

# Dialogue and Reconciliation

FROM BULLETS TO BALLOTS

Sulaymaniyah Conference  
Iraqi Kurdistan  
December 2012



**OLOF PALME  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTER**



# Content

Participants	3
Dialogue and reconciliation	4
Reconciliation processes	4
Reconciliation as a process and a goal	6
How to use dialogue as a political tool	7
Challenges and difficulties with dialogue	9
The role of women in promoting dialogue and reconciliation	10
After the struggle - how to include citizens and society in the political agenda	11
How do you get different sides in the revolution to constructively work for the better of the whole country together?	12
The young generation - in what ways can they contribute the best to a nonviolent society?	13

**Text and layout** Otto Widmark

**Photos** Hama Omer and on page 5 by Martin Karlsson.

This publication has been produced with financial support from The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). Sida is not liable for content, layout or opinions expressed in the brochure.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the people speaking during the conference. They do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden and The Olof Palme International Center.

## Participants

ANC, South Africa

Mr Molefe Samuel Tsele

Akbayan, Philippines

Mr Mario J. Aguja  
Mr Exuperio C. Lloren

Fatah, Palestine

Mr Mahmoud Allabadi  
Ms Heyam Saada  
Ms Myassar Abu Shawish

Frelimo, Mozambique

Ms Beleza Fernandes Zita  
Mr Adelino Zacarias Ivala

MPLA, Angola

Mr João Baptista Domingos  
Ms Lizete Neto

PUK, Iraqi Kurdistan

Mr Rizgar Ali  
Mr Mala Bakhtiar  
Ms Jwan Ihsan Fawsi  
Mr Abdul Razzag Mirza  
Ms Narmin Osman  
Mr Shoresheh Kadir Rahem

Social Democratic Party, Sweden

Ms Desiree Liljevall  
Ms Ann Linde  
Mr Peter Weiderud

External Lecturer

Ms Nora Refaeil

Olof Palme International Center

Ms Kajsa Eriksson



# FROM BULLETS TO BALLOTS

## Dialogue and reconciliation

The Conference Series “From Bullets to Ballots”, organized by the Swedish Social Democratic Party together with the Olof Palme International Center, is a meeting ground for social democratic and progressive political parties in different stages of transforming from more or less centralist liberation movements into functioning democratic structures, to discuss and share experiences, achievements and obstacles with each other. Starting in 2003 with ANC of South Africa and Fatah of Palestine, the conference has grown, in its sixth round, to include also Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Iraqi Kurdistan, Frelimo of Mozambique, MPLA of Angola and Akbayan of the Philippines. The theme for 2012 was “Dialogue and Reconciliation” and the conference was hosted by the PUK in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan on December 4-5.



*Ann Linde.*

Ann Linde, international secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, explained the importance of the transition:

- Liberation movements often have to be centralist and secretive while the democratic party have to be transparent and influenced from the bottom up. In order to progress you can't stay in a liberation movement state of play with all that it implies.

Mala Bakthiar, secretary of the PUK Politburo, welcomed the delegations to Sulaymaniyah and Iraqi Kurdistan and presented the situation the PUK is in. Mala Bakthiar pointed out that, twenty years into the democratic progress, Iraqi Kurdistan is good example in the region of going from oppression and liberation struggle to a parliamentary system with 600 000 voters, freedom of expression and media but still having much yet to achieve. He stressed the fact that former enemies are now working together and the importance of the support of the international community.

- We are proud students of Nelson Mandela, Mala Bakthiar said.



*Mala Bakthiar.*

## Reconciliation Processes

During the first seminar experiences from reconciliation were discussed. Different methods and examples were put forward by the parties. The respect for specific conditions in the different countries, the importance of preparation and creating the right circumstances, as well as the inclusion of women in all parts of the process, were discussed. Dr Molefe Samuel Tsele from the ANC was the main presenter. He said that the ANC progress to negotiations and putting down weapons was a strategic decision,

based on the understanding that the national issues would best be addressed by the non-violent method.

The role of the international community differs from case to case but is always important. The apartheid regime were forced into talks by the international support of



*Dr Molefe Samuel Tsele.*

the anti-apartheid movement and the isolation, through UN resolutions to divestments from international corporations, of the regime.

The parties agreed that negotiations demand a progressive leadership, legitimized through the inclusion of grass roots in the process. The progressive leadership in South Africa were able to bridge the initially polarized, entrenched positions. The people's support of the method was built through transparent discussions and debates, conferences and political education held among the grass roots during the different stages of the negotiations. The democratic conduct and the credibility of the leadership made the outcome possible.

