



ICAHD UK (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions UK) Webinar:

Israeli Dissident Voices: Breaking Away from Zionism

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Speakers

Livnat Konopny Decleve, Israeli PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University, Israel

Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian, author, director of the European Centre of Palestine Studies, University of Exeter, UK

Jeff Halper, Israeli anthropologist, author, director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

Linda Ramsden (LR) Director of ICAHD UK: Welcome to everyone attending this webinar entitled Israeli dissident Voices: Breaking Away from Zionism.

It is facilitated by ICAHD UK, an organisation founded in 2004 to support the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, ICAHD. ICAHD works towards a political solution that ends Israel's occupation over the Palestinian people and for the establishment of an inclusive democracy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Our focus for mobilisation is Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes – now more than 130,000 on both sides of the divide – and the resulting displacement of the indigenous Palestinian population, due to Israel's settler-colonial policy that continues to happen in both the Occupied Palestinian Territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza and also within the State of Israel.

In May 2020 we began our webinar series which addresses ICAHD's mission interests. All have been recorded and can be found on our website. Today we add what we know will be another valuable resource to this bank of information.

I would now like to introduce today's speakers who we're delighted to have amongst us.

We have **Livnat Konopny Declve** who has an MA in psychology and anthropology from Ben-Gurion University and she's a PhD candidate in sociology and anthropology at Tel Aviv University. Her research investigates self-exile as an expression of dissent. She teaches at Sapir College and is a member of the international PhD programme Transformation in European Societies' Political Lexicon and she's a part of the Living Together research group at the Minerva Humanities Centre.

Ilan Pappé also joins us. Ilan is an expatriate Israeli historian, currently the director of the European centre of Palestine Studies, University of Exeter, UK. His research focuses on the modern Middle East, in particular the history of Israel and Palestine. He's also written on multiculturalism, critical discourse analysis and on power and knowledge in general. He's the author of several books including *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and *The Idea of Israel: a History of Power and Knowledge*. We're also pleased to say that Ilan Pappé is one of the patrons of ICAHD UK.

And then we have **Jeff Halper** with us. Jeff is an anthropologist who has taught at several universities in countries around the world. Jeff is the co-founder and director of ICAHD. He's a lifelong activist for social justice and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee. Jeff is also an author. *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel* is a book in which Jeff describes his personal journey. His latest book is *Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine: Zionism, Settler-Colonialism, and the Case for One Democratic State*.

All three guests are part of the One Democratic State Campaign which is led by Palestinians and includes its Israeli partners as they map out a just and sustainable way forward.

I'm now going to hand over to Jeff Halper as he begins the discussion with Livnat Konopny Declve and Ilan Pappé. Thank you. Jeff, over to you!

Jeff Halper (JH): Thank you, Linda. That was a very nice introduction. The idea today is somewhat different from many other discussions we've had. Obviously, the struggle for the liberation of Palestine is a Palestinian struggle, first and foremost, and has to be led by Palestinians and so we've always in ICAHD given, of course, the Palestinian voice preference and its own dominant place.

But at the same time, we have to realise, we know that Israeli Jews are also stakeholders. In other words, the concept of one democratic state – that the One Democratic State Campaign advocates – is inclusive. I mean this was also the PLO's (Palestine Liberation Organisation) idea and that is that the state includes all the inhabitants of the country, including, of course, refugees who return, but all the inhabitants of the country.

So, the idea is to replace a state based on ethno-nationalism and religion – the Jewish state – with a state that's inclusive of all its citizens, offering equal rights to all its citizens and, hopefully, the emergence of a new political community in the country.

We don't hear critical voices so much. We hear Ilan's voice quite a bit, of course, and appropriately so. But even so Ilan and, I think, the other two of us tend to – when we speak – we tend to relate to the Palestinian issue and how we're contributing to the Palestinian struggle.

But today it's a little bit different because it would be very interesting for people to understand more where Israelis are coming from, especially critical Israelis; to hear the voices of what ICAHD calls three dissident Israeli voices, three critical Israeli voices. Maybe even three anti-Zionist – certainly anti-colonialist – Israeli voices.

I don't want to put words in people's mouths but that's the idea. So, the idea is that the three of us will speak maybe for 15 minutes each and there's three parts to our presentation, each one of us, that we're trying in a way that structures just a little bit our presentation.

The first one, the first issue, kind of, is what was our pathway out of Zionism? I mean for me it was easy, I never was in Zionism – in some small town in Minnesota. But you know for Ilan and Livnat certainly, that grew up in this country and were enveloped by it, that would be really a much more important discussion, I think, to have and a very revealing one.

The second issue that each one of us will address is the whole idea you know that many people have reservations about the one state idea, of course. The argument is that the Israeli Jews will never agree to it. So, one of the questions we have is coming out of Israeli society, do we think that we can pull some Israelis into this struggle? Or how do we see the Israeli public as a part of this struggle? Can we reach in any meaningful way the Israeli public with a more, let's say, a more rational, analytical, critical, political programme?

And the third part of the discussion will be where we go from here? In other words, laying out the dynamics within Israel itself, how do we see ourselves progressing towards a joint struggle for one democratic state, for the decolonisation of the country and liberation of Palestine?

So those are the sort of the three areas we'll look at and let's begin with Livnat.

Livnat Konopny Decleve (LKD): Thank you – and thank you, Jeff, and thank you, Linda, for the introduction and for inviting me. I'm very honoured to be part of this talk and I will start as Jeff said with the first question that he posed which was what was my way out of Zionism. But in order to talk about my path out I would have to talk about the origins of Zionism in my ideological heritage, that is in my family.

