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Proposed Guiding Principles for Israeli/Palestinian Academic Cooperation: Translating the Shared Adherence to Academic Freedom into Action

Walid Salem and Edy Kaufman

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for Israeli/Palestinian
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conducted by the Palestinian Center for the Dissemination
of Democracy and Community Development (PANORAMA),
with Walid Salem heading the Palestinian team,
and by the Center for Research and Cooperation Jerusalem (CRC),
with Edy Kaufman heading the Israeli team,
within UNESCO's Civil Societies in Dialogue Programme

PANORAMA
THE PALESTINIAN CENTER FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF DEMOCRACY
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

THE HARRY S. TRUMAN INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PEACE
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الجامعة العبرية في اورشليم القدس معهد هاري س. ترومان للبحوث وخدمة السلام

Contents

Acknowledgement	7
Background	9
Preparing the code of ethics	13
Action research methodology	13
Israeli and Palestinian feedback.....	16
Importance of a professional code of ethics	19
The role of guiding principles.....	19
Obstacles	20
Principles for academic cooperation.....	22
Proposed Guiding Principles for Israeli/Palestinian Academic Cooperation: Translating the Shared Adherence to Academic Freedom into Action	27
International referential framework	27
Preamble	28
Values	29
Proposed principles.....	30
Follow-up and conclusions	33

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Background

To date, few Palestinian and Israeli academics, university faculty, researchers in specialized institutions or think tanks have cooperated in research projects or maintained a sustained professional relationship. Over the years an estimated 2 per cent of Israeli academics have participated in such ventures and approximately 5 per cent of their Palestinian counterparts.¹ The vast majority of Israeli academics have remained indifferent, concentrating on their own careers and research agendas. In the case of the Palestinians, most academics have opposed, passively or actively, establishing such relationships across the divide. Even if the few academics who participated have made substantial contributions to the advancement of peace,² their work represents only a small fraction of the potential of this sector of society. Furthermore, these figures, calculated before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in October 2000, may have been further reduced by the increasing psychological hostility between Palestinians and Israelis due to the widespread use of violence by both communities, as well as by the physical limitations, such as Israel's checkpoints in the West Bank and the unilateral pullout from Gaza, the separation wall and legal statutes, restricting contact between the two national groups.

The ultimate goal of this project is to explore avenues for significantly increasing the percentage of Israeli and Palestinian academics and intellectuals engaged in constructive dialogue who can contribute towards a just peace. However, we take as our starting point the articulation, establishment and agreement upon shared principles for effective cooperation.

This document was launched in 2004 by UNESCO, which commissioned a study on the obstacles and promises of establishing a sound basis for academic and intellectual cooperation across the divide from the Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (PANORAMA, a

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1. The overall issue of civil society cooperation has been studied by M. Hassassian and E. Kaufman. *The Role of Civil Society in the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process*, in M. Ma'oz and S. Nusseibeh (eds), *Is Oslo Alive?*, Jerusalem, Adenauer Foundation, 1998, pp. 115–39; E. Kaufman and M. Hassassian, *Israeli/Palestinian Peace Builders: Lessons Learnt*, in Paul van Tangerine (ed.), *People Building Peace*, Utrecht, European Center for Conflict Prevention, 1999, pp. 112–23.
 2. See analysis by Paul Scham, 'Arab Israeli Research Cooperation 1995–1999', *MERIA – Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2000, pp. 1–16.

Palestinian NGO) and the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace (a research institute located at the Hebrew University), whose initial efforts are currently followed up by the Center for Research and Cooperation Jerusalem.

The creation of the guiding principles is an interactive process designed to translate the academic, humanistic relationship and financial values set out below into concrete efforts towards transcending obstacles to cooperation across the divide, particularly at times of violent conflict. Such cooperation should focus on pursuing common concerns, as academics and as human beings, a plea to Palestinian academics to work together towards a new basis of cooperation rather than denying the legitimacy of the other side and calling for boycotts of Israeli institutions. Furthermore, it should be based on *enacting* these values, encouraging Israeli academics and intellectuals who are informed about Palestinian suffering and lack of justice to move from the level of knowledge to that of acknowledgement. The goal of the project is to *act-knowledge*, that is to transcend the passive understanding of the situation and to act together, in the knowledge of a shared reality and a shared social responsibility, to change the unacceptable situation that overwhelmingly Palestinians and often Israelis find themselves in.

This set of proposed guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation among academics and intellectuals is not meant to be simply an academic exercise outlining common values that individuals who have been privileged to access higher education can share. Unlike many dialogue projects that ‘preach to the converted’ by including only those willing to meet with the other side, these guiding principles provide an opportunity to bring together Palestinians and Israelis representing a wide spectrum of political opinion. Consequently, they need to reach not only those committed to dialogue, but also those drawn to the challenge of defining a set of principles that addresses their professional responsibilities in a conflict situation.

