



Beyond the Headlines

Featuring
Izzeldin Abuelaish

Author of the book
***I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to
Peace and Human Dignity***

A conversation moderated by
WARREN HOGE
Vice President for External Relations, IPI

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Warren Hoge:

I'm Warren Hoge, IPI's Vice President for External Relations, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this Beyond the Headlines event featuring Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish and his book, *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity*.

In the case of Izzeldin Abuelaish, I should say I feel not only pleased but privileged to be introducing you to a remarkable man. He will speak eloquently and feelingly about the tragic event two years ago that showed the world, and, as it turned out, live Israeli television, the human face of suffering in Gaza. He will also be staying around here after we finish tonight's program to sign copies of the powerful memoir he has written, which is on sale at the door.

But before he speaks, I wanted first to tell you a little bit about his life struggle before that, because he's too modest to tell you so himself, and it's important to cite it to appreciate the true dimensions of this man and what he had to overcome in pursuing his campaign for peace. Now in doing so, I don't want to fall into being judgmental or accusatory because over my shoulder is someone with every right to sound enraged and vengeful but who instead responds with pleas for understanding and demands for reconciliation.

His book is a chronicle of life in an occupied land, a life that brings daily frustrations and humiliations, a life in which just getting around involves checks

and screenings and interrogations and searches that turn trips that should take minutes into maddening journeys that stretch into hours and even days.

One reason his account of that life is so compelling is that his voice is one free of bitterness and resentment.

He was raised in a house in the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza. It was just miles from his family's traditional home, and even that refugee house in Gaza had to be forcibly demolished when the Israeli Defense Forces said it needed to widen the street outside to permit passage of its tanks.

He was the eldest son and consequently felt a special burden at not being able to better his family's life despite his pursuit of education and his holding down simultaneous side jobs, one of which required him to begin his long day at 3AM every morning. His memories of his childhood are of being tired and hungry all the time. He did as many odd jobs as he could in his youth in Israel, working on farms, construction projects, and building chicken coops.

Yet, for all the deprivations in his life, he doesn't hold "Israelis" to blame, just those Israelis who treat him abusively, and he, in almost the same breath, cites the Israelis who are his cherished colleagues in Israeli hospitals where he has worked. He has spent his life pointing out the similarities between the people on both sides of the border, and the possibilities that that semblance raises for peaceful cohabitation one day.

He believes that medicine can bridge the divide between conflicted peoples and that violence is a symptom of a disease, and you have to treat the disease before you'll convincingly get rid of the violence. Seeing women in his culture often blamed for things they could not control, like infertility or the sex of a baby, turned him into a woman's advocate and led him into the field of obstetrics and gynecology and fetal medicine. In a land marked by too much death, Izzeldin daily enabled the miracle of life.

He has had connections to the UN since childhood. He and his eight children, including the three daughters who lost their lives in the Gaza incursion, all attended UN schools in Gaza. His father worked as a laborer for UNRWA, the UN Relief and Works Agency, and he worked in an UNRWA clinic in Gaza as a field obstetrician and gynecologist. In 2006, he went to Afghanistan for the World Health Organization.

I was consequently really happy today to take him over to the UN where he was greeted warmly and personally by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Standing in the middle ground of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can leave you exposed on both sides. Izzeldin is often distrusted by Israelis and doubted by his fellow Gazans, who ask, "How can you help those Jewish women to have babies who will grow up to be soldiers who will bomb us and shoot us?"

In the book's preface, Dr. Marek Glezerman, chairman of the Hospital for Women and deputy director of the Rabin Medical Center in Petah Tikva, Israel, tells of a time when Izzeldin, by this point a practiced physician fluent in Hebrew with a Harvard degree and a well-known record of caring for Israeli patients, was going to a medical conference in Cyprus. He left the Gaza strip early in the morning to get his flight but was rebuffed by authorities at the airport who wouldn't let him board the plane for unspecified and unexplained security reasons. There was no

flight until the next day, but since he only had a one-day travel permit to Israel, he could not stay at the airport.

Dr. Glezerman picks up the story. "He came to our house to stay overnight, and I expected to greet a very angry man. He was humiliated, but to my surprise, he was angry only at a specific clerk at the airport, an individual person, not "the Israelis."

"That's Izzeldin. He never gets carried away into making wholesale judgments. He simply said, 'That guy was not only inconsiderate, he was also misled. He behaved rudely because he did not understand.'"