Dr Molefe Tsele described the stages of negotiations as a four stage process:

Dr Molefe Tsele described the stages of negotiations as a four stage process:

1. Preliminary discussions
2. Pre-negotiations and positioning
3. The actual negotiation process
4. Implementation

The preliminary discussions with the apartheid regime were initially kept secret and lay down the conditions for moving into the next phase.

The phase of pre-negotiations, in South Africa named “talks about talks”, created the environment for the actual negotiations, decide how many people would sit around the table, who is to be included and what the agenda would be. Jwan Ishan Fawzi, Member of PUK leadership Committee, spoke of the critical situation during negotiations, as the oppressing regime often uses severe repression while having agreed on negotiating.

In South Africa the actual talks, “Conventions for a Democratic South Africa” (CODESA), started when the pre-negotiations had laid down the right conditions. The two enemies discussed transitional arrangements, principles for the constitution and the truth and reconciliation processes following. This also included agreeing on how agreements should be interpreted so that it would not turn out like the Oslo process where implementation were reinterpreted and became an issue of negotiations itself.

All parties put forward the importance of women participating in the negotiations, not just by numbers but having their issues and concerns taken up in the constitution.

In South Africa the perpetrators were given the responsibility to seek forgiveness from the state through an open and public disclosure, while restorative and social justice remains a challenge still to be solved.

## Reconciliation as a process and a goal

Dr. Nora Refaail, Special Adviser on Dealing with the Past and Reconciliation, held a lecture about reconciliation and transitional justice. With contemporary wars now being fought with a huge impact on the civil population rather than two armies fighting each other on an isolated battlefield, the conditions for peacemaking and post conflict state-building have changed to become more complex. Two thirds of all conflicts today can be classified as identity conflicts where religion, geography, cultural, lingual and ethnic aspects play a fundamental role, the historical dimension adding to the complexity of multiple causes.

Albeit the complexity of this type of conflict the core often boils down to institutional weakness causing a lack of alternatives to violence. In this context of fear and mistrust, sustainable peace and reconciliation must be reached through a process of transitional justice and dealing with



*Dr Nora Refaail speaking.*

the past of massive human rights abuses. Defined by Professor John Paul Lederach, reconciliation is a meeting ground involving the process of bringing people together, enabling them to grow beyond the past to establish and normalize full and trusting relations in the present. For Lederach, the main ingredients of reconciliation are truth, mercy, justice and peace.

Also the Peruvian truth and reconciliation commission understands reconciliation as a process of establishment and unification of fundamental ties between people that were destroyed and deteriorated through the conflict. Further, reconciliation has the following three dimensions:

- the political, relating to reconciliation between the state and society and between political parties,
- the social, referring to the institutions and spaces of civil society,
- the interpersonal dimension.

Addressing the causes of conflict is a condition for reconciliation, focusing on macro

level issues, reconciliation must differ from forgiveness.

- Reconciliation requires a social accord towards the future, conditioned by justice and truth but not necessarily forgiveness whilst forgiveness does not require a common social accord, Dr Refaeil explained.

Forgiveness happens on the individual level.

- It is the prerogative and a choice of the victims, many of them are not ready to forgive, said Dr Refaeil. Reconciliation however has to be advanced by the state as a duty; it is not a matter of choice.

Based on four interconnected pillars, including the right to know, the right to justice, the right to reparation, and the guarantee of non-recurrence, the reconciliation process focuses on both victims and perpetrators.

1. The right to know or truth seeking is practiced in truth commissions and other methods establishing the facts about legacies of human rights abuses during a conflict or an authoritarian regime. The right to know is seen as a basic human right and a prerequisite for any further transitional justice initiative.

2. The right to justice refers to the duty of the state to investigate violations, to prosecute the perpetrators and to punish them if the guilt is established. The South African model of forgiveness amounting to impunity would not be possible for the most serious crimes anymore today.

3. The right to reparation for victims includes mechanisms such as rehabilitation, compensation, restitution and symbolic public apologies.

4. The guarantee of non recurrence refers to institutional reform in accordance with the norms of good governance and the rule of law to ensure that the crimes of the past committed by the state institutions will not happen again.

Dr. Nora Refaeil explained that it is necessary to work with all four pillars in order for the people subject to human rights abuses to change their identity as victims and for reconciliation to take place. The decisive process needs to be inclusive and gender-sensitive with perspectives from all relevant stakeholders taken into consideration.