So, my father's family was from Poland and my grandfather joined the Zionist movement and he left his very rabbinic, orthodox family and emigrated to Palestine in 1932. He managed to bring my grandmother and his parents and hers. Their parents were orthodox Jews, so in no way were they Zionists, but they only came because they wanted to die in the Holy Land. But the rest of the family was murdered in the Holocaust and that was something very strong in the heritage, in the memories of my family – things that came up a lot in conversations and so on.

My father worked in the Jewish Agency and was a devoted Zionist. My mother's family came from Yemen at the beginning of the 1930s - I think that it was 1933 - and they came by themselves. They walked part of the way, and then they took a boat. When they got to Palestine they settled down in Jerusalem. In Yemen as well as in Mandatory Palestine, they were very close to Muslims. They had no problems with Muslims.

My grandfather was a jeweller and he liked collecting antiquities, especially coins, and he had some interactions with Palestinians in Hebron – Al Khalil – and in Jordan. He used to travel to those places, to Palestinian localities and exchange with Palestinians. And he also

had a Palestinian partner, business partner and they both had a jewellery workshop in the Old City of Jerusalem, in East Jerusalem. And all those amicable and business relationships were terminated and destroyed after '48.

So those two narratives affected me greatly, shaped me, shaped the way I saw things and gave (meaning) to the political reality in which I grew up. On the one hand I held the belief that Israel is a miracle that never happened before and that it is the only place for Jews and our sole refuge on earth – and that we are in perpetual danger of extinction and that Gentiles, and especially Arabs, are always against us and they only want us dead. So, this was one legacy or heritage that I received (from) my family

On the other hand, there was sensitivity towards the injustice that was done towards the Palestinians and also the will to revive the communal life with Palestinians.

I found similar stories in my research with dissident Israelis – it seems like there are two ways out. Either people had one very transformative event which changed their point of view completely from one point to another and obliged them to see things, see the political reality in which we live in a totally different way; or, and this is my case, a more gradual (accumulation of) events which eventually brought us to change our vision and see things from other perspectives, other than the Zionist perspective.

So, in my case as I said it was more cumulative events that I can remember – memories and things that I can go back into, even to my very early childhood.

I was brought up in a neighbourhood which was built on the Green Line, was built in a demilitarised zone. So, when the Green Line was drawn, it did not belong to Israel or to Jordan and of course this neighbourhood was surrounded by Palestinian villages. And I remember that as a child it marked me, the difference between our life quality and things that we had or the things that we were entitled to, comparing with the Palestinian children in the villages around us.

One story which I remember, I asked some of my childhood friends if they remembered that, but nobody did. We once went to visit one of those villages and we walked by foot from our school to the school in the village and coming to the frontier of the neighbourhood road which was marked with big white stones.

And as we went down to the village and into the school which was impeccably clean, and the children were nicely dressed and were very polite to their teachers – things which you cannot find in Israeli schools. I remember I was six or seven and I remember thinking are those the children that we are so afraid of? How come? Why do we think such bad things of them?

And it's stories like that, people told me similar stories like going off into the mountains or the seaside and seeing destroyed villages or destroyed houses, never asking themselves why are those houses destroyed or why are they abandoned?

Until the day we do ask ourselves those questions – I think that coming to think about it, preparing myself for this meeting I thought of it like, you know, we used to have those vinyl records where you would sometimes have a scratch on the record. And the music would stop and then continue in your head – you would continue the music, regardless of the scratch. But at some point, there are so many scratches on the record that you can no longer hear the music. All you see is the scratch and then you have to find other ways to explain the political

realities which you are living through yourself. Then the Zionist narrative is no longer enough.

That's the way I explain my way out. I think that only when I began my academic journey which started such a long time ago, a decade ago, that I could finally have words or the political language to express those concerns.

But if I want to answer the next question as to how do we move other Israelis forward towards a just peace and where do we go from here strategically? I think I will have to use not my personal story but more research.

In my dissertation I focused on Israeli Jewish left-wing activists who left Israel, who moved abroad or to Palestinian localities in the West Bank. And they did that following their dissent of the ongoing control of Israel over Palestine; and those activists left because they were disillusioned with the possibility of bringing an end to the conflict (by) their activism.

So, the research shows that even those who are convinced – we don't have to convince them that we should dismantle settler-colonialism or dismantle apartheid or bring about more just solutions. Even those who are convinced can, because of their despair, the futility of their acts, can abandon their activity and abandon the state as well.

Therefore, the question is not only how do we bring Israelis, the Israeli public into agreeing or moving towards a more just peace, but we should start with those people who are already convinced but unable to accept things such as the return of Palestinian refugees or the possibility for one state.

And I think that the problem is that people at some point just cannot imagine further than things that already exist in the political structure in which they are living. So, we have the Green Line, we have the separation between Area A and B and C, and we already have the separation between Jews and Palestinians. It's easier for people to accept the separation between the two states, it's easier for them to accept the two-state solution. It's harder to think about a state which will, or a certain political arrangement which will include all the people living between the river and the sea and in a just way and in equality and also, including refugees under this situation.

So also, it's harder for people who find it okay to imagine a case in which people will receive some compensation in terms of money for the land that they lost, or the houses that they lost or the goods that they lost during the Nakba. But it's harder for people to imagine – their imaginations stop there. They cannot imagine the return of the refugees.