When the Gaza war broke out two summers ago, Dr. Glezerman was worried about how his friend and associate, Izzeldin could handle his life and his family under the bombing. Nadia, Izzeldin's wife and the mother of their eight children, had died of leukemia just four months before. "Like everyone else," Izzeldin, told him, "we were all sleeping in the same room. We put some children against one wall and some against another wall, so if we're hit, we won't all be wiped out."

On January 16, 2009, three of his girls were on the wrong wall. They were Bessan, 20, Miyar, 15, and Aya, 14.

And nothing could honor them more than what their father has done since then to preserve their legacies, turn their memories to life-affirming purposes and try to rescue his region from its awful cycles of violence.

Izzeldin, I am so pleased you are here to speak to us.

Izzeldin Abuellaish: Thank you. I would like to thank Warren, really, for giving me this opportunity. It's a moment for each of us to feel his humanity and to belong to it.

This moment for me, I would love the Palestinian people in general, the Gazans in particular, and my parents, my mother, my wife, my daughters to come with me for a second to see that there are people who are thinking of them and can do something for them, and that they are proud of what I am doing, and I am determined to continue that path, and on a daily basis, I am determined to send my daughters gifts over blisses, of good deeds, of wisdom, of good words to change this world, to show them the suffering of the human being.

As a Palestinian, that I am proud of, but which Palestinian? Palestinian refugee, that one day, he has his home, he has his identity, he has his country and citizenship, that in now, the 21st century, on a daily basis, as if this world wants to remind me of being stateless, of not belonging to this world. For what? For nothing I did. For nothing our people did, and our life, and personally, my life is a tragedy. Since I was born as a child, to be born in the refugee camp, that I never tasted the childhood, but a shame we are in the 21st century, and hundreds of millions of children are suffering the same. I succeeded in my life, and I believe it's God's bless, but the most difficult time in my life was just four months period.

A number 16 for me will never be erased from my mind. 16th of September, 2008, quarter to 5PM is the day when I lost my wife of acute disease. I felt it's the end of the world, because I believe the mother is the vital. The mother is the one who builds and destroys. Children should be raised with their mothers, and in my life, I am in debt to my mother. The Palestinian mother is the hero who sacrificed, who gave, who did everything to keep the Palestinian case living and surviving, and now, I am burned by the fire of loss.

My wife, and I was blessed with six lovely daughters and two sons. Those daughters, if I have 20 of them, I would be blessed from God. Their teachers used to fight for them to have them in their classes. They never succeeded. Less than 97 persons in their schools.

In my life, I dreamed one day to be a medical doctor, because for us, especially for the Palestinians, education was a matter of survival. Our parents lost everything, but they realized one thing. It's time to focus on their children, and the children are the wealth, and the weapon is education. From nothing, they educated us to cut from their food, and we learn, and we go to universities, not for the sake of education, to get a better job to help others, because at that time, and for us, it's a matter of survival. In this world, there are two kinds of people: those who are fighting to live, and those who are living to fight. We fought to live, but how many were killed in the way? How many were lost in the path? They can't survive this difficult path.

I dreamed--and I can tell you to urge every one of us to dream--I dream to be a medical doctor, and the dreams are close to reality. I worked hard. I succeeded. I challenged all those man-made challenges. It's not from God. And then 16th of January, 2009, quarter to 5PM is the day when an Israeli tank shell hit my daughters' room killing three daughters, niece, and severely wounding other members. I didn't believe it.

Bessan alone, I wanted to see them. Where is Bessan? Bessan, that I can write books about her, Bessan who was 20 years old, who became the mother, sister, friend, the brother for the whole family, Bessan was the first Palestinian girl I sent to peace camps at the age of 14, and there she came to tell me, I found how similar are we.

At the age of 14, Bessan said, to me, terrorism with terrorism, or violence with violence doesn't solve any problem. Bessan said, everything starts small, then becomes big. Everything starts in one place, then goes in different directions. Can we learn from our children? Bessan was supposed to get her B.A. a few months later. Miyar, who planned to be a medical doctor, I was happy, at least one of my daughters will follow my path. Aya, who was 14, who planned to be a journalist or a lawyer, to be the voice of the voiceless, they were girls armed with love, with hopes, with education, with care to others.

My niece, who came for her fate just two days before the tragedy who was 17, I don't want anyone to see what have I seen seconds after I left my daughters' room, less than five seconds. Where is Miyar, where is Bessan, where is Aya? They became parts, drowning in a pool of blood. Miyar, at least, I wanted to see her face decapitated for nothing they did, and there was no reason to be killed, but I realized, as a believer, as a Muslim with deep faith--it's important to have faith.