- People have to develop a joint ownership in the process, Dr Nora Refaeil said. Participants must address the root causes of the crisis, not just the symptoms.

## **Dialogue as a political tool**

During the transformation from armed liberation movement to a modern, democratic political party the method of dialogue becomes the main tool for transforming the party and the society into the right direction. The choice of method determines the result and the foundations of the future society, why developing the method of dialogue was a concern for all partaking parties.

Peter Weiderud, Chairman of the Religious Social Democrats of Sweden, was the main presenter talked about Swedish history as an example of a former violent nation transforming and building a tradition of using dialogue to solve political matters. The policy of non-alliance and neutrality made it possible for Sweden to handle the Norwegian break away in 1905 and for Sweden to stay out of the First and Second World War.

- Using ballots instead of bullets also guided our domestic political struggle of building the modern welfare state, Peter Weiderud explained. The main instrument was the development of the civil society.

The method of dialogue instead of violence has kept Sweden out of war since 1814. The questions of class struggles raised by industrialization was handled from the 1930's by the Social Democrats through dialogue and mutual respect, through the building of the welfare state and the Prime Minister Per-Albin Hansson's concept of "the people's home", an inclusive society breaking down the social and economic barriers between citizens, creating the Swedish middle way.

The importance of distributing power were stressed by Peter Weiderud:

- When we are looking for liberation, we have to centralize power. But when our aim is liberty, we have to distribute power. In Sweden, decisions and practical political solutions were put closer to the people, through the power of the civil society and the municipalities.



*Peter Weiderud.*

Being more concerned with functioning health care, education and other issues for the daily life to improve, young people are to a larger extent asking for power to be distributed. The parties agreed that dialogue is a more progressive frame for solving disputes than armed struggle.

- In order to have dialogue, recognition of the partner is essential and excluding those that you disagree with can cause detrimental damage, Peter Weiderud said.

The Swedish Religious Social Democrats met with PLO and Yasser Arafat in the 1970's when they were still labeled terrorists in Europe and Prime Minister Olof Palme met with Yasser Arafat in Stockholm in 1983 despite heavy criticism from the conservatives.

- This principle of dialogue with the representative of the Palestinian people was unfortunately forgotten after the Palestinian election of 2006, Peter Weiderud said. It paved the way for the Palestinian division we see today.

There are, however, exceptions to the principle of dialogue like in the case of the boycott and isolation of the South African apartheid regime. For a limited time, with the support and call from the victims of the conflict inside, it may be progressive.



## Challenges and difficulties with dialogue



*Lizete Neto and João Baptista Domingos.*

Even though all the political parties of the conference agreed that dialogue is the supreme political method, difficulties and challenges of dialogue were needed to be discussed. The outcome of using dialogue before violence is greater in the long run and necessary for reconciliation and a well functioning society. However, the parties agreed that the method of negotiation is a delicate and challenging balancing act between different interests. Mahmoud Allabadi, head of the Media Department at the

Fatah International Relations Commission, introduced the session, speaking about the situation for the Palestinian people and their conditions for using dialogue as method. Dialogue is used both in negotiations with Israel and in order to unite the Palestinian peoples in the struggle against their oppressor.

Fatah is struggling to keep dialogue as a political tool with President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas insisting on returning to negotiations despite the Israeli unwillingness. This fact expresses the problematic situation of having a dialogue partner that is also the oppressor and occupier. Finding a formula and meeting ground for negotiations and bridging the barriers of power politics and settlement policy is difficult. The main concern at the moment is getting out of the stuck point with Israel while at the same time having to handle the demands and opinions of the Palestinians.

- We have to convince both Israelis and Palestinians of the advantage of using the method of dialogue and negotiation, Mahmoud Allabadi explained.

The support of the international community plays a great part in the negotiation process and it is important to convince powers around the world of the importance of continued negotiations and recognition of Palestinian state, especially as the Israeli opinion seems to reward right wing extremism.

Even though the failures of negotiations may cause people to resort to extremism, many Palestinians still see dialogue and negotiation as the best method:

- The Palestinians are not out for revenge or suing Israeli politicians or generals in the International Criminal Court. The interest is peaceful living and building a Palestinian state, Mahmoud Allabadi said.

The occupying and oppressing power is also determining the conditions for internal dialogue and conducting elections. While Fatah want to see a shift to democracy and free elections the occupation needs to be lifted.

Another aspect of dialogue as a method is regarding the relations between Fatah and

Hamas, the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The condