normalise Palestinians and Jewish Israelis as peers. The respondents argued that Jewish Israelis have an obligation to visit Palestinians and to "see their life, on their terms in their territory" and not in some allegedly neutral space with a façade that hides the reality. Jewish Israelis can, for example, attend vigils and protests with Palestinians and help them with the annual olive harvest, but whatever support they offer,

...should not be from a place of dialogue, it should be from a place first of all of listening, because as Israelis our first obligation is to listen ... our first obligation is simply, simply to listen and it's not a place to start expressing opinions. I think as an activist, from experience with Palestinian people, my first job is always to listen and to be very attentive. (R20 2015:39-40)

It is one's duty to be honest with one's audiences, opponents and fellow activists (R7 2015:45; R10 2015:20; R14 2015:91-94; R19 2015:29). Being honest means being "authentic" as opposed to being nice just for the sake of it or manipulating others (R4 2015:33-36,40):

Niceties often mean that you accumulate a lot of frustration, because there is no honest dialogue with you. There is no genuine conversation happening. It allows you to live a much ... freer life. That living of a freer life allows you ... to be the nicer person that we all should be deep down. (R4 2015:36)

Thus, having an “honest conversation” (R1 2015:129) by pointing out the problem and Israel’s role in it “allows them to deal with it” and means that one is not “walking away from this person that smells bad” (R4 2015:44). R12 pointed out that it actually takes more guts to live a lie than to be liberated from those lies. He does not know how his friends have held it together for so long: “I get to work in Ramallah and Bethlehem and they’re scared silly in Ramallah and Bethlehem. They think everybody is a potential terrorist” (R12 2015:96).

The case study revealed two views on dialogue and its role in the Palestinian project. On the one hand, *bi-lateral discussions can hide the power asymmetry and pretend to be a way of moving closer to one another, while it actually deepens the divide*. Such discussions are devoid of honesty and restorative justice and can deteriorate into meaningless, insincere political jargon, or become a way to buy time and prolong the oppression of Palestinians. On the other, it is possible to experience *a shift in one’s perceptions on the Palestinian project in such forums*, or speak one’s truth to those who hide or deny it. Whether the respondents see value in talking to others (for example, Zionists) or not, they shared the sentiment that *radical honesty in engaging with differing parties about the power asymmetry is essential*.

### 5.3.3 *Discerning what is true*

How do the respondents know what is true and what is not? R8 (2015:69) sounded very sure that “truth will always win. There is just this huge confidence I have”. In his view, the essence of truth is that all people are equal, no matter what their circumstances or appearance. Thus, everything else is “just irrelevancies”, “fluff” or “overlay” that needs to be “cracked open, to get to the truth, to the real deep truth” (R8 2015:123).

Claims to truth are a central, important point of dispute and they are often encountered by the respondents in the course of their work. The general view of truth among the respondents in the case study is that they *do not lean towards absolute truths, or towards winning arguments at all costs*. Most of the respondents were careful not to claim that they know “truth” in the sense that certain ideas and facts are fixed and superior to others. R4 regards “truth” as one of the issues at stake, but not as the one that will necessarily bring about a shift in perceptions:

Some people think that it’s all about ‘Let me tell you the truth’ – that it’s the truth that will change the world. I don’t think the truth will change the world. It’s much deeper than just the truth [...] In [anonymous organisation] it’s about strategy and I think it’s again about this deeper love that you need to have. I don’t know whether the truth has ever saved the world from anything. (R4 2015:193-195)

R18 agreed that it is not only about countering untruths with “facts”, but about showing an alternative attitude and position – she commented on so-called “core facts” often used by Zionists to argue against the Palestinian project:

I don't like the discussion that comes out of core facts, because I think that all the facts are not really facts and a lot of those discussions have a basis that's very biased and then you cannot get anywhere. In those situations, I really try to bring ... I give a different energy to it, like to talk about humanism in a way that's not left or right, in a way that's just, you know, people are being really badly treated – and in my name – and I don't want that to happen at all, let alone in my name. I try to bring those conversations to that aspect, I think. (R18 2015:72-73)

Despite her firm convictions, R16 (2015:48) stated: “I don't have the hypocrisy to think I have the truth.” She argued that it is important to be open to learning:

I: How do you know – this is the way to go and this is what I should stand for amongst so many possible options?

R16: I don't. It's what I think. It's obviously an accumulation of a lot of different things that I went through during my life. I mean a lot of things that I saw, witnessed and conversations I've had. I've changed the way I speak about my own identity, the way I see possible solutions here. I've changed throughout the years. I can't tell you that I know anything ... sure, I have a very set ideology, but it's something that not only changes all the time, it's actually important for me to make sure they can continue to change. I don't think I know everything. (R16 2015:45-46)

R16 and others (R6 2015:50; R7 2015:33,40-41,127,133-142; R16 2015:48-50; R21 2015:139-141; R8 2015:71-72) *embrace mutual learning, personal growth and understanding while recognising that one can make mistakes*. As with R8, for R16 it means that others can learn from her way of seeing things just as she can learn how to understand them. Learning from them may not necessarily change her values, but it can deepen her understanding. In speaking about a public debate on former Israeli soldiers' public testimonies of their combat in Operation Cast Lead (in the Gaza War of 2008-2009), R13 commented as follows:

Things cannot be just black and white. There is always going to be a lot of greys. So you know, they are indoctrinated, they were young and brainwashed and if they can come to some kind of realisation that what they did was wrong... Even if they don't go to the International Criminal Court, for the rest of their lives they're going to be regretting their position and the consequences. And I'm not going to justify their military involvement, but I also understand the humanistic nature and I need to be in that place also. (R13 2015:97)

The desire for greater congruency between morality and behaviour entails *life-long, dynamic, cyclical journeys of continuous learning, unlearning, relearning and rethinking* (R21 2015:139,141,149). R6 acknowledged: “I'm never going to arrive at a point that I know everything” (R6 2015:49-50). “[K]nowing and thinking and being and acting are all inter-

connected and it's always a work in progress and in process" (R6 2015:50). Yesterday's truths can be today's falsehoods (R7 2015:127), so the moral option is to choose what seems to be "the bigger idea of truth" (R7 2015:136). Being open to the truth means doing more research on a specific aspect (R8 2015:91) and learning through interaction, which opens "me up to a bigger truth, also emotionally. So that is the bigger thing" (R7 2015:109):

So how do you know? How do you know? You don't really know. But in terms of not doing or doing, what is the truth for me if I don't do? I know I'm shying away from something that I think is much more true than the other thing that I think is much less true and it has moral implications. (R7 2015:41)

R7 feels challenged, but not disheartened, by creative, constructive exchanges between activists in his quest for truth. A potentially difficult situation amongst activists was, for example, resolved in a creative, democratic exchange. As a result, everybody now

... checks everybody else out in a slightly new way, without having disrespected and trampled on people. So ja, I feel I was part of that process and I probably stoked a lot of it up. If I hadn't done it, we might be in a slightly different place. So I've got a lot more power than I think I have [...] So how would I do things differently? I'm still learning all the time. I'm not frustrated. I'm not frustrated that I need to learn. Things are just too dynamic at the moment in a sort of positive sense, rather than a negative sense. (R7 2015:139-140)

R7 deemed the connections between truth, his integrity and his existential quest as a core reason for his advocacy and felt he had "a duty to actually get into the public domain" (R7 2015:128). The extent to which he is willing to live according to truth is "probably the biggest challenge in my life, it always was and it still is" (R7 2015:28). The Palestinian terrain provides an important context for testing his ability to live up to this challenge and so for him it is "not just this struggle, it's something much deeper" (R7 2015:28). R7 is very aware of not knowing it all and, hence, he uses checks and balances when commenting on tactics and strategies in the solidarity movement:

I see my role as raising, identifying gaps, gaps in critical thinking ... then exploring a response to the perceived gap, then checking with a whole lot of people that I trust whether this is in fact something that is reasonable to be identified and to be critiqued. (R7 2015:55)

Finding the truth is a social process: "It's not just in my head. It's not given to me by my mind, or by God. It's given to me in interaction and critical interaction even with that that you regard as being false" (R7 2015:47).

R7 and others (R1 2015:73,103; R14 2015:33,66; R21 2015:124) stressed the importance of scientific scholarly processes of research and verification to get closer to the truth. They

cautioned that not questioning deeply enough into the subtle narratives that set up the other in fact leads to othering. It is essential to continually weigh up more evidence to deepen or challenge arguments. One has to painstakingly put all the little anecdotal pieces of evidence together and interrogate them to come up with a “true” picture. However, R7 did not proclaim an absolute truth: “When I say true, it’s not absolutely true that you can’t add to it” (R7 2015:33). Constantly seeking the truth is very relevant to his discernment of facts in the contrasting Palestinian and Israeli versions of reality, because “what’s true and what’s not true in a way takes you into what is right and what is wrong. It’s very close” (R7 2015:20). The picture one gets, for example, from reading Walid Khalidi’s *All that remains*<sup>127</sup> on the history of the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages during the Nakba can be verified by evidence from official Israeli military archives. Because these records offer a “blow by blow account of how military brigades arrived at these villages and surrounded them and [how] they [the Palestinian villagers] fought back because they didn’t want to surrender”, how the villages were conquered, the inhabitants killed and expelled (R7 2015:33), it is possible to show that the Palestinian version of the events of 1948 is more true than the Zionist impression of a brave War of Independence against hostile Arabs.

R12 (2015:21) confirmed the vast gap between what the public is told and what happens in reality. He discovered the dishonesty of the Zionist narrative during his military service:

We would do one thing at night and then the morning I’d read the newspaper and it would say something completely different. But it turns out that that’s true also for my history classes. That we don’t learn about the Nakba. That we learn about the War of Independence, but Israelis don’t know that we displaced 80% of the Palestinian nation within two years.

The same principle of scientific investigation applies to activists. If they make unverified comparisons, for example, to shame Israel, it gives the Israeli lobby reason to accuse activists in the Palestinian project of misinformation:

At one point, he said that ... Gaza is like Auschwitz. ... Okay, he didn’t elaborate, because I’m sure he cannot elaborate. ... this comparison is so problematic that it would work against him. So he took just the easy way ... to shame or to blame without any justification. This, for example, I think is wrong. It doesn’t help anything. (R14 2015:47-48)

In respect of the value of “openness”, the respondents referred to holding space for the other whose truth differs from one’s own. For some of the respondents, being open to influences

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<sup>127</sup> Walid Khalidi is a renowned Palestinian scholar of history, educated at the University of London and Oxford University, who has written extensively on the Palestinian Nakba.

that foster the kind of inner “space” that allows the other “just to be” (R6 2015:25) and “non-reactive compassion” (R9 2015:107) goes hand in hand with “actually practising something that allows you to do that” (R9 2015:105) – such as meditation, prayer, spiritual work and other means of nourishing oneself (R2 2015:145; R9 2015:108; R18 2015:25). There is a “need to develop a consciousness about how I signify, walk in public spaces” (R6 2015:33). Over the years, R6 said she had “observed things in me that allowed me to make space and then thought about them, ‘Oh, look you have space and you can make space’” (R6 2015:92).

Truth, according to R2, is not about being a prophet who conquers external demons and tells truths through external others. He and others argued that aspiring to truth and living with honesty has to do with *a conscious process of self-reflection* to again and again align oneself with what one stands for in life: “It’s accompanied by a continuous challenge, wrestling with myself about what am I doing” (R2 2015:59). Future generations may expose him as short-sighted, inadequate, shallow, inconsistent and hypocritical, just as Gandhi has been exposed for not being a sufficiently great friend of the rights of Africans, but R2 said he has to live with himself. At times, he berates himself – not in a way that makes him feel insecure, but because he is conscious of being harsh and indifferent to the sensitivities of others at times (R2 2015:58). If he is blamed for self-righteousness, presumptuousness and a kind of moral indignation which assumes having the moral high ground, he is “happy to assume all of those things” (R2 2015:44).

However, to R8, it is also necessary to be open to influences from the outside, so he stressed the need for a dynamic reciprocal relation between the self and the other:

I also think there is a dialectical relationship between the two things. I’m not arguing that I must always start within myself and it goes out. I’m arguing that in fact sometimes things start out there and then it comes to me and they influence me deeply. And so there is this constant cycle, this constant relationship between inner and outer that influences each other ... so that both you yourself become a better human being and the situation becomes more humanised on a social level. (R8 2015:158)

However, two respondents stated that they were *hesitant to speak of their spiritual practices*, as they perceive speaking about engaging in such practices to be frowned upon in activist circles since *it is simply not the “done thing”*. Nevertheless, they consider their practices very necessary to their style of activism and they talked about it in the interviews – at first hesitantly – when asked to give more detail. R9, who practises Buddhist meditation, and R18, who does spiritual work in a small group of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, both perceived there to be silence on the role of spirituality in activist circles. For R9, her meditation is

critical to her activism, because it informs and shapes her attitude and behaviour (R9 2015:105,134,148,158). However, she was reluctant to talk about it, since she had an impression of a tendency in activist circles “to just dismiss out of hand any idea that spirituality can be radical, that it can be liberatory, but it is all of this” (R9 2015:117):

- I: Why is taking every single life so seriously and respecting what someone brings to the earth, whether good or bad, so important to you?
- R9: I don't know. I don't know. I mean, why is it so important to me? I don't think I can give you a logical answer. I could give you an answer that would horrify me, horrify most of my friends and possibly, although you are with the theology department, maybe it wouldn't horrify you.
- I: Well, try me.
- R9: Well...
- I: I'm curious?
- R9: I think it has to do with a certain kind of spiritual destiny and possibly prior experience that has made me feel even though I'm not very good at it, that the – that the complete embrace of all humanity is like the ultimate reason why we are here. (R9 2015:36-41)

Talking about valuing the lives even of those who play the “bad” roles can be perceived as “a way of railroading the issues that are actually important”. She thinks it is inappropriate to raise the matter in a BDS movement meeting: “I think that would be completely inappropriate. I'd love to be able to, but there is no room there for that” (R9 2015:129).

R18 agreed that the role of spirituality does not feature in discussions amongst activists, but in her case it is also “crucial” in shaping her kind of activism (R18 2015:15). She argued that most people think that spiritual work and activist work inhabit two different worlds that do not go together, but she believed that actually they complement one another (R18 2015:16-20). Her spiritual practice does not make her “floaty”, but “more grounded” as she feels connected with her body and her intuition, and therefore has more clarity and poise when, for example, non-violent protests get out of hand or violent due to police interference (R18 2015:29-33). The objective is to do “something moral” and to connect “mind and body, or soul and body” (R18 2015:17), or the outer and the inner:

Most activists won't talk about this, because most of them don't do this. But there is a small scene of activists who are also doing spiritual work ... which I think has a huge influence if you do it a certain way. So there is spiritual work that's very energetic and it has nothing that's connected to here and now; and there is spiritual work that you can do that's also really grounded. That means workshops, like special workshops that are together – Palestinians and Israelis, or workshops that do work inside of you to be able to hear the world and its needs and to continue working with that. In Jerusalem it's a very small group of people who are really involved in both places at the same time. There are six of us I think. (R18 2015:14)

Being an activist and actively pursuing a spiritual path makes her feel “very lonely” in the “greater society”, because neither of these paths are part of the general consensus in her society. Yet, there is an “anomaly”, because, at the same time, she is aware that there are others who look upon her kind of activism with “awe” (R18 2015:29), and she is aware that others come into the activist world because of her advocacy style:

I think that I inspire not the activists, but the people who aren't yet active – that there is maybe another way to be active. It doesn't have to be extreme and I mean I do some extreme things, but I definitely have friends that have told me that I inspire them and they have come into this activist world through me. (R18 2015:31)

R9 and R18 were the only ones in the case study to suggest that there may not be enough openness amongst activists to share these impressions and to learn from one another. R12 (2015:102) also remarked that he did not want “to be framed accidentally as a religious ‘cook’ or a spiritual (indistinct 47:27)” when mentioning a possible global energetic “mass awakening” and supporting the energy of the earth.

#### **5.3.4 Sub-conclusion**

*The findings of the case study reflect a strong desire among the respondents for honesty and openness about the origin and the identity of Israel, and a rejection of its deliberate misrepresentation and covering up of the Palestinian Nakba which led to millions' being refugees today. They call for honesty about the ongoing power asymmetry and reject the narrative which positions Israel as the party that deserves the world's sympathy in a “conflict”. They demand openness about the role (and co-opting) of religion, Israel's nationalist imperialism, its double standards, and other forms of misinformation currently practised in the Palestinian oppression.*

*Honesty and openness are required at all levels of interaction – within families, Jewish Israeli society, South African civil society, in their governments, media, religious structures, schools, and also between activists. They experience being without such transparency and remaining silent about the disparities and the alternatives as unsettling, dishonest, misleading and lacking in integrity. The respondents have taken up the task of correcting the plethora of widespread and embedded, deliberately constructed, orchestrated and well-communicated myths and lies. As they have argued earlier in respect of general conduct and language, here too, the medium is regarded as part of the message. Therefore, they regard*

*dialogue groups that are not structured, in form and in content, to reflect the power asymmetry between the Palestinians and Israel honestly as inappropriate and harmful.*

*The respondents favoured verified facts from reliable sources, and remained aware that they do not know everything. For this reason, they are committed to an ongoing process of learning and interaction. Nevertheless, they stated unequivocally that they believed that the Zionist narrative is far from the truth, and is a deliberate, propagandistic cover-up of historical facts.*

*Honesty, truth and openness, together with the other ethical aspects presented in Chapter 5 are perceived as crucial and profound values for life that need to be applied consistently for the sake of one's integrity. All these values form part of the broader moral case for a better humanity that contextualises and motivates activism in the case study.*

## 6 STRATEGY, OUTCOMES, MEANING AND WORTHWHILENESS

Why do the respondents perceive it to be necessary to go beyond moral support for the Palestinian project and to take a very public stance? How do they know how to focus their work? Do they derive some satisfaction from it? The foregoing chapters have presented the respondents' impressions of their initial recognition of the validity of and their commitment to the Palestinian project, their emphasis on personal integrity and their belief that engagement in the Palestinian project is part of a broad moral stance, and the interrelated values that they adhere to. The themes presented in Chapter 6 relate to the praxis of activism in the public domain and the question of whether the respondents derive personal value from their activism.

The discussion below therefore starts with shared impressions of a pressing need for broad, public advocacy. Next, it explains the respondents' views on being guided by the needs of civil Palestinians. Section 6.3 then considers the perceived core advocacy tasks of each participant, as well as the outcomes they aspire to. Section 6.4 turns to the degree to which they feel they can and cannot effect change. Finally, Section 6.5 reflects on respondents' experiences of the meaning and worthwhileness in their activism.

I continue my approach to treading the fine line between identifying unique perspectives and noting patterns among respondents in the analysis here. I note individual, yet strongly positioned perspectives in addition to shared trends.

### 6.1 The urgency for public advocacy

Why is it imperative to each of these respondents to adopt widely visible, public stands and to mobilise as many people as possible in support of the Palestinian project? The arguments presented in this section are arranged around the respondents' perceptions of the reality on the ground, the abuse of religion to rationalise oppression, the lack of global political will, the choice between complacency and integrity, and their approach to public communication and mobilisation.

#### 6.1.1 *"The bullets are real, the bombs are real"*

R15 wondered how much longer the occupation of the Palestinians can continue:

We are becoming a more racist, more violent society that's running into an abyss, because how much can you oppress the Palestinians without expecting another explosion of uprising? There is an elephant in the room and we can't ignore it. It's there and the elephant is the occupation. It has to end and get out of the room. (R15 2015:14)

All the respondents perceive an urgent need to express their personal convictions in public, because of *the very real suffering of so many people in a horrific, escalating tragedy*. The Palestinian project is characterised by massive power asymmetry. This imbalance is intensified by Israel's ongoing and deepening military, economic, political, diplomatic, religious, academic, ethnic, geographic, legal and social abuse, and its discrimination against and its oppression, barbarianisation and impoverishment of Palestinians (R2 2015:101-102,105-107; R3 2015:42; R9 2015:121; R12 2015:15,21,28,77,135-136,143; R16 2015:108; R17 2015:110). It includes Israel's "sweeping fear and anger" and "siege mentality" (R5 2015:189-192; R11 2015:31; R13 2015:19-22,44; R15 2015:31; R16 2015:102-103; R18 2015:97-100; R21 2015:152). As the respondents explained, the public is "manipulated" (R12 2015:75), "brainwashed" (R5 2015:195; R13 2015:97; R15 2015:78; R18 2015:100) and "immobilised in order to keep the ongoing occupation happening" (R13 2015:19).

"The bullets are real, the bombs are real...it is not just a difference of opinions," R4 (2015:55) pointed out. The respondents are all convinced that *it is no good simply to stand by in horror, or to think of the matter as a never-ending problem*. Every day, more damage is done. If one remains quiet, if one does not question the myths, lies and systemic injustices, it means that by default one supports "that type of carnage" (R7 2015:41).

Just talking with one's neighbour does not bring about change (R11 2015:15-16). "If you want to influence people and make an impact you have to go public. That's exactly the perfect arena" (R19 2015:106). Public advocacy is deemed an "absolute necessity" (R8 2015:52); it is futile to stick one's head in the sand and just continue without a viable strategy (R10 2015:37; R12 2015:47). It is "never enough to simply say I am going to take a personal, local view of this situation and let's hope for the best" (R10 2015:37) or to be only "keyboard activists" (R5 2015:87). It seems fine to talk about holding this or that political position and being to the left or the right of the issue, but, as R21 explained, it does not matter much what one calls oneself – the Palestinians are suffering right now; simply pondering a possible political solution is "so lofty ... it's so far gone. People can't get to their work. They can't get medical assistance when they need it. There are very real things happening now" (R21 2015:102). This implies that "there's an urgency around this and it's a

practical element as well. The longer this carries on that people aren't speaking publicly about this situation, the longer it's going to obviously continue" (R21 2015:101).

However, unlike in the case of South African apartheid, global public sentiment sides with Israeli imperialism at the cost of the Palestinians' human rights, as especially the South African respondents have pointed out. They argued that the *Palestinians face far greater and more complex obstacles than was the case in South Africa*. In general, the widespread, public empathy for Jews because of the Holocaust together with all the propagandist lies and myths against the Palestinians blind many to the deliberate, crafted, institutional, systemic oppression, displacement and destruction of them as a people (R1 2015:51; R6 2015:127). South African apartheid policies and practices tried to exploit the Black South African labour force, but Israel wants to get rid of the Palestinians altogether, by whatever means, to keep the land and resources without the indigenous people (R2 2015:102,105-107; R5 2015:36). Palestinians are labelled villains and troublemakers and are stereotyped and belittled as barbarian (R1 2015:35; R2 2015:101), in contrast to aspirational images of "courageous Jews" (R5 2015:26), who bravely survive in Israel, "the outpost of Western civilisation" (R2 2015:101). The respondents stated that the Palestinians are "completely othered" and dismissed as "Arabs" – a term loaded with many derogative preconceived ideas such as being "dirty" or "lazy" (R8 2015:18). As a South African "who comes from a tradition in Black theology and Black consciousness", R8 (2015:18) understood "how those words get used ... The word 'Black' can be loaded and can mean certain things and so 'Arab' is exactly the same". Zionist propaganda categorises and diminishes Palestinians as nothing but "terrorists" and "suicide bombers" (R5 2015:25).