I said, this tragedy is for good and must be for good, because what happened in Gaza was secret, and the world was watching it, as if they cannot stop it, it can't be stopped, and that's the lesson. We want to save a human being, not to watch it. When I see a patient bleeding, I must intervene and stop the bleeding, not to watch it! The most holy thing in the universe is a human being and the freedom. This war in Gaza, in a time, Gazans became numbers! 100, 200, 1,000, they have no names, they have no faces! It's shame! To look at a human being as numbers or as statistics, saving one, you save the world. Killing one, you kill the world, and we must fight for the freedom of all, freedom of oppression, of

occupation, of sickness, of unemployment, of being homeless. I can't be free as long as others are not free. Your freedom is for my freedom. It's time to move as one and to behave as one and to feel connected.

And the first message of support came from my son, Muhammad. He was 12. I looked at him. What is he going to do? Is he going to be crazy, to be violent? He wasn't born violent or hating. He was born a pure, lovely child, loving to others, but we have to blame ourselves. No one was born violent or terrorist. We have to ask the context in which we live, the environment which created those violent children. Violence is a symptom of a disease. We must search for the disease: the oppression, the occupation, the poverty, the humiliation in this world, the sickness, and to treat the cause, not to think of the symptoms.

He looked at me and said, "Why are you crying? Why are you screaming? You must be happy. Do you want me to be happy, and Bessan, Miyar, Aya are killed? You must be happy. My sisters are happy there. They are with their mom. She asked for them."

That's the Palestinian child! Can we learn from them who believe to move forward? I said, if he believes that, I have to move forward and to carry the pain, and I said, this tragedy is for God.

At the same time, I was supposed to be interviewed live by the Israeli TV. And that's the moral courage of my friend, Shlomi Eldar, when I left him a voice message, he opened the speaker to tell, and to inform the world about the craziness about what is happening in the Gaza strip. It satisfied me, the second day when Ehud Olmert announced unilateral ceasefire, but we don't want to be killed to get our freedom or to save lives. We want to prevent. Prevention, not treatment.

And when I wrote this book, I was supposed to write it a few years ago about my life, about my practices of medicine in Israeli hospitals where I used to be the first Palestinian to practice medicine in an Israeli hospital in 1991, because I believed in it. Medicine has one face. It has a human face. To save lives, to heal and to help. It doesn't know names, colors, ethnicity, or nationality. Within the borders of the hospital, we treat all equal with respect, with privacy, wishing all the recovery and the health. Can leaders learn, and people to learn from medical doctors? What do we practice within the borders of the hospital? To treat others outside equally as we treat them inside the hospital. That's what is needed. I was satisfied about, what did I do.

And I shall not hate because, if I want to hate everyone in my life who did bad things to me, and if every one of us is going to hate everyone who did bad things to him or her, the list will be endless, and this world will be drowning in an ocean of hate. And who to hate? To hate myself? The one whom I want to hate, is he thinking of me at all? He's not thinking. But I want to challenge him, and on a daily basis, to send him messages telling him, you used bullets to kill my daughters, to destroy my life. I am not going to use the same weapon you used, and I am not collapsed or destroyed. I am standing steadfast, stronger, more determined, more persistent and focused of not giving up, knowing what do I want. Hate is a disease. Hate is a poison. Build a shield around yourself of not allowing hate to invade your body. It's a fire which eats the one who carries it.

My daughter, Shatha, who was severely wounded, she lost the sight in one eye. She lost two fingers. She spent four months in the hospital, and she was in the high school studying day and night during the war, on candles, to be one of the

first teens in Palestine in the high school. What do I expect from her after what happened? She said, I have to go to study and to achieve the plans of my sisters.

And she proved that the antidote of hate and revenge is success. She worked hard, and I didn't expect much from her. The day I moved to Canada, where I was supposed to move to Canada before the war with a work permit at the University of Toronto, they announced the result, and she succeeded as nothing happened. She succeeded 96%. And what is she doing now? She's studying computer engineering at the University of Toronto. Those are our children. Can we learn from them? And to practice those values and to learn? I lost my daughters, but I didn't lose hope, I didn't lose the compass.

Your presence here is a sign of hope! And God will never change what is in people until we started to change what is inside our hearts, minds, and souls. The change is not coming from outside, and it's not just wars. It's good that we are meeting.