So, I think that as a researcher, what interests me is to find a point where people stop imagining. What stops them from imagining one step forward? Where are they afraid? What are their concerns? What conflictual – how do some values of justice or peace etc come in conflict with other values that they have? For example, affiliation with some communities or the religious commitment.

So, I think that one step would be to try to discern those fears – the places where people cannot imagine further. And then as a movement, or as political people, we will have to find some solution or to address those problems, to address those problematic points in order for people to find the vision that we have of one democratic state, (to make it) more tangible in a way that will address those fears.

Of course, we will not be able to address everyone, we will not be able to recruit everyone or – as I heard Ilan say a few days ago in a meeting that the One Democratic State Campaign hosted – he said that we would have to pay a certain price.

Sure, this would happen, but we first have to find a way to delineate those problems and the price that people will have to pay in order for people to be able to adjust to that or to accept that or to overcome a certain fear and reluctance that they may have.

I will stop here, and I will be up to answer any questions further on. Thank you.

JH: Thank you, Livnat. That was very articulate and very good. Ilan?

IP: Thank you Jeff and thank you everyone. Thank you ICAHD for organising this and thank you everyone for attending our webinar. (I must) keep an eye on the watch.

Before I start telling my own kind of story, I would like to pay attention to a book which I will write – I'm sure many of you are familiar with – I will write its details in the chat box later on when Jeff is talking. But still listening to him and writing. I can do it for two minutes, not longer.

This is a book called *Out of the Tribal Boundaries* by Avigail Abarbanel. She's collected 25 stories of Jews from Israel and not from Israel who tell their individual stories of their journeys out of Zionism.

And what is interesting in this book: you look at all these 25 people, although each one of them had a very different journey in a very different trajectory and (they're) on the left, (they) have some common features.

And especially I noticed for the Israeli Jews who are in this book, I think that the Jewish experience out of Zionism outside of Israel was very diversified. It was much more difficult to see commonalities there and actually it seemed that everybody had a different set of circumstances that took them out of Zionism.

But for Israeli Jews I noticed that for many of them, being outside of Israel for a period – even a short period – was very fundamental in their re-thinking about Zionism as an ideology and all in all recalculating, if you want, their views about the State of Israel.

Secondly, that, in one way or another, they were able to form more intimate, direct relationships with Palestinians which otherwise would have been impossible for them, given the segregated reality in which most Israeli Jews live.

And thirdly that they became interested in – either as professionals or as amateurs – in the history of the country and they started to read different versions that challenged the history they were familiar with.

And I think all these three elements; the element of being abroad, meeting Palestinians on a much more equal footing and being exposed to knowledge about Palestine that was distorted or unavailable if you just remained within the Israeli educational system or within Israeli Jewish Zionist society, are also very important factors in my journey outside of Zionism

The second point I would like to make – it's a journey and when you talk about a journey there's no moment of, there's no epiphany. I mean there's not one moment of revelation

when suddenly everything falls into place, and you say to yourself ‘Oh my God I was wrong! Yesterday I was a Zionist. Tomorrow I’ll be an anti-Zionist.

It’s a journey that has a lot of stations in it. Some stations are more important, some stations you can understand better with the passage of time. Some stations are maybe much less clear, even after so many years that the journey took you.

For me, and I also think this comes out in some of the narratives that people told Avigail Abarbanel in her book, 1982 was an important turning point. Now of course we are of different ages. Some of the people who write in the book were two years old in 1982 so I don’t think it could have been a very formative moment in their relationship with Zionism – they have a relationship with other issues.

But for certain generations of people that were born just a little bit after the creation of the State of Israel or a bit before the creation of the State of Israel, 1982 – much more than in 1967 – was the moment where it was so obviously clear that Israel went to an unjustified war.

And there were enough Israeli Jews saying this was an unjustified war; if you want, a war of choice. And because there was television and because some of us were abroad and could see the images of Israeli destruction that were unavailable for us, if we would have stayed in Israel, in many ways.

This whole kind of contradiction between the official Israeli version of why there was a war in 1982, what Israel was doing on one hand, and the massacres and the destruction and the brutality and the inhumanity that Israel inflicted – not just on the Palestinian people but on the Lebanese people.

You know if you read the report by Sean MacBride, the Irish human rights lawyer who probably wrote the most full report of what Israel did in 1982 – he was asked by the United Nations, by the way, to write this report but the Americans made sure that this report would never be fully published – if you read that, you can really not remain at all indifferent.

Now there are two ways you can react to it: by saying okay, this in 1982, this is an exception. It doesn’t prove the rule. Israel behaved badly in this particular incident, but this has no implication for what happened before or what’s going to happen afterwards.

But in my case, I was at the time a PhD student in Oxford when these atrocities were committed by Israel, and I was reading in British and Israeli archives of very similar atrocities created by Israel in 1948. So, when I looked at what Israel was doing in 1948 and I could even see with my own eyes what Israel was doing in 1982 and I connected the dots. I said to myself probably the same motivation for the inhumanity of 1948 repeated itself in 1982. That was a very important, at least in my case, infusion if you want.

Learning about the formative years, the formative years of the creation of the State of Israel through my professional work as a historian and looking at 1982. And there I was, on the ground already in 1987 during the first Intifada.

I began to understand that there is a link between all these moments in Israel’s contact with Palestinians - things that end with ethnic cleansing, oppression, massacres, and inhumanity. So, then it helps you to get out of your - of Zionism as an ideology that you take for granted

as if this is the only way of interpreting reality, through knowledge and through your own experience on the ground.