This action research project, undertaken under the auspices of UNESCO, aims to provide a better understanding of the underlying difficulties and potential for change in the current Israeli-Palestinian context. In the first year, the research team undertook an in-depth study of the current stance of academics and intellectuals towards Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and drafted a set of principles that could

encourage academic cooperation. The short set of proposed guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation is derived from a series of interviews and focus groups held with Palestinian and Israeli academics and intellectuals. The guiding principles therefore reflect mutual understandings that emerged from frank and open discussions on the social responsibilities of academics and intellectuals arising from our shared professional commitment to academic freedom.

Preparing the code of ethics

Action research methodology

As the term *action* research implies, this report not only diagnoses the current situation and makes a prognosis for the future, it also suggests specific actions for creating a climate favourable for dialogue among academics and intellectuals. A fundamental premise underlying our research was that a set of agreed principles, like a professional code of ethics, has the potential to promote sustained and constructive cooperation. It would anchor the legitimacy of cooperation in ‘professional motives’ and would appear less contrived by using ‘professional’ motives to bolster the legitimacy of cooperation. The value of academic freedom, universally acclaimed, could serve as one such platform for action and can be legitimized through a document accepted by the leadership of Palestinian and Israeli universities as well as by a majority of faculties. We also hypothesize that an external, neutral party such as UNESCO can ensure that the focus remains on the implications of dialogue for academic freedom in the context of violent conflict, and differentiate such cooperative efforts from the broader political issues.

The project included several phases:

- (a) A systematic review of the literature, which revealed that the bulk of ethical writings deal with behavioural guidelines *within* a community and in processes of democratization or social cleavages, and do not address ethical mandates for dealing with the other side across the ethno-political national divide.

3. The ‘Barcelona group’ consisted of ten Palestinian and ten Israeli academics who gathered for the first time in May 2004 under the auspices of the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Center for Contemporary Culture, Barcelona) to discuss the social responsibility of academics at times of violent conflict; their contributions were of great relevance to the issues discussed in this project. This group has continued to meet in Jerusalem and Barcelona. It serves as a Track II initiative for exploring ideas that could also be shared with the leadership of Palestinian and Israeli universities.

- (b) Drafting two short documents: (1) an explanatory note and set of principles for Israeli/Palestinian academic cooperation based on the ethics of academic freedom; and (2) a list of shared values for the promotion of civil society dialogue for peace, and their dissemination.
- (c) Upon the evaluation of the limitations, promises and achievements identified, it was deemed necessary to move into the participatory stage, involving those academics that expressed interest in further exploring a new basis of cooperation and in searching common ground within the academic community as a whole, based on their individual and collective social responsibility. This bottom-up approach aimed at moving from diagnosis and potential consensus to dissemination of ideas, promoting active discussion within and among academic and research institutions as well as expanding the dialogue to intellectuals and NGOs in search of common denominators in the advancement of peace.
- (d) Consequently, this process sought to explore how the 'separate' topics of professional ethics and cooperation at times of conflict could be bridged through interviewing Israeli and Palestinian academics and intellectuals. Those involved in the focus groups and interviews included Palestinians and Israelis who had previously been involved in cooperative efforts, as well as those who had not. Although an effort was made to speak with academics and intellectuals from diverse geographical, professional and political perspectives, the pool was restricted to those who were willing to even discuss the prospect of cooperation. In a preliminary phase, sixteen Palestinians and nine Israelis used a questionnaire that was drafted jointly in English and then translated into Hebrew and Arabic.
- (e) In addition, uninational focus groups were held in Jerusalem (twenty-five participants from the Hebrew University), Haifa (eight participants from the University of Haifa and the Technion), Beersheba (five participants from Ben Gurion University). While the researchers were not successful in holding a focus group at Bar-Ilan University, five people responded to a questionnaire that was circulated. On the Palestinian side, fifty-seven people participated in focus groups held in Jerusalem (seventeen writers and artists); Bethlehem (thirteen academics and intellectuals); Jenin (fifteen

academics and intellectuals), Gaza (twelve academics and intellectuals). In addition, five returned the circulated questionnaire.