What makes the evil flourish is good people to do nothing. It's a matter of action. Each of us to take responsibility and to look inside and around what can he do to make a difference in others' lives? We lost the happiness, and we think happiness with how much do we have? How much do we earn? Happiness is not inside. I get it from others through sharing, through connecting and giving and feeling and communicating and defending the rights of others. That's happiness that we all lost.

So hope is there, but we need to act, and it's important not to underestimate the size of your action. Start to do something within your neighborhoods, talk to others, speak to your family, to your friends, at your work, about what is happening in this world. Don't reject yourself! Don't underestimate the size of your action and the story of the young girl who believed in action, who was sitting on the shore when a heavy tide threw hundreds of starfish, a man crossed that girl and said, what are you doing? As a girl who one day will be a mother, to save and to give, she said, I am saving lives, throwing one by one into water. He said, but there are hundreds! It's not going to make any difference! She was confident. She believed in herself and used the evidence based practice to throw another one and said to him, it made a difference to that one. That's what is needed.

I can say to you, in my life, I learned that nothing is impossible. The only impossible thing in life I believe in is to return my daughters back. Anything in life in this moving world is possible. No one would believe in what is happening in the Middle East. We thought that the nations and the people are dormant. The means of fighting have changed. It's not weapons. It's technology and the young men and women and education. It's the first time in the history you find the gun, and the soldier is the weaker, and the naked person, the young man and woman is the stronger, armed with his faith and his belief in his rights to face those brutal soldiers in this world, and they can't shoot.

What happened in two months period is a miracle, and it's a signal for all leaders. We need leaders, but we don't need political leaders. We need leaders who are risk takers and the challenging. We need human leaders whose eyes are focused on whom? On their nation's interest, on the human interest, on the poor, the unemployed, on the oppressed, not their eyes on the next election, and to keep in power. It's time for the change, and I can say to you, the change is there on the cover of the book.

This picture of my daughters was taken two weeks before they were killed. They succeeded to see their names written in sand on the Gaza beach when I took them just to heal from the first tragedy they ever faced, but where are their names now? Their names are written in stone on the tomb and in our life. The normal people, we can't see our names written in stone or metal. Only leaders, big philanthropists, and generals, they can see. I swore to God and to my daughters, because I fully believe I will meet them one day, and I want to meet them one day telling them I am bringing you justice that your souls and the blood was sacrificed for, and that your souls and the blood made a difference in others' lives, and just by wisdom, good words and good deeds.

In memory of my daughters, I established a foundation called Daughters for Life, for education and health, because in my life, I am in debt to my mother, my wife, and my daughters. Without them, I will never be standing here. My successes, they were behind it.

And I fully believe in the potential of girls and women. It's the woman's role, not the woman's status or rights. Give me five women in this world who were behind war or tragedies, but you can find hundreds of men. I can say, give them the opportunity. If they didn't improve this world, at least they will never make it worse. It's time this foundation will be devoted for girls and women in the Middle East. This June, we will give 35 awards for newly graduate females from six countries: Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Two weeks ago, we signed a memorandum of understanding with Trent University to give 12 undergraduate and graduate scholarships for 12 girls from the Middle East.

It's time for action and to do something, and this is the gift that I am determined, and to see my daughters' names written in stone and metal on institutions to encourage others where I see other girls achieving the plans of my daughters. It's not the biology. It's the humanity.

You can see in every child in the street your son or daughter start to smash and destroy those mental and physical barriers and to find the love that we all lost and the love, especially for men, where can we find it, and what can be done to achieve it? *Where Love Resides*, a poem which was written by an Israeli Jewish woman in memory of my daughter Bessan, who knew Bessan, who knew Dalal, Shatha, Miyar, Aya.

"I long to touch you, Bessan, one more time, to hug you, to tell you how sorry I am that your mom died, but now you too are gone, your smiling face, your gentle way, your softness, your non-judgmental words, your pain for your people, your way of life, your dreams, aspirations, and your hope for peace. Just days before the war, I spoke with your dad. He gave me your phone number. It's still in my car. Every day I glance at the number seeing your name, Bessan. I wish I had spoken with you more, but I didn't have the guts. I spoke with you three days before you died. I told you that I am praying for your safety. My prayers were not heard.

"Through the shelling, the bombing, the Qassams, the smoke, I feel I have been betrayed by God, by my country, by the cruelty of humanity, by the warmongers, by those who think violence is the solution, and with all of this, I have been given a gift to have spent six weeks with Shaddah, Izzeldin, and Ridah. I have no words of revenge, no hatred, I have no anger, I have the deep belief that peace is possible, even with this enormous loss. I have been strengthened from their strength. I am more determined from their determination. I am more at peace from their peacefulness.