But I think I would not have been able to make sense of what I saw in the most structural way. I kind of say to myself: wait a minute – the problem here is not that or (an)other Israeli government, or the problem is not the rotten apples in the Israeli military barrel. No, the problem is the ideology of the State of Israel.

To get there I benefitted a lot from having Palestinian colleagues in England. Some of them were my teachers; some of them were my fellow students. I met people like Edward Said at the time. I became very close to him. It was through these intimate connections that suddenly a different narrative (was built) and then the different pieces begin to fall into place in that sense.

And probably the third kind of factor – being outside, meeting Palestinians, having the knowledge but that takes a bit longer.

Both Israelis and Palestinians are erring in many ways when they think of themselves as exceptional cases. They're not. Zionism is not an exceptional case. The Palestinians as victims are not an exceptional case study.

And when you begin to look at the wider picture where else similar things, not identical but similar things, happened such as in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, North America, Latin America, you begin to understand there is here a global phenomenon of settler-colonial movements on the one hand and colonised people on the other. It didn't only happen in Palestine. It happened in many other places and the only just and right political way of dealing with this situation is by decolonising the settler-colonial project.

So, when I look back at the books I've written and the articles I've written, in my own kind of development of my thinking I can see how I eventually had to reach this moment where I was not just telling people as a historian what I think happened – then of course I was not the only historian.

But also, I believed there was no point in writing the history if you don't point to the cases in history where realities like these were challenged successfully, partly successfully and are still being challenged today. And that is a very important part, I think, of the journey that strengthens you.

As for the last four minutes, just to talk about the other question. If I put it in a kind of concise way, decolonisation is going to be a messy process. It's a messy process. It's not a pharmaceutical process. It will be ugly; it will have some ugly moments. Hopefully, not as ugly as we've seen in Zimbabwe. Hopefully, not as ugly as some of the post-apartheid scenes we've seen in South Africa.

But anybody who thinks that this will be a kind of nice parade with a lot of music and bands and celebration hasn't read enough about history. But having said that, the more you strategise over that moment, the more you're thinking about it, the better you are prepared to mitigate the more violent side of it, if you want, the more inevitable, uglier aspects of decolonisation.

And I think that's why I feel so strongly about the One Democratic State Campaign because one of the main messages it sends – mainly to the Palestinians and mainly to the Palestinian national movement, if one can use this term – is to say “Give us a clear understanding (of) how you visualise the relationship between you, the indigenous people of Palestine, and the settler community.”

How would you like this to happen? How would you like to implement the Right of Return?

What do you think – if there is a one state – do you think there's a difference between how we treat the settlements that were built in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – dismantling the settlements and the settlements that were built before '67 in the Galilee, in the Naqab? And after '67 in the Galilee and the Naqab on confiscated Palestinian land? How do you want to deal with the confiscation, robbery of land? Actual return (of refugees)?

And what is your sense of some collective rights that the Jewish community in Israel might want? Are you willing to tolerate collective cultural rights, willing to accept an ethnic group that might want some sort of cultural autonomy? How far do you want to go with rectifying the ills of the past?

There's a long list of things, I won't go into them all, and I think that Livnat is absolutely right. When you have a delineation you can go bravely, courageously, and openly to the Jewish public. I'm not worried about the early stages of this.

The Jewish masses will not wait to hear these messages in Tel Aviv and Haifa. But the few people who are willing to hear it – the numbers will grow – will have to be told the truth about it. It shouldn't be wrapped in any way to make it easier for them to swallow. As I say, it's a messy issue.

I will end by telling you one experience I had in South Africa. In my last tour in South Africa every white person told me that he or she used to be against apartheid. (I said) if all of you were against apartheid, I have no idea why it was sustained for such a long time. But that gives me a lot of encouragement; I didn't care whether this was true or not true.

It seemed that there was a certain moment at least in terms of political apartheid – I'm fully aware of economic apartheid – but in terms of the political apartheid, it seems that yep, it was possible for people to understand that this is a *bon temps*, that this is what you want.

And I was aware that people like John Dugard who was very open, you know, being a judge in the time of the apartheid system. Who said openly, you know, “I don't think I want to live in post-apartheid South Africa, but I fully justify the takeover of the ANC (African National Congress) of South Africa, and I will do all I can to help it.”

So, I think people would find individual solutions. I can tell you the truth, I think quite a lot of Israelis Jews might feel uncomfortable in a non-apartheid state, a democratic state. I think this should not prevent us from working towards a just solution.

JH: Thank you Ilan for that. Okay I guess it's my turn. I'll try to be brief. As you all know that is not my strong suit. You know, I think, you know, I could put my journey – I guess not really out of Zionism because, like I said, I was never really in Zionism and certainly not in the way Livnat and Ilan were, in terms of being brought up here and enveloped in the Zionist ambience and so on.

But I think I can point to maybe three stations, as Ilan calls them, on this journey of mine and of course the sub-text here is I came into this country. I mean Livnat and Ilan don't have to justify the fact that they chose to be Israeli. In many ways I chose to be a settler.

But I think there were just three stations I'll mention briefly. One was the sixties and that was the context in which I grew up, the sixties in the United States. I was very much on the Left. I was in the Civil Rights movement, very active. I was in Mississippi

I was very active in the anti-war movement. I was a draft resister. You could even say I was almost a check list of everything you had to do in the sixties, including growing a beard. I had long hair in the days when I had hair. I did everything except Haight Ashbury. The drugs are later on in the sixties – that wasn't my thing.

