**Speaking Tour in Germany**

Hannover, Gottingen, Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin.

**Palästina Initiative Region Hannover, Stiftung Leben & Umwelt / Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Niedersachsen, Göttinger Bündnis für Gerechtigkeit in Palästina und Israel; Nahost-Forum-Bremen, AK Nahost Bremen, Umdenken e.V. / Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Hamburg, Alsharq e.V.**

Ten days in Germany, travelling from one town to another, at the invitation of the above organizations, an ordeal I took upon myself not quite knowing what to expect. The only thing I knew for sure was that I was going to present my picture of the Middle East with the ongoing conflict that unlike many others, I believe can end if only both sides really want to and realize that the only way is to recognize each other’s right to exist in mutual respect, dignity and security. In other words, Life here = Life there from whichever side you look at it. Living on the border of the Gaza Strip, being attacked and attacking back, never quite sure who “started”, familiar with the suffering on both sides, hurting for us both, I know it has to stop. I know that we have to change our strategy we have to join forces, the sane, too quiet, people on both sides, in order to change the lose - lose situation of war into a win – win situation of peace. I am not dreaming. It can be. The dreamers are those Palestinians who still say that they want to drive us into the sea. That is not going to happen. They are dreaming. The dreamers are those Israelis who think we can continue another 50 years of occupation and another over ten years of blockade and eventually the Palestinians will beg for peace. Not that way, they are dreaming, not I. What I say can become a reality – two people side by side making a life they do not want to lose, respectful, dignified and secure.

In one of my talks, someone asked me why I do this. Why do I travel to various places in the world to talk and present my case, so to speak? The thing is I believe I have a message that has to be heard. A story of a Jewish woman who came as a child to Israel from England because her parents understood that the only place in the world for the Jewish People to feel at home, without explanations, excuses and/or favors, is in Israel – the Promised Land. Familiar with the Jewish history – the Diaspora, the Holocaust and the establishment of a Jewish State for the Jewish People – I had no doubts. It wasn’t until much later due to the journey of my life that I realized that my redemption was someone else’s disaster. How do I live with that? How do I deal with it? During my talks I was asked why we do not go back to where we came from and I reminded them that we were not really wanted there. I was accused of stealing people’s homes and expelling them from their land. Yes, I know. Wars are ugly. Terrible things happen at war. Today we are two peoples/two nations with a tie, historical and theological to this same piece of land. It is never ever going to be one instead of the other so is it not high time we learn to live side by side and we can. I was asked if I was a Zionist. My answer was that if Zionism is the belief/recognition that Israel is the true homeland of the Jewish people, then I am. If Zionism means that we, the Jewish people, cannot recognize another people’s right to live here in their own rights without discrimination, with equal rights, in whatever format is agreed upon by both sides, then I am not. I do not believe the latter to be a correct definition of Zionism and therefore I see myself as a true Zionist.

I met people who understood what I was saying. I met people who found it difficult to accept. I met people led by hate and mistrust and I met people led by love and understanding. I met people who despised me for thinking that I can “steal” someone’s home and then ask him to talk and make compromises. I met people who had never come in contact with an Israeli before and dared to take a chance and during the conversation mistrust and tears turned into an understanding, a smile and a hug.

This is why I go on these journeys. To meet people I may not have any other chance of meeting. To put across the message that we should be there for one another because we are always going to be there on that small piece of land which like one of my dear friends in Gaze recently said: “It is a small piece of land but there is room for both of us”. We can find a just and long lasting solution/understanding if we only stop blaming one another and for a brief moment look inside ourselves and ask, where did I go wrong? What can I do to make a difference? This is what I believe. This is my message. And I will go far and wide to make it heard as long as I can.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for listening, understanding even when not agreeing. Thank you all for making this voyage possible. I personally learnt a lot and hope you took something into your hearts and minds too.

Other Voice, the organization I did my best to present in the best possible way, is a group of people living around the Gaza Strip, suffering from the fear of the next alert, the next rocket, the next sleepless night and yet realize that as long as our neighbors live in the despair, the rut, they are living in today, nothing will change. We demonstrate, we try to help our friends across the border in different ways, we make our voice and theirs sound loud and clear “Violence is not the answer, dialogue, acceptance is”. LIFE HERE =LIFE THERE.