- (f) Two special focus groups took place on the Israeli side. One, held in Jerusalem, consisted of the Israeli participants of the 'Barcelona group',³ and thereby represented a select group of Israelis already involved in an in-depth encounter with Palestinians. The second was a focus group conducted electronically, in which thirty-nine people took part, which discussed a set of principles based on the value of academic freedom that was then distributed to members of the Hebrew University community in the aftermath of Yom Kippur 2004. The researchers received a great deal of interesting feedback and commentary from those who felt free to speak in a more anonymous forum where they were not seen and heard by their colleagues.
- (g) A unique component of the research methodology was the participation of an external team of evaluators, who met with the research team and continually monitored progress and findings. The presence of this evaluation team allowed the researchers to modify and respond to feedback. The team of one Israeli (Maya Kahanoff) and one Palestinian (Ata Qaymari) presented evaluations at the midpoint and endpoint of the research process. Their findings, which served to increase the value of this research, are included in the latter part of the full report.
- (h) The code was also discussed in a series of uninational and binational consensus-building workshops whose objective was to seek adherence to the principle of academic freedom. Among the binational workshops mention should be made of a major conference in Jerusalem for 100 people concerning a Code of Ethics for Peace Activism on 31 May 2006. Concerning the uninational meetings, on the Israeli side, two encounters were organized at Haifa University and, in general, reactions were positive and many questions were raised, while on the Palestinian side, meetings were held in Jenin, Ramallah and Jerusalem. The proposed guiding principles were submitted to members of the Palestinian Council and of the Israeli Ministry of Education.

4. Since these focus groups were held, much as yet superficial change has occurred. The degree to which this apparent change is seen and felt on the ground will determine whether and when their position will be revised.

- (i) The project is not finished: more work and extrabudgetary funds will be needed before moving into any future phase. Possible action could include further exploring the shared ethical values required for civil society dialogue for peace; and within the academic community, for UNESCO to convene the Palestinian and Israeli presidents and university rectors for critical introspection and discussion of the set of principles, disseminating the shared values during uninational and binational group discussion, developing a flexible programme adapted to the evolving political climate.

Israeli and Palestinian feedback

The following brief summary of our findings is aimed at providing the reader with some grounding for our subsequent analysis and conclusions.

Israeli academics were divided between those who felt that the role of the academic in society is to be objective and to conduct (apolitical) research, and those who saw it as one of social and political responsibility, providing a unique position from which they could disseminate ideas and help to influence public opinion. Within the Israeli academic community, many who supported the idea of a set of guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation emphasized that the document should not be a political statement, but should point specifically to prerequisites for cooperation, such as freedom of movement, access to laboratories, etc. The proposed guiding principles thus do not copy existing international principles. Nevertheless, the Israeli focus groups also felt that the guiding principles should reflect universal principles that cross dividing lines and do not leave room for conflicting interpretations. Some Israelis also felt that the guiding principles should not be compulsory for cooperative projects, but should be a basis for voluntary adherence, perhaps consisting of a series of clauses that academics, who tend to be individualists, can feel more or less committed to and endorse at will.

Israelis suggested that the proposed guiding principles should outline rules of behaviour for cooperation, and that they should also specify the extreme situations that justify the cessation of such cooperation. The document should be inclusive in nature and should emphasize both collective and individual responsibilities in a manner that encourages introspection. Project stakeholders should be encouraged

to experience the conditions of the other side. Meetings should therefore be encouraged not only in Israel but also in the Palestinian territories, using both Arabic and Hebrew if possible, or a third language, such as English, as a bridge. The work should be conducted openly, transparently, in a manner that would overcome institutional, peer and social objections.

Those Israelis who were against the idea of guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation stated that they were concerned with the politicization of cooperation that could result. They suggested that practical projects might be more important than a declamatory document, and that the process of creating such a document might lead to a negative reaction that could harm the few meaningful Israeli-Palestinian ties still in existence. Others argued that academic cooperation should grow naturally rather than be artificially stimulated, and that if violence is one of the constraints on cooperation, the real issue is to fight against terror.

Palestinian academics, since the outbreak of the first intifada, have split into those remaining at universities, those who have left to work for professional NGOs, those who have joined Palestinian political parties as ideologues, and those working for the Palestinian Authority. While some of these academics continue to work on Track II activities and proposals for final-status issues, others have resigned from public service out of frustration. Like their Israeli counterparts, Palestinian academics are divided between those who believe it is enough for academics to teach and influence their societies through their research and influence on the young, and those who believe that academics have a social and political responsibility to be the vanguards of their people. A large number of participants, however, were against the creation of a set of guiding principles as long as the current political situation persists.⁴ Many of these same academics and intellectuals expressed a willingness to explore such a possibility if a Palestinian state were to be established alongside Israel, thereby ending the current asymmetry.

Palestinian participants mentioned many obstacles to dialogue and cooperation stemming from the current political and social situation in the Palestinian

5. For an overall analysis of the importance of a professional code of ethics and its relevance to Israeli/Palestinian academics, see Yonit Levanon's contribution in Appendix 4 of the full report, available online.