### **6.1.2 *Inverting religion to oppress***

Moreover, the Palestinian project is often *incorrectly categorised as a "religious clash"* (R2 2015:13; R3 2015:25,33), and is tainted with Islamophobia (R1 2015:73-74; R5 2015:17; R9 2015:65) and fuelled by Christian Zionism (R8 2015:127; R10 2015:41). Judaism, Islam and Christianity are misconstrued to justify the oppression of Muslim and Christian Palestinians. These inverted applications of religion are not the beliefs of a cult or a sect, but are *embedded in widely accepted, mainstream public perceptions that in turn* – according to the respondents – need to be addressed in public. Black South Africans elicited support from the global Black Consciousness movement including the African American community in the USA (R1 2015:16,22,37,123). This movement ensured that "Black" was not a phenotypical

descriptor, but became “a political expression of unity amongst the oppressed” (R1 2015:39). However, as R8 (2015:21) pointed out, the African American community’s own Christian-Muslim tensions inhibit their identification with the Palestinian struggle.

According to R1, *Hamas is sometimes mentioned in the same breath as ISIS and other militants to vilify Muslim Palestinians*. R1 (2015:74) did not hesitate to call ISIS “terrorists”, but he distinguished Hamas from terrorist groups. He explained that Hamas “might be motivated from a religious point of view, but they cannot be equated [to the] terrorism” of Boko Haram, the Lord’s Resistance Army, or ISIS. He argued that in other liberation movements, such as those in South America, where liberation theology played a major role, religious people also used “guns to fight against their military regimes” (R1 2015:74).

Likewise, *Christianity is used as a rationale to displace and oppress Christian Palestinians* (R4, R5, R8, R10). The degree to which Biblical Studies are manipulated to advance the oppression of the Palestinians is “very deep and very sinister” (R8 2015:11). Land dispossession and the misrepresentation of religion are “bolstered by the military and security agency” (R10 2105:41). In a “travesty” of the Bible (R10 2015:15), Christian Palestinians are regarded as “Philistines” (R8 2015:19). Especially R8 and R10 experienced this abuse of the name of Christianity as very disturbing:

As a Christian, as a theologian, as a person who studies the Bible, who reads the Bible every single day, this is just so – so extremely important. That if there is a place on this earth where the Bible gets used to oppress people I will oppose it. There is just no question about that. (R8 2015:38)

Christian Palestinians “read the Scriptures as a matter of life and death. For them it’s not a casual study of the Bible. For them it is to honour a place in God’s plan as Palestinian Christians” (R10 2015:122). Yet, South Africa’s African Christian Democratic Party has publicly affirmed its loyalty to Israel (R8 2015:57; R10 2015:130-136). Like the African Christian Democratic Party, Christians worldwide support “the Zionist state believing that it is Biblical to do so” and hence disregard “those who suffer helplessly” (R10 2015:43). Speaking about his experiences of Zionism at a global Pentecostal Christian conference in Jerusalem a few weeks before his interview, R10 (2015:15) said that Christian Zionism belies the “true face of Christianity” because it promotes and idealises an ideology that supports and entrenches Israel’s dishonesty and human rights abuses and it sides with the powerful, not with the oppressed. R10 reported that on many fronts, South African and other church leaders respect and work with him, but “not on the Palestinian matter. On the Palestinian matter we

sharply disagree” (R10 2015:144). Zionist Christianity is rife. For R10 (2015:19) the “defining text” in his life is Luke 4:18, “which is the prophetic call where Jesus says the Spirit of the Lord is with Me because He has anointed me to bring His good news to the poor, the deliverance to oppressed people and liberation to the captives”. Inspired by South Africans such as Beyers Naudé, who undertook a pastoral quest to be honest and to proclaim his values openly during the South African anti-apartheid struggle, R10 (2015:20) feels that he, too, has a public obligation to advocate for the plight of the oppressed. R8 and R10 perceive *rescuing Christianity from Christian Zionism as important and urgent*: “Unless we uncover the true face of Christianity for that region it seems as if we can’t make sense anywhere else” (R10 2015:15).

### 6.1.3 *Insufficient political will*

Moreover, the respondents noted that globally there is *insufficient political will and a lack of unequivocal support backed by appropriate actions* to pressurise Israel to change. South African respondents R1, R5, R8 and R9 expressed their *disillusionment with the ANC and South Africa’s government*. R5 noted: “Constructive engagement was not good enough for Pretoria. Why is it good enough for Tel Aviv?” (R5 2015:212). The respondents reported that the ANC says the right things in public, but fails to back it up with actions. Even worse – the ANC is hypocritical because it hides its real stance from the public. The ruling party is not “very pro-Palestinian in what it actually does. It talks left and walks right” (R9 2015:92, see also Section 5.2.4). Since South Africa has become a democracy in 1994,

...trade with Israel has increased four-fold, four-fold from 1994! And for me that is hypocrisy, that when we talk about BDS, we mean sanctions as well. And if there is one country that should have sanctions, it’s South Africa, given that Israel supported the apartheid regime and given that the present people in power, or in government, are the ones who called for sanctions against apartheid South Africa. That just does not gel for me and I refuse to be quiet about that. (R1 2015:127)

The lack of political will is not limited to the South African government. The respondents’ pressing need for public outcry is also based on the fact that Israel is the “fourth biggest military power with the latest equipment” supported by the USA. It lacks “a countervailing influence”, such as the one against the apartheid regime in the form of the “Eastern European countries of the Soviet Block, however problematic that was” (R1 2015:42). Middle Eastern regional support for Palestinians has “collapsed” (R2 2015:99):

In South Africa, other than Malawi, we had all the front line states supporting us [those who opposed apartheid], we didn’t have an international White lobby defending South

Africa. South Africa was simply a strategically well-located place that the West had to defend for geo-political strategic purposes. There wasn't a sense of other White people needing to defend this outpost of White civilisation against the barbarians. (R2 2015:100; my insertion)

Moreover, *none of the respondents seemed to count on global regulatory bodies for help*. This increases the respondents' sense that public advocacy is imperative. International bodies that might be expected to uphold international law and/or protect human rights and human dignity, such as the United Nations and the World Council of Churches, were hardly mentioned in the case study. The exceptions were R8's revulsion at the World Council of Churches being pressurised to omit the word "Palestinian" from the Bible (R8 2015:11), and R12's mention of the need to co-ordinate relief aid in the oPt (R12 2015:36), for example, by UNOCHA.

R12 explained that the many non-governmental organisations and global bodies that operate in the oPt cannot really make a change or bring about a different kind of system (R12 2015:36-37). They merely "fill the gap" where the Palestinian Authority and Israel "don't and can't provide services". It is what they do, but they do *only* that: "They fill the gap. By definition, they work on humanitarian response. That's their mandate here" (R12 2015:36). Local organisations that depend on funding from the United Nations can plan only for the period of funding, which is one year. Hence, interventions tend to be project-driven and short-lived. They are not strategic in suggesting a future vision accompanied by incremental implementation. R12 argued that multi-national corporations and politicians at the United Nations level cannot resolve civilian issues in the context of the Palestinian project – those issues need to "be resolved here on a local level" and those solutions are the way local communities can empower "the global resistance, the global shift" (R12 2015:108).

#### ***6.1.4 Choosing between complacency and integrity***

Because of widespread civil, religious and political apathy, rejection and double standards, the respondents *all pursue public advocacy as an imperative even if they do not like the idea of having a public persona*. While some are gifted orators (R2 2015:190; R3 2015:91,132), or enjoy working with people (R14 2015:13), others find the exposure, the personal discomfort, the "nakedness" (R6 2015:123), the "emotional challenge" (R21 2015:27, 38; R7 2015:55, 60) or stress because of "anger or fear" (R7 2015:95) of exposure and/or taking a public stand hard to bear. To express his views patiently and with wisdom "takes an

enormous amount of experience and maturity” (R7 2015:56). R20 recalled that there were many points along the way in which she could have chosen not to refuse her drafting for the military in such a public manner (R20 2015: 76); it was often tempting. Her concern was less about not joining the military, than about not doing:

... to not do ... so publicly, to not have to go through everything that I had to go through in terms of social ostracism and cutting off ties and angry conversations. Sure, there were many times where I felt it would have been easier to not do it. But I think, I felt I was on a mission. I felt that I was on a mission. I felt – I felt – yeah, I felt a deep sense of being on a mission, I think. (R20 2015:76)

Given their impression of urgency, the respondents perceived *their choice as one between the pacifying comfort of complacency and the more existential comfort of integrity*: “My experience of being passive and not doing, is that I am not taking responsibility for my thoughts” (R7 2015:39). If one avoids doing, one actually succumbs to not wanting to get uncomfortable. He suggested that by acting he has “the pain of being uncomfortable ... because I get out of a comfort zone and I become known” (R7 2015:39) and it in turn elicits criticism and even attacks. However, he deemed carrying the discomfort of public exposure and retaining one’s integrity, which brings a fundamental comfort, to be the better option. It is actually not about being an activist *per se*, or owning that kind of label (R4 2015:40,79-81), but about living authentically. For some Jewish Israelis, their public activism is also the “political dimension” of what they consider their “responsibility” (R14 2015:52; R17 2015:95, 97), or of their “sense of community” (R11 2015:9, 94; R12 2015:9; R13 2015:62). If they ignore this, they feel they jeopardise their personal and societal responsibilities: “I do believe that Israelis have an obligation to try and be part of that as much as we can” (R16 2015:35).

Complacency is a feature of all societies, whether it is about the clothes people wear, “the food that we eat, the kind of life that we have, the thriving economy certainly in the West, in Europe and in the United States” (R20 2015:57). R19 used the analogy of the 1999 science fiction action film, *The Matrix*, to explain how Israeli society can live in a dream world.<sup>128</sup> Like the main character in the film, they have the option of taking “the red pill” to see “all the nastiness of truth” (R19 2015:90) in their society and to act against it. However, not all

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<sup>128</sup> In *The Matrix*, an American-Australian production starring Keanu Reeves, there are two parallel dimensions. In one, the appealing “reality” is actually a simulated matrix in the minds of a drugged human population, whose bodies’ heat and electrical activity serve as an energy source. Those who take the “red pill” can see the reality. The protagonist is a computer programmer, Neo (Keanu Reeves), who learns this truth and joins others in a rebellion against the manipulation of humans and reality.

have the emotional strength and stability to do so, he added, and so they opt for the “blue pill” of complacency. According to R20, the complacency in Israel and its denial of the reality is stark and disturbing, since almost everyone serves in the military and hence has had first-hand exposure to the regime’s oppressive policies. This societal silence turns into “a pro-active element. ... It’s more than complacency. It’s really active participation in the oppression” (R20 2015:57). Upon realising her society’s contrived reality, she wanted to “shake” people out of their dream world, as something she felt “had to be done” (R20 2015:112):

I just felt like it was my duty, I felt like I needed to shout out and to cry out what I was feeling. I was feeling very upset and angry in seeing all this injustice that was being done and I needed to call on my community to wake up and to stop it. It just felt very urgent. I think I had a deep sense of urgency. (R20 2015:69)

Like R20, who endured four months of prison and detention for her refusal to enlist for compulsory military service, R16 also capitalised on the expiry of her draft day for compulsory military service as *a deliberate, public, political stand*. She and others jointly sent a letter to Israel’s Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense to declare their refusal to enlist. They also made their decision publicly known through the media. R16’s integrity was part of her reason for refusing service in the military, but although “integrity is very nice ... it’s not a good enough reason to go to prison as far as I’m concerned” (R16 2015:30-31):

We had the opportunity for a tool of speaking to the public, of getting media attention that we won’t get in any other phase of our lives, other than refusing military service. So that was the thinking behind my wanting to make a political stand of it. It was just another opportunity for activism, that that is an opportunity that the occupation allows us. It’s kind of funny to think about it in that way – that conscription is an opportunity for refusers, but it is. That was my choice and for me it was just another form of activism. That’s what you do specifically, or one of the actions you can take as a 17-year-old and then as a 19-year-old you can do other things. (R16 2015:31)

R16 was imprisoned for about two months, followed by three months in detention before being released on the basis of “mental health” (R16 2015:33). She “completely” and “totally, totally respect people who would much rather just get out of the military in whatever way and use other forms of activism” (R16 2015:29), but it was her way of public non-cooperation. It did not lead to a mass refusal movement as they hoped at the time, but the public visibility of their choice may help people to realise that it is an option. However, their failure to achieve their aim of a mass movement of high school seniors, all resisting military service, left them with “a certain type of cynicism” (R20 2015:89).

### 6.1.5 *Target audiences, media and tailored communication*

*The urgency and the importance of reaching and mobilising as many people as possible has led all the respondents to explore all possible appropriate media and angles* (R1 2015:73-77; R4 2015:158; R5 2015:197; R6 2015:127; R8 2015:12,57,80; R10 2015:150; R11 2015:99-100; R12 2015:49-52;150; R13 2015:59; R14 2015:4,85; R15 2015:11-12; R16 2015:27; R19 2015:40; R20 2015:49). The respondents want to connect with all sectors of society, including politicians, business, non-governmental organisations, organised religion and faith-based organisations, the media, academia, civil groups and the general public. In their attempts to reach local and international audiences, they speak at conferences and private meetings, and on television, radio and YouTube. They conduct research and write opinion pieces, articles and letters on blogs, in newspapers, journals and magazines, and they publish scholarly work. Some produce films and videos and work through art and performances. Others accompany people to the occupied Palestinian territory. Some participated in the Gaza Flotilla. They organise and take part in public protests and facilitate workshops. In short, the respondents use a wide array of media and forums to reach as many people as possible.

The use of *social media as a platform to influence and mobilise the public was often mentioned*. Even Facebook discussions may shift negative perceptions to greater insight and encourage involvement, according to R18 (2015:74). The opposite is also true, because social media are also used to make unjust accusations and to entrench Zionist propaganda (R14 2015:28-38; R17 2015:110). R5, in particular, highlighted the use of social media since “it amplifies” the Palestinian voice and their cause (R5 2015:89,179) in a “democratisation of knowledge” (R5 2015:91). Social media provide access to a wide variety of resources, such as info-graphics, short videos and research documents (R5 2015:201). Journalists monitor social media to establish what people are talking about, and hence these media influence mainstream conversation. During the 2014 Gaza War (Israel’s Operation “Protective Edge”), the statistics of one media monitoring company, for example, showed “2 000 tweets per hour, containing #Gaza” at the height of the attacks. These tweets were on anything from newspaper stories to comments by individuals. It offered Palestinians “a voice that they’ve never, never had” (R5 2015:179).

*Circumstances also affect the choice of whom the respondents want to connect with*. In a television broadcast with a hostile Zionist, for example, R4 focuses on the viewers: “They are who I want to connect with. I’m not interested in connecting with this person [the Zionist]”

(R4 2015:25). At a smaller gathering, he may want to convince a specific person, but “I guess I don’t feel powerful enough to convince people completely on the other side, I don’t. I’d rather work on people that are neutral, that are willing to move. That is my main focus” (R4 2015:125-126). In one way R16 considered her advocacy “very clearly towards the Israeli society” (R16 2015:66). Yet, because she works in a Palestinian organisation, it gives her the chance to reach the international community, and so she too works with a variety of audiences.

There is also a *need to tailor communiqués and interaction to address specific misperceptions and cognitions*. The respondents cautioned that it is inappropriate to use a “one-size-fits-all” approach. One needs to understand where people come from and what their frameworks and communication needs are. For example, when R11 uses the angle of “human rights” to put the Palestinian case to Jewish Israelis, “it’s like I talk with them in Chinese or something”. However, if he talks about “the cost of the occupation, then they understand what I am trying to say” (R11 2015:52). When engaging with religious Jews, R11 in turn draws on resources from the Judaic tradition (R11 2015:53). R18 noted her experience of sharing a public space with a particularly aggressive group of right-wing Zionists, who loudly advertised their views on the streets of Jerusalem. When R18 and her colleagues started to talk with them in the city centre, it was

...to make sure that there wasn’t going to be another lynching of Arab people ... We needed to create a space to be able to talk in ... And it’s amazing, because we’re still there talking. ...Today they’re like, okay, maybe these leftists aren’t so bad, you know, there are conversations happening, so it’s starting all over to work.... At the beginning of the summer it was violent. We would sit and sing songs, or whatever, and they would come and try and provoke and all this stuff, but slowly it turned into discussions and today...we go to the square and you see they are just boys. They are religious young boys talking to 25-year-old student girls – and talking – and it’s really interesting. (R18 2015:76-79)

Some see it as important to use personal human angles rather than only historical events, statistics, and so forth. R5 wondered how, for example, one could reach all those people who used to be active in the South African struggle, but who are not yet involved in the Palestinian project: “Whether they’re old or young, their core values are the same. You just need to get them to see things in a different light” (R5 2015:30). When one humanises facts and says “this is so and so and she is 29 years old”, the audience can connect as mothers, as fathers, as wives and husbands, and it enhances the message (R5 2015:108). Or when one sees “300 tired workers” queuing up at a check point, as opposed to “300 potential terrorists”

(R15 2015:37), it may not change the minds of people completely, but one erodes the “Palestinian equals terrorist equals suicide bomber” somewhat (R5 2015:108).

R2 uses his own life story to explain the world from the perspective of the marginalised when he addresses audiences:

I would often start off with where I come from. I would talk about my mother and her six sons and how my father left her when I was three weeks old [...] I talk about my mother and the triple oppression of women – patriarchy, apartheid and capitalism.... And I say, you know, us Muslims, it’s common that the man is the sultan in the house. So I’m also kind of taking a dig at Muslim culture, which they don’t expect. They think this Muslim is going to be defending Muslims, you know. For Muslims, the man is the sultan of the house and you can imagine what life was under six sultans. So I’m now framing the angle – you can say, of course, I’m utilising my personal experiences. (R2 2015:186,190)

In addition to reaching out to their immediate societies and working with the Palestinians, most case study participants (17) also *make themselves available to colleagues and audiences outside their own cultural, national and religious groups* (R1-R8, R10-R15, R18, R20, R21). They address and co-operate with people from other countries such as France, Germany, Britain and the USA and also with those whose religious traditions’ and cultures they do not share. In fact, R13 (2015:69) asks the help of non-Jewish activists to promote dissident, non-Zionist Jewish voices, to “make us visible so our voices are able to come out and be heard”. R13’s plea is reminiscent of R5’s (2015:154) realisation (see Section 3.2.1.2) that not all Israelis try to dehumanise Palestinians, and how this sparked her understanding of the nature of the Palestinian project.

In this regard, R5 argued that it would be easy to suggest, for example, that Christians should speak to Christians, because they understand their own constituency. But in R5’s view, it is very important also to correct the perception that the Palestinian project “is a Muslim issue” (R5 2015:199), precisely by having a Muslim woman speaking in Christian churches. R5, for example, generally wears her *abaya* and scarf when she addresses Christian congregations. At first sight, she says, she may be judged on her appearance. People may think,

‘Oh, it’s a Muslim lady. Okay. Are we going to get like a little bit of a lecture about the importance of Jerusalem to Muslims or something like that?’ People are, I think, quite surprised sometimes, by, the way in which I frame the issue. So, for me as a Muslim woman, to speak to those kinds of audiences, it’s incredibly important, for them and for me. For them in the sense that again they realise this isn’t a Jewish-Muslim issue. They also understand the importance and what’s happening to the Christians, the Christian population, whether it’s Bethlehem, or Nablus, or Jerusalem, or wherever. (R5 2015:200)

Likewise, when a Jewish historian speaks in a mosque, it too turns the medium into the message. Thus, it is seen as “more powerful” and makes “more of an impact” as it serves to break down stereotypes and it shifts the attention to the human rights nature of the Palestinian project. R5 explained that it is important for people to see that the issues are not in “straightjackets” in the sense that it is a Muslim issue, or that only “Christians must speak to Christians about it, Muslims must speak to Muslims about it, Jews must speak to Jews about it”:

That is how you build bridges. That is how you increase awareness. Because so much of this issue has been obscured by religion already, I think it’s really important for people to see that it isn’t any one particular religion that needs to worry about this, or any one particular religion that’s responsible for this. (R5 2015:203)

None of the respondents considered downscaling their public engagement. On the contrary, *almost everyone wanted more hours in their day for a public task they deem urgent*. In addition to the remarks already presented in Section 4.2, several other examples illustrate this point. R13 (2015:103) and R17 (2015:141) would like to be full-time activists. R4 (2015:112) was “not in this just for the short haul”, but “for the long haul”. As R2 (2015:145) said, it “is not a three-year project, it is my life”. It is necessary to be public, “because it is the right thing to do” (R5 2015:48; R21 2015:54). If “Palestine is in pain, the whole world is supposed to feel that pain and try to find a remedy” (R5 2015:61). Five respondents (R1, R2, R3, R11, R15) have been activists in the Palestinian project for more than four decades. R11 stated: “As far as I will have force to continue, I will be there” (R11 2015:90); “[w]e – the Israelis – we have time, we can wait; the Palestinians, they cannot” (R11 2015:47). R15 (2015:32), who is in the same age group as R11, said: “[W]e are trying all the time, the only thing we can do, is to constantly try.” Public advocacy is urgent,

...because ethnic cleansing is still happening, because it’s not too late. If we’re going to discuss justice and restorative justice and if we’re going to discuss what an equal society looks like and the potential of what this place can be in the future, not just about the past, then there are many ways to do that. We don’t have to be resistant. We can be productive. (R12 2015:69-70)

But, to be “productive” implies outward, public action:

And so prayer, meditation, writing, it may have its place, but from my very superficial analysis, it hasn’t done much. I’ve seen in the various struggles that have been led that action is needed, whether it’s the civil rights movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the anti-colonial movement... If Africans had to just sit in their chains whilst being slaves, they may still be slaves today. But that they resisted is probably why they’re out of those chains today. (R4 2015:57)

Yet, for some, their *inner practices are complementary to and necessary for outward action*. Especially R2, R6, R9 and R18 stressed the great importance of practices such as meditation, spiritual work and/or praying to replenish themselves, to open up inner space for the other and to cultivate their public tone and manner:

If you look at the sermons of the Buddha or the Scriptures, he talks about taking action. If somebody goes to hit another person, you don't just sit there and meditate while it's happening. You meditate while you stop them. That's the difference. (R9 2015:55)

### **6.1.6 Sub-conclusion**

*Whether the case study respondents value the ways in which inner practices help to shape reality or not, all agreed that outward, public action is necessary and urgent. There is very real, extensive daily suffering – decades of it. In their opinion, the global public and governments, regulatory bodies, religious institutions and media mostly stand by without stopping the carnage and the abuse. Mass scale othering, rejection and falsehoods are endorsed by societal complacency and/or are actively promoted. The respondents are alarmed about the inversion of facts which reduces both Muslim and Christian Palestinians to troublemakers who deserve to be marginalised and oppressed. Islamophobia was mentioned a few times. The problem of Christian Zionism was of deep concern to the two Christian respondents, who argued that Christian Zionism ratifies and promotes the oppression of Christian Palestinians through their own religion. A theology that justifies the marginalisation of an entire people necessitates advocacy, also for the sake of redeeming Christianity.*

*Participants' impression that global support for Israel maintains vested interests of power led all of them to mobilise mass support for the Palestinian project. The task is huge. It faces obstacles greater than the ones faced under South African apartheid. However, none of these activists shies away from this task or hides behind societal complacency. Their integrity and their pressing desire for public involvement outweigh their need for personal comfort. Therefore, they explore all possible angles, media and platforms to reach as many people as possible, including people from backgrounds and orientations other than themselves. Still, they feel a need to do more.*

Given the respondents' imperative to act in public – how do they know how to focus their energy? The next three sections focus on broad strategies, the power and limitations of human abilities, and the gap between the actual and the desired outcomes.