"Bessan, forgive me for not being able to save you from my own people. Forgive me for giving you hope that peace is possible and then taking that dream from you. You will always be my symbol of hope, peace, and mostly gentleness. Your dad shared the dream with me. Days after you died, he came into a room full of men, and there you were, sitting amongst them. He asked you, why are you sitting here, Bessan? You know it is not acceptable in our society. You answered, all is fine now, Dad. I am happy and well. I can be here now among the men where I am needed.

"May no other woman need to die in order to be able to influence the men as you have, Bessan. May we women be heard and heeded, and may the men in this world give the chance to know from deep within their hearts that this is where the answer lies, in their hearts, where love resides."

Dear sisters and brothers, I believe that we can make a difference, and we can change this world. Have hope. Have faith. But most important is to take action, and we need to smash those mental and physical barriers, and in our life, we have priorities, and the future is our priority, but who is the future? Our children. Can we give the bright, safe, secure future for our children, and to start leaving here and each of us to do something to make a difference? At that moment, this world, believe me, it can be dressed a difference, beautiful human address that we lost all. Thank you and God bless you. Thank you.

Hoge:

Well, thank you, Izzeldin. As I told you, I feel privileged to introduce you to a remarkable man. I want to ask a couple of questions and then give you a chance if you have any questions or comments you want to make.

One of the questions I have, Izzeldin, is about how to put into action what you're talking about, which is so much about individual communication destroying the otherness of the other side, and I wanted to ask you about the Creativity for Peace Camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where three of your daughters went. There's a program called Seeds for Peace.

These programs believe in the idea of putting, particularly young people, young Israelis and young Palestinians together to let them discover their similarity. Can you talk a bit about that? Does it work? Is it something we should believe in?

Abuelaish:

Of course, you know, these are the grassroots. This is the bottom up. And it can make a difference. But to increase the impact of those efforts that I believe in, the top, the bottom hub is working against gravity. It goes from down up. Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it falls down. But what is needed, the strongest, to make this concrete and solid, I think we need the top down, the political will, the political solution, and the political leaders where they are working in the direction of the gravity, so when it falls down, it will help those grassroots to flourish and to make the impact.

Hoge:

I also wanted to ask you about a story you tell in the book that's very dramatic, and a moment that upset you terribly, when a 21-year-old woman named Wafa Al-Biss from your part of Gaza who had been treated in the hospital in which you worked in Israel for burns from a cooking accident was intercepted on the border going into Israel with 10 pounds of explosives around her body, and she said afterwards that her purpose was to go blow up people in that hospital. I know how upset you were with that. How did that happen? How possibly could a young woman have been convinced to do that, and secondly, what did you do in response to that incident?

Abuelaish:

I remember that case. I was in Shifa Hospital for another Palestinian woman who was shot in the head and trying to transfer her to the Soroka University Hospital where I used to work. So I called my friends and my colleagues in the hospital, we want to transfer, and they said to me, we can't. I said, why? I felt upset because it's a matter of survival. We want her to be in the intensive care unit.

The second day, I learned about this case. She is Wafa, she is one. She doesn't represent the Palestinian nation or the Palestinian people. She is one. I can say to you, she went to Erez, and before she arrived there, they called her to take a side as if they knew she is coming, she was brainwashed, she was treated from her third-degree burning and wounds to be treated, and then someone to respond in that way, I am sure there is something behind it.

And immediately, the second day, I wrote an article that this single case doesn't represent the Palestinian people as many other Israelis. We don't want to generalize, to take every case as it is. She is now suffering because of that, and later on, her family, they spoke loudly against their daughter, and to blame the people who used their daughter for this cause. They spoke highly about that and loudly. Who sent this daughter who doesn't know, in a weak point, you know, she is vulnerable for that cause. And it made a difference, writing, and it's time.

That's what we want each of us to take responsibility. If I see something wrong from the Palestinian side, I have to speak about it, and also, anyone from the Israeli side to speak loudly about it, not to be justified. Mistake is mistake. What is wrong is clear. Either white or black, not to feel shy when it comes to my side.

Hoge:

Izzeldin, I wanted to ask you a third thing from my own impressions of traveling in the Middle East, and I wondered what your attitude was about this. You are a Palestinian who has lived in Saudi Arabia at one point. You have lived in Cairo, you studied there for five years. You've been to Afghanistan. You have had the experience of living in the Middle East, in Muslim countries in the Middle East.