6. See Amal Jadou's report in Appendix 5 of the full report, available online, for further discussion of the various stances on professional codes of ethics.

territories. In addition to the Israeli occupation, these obstacles include the crisis of Palestinian identity, the lack of freedom of thought, and the power of militant groups that threatens the personal and professional safety of academics. The university structure itself provides another obstacle, as many Palestinian academics must take up additional employment in order to augment their low salaries, and extreme competition for positions exists between those who have foreign degrees and those educated locally.

However, the Palestinians expressed more specific objections stemming from past experience with dialogue activities. As one participant noted, ‘We were defeated when we resisted Israel and we were defeated again when we normalized with Israel without good previous preparation.’ Others felt that Israeli academics were humanistic Zionists or were against Palestinians, and that their attitudes prevented cooperation. Palestinians also mentioned the campaign to boycott Israeli academics, stating that they could not be against it considering the silence of Israeli academics towards the occupation. They also provided accounts of previous failed efforts at dialogue. Some believed that negotiations and relations across the divide should be left to political decision-makers.

A minority of Palestinians supported the idea of guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation now, provided that the Israeli academics support the Palestinian people’s rights to self-determination and statehood. A few were willing to support professional cooperation regardless of political positions, and others only cooperation between ‘comrades from both sides (i.e. left-wing academics and intellectuals). Palestinians disagreed as to whether the basis for these guiding principles should be international or national values, but they did agree that such a set of principles should not be a law or a tool for restricting freedom of thought. Further, the proposed guiding principles should include the specific values and

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7. M. Amir, ‘Police, ethics and oversight’, in Dove Izraeli and Noam Zohar (eds), *Ethics and Social Responsibility – Israeli Studies*, Tel Aviv, Tcherikover Publishers/Gomeh Scientific Publications, 2000, pp. 91–92 (title translated from Hebrew).
 8. E. Kaufman, ‘The quest for reciprocity in an asymmetric conflict: problems and prospects of Israeli/Palestinian academics’ engagement in peacebuilding’, in Josep Ramoneda et al., *Breaking the Wall – The Social Responsibility of Palestinian and Israeli Academics and Intellectuals at Times of Violent Conflict: An Introspective Search*, Barcelona, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2005, pp. 59–86.
 9. W. Salem, ‘The anti-normalization discourse in the context of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding’, *Breaking the Walls*, in Ramoneda et al., op. cit., pp. 87–106.
 10. Kaufman, op. cit.

norms relevant to joint Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, including the responsibility of academics towards the ability to practise of other academics living on the same land. The guiding principles should emphasize social responsibility, acceptance of diversity, and understanding the needs and positions of the other side. Like their Israeli counterparts, the Palestinian academics stressed the need for transparency, commitment to a common vision rather than to funders' objectives, to work against tendencies to justify violence, and to act in a professional and objective manner.

Importance of a professional code of ethics⁵

It is important to distinguish between ethics as a theory of morality (i.e. the philosophical traditions of Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza) and professional ethics, a collection of behavioural guidelines applying to members of a given organization (i.e. military, medical and legal ethics). Ethics sets forth the general principles of moral behaviour but, unlike professional ethics, does not necessarily define the practical rules governing this behaviour. Ethical principles such as 'Thou shalt not kill' establish universal fundamentals of moral behaviour. Professional ethics, in contrast, specifies concrete dictates, such as 'No public servant shall accept gifts from the people to whom services are provided', which determine the precise moral restrictions on a distinct group of people. By definition, professional ethics are confined to members of a given group or organization and relate to their unique characteristics. We wish to emphasize, however, that the rights and obligations included within professional ethics are not intended to replace the more general rights and moral obligations of professionals as human beings. They add to the professional's moral behaviour as a person and should not in any way conflict with these precepts.⁶

The role of guiding principles

Similarly to professional ethics, a set of guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation serves several functions for professional communities, as well as for societies engaged in protracted conflicts. It proposes guidelines governing two types of interaction: between members of a given profession and their clients, and

11. This insight, along with some others in this section, is taken from the external evaluation conducted by Maya Kahanoff and Ata Qaymari that appears in the full report, available online.

among members of the profession. A set of guiding principles both reflects and creates public obligations for the members of a professional group as an expression of respect for their professional activity. These guiding principles educate new members to the profession by stating objectives, values and service to society while also enforcing these values through the monitoring of colleagues' behaviour.⁷