I was in the class of '68 at college, that was the height of political sixties. And then it rapidly began to decline from there. So, in some ways, being anti-Zionist or being critical of Zionism, at least being open to criticism of Israel and its treatment of Palestinians didn't take a tremendous ideological jump because I was already kind of pre-conditioned, having been a part of the Left. Although I have to say I didn't really know that much about Israel.

So, what brought me here then? The other part of the sixties people tend to forget was focus on one's background and roots which are very strong in the United States in the sixties as well.

Part of my leaving was an alienation from American society. I didn't like the materialism, I didn't like the capitalism, I didn't like the superficiality, I didn't like the anti-intellectualism and I certainly didn't like Nixon. You know I was kind of on my way out and the question was for me where do I go? And that was a real question because I wanted to be politically active but not really in the United States. I really didn't care about the United States too much anymore. And in some ways Israel was attractive for two reasons.

First of all, as a part of identity politics, my Jewish identity became more important to me which was really the only alternative identity I had, besides being a white American. But you know there was no expression of a radical Jewish life in Minnesota. If I had grown up in New York, on the East Coast or maybe the West Coast I might not have come here. There might have been enough Jewish substance in the air. But the alienation, the growth of a Jewish identity – even though I'm not religious in any way – and the fact that I wanted to be politically active somewhere led me to Israel.

Because for better or for worse, as a Jew I could come here, I could immigrate here and be a part of the society and I had an alternative framework in which I could work. I have to say that the first thing I did, the first minute I was in Israel was join the Israeli Left. In those days there was a group called Siakh which was the Israeli New Left here in Jerusalem. And I became a part of that so I was critical from the beginning although I can't really say I was anti-Zionist. I don't think Zionism played a role in that sense. So, I was on the Left for many years.

But I guess the second station, to use Ilan's phrase, the second station on this journey was ICAHD because you know for 25 years I'd been here and active and so on, but like others on the Israeli Left, I really knew nothing about Palestinians.

Like Ilan said, even the Leftists, we lived in a very segregated environment. We didn't know Palestinians personally. You know we would invite Faisal Husaini as a token Palestinian to come to our demonstrations here and there, but we didn't really know Palestinians. We didn't know the West Bank.

You know someone would say to me: "A house is being demolished in Anata" – which is five minutes away from Jerusalem – "Let's go!"

I would have no idea where Anata was, I never heard of the place. I wouldn't know how to get there, and we didn't know, I have to say on the Left, how the occupation worked. I mean I only learned from ICAHD, being on the ground at house demolitions about the Civil Administration, about how Israel issues demolition orders, why they issue demolition orders. And from there of course what Israel's long-term intentions were.

Plus, I got to know Palestinian families – you had to if you wanted to rebuild homes and resist demolitions – and Palestinian political people. So, it was the opposite of what Livnat said in a way: my experience. And that was what Ilan, I think, mentioned as well - you know the idea that it was very hard to meet Palestinians here.

I mean Livnat had to try to get out of her neighbourhood to a Palestinian village nearby and a school. Ilan was talking about how Israelis go abroad and finally get to meet Palestinians. I had in some ways the opposite experience and that was that the first Palestinians I got to know were here in the Occupied Territory, in Anata.

It was the first time I was really exposed to their reality and exposed to the occupation. So, what we had to learn was, how does the occupation work? What the hell is going on here? And as Ilan said, there was no way to answer those questions simply from being a part of even a critical Israeli Left. In other words, within Israel you didn't have that information, you didn't have Palestinian voices to explain it to you, you didn't see what was happening on the ground.

So ICAHD is really what got me out of the bubble of Israel into the Occupied Territory – East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza in those days as well. And that is really where I began to understand Zionism, the Occupation, what the Occupation means, why it was almost an inevitable product of Zionism, the Palestinian dilemma, the Palestinians' aspirations and so on.

And the third station that I'll just mention is all that was very good – I became an activist, and I began to understand things, but I was still lacking this analytical piece to make sense of it. And I think that began to come about in the last few years as this whole idea of settler-colonialism began to emerge.

It's only been really ten years or so that settler-colonialism has become a part – and even maybe less, maybe five or six years – that this has really become a more common form of analysis. And even as an anthropologist I knew colonialism and so on, but I hadn't really – and to tell you the truth I think there was a threat in some ways to me, the idea of settler-colonialism.

And I even remember mentioning it to Ilan not so many years ago in Exeter, saying I don't know if settler-colonialism really fits partly because the idea is to label Israeli Jews settlers

really seems to delegitimize any legitimate contact, you know, link they have to the country. And I really did feel there was a genuine link somehow between Judaism and this country.

This isn't a matter of settler-colonialism in which a British farmer gets up one morning and goes to Kenya to get cheap land and cheap labour. That wasn't the Zionist story and I guess I felt that we were throwing the baby out with the bath water in delegitimizing Israelis as settlers.

But it didn't take me long, as I got into the settler-colonial analysis to really see that, yes, that did explain what I was seeing and experiencing and hearing in the places like that. And that was for me as an anthropologist, the fit – it isn't so much that I agreed and that I liked the analysis but yes, the analysis did really begin to explain to me political realities that I didn't have another explanation for.

And so, I think those were the three, and that led me, of course, to the One Democratic State Campaign because once I had got it, once I began to understand what was happening – and I have to admit it was long after I'd come here, decades after I'd come here – then the question was okay, now what do we do about it?