## 6.2 Strategy and action in the service of Palestinian needs

In light of his grave concern regarding the prevailing Zionist ethos in Jewish, Christian and secular societies and the need to address this, one respondent, R7, pointed out that one's preoccupation with this concern can mean that one loses sight of "individual Palestinians and their suffering". Although R7 was very aware of this risk, he was also aware of just how much he is driven by things related to his Jewish identity. He pointed out that in a way the struggle is indeed also his (Jewish) struggle,

...but it's not primarily about Jews, it's primarily about people who are oppressed, the Palestinians, it's primarily their struggle. It's actually much bigger, it's a much bigger project. They're the people who are here suffering so it is about them in that sense, but it's also much bigger. It's not a Palestinian versus Israel or versus Jew thing in a way, in that sense, but it also is that in an immediate sense. (R7 2015:160)

R7 was not alone in his conviction that processes of activism should respond to the needs of Palestinians. However, what specific forms do or may such strategies or actions take in the respondents' views?

### 6.2.1 *An obligation to listen*

R7's words reiterated the presence of a dynamic tension between self-interest, the Palestinian project and the bigger context discussed in Chapter 4. How do the respondents know how to steer their activism, given their concern with Zionism, the particularity of the Palestinian project, and a broader moral project against othering? This subsection presents their clear intent to respond to the Palestinians' plea, as opposed to pursuing different personal agendas in isolation.

The respondents perceive *listening, hearing, seeing and acknowledging the Palestinians' dignity, their humanity, their aspirations and their requests, and then acting in their service*, as opposed to telling them what they should do and how they should go about it as crucial.

R8 recalled how much it meant that members of the international community listened to Black South Africans during the South African anti-apartheid struggle: "Just the mere fact that they were listening, [that] they were saying, 'We respect your humanity, your dignity, your everything.' So just the mere fact that they were doing it" (R8 2015:30) had immense value. Even if one does not fully connect and agree with what is being said, one "must uphold the dignity of the person in the context in which he or she finds themselves" and even more so in theological discussion, for that "person is asking God some very serious

questions” (R8 2015:26). Thus, it is critically important for the Palestinians to be able to express their views freely and, for those who are listening, to “respect those words” (R8 2015:27).

It was through listening that R5 (2015:13), R6 (2015:22-25) and R19 (2015:23-25) gained insight into the Palestinian struggle. *The kind of listening the participants advocate for is not listening for the sake of politeness, but unconditional hearing emptied of selfishness, and listening followed by honest self-reflection.* R6 recalled how her work with South African struggle veterans sensitised her toward also hearing the Palestinians:

Actually I just had to sit here and witness and listen and allow – and listen in a way that doesn’t judge and respond, that doesn’t say, “but”. But really hears and takes it in and doesn’t have a readymade reply. That’s where I think I really learned that the ego is very invested in wanting to push everything away and that actually I could just make space for things that troubled that ego, or defence, or internal war. (R6 2015:94)

R20, R12 (2015:87-88) and R16 (2015:39) constantly remind themselves that *Jewish Israelis already have the rights that Palestinians are asking for and, therefore, they cannot impose their agendas on the Palestinians.* R12, for example, comes from a position “of privilege as a White Israeli man, as an ex-IDF soldier”<sup>129</sup>. The way to engage with such an identity is to “recognise” it and to “take advantage of it in a positive way. It’s not for me to lead. It’s for me to bend my privilege so that it benefits and creates platforms for my [Palestinian] colleagues (R12 2015:41). R20 argued:

...our first obligation is not to speak. People love to discuss, we love to share our opinions, but in this case our first obligation is simply, simply to listen and it’s not a place to start expressing opinions. I think as an activist, from experience with Palestinian people, my first job is always to listen and to be very attentive [...] and to ask what they want and how they want their struggle to work and how they want our role to be ... So my role is obviously to listen to Palestinians and to participate in the struggle that they have set up on their terms. (R20 2015:40,46-48)

R10 (2015:58) also agreed that the “guidance” must come from the Palestinians. The Palestinians “know the situation” (R10 2015:58; R14 2015:24) and have identified specific actions (R8 2015:33). “Solidarity means accompanying them in these choices” (R10 2015:67):

At best we are in solidarity and can have close relations and a very strong sense of empathy, but we’re not Palestinians, we don’t determine the future for Palestinians. It is their struggle that we are honoured to be part of. We’re honoured to be let in to assist with [it]. (R3 2015:56; my insertion)

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<sup>129</sup> The Israeli Defense Force is commonly referred to as the IDF.

Or in the words of R8:

We can dialogue, we can ask questions and so on and so forth, but at the end of the day it is their experience and they must express what they are experiencing with their own words and their own idioms that make sense to them. Then we as people from outside of their context must hear and then we must ask the question “Now how do we stand in solidarity with you?” (R8 2015:28)

But what are the Palestinians’ requests? Respondents pointed out that it would be wrong to think of “the Palestinians” as “one monolithic block” (R5 2015:117). R5 argued that genuine Palestinian aspirations are reflected neither by the Palestinian Authority (PA), nor by the Hamas leadership. Moreover, those who benefit financially from the occupation may want things to stay the same. All of this poses a dilemma for activists, because sometimes one Palestinian group may contradict another. In consequence, as R5 (2015:116) noted, the Zionist lobby asks: “Well, who are you representing, because the Palestinians themselves say X, but you people are asking for Y.” Part of the perceived advocacy challenge is therefore to have appropriate, agreed-upon strategies (R4 2015:79,180), to apply logical analysis (R4 2015:79), to remain cognisant of the Israeli regime’s vision and plans (R12 2015:63-68), to maintain the strategic intent (R10 2015:36-37) and to work together:

It’s not just something that everybody kind of just does their own thing and we all hope and pray that we achieve our own [goals]. There has to be some process, some planning, some thinking and we all must be going in the right direction, in the same direction. (R5 2015:145; my insertion)

### **6.2.2 Responding to civilians**

The expressly stated choice of all the South African respondents and the majority of the Jewish Israeli respondents (R12, R13, R14, R17, R18, R19, R20, R21) is *to heed to the official public call of Palestinian civil society*. In this regard, R20 remarked: “As a solidarity activist, I really first take my cue from Palestinians. I don’t advocate so much for things on my own terms, my own opinions” (R20 2015:51). R5 made it clear that she supports grassroots wishes and not the agenda of politicians:

I look at Palestinian Civil Society and I think that is where developing the brand comes in. When I got a tweet from the Palestinian Farmers’ Union saying we appreciate these kinds of initiatives, that tweet would probably have meant a lot more to me than, let’s say, if I got a tweet from the PA, saying same thing, because these are the people on the ground who have everything to lose from the current *status quo*. (R5 2015:116)

Similarly, R2 (2015:91) stated: “I’m active in BDS, because I really believe that the Palestinians have identified this as the requirement [from] the international community. This

is the single demand that they have imposed on the international community and I'm an activist in solidarity." To R2, to be in solidarity with the Palestinians means that he "cannot come from the angle that 'I know what is good for you' [...] to be in solidarity means to be guided by them" (R2 2015:92):

So you think strategically, because it's not a question of *my* fulfilment and satisfaction. As I tried to tell you there isn't much of that in me. But in thinking strategically and wanting to advance what our partners require from us, you must also find ways of best bringing other people on board. And they require victories, visible victories. (R2 2015:93)

The Palestinian civil society's request to the international society is to isolate Israel completely through BDS to compel Israel to change. However, it is relevant to note that the respondents in this case study see BDS as a strategy and/or a tactic employed for change and not as a reason for activism in itself. The fact that *the BDS campaign and its objectives represent the expressed, official civilian Palestinian request to international society appealed to the respondents*. Whether they do so through BDS or not, all the respondents resist relations with Israel that others accept and/or tolerate as "normal" inequality, or as an "acceptable system of discrimination" (R4 2015:32; R5 2015:232; R9 2015:102; R20 2015:39). In addition to the Palestinians' civil call for BDS, the Christian respondents (R8, R10) took their lead from the Christian Palestinians' declaration and call for help (Kairos Palestine 2009), which also supports the BDS call.

The respondents acknowledged that as activists they too made mistakes, as was mentioned in Section 4.1.3. "It's very difficult to navigate the terrain of being a solidarity activist and working with a Palestinian community on different aspects in different communities," R20 (2015:108) explained. Still, the principle of *acknowledging the agency of the Palestinian civil society and the desire to be guided by their needs* remains relevant:

So there are always mistakes that we all make, but I've always tried my best and I know this: to listen and to be very, very sensitive to what is being asked of me by the Palestinian comrades that I work with. (R20 2015:109)

### 6.2.3 *Sub-conclusion*

*The agency of Palestinians, their voices and their needs are of primary importance to the respondents' advocacy strategies. These activists are in solidarity with all Palestinians, and their own efforts are driven by the needs of grassroots civilian Palestinians and not by alliances with those in positions of financial and/or political power. Nearly all the respondents expressly stated their active support for the Palestinians' official civil call to put*

*pressure on Israel through the non-violent BDS campaign. However, it is important to distinguish between BDS as a strategy, the isolation of Israel for the sake of putting pressure on the regime as a goal, and the outcomes the respondents strive for. The respondents do not see the isolation of Israel in itself and even structural political changes that may flow from such pressure, although these are important, as the most fundamental reasons for their activism.*

The next section, Section 6.3, now turns to what the respondents regard as the crux of their advocacy and aspirations.

### **6.3 Core tasks and desired outcomes**

Throughout the analysis, the same question was asked repeatedly: Why, according to the case study respondents, are they activists in the Palestinian project? Thus far, the analysis has offered insights on whether the respondents confirmed or challenged pre-existing perceptions or not before accepting the validity of the Palestinian project, their impressions of the organising principles that underpinned their first commitment, the triggers for their activism, key insights that they all shared at the time when they joined the Palestinian project, why their personal integrity played such a big role in their decisions to become activists, their view of the Palestinian project as a critical site of reflection for a broader moral case against othering, and their common interdependent value set. In view of their insight that they should be guided by the expressed needs of civilian Palestinians, this section approaches the basic research question through the lens of what each individual respondent regards as *the essence or the crux* of her/his advocacy – if any.

In the interviews, most of the respondents were asked whether it was possible for them to summarise what lies at the heart of their work, and whether it would be relevant to them to do so. This question was posed to ascertain whether they held specific views on this topic, and whether it is possible for them to identify such an element or such elements at all. Most but not all that is discussed in this section is their responses to specific and direct questions regarding their views of the quintessence of their advocacy. Without repeating details from earlier parts of the analysis, this section contextualises the nodes graphically displayed in Figure 2 in Section 3.1, by exploring possible shared sentiments. It seems that the respondents are indeed able to voice core elements and factors, be they tasks, responsibilities

or values, around which their activism centres. However, respondents generally refrained from reducing the core of their activism to one single aspect.

### **6.3.1 Shifts in ethos and/or paradigms for humaneness**

Most respondents consider their core task as making contributions towards a new, or a different “reality” (R13, R14, R15, R17, R18, R19), “paradigm” (R11, R13, R16), “ethos” (R21) or “consciousness” (R6, R12) to “redeem” true humanism (R9) for the sake of “a better world” (R2, R3, R4, R8) and improvement in the “human condition” (R1). *The kind of change most aspire to is enveloping and fundamental.*

Right at the end of her interview, R18 remarked that perhaps the most important thing she wanted to share in respect of her work was this:

People are very afraid on both sides of not having a place. In the end, we talk of collective trauma, both sides have gone through very serious collective trauma. Both of them, really when it comes down to it, I really believe that everyone just wants their child to grow up in a place that’s safe for them. And there is a lot of fear for that not happening, so the Israelis or Jews are fearing another Holocaust and the Palestinians are fearing the state that they’re in already, which is not having a safe space to be in. So that fear has to be overcome and that means dealing with issues of majority-minority and dealing with issues of the security forces ... It’s really, really, really deep and very intense ... it’s a psychological thing that has to change here as well. (R18 2015:100)

The point about fear also featured in R11, R13 and R16’s qualification of their respective contributions to a “paradigm shift” (R11 2015:35) as *a drive to bridge an era of militarism and fear to a safer, more humane society*. According to R11 (2015:30), Jewish Israeli society – and its relations with the Palestinians – is in the midst of tension, or “a kind of fight” (R11 2015:30) between two wholly different ways of viewing life, namely the current, dominant militarist approach and a humanist approach. For R11, facilitating and/or contributing to such paradigm shift is “very, very difficult” and “complicated” (R11 2015:37).

But a “revolution” that changes only the official, legal division between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis (R16 2015:41-44) by “shifting over” the existing power dynamics in a mechanistic manner is inadequate (R16 2015:62). Real change is about changing the “system itself and you can’t do that by twisting it over. Systemic change is much slower and much harder to see or measure, but in the long run I do believe ha[s] the most sustainable effects” (R16 2015:62). If one does not “change the system, but just the direction of things it’s still better than what we used to have, but for me that’s not the goal” (R16 2015:62).

It is time to become a “humanistic state, place ... where people can live in peace with their neighbours and with ourselves and not in such a militarist and violent”, fear-driven, anxious society where anything can happen anytime (R11 2015:31). For R11, as a Jew, this means the prophetic nature of Jewish ethics needs to be reclaimed, and this is not a task that ends on the day “we give up the occupied territories” (R11 2015:92). *Militarism must be replaced by an ethos of care, compassion and equality through humanism and feminism* (R13 2015:16,104-106; R16 2016:126). R19 also mentioned wanting to be part of a society that cares not only for those people in their immediate circle, but “extend the length of their hands” to those further away. “I want to live in an environment where we’re closer to each other and where there is ... harmony with the rest of life and nature” (R19 2015:114).

R9 did not mention a paradigm shift, but spoke of reclaiming true humanism. According to her, Zionism’s exclusive understanding of humanism “has disgraced itself by actually being anti-humanist, because actually it’s not about all human beings. Ja, it’s actually a White humanism, it’s got nothing to do with humanism really and everything to do with de-humanism” (R9 2015:35). For her, the crux of her advocacy in the Palestinian project is the task to “redeem humanism” (R9 2015:35) and to value every single life, no matter what the person’s orientation or ideology is:

So I would say that that is a value that informs why I would want to be involved ... that’s the only reason why ... why I’m involved in it, or why I would be involved in anything.  
(R9 2015:35)

Several participants in the study are working towards open, respectful co-existence. They too are concerned with changes in attitudes, opinions and relations. R6 (2015:129), for example, regarded the essence of her public advocacy as “shifting” and hence there is no single aspect that stood out for her, but she explained that her advocacy has to do with “thinking together in order to live better and live together”. She *connects the conceptual and/or the paradigmatic with the practical*: “It is wonderful to be conscious, but to shift from consciousness to making space” is required if there is not yet space for the other (R6 2015:137). R18, who is working towards a pluralist, non-violent society where no-one is harmed, wants to influence aggressive mind-sets in addition to working to end to the occupation. She emphasised that it is not about creating mere “tolerance”, but about fostering “a more available, open world to live in” (R18 2015:62). She wants Jewish Israelis who are expressing angry, hateful, violent attitudes and behaviour “to see that there are other views and to take that into consideration when they walk in this world” (R18 2015:83). Within

disagreements, there “has to be a space that people aren’t getting trampled on. And that means accepting that there are other views here” (R18 2015:85). She concluded: “I think – I know, that part of my destiny or my calling here is to connect between people” (R18 2015:62).

### **6.3.2 Behaviour change through knowledge**

R13, R14, R15 and R17 *valued education and awareness-raising to foster an inclusive ethos of care, compassion, justice, equality, honesty and openness*, deeming these the essential tasks of their activism. They want accurate media reports (R15 2015:31-32), to “detox” Israel from its colonising mentality (R14 2015:108) and a demilitarised reality (R13 2015:104-106). R15 explained:

We are working with our face towards the Israeli society to help them to see what occupation is about and how destructive it is and how detrimental it is to democracy and to all society. It’s about the awareness of the Israeli society. That is the main purpose. (R15 2015:125)

R17 (2015:91) believed that education will bring the desired change, for “if people in Israel will be educated that Palestinians are human beings with rights and feelings just as Israelis” are, then discourses in the newspaper and amongst those “who go to the army” would be different. Thus, these respondents perceive links between knowledge and behaviour.

R8 (2015:157), R17 (2015:150-151) and R21 (2015:144-145) centre their activism on their *personal responsibility to develop in order to have the best possible world in a drive for human rights at large*. For R17 (2015:151), it has a lot to do with “evolving and changing as a person”. Likewise, R8 called for dynamic interaction between “people to be the best people they can possibly be and the world to be the best place it can possibly be”, because the contributions of individuals add up to the best possible society (R8 2015:162):

I don’t think I’ve ever put it in these kind of words, but I think that’s for me the essence. I really dream and I really long for a non-violent world, you know. I mean I really, really do, because I think violence is destructive of everything. It’s destructive of everything .... I’m only feminist, because a world where there is so much violence cannot be a good world for women and for my daughters ... You have to build a gentle world, a world where there is gentleness, where there is compassion. [...] So being the best human being I possibly can be. That means a great awareness of who I am and ... dealing with [my] demons in a way and then dealing with that legion of demons in society. (R8 2015:162; my insertion)

21 also phrased her core task in terms of both external and internal aspirations. She wants to “keep on learning and unlearning ... The essence is that I don’t ever turn myself off or

become blind to what's going on again" (R21 2015:145). This includes the task of changing perceptions in her family and extended family. She also wants to help change the "ethos" (R21 2015:126) in Israel, but is as yet unsure about the exact space where her contribution lies. For R8, R17 and R21, too, a central dimension of their work is nurturing openness and a willingness to learn and grow for the sake of improving themselves and humanity, and they also apply this principle in the context of the Palestinian project.

### **6.3.3 Institutional change through justice**

Four participants contextualised their core work in relation to *justice as a way to improve the quality of being human*. R4 (2015:180) spoke of the "combination of the larger struggle for justice, for love, for a better world" along with the necessity for strategy "because we want to see an end to certain things". For R5 (2015:225-228), justice is about treating others the way that one wants to be treated. Therefore, the Palestinians' pain, which is everyone's pain, calls for her involvement. Similarly, R20 (2105:100) said she works "for the end goal of just justice and relieving the pain as much as possible" as well as for equal opportunities. R19 (2015:81) included himself as a beneficiary of the safety, peace, justice and happiness he is working for. When R4, R5, R19 and R20 contextualised the pursuit of "justice" as an essential task, they positioned it as a structural, institutional way to overcome the misperception that Palestinian lives matter less than the lives of Jewish Israelis. Thus, they too perceive a connection between the conceptual and the practical.

### **6.3.4 Life for all through Islam and Christianity**

For R2, R3, R8 and R10, their *religious and spiritual responsibility to advance the texture, the quality and the value of being human is crucial*.

R8 (2015:43) and R10 (2015:15,169) are informed by inclusive understandings of the Bible and promote such understandings, and hence try to correct misguided Christian Zionist views, as already discussed in Sections 5.2.3 and 6.1.2.

Similarly, R2 and R3 are both informed and driven by inclusive understandings of Islam. For R2 (2015:219), this means that his core task entails co-participation "with others in the ongoing creation of a world wherein it is safe for people to be people, children to be children and other sentient beings to be other sentient beings", with the awareness that all of this is "part of a journeying back to our Creator and Sustainer" where he has to render an account

for his deeds. R3 (2015:133-134) clarified his position in respect of an inclusive perspective as follows:

There are two things. One is – one is expressing my gratitude to God and secondly playing a role in trying to make the lives of people better, whatever that is.

Especially R2, R3 and R8 spoke about rising above self-interest. All three accepted the task of taking up the plight of the marginalised. Their sense of inclusivity in religion is neither a desire to convert others to their traditions, nor a claim to omniscience. They share the self-perceived task of recognising and promoting human rights and the dignity of all human beings. They expressed in great detail humanity's shared vulnerability and inadequacies. R3 (2015:136) also stated that he saw himself playing a key role in having compassion for his colleagues, a “principled integrity” and a desire to “speak to that which is correct”. R8 (2015:162) emphasised the need for all people, himself included, to be the very best they can be in service of a better world. In all these perspectives, the respondents acknowledged an interconnectedness between themselves, their religions and others.

### 6.3.5 *Wholeness by overcoming dualities*

R7 was the only Jewish participant to refer to an element of Judaism, namely the Talmud,<sup>130</sup> in expressing the essence of his advocacy. His quest is for “wholeness”. He understands it as attaining an inner congruency or “closure” by “identifying gaps in critical thinking”, then exploring responses to his thoughts by gaining input from others eventually to move closer to “the truth” (R7 2015:55). As an example, he mentioned an e-mail exchange with a Jewish family member who accused him of several things:

I said to him well, what is the evidence that ... all the people in Gaza support ISIS, and is ISIS and Hamas the same thing, because I don't think so... I'm not justifying Hamas' shooting rockets at civilians. That's a war crime, but what's the evidence ... Where are these websites that my children and my names are on? Please, I'd like to know this. Then an email came back to me, saying to me: 'Oh my God, I made a *faux pas* here.' He mentioned those words. He couldn't respond to anything. And obviously that gives me a sense of – more like wholeness – in terms of inner dualities – that actually I'm onto something that is more true than he is and it's more true because of the sort of reason-weighting-evidence method. (R7 2015:92-95)

He admitted that dealing with “dualities” in his society, but also in himself, is “a messy business” (R7 2015:83). For example, when he is in the company of pro-Israel people, he understands where they are coming from, and almost experiences himself in their shoes. “But

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<sup>130</sup> The Talmud is Jewish for “law”. It is one of the central works of Judaism, just as the Bible is central to Christianity, and the Q'ran to Islam.