Obstacles

Issues of asymmetry, normalization and reciprocity pose major obstacles to Israeli–Palestinian cooperation at all levels, including the development and application of a code of ethics for academic cooperation across the divide. *Asymmetry*, which is inherent in most violent conflicts, is interpreted differently within the Israeli and Palestinian contexts. Palestinians emphasize the unevenness between the occupied (Palestinians) and the occupier (Israel) and seek solidarity and efforts to redress the power imbalance. Israelis, however, point to rising anti-Semitism and the fact that Israel is a small country surrounded by what are perceived to be hostile neighbours.⁸ *Normalization* has been defined among Palestinians as ‘the process of building open and reciprocal relations with Israel in all fields, including the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields’.⁹ Palestinians are divided in their stances vis-à-vis normalization. Supporters see it as a process to integrate Israel into the Middle East and thereby change the abnormal, damaging relationship. Others, however, are against normalization as it implies a willingness to accept, and perhaps legitimize, the injustice they have experienced at the expense of Israel’s creation and expansion. This anti-normalization stance leads to Palestinian initiatives such as the boycott of Israeli academics, and also creates a great deal of pressure on those Palestinians willing to cooperate across the divide. *Reciprocity*, the idea of holding both sides of the conflict responsible and accountable for their actions, is frequently the focus of Israeli liberals who are critical of unconditional solidarity efforts with Palestinians. However, reciprocity is often most evident in its negative form, as each side blames the other for beginning the cycle of violence.¹⁰

One additional challenge arises from the different agendas of Palestinian and Israeli partners to dialogue.¹¹ Due in part to the asymmetric socio-political contexts

12. This finding is discussed further in the evaluation section of the full report, available online.

13. For full text of the Rome Declaration, see Appendix 10 of the full report, available online.

of the two societies, Palestinian academics and intellectuals tended to focus on internal societal development issues rather than on cooperation with Israelis, whereas Israeli focus groups tended to deal with the narrow issue of cooperation with Palestinian academics. Related to this issue is the tension between politics and academia. Palestinians sometimes engage in joint research projects as a means towards a political end and not, like most Israelis, simply for the sake of the research. Cooperation is especially difficult in the humanities and social sciences, as in these disciplines academic research is more closely connected to the overarching political issues than is the case in the natural sciences. In addition, a great deal of logistical and political manoeuvring is required to find ways to meet face-to-face due to the legal, physical and psychological barriers separating Israelis and Palestinians from one another. These obstacles, combined with a general indifference observed on the part of Israeli academics and the Palestinian focus on the national struggle, make it easier for Palestinian and Israeli academics alike to remain isolated in their own communities.

Funding may inadvertently provide several pitfalls for meaningful cooperation. First, the availability of money for joint projects can lead to instrumental collaboration, whereby dialogue is seen as a means of obtaining research funds, rather than improving the Israeli–Palestinian relationship. In some instances, Israelis or Palestinians are forced to find a ‘partner’ from the other side in order to receive much-needed operational funds. They embark on collaborative ventures, not out of a desire to cooperate but out of a desire to survive (or in some cases, profit) in an increasingly difficult economic situation. ‘Partnerships’ such as these can sometimes even increase hostilities and distrust between the parties, because when the working relationship encounters difficulties, it is easy to fall back on stereotypes. Many of the joint ventures that mushroomed during the Oslo peace process in the early 1990s fell into this trap, and quickly disappeared when the peace process collapsed and the money dried up.

14. See Appendix 6 of the full report (available online) for selected excerpts from university websites and the internet addresses where the full statements can be found.

15. From the mission statement of Al-Quds University (Appendix 6 of the full report, available online).

16. Al-Quds University; University of Haifa; Tel Aviv University (Appendix 6 of the full report, available online).

17. For example, Ben Gurion University states the value of ‘cooperation with countries sharing a similar climate, particularly in the Middle East’ (Appendix 6 of the full report, available online).

A related issue vis-à-vis funding is the frequent lack of connection between the donors' agenda and the needs, interests and goals of the recipients. As a result, sometimes cooperative efforts are structured to meet the requirements of international funders rather than the requirements of the Israelis and Palestinians involved, and therefore face limited chances of success. Others have noted that there is a greater interest in conflict resolution projects from international organizations than from local ones, especially after the rapid dissolution of joint ventures at the end of the Oslo peace process left many disillusioned. Currently, during the al-Aqsa intifada, donors cannot always find partners willing to cooperate. Some Israeli academics think that due to the social and political climate, cooperation with Palestinians may negatively affect their chances of academic promotion. At the same time, however, Palestinians expect that Israeli academics have the power to make significant social and political changes leading to the end of occupation. Such conflicting expectations of the goal of joint research, compounded with the very arduous work of deciding on a common research strategy and writing process, leaves many disillusioned with the prospect of collaboration, even if it is funded.¹²