I have often thought, when I travel through those countries, that many people in those countries talk about the Palestinian cause but don't do much about it, and I wondered, when you were there as a Palestinian, did you find they were asking you lots of questions about what it was like in Gaza, what life was like in Gaza, did they express real concern for your fate there? I think what I'm telling you--it's a question with a little bit of a predisposition in it--I have often felt that other Arab countries don't take the interest or show the concern in the Palestinian cause, the humanitarian part of it that, they ought to. Do you agree?

Abuelaish:

I think this is a mistake, and we were speaking about, not to generalize. We want to differentiate between the Arab leaders, political leaders, and the Arab nations. The Arab people, as even the western, in Europe, in North America everywhere, the nations, the people are in support and understands the Palestinian cause. But the leaders themselves who are the obstacle, and they are working, as I said, they are working for a political agenda to serve their own interests, to keep in power for corruption and to stay as long as they can. It's the leaders' problem. It's not the nations.

The Arabs, I can say to you, as the Americans here, in Europe, in North, they are supporting the Palestinian cause. They understand it, and they show passion, compassion, and support for the Palestinian cause, but it's the leaders, and thank God, there is a new wave of change happening in this world, each leader

in this world to start, to look around. What am I doing? What can I do to keep myself and to protect myself? Because I think the nations' eyes are opened, and now the leaders should be accountable for the nations.

Hoge: Very good. William? If you'd wait for the microphone, please identify yourself.

William A. Verdone: Thank you, William A. Verdone. I know you don't have a crystal ball, sir, but what do you see in that area five years down the road, particularly with reaching out to the disenfranchised, those who need education mostly? What's your impression five years down the road? Thank you. And may I ask, and may I further say, God bless you.

Abuelaish: Thank you. I can say to you, not five years, maybe one year, the situation to be changed, and to see the Palestinians, the independent Palestinian state, to witness it and see it, because what is happening in this world? You don't expect. Can you tell me what will happen tomorrow? No one knows. And if I came to ask you, where are the States now? Three years ago, to say I dreamed the President of the States will be a black guy called Barack Hussein Obama, what are you going to say? No one would believe it! But who is the President? President Barack Obama. So everything is possible to happen for good or bad, for good or bad.

How can we prevent the bad? The bad is not going to come from God. We know the natural disasters. We have to handle it. In Japan, they handled it, and they succeeded. But the most painful is the man-made disasters. Can we avoid and prevent it?

Hoge: In the second row? Masood? Hang on, just wait for the microphone if you will. Be careful, he's a journalist!

Masood Haider: Thank you. Thank you, Warren, for warning him. My name is Masood Haider. I represent a Pakistani newspaper called *Daily Dawn*, *Dawn* of Pakistan. That's what I represent. I just wanted to... I was very interested in what you had just said, to create some sort of a front...women and children, or daughters which will eventually be a front... I mean, overcome the hatred that is there inherent in the situation as it is, and do you think that can happen, and that front can be created between the Palestinian and the Israeli women. Because that can be, I'm sure, a great step forward.

And also, I'd like to ask you another question that's about this new initiative that has been talked about that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is coming here, he's going to announce the initiative. What do you think he should announce that you think that can succeed? Thank you.

Abuelaish: Concerning the hate, I can say to you about the Palestinian mothers, and even the Israelis, the Palestinian children, in 1994, after signing this Oslo agreement, one day before, it was the first intifada, and those children, what did they do? Their job was to throw stones. The second day of signing the agreement, once they witnessed the new hope and the change in their life, and once the Israeli tanks started to withdraw, they started to give them candies, flowers, and olive branches. Instead of throwing them with stones, they throw them with candies, flowers, and olive branches. Those are the Palestinian children, I can say to you, they are the most resilient.

And I am willing to study that to see that the Palestinian children and the Palestinian people are resilient, and it may be genetic. Give them hope, and you

will see how can they react. This is one thing I would like Prime Minister Netanyahu to come, not to say initiative, to say to him, to tell him, I am coming, and I froze the settlements, I finished with the checkpoints, to do something, not words, to come with actions that he translated there. This will give hope and will strengthen the hope of translating the peace process into action.

Hoge: Please, Alberto.

Alberto Turlon: I am Alberto Turlon from the Burma Fund, and actually, you mentioned... I have two quick questions, if I may allow. You mentioned the top-down approach, so political leaders, and I wonder if you have some suggestions or thoughts you want to give to the Palestinian Authority based in the West Bank. This is one question.