I hear myself saying, ‘but’ to them – to the contrary....” (R7 2015:86). He associates “wholeness” with not being in a “cocoon” (R7 2015:78), but with stepping out and taking up the plight of the marginalised. R7 also identified with a relational dimension that involves people over and above those in his immediate circle of colleagues, family and friends:

I feel half guilty that again it’s about me, but I guess it’s always about me in the situation, but a whole person is much more than just being about yourself. I suppose it’s a thing about if I’m not for myself, who would be for me and if I’m only for myself, what am I. Ja, I think it is that, which is quite sort of Talmudic in a way. (R7 2015:163)

### **6.3.6 Putting Jerusalem “back on the map” through grassroots platforms**

It does not help to have “the most amazing dreams and visions” for an alternative society without a platform to develop that thought. It must have substance and support. R12 expressed *a need to develop strategic blueprints pro-actively for the desired future*. “It’s very important that a movement consciously remain productive and not just resistant to “occupation and oppression and racism, but we’re suggesting the alternative society that we want to live in” (R12 2015:37). He argued:

Strategically we can do much better, not just resisting, but suggesting ‘this is what it can look like’. I don’t care if it’s one state or two state even though personally I don’t think race-based separation makes any sense at all. But we need to be more practical. We need to come up with blueprints. (R12 2015:48)

R12 articulated his essential task without hesitance: it is “to create platforms for Palestinian grassroots leadership in Jerusalem” to voice the city’s “needs and dreams and aspirations and to put the city back on the map as the Palestinian capital and largest metropolis” (R12 2015:126). His focus is not to educate and/or convince Zionists that they are wrong, or to end the injustices. His eyes are set on what needs to be in place by the time policies, laws, regimes and structures change – and here lies the gap, he argued. For this reason, he wants to reach those in the global solidarity movement such as non-Zionist Jews, faith-based societies, BDS partners and others,

... because I think it’s important that we strategically work within our own movement. Locally if I work with Israelis, I work with Israeli activists. I’m not here to outreach and convince other Israelis that they need to change their mind. I think we can be much more strategic as a movement ourselves. But overall right now the biggest challenge is that we’re not strategic. We don’t have a strategy. We don’t know what we’re creating. (R12 2015:47)

According to R12, in Jerusalem, for example, the only people who have “blueprints already submitted at municipal level” and have started to implement these plans that exclude the

presence of Palestinians by design are the right-wing settlers. But R12 wants to be “productive” and “strategic” by working with grassroots Palestinian leaders to formulate a vision and a plan for the future:

What are we building? What does the community look like? What does the organisation look like? What does the neighbourhood, the region, the city, what do these look like? Those are the most interesting conversations we can have. But right now those conversations are not available, because of the current ... financial and economic infrastructure. I really want the solidarity movement to catch up with that. That’s what I’m impatient for the most. That’s the next phase. (R12 2015:124)

R12’s goals are linked to a consciousness that reflects a dynamic interaction between the local and the global. He considers himself part of “a global community that is leading a shift based on indigenous knowledge, but also a new generation that is showing up and saying it doesn’t have to be this way” (R12 2015:104). It is possible, he believes:

I know how beautiful the world can be. That it’s right here, it’s right under our nose. It’s right here. It’s not so far away. (R12 2015:80)

### ***6.3.7 No single act, but a coming together***

As can be seen thus far, the respondents offered a variety of core foci and outcomes for their activism. At the same time, none claimed that her/his way was the only one, or was superior to the tasks of others. Moreover, many struggled to distil one aspect as the “essence” of their advocacy:

I: What would you say is the most important thing you want me to hear about your activism?

R14: It’s a tricky question.

I: It’s not meant to be.

R14: I’m not sure how to answer it.

I: Okay, you don’t have to answer it.

R14: I mean because I told you many things before so I’m not sure how to say what would be the most important, I’m not sure. (R14 2015:109-114)

When they did formulate key aspects, they often framed them as part of a general principle; for example, R13 said: “It all comes down to the bigger picture” (R13 2015:105). R16 argued that there is “no real issue” that can be pinpointed as the single most important reason for activism, since the Palestinian project can be approached in different ways (R16 2015:101-103). There are “many reasons” for his activism, R7 (2015:16) agreed, or a “whole host of reasons”, as R8 (2015:41) confirmed. Because “there are a multitude, it all adds up into something quite big” (R8 2015:36). Their activism comes from “a mixture of big things and small things, and the small things sometimes are connected to the big things” (R19

2015:118). One has to do “all these smalls things at the same time from all over the world in order for the occupation to end” (R18 2015:52). “There is no one thing. It’s a whole complex of social structures that make us all what we are” (R16 2015:103).

However, the analysis revealed commonalities between self-assumed individual core tasks. First, *all* the respondents framed their core tasks and ideals in *relational terms*, by referring to the *Palestinians, Israel, an envisaged integrated community, God, others and/or themselves*. Second, all of them emphasised a concern for *the texture of human lives in general and in particular the trampled lives of Palestinians*. “What are the building blocks?” R1 (2015:73) asked, adding, “[i]t’s not just economics. It is culture, it is aesthetics, *it is about how do we humanise a human condition. What do we value?*” (my emphasis). Later, R1 added that he was most attracted to the possibilities posed “in that part of the world” in light of its being the origin of “some of the major religions”. The potential is for a “*coming together*” of *world views, symbolism, culture and so forth* in way whereby the one is not usurped by the other or grouped together in one “rainbow” (R1 2015:109) (my emphasis in italics). R1 thus rejected retired Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu’s idea of South Africans as a “rainbow nation” as a possible solution for the Palestine/Israel situation. Instead R1 suggested a “fluidity” of “various tributaries that flow into the ocean of humanity” (R1 2015:109) while each retains its unique identity. Such a process, including “space for those who are not religious, ... might be profoundly spiritual and ethical” (R1 2015:116).

### 6.3.8 *Sub-conclusion*

*Following the discussions on the urgency of public advocacy and the respondents’ bases for deciding on strategies and tactics, Section 6.3 has summarised the activists’ own views of their central tasks and ideals.*

*Their foci of their advocacy can be grouped as follows:*

- *Almost all the respondents said that the current negative militarist and abusive view of reality and the ethos of Jewish Israelis require a fundamental, paradigmatic shift to a more humane, caring, feminist approach. Especially R1, R4, R6, R8, R9, R11, R13 to R19 and R21 expressed it as part of their core task. This aspect was regarded as very important and was widely shared in the case study.*
- *According to especially R13, R14, R15, R17 and R19, awareness-raising and education can help to shift the discourse in Israel and in the general public. Israel’s Zionism,*

*patriarchy, militarism, colonialism and its multiple injustices against the Palestinians need to be brought out into the open, and need to be unmasked and corrected. This aspect supports the above aim of achieving a paradigm shift in Israel.*

- *R4, R5, R19, R20 argued that justice is a structural means to stop the violations of international law and human rights and to restore the rights of the Palestinians.*
- *Four respondents – two of them Muslim, and two Christians – articulated theological dimensions of their core tasks. None did so by referring to Judaism, except R7, in a brief remark on the Talmud. Muslim respondents perceived gratitude and a responsibility for co-creation in respect of God, while the Christians want to address Christian Zionism to redeem the true spirit of their religion.*
- *The fundamental task – according to R7 – is to experience wholeness by moving closer to truth in a social process of critical thinking.*
- *Another focus held by only one person, R12, was the creation of platforms for grassroots leaders to voice their aspirations and plans for a future Jerusalem that will restore it as the Palestinians' economic capital and largest metropolis.*

*Notwithstanding some respondents' formulation of core advocacy tasks, they regard these as cruxes, but not as superior to other tasks. Thus, the respondents tended to see all their work as complementary and necessary.*

*Their ideal outcomes can be summarised to reflect two commonalities. Firstly, the respondents aspire to effect integrated change in which structural, institutional and other formal forms of equality, justice and honesty are embedded and reflected, including in personal, internalised attitudes and relations within and between people. Secondly, the case study re-affirms the earlier finding of striving for consistency in valuing all human lives in a shared humanity. In practice, it means working towards having safe, healthy, happy, inclusive co-habitation where all have equal rights.*

*Thus, the respondents in the case study spoke about the core desire for change, in laws, state policies, political structures and urban reality. Just as important are relational dimensions expressed through inner wholeness, and paradigmatic, conceptual, affective and volitional shifts in attitudes and interactions between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis – some respondents also added in relation to the self and to God. The golden thread was ethical coherence between the self and the other. Their comments pointed to dynamic, reciprocal*

*relations between the inner and the outer, the public and the private, as well as the conceptual and the practical. They perceive a need for change in both sets.*

Whether their ideals can be achieved or not, is the topic of the next section.

## **6.4 Human agency and the feasibility of goals**

It will come as no surprise to find a strong emphasis on outward public action in a study that seeks to understand the reasons for activism in one of the most contested issues and instances of prolonged suffering in the world. But how much of a difference can the respondents actually make? Are their goals feasible? The data show that it is by no means easy to realise their desired outcomes. The focus in this section is the degree to which they think they can or cannot effect change, as well as the activists' views on the gap or tension between their desired outcomes and the actual outcomes.

### **6.4.1 Humanity's ability to shape reality**

The respondents in the case study expressed *a strong, consistent desire to shape reality through outward action.*

These activists assume a "responsibility" (R14 2015:14) to "act" (R2 2015:42). "There is a lot to do and we are able to do it. It's not only that we have to do it, but we are able to do it. It's not hopeless" (R14 2015:56). Humans can be "agents" in realising their own aspirations (R14 2014:14). They have the ability to "organise", "initiate" and "do stuff" for "change" (R17 2015:17), to "make things better" (R4 2015:191), to "stop the wrong", "the bully" (R4 2015: 58, 78) and "the occupation" (R15 2015:21,95). Humans are "instruments in co-creation" and in the "shaping of this world" (R2 2015:86; R5 2015:78-81). The respondents explore ways of "thinking together in order to live better and live together" (R6 2015:129) because they believe "a better future is possible" (R10 2015:100; R19 2015:58). In all of this, "doing is actually being" (R17 2015:17) and "knowing and thinking and being and acting are all inter-connected and it's always a work in progress and in process" (R6 2015:50).

"I'm really motivated by the thought that I want to change things," R19 (2015:106) explained. Like R19 and many other respondents, R1 (2015:89) also wanted "to be part of people who want to bring about change". For R12 (2015:76), "to be Jewish is to fix ... the world around us ... to heal the world". Not being able to do anything to correct the wrong "is

much harder to live with than a choice to be active against” the injustice, even if one’s choice contravenes the opinions of one’s own society. “At least you don’t feel like you’re giving up on yourself, on your society, on the ideal that things could look differently. For me it’s much more helpful to be active than to give up” (R16 2015:75-76).

All the respondents want to effect change. They want to influence *mindsets, hearts, personal volition and political will, policies and structures* to improve the circumstances of the Palestinians. But can they? Do they regard their efforts to really make a difference? If not, what are their thoughts on such limitations?

#### **6.4.2 Slow progress**

R14’s self-assumed core task to educate Jewish Israelis on the Nakba and the Palestinians’ Right of Return aims to contribute to the “decolonisation” of the Israeli society and its “regime-like thinking” (R14 2015:108). He wants to open up existing discourse in Israel. When he started, R14 explained, almost no-one in Jewish Israeli society knew of the Nakba or what it means. If one googled the word “Nakba” in Hebrew, there were almost no results. “Today you have thousands and thousands of results”, and it is “used all the time by Israelis, in many cases wrongly, but still, it’s there” (R14 2015:76). Many now “understand that the Nakba is the core issue in the creation of Israel as a Jewish state” and that the problem is not just the occupation (R14 2015:78). Even though the media and politicians persist in misconstruing the past, Jewish Israelis now know that the Nakba “has to do with something that is challenging for Israel” and that it points to Israel’s misdeeds against the Palestinians (R14 2015:77). R14 argued that Israel’s passing of the 2011 Nakba Law<sup>131</sup> is an indicator of growing public awareness. Defiance of this law and the violent, nationalistic defensiveness of many Jewish Israelis in response to commemorations of the Nakba are some of the risks of his work. Referring to South Africa’s struggle for justice as an example, R14 argued that there is a price to pay for not acting. One can sit aside quietly, but in the end, doing nothing may be even more costly, in his view.

Does R14 regard his efforts as a positive contribution? He argued that *it is not so easy to indicate successes clearly, but that there are some basic indicators*. Palestinians tell him that his work in respect of the Nakba and the Right of Return gives them hope. The fact that he and his colleagues are “real Israelis” – born and bred in Israel, fully exposed to its Zionist

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<sup>131</sup> See Section 5.2.4.1.

education and propaganda, still live in Israel – and yet conclude that the denial of the Nakba and the Palestinians’ history is wrong,

...gives them strength in their own struggle for freedom and rights [...] So if someone is very cynical and says okay, things are open, but then what, where are the refugees? Would that really make a difference? But I still insist that hope is one of the human resources and maybe one of the most important ones and when we struggle for a better life, better world, without hope, what do we have? [...] I think for those who are fighting for their rights non-violently, it gives them much more strength in their struggle and I hope that for those that are taking the violent ways, maybe sometimes it gives them hope to leave their violent ways and to act more non-violently, I hope. (R14 2015:81-84)

R14 (2015:85) definitely aims at success. A public who understands the Nakba and the Right of Return is “an important tool to put pressure on Israel”. Other activists elsewhere in the world also use the information compiled by R14 and his colleagues. He sees his work as being to the advantage of both Palestinians and Israel. Although his work is currently actively discouraged by the regime, the information he has gathered may in future very well be part of the school curriculum, he believes. Right now, their output provides a basic infrastructure for such a curriculum and it fosters awareness of crucial historic facts virtually unknown to most Jewish Israelis. It makes “a difference in a very basic sense” (R14 2015:85).

R14’s contribution illustrates a milestone on the way to a changed Israeli society. But do the respondents envisage a successful conclusion to the Palestinian project, its aims and their involvement in it? *A few are convinced that the Palestinians will be free.* R4, for example, regards himself as participating in a struggle “that actually does have an end” (R4 2015:68). To him the environmental justice struggle may be more difficult to solve than the Palestinian Struggle where “things seem to be aligning themselves for” resolution. He has “a strengthened hope”, because it is “a very real hope” (R4 2015:68):

I have no doubt in my mind that the Palestinians are going to achieve freedom. It’s probably going to happen in my lifetime. It will happen in my lifetime. I’m very confident about that [...] I do get involved in things where I can actually see that we’re making a difference. (R4 2015:98)

R8 (2015:98) agreed about the prospect of seeing an end to the occupation and he envisaged himself walking on the beach in Gaza. There is “a confidence in me that justice will always win. There is like a deep confidence. Truth will always win. There is just this huge confidence I have” (R8 2015:69). R8 has noted a shift in public knowledge and in media coverage over the last decade. Previously the media would have insisted on publishing a

view opposing the Palestinian project, but they “don’t even worry to do that anymore. Now it comes in the form of letters against the article and so on ... It has really begun to happen” (R8 2015:61). This shift in public sentiment and in the media, according to R8, is not restricted to South Africa. R5, who is less positive than R4 and R8, has nevertheless also noted a shift in the amount and quality of media coverage that the Palestinian project receives. With the help of social media such as Twitter, journalists who have never reported on the Palestinian project before now do so. In a way, this makes “levelling the playing fields” more possible, but it has not done so altogether, because the nature of the media “is to serve the elite. But it’s a little bit more level than it was – let’s say – twenty years ago” (R5 2015:94).

However, the perception remains that *it is very difficult to effect paradigmatic and ethical change in Israel*. Speaking in the weeks after the 2015 Israeli national election, R15 lamented the lack of change in her society. The right wing was becoming stronger, and saw Israel as an isolated entity that needs to be protected:

The media are totally sold into the system. They become petrified of the Palestinians and of the Muslims around us. The politicians use it very, very efficiently and it works.... Every time the government gets desperate because some people are demonstrating for better housing, they say, ‘Iran, Iran’ and then we all unite in fear of Iran. So it works extremely well. (R15 2015:30-31)

Sometimes, one gets “hit by doubt like, is it going to work?” (R15 2015:88). Will the situation indeed be resolved? It is not a matter where “eight million people should turn to the Palestinians and say, ‘you know it was all a mistake, we are leaving’. It might have been a mistake”, but even then one cannot tell eight million people

...to just go somewhere. What we have to do, is to solve the problems with the people as they are, and where they are. So sometimes I have doubts whether it’s doable, but I believe that it is, but the doubt sometimes creeps in. (R15 2015:88)

Some of his best friends have given up on trying to effect change, according to R11. “They come to the conclusion that it is impossible to do it. That we have to wait for some kind of disaster, that just disasters can change paradigms in Israel” (R11 2015:37). He highlights the *unbearable tension between the Palestinians’ need for immediate large-scale relief and the reality of slow, paradigmatic, ethical change in Israel*. There are some successes,

... but in a very slow way. And we – the Israelis we have time – we can wait; the Palestinians, they cannot. And what I mean when I say that slowly we are succeeding, changing paradigms, I mean that 20 years ago the main question in Israel was if we should give back the occupied territories, yes or no. Today the main question is, which percentage of the occupied territories we should give back to the Palestinians. (R11 2015:47)

His scholarly background inclines R11 to look “at long processes” and, from such a perspective, something has changed in the Israeli mentality over the past two decades. But the challenge remains to convince the overwhelming majority in Israel “that we should do something to change the impasse, the situation, now” (R11 2015:48). Jewish Israelis currently have “a kind of cognitive dissonance” (R11 2015:49). They realise that the occupation must end, “but they are still voting for the right wing” (R11 2015:49). Yet, R11 still expects the shift to occur – if not sooner, then later. Likewise, everyone who participated in the case study keeps on trying and does not give up even if they cannot see proof of the results of their efforts. R15, for example, is not deterred by not knowing “what the success will be”. She adds: “I’m not asking how successful we are and how we draw the end of occupation closer” (R15 2015:102). As long as Palestinians have to go through Israeli military checkpoints, she continues with her work.

### 6.4.3 *Giving, co-creating and having hope*

Several respondents contended that the notion of “hope” plays an important role in weighing up human agency against the feasibility of one’s efforts. They see *giving the Palestinians “hope” as in itself a contribution*. In the experience of R5 (2015:177), visible public solidarity by South Africans supports Palestinians civilians’ hope for a better future. R2, who was hesitant to conclude that hope really makes a tangible difference in the lives of the Palestinians, speaks from his own encounters “with many, many Palestinians” and agrees that activism does indeed offer hope: “We’ve given them hope in the context of the Middle East where all the regional support has collapsed around them” (R2 2015:99). R10 did not mention “hope”, but emphasised “faith”, since humans cannot achieve everything. He argued that it is important to know that beyond the immediacy of the desperation

... this is not the final story. Another future is possible, not because one is optimistic, but because one has this thing called faith. It is a thing that Jesus says, if you have that, then you can move mountains. So I think that people who are in the predicament that Palestinians are, or any other group that are oppressed against very heavy odds, the best gift we can give them, is this ability to know that another future is possible and that it is guaranteed by God. So that’s why in my advocacy ... I will leave people believing more in God helping their struggle than that they can in their own hands or strength. (R10 2015:91-92)

R17 and R20, for example, added that *not only offering hope, but also gaining hope from the Palestinians in the joint struggle sustains public action and serves as an impetus to the momentum of their shared imperative*. R17 recalled live streaming a staged public incident

for the internet-based Avaaz advocacy platform to showcase how Palestinians are treated by the Israeli regime. Her participating Palestinian colleagues “were so brave” (R17 2015:146). The event came at a cost though, for in their joint action, only the Palestinians were imprisoned. “We didn’t end the occupation, we didn’t change the regulations of [anonymous situation]”, but all felt “that something can happen” (R17 2015:147). R20 valued the difference emanating from the willingness to listen, to hear, to affirm and to cross over separatism in a seemingly insurmountable situation. It results in authentic, deeply satisfying human connection and co-operation, in her opinion. She has seen time and again how much the Palestinian community

... crave recognition of their pain, like any human does. And that it’s amazing how much empathy and how much tolerance they have for Israelis. ... you come out and extend that recognition to them, how open they are to talk and how much good work gets done just from that. And I think that it’s so important, just those little human moments, I have countless of them all the time in my work, of really showing humanity to Palestinians and showing them that there are Israelis who are willing to stand up with them against the inhumanity of their situation of the larger structural oppression that they face. (R20 2015:80)

The kind of hope described by R17 and R20, and especially the change in interpersonal relations that R20 noted, has not ended the structural and systemic oppression. Yet it does have an impact on the reality between the Palestinians and herself, as R20 mentioned in the above quotation. It may be small and incremental, but it represents a real shift. It is, in a way, already realising “another future” as R10 (2015:92) posits.

*Having hope is one of the most valuable human resources*, according to R14 and several others. He sees around him in Israel how cynical people get when they do not believe that things can change for the better. They accept the oppression as “the way it is” and conclude that the only option left is to take care only of their own interests. But he sees things in a different light (R14 2015:15). Having hope means having the “possibility to do and to take responsibility” and being an agent of one’s “own issues or aspirations” (R14 2015:14). He contends that it is possible to act and to make a difference (R14 2015:56); things are not hopeless. Even when things go wrong, lose momentum or seem hopeless, for example, during the devastating War on Gaza in 2014, “something that’s inside of me says don’t work it out, just keep doing it, which is something that I think really has to do with the spiritual work” (R18 2015:58). R16 (2015:78-79) said in respect of dealing with adversaries:

I don’t feel pessimistic at all. I mean it’s funny, because we see the saddest realities and we really see things and we put ourselves in a position dealing with them all the time.

For many people, yeah, I mean their reaction is this is just depressing. For me it's the exact opposite, like the fact that I'm there, the fact that I still believe I can affect something in some way, that is the most optimistic thing that you can have in this place.

According to the respondents, to create, to receive and to experience hope through action is an important dimension of human agency. Whether it reflects a euphoric vision, where everything is possible or not, is answered in the next section.

#### **6.4.4 *We cannot do it all***

The most prominent and often mentioned remark in the case study in respect to relations and tensions between desired outcomes, advocacy efforts and actual outcomes was that *activists can neither do it all by themselves, nor can they stop doing what they do. That the task seems too daunting and that they may not see real results did not discourage the respondents.* Especially R2, R3, R8, R12, R14, R16 to R19 and R21 remarked that change in the Palestinian project comes through incremental steps and co-participation. Others also spoke about taking manageable, "simple steps" (R10 2015:148), realising there are "a lot of little tiny goals" (R13 2015:87) and "small victories" R21 (2015:145). Taking attainable "small steps" makes some things (such as progress) "much slower" (R13 2015:103; R6 2015:127). However, it does not make sense to set oneself up for "burn-out" (R7 2015:60,142; R13 2015:89): "When I stretch too thin I snap. Then...all that space is just gone, there is no space for anyone" (R6 2015:134).

Each person's contribution is seen as her/his "bit" (R4 2015:87, 99, 149; R8 2015:162), or as a "chip off the wall" in the hope that the wall will eventually "crumble" (R16 2015:35). "My small step towards ending the occupation is what I need to do. I cannot not do that" (R18 2015:46). One's efforts are like nurturing a plant, according to R8. "If one does only something small every day, it grows". The "small, small, small things eventually all add up into something good" (R8 2015:154-155).