Principles for academic cooperation

Rationale

A set of proposed guiding principles for academic and intellectual cooperation need not start from scratch. Indeed, there are precedents upon which it can build, most notably perhaps the 'Declaration of Principles of Palestinian-Israeli International Cooperation in Scientific and Academic Affairs'. This Rome Declaration (named after its place of signature at the University of Rome La Sapienza), signed in May 2004 by the rectors and presidents of five Israeli and four Palestinian universities and research institutions, lays out an ethical framework 'to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and co-operation and to promote joint scientific and academic projects for the interest of all the parties in the Middle East Region ...'.¹³ While the document lays out broad universal human values, the signatories agreed to specific tenets based on their roles as academics and intellectuals, the first of which is 'the creation and the preservation of full conditions whereupon no

18. See, for example, the mission statements of Birzeit University and Hebrew University (Appendix 6 of the full report, available online).

academic institution, scientist or student whatsoever will be discriminated against and all will have full and free access in the pursuit of their academic activities, whether on the national, regional or international level’.

The Rome Declaration, while limited in its aims, signatories and implementation, provides a basis from which to work, and provides a historical precedent legitimizing our efforts. Further, it joins academics and intellectuals, in this case through their institutional leadership roles, around issues of common interest: academic freedom, the development of young minds, and establishing an environment of tolerance and pluralism. Indeed, the mission statements of many Israeli and Palestinian universities reflect these and additional themes.¹⁴ Perhaps the most common aim articulated in these mission statements is the value of *diversity* and *pluralism* in terms of tolerating, respecting and encouraging a range of intellectual, cultural and artistic expressions. International cooperation and intercultural understanding promoting justice and peace are related aims, often expressed in terms of encouraging free and open discussion, engagement with society, and educating students ‘for leadership, peace, and democratic values; to serve as a voice of reason, conscience and compassion in the region and the world community’.¹⁵ A few universities even specifically articulate the important value of ‘international cooperation’, ‘mutual understanding and cooperation between the Jewish and Arab populations on and off campus’, and ‘putting their expertise to work for the peace process ... in joint projects with colleagues from neighbouring countries’.¹⁶

Other universities lay out the potential for cooperation based on specific academic principles, such as common research interests,¹⁷ or upholding the right to education by helping to lift restrictions placed on Palestinian students’ and professors’ mobility and access. In some cases, values of academic freedom, freedom of expression and equality of rights are made contingent on specific political issues such as speaking out against the Israeli occupation or expressing commitment to Zionism.¹⁸ This trend reflects the obstacles mentioned above, notably the issues of normalization and reciprocity. The Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (FFIPP), for example, includes in its mission statement ‘the meaningful reconciliation between conflicting ethnic groups and denominations through joint educational

19. Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (CCRR) paper, Barcelona Group.

and cultural projects' and 'conformity with international law including the human right to teach and to learn'. However, the group also calls for 'the freedom from military occupation, territorial annexation and incursion', which keeps many Israeli academics from participating. While this lays a valuable foundation for Israeli and Palestinian academic cooperation, it reflects the challenges and possibilities for finding common ground.

Using secondary sources, previously existing statements (such as the Rome Declaration) and our own research findings, we have drafted a set of proposed guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation. Special care has been taken to ensure its universal spirit (inspired by internationally and regionally shared norms), consistency (principles that do not conflict with each other) and usability (based on practical ideas). In addition, the principles are an ongoing work, providing a starting point for discussion and dialogue, and are open for revision and adaptation as the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian civil society progresses and changes. The proposed guiding principles are a mechanism for widening the circle of discussants and for developing consensus on other important issues relating to the conflict.

Searching for common ground

The need for a set of guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation becomes even more urgent at the present juncture when Israeli and Palestinian leaders are embarking on the tenuous road towards resuming negotiations and are faced with numerous challenges from their respective publics. The January 2005 election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as Palestinian president on a platform of ending Palestinian violence, combined with the Israeli pullout from Gaza led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, provided a sign of encouragement for those working to promote dialogue. However, this thawing of relations is endangered by large numbers of Israeli settlers and messianic nationalist supporters as well as by Palestinian militants against the peace process who threaten to continue to fire on Israeli targets. It is too early to determine whether the Israeli and Palestinian academic and intellectual communities will respond to this renewed sense of urgency to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. Our findings, however, suggest that the potential exists for real change. The research shows that a sizeable portion of Palestinians and Israelis believes that guiding principles for dialogue

and cooperation can contribute towards sustaining cooperation in time of conflict. Further, they agree that having a code is not enough. It must be internalized, acted upon, and monitored by some external body. Many also believe that joint work is essential as it helps to humanize the other side and gives a face to the ‘enemy’, and that it is particularly crucial to sustain this work in time of conflict. For Palestinians especially, however, this joint work must be predicated on some kind of mobilization against the occupation and against the circumstances in which they now find themselves. While some Israeli researchers do not want to have to make political statements as a precondition to academic cooperation (they would like to interact simply as researchers, as they do with colleagues in Europe or the United States), others are willing to make such statements provided that there is reciprocity from their Palestinian counterparts.

