

Voices of the young... visions for the future

World Week for Peace in Palestine & Israel

From Wadie Qaunda, Lutheran School, Ramallah.

“ Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.” Robert H. Schuller

I am a proud Palestinian teenager living in Ramallah, and I am hopeful that myself and every other Palestinian will have a fruitful future. But, looking at and assessing our present and past, we tend not to know what the future holds for us. Every single event that happens, especially politically, can change all of our plans.

My family represents a typical Palestinian family. In 1948, when the Palestinian exodus, or what we call as Nakba (which means catastrophe), happened, my grandfather was forced to leave everything behind and migrate from where he lived in Ramleh to Ramallah . We are now refugees living in Ramallah. A small part of my family stayed in Ramleh, another part of my family is living in the USA and can only come to Palestine as American visitors.

As a young Palestinian living in Palestine, I can say that youth are being pressured and put in the corner, and at the same time they are being expected to think rationally and sensibly and to lead a better future for this country...

There is no freedom. Settlements are wide spread, besieging every city and preventing them from growing. When I am at my grandparents house, a settlement is standing in front of me. The Separation Wall is hard to miss when you visit Palestine It is an ugly concrete structure that gives you the impression that you are inside a big prison. The military checkpoints that restrict our right to movement are everywhere. We wait in line like animals, walk through turnstiles that could be stopped at any time

Peace, and specifically just peace, is the solution to bringing security to Israel and Palestine. War won't help; there are no winners in war, only losers, and in every war the real losers are innocent civilians from both sides. We must reach an agreement that calls for two sovereign and independent states coexisting in peace. The goal of the negotiations must be a fair, comprehensive and clear agreement; they cannot be a cover allowing the stronger party to impose its will, as it must be kept in mind that we are talking about what is currently a very unequal balance of power.

Negotiating must be done eye to eye, you cannot negotiate on your knees. Israel should understand that building settlements in the West Bank is not helping with bringing peace. Israel must feel the economic and moral cost of the occupation before we can negotiate peace.