When R20 expressed her frustration with the slow rate of progress, she admitted to experiencing some degree of cynicism, since other Jewish Israelis do not seem to "catch on". But R17 and R18 prioritised "the process" over some as yet unknown end goal. A focus on the process gives one more control and choice in how to do things (R17 2015:84). For R18 (2015:52), the process is always more important, because goals may change along the way. It does not help to feel overwhelmed or paralysed by an apparently overly daunting goal. The idea is to take

... baby steps. So there is a bigger picture at the end of the tunnel that I hope we will be able to get to. Not necessarily during my generation, but maybe the next and the next and hopefully it will be sooner than later, but that's like a very, very big, big dream. The smaller things that we're doing are, I believe, you have to do all these small things at the same time from all over the world in order for the occupation to end. (R18 2015:52)

R16, who was in the age category of 20 to 30 years at the time of her interview, doubted that she would see the freedom of the Palestinians in her lifetime. She did not think her work showed any measurable effect, but to her it did not mean

... that we don't need to aspire to it constantly. I know we can definitely change in that direction, but it's not something that we actually claim to ever be able to achieve. As far as I'm concerned, it's just about trying to get things closer to that. And baby steps closer to that. (R16 2015:59-60)

Such "baby steps" may be improvements in the terrible conditions in Gaza (R14 2015:55) or not having homes demolished (R21 (2015:107)). It can also be achieving legal equality, even if that still leaves "huge amounts of inequality. And yet it's better" (R16 2015:59). All the "fundamentalism of society" will probably remain, but to take "baby steps in the right direction" is, for R16, "what activism is about" and so she does not "expect it to be ideal at all" (R16 2015:60).

In line with R16's thinking, others also offered *strong arguments against reaching, and even envisioning a flawless, final solution*. R14 (2015:54) thinks it is no longer realistic "to believe that we can be in an ideal world", because of human nature. The goal is not to "figure out the ultimate heaven" (R12 2015:27). Part of the challenge, R12 (2015:27) said, "is that we constantly use the term 'solution', as if there is some sort of utopic vision that we're supposed to achieve in some way. By defining it to begin with, we're shooting ourselves in the foot". As R18 (2015:27) added, the next step is not "nirvana, it ends with doing something moral". R21 (2015:107) and R3 agreed that the notion of having an "end goal" was inappropriate. R21 works alongside like-minded, caring people toward concrete, incremental changes, and R3 regards the mere thought that one can "achieve end goals" as "problematic". Humanity's task

... is simply to struggle for the right things and to struggle towards end goals. Whether we achieve them or not, is really not relevant. So, if I die tomorrow and Palestinian people are not liberated, that's not a failure on my part necessarily. I mean it could be if I didn't do anything, right. But their being liberated or not is not the issue. The issue is whether you lived a life of struggle and whether you did it with integrity and ethics. So I say in shorthand that our task is to struggle and the results are with God and He delivers them, but sometimes He delivers them in ways that you don't think are success, but that's His job, His problem. (R3 2015:110)

Much along the same lines, R2 (2015:63) argued that it is unrealistic to aim for an ideal endpoint in the form of “utopia” or “nirvana”. He was adamant that he did not believe in or work for “achievement” (R2 2015:87) or “impact” (R2 2015:84) – he is responsible only for what he does with his 24 hours, his health and his capacity, and not for changing the world:

When the last hour strikes and you are on your way to the plantations to go and plant a seed, go ahead and plant it. So you must do what you have to do. The consequences of what you do, don't depend on you. (R2 2015:89)

Carefully considering his responses, R2 often repeated words and phrases. He said he never, ever felt “a sense of achievement” (R2 2015:212), but perhaps rather one of humility. He felt “blessed” and acknowledged his gifts, but not in ways that led “to a bigger ego or vanity. I am blessed. God has been good to me and for me. So it never leads to a sense of achievement or power” (R2 2015:212). He added: “I work towards. So it's not a question for me on whether I'm going to see a free Palestine or not. I'm not interested in personally seeing a free Palestine” (R2 2015:87). Within the bigger scheme of things, humans can at best aim for an ongoing “trajectory of greater awareness” (R2 2015:64) and be part of “a continuous movement towards a more just society, a more compassionate society. We're not going to achieve a just society. We're not going to achieve a compassionate society” (R2 2015:63). He explained: “I am into journeying towards. I'm into journeying towards” (R2 2015:84).

In fact, there is good reason to regard perfect “utopian solutions” as “dangerous” (R19 2015:53), since many leaders “who pushed for utopian solutions created massacres and holocausts”. According to R19, “utopia” is perhaps precisely the ongoing process or endeavour to change and to improve the wellbeing of humanity, and not something that represents a final stage of perfection:

And so there is no nirvana. There is only a greater struggle, a deeper awareness of what does it mean to be human in existence with others that we discover as we go along. (R2 2015:66).

Still, the tension between what the respondents want, their outputs, the slow pace of change and the ever-escalating oppression of the Palestinians, remains.

#### ***6.4.5 Persevering within a paradox***

It is already clear that the respondents are fully committed (Section 4.1.3) and they want to do more (Section 4.2.2), yet know they cannot do it all (Section 6.4.4). They sense a profound existential and collective duty not to turn away, but to face the protracted unjust

reality, and to address it (Section 4.1.2). Yet, they experience extremely slow progress (Section 6.4.2). In all of this, they perceive their own integrity to be at stake (Section 4.1.2). All of these factors seem to create an impossible situation.

R12 (2015:111) phrased his *impatience and dedicated drive for real, tangible results as parallel to experiencing insufficient progress – even lagging behind* – as follows:

It is very frustrating and it is very disheartening to see it not working, to see that we're not making progress as fast as I'd like to see progress happening. The occupation is not ending tomorrow. In fact, from what I'm watching, we're not doing a very good job. We're not catching up with the Israeli policy-makers and we're not catching up with the multi-national security companies that are active here more and more. There is a double-headed axe to it. There is realising that this is happening and realising that we may be failing at the same time.

R1 recalled how the South African struggle in the 1970s and 1980s often seemed like “lunacy” – as if apartheid would go on “forever”, without a foreseeable end. His participation in the Palestinian struggle is not necessarily “because we think we will have victory very soon. We struggle because of injustice and inequality and oppression and it doesn't mean we have victory in sight” (R1 2015:52). But R16, who said all along that, in all likelihood, she would not see the end of the occupation in her lifetime, also pointed out a discrepancy in her own view:

I actually do believe that in my lifetime it will happen. That's the absurd. I completely believe it will happen in my lifetime. On a deep level I don't believe anything I'm doing will lead to that, but on a theoretical level I completely do believe that we're all kind of again chipping away at some direction and somehow it will all accumulate and eventually be part of it, but on a deeper level, there is this lack of belief that all these things that we do – and we keep doing things – that they actually have an effect. If you don't believe that they can have an effect, then you can't really plan to do so. (R16 2015:114)

Clearly there is much to say about why one advocates in the Palestinian project, but there apparently is also much one does not know. It is very hard to explain one's motivations logically, or intellectually (R6 2015:84-89; 96-97; R9 2015:36-41; R11 2015:2015:22; R13 2015:77-79; R14 2015:96-98, see also Section 3.2.2.). Activism is voluntary, and yet, simultaneously, involuntary. It is “a conscious act – and I don't really watch myself really going down there, I participate in opening that door. I also watch myself going through the door” (R7 2015:104). But not knowing all the answers is not perceived as a stumbling block to activism. Not knowing why he is “part of a struggle to make this world a better place” was

not something that he was “uneasy about ... I do find it a fulfilling life, living the life that I lead” (R4 2015:47).

The words of R16 (2015:45-46) possibly best encapsulate the respondents’ general sentiment:

I: How do you know – this is the way to go? This is what I should stand for amongst so many possible options?

R16: I don’t. It’s what I think. It’s obviously an accumulation of a lot of different things that I went through during my life. I mean a lot of things that I saw, witnessed and conversations I’ve had. I’ve changed the way I speak about my own identity, the way I see possible solutions here. I’ve changed throughout the years. I can’t tell you that I know anything. I know right now the realm in which I feel comfortable, being active. I mean, sure, I have a very set ideology, but it’s something that not only changes all the time, it’s actually important for me to make sure they can continue to change. I don’t think I know everything.

And so the respondents see themselves working for shifts in Israel’s paradigm and morality, for changes in the discourse and behaviour of Jewish Israelis, for justice, human rights, dignity and relief of the Palestinians’ pain, for healing and wholeness, and they envision and plan the infrastructure for the new society. They agreed that it requires much dedication, patience and emotional strength amidst many difficulties and an absence of any guarantees. Yet, as the next section shows, the activists did not doubt that the journey is worthwhile.

#### **6.4.6 Sub-conclusion**

*Over and above the value of inner action for activism mentioned especially in Sections 5.3.3 and 6.1.5, all the respondents emphasised outward ways to shape and mould reality. They are neither motivated by what they can achieve, nor deterred by not having guaranteed outcomes. In fact, they deliberately steer away from aspiring to some perfect ending. They realise that it is unlikely for any single individual or her/his generation to realise their ideals. They know they cannot do it all and are not accountable for the outcomes, but only responsible for their own actions. There is no final, flawless solution.*

*Nevertheless, all these respondents continue to advocate, knowing that people have the ability to participate in shaping reality. They struggle, they persist in trying and contributing to a shared project of growing in humanity – and they want to do so. They have goals, but their emphasis is on the process and a journey along with others. They find themselves in circumstances beyond their control and experience slow progress, and yet they continue with hope. Hope is seen as a resource, as humanity’s gift of an ability to act, to shape and mould*

*reality and to co-create. Change is possible and activism can bring hope to the Palestinians. Moreover, hope turns into reality through authentic, deeply satisfying human connection and co-operation between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis.*

*The respondents' activism exists and their commitment continues despite challenging demands, setbacks and small victories, frustration, doubts, fears, cynicism, tension and paradoxes. Having all the answers does not motivate them. They struggle towards and navigate between juxtapositions – guided by their values and their yearning for congruency and moral integrity. That is what they can give freely.*

Do they also receive something in turn? It is the question addressed by the last section in the analysis.

## **6.5 Meaning and worthwhileness**

According to this case study, activism is not a burden. As is clear from Section 4.1.3, if there is a cost, the activists bear it without complaint. But do they also derive value from their activism? This aspect was generally not raised by the respondents of their own accord, but they did respond to questions posed to them regarding meaning and worthwhileness through activism. Most mentioned a sense of interconnectedness, and they also qualified terms such as “happiness”, “fulfilment”, “satisfaction”, and feeling “good”. These responses are presented in Section 6.5.1. The aesthetic impressions set out in Section 6.5.2 were offered freely by the respondents, and were not responses to direct questions.

### **6.5.1 Experiences of connectedness in a divisive context**

As I have indicated above, the comments in this section were responses to specific questions. In other words, the respondents did not set out to explain what they gain, but had to be asked about it. R5 (2015:175) spoke of “this tremendous sense of fulfilment” when she reached ordinary Palestinians through her advocacy on social media. R20 (2015:79-81) gets “satisfaction” from a sense of “doing something good” that aims to make the world a better place, and for “posing an alternative both for Israelis and for Palestinians”. She said the Palestinians can see “other types of Israelis that are listening to their call and hearts and acknowledging their oppression and their pain” (R20 2015:79). She commented that this feels “good”, because it shows everyone in the world what is wrong and that it can change:

I also like feeling that I'm trying to push the Israeli community out of their comfort zone and into what is right and into a better path... that's something that feels right to me and I feel good, and I get satisfaction and feel fulfilled, that that's the right thing to do. (R20 2015:81)

Throughout the analysis, I have tried to understand *the logic, or the arguments* posited by the respondents and not to focus on single words or quote them out of context. The aim was to remain true to the research question posed by the study and thus to retain a focus on understanding the respondents' self-perceived motivations. For this reason, it would be naive to conclude that their impressions of meaning and worthwhileness, for example, boil down to a "happy, fulfilling sense of satisfaction". In fact, as I show below, some respondents expressly warn against this. The aforementioned comments in this section reveal experiences of meaningful connection with Palestinian civilians (R5) and a hopeful possibility that alternatives and improvements are possible (R20). Thus, the perceived meaning exists in interaction with the responses of others. It cannot be described as a unidirectional experience of "getting" or "receiving", but rather as mutual interactions that effect some change in both the respondents' own and in other lives.

In fact, some respondents deliberately problematize concepts such as "fulfilment", "happiness" and "doing good" in describing their impressions of worthwhileness through their activism. R2 (2015:129) refused to use the word "fulfilled", because it "implies a sense of contentment and I'm a deeply troubled human being, I'm troubled. Troubled in the sense that I'm restless, I'm agitated" and extremely committed to human rights over and above the "normality thing" (R2 2015:133) of having to work. On the day of his interview, R2 had several additional responsibilities over and above his normal work. Meanwhile, "at the back of my mind is just the xenophobia thing. En nou het ek nog my gewone – I still have an interview with Marthie" (R2 2015:133).<sup>132</sup> According to R2, the meaning of his activism is encapsulated in the word "zaria", which means being "a means of God working in the world" (R2 2015:217). R2 perceived *a relational dimension in his accountability to God* as a "witness bearer for God in the question of justice" (R2 2015:16) and his *responsibility to co-participate with others in the quest for a safer world* (R2 2015:219).

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<sup>132</sup> Like all the other respondents, who are very busy people, R2 did not cancel his appointment for the research interview. He eventually fitted it in late at night, arriving with a take-away dinner because he had had no other time to eat. Yet, he freely gave his focused attention to the discussion, knowing that he had to chair a meeting at 7:00 the next morning to address the xenophobia crisis at his institution.

R7 (2015:127) also qualified his sense of meaning as “not quite satisfaction or fulfilment” or “doing good”. It is not about knowing that

... you're doing good in the world and you're an activist. It's not that type of comfort. It's the opposite, it's very uncomfortable very often. But it has moments of great – I don't know what the word is – satisfaction or fulfilment where ... you get closure, where you feel like you understand things a lot better now. (R7 2015:217)

The value R7 (2015:93,163) derived is *a shift towards “wholeness” through improved understanding in interaction with others*. The process is uncomfortable, but healing (R7 2015:95). Being consistent and living with coherence in one's values brings relief and feels whole, he explained. Thus, R7 also described his sense of meaning (and also his central advocacy task) in relation to others and to himself.

R19 (2015:77) argued that “happiness” is “a dangerous term”, since “it smells like a privileged White person happy to be active with Palestinians”. However, being part of the struggle made him feel “more empowered, more fulfilled and I think it's life worth living. It's hard to say ‘happy’, you know, the word ‘happy’ is connected to different things”. The way he prefers to understand “happiness” is having “something that you believe in, or something that gives you reason, and you are going toward that”. In that way, one is happier “struggling for freedom than just cursing” the situation.

R19's (2015:120) reason “to go forward” is intertwined with a profound sense of inner expansion. He no longer looks at the Palestinians as the “other”, but as part of the circle he belongs to. He perceives his new expanded belonging as “way, way bigger” (R19 2015:64, 71) than what he had in his former social circle. Many of his previous connections were troubled, or had “eroded” (R19 2015:64) since he started to campaign for the rights of Palestinians. But now, over and above his connection to the plight of the Palestinians, R19 also derives *gratification from experiencing a sense of belonging to a global circle of like-minded people*. It was when he shared platform with other Israelis and Palestinians in Britain that he sensed a new belonging “to something that is so, so much bigger” (R19 2015:71):

[T]hat's when I realised that my belonging is to something much bigger than the circle of activists in Israel. There are many, many other struggles ... parallel to this struggle ... and ... thousands and thousands of human beings are feeling just like me, not just about one thing, but they have a world-view that I share. I didn't really put it in even political terms.... Just a feeling that so many people from all over the world are caring about these things and they don't care just about the Palestinians that we're talking about here, they care about the refugees in their own countries and they care about the gap between rich and poor in their communities. These are the people that I love, I'm going to be

connected to them, I want to be their friend and now I can be their friend, because I made a few decisions that put me on the side that I perceive now as the solution and not the problem. And this is a huge sense of belonging that is bigger than the problems that you can have in one place or another. (R19 2015:73-77)

What R19, R7, R13, R17, R18 and others described, are experiences of wholeness, connectedness, belonging, love, emotional safety and/or an inspiring, uplifting “coming together” of people and ideas within – or despite of – division, discrepancies and tension:

We’re like 20 to 65 or 70 and here is this feeling that we’re all in this together even if we don’t know each other very well. And you know, I’ve been really well accepted here, even though I’m a bit different. (R18 2015:64)

R17 (2015:158) mentioned the importance of *shared values and friendships with like-minded others who are enthusiastic about a bigger idea* and not only about their bank balance at the end of each month. Life is more “interesting”, she said. R19 (2015:76) agreed:

When you are connected to people [and] share with them ideas and beliefs ... you feel warmth, you feel energy, you feel happiness of being together ... I compare myself to friends here in Israel ... all those people who feel very devastated after the last elections, share one thing. It’s that they are really, I don’t know if I’m saying it right, but I think that people are more devastated when they are not happy about something ... but when you’re active together with other people ... and you struggle together – especially, especially in our very privileged situation where you can struggle non-violently and collectively with people on both sides and with internationals, there are a lot of things you get in return that make you feel empowered.

R4 (2015:109-112) noted that his fellow activists had “got your back and you’ve got their back and it’s not a lonely place”. The space of shared activism is “a wonderful place” and he increasingly realised *the “vital” value, support and “nourishment” of personal bonds*. He said: “I’ve been increasingly learning how crucial, crucial, crucial it is – not just strategy wise, the importance of having it, but how much it motivates you yourself to continue doing what you do” (R4 2015:109). This also applied to the “love” (R4 2015:109) he experienced in his connections to colleagues and supporters and the “necessary energy and spirit” they give him to continue. It makes one feel “not alone” (R13 2015:114). R13 (2015:112) experienced worthwhileness by celebrating

... every small accomplishment. We value it for what it is and I think that is also important. I mean because we are such a small community and it’s mostly women – which is another interesting thing, that most of the visible left-wing activists are women ... So there is always time for celebration, regrouping and going out to the next thing ... We always hug one another, and always support one another and I think that’s a very feminist thing.

R5 (2015:187-188), too, experienced meaning in *a mutual bond of “shared camaraderie” between people who seemed to have nothing else in common*. It was like that with transnational activists during South Africa’s apartheid years too, she said, and now it applies to South African activists in the Palestinian project. “When you were interrogated and detained at Allenby, right, to some extent that actually made somebody like me feel a little bit better” (R5 2015:181). “There is a link now between us”, she added. Many people from other countries have received similar treatment on borders manned by the Israeli military. The significance, according to R5 (2015:181-183), lies in how this experience of being detained and of being made suspect because one values human rights connects human beings across borders, cultures and religions.

Likewise, R8 and R1 felt nourished, inspired and enriched by being with like-minded others – whether from abroad or South African. Both also noted how *the Palestinian struggle brings together South Africans to address local issues too*. The joint work between people from different religious orientations, languages and cultures in South Africa is “good for the country” – despite South Africa’s “wonderful constitution” and its constitutional court, “we don’t live up to that constitution often and so I think that’s the missing piece of chocolate” (R8 2015:135). Unfortunately, constitutional violations happen on the “very highest level” (R8 2015:135). On surface, it may seem as if he and a White Afrikaans activist hardly had anything in common, according to R1, since they are from vastly different backgrounds and orientations. However, in reality the two of them have “so many profound things in common ... But what is it that brought us together? It was the Palestinian Struggle. We were part of the same organisation and it is in that sense also breaking down the metaphorical walls that exist amongst our own people in this country” (R1 2015:108). Although several Jewish Israeli respondents mentioned how their work benefited Israeli society too, they did not explicitly connect their sense of *meaning* to it.

However, in South Africa the communal value of activism in the Palestinian project is characterised by *a coming-together of people from vastly different backgrounds and orientations*:

The mere experience of being involved in the struggle and meeting people ... from Muslim and Christian and Jewish faith and no faith and so on ... this is not one-dimensional, people have different things, so an atheist Jewish comrade is Jewish, but he says he is also atheist. He sits in the car with me and I put on Taizé music and he is

completely transported by this music, you know. He says, look, I'm atheist, but this attracts me. (R8 2015:82)<sup>133</sup>

R8 has experienced how South Africans from an array of orientations who don't often talk to one another can be in the same venue and talk about the Palestinian project. "I think just for social cohesion in this society it's just such a good thing. I just find myself in these spaces where it's just been so whole, you know. It just felt so good" (R8 2015:83). He recalled listening to presentations in Parliament. What he remembered best was not what was said, but how it felt:

I remember that experience, sitting in that same Parliamentary precinct listening to you, listening to others and looking at the people around me. I mean where on earth do you get that experience where you have this sort of diversity of people? In fact, on that day we were speaking on Palestine, Cuba and Western Sahara. So we were talking three things .... I remember that particular morning [anonymous person] saying to me, 'Wow, to sit in this context.' For him it was something so special. ... He was just so taken with this context. So I'm just finding myself meeting these amazing people actually. (R8 2015:84)

His activism to R8 (2015:87) was "a pleasure in a way. So I think what I find, it's never a burden. It's almost always a joy, because I meet such a diversity of people in this particular struggle". For R4, his life is "fulfilling" (R4 2015:47), because he is "free" (R4 2015:36) to live authentically, to be honest, not having to pretend (R4 2015:40):

... you're living your life. You're not living the life of societal demands or whatever. I guess that is liberating and so it's nice to be part of a movement that doesn't impose on you niceties or the need for niceties. You need to be nice because you're a nice person, not because you need to get something from the other person.

R19 (2015:32) perceived himself as *more empowered and energised* than his friends, who are not activists, and in whom he noticed a huge conflict within themselves. Despite being tagged as "this lefty, or this activist, or this toyi-toyier"<sup>134</sup> there is no question about "who is feeling more safe and secure" in her/his position. He would recommend being an activist in the Palestinian project to everyone. Once people made the shift, he noted the unleashing of an "enormous power and energy" in them like an atom that comes apart. According to R19, it can be a "tough decision" for his fellow citizens to step outside the system, to expand their identities and to commit to activism. But, the act of becoming part of the Palestinian project is "like a burst of energy. It's like a waterfall of motivation and empowerment" (R19

<sup>133</sup> The ecumenical Taizé Community is a joint Catholic and Protestant monastic order in France and it is an important site for Christian pilgrimage by people from all over the world. The community's spirit of kindness, simplicity and reconciliation is reflected also in the contents and the structure of their music.

<sup>134</sup> It is quite interesting that R14, who is Jewish Israeli, referred to the use of this term for a South African dance that is associated with political protests in South Africa, especially during the apartheid years.

2015:92) and if it is directed, one can “do huge and amazing things” (R19 2015:92).

In the experience of R12 (2015:81), once one starts to peel off “the layers of ‘not truth’, then you realise there is a lot to work with. There are some beautiful communities here, there are beautiful activists and community leaders”. It is “a privilege” and “an honour” to live with them and to experience what Jerusalem can be. Likewise, R3 (2015:56) felt “honoured” to be “let in” to assist with the Palestinian struggle. R8 (2015:13) mentioned how “good” it was to spend time with Palestinians – to sit with them, to listen to them, and to connect with them. To be “physically present in their space and seeing the Christian community” (R8 2015:38) and to listen to their stories inspired him greatly. These remarks by R12, R3 and R8 point to more than meaningful connection between people. They express *notions of humility and gratitude to be allowed as partners in the Palestinian project*.

### 6.5.2 *Beauty in the rubble*

In this last, albeit very short, section the discussion turns to how the awareness of death, desolation and destruction amplifies aesthetics and hence the ability to see more than the obvious, and to go beyond the surface. It is not an aspect that I asked about, so the points mentioned here were offered freely.

The first hint of aesthetics in the data corpus came from R1. He spoke of “*basic*”, *but eternal human values in a poetic manner to express the significance of human life*. It is his way of deciphering what is “good”, and what feels “soulful” in human experiences. In reflecting on his first personal encounter with Palestinians when they were together in exile, he fused time and space as he explained the very close bond based on solidarity, trust and honesty he continues to yearn for

R1: ... those kind of basic simple values were required merely to survive if you were involved in the struggle. You weren't getting material benefit. It was bad for your health in so many different ways. So I miss those values very profoundly. Of course we had informers. So the risks were there. And quite often it was a matter of life and death and you began to rely on individuals for survival and so these relations were not superficial. They were extremely profound and deep and issues of trust ... of respect, of depending on those values, honesty, basic and profound things that I miss today.

I: Why do you say you miss them? How does this yearning connect with the Palestinian Struggle?

R1: ... because of the values that it encapsulated. The whole aspect of acquisitiveness of material gain, of corruption those have tainted and sullied the very basic values I speak to. The visceral tuck that continues to exist with the Palestinians is that it

exists there now, for precisely the same reasons. Because people – Palestinians – value those areas in the way we did. (R1 2015:55-57)

In another dimension of aesthetic meaning, R8 (2015:96) described *a spiritual togetherness and integration with God and the oppressed when in solidarity*. Thus, God’s presence is felt within the struggle and by being with the oppressed. For R8,

... there is something of a – of a God presence within the struggles, and particularly when you’ve made a choice to stand with the oppressed. It is no longer an intellectual discussion that you are having about Palestine and all these kinds of things, but it’s like I’m in the middle of this and I’m with these people who are oppressed and because ... God is ... with them ... God is with me also. There is this just this wonderful experience. I think it’s difficult to explain, because it’s difficult to explain God in any case. But it’s difficult to explain it to people who are not there as well. In other words, it’s a ‘weird’ thing, almost.

The “weirdness” R8 noted is a sense of something more, something holy and perhaps even healing in the midst of something so tragic and horrible. It inspires a sense of spiritual expansion that transcends earthly limitations. R7 (2015:108) spoke of the Palestinians’ human ability still to be able to experience joy in the saddest of circumstances. It challenged him, he said, as it is around “a bigger truth” and about “thinking differently”. Hence he pondered *the power of imagination and the symbolic value of earthly reality*. He felt inspired by their “pain and their ability to laugh”. The image of people in Gaza who have been “bombed out” and lost their families and possessions, but still remain human, opens up a realm that allows him to think “there is something profound that I need to learn from that” (R7 2015:108).

Without trying to relativize the suffering of the Palestinians, R1 (2015:91) recalled further *images of grace and resilience juxtaposed by the rubble of bombed houses and hospitals, dilapidated infrastructure, death, disablement and desolation*. He noted an *interconnectedness between beauty and ugliness*. Quite often, he says, the Palestinians are sustained by

... the values that I talked about, but also by appreciating the small things in life. They have ... an incredible sense of humour and also there is beauty and happiness in the midst of ugliness and brutality. That beauty and happiness revolves around those people who are fighting against the carriers of misery and of brutality and of ugliness. There is beauty in that. So this might sound horrible, but there is beauty in the Gaza Strip amidst the rubble and the poverty when people try and support each other with the little they have. There is beauty in a Nazi Concentration Camp when some of the condemned show ways of supporting each other. So in that sense I don’t want to convey a notion that everything is doom and gloom. It never is.

There is also a tremendous beauty in those who are privileged in society and who make common cause with the oppressed, R1 (2015:97) added. Is it not the greatest paradox of all? That beauty becomes so crystal clear because of the debris? That the pain and suffering highlight also beauty? No-one in the case study posed this question.

### **6.5.3 Sub-conclusion**

*Meaning and worthwhileness were not qualified here as one-directional, self-centred experiences of satisfaction, fulfilment, happiness, contentment, or victorious assuredness, but as gratifying, reflexive and relational. Two dimensions were noted:*

*In the first, the reciprocity is mainly between people, in service of the Palestinians and/or in relation to God. Fulfilment came through connections between people, from having gratitude, through growing in understanding and feeling expanded and liberated, sustained, energised and inspired. It was also associated with living with integrity, moving towards wholeness, healing, and with a sense of connection to something much bigger than being a person in a country participating in a particular cause. In this perspective – which was also mentioned most often – meaning and worthwhileness spring from:*

- *feeling connected to and/or nourished by the support of, and love for, a wider circle of like-minded people with similar values and a shared passion for an ideal greater than limited self-interest;*
- *co-struggling for a better world that includes the rights and dignity of the Palestinians;*
- *sensing closure, wholeness and relief by feeling empowered, authentic, honest and driven by truth;*
- *taking the chance for South African civilians from diverse backgrounds jointly to re-focus on their local socio-political-economic issues in addition to the Palestinian project. In this overlapping experience the South African experience of pluralism and solidarity is renewed; and*
- *sensing gratitude for being allowed to, and welcomed as, partners in the Palestinian project.*

*In the second, meaning and worthwhileness were experienced as aesthetics and hence as an inspirational, deeply nurturing, intangible reality. This dimension of depth was noted especially by two respondents who described themselves not religious (R1, R7), and one who was (R8). They identified the following aspects:*

- *basic, but eternal human values that express the significance of human life;*
- *a spiritual togetherness and integration with God and the oppressed when in solidarity;*
- *the power of spiritual imagination and the symbolic value of earthly reality; and*
- *images of humanity's grace and resilience juxtaposed by, and connected to the ugliness of human suffering.*

## 7 RESEARCH RESULTS

I embarked on this research because I wanted to know why non-Palestinian civilians become and stay activists in the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian project, which entails both the Palestinians' experience of oppression and their struggle to liberate themselves, as I argued in Chapter 1, is highly contested. It is not supported by mainstream media, the global public, politicians or religious institutions at large. Nevertheless, many people and organisations from all over the world have been advocating for the rights of Palestinians for many years. All the activists I met in Israel and at home in South Africa persistently, and often in the face of great social resistance and at considerable personal cost, continue to take a public stand to mobilise others and to influence policies and practices.

In the absence of any scientific research on activists from my own country and in light of limited research on why Jewish Israelis advocate in the Palestinian project, I set out to explore the self-perceived ethical and other motivations of activists from these two countries in one case study. My question was the following: *Why, from their own perspectives, do South Africans and Jewish Israelis participate in the Palestinian project?*

The first two research decisions were where to locate the study and what method(s) to apply. The focus was the praxis of civilians who try to influence both institutional systems and the public regarding a protracted and complex struggle, characterised by large-scale destruction and violence, in a site associated with the world's three largest monotheistic faiths. Hence, this study in empirical ethics was located in the group of disciplines dealing with systematic theology, ethics and public theology. I opted for in-depth, semi-structured interviews in a case study with 21 purposely selected respondents. The study obtained institutional ethical clearance, and a number of steps were taken to minimise risk to the respondents and the material.

The focus was to gather and explore empirical data. The point of departure was neither to make any assumptions based on moral theory nor to posit an *a priori* hypothesis. This was an inductive, exploratory study in which I did not know what to expect, or even what to search for. I wanted to find out "what is" and not what "should be". The purpose was to gain insight into the experiences of the specific respondents, and to present their self-perceived answers to the research question in the form of statements grounded in the empirical data, in such a

way that both the data and the process of interpretation can be traced back for review and/or for further interpretation in the hermeneutic unit created in ATLAS.ti (see Sections 2.2 and 2.10).

In Chapter 2, I explained the qualitative case study method that I adopted and its exploratory design, complemented by inductive thematic analysis. Methodological decisions included choosing a cross-sectional time perspective of three months in 2015 in which to conduct the interviews; engaging in informal discussions with (mostly Palestinian) informants to enrich the contextual framework in Chapter 1 and to inform the selection criteria; conducting a pilot study with three activists; undertaking purposive sampling based on selection criteria such as supporting non-violence, international law and a concern for all Palestinians; and using a paradigm of inquiry with examples of semi-structured, open-ended questions. The first two chapters contextualised the study and clarified how it was conducted. The next four chapters presented the analyses of the empirical data.

The focus in Chapter 7 is threefold. Similar to the process I followed in the remainder of the study, based on grounded theory (as referred to in Section 2.2 of this study), the chapter begins by presenting the research findings as statements grounded in the data gathered in response to the research question. At the next level, it proposes an overall conclusion that is similarly grounded. The chapter then reflects on whether the findings and conclusions are credible and dependable. Lastly, it lists possible contributions that this research makes and offers a number of suggestions for further investigation and future research.

## **7.1 Summary of findings**

Why do the 21 respondents advocate in the Palestinian project? Part B (Chapters 3 to 6) are organised around four prominent themes with sub-themes. Each is substantiated by arguments and opinions that are sometimes unanimous, and sometimes divergent. Some of the respondents' views share a number of similarities, others are unique to a particular respondent. Table 3 (overleaf) summarises the respondents' self-perceived reasons for being activists in the Palestinian project in the form of grounded statements based on the study's four core themes (A, B, C and D) and its sub-themes (on the left, in bold) with their supporting arguments (on the right, in italics).

**Table 3: Four core themes with grounded statements and key supporting arguments that motivated activists in the case study**

<p><b>A. Motives for joining the Palestinian project:</b> It is not possible to pinpoint the precise reasons, but the respondents identified several triggers, catalysts and insights that alerted their attention to the nature of the cause and influenced their self-perceived personal responsibility.</p>	
<p><b>Activism begins with either the confirmation, or the challenge of pre-existing perceptions</b></p>	<p><i>It was not clear to all the respondents from the start that they had a role to play in the Palestinian project. Ten respondents affirmed the Palestinian project without needing to transform their pre-existing ideas on Israel and the Palestinians. The other half discovered that their prior knowledge and impressions around the Palestinian project were inaccurate. Whether they changed vested loyalties and/or misperceptions before committing or not, all realised the dynamics of a disproportionate power balance between Israel and the Palestinians. Moreover, all ascribed the rise of their commitments to activism to their life views and to values already present in their lives before they became activists in the Palestinian project.</i></p>
<p><b>Initial commitment to the cause is underpinned by specific, varying organising principles</b></p>	<p><i>Whether they changed vested loyalties or not, all the respondents perceived their earlier inclinations, based on their beliefs, world-view, values and intentions, as formative in their decision to embark on the Palestinian project, and they presented their views from the perspective of their lives as a whole.</i></p> <p><i>The perceived reasons for the rise of commitment were normalcy, chance, a special calling or destiny, choice, a felt sense (an urge, instinct, intuition, guilt, shame, anger, excitement, being driven or pulled), corporeal realisations and more inexplicable motivations. Some of these organising principles seemed very clear and could be articulated in a straightforward way – these include a deliberate choice, a particular feeling or a clear sense of being called to a task. Other principles seemed to hover just beyond the respondents’ grasp or were difficult to express. Often there was some interplay between the organising principles.</i></p>
<p><b>Specific, contextual experiences convince activists that the Palestinian project is valid</b></p>	<p><i>These contextual experiences included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Other human rights issues, particularly the South African anti-apartheid struggle and the links of these with the Palestinian struggle.</i></li> <li>• <i>The contributions of other people such as family members, public figures, intellectuals, writers, activists and encounters at conferences and dialogue forums.</i></li> <li>• <i>The influence of ideological frameworks, movements, paradigms, spirituality and religion.</i></li> <li>• <i>Experiences and impressions of violence such as Israel’s military abuse, and armed struggle that drew their attention and sensitised them to the abuses being perpetrated.</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Key insights inform the start of activism</b></p>	<p><i>Core realisations amongst all the respondents at the time of joining the Palestinian project were the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It is not a “conflict” between equal partners, but a deliberate systemic oppression that benefits Israel.</i></li> <li>• <i>Lies, ignorance, naivety and exceptionalism mislead the public.</i></li> <li>• <i>One can respond in various ways – it is not a deadlock.</i></li> <li>• <i>Human beings have the ability to act and to embody their convictions.</i></li> <li>• <i>The Palestinian project appeals to people’s values, identity and integrity.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>B. In facing the self and the other</b>, two closely knit motivations underscored by a desire for moral consistency, position activism.</p>	
<p><b>A strong desire for personal integrity sustains activism</b></p>	<p><i>Overall, the respondents were motivated by a personal sense of integrity characterised by honest, ongoing self-reflection. They have an unwavering desire to be authentic, genuine, whole, undivided and morally consistent. Congruency, in their view, requires rigorous self-honesty and an internal locus of control. This is not a self-absorbed preoccupation with personal interests that leads to isolation from others. Their quest is for integrity in all relations, and therefore they cannot face themselves if they stay quiet about something they perceive as so wrong. To validate the Palestinian project without addressing the discrimination is perceived as intolerable, a disjointed response that causes inner turmoil. The deep sense of responsibility that spurs them on when facing the glaring difference between their own rights and those of the Palestinians means that they all want to narrow the gap as far as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Impressions of duty have both existential and collective dimensions. South Africans and Jewish Israelis accept specific, unique roles. The Jewish Israeli activists see themselves as part of, and as benefitting from, the oppressing state. They feel obliged to act and believe all Jewish Israelis should respond similarly. They act because of the harm which has been done to the Palestinians and which Israel inflicts on its own society. They want to make it known that Israel is compromising its identity and theirs by pretending that all Jews, as a homogenous people, are in full support of Zionism and the human rights abuses being perpetrated. Likewise, they act to retain integrity in the memory of collective Jewish suffering. They will not tolerate the notion of the Shoah being abused and disgraced to justify the annihilation of Palestinians. They feel that the very integrity of being Jewish is at stake. They sense that it is a pivotal and strategic task to be “Jewishly visible” in their advocacy.</i></p> <p><i>Likewise, the South African activists accept a special responsibility because of their history of systemic suffering. They do not regard their own former apartheid and the Palestinian struggle as identical, but the wholesale oppression of an entire people feels very close to home and informs a very special identification with the Palestinian cause. Since the global society – including the Palestinians – helped to free South Africa from apartheid, they argue that South Africans must respond in kind.</i></p>

	<p><i>Their own fears, the many personal risks and cost do not deter activism. None of the respondents was motivated by a desire to be recognised for bravery or heroism. Factors that drive activism include a firm and enduring commitment to integrity, the activist’s personal values, and other factors discussed below. If they have doubts, these are about strategies, tactics, methods and modes of conduct, but not about whether they should be involved or not, or about their values.</i></p>
<p><b>Activism in the local site of the Palestinian project is part of a broader moral struggle against othering</b></p>	<p><i>Being motivated by experiences of inclusive selves and/or expansive identities, they cross over to a commitment to activism in support of the “other” that is broader than the particular struggle of the Palestinians. Impressions of a larger pursuit and/or connections between the Palestinian project and other struggles is one of the most prominent reasons for activism, especially in the Palestinian project. They do not have the time and energy to be involved in all the worthy causes of the world, but are motivated by their view that the Palestinian project is a critical juncture for global issues. They see the Palestinian cause, problems in their own local and national contexts and other struggles against dehumanisation in the world as part of the same matrix of problems. The Palestinian project is not identical to other issues, but acts like a microscope that brings several struggles into sharper focus. Activism in the Palestinian project is contextualized as a task with global implications. Therefore, respondents feel driven to make known the connections between their impressions of Zionist Israel’s self-destructive ethos and other urgent local and global issues; the USA’s support for Israel; the concurrence with South African apartheid and many other issues, to unmask the confluence of fear-fed militarism, greed and neo-liberalism that strengthens global power bases. None of the respondents focused on Israel because of some vendetta, or because they wanted to “single out” Israel.</i></p> <p><i>The tension between the Palestinians and Israel was not perceived as a religious clash. All the respondents try to unmask Zionism’s conflation of myths, lies, state and economic power and exclusivist understandings of Judaism and Christianity as the ideological framework for othering Palestinians. None of them advocates for the rights of one religion over another, or claims a city, or a piece of land for the sake of religion. Although only a third refer to themselves religious, all of them are inspired by co-operation with people from other affiliations than their own on the basis of shared, inclusively positioned values.</i></p> <p><i>One person was particularly motivated by the intersection between the local and the global (a Gaia consciousness) to bring about changes in urban planning in Jerusalem as a point in case for what is possible in the rest of Palestine and perhaps elsewhere. Impressions of ecological abuse and hegemony were not mentioned as pertinent reasons for activism.</i></p> <p><i>Changes to the political structure and the respondents’ general preference for a one-state solution were not perceived as irrelevant, but the notion of nationalism and the nature of the future political structures were not offered as points of departure, nor mentioned as motivating factors. The respondents</i></p>

	<p>were primarily motivated by the need to shift Israel's collective ethos of superiority, exceptionalism and militarism to one of inclusive care, feminism and humanism. However, the tension between the perceived need for paradigmatic and practical grassroots changes was a paradox that they try to navigate by giving attention to both aspects.</p>
<p><b>C. Specific, interrelated values</b> relevant to the context of the Palestinian project motivated the respondents' activism. All their values are underpinned by the notion of a common, caring, inclusive humanity in which discrimination is unacceptable.</p>	
<p><b>Consistent, embodied altruistic love and compassion motivates activism</b></p>	<p><i>However difficult it may be to be a Mensch, it is a challenge none of the respondents wanted to avoid. Several deep emotional processes expanded their inner selves to include the other. All the respondents acted because of a shared humanity and not because of a special affinity for one group over another. Thus, the Palestinians' pain motivated their activism. Moreover, they perceived the ongoing abuse and violence also to hurt Jews and Israel. This compassion for the oppressor was thus also a motivator for action. All who spoke about the Holocaust posited that to inflict pain on the Palestinians because of one's own history of abuse is intolerable and it must stop.</i></p> <p><i>Moral consistency is a key reason for these respondents' activism. The respondents were not motivated by hatred, or by a desire to wipe out the "enemy". Provocation can, in their view, be both creative and something not worthy of their energy. Violent resistance is not the preferred option since the means do not fit the end, but a few of the respondents were willing to support such a strategy if the majority of Palestinians called for it. Especially South Africans, but not only they, spoke in nuanced ways about the burden of armed resistance. None of the respondents rejected Palestinians who opt for armed struggle, but they did regard the killing of civilians as a breach of international law.</i></p> <p><i>The respondents indicated that altruistic love and compassion amongst fellow activists enrich and sustain activism. It was not posited as a reason for activism, but was deemed necessary for the sake of integrity and moral consistency.</i></p>
<p><b>Equality and justice are foundational life values</b></p>	<p><i>The notion that all human lives have the same value in a shared humanity is a pertinent reason for activism. Equality is considered a basis from whence to approach life, and justice as a means to restore and not to retaliate. Respondents warned against reducing identities to cultural, ethnic, national, religious, or any other perceived unjust attributes. Several were motivated to correct derogative terms used to diminish Palestinians, and develop language that empowers, humanizes and helps to articulate and envision a different, inclusive, caring way of being together. Activism is perceived to benefit from learning with others how one's conduct, tone and manner can signify inclusivity, equality and justice in respect of all.</i></p> <p><i>Only a third of the respondents identified themselves as religious, and most of them argued equality and justice from these perspectives. Whether they</i></p>

	<p><i>were religious or not, all affirmed the options available for religious association and appreciated understandings that fostered inclusive justice and equality. Humanists and those who identified themselves as secular, agnostic, atheist, pagan or spiritual sometimes also motivated their positions on equality and justice in reference to religious traditions.</i></p> <p><i>While they were inspired by belief systems such as those of Christianity, Islam, Marxism, feminism, atheism, and/or a sense of cosmic belonging, none of the respondents claimed that their idea of justice and equality was exclusive to their convictions, or spoke from a superior religiosity, or on behalf of God. The Christian respondents deemed the exclusivism of Christian Zionism a reason for great concern, and it motivated their activism. The shared motivator for activism was not religion, but their values and mutual respect for different traditions.</i></p> <p><i>Respondents called for change to the legal apparatus that oppresses and neglects Palestinians. Nearly all framed Israel's practices as reminiscent of apartheid. Some highlighted the need to qualify Israeli apartheid in terms of international law and not to confuse it with South African apartheid. The South African activists indicated that they want the international community to uphold international law in respect of Israel and the Palestinians. Jewish Israeli activists called for non-discriminatory laws and practices in Israel. These activists were motivated by the need to institutionalise justice and equality in laws and in legal enforcement, in the Palestinian economy, in religious freedom and in urban planning. Their activism was not only motivated by the need to dismantle oppression and to enforce legal and constitutional rights, but also by the need for substantive rights in employment, education, healthcare, housing and so forth. Creative, non-violent activism appealed to them and there was broad support for the international BDS campaign and its demand for the Palestinian refugees' Right of Return.</i></p> <p><i>The idea of moral consistency in compassion, altruistic love, equality and justice – as part of a future dispensation and in the texture of daily interactions with the oppressed, the oppressor, audiences, the public and fellow activists – motivated the respondents' activism.</i></p>
<p><b>Honesty, truth and openness are non-negotiable</b></p>	<p><i>Consistent honesty and openness – as basic, critical values – also motivated their activism. Here too, moral integrity was both an outcome of the desired ethos and deemed necessary in relations on the way to a new dispensation, such as honesty and openness in Israeli and South African civil society, in governments, media, religious structures, schools and between activists. Section 5.3.2 summarised impressions of the lies that Israel has manufactured and that must be unmasked and corrected through activism. The respondents called for public honesty about the founding of Israel, the power asymmetry, Israel's façade of being a "victim", Israel's nationalist imperialism, its double standards, and other facts hidden from the public. They objected to a tendency amongst Jews to keep quiet in public about Israel's violations. Because they feel dishonest and without integrity if they</i></p>