And that's what began, and again Ilan was the trigger for that because we met about four years ago in my house, we began to talk about the one state idea and then we began to connect with our Palestinian partners and that sort of led in a way to the One Democratic State Campaign.

So those were my steps towards becoming what I call an anti-colonial Jewish Israeli. I could say an anti-Zionist Israeli but I'm trying in some ways to do what Ilan mentioned and that is (to say) that Zionism isn't unique as a settler colonial movement. There's a lot of commonalities with other ones. And I think it's (important to use) colonial language, (to) call this an anti-colonial struggle.

And so, it might be useful – I'm still debating as I'm writing – whether I should define myself as an anti-Zionist Israeli which is harder for me because Zionism was really never, like I said a part of – unlike Livnat and Ilan – a part of what I had to deal with. I could come here without the ideological Zionist part.

But to call myself an anti-colonial Israeli I think begins to introduce that wider language. You can be anti-Zionist but that doesn't say much about Israel or about the Palestinians. But once you call yourself anti-colonial, that means you're in a broader struggle with the colonised people and I think in some ways it's a more useful term.

At the same time, I think it also begins to bring us in closer political partnership with Palestinians. You know, I think one of the issues working with Palestinians is that (they're) anti-normalisation, the idea that we don't want to work with Israelis. Even working with Left Israelis is a form of normalisation and that, in a way, comes out of the same split in the two-state solution. It's us over here and you over there and so on

But I think of the anti-colonial struggle, and you look at South Africa and you look at the FLN (Front de Libération National) in Algeria and other places. An anti-colonial struggle has to be a joint struggle of everyone living in that colonial entity.

And I think that one way we can begin to bridge this anti-normalisation gap is by saying to replace anti-normalisation – that I understand, and there should be anti-normalisation. But at the same time maybe we should begin to adopt the language of joint struggle because, like this webinar today is trying to say, Israeli Jews are stakeholders. And there's not going to be a political solution of any kind that leaves out Israeli Jews, just as the whites and the Asians couldn't have been left out of the South African decolonisation process.

And that just leaves me then really briefly to look at South Africa as the most relevant precedent as to what could happen here because in some ways, we share some of the same things. You know the liberation struggle in South Africa had to face a dominant white society that wasn't going to cooperate at all with the anti-apartheid movement and of course (that's) very like the Israeli public.

So, what the South Africans did, basically I think, is they by-passed the whites. I mean they went right to the international community, especially international civil society: churches, trade unions, political groups, university groups, and really built a strong anti-apartheid movement globally. That then affected government policies that then came back and created economic realities through their BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement that finally caused the collapse of apartheid.

And then what happened you know, the ANC (African National Congress) was very inclusive. In other words, in the Freedom Charter, in the draft constitution in Mandela's phrase "We're all South Africans". He said to the whites in South Africa: "You know you are a part of the new South Africa; this isn't against you."

Now that didn't convince the whites of course - the vast majority. But when in fact the apartheid system did collapse and the transition began, then the whites saw – and I think Ilan touched on that – the whites began to see that they had nowhere else to go. Some left the country of course.

But for the most part, the transition went fairly smoothly – unlike the blood bath that had been predicted. So, I think that could happen here as well. We're not going to convince Israeli Jews, but we can soften them by showing them that our vision of one democratic state is inclusive of them.

You know I think our One Democratic State Campaign at some point also might want to undertake drafting a constitution for the new state, just to show Israelis how it could work and that they would be secure – even in a Palestinian-majority state.

And then hopefully the Israeli Jews would begin to come around as a transition – after Zionism begins to collapse and I think that's possible – as a transition happens. Then I think there's a better chance of Israeli Jews to join us. All right, so that's my piece and now go back to Linda and begin the discussion.

LR: Thank you Jeff. Thank you, three speakers – absolutely terrific. We don't have very much time so we're going to have to be really focused.

I would like to start with just a clarification from you Ilan before we go into the actual questions. There was a question about the name of the author of the 1982 report that you mentioned. Was it Sean MacBride?

IP Yes, I wrote it I think in the chat box, yes.

LR: Okay, so we've got that.

A few questions here and if we can be brief or if one of the speakers answers it fully and the rest of you agree with it then maybe we can pass on to another question.

Let's start with a question referring to South Africa.

For you, do you see the lessons for your struggle from white South Africans who opposed apartheid? Are you finding lessons for you that you're applying to your situation in Israel?

IP: Yes, I think we are. There was this United – I think – Democratic Front, something, one outfit, I don't know exactly now the initials, really kind of organised white support for the ANC. There were white members in the ANC and I think many years ago we thought that the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) should have had maybe more anti-Zionist Jews in its midst.

And definitely there are so many similarities, dissimilarities as well, but I think the conflict zone of a white person in apartheid South Africa and the conflict zone of a Jewish Zionist citizen in Israel is something that can and should be morally used: first of all for solidarity for the struggle for freedom and liberation and secondly, as Jeff said, this has to be done also because it's not just the Palestinian future, it's our future as well.

So, I think there's a lot to be learned from that experience. And this is not because it's totally identical, the two regimes, or the struggles are identical but because the anti-apartheid movement and solidarity with the ANC is an inspirational model for everyone who wants to galvanise support for the Palestinians in their just struggle for freedom.

I think the inspiration here is even more important than scholarly comparison which is also something I've added to the book on Israel and South Africa. I'm fully aware of the differences but I think definitely this is something important in our legacy and in our thinking for the future.