Core values affirmed by academics on both sides included mutual respect, granting legitimacy to the other side and upholding equal rights to education. Palestinians and Israelis recognized the special responsibility of intellectuals and academics to uphold ethical values and hold their societies accountable for their words and deeds through their access to information, their work with ideas, and their instruction of the next generation. As one focus group participant said, ‘because peace education has to build on human values and not just the absence of war, it has to be led by philosophers, thinkers, leaders and writers’.¹⁹ Academics and intellectuals could be, at best, leading opinion-makers. Furthermore, this class of society should develop critical thinking, respect diversity, and promote dialogue and learning. Critical intellectuals, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, must ‘denounce injustice wherever it occurs’.

Although playing a significant role within society at large may not be a desire shared by a majority of academics, we would like to believe that, as in any other professional field, their ethics and responsibilities in their own disciplines revolve around the concept of academic freedom. Hence, we are hopeful that such a minimal common denominator could be found as a shared value between the largest segments of Israeli and Palestinian scholars, researchers and intellectuals. Commitment to the principles does not represent a specific political agreement, but rather lays out a framework for how Palestinian and Israeli academics expect their counterparts to speak about and relate to the other side when carrying out their teaching and research responsibilities.

Proposed Guiding Principles for Israeli/Palestinian Academic Cooperation: Translating the Shared Adherence to Academic Freedom into Action

International referential framework

This joint document is inspired by:

1. Our shared endorsement of the right to education, in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 26, 10 December 1948): *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*
2. Our shared commitment to academic freedom as endorsed by the International Association of Universities. The principle of academic freedom can be defined as the freedom for members of the academic community – scholars, teachers and students – to follow their scholarly activities within a framework determined by that community in respect of ethical rules and international standards, and without outside pressure. Rights confer obligations. These obligations are as much incumbent on the individuals and on the university of which they are part, as they are upon the state and society.
3. The call of the Constitution of UNESCO adopted in London on 16 November 1945: *That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.*

Preamble

After years of violent conflict, academics and intellectuals globally and in our own societies are expressing the hope that Palestinian and Israeli institutions of higher learning can fulfil their social responsibility and contribute their share towards a just peace (a peaceful solution accepted by the two sides). This hope and sense of responsibility generate the following frame of reference:

1. Cognizant that our special responsibility emanates from our privileged access to higher education, the development of the spirit of inquiry and of independent thinking.
2. Mindful of our universal mission to develop intellectual, cultural and scientific knowledge and progress in accordance with human rights principles.
3. Recognizing that universities can play a major role through research, teaching and service to the community in developing human and cultural understanding between the two peoples, and transfer knowledge, science and technology.
4. Aware that our common cultural heritage, that is the three monotheistic religions of our nations, has been in the past a cradle of civilizations.
5. Understanding that joint cooperation needs to be based on the principles of equality, reciprocity, dignity, tolerance and mutual respect.
6. Accepting that in the pursuit of such principles we should avoid all forms of harassment, exploitation, intimidation, discrimination, and any abuse contrary to ethical commitment and precepts.
7. In recognizing the need to bridge the gap, the ties are to be based not on dominance but on equality, mutual assistance and solidarity. Based on such concern to promote joint scientific and academic projects for the interest of all parties in the Middle East, higher education should be recognized as a major instrument of the fight against inequality among nations, people and groups.

8. Calling upon all academics, scientists and intellectuals to work actively for the creation and the preservation of full conditions whereupon no institution, researcher or student whatsoever will be discriminated against and all will have full and free access in the pursuit of their academic activities, whether on the national, regional or international level.
9. Whereas this set of principles is steeped in the shared values of human rights, democracy and peace as a common denominator, there is a need to translate that dialogue into action in a way that can overcome existing obstacles. While the respect of the following proposed principles may be at this time more relevant to Palestinian and Israelis, we adhere to their universal jurisdiction.