	<p><i>are not transparent and reveal the untruths and silences, these respondents have taken up the task of correcting the plethora of Zionist myths, lies and intentional propaganda that cover up historical evidence.</i></p> <p><i>Truth in the sense of scrutinised, verified facts from reliable sources, and not “absolute truths”, motivated their activism. The respondents deemed it important to remain self-reflective and open to ongoing realignment and learning.</i></p> <p><i>They deemed inappropriate any dialogue that in form and content is not structured to reflect the power asymmetry between Palestinians and Israel, but instead mimics a binary “conflict” whereby both parties have an equal say. Such dialogue lacks integrity and is damaging. The task of Jewish Israelis and other non-Palestinians is first to listen and then to end the injustice.</i></p>
<p><b>D. With regard to strategy, outcomes, meaning and worthwhileness</b></p>	
<p><b>The urgency of the matter necessitates public advocacy</b></p>	<p><i>Outward public action is necessary and urgent, because of escalating horror. Despite decades of daily and extensive suffering by the Palestinians, the global public, its governments, regulatory bodies, religious institutions and media mostly stand by without stopping the systemic injustice. Mass othering, rejection and falsehoods are endorsed or actively promoted. Muslim and Christian Palestinians are seen as troublemakers who deserve to be marginalised and oppressed. The Palestinian project is unjustly tainted with Islamophobia, and Christian Zionism is used to ratify and promote the oppression of Christian Palestinians through their very own religion. A theology that justifies the marginalisation of an entire people requires examination, also for the sake of redeeming Christianity.</i></p> <p><i>The respondents were motivated by all these perceptions and also by their impressions of insufficient political will and vested interests in support of Israel. These activists have chosen to reject societal complacency and to endorse moral integrity. They continue consciously to act in the public arena despite the personal discomfort of being so visible. The urgency of the project has motivated them to explore all possible forms of media communication and to tailor their messages to reach as many people as possible – also those from orientations other than theirs. Almost all of them want more time for their activism.</i></p> <p><i>Some communicated that their inner spirituality is crucial to how they position their outward action.</i></p>
<p><b>Strategy and action are determined by Palestinian needs</b></p>	<p><i>The requests and agency of the Palestinians are deemed crucially important for advocacy strategies. The first obligation of an activist is to listen to the oppressed, and the next is to act in the service of the needs of those who are oppressed in line with one’s own ethics. Respondents are in solidarity with all Palestinians, but their efforts are driven by the needs of grassroots civilian Palestinians and not by alliances with those in positions of financial and/or political power. The fact that there is an official civil Palestinian call</i></p>

	<p><i>for a non-violent strategy appealed to the respondents, but they distinguished between the goal of exacting international pressure on Israel and the outcomes they aspired to. Isolating Israel and structural political changes that may flow from it are not their primary or core reasons.</i></p>
<p><b>Different core tasks and aspirations motivate these individuals</b></p>	<p><i>Most of the respondents mentioned core tasks and/or aspirations, but none regarded these as enjoying priority over other responsibilities. Advocacy foci can be grouped as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fourteen respondents focus on a fundamental, enveloping, paradigmatic shift in the militarist, abusive ethos of Jewish Israelis to a new reality characterised by an inclusive, safe, humane, caring, feminist approach. Five more respondents use the means of awareness-raising and education to shift the discourse in Israel and in the general public by unmasking Israel's Zionism, patriarchy, militarism, colonialism and its multiple injustices against the Palestinians. They are also motivated by ongoing personal development for the sake of a better humanity.</i></li> <li>• <i>Four respondents are motivated by justice as a way to improve the quality of being human. It entails, for example, a structural end to violations of international laws and the restoration of the rights of the Palestinians.</i></li> <li>• <i>Four – two Muslims and two Christians – are motivated by theological notions of life for all. R7 remarked briefly on the Talmud. Muslim respondents perceive gratitude to God and a responsibility for co-creation, while the Christians address Christian Zionism to redeem the true spirit of Christianity.</i></li> <li>• <i>The fundamental reason for R7 to engage in activism is to experience wholeness by moving closer to truth in a social process of critical thinking.</i></li> <li>• <i>In another focus held by only one person, R12 is motivated by the idea of creating strategic blueprints of the desired future. He creates platforms for grassroots leaders to voice their aspirations and plans for a future Jerusalem that will restore it as the Palestinians' economic capital and the largest metropolis.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>All the respondents are motivated by the notion of integrated change that includes structural, institutional forms of equality and justice, together with altruism, compassion, honesty, truth and transparency. All of these should also be reflected in the texture of being human and human relations. Thus, they aspire not only to changes in laws, state policies, political structures and urban reality, but also to shifts in paradigmatic, affective and volitional positions that mirror a coming-together without being usurped by the other. Both the quality of the process and the end goals motivate them.</i></p>
<p><b>Activism is propelled by humans' ability to influence reality,</b></p>	<p><i>The human ability to participate in the shaping of reality gives hope and motivates activism. All the respondents persist through small, but steadfast, incremental steps and some indicators of progress. Giving and receiving hope sustains activism. Hope is perceived to turn into reality through</i></p>

<p><b>and activists are not deterred by slow change and setbacks</b></p>	<p><i>authentic, deeply satisfying human connections and co-operation between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. Despite great emphasis on outward ways to shape reality and to attain freedom and full rights for Palestinians, nobody is motivated by what s/he can achieve.</i></p> <p><i>Many warn strongly against the idea of utopia, nirvana, or some flawless, final solution. All the respondents accept that they simply cannot do it all and they are accountable only for their own actions, not the outcomes. Thus, parallel to a dedicated drive for real, tangible results in a seemingly daunting task, activism is characterised by widely shared experiences of insufficient progress. On the one hand, they are pulled forward by co-struggling with others towards specific and urgent goals for large-scale relief and paradigmatic changes. On the other hand, they are frustrated by insufficient progress and by having no guaranteed outcomes. Within this tension and paradox, they nevertheless “struggle towards” – guided by their values and a yearning for congruency and moral integrity.</i></p>
<p><b>Experiences of meaning and worthwhileness enrich activism</b></p>	<p><i>Relational and aesthetical experiences do not motivate activism, but they provide meaning and a sense of worthwhileness.</i></p> <p><i>The respondents did not ascribe meaning to simplified understandings of “happiness”, “satisfaction”, “fulfilment”, “contentment” and a victorious assuredness. The respondents experienced meaning and worthwhileness through reciprocity between people and/or in relation to God in a divisive context. Gratitude for being allowed to be, and being welcomed as, partners in the Palestinian project is inspiring. Co-struggling inspires by joint growth, feeling expanded and liberated, sustained and energised. Meaning springs from feeling connected to and/or nourished by the support of, and love for, a wider circle of like-minded people with similar values and a shared passion for an ideal greater than limited self-interest. It is associated with moving towards wholeness, closure and healing, and with relief and empowerment by being credible, honest, truthful and being connected to something much bigger than being a person in a country participating in a particular cause.</i></p> <p><i>For South African activists, their activism in the Palestinian project renews activism in their own, local context.</i></p> <p><i>Moving, deeply nurturing aesthetic experiences in the course of activism inspire further engagement. In the case study, these experiences symbolise spiritual togetherness and integration with God and the oppressed when in solidarity; the power of spiritual imagination and the symbolic value of earthly reality; and images of humanity’s grace and resilience juxtaposed by, and connected to, the ugliness of human suffering. Thus, the very act of activism is perceived to attract respondents to the cause.</i></p>

In light of the above, the discussion now moves to the study’s final conclusions.

## 7.2 Conclusions

The task in this section is to draw a succinct, overall conclusion based on all the grounded statements in Section 7.1. The danger of deducing such a meta-statement is that a researcher can be beguiled into reductive thinking. Clearly, at this stage, my thinking cannot be inductive. Nor should I reduce the body of grounded knowledge because of pressure to produce one, single clear point. Because I am well aware of this risk, I approach the final conclusion, or the meta-statement grounded in the findings, in three phases. It starts with the centre of respondents' motivations and from there spirals outward to more explanatory notes on their reasons for activism in the Palestinian project.

### 7.2.1 *The centre of motivation*

The various reasons why the respondents in this case study are activists in the Palestinian project tend to *centre around their expressed desire for moral consistency in their experiences of an interconnectedness that goes further than the project itself*. They expressed this desire both as a personal quest in their own relations, and as a yearning for a communal shift from selfishness, dualism and alienation to inclusive, life-enhancing relations between all the parties in the Palestinian project. The crux for them remains their inclusive, consistent embodiment of values, as opposed to a selected application of worthy values. Thus, when they advocate for interpersonal and structural change in the specific context of the Palestinian project, they do so with an understanding of a bigger picture that includes the plight of other struggles for freedom and human dignity in the world. The enormity of their self-assumed task does not overwhelm them. They steadfastly do what they can, even if they have no guarantees. To them, their activism is a necessary expression of their own integrity.

### 7.2.2 *Structural and content consistency in arguments*

*Structurally*, the respondents' perceptions pointed to a constant, dynamic, reciprocal relation between their views of the inner and the outer, the private and the public, the conceptual and the practical, as well as between the particular and the general. Thus, the form in which they presented their points was akin to a rhythmically moving "metronomic" shape, underscoring the same tune. In their views, both the immediate and the lesser known (the "other") are equally important and necessary.

At paradigmatic, emotional and factual levels, and perhaps at other levels too, these respondents continually advocate for a shift away from one dispensation to another. The *contents* they advocate for suggests a shift away from one framework towards another. However, it would be inaccurate to conclude that they have in mind a linear move from Point A to Point B. They realise that the road of change is not straightforward. They explained in overlapping and also unique ways how the path towards their envisaged ideals of greater humaneness guided them through circular motions and reciprocal junctions. In the midst of upheaval and tragedy, they often encounter deeply nurturing experiences of togetherness and newly established relations between people from so-called opposite and/or different orientations. Despite the shortage of structural and broad-scale societal changes, they feel that they already have experiences that resemble a new, integrated, relational reality. As they see it, this reality is characterised by moral integrity, intersectionality, equality, justice, altruistic love, compassion, honesty, truth and openness in respect of all.

As the respondents expressed it, both the structure and the contents of their messages are characterised by *relationality*, or – as I concluded several times in the analysis – *the medium becomes the message*. This congruency creates an impression of credibility, and of the dependability and usability of their views.

### ***7.2.3 A personal quest and a communal shift***

The respondents perceived the responsibility of applying one's values in respect of all parties as inextricably bound to *the ability to face oneself*. All of them indicated that they want synergy between their values and their responses in the context of the Palestinian project. All of them embrace similar, inclusively positioned values. They understand consistent application of these values vis-à-vis the Palestinians, all other parties and themselves as indicative of integrity.

All the respondents sensed *a strong emotional appeal in themselves over and above the factual merits* of the case. They indicated that they experience intense discomfort when they observe the glaring discrepancy between their own lives, what they envisage for others, and the reality of the Palestinians' lives. They experienced this discomfort as so strong and as so unsettling that it threatens their own sense of self if they do not face it squarely and try to narrow the gap. Remaining silent and doing nothing about it means feeling fake, torn, divided, disgraceful and inconsistent. It causes inner turmoil, tension, and secret shame. They

associate stepping out into the public domain with relief, liberation, freedom, inner expansion, empowerment, congruency and wholeness. In short, a visible, public stand through creative, non-violent action guided by moral consistency – even if it comes at a price – is their way of living with integrity in the context of the Palestinian project. The price for dishonesty and complacency is perceived as higher than that of taking a stand, and they do not consider opting for the *status quo* worthwhile.

Instead of entrenching reduction, division, exclusion and superiority, the respondents *try to overcome boundaries*. Binary relations and polarisation do not serve them. They do not cut existing ties with Zionist friends and family (although their friends and family may cut ties with them), and they do not condemn those who resist the oppression through violence. None of the respondents contrast Jewish Israelis and Palestinians in simplistic terms as the “bad” against the “good”, or as “victimisers” versus “victims”. They see people from both as vulnerable, traumatised, and liable to make mistakes – nobody is denigrated as a monster. In short, the respondents do not reject, condemn, or treat those whom they differ from as lesser human beings, but aspire to work towards restored, healed relations.

In being self-reflective in the study, the respondents examined various dimensions of their inner lives. They indicated that they try to deal with their own demons and to cultivate a capacity for *opening themselves up more fully to the other*, be it fellow activists, the public, Zionists, the Palestinians, or an underlying impulse that may or may not have religious connotations. Their quest for greater humaneness is also an appeal to integrity.

From the above, it follows that the case study participants do not see themselves and others as people with mono-identities in opposition to one another. They reject the idea of unilinear relations which limit or reduce a person to someone with a state and a flag, a religious identity, a culture and an ethnicity, for example. They do not feel that they are “owned” by the state and other institutional powers, but locate themselves in *relational, contextual identities, and act from internal loci of control*. They live “*from the inside out*” to effect changes to the varied components that give rise to the oppression of the Palestinians.

None of the 21 respondents associate with the Palestinian project in individualistic or selfish ways. Their relations, and their awareness, span national borders to reach out to other activists and other causes. They see themselves as part of an organised, global, non-violent movement of people from different religious orientations, countries, cultures and other social

strata who gather around the Palestinian project as the central issue. They think and plan in collective terms by *prioritising the cause over personal needs and demands*. At the same time, they are *inspired by uniqueness, fluidity and the interchange* between people from different backgrounds. It is precisely in the confluence of various tributaries in a mutual struggle informed by shared values in the service of both the own cause and others that they experience the process as significant and meaningful. From this participation stems a profound sense of belonging, which in turn motivates and sustains their activism.

However, in the interviews the respondents argued that when pluralism turns into a new dogma or is hailed as the only viable option, it once more turns into a form of exclusivism. They made it very clear that they value diversity (for example, in religion, culture, ethnicity and other ways of relating to the same phenomena), but that they do not promote an absolute pluralism in which all and anything is acceptable. They remain *adamantly opposed to dogma* and do not think they know everything, or that truth is absolute. They set out to learn as they evolve and journey together. At the same time, they have very clear and firm frameworks from where they operate, such as their paradigms of humanism and feminism, their values, religious traditions and their rejection of Zionism, militarism, and other forms of abuse and oppression.

All the respondents indicated that they perceive the divisive exceptionalism, the moral inconsistency and the abusive domination of Zionism as deeply problematic, unethical and unsustainable. They argued that its false doctrine connects people throughout the world to Zionist Israel. It is a connection that manifests as communal fear, exclusivism, superiority, greed, rigidity, an absence of empathy and a lack of imagination. In this kind of connectedness, people are perceived to move further and further away from personal integrity and free, safe, happy communities.

There is a profound shared sense that *things cannot carry on the way they are*. The Palestinian project is of particular relevance to them because it brings into focus the dark side of a global interconnectivity between industries, businesses, politicians who proclaim themselves to be leaders of credible democracies, people of faith and others who strengthen Zionist ideals. Fundamental, paradigmatic changes to consciousness levels are deemed necessary, and so are practical non-violent alternatives to the belligerence of Israel. The respondents' advocacy in the Palestinian project is not characterised by short-term, isolated interventions, but by long-term commitments. They are not only *goal-driven* and impatient

for real progress, but also *intent on the process and its relational texture* in struggling towards sustainable solutions. They focus both on small, achievable steps and on more encompassing, paradigmatic work.

The respondents do not perceive their power to be institutional. In allowing that which they seek in life to enter into their own beings, they perceive their *aspirations to turn from projections to encounters*. Their creative non-violent activism becomes a thrust for the imagined more humane future. It facilitates experiences of diversity, partnerships and plurality through joint learning and growing understandings in the here and now in search of defining and redefining what the future should look like. In their experiences, it becomes possible to have moments of credible, deeply meaningful and mutually nurturing connections with Palestinians and others. Their desired outcomes are already taking shape – albeit in tiny, incremental steps.

### **7.3 Credibility, dependability and transferability of findings**

How can the trustworthiness and applicability of the grounded statements and conclusions be established? As Section 2.11 points out, the findings of a case study cannot be generalised, because they are specific to that case study, but multiple methodologies can be used to evaluate the validity and the reliability of qualitative findings in a process known as triangulation.

In this study, the findings and conclusions are triangulated in five ways, using both internal and external points of reference. In the first place, the lived circumstances, experiences and opinions of the respondents are congruent with many of the arguments considered in Chapter 1. In the second place, all the themes and sub-themes that were found to affirm the activists' joining and staying committed to activism applied to all the respondents, with the nuances and differences in these commonalities adding depth and texture. This too points to consistency, authenticity and therefore to the credibility and dependability of the findings. Following on from the second point, in Section 7.2.2, I have noted both construct validity and content validity, as defined by Babbie and Mouton (2001:123), in the respondents' views. Thus, in the third place, their ideas, arguments and words demonstrate their self-perceived principles and values and it too increases the trustworthiness of the material. In the fourth place, the informants' specific expectations of activism (as listed in Section 1.4) have been used as a source against which to triangulate the respondents' motivations, and this

showed a high degree of correlation, as illustrated in Table 4. In the fifth place, the Kairos 2015 statement has been used as a means to triangulate the study's findings and it too affirmed key findings in the case study, as can be seen from the discussion that follows after Table 4. None of the external sources used for triangulation contain any information that dispute the findings of the case study.

In Table 4 (below), a brief retrospective overview of the (mostly) Palestinian informants' expectations and the respondents' views is given to ascertain the applicability and usability of the findings and conclusions.

**Table 4: Comparison of the expectations of the informants and the respondents' views**

<b>Informants' expectations</b>	<b>Respondents' views</b>
Palestinians want to be acknowledged, treated with respect and live fully in dignified, inclusive and/or plural societies that welcome refugees and those in the diaspora.	All agreed to the study's selection criteria that specified the need to recognise Palestinians as a people, not only those who live in the oPt, but also those who reside in Israel and in the diaspora. This inclusive view of the Palestinians is reflected in the data corpus. Especially the Jewish Israeli respondents mentioned the Palestinians' Right of Return and want to sensitise their society in this regard.
The Palestinians wish to be equal partners in a global solidarity movement that respects their expectations of activism.	The respondents do not see the Palestinians as objects of charity. All acknowledge the need to listen to Palestinians, to respect their agency and to take their lead from them.
Activists should find ways to move away from attitudes and strategies that deepen imperialism, power abuse and othering. Their agenda should be informed by the kind of non-violence that seeks to bridge the divide in favour of constructive, alternative ways to co-exist.	The respondents are intent on finding creative, constructive non-violent alternatives to dualism, power abuse, othering and superiority in all relations, such as with Israel, between peers and in political, social, religious, spiritual and other understandings. They want to make a difference at paradigmatic, ethical, conceptual, emotional and practical levels.
The task of transnational activists is not to design or choose political solutions, but to highlight the unequal power balance, to sensitise, educate and mobilise civil society and to put pressure on Israel.	The respondents are not motivated by any specific political solution or structure and do not advocate these. Their aim is respectful, just coexistence. Hence, relations between people are an important focus. Most of the Jewish Israelis respondents try to influence their own and other civil societies and highlight the power asymmetry, and one respondent focuses on drawing attention to the need to support efforts to envision and plan for

Informants' expectations	Respondents' views
	urban reality in a future Jerusalem.
Mere words are not activism. Practical, hands-on involvement is necessary, for example, in the BDS campaign, but also through other means.	All agreed, and accepted these points. There was specific mention of the need not to be mere "keyboard" activists or to hold private supportive views without taking a public stance. BDS is widely supported as an advocacy strategy.
Justice, international law, inclusivity, co-existence, human rights, mutual respect, equality and integrity, as well as compassion and love, are key values in both activism and in the envisaged future.	All these elements are important to the respondents. All agreed to the selection criteria that specified that both Israel and the Palestinians should adhere to international law and endorse human rights, mutual respect, inclusivism and/or pluralism, and peaceful co-existence based on equality for all. All deem integrity, justice, equality, compassion, altruistic love, and also truth-based honesty and openness to be crucial to their activism and for future co-existence.
Activism should not focus on nationalism for the sake of it and be divorced from a sense of a shared humanity.	The respondents were very clear in stating that nationalist aims do not motivate, or inform their activism. The focus is on a shared humanity and shared values and the absence of discrimination.
The Palestinian cause is neither isolated from other struggles in the world, nor the only cause worthy to be involved in.	The respondents fully agreed with this point and it was one of the sub-themes in the case study.
The activists should practise what they advocate in their own organisations and amongst their peers.	This point was raised several times. Several pertinently mentioned the need for compassion for fellow activists. The need for moral consistency was a key point and a central theme throughout.
An ideal activist displays a steadfast resilience and confidence based on moral convictions and factual evidence. S/he has courage, practises critical thinking, works hard in a sustainable manner and uses her/his energy in constructive ways.	The participants are very committed and persevere despite many challenges. None regards her/his work as a short-term project of only a few years. They emphasise verified, scrutinised factual evidence and critical thinking. They do not think of themselves as "courageous", but prioritise the cause over personal agendas. The analysis only briefly mentions thoughts on time and energy management, peer support and meaningful experiences, but the data corpus shares more on constructive self-management.
South African and Jewish Israeli activism are very relevant and necessary, but the natures of their actions differ. South Africans are expected to widen and deepen their existing solidarity and <i>Ubuntu</i> to fulfil	The analysis indeed shows some differentiation between the two groups. The Jewish Israeli activists focus on their own society, and on Jews and others in the international society. All the South African respondents assume a special role

Informants' expectations	Respondents' views
<p>their perceived role as a global moral agent or leader. Jewish Israelis need to focus mainly on influencing Jews within and outside of Israel, and then on the broader international society.</p>	<p>because they know systemic oppression. They are intensely aware that they could have been in the shoes of the Palestinians. Except for R1 (2015:111-113), none used the term <i>Ubuntu</i><sup>135</sup> in their motivations. This notion is not analysed in the dissertation since it is a topic that requires in-depth attention. It may very well be that there are signs in the data corpus of an ethos and praxis of <i>Ubuntu</i>. It may warrant further probing and it could be part of a future study. The South African respondents do not speak about themselves as global moral agents, but express profound concern and disappointment in their leading political party and government for not taking a bold stand with actions against the oppression of Palestinians. Moreover, they are of the opinion that much work is still needed to sensitise fellow South Africans.</p>
<p>Despite a rootedness in particular and different religious traditions, the spiritual task is to open up to the other to a place of ethical co-existence. If activists are to fulfil truly complementary roles, they need to develop and/or nurture inner qualities, along with disciplined, informed, focused outward actions. Continuous self-reflection, humility and adjustments are necessary.</p>	<p>All demonstrate, and many talked about, the relevance of being self-reflective and humble. Several arguments supported commitment to ongoing learning, inner growth and concomitant behavioural adjustments. Their convictions were inspired by a variety of frameworks, such as specific religious and spiritual traditions, feminism, humanism, other existential views, Black Consciousness, Marxism and the work of a others. Despite firm commitment to their own frameworks, they welcome diversity and partnerships with people from different orientations who share their values.</p>

This brief overview shows a high correlation between the informants' expectations and the respondents' agendas and motivations. To be more specific, the respondents' views met all the informants' expectations, except for one. The South African activists do not think that they can live up to, or are living up to, the ideal of moral leadership in the Palestinian project.

<sup>135</sup> *Ubuntu* and similar terms in sub-Saharan African indigenous cultures can have many different connotations and in some scholarly discourses, are also subject to different and contested interpretations. One possible way of explaining "*Ubuntu*" in a South African understanding of the concept is that it carries an existential meaning and it permeates relations on all levels – with the self, with one's own community, with others, with nature, with ultimate reality and all that is perceived to be out there. Communal belonging, for example, is not defined as "solidary", in the sense of "standing alongside others", but starts with the individual (the known) and from there expands outwards (what is less known). Being human through others carries existential value as it permeates every aspect of life – often unfamiliar to a modern Western understanding (Louw, 1998:n.p.).

On the contrary, most of them are painfully aware of the failure of their leading political party, their government and fellow citizens to take unequivocal positions against the oppression of the Palestinians.