LR: Thank you, A question for Livnat, please.

There are a lot of Israelis, it seems, from Tel Aviv who are going to Jerusalem to participate in demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah. Do you know if these people are nurtured in their journey away from Zionism? Do you know if there's follow up with them?

It appears that they're hearing about what's happening in Sheikh Jarrah. They think something's wrong, so they go there to see. Can you explain whether you know about this being part of their journey? Who's there? Who's nurturing them in taking the next step?

LKD: So, the demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah – it started there long before the recent events that put Sheikh Jarrah in the media – and those were sometimes very small groups of activists that maintained the resistance of their activities there. And now they gain more, and they have more people joining them, of course.

But I think that this is the problem with those kinds of demonstrations or events that they have those peaks in which they reach, - I'll be honest, I would not say a big audience because

the Left is not so big, they reach a larger audience also abroad and then there is a fall and abandonment of the activity or at least it's not very – it doesn't persist.

But also, people can sometimes think that Sheikh Jarrah is a just cause but they don't see it in a larger context, and I think that this is the bigger issue or the bigger challenge that we have. It's to show people that it's not only this event or another – it's not only one attack on Gaza or another. It's a much larger issue that has to be dealt (with) in much larger ways. I'm not sure if this answers the question but this is where the train of thought took me.

LR: Thank you. Thank you for that insight.

A question for Ilan and Jeff. Do Israelis read your books?

JH: Ilan, that's a very pertinent question for you.

IP: Yes, it's very interesting. I mean out of the 20 books I've published, I have two books in Hebrew; one about the Husaini family which was received reasonably well. After years of hesitation, I decided to publish *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* in Hebrew. To my surprise – maybe not – an issue for another evening, the newspapers that are identified with the Centre and the Right actually treated the book with quite a lot of respect. They didn't agree but they thought it legitimate.

The one place where the book was totally – or there was an attempt to totally destroy the book was Ha'aretz. And I'm not surprised, I'm not totally surprised as I think a book that looks at Israel as built on ethnic cleansing – a crime against humanity – is something the right-wing in Israel can accept but would like to argue that there was no choice. But at least they're not lying.

The Zionist Left would like us to believe that this didn't happen so they're much more worried by books (by authors) like myself and I can tell you a secret – it's not a secret, it's in the open. The editor of Ha'aretz Aluf Benn said very clearly he would never allow me to publish anything in the newspaper and that's been the policy of the paper since - at least the last three years. I'm not surprised. I really am a threat much more to liberal Zionists than to Zionism. I don't think Jeff's books fare better, but he will tell you.

JH: No, my books haven't fared better. They're not in Hebrew at all. You know, I think some Israelis read English, probably more Israelis abroad who might read English, might have access to them. But to tell you the truth just in a word, I would much rather have my books translated into Arabic.

I think the Arab world, both the Palestinians and the wider Arab world, are missing a critical Israeli analysis and are really missing a kind of critical understanding of what Zionism is and the history that Ilan certainly brings and that I try to bring as well. So, I'm trying to work out ways, I don't know how Ilan funded his – I think you did a crowd funding didn't you, for *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*?

IP: Yes, yes.

JH: So, I'm trying to translate my book, my last book *Decolonizing Israel; Liberating Palestine* into Arabic. It would cost something like \$5,000 which neither ICAHD UK nor any ICAHD chapter has so we're trying to think of ways in which we might raise that money.

Anonymous interruption Oh good, he'll pay for it himself!

JH: What? I wish I had \$5,000! (laughing) So you know, at any rate what I just want to say is that another kind of a thing that people abroad who support the Palestinian cause, if they're asking what can we do besides BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) and different campaigns and lobbying and so on? You know - help us, me and Ilan and there are many others critical writers as well, both Israeli Jews and Palestinians, whose books have to be in other languages.

I think there's a lot of Palestinian literature and Arab literature that should be in English and our literature which should be in Arabic. And that would be a significant contribution, I think, to a better critical interaction between Israeli Jews and Palestinians and the wider Arab world than we're able to have simply on an interpersonal basis.

LR: Okay. Thank you I would like each of our (speakers) to share their final thoughts with us as we start to bring this to a close. If there are other comments that you saw that came up in the chatline you wish to address you could bring this up now. So, if you each have up to a couple of minutes, please, and then I'll have to close it. Okay, Livnat can we start with you please? Can you unmute please Livnat?

LKD: Sure, I forgot! I can only conclude by saying that we should be able to use the ten points that we have for the One Democratic State Campaign to make them clearer for Jewish Israelis but also for people abroad and tackle those controversies that those points might raise now or in the future so that our vision would be more fortified, more tangible, and visible for others. That's it. Thank you.

LR: Thank you. Ilan.

IP: Yes, I also want (that). I would say that each of us has a different role to play to bring freedom and justice to Palestine and the Palestinians.

This matter need(s) to be part of a very justified attempt to tell Israel it's a pariah state. The question of international legitimacy – you can't question international legality – but it's international legitimacy, that's what eventually helped to bring down the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Whether you do it through the BDS campaign or do it in any other way you feel you can do this, remember you are on the right side of history and you will play a part in bringing justice where injustice has existed for more than a century.

The Palestinians have their own role and their own agency, and they are totally aware of it, of unity, representation a clear vision for the future finally. (The) institution cannot do this so there's a need to either restructure the existing institution or build a new one.