And on the bottom-up side, if you want to, you mentioned your foundation, which is working on women's education. If you want to mention any specific charity or single person or other organization, I don't know, group of people which informally is working in Gaza in silence to continue to give hope in social issues, education, health, or some other issues, you can name them. If you just want to mention them, just, if you want to praise them. That's it. Thank you.

Abuelaish: Concerning the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian leadership, it's not for the West Bank. It's for the Palestinian people all over the world, for the 11 million Palestinians, and then the Palestinian territories, to say to them, where they adopted it, and they realized it, and they practice it on a daily basis. Violence is futile, and they will never go to violence, and they will go to the international community, you, to support them, to speak loudly about the Palestinian rights, and to support and to defend the Palestinian rights where Abbas and Dr. Fayad, they are working hard to achieve that goal with nonviolence, and it's time for the international community to intervene and to put an end to this conflict, I can say to you, solving this conflict, will it change the world? It is the main issue in the world, it will give hope to the whole world. This is one thing.

The second issue concerning Gaza I can say to you, there are many Palestinians in the Gaza strip who are believing and working in silence to promote nonviolence and to promote civil society. Many of them wither. Belonging to this party or that, or the civil society, different NGOs. I can provide you with many names, and if you are willing to help them, to collaborate with them, I can give you those names.

Raymond Karam: Hi, my name is Raymond Karam. I'm from the EastWest Institute. Thank you, Izzeldin for an amazing presentation, and for sharing your life story with us. Since you're from Gaza, and you lived through the conflict, and you raised six girls in Gaza, what we hear here first is that, you know, a clamp down on women's rights by Hamas, and second is the obstacles to Palestinian reconciliation. If you can tell us your experience to that, how you are able, how the takeover of Hamas of the Gaza strip affected the six girls that you were raising, and second, how you see, what are the obstacles to Palestinian reconciliation? Thank you.

Abuelaish: I raised my daughters as I wanted. I am a Muslim, and Islam is not with a dress, just a dress. Islam is the practices. To be human, and to behave as a human, I fully believe Islam is a religion of kindness, of wisdom, even the Prophet Mohammed in Quran called people with wisdom and good words. It's not with oppression and force. Everything is by choice, not by force. So I raised them the way I wanted, and no one approached them.

And the second issue concerning Hamas in Gaza, Gaza is not Hamas. There is the Palestinian people, and that's what we want to deal, there is a Palestinian nation, and there are movements: Hamas movement, Fatah movement, Popular Front, like in Israel as everywhere, the Likud, the settlements, Yisrael Beiteinu, Shas, Kadima, Labor Party, its movement. But the most important tool created Hamas. That's what we want. Who created Hamas?

Male From Audience: Originally Israel.

Abuelaish: That's what we want to ask! Who created Hamas? When was Hamas created? In 1980s, at the time of PLO, and it's big. They created Hamas to oppose the PLO, and they supported them, and at the end, they changed their position against the occupation, and the election, even the last election, I ran for those election as independent, but who pushed the Palestinian Authority to run the elections? Who pushed them?

Male From Audience: The U.S.

Abuelaish: The United States? No, not the United States, the Bush administration. At that time, we want to be specific, and the Israeli government. And when they succeeded, and it was known, the result, it was clear who paid the price. The Palestinian nation. Reconcil- I can say, it's shame for us as Palestinians until now, we didn't unite. Our unity is a strength, and it's shame for the leaders in both sides to fight for the party's interest, for Hamas or Fatah interest. It's time that the Palestinian interest to be the bigger and to fight for the total Palestinian interest, not just for the party's interest. I hope it will happen soon. I don't see it happening, because once the ego and the individual interest is there, it will be difficult, and this is a challenge for us as Palestinians, and weakness.

Hoge: Please, Shamina?

Shamina de Gonzaga: Shamina de Gonzaga. At another meeting – first, thank you so much, again. It's great to hear your presence in this room, I think, brought a lot.

At another meeting here some months ago where the Palestinian leaders were also present, a man who is about 70 or somewhere near that age was referring to himself as the younger generation of Palestinian leadership, and I've been honored to know many young women and men from Palestine who I see tremendous leadership potential, and I'm wondering if you think that there would be a way for the younger generation to break into the political sphere. Perhaps... I mean, I've seen the NGOs first hand. I know that there's a remarkably vibrant civil society. You have a book of NGOs in Palestine that I've never seen anywhere else. I'm wondering if there's a way to segue from that into political action.