Values

The principles for dialogue and cooperation articulated in section D are anchored in the following sets of suggested values:

1. *Academic values.* As academics we are committed to act according to our professional duties, protect freedom of thought, openly share information with each other, and take responsibility for what we say. We are committed to conducting accurate, serious and objective research and engaging in ongoing learning. We will stand in solidarity with other academics on the same piece of land in the protection of their academic freedom.
2. *Humanistic values.* We value democracy, equality, and freedom. We value wide participation, social openness, and are willing to cooperate with a diverse range of people with differing opinions. We are committed to promoting non-violence within our own society and to rejecting occupation and dominance.
3. *Relationship values.* We recognize the difficulties in the history of our relationship with each other, and are committed to addressing the problems of asymmetry and reciprocity. We are committed to working towards forgiveness, and express our commitment to working with each other for peace. We are committed to try to understand the needs, concerns and

positions of the other side, and to network with each other rather than conduct parallel projects. Furthermore, we will utilize transparent means for resolving our conflicts.

4. *Financial values.* We commit to working for our common goals and not personal or sectarian gains. We will not change our vision based on funding availability and will use funds appropriately.

Proposed principles

- (a) Guarantee the freedom of teaching and speech, cherish the value of tolerance towards divergent opinions, make clear statements against the use of the pretext of freedom of speech for incitement to violence, promote non-violence in the campuses and community and across the divide.
- (b) Ensure the freedom of movement of academics, which for years has been curbed both in terms of their participation in international conferences overseas, as well as in their access to any areas within their own countries and the inability to meet with their own peers.
- (c) Insist on the respect for the universal right to education. Free access should be respected for students to be able to attend classes without arbitrary permits, thus allowing them to move within and between their homes and universities. Given the delay and the humiliation of permit allocation, the process negatively affects the morale of the students, saps their time and energy and is an affront to human dignity.
- (d) Insist that the value of academic freedom can best be achieved when institutional autonomy is ensured and when there is no interference from external authorities.
- (e) Refrain from closing universities, as this form of collective punishment negatively impacts on both learning and research. Restricting and preventing access to centres of knowledge only increases the level of hatred and exacerbates the conflict.

- (f) Protect and welcome academics and students who adhere to the universal respect for human rights and who wish to visit each other at their respective campuses.
- (g) Stimulate a dialogue about the responsibilities and consequences of shared adherence to the universal standards of academic freedom as articulated in this document and elsewhere.

Follow-up and conclusions

We hope that this action research has the potential of stimulating further dialogue on the responsibilities and consequences of adhering to the universal standards of academic freedom articulated here and elsewhere. This involves establishing joint projects and engaging in cooperative efforts between academic institutions and individuals based upon the values of social and professional responsibility, independent thought, equality of participation, acceptance of diversity and commitment to values of peace and justice. Furthermore, such work should endeavour to promote networking rather than parallel projects, continuous self-development, clear and open communication channels, conflict-resolution skills and transparent decision-making in all matters. Israelis and Palestinians involved in our focus groups emphasized the importance of developing an academic network, possibly including an internet website that would provide information for both Israeli and Palestinian academics who want to be involved in cooperative projects.

In our study, many Israelis and Palestinians alike stated that there must be a joint follow-up committee to work on maintaining and updating the proposed guiding principles for dialogue and cooperation, and that the principles must be actively used and applied for the project to be worthwhile. Several academics stated that they were against the idea of guiding principles if the document was to be just another piece of paper, saying that general treaties on ethics, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, already exist but are not sufficiently acted upon. Others, however, did not want the guiding principles to become a law or a tool to impose restrictions on freedom of thought or distribute punishments and rewards. Those who participated in the focus groups and interviews stressed the need to organize around the guiding principles when they were finalized. Both Palestinians and Israelis see the need to transcend asymmetric relations while recognizing the existing differences in the resources available to each community. Provided that technology, training and other resource transfer arrangements are conducted in a non-patronizing way that does not institutionalize asymmetry, such obstacles can be overcome.

We would like to be reassured that a set of proposed guiding principles for academics could also be an avenue to providing a mutually acceptable framework for conducting joint ventures, one that reduces the ‘transaction cost’ of such cooperation and thereby encourages greater participation. Academics of both societies overwhelmingly adhere to the goal of strengthening principles of human rights and democracy for both peoples as a necessary condition for functioning societies and their members’ professional freedom. Maintaining commitment to a set of guiding principles could help these espoused values to prevail over feelings that deny the legitimacy and victimhood of the other side. A professional set of principles could also help to widen the circle of cooperation by including not only those who promote morality arguments to ‘do what is right because it is the right thing to do’ but also those who prefer to consider peace-building as a matter of long-term, enlightened self-interest. Finally, let us wish that this initiative could transcend the boundaries of university campuses and have a multiplying effect. Our hope is that by working through a multidisciplinary network, this project will reach academics and intellectuals with a diverse array of professional skills who can then approach a variety of civil society constituencies that we alone would not be able to reach.

Because of the changing situation, this project is an ongoing process that needs constant reassessment. The relevance of the guiding principles should be evaluated and changed over time so that they do not lose touch with their initial goals and objectives.