There are many Palestinian initiatives in that respect now, which is very encouraging. And I think we in Israel who work with the Jewish community have our own educating to do, to try and show the Israelis how to unlearn so many things they take for granted.

It will be an uphill struggle, there will be a lot of setbacks. And maybe we won't see tangible results in our own lifetime, but this is our part of the story and I'm very optimistic about it, not in terms of how many Israeli Jews will join the One Democratic State Campaign or later a

political movement, but in terms of clearly delineating, as Livnat said, for the Israeli Jews the options that they have.

If they want to continue to live in a racist, apartheid state they also will pay a very, very high price. History doesn't look well on apartheid systems and if they refuse to dismantle themselves, they are dismantled by force. And I think, hopefully, with a change in the American Jewish community in particular, some more sense will be kind of learned by the Israelis themselves. Thank you.

LR: Thank you Ilan and now Jeff?

JH: Well, if the international civil society, the international grassroots, the people of the world – not necessarily the governments – are a crucial piece of the liberation struggle like they were in South Africa, like they were in Algeria and other struggles – then two things happen that haven't happened yet (in this struggle).

First of all, the international activists and the organisations that support the Palestinian cause have to become political. I think we are in a situation today where the whole movement and (that) includes the BDS movement and there's lobbying and there's campaigning and there's protest. But in a very weird sort of way, they're not really political because there isn't a political programme or there isn't the idea that, besides protest and resistance and lobbying, we have to actually have a programme in order to end this occupation and to liberate Palestine and so on.

And what I feel, I think, is that the One Democratic State Campaign has made a tremendous leap forward. This ten-point programme – it's still an outline, it's still like Ilan said, it's basically a set of questions or issues that we're presenting to the Palestinians and to critical Israelis in order to elicit their responses.

It isn't a programme that we say 'this is the programme' but at any rate there's enough substance to it that it should be something that people begin to adopt and integrate into their political campaign. And what we're finding is from all kinds of groups abroad – the PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) in the UK to Jewish Voice for Peace in the US, Campaign Against the Occupation in the US and other groups – is their reluctance to be political, almost a refusal to be political and simply, you know, to stay in this space.

We all know the two-state solution's gone but we're resisting going anywhere else. Staying in this kind of safe space of protest and being angry and criticising and everything else but not really adopting a political programme that moves us forward.

And the second part of the problem with the international community I think is that there really is a disconnect from the Palestinians themselves, in other words a lot of the organisations abroad that are very prominent in terms of working on the Palestinian issues don't really have a working relationship with Palestinians.

They don't consult with Palestinians, they don't bring them into the discussions, they don't ask what their priorities are. They're not listening. But whether it's the BDS or whether it's their own protests that they decide to do – or going to Congress or going to Parliament – all kinds of things that in themselves are good, nevertheless have to be coordinated with the Palestinians themselves.

We have to understand that we're all – both Israeli Jews and you abroad – we're all supporting what's really a Palestinian struggle and we can't move ahead, as radical as we think we might be or whatever, without the Palestinians: without being open to them and listening to them and bringing them in and actually following their lead.

So, I think that's my message. You've got to be political and so I would hope that the groups abroad would begin to address the One Democratic State Campaign programme and they have to be more connected to the Palestinians and bring them in more and see them as the leaders more than they have.

LR: Excellent. Thank you, yes, we will remember that – to keep amplifying Palestinian voices. But today I thank you that we've been able to give this platform to the critical Jewish Israelis who want to see this vision of creating the democratic state between the river and the sea. Thank you so much for joining us. We're absolutely thrilled to have you with us.

Now I'd also like to just say in closing a few things. One is that Livnat – I hope that we'll hear more from you in the future. I want to hear about this research you're doing. And if anybody here has not read any of Ilan's books, you really must go out, get a hold of those titles, and start reading his messages.

And then remember that through ICAHD on our website you can get a copy of Jeff's new book *Decolonizing Israel: Liberating Palestine*. We have them available at discounted prices so don't miss the opportunity to get Jeff's book through us.

Our next webinar is going to be on Wednesday, the 20th of October, when our theme will be climate justice, not ethnic cleansing. You'll be hearing from Manal Shqair and Eurig Scandrett who will prepare us for the Palestine-related events that will be happening during COP26. Full details are available now on the ICAHD website so take a look at them and register your intention to attend.

On our website you'll find out about all of our campaigns from home demolitions to British-made JCB bulldozers, the NSPCC, the national – the largest – national children's charity in the UK that is taking tarnished money from JCB, and more

We also do have a whole section devoted to the One Democratic State Campaign and within it you'll also find several interviews that have been done between – well with Palestinians and Israelis who call for one state. So read them, use that information, quote them. All of this also gives us legitimacy in our arguments that we present to other campaigners and to our political representatives.

We know that we have a huge task to do in working with our political representatives and governments who have taken on board this Zionist argument, justifying the State of Israel. So, we need to address this.

Also, on our website you'll find lots of information to help equip campaigners because we're about helping you in this struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

Lastly, I'd just like to encourage you to join ICAHD UK. Sign up for our actions. You can receive bulletins, our monthly newsletter. Also note that you can now subscribe to the communications coming from ICAHD USA which are also sent out monthly. You can sign up for those through the ICAHD website.

Because we campaign for political change, ICAHD UK is not a charity and this means we rely on people like you to enable us, to enable our work, so please join us and be part of our movement to change history.

So once again I thank our speakers, I thank those attending today's webinar. See you again soon. Goodbye!