

IPF Atid Voices from the Community

As for many others in my generation, the 2014 Gaza war fought between Israel and Hamas was a watershed political moment for me. Months after the deterioration of another round of peace talks, Israel and the Palestinians were once again engaged in war, this one bloodier and more intense than those prior. I remember my mother crying in our living room in New York when we heard that the three Israeli teens kidnapped by Hamas were found dead - murdered. "It's just so horrible," I recall her muttering, between sobs. And I remember the shock I felt after hearing about the kidnapping and murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a Palestinian teenager burned alive by Israeli settlers just one day after the burial of the three Israeli boys. I considered the ensuing 50 days of war a venting period – both sides unleashing their sadness, pain and rage on the other as they have for over a century.

The events of that summer affirmed my growing desire to commit more fully to a career in advancing Middle East peace and security - for all. Since September 2014, I have worked for Ameinu, a progressive Zionist non-profit organization in New York; studied Arabic in the U.S. and at Givat Haviva in Israel; traveled to Jordan; and worked for Ir Amim, a Jerusalem-based left-wing NGO, and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a Tel Aviv-based security think tank.



The diversity of my experience has led me to believe that civil rights and security are inseparable in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Without progress on the political front and the enfranchisement of the Palestinian people, there will be insubstantial progress on the security front. As such, the well-being of Israelis is interwoven with the well-being of Palestinians.

Fundamentally, I believe that conceptions of security as a purely military matter are simplistic and must be

discarded; they should be superseded by the more comprehensive lens of human security, which attends to the political, social, cultural and economic factors that influence security from the local to the international level.

I came to Israel Policy Forum because I believe the organization shares my appreciation of the

necessity to highlight and address the non-military aspects of security as a means of advancing the two-state solution. IPF is the American Jewish organization at the forefront of this effort, filling a vital niche for young American Jews, already established Jewish community leaders and American policymakers seeking a deep understanding of realities on the ground in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Cultivating the next generation of well informed and critically thinking Jewish leaders through education and advocacy, IPF Atid represents one of the most exciting aspects of IPF's work. With my extensive experience working in the Israeli human rights and security sectors, I want to share what I've learned with my American Jewish peers and challenge our generation to dig deeper into the obstacles and opportunities involved in achieving a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

-Joshua Schwartz, IPF Atid New York