As indicated at the start of Section 7.3, a public statement by the delegates of an international Kairos conference in August 2015 can be used to triangulate the research findings and conclusions. An international group of over 80 people from 16 countries<sup>136</sup> gathered in Johannesburg from 17 to 20 August 2015 on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1985 South African Kairos document. The aim of the conference was to ask, and to reflect on, what the memory of the 1985 South African Kairos appeal means today – in the South African context and in other local contexts. The conference delegates’ official public statement, titled *Dangerous memory and hope for the future* (Kairos 2015), makes it very clear that such commemoration should include critical reflection on the dynamics that contribute to the oppression of the Palestinians and the nature of an appropriate, morally responsible, response. The international group’ opened their official statement by indicating that they were inspired by the idea of a common humanity, human dignity and concern for the environment. The case study is in agreement with the first two points, but, as noted in Section 4.2.4, the respondents did not focus on ecological concerns. Interestingly, the Kairos 2015 statement mentions this concern only twice, and also does not elaborate on what this concern means in practice.

Many of the points in the conference delegates’ two-and-a-half-page statement reverberate in and even echo the findings of the empirical data sourced from April to June 2015. Although the conference was largely a gathering of Christians, others, including Muslims and Jews also attended and presented papers. In fact, the conference conversations “were intentionally multi-generational and broadly international. We were grateful to engage deeply with Muslim and Jewish perspectives. We found much joy in our solidarity and shared struggle” (Kairos 2015:n.p.). As some respondents in the case study also said, the delegates were encouraged “to find that, although Empire seeks to divide communities from one another, peoples’ resistance can unite us across religious, ethnic and culture divides” (Kairos 2015:n.p.). These experiences of being united across conventional boundaries were also prominent in the case study, but unlike in the 2015 Kairos statement, there was no focus on a multi-generational approach.

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<sup>136</sup> Botswana, Brazil, Germany, Ghana, India, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Swaziland, Sweden, the USA and Zambia.

The Kairos 2015 statement contextualises the Palestinian cause by mentioning a range of other struggles. Together, they are perceived as part of a broader struggle for moral integrity, justice and human dignity. The statement's pointed and elaborate explanation of intersectionality between South African apartheid, South Africa's ongoing struggle for inclusivity, other struggles in the world and the Palestinian project affirms the validity of this study's findings regarding an important sub-theme, namely that the respondents perceive the Palestinian project as a prism for other struggles against othering. In what the delegates called "a disturbing echo of the dangerous memory of the South African story of apartheid", they noted that "Palestine is the space where our sacred texts are contested" (Kairos 2015:n.p.). The conference delegates' focus on the role of the Palestinian struggle as a catalyst resonates with the study's findings, and to a high degree, so do their views on issues such as patriarchy, militarism, fear, neo-liberalism, greed and a negative position of interconnectedness offset by positive plurality and inclusivity – I therefore quote extensively from the statement:

The empire we face is not restricted by geography, tribe, language or economy. Empire is an ideology of domination and subjugation, fuelled by violence, fed by fear and deception. It manifests itself especially in racial, economic, cultural, patriarchal, sexual, and ecological oppression. Empire deceptively informs dominant, White supremacist, capitalist paradigms controlling global systems and structures. Global empire is sustained by weapons and military bases (hardware) along with ideologies and theologies (software).

We rejoice that resistance against empire is manifested in a plurality of struggles throughout the world. Struggles against ecological injustice, gender injustice and patriarchy, landlessness, abuse of people on the move, refugee vulnerability, political and religious persecution, social exclusion, denial of indigenous rights, neglecting children's rights, harm to LGBTI persons, access for the differently abled, and racial supremacism represent only a portion of the struggles against empire. Since 1985, Kairos documents have expressed resistance to these and other realities in Central America, Europe, Malawi, India, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Palestine. ... In this conference, we were pleased to receive new Kairos documents from siblings in Swaziland, Nigeria, and the United States. The memory of unjust suffering in all contexts is dangerous to the purposes of empire.

In our listening to one another, we found that the context of suffering and pain created by Israel's oppression of Palestine contains all aspects of empire. Palestine is therefore a microcosm of global empire, a critical site of reflection that can bring experiences in other locales into sharper focus. Palestine does not eclipse other situations around the globe but instead intensifies the need for greater interconnection and mutual engagement. (Kairos 2015:n.p.)

The Kairos 2015 declaration is more than a position statement. It also confesses the Church's "ambiguous and cautious" response when faced with human suffering and it calls for public action. The conference statement clearly and prophetically draws attention to the unacceptable and oppressive complicity of Christian Zionism as a form of "state theology" that supports "state terror" in oppressing the Palestinians and to corresponding dynamics during South African apartheid. Thus, the conference delegates' views on Christian Zionism support the findings of this case study. Kairos (2015:n.p.; my insertion) states:

Imperial theology is at work in the continued oppression of Palestinians and the crisis now engulfing [in] what is known as the Middle East. Analysis and rejection of the State Theology supporting Apartheid in South Africa was an essential element in exposing and resisting that sinful system. In its dominant forms, Zionism has been used to justify the dispossession, transfer, massacring, ghettoization and exploitation of the Palestinian people. Zionism has become an element within the dominant structures of empire. Politically, we call for an intensification of all economic and political pressures on the State of Israel, including the Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions [BDS]. In our biblical interpretation, we strongly distinguish between biblical Israel and the modern State of Israel. Theologically, we declare to be heresy any Christian theologies that support the Zionism informing Israeli oppression.

Like the respondents whose views are discussed in this case study, the Kairos (2015) conference statement calls for international law to be applied equally to all. It also rejects imperial exceptionalism in respect of Israel "that imposes sanctions on some regimes while vetoing and criminalizing popular calls for sanctions on egregious violations of international law" (Kairos 2015:n.p.) and it supports BDS. Moreover, the conference delegates pledged their support for a deepening theological engagement with the pressing challenges of the world. All these views confirm the study's grounded statements.

Two appeals for action raised in the Kairos 2015 document were not mentioned by the case study respondents. The one is the need to "encourage all Christians to respond to the Palestinian Christian call to 'come and see' the living stones of the Holy Land" and not to visit holy sites in places such as occupied East Jerusalem and Bethlehem without also engaging with the Palestinians and their suffering. The other is deliberately to create appropriate systems to nurture and mentor young people in a life-enhancing ethos to grow in leadership. However, these two points may be regarded as means or tactic in advocacy work and not as explanations for why one would be an activist in the Palestinian project. The conference statement ends with the words "we are, because you are", which, in a way may reflect an *Ubuntu* consciousness, which was not spelt out by the respondents in the case

study. However, a personal, engrained, *felt* sense of association with the oppressed was clearly articulated in the case study.

Thus, although the case study and Kairos 2015 had different foci, and although each contains suggestions for activism not specified in the other, there are important and clearly spelt out areas of overlap regarding views on why activism in the Palestinian project is relevant to global society, including politicians, civilians, religious institutions and believers. These areas of agreement enhance the credibility and the dependability of this study's findings and conclusions.

The use of multiple methodologies helps raise the research above personal biases and the limitations embedded in the use of a single methodology. The triangulation by means of all these methodologies and the various ways in which they affirm the findings and conclusions of this scientific investigation indicate that the data display integrity and that the grounded statements can be accepted. Whether they are transferable to other activists who meet the same criteria cannot be ascertained here, but the level of credibility and dependability suggests that it may be worth investigating whether the motivations for activism found in this research also apply to other activists, who these activists are and whether there are more motivations that drive activism. Within the limitations and the boundaries of an exploratory case study with a limited number of purposely selected respondents, it is my hope that the self-perceived motivations of this group of activists may be informative and perhaps even inspiring to others.

#### **7.4 Contribution of the study**

Although this is a case study and it is therefore not subject to the demand for, or governed by a logic of generalization, the findings of this empirical research may benefit the body of scientific knowledge and society in a number of ways:

- It highlights specific Palestinian informants' expectations of the agendas, conduct and ethics expected from transnational activists – particularly South African and Jewish Israeli activists.
- As an empirical investigation of lived experiences in one of the most prolonged struggles in one of the most contested and violence-ridden sites in the world, it has uncovered

grassroots civilian views, overlap and differences in the views of transnational activism held by both South African and Jewish Israeli activists.

- The study has generated knowledge on a number of moral, religious, spiritual and existential reasons for affirming the Palestinian project and for joining and staying committed to activism.
- The respondents' lived experiences and perceptions add nuance and texture to the discussion of moral questions and understandings associated with religious and existential notions in an area with much symbolic significance.
- The study qualifies and makes specific a number of central concepts and constructs in the context of the Palestinian project, such as understandings of Jewishness, inclusivity, pluralism, religion, Zionism, violence and non-violence, democracy, nationalism, conflict, oppression, peace and dialogue.
- The study's rationale, as well as the respondents' views may challenge assumptions in scholarly, ethical, religious, business, public, political and other discourses on the plight of the Palestinians, the nature of the Palestinian project and the ethos of Israel and of Zionist Jews and Christians.

The study also opens up topics for further research, as listed in the next section.

## **7.5 Future research**

As I have indicated above, the research results should not be generalised or transferred to predict or validate the behaviour of other activists. However, these research findings may be a catalyst for further investigations on the motivations of other activists in the Palestinian project. The following areas might be fruitful in future research:

- The case study respondents had a number of motivations in common, such as their notions of inclusive interconnectivity, the importance of moral consistency and integrity, interrelated values, the impression that the Palestinian project is not a nationalist project or due to a religious clash, and intersectionality with other struggles. It may be worth finding out whether other activists are also motivated by these reasons. If so, do these motivations apply to all the activists in the Palestinian project, or only to those who subscribe to the selection criteria in this study? If there are differences, what are they and what do they mean for activism in the Palestinian project?
- The study has highlighted the prominence of the South African case as a motivating factor, and Palestinian expectations of South Africans as global moral agents. Are these

perspectives shared by others, including the South African public? Why, or why not? What can South Africans learn from Palestinians and Jewish Israeli activists?

- The topics of Christian Zionism, and of the political, business and other vested interests of South Africans in Israel, are a source of great concern in the case study. An investigation into the reasons for such positions in light of the Palestinian expectations of South Africans as global moral agents may provide insight into ethical paradigms and levels of consciousness in South Africa. South African understandings of *Ubuntu* in the context of the Palestinian project may be particularly relevant.
- Almost none of the Jewish respondents are religious. Is this the norm for Jewish activists? If so, it may be beneficial to probe deeper into their reasons. Do they, for example, connect their non-religious stance to the conflation between Judaism and Zionism? What are the views of those who *are* religious? How and where do they engage with communal belonging in practising their religion and what can be learnt from it? The work of Braverman and Ellis, for example, may provide valuable insights that can inform further research on activism.
- The findings mostly focus on aspirations for human dignity. How relevant or irrelevant is the ecological angle to activism in the Palestinian project? Why? Is it an angle of incidence that can or should be explored to promote activism in the Palestinian project? If so, what is required to do so?
- Theories of action and social change such as those of Joas and Appiah could be used for deductive studies. Appiah (2010), for example, argues that over the last century democratic movements have not been driven by legislation from above, but rather by a sense of shame that emerged about what turn out to be outdated, obsolete and even ridiculous codes of honour. Appiah is interested in what can change moral behaviour. He claims that recognising a deed to be immoral, illegal, irrational and/or irreligious does not necessarily change behaviour. In his view, there is no spontaneous alignment between what people know versus what they do. Thus, future research might explore the motivational power of a desire for honour vis-à-vis morality.
- The informants have pointed out that hardly any publications on the South African struggle have been translated into Arabic, and that there is a need to do so for the sake of Palestinian civilians. Is it perhaps also necessary to translate them into Hebrew?

## 7.6 A final word

A mood of universal destruction and renewal...has set its mark on our age. This mood makes itself felt everywhere, politically, socially, and philosophically. We are living in what the Greeks called the *kairos* – the right moment – for a ‘metamorphosis of the gods,’ of the fundamental principles and symbols. This peculiarity of our time, which is certainly not of our conscious choosing, is the expression of the unconscious human within us who is changing. Coming generations will have to take account of this momentous transformation if humanity is not to destroy itself through the might of its own technology and science..... So much is at stake and so much depends on the psychological constitution of the modern human. (Jung, quoted in Tarnas, 2007:453)

In arguing from the most cherished Jewish values, Ellis (2009) concludes that the policies of the Israeli state cannot reasonably be defended. For him, the future not only of Judaism, but of Israel itself, hinges on a fundamental shift in Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians and on a completely new direction. When he draws on personal engagements with fellow Jewish scholars, Ellis (2010) concludes that two generations after the Holocaust and Israel’s founding, the uncertain future of Judaism requires a deeply personal and intellectual exploration of Jewish tradition and identity in the pursuit of global justice. He asserts that the “ethnic cleansing of Palestine is among the defining moments of contemporary Jewish history.... Israel will not stop itself. Palestinians cannot stop Israel. Many Jews and Palestinians want a way beyond this endless violence” (Ellis 2011:n.p.). Along with Ellis, Tutu (2014:n.p.) argues that Jewish Israelis should liberate themselves by freeing the Palestinians. Butler’s (2004) remarks on how Jewish efforts to criticise Israel for its oppression of the Palestinians are often portrayed as insensitive to Jewish suffering. But the ethics of doing so, she says, “is wrought precisely from that experience of suffering, so that suffering itself might stop, so that something we might reasonably call *the sanctity of life* might be honoured equitably and truly” (Butler 2004:104; Butler’s emphasis).

Was Jung correct in implying that modern humanity faces a metamorphosis, a transformation of fundamental principles and symbols? Since the end of the twentieth century many have written about the dawn of a new era in the (especially Western-based) understanding of reality and humanity’s place in it, which points to a move towards monism. The phasing out of a world characterised by hierarchical, polarising social structures and relationships is described as a collective shift from separateness to a sense that everything is connected to everything else, and that even the smallest thought or action has an impact on the whole. This new era is referred to using terms such as globalisation (Giddens 2002), complexity (Cilliers 1989; Capra *et al.* 2007), post-modernism (Niemandt 2007), the Gaia concept (Huysen,

2011:157) and a “network society” (Castells 2005). In all of these understandings, interconnectedness and an associated notion of the changing and evolving nature of identity and of patterns in relationships seem to play a significant role.

At the end of the twentieth century, Peter Russell was interviewed by DiCarlo (1996:366), and was asked whether humanity’s interpretation and the application of greater levels of interconnectivity (which is also facilitated by technology) will result in a sane or an insane “global brain”. In other words, where are we heading? The answer, he said, has to do with “our values and how we see ourselves in relationship to each other and the rest of the planet” (Russell, quoted in DiCarlo 1996:366).

On a winter’s day in Cape Town, Mitri Raheb (2014b:pers. comm.) told me that if one goes to Palestine, “you’ll feel that ultimate despair and ultimate hope are so close together”. I know that feeling. I have felt it too when I was there, and it has not left me. This research started with some very personal questions. Although neither my fellow activists nor I know how to pierce the deepest reasons for our shared activism – if such a reason indeed exists – this study, for me, has been an immensely enriching and energising experience on many levels. Every small step by every single person matters. I too choose to do my small part to realise this hope in the pursuit of global sanity. If I do not accept my responsibility to play that part, I will betray myself.

Raheb (2014a:21) challenges us to make a choice – do we want a static, enclosed, reduced, paralyzing, patriarchal reality that looks backward; or do we want a creative, project-driven, prophetic view that revitalises humanity as it invents a better future and an untold narrative as it asks: where to from here?

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## **ADDENDUM A: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH**



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### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Marthie Momberg (MA, MPhil) from the Department of Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University. The research topic is

*Why Activists? A case-study into the self-perceived motivations of selected South Africans and Jewish Israelis in the Palestinian project.*

The results of the interviews will contribute to a PhD dissertation with the above-mentioned title. You have been selected as a possible participant in the study because you are 20 years or older, you are able to converse in English, and have been lobbying for the rights of Palestinians for at least two years; you strive for a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians through non-violent strategies in alignment of the International Human Rights Law and the International Humanitarian Law; and you associate with alternatives to narratives that promote the systemic oppression and exclusion of Palestinians.

The Palestinian project is the Palestinians' quest for self-determination and a just peace in alignment with international law. For the purposes of the study, the Palestinians are defined as the 4.4 million people in the occupied Palestinian territories (i.e. the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem), the Arab-Palestinian Israelis, and the more than 6.6 million people who became refugees as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars, or for other reasons, and who are prohibited by Israel to return to occupied Palestine, or to their properties in Israel.

#### **2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study is largely exploratory. It wants to assess why, from your perspective, you and other South Africans and Jewish Israelis are activists in the Palestinian project. What will be important to understand is the relation between yourself and the Palestinians and your ethical reasons for acting in their interest. The core research question is: *Viewed from their own perspectives on values, morals and social relations, what makes it worthwhile to the respondents to participate in the quest for alternatives to the systemic oppression and exclusion of Palestinians?*

#### **3. PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to be willing to share your personal views and to answer a list of questions posed by the researcher. The researcher will schedule a suitable date and time well in advance in consultation with you. Your interview will last approximately two and a half hours and it will be conducted in a private meeting room chosen by you or in a public space such as a hotel in a city or town near you. If you are citizen from Israel and if the researcher is not allowed to enter Israel, or if you live in any country other than South Africa or Israel, the interview may be conducted on Skype.

#### **4. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

You will need to travel to the interview venue at your own cost. If the interview is done on Skype, you will need to organise your own access to it. If there are unforeseen circumstances which result in a delay, or in the need to move the interview to another time slot, the researcher will do her best to accommodate you.

The study will not probe into any psychological reasons for your activism and it does not intend to pose any risks or discomfort to you. Nevertheless, if you feel that you have a need to reflect on the discussion you may contact a professional who can facilitate a telephonic de-briefing session. If you are in South Africa, you may contact (details withheld) for a debriefing session. If you are a citizen of Israel, you are welcome to contact (details withheld).

#### **5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

You will not derive any direct benefit from the study, but the study may advance public and scholarly perceptions on activists like you in the international community. As such it may further an understanding of your work and may motivate others to join your cause in a manner that is consistent with the values on which your activism is based.

The research may also benefit science and society by:

- explicating central concepts and constructs relevant to the topic;
- generating knowledge on the values, the ethos and morality, the identity and the existential symbols that motivate certain members of civil society members in their activism;
- providing insight into the positioning of activism in respect of another people;
- creating an understanding of what inclusiveness, pluralism and/or other applicable paradigms in the activists' context entail and how these interact with existential paradigms (current and emerging reality views or cosmologies), human rights, human dignity, morality, ethos, identity, values and behaviour;
- facilitating scholarly and public discourses between Jewish Israeli Jews, South Africans, Palestinians and other interested parties on the plight of the Palestinians;
- providing some insight into the activists' relations to their local and/or regional contexts;
- testing and developing research strategies for other applicable studies; and
- opening up possibilities and priorities for further research in the domain of Experimental Ethics on transnational activism in the Palestinian project.

You will receive the findings via e-mail after the degree has been awarded.

#### **6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary and you will not receive payment for it.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your name and organisation will be mentioned neither in the study nor in the recording to ensure your anonymity. However, your age, gender, religious orientation and the name of your country may be used in the study, together with the information shared during the interview.

For the interviews the researcher will use a voice recorder and transfer the recording to a tablet with a password. Before travelling with the voice recorder, the original recordings will be erased. As an extra precaution, she will e-mail the files to a safe address and transfer the sound files to a micro sim card and to a flash disk. The flash disk will also be mailed to a safe address before embarking on any travelling between countries.

All other research data will be secured by regular updates and will be kept electronically (on her password-protected laptop, on a flash disk, on an external hard drive, and on the university's password-protected e-mail system). When not in use, the equipment will be locked away and the researcher will be the only person to have access to it.

The researcher will use a professional transcriber to produce written copies of the audiotaped discussions. This person has signed a confidentiality agreement not to disclose any part of the audiotaped discussion. You have the right to review and/or edit your recording and/or transcription until the start of the analysis. If you wish to do so, you may ask the researcher to e-mail it to you.

The researcher will erase the recording after being awarded the degree, unless there is a need to use it for educational purposes and under the provision that you give your written permission that she may use it. She may publish the results of the study but will not use your name or any details which may disclose your identity unless you agree to its disclosure in writing.

## **8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant her doing so. Such circumstances may, for example, be a shift in your position, whereby you no longer support non-violence, international law, or peace based on inclusivism and/or pluralism, if you change your nationality, or if there are logistic obstacles.

## **9. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the supervisor of the investigator, Professor D. J. Smit at Stellenbosch University. His contact details are as follows: (withheld). You may also contact me, Marthie Momberg, at (contact details withheld).

## **10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact (details withheld) at the Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

The information above was described to \_\_\_\_\_  
(participant's name) in English by \_\_\_\_\_ and I command  
this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my  
satisfaction. I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this  
form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_  
[name of the participant]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions.  
This conversation was conducted in English and no interpreter was used.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**ADDENDUM B:  
SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR PALESTINIAN INFORMANTS**



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**AGREEMENT TO TREAT RESEARCH INTERVIEW DATA STRICTLY  
CONFIDENTIAL**

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You are asked to sign the following confidentiality agreement in transcribing the interviews of a PhD dissertation with the title: *Why activists? A case study into the self-perceived motivations of selected South Africans and Jewish Israelis in the Palestinian project*. The study will be conducted by Marthie Momberg, (MA, MPhil) in the Department of Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the study and/or its respondents will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone at any time whatsoever. Such information includes, but is not limited to, the audiotaped discussions.

All data will be kept electronically and be protected by passwords. When not in use, the equipment will be locked away and you will be the only person to have access to it. You will erase the recordings after submitting the transcriptions to the researcher.

**SIGNATURE OF TRANSCRIBER**

I hereby consent voluntarily to transcribe the audiotaped discussions in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**ADDENDUM C:  
SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR PALESTINIAN INFORMANTS**



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Stellenbosch  
December 2014

Dear XXX

**YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM**

Thank you for being willing to share with me your expectations of South African and Jewish Israeli activism in the Palestinian project. Your input helps me to prepare for formal interviews with the activists. Please feel free to share all your thoughts and any ideas you may have on the topic.

I was hoping to talk to you in person in Bethlehem in December 2014, but since Israel has denied me entry it was not possible. I shall appreciate it greatly if you take the time to answer the questions in writing, but we can also talk on Skype if it would suit you better. Just let me know and we can set up a Skype call.

The research forms part of a PhD dissertation at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. The topic is: *Why Activists? A case-study into the self-perceived motivations of selected South Africans and Jewish Israelis in the Palestinian project.* The research question is: *What are the self-perceived motivations of selected South African and Israeli activists, in their quest for non-violent alternatives to the systemic oppression and exclusion of Palestinians?*

My plan is to interview ten South African and ten Israeli activists who support the Palestinians' quest for self-determination and a just peace in alignment with international law.

If it is fine by you I would like to mention your name, your designation and your organisation. However, if you prefer to remain anonymous, you may indicate this and I shall respect your choice.

Kindly send me your answers as soon as possible, but not later than 30 December 2014.

Thank you so very much.

Marthie Momberg