Abuelaish: I would love to see the Palestinian women negotiating, to negotiate, to represent the Palestinian people. Believe me, they can. And they can, and we are proud of the Palestinian girls and women. If you look at the high schools, the exams, and the percentage of success, the top ten are girls, mostly. The percentage of success among girls is more than among boys. At the universities, the number of girls is more than the number of boys. I think there is an education for us as Palestinians is wholly, without discrimination between a boy or a girl, and that's why this foundation, because we have limited resources.

What about a girl who is successful but deprived of the resources? Her father, he has the money, and maybe to send his son, not to send the daughter, and she

can't succeed. And that's what we want, to be leaders in their fields, in education, in medicine, in business, in journalism, in law, and I don't think it's a dream, one day it will be a reality, to have a college for girls to produce leaders in the Gaza strip. In the time, people, they think Gaza is receptive of humanitarian aids. Gaza will be radiating and giving others and sharing with others. This will help the Palestinian people, and they will be leaders.

Hoge: Yes, please, here in the second row. Just wait for the microphone, and please introduce yourself.

Tal Recanati: Hi, my name is Tal Recanati. I wanted to ask you a question about dialogue and your views on dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. I know that there's some degree of controversy of this subject. In other words, there's this whole issue of normalizing relations on a more grassroots level. I'm not speaking about the leadership level, and that some on the Palestinian side have not been in favor of dialogue between grassroots groups.

Abuelaish: Dialogue, is it a mean or an end? Dialogue is a mean to achieve a goal. It's not an end, it's not a goal. We are meeting here, not just for the talk for the event, to learn and to do something, to achieve something. So that's why the Palestinians, they are fed up with dialogue, with negotiations, because they didn't achieve anything, let us come to talk. Please, you know, if we want just to talk, what is the value of this talk? The people are frustrated, disappointed, and they lost hope in that dialogue. If this dialogue is not translated into action, and even, I can say it loudly, the peace negotiations, if they are not accompanied by action, it's useless.

The patient, when he comes to meet me, for what? I take the history, I talk to him, I do dialogue with the patient, but at the end, he gets a prescription to be cured and to be treated, not for the sake of the dialogue. At the end, the patient, if I didn't give him prescription, he will never come back. He will say, what's the value? I can go to speak with other friends. So it's a matter of action, as I said, to translate this dialogue into action on the ground, and believe me, we don't want to invent the wheel. The solutions are there. The matter's there, just to start implementation.

Hoge: Izzeldin, I'm going to ask you one last question, and then we'll break here. And it's about your life, I'm sure I speak for everybody in this room when I want to ask you about your children, how you're doing, how is Canada treating you, are they now in an environment where they are safe and able to progress without the fear of what has happened to the rest of your family? You say in the book that you decided, when you got the offer to go to Canada, that you would go for five years. Do you think five years from now, you will go back to Gaza? Do you think your children will go back to Gaza?

Abuelaish: July, we will be in Gaza. This July, we will go to Gaza. Last July and August, we were in Gaza. I can say to you, for me, I see my daughters. I would love to be there to visit their graves. It's my roots, to see inside their rooms, to smell them, to talk with them. There are parts of me, my people there, my suffering. I go to Gaza to feel angry, to feel outraged, to come back not accepting what is happening there, and to talk to others what can be done. That's why I go to Gaza, and it's not where are you, it's who are you. I am in Canada, but I am doing to people, to others. What is the value of being in Gaza and feeling paralyzed? My children, on a daily basis, my son is asking me, when can we go to Gaza? We breathe, Palestinians, we eat, Palestinians, we talk. It's our roots! The suffering, the life, our parents, our grandparents, our good and bad

memories, I can say to you, nothing like home! And we are deprived of being at our home. Can people to feel that, and to help, to let us feel that we are at home.

My children, they are doing well in Canada. Even in Gaza, they used to live the best life, but what is the value of that, and their cousins, their friends are suffering? It's not life if you are not feeling the others' feeling. My daughter, Dalal, she's studying civil engineering at the U of T. My son, all of them, God bless all of the children, they are doing very well, but they will never forget their homeland and the place where they were raised and lived where their sisters' bodies are buried.

Hoge:

I don't know what to add to that except to note that William Verdone said "God bless you," and I'd like to say the same thing to you on behalf of everybody in this room, and thank you for coming here and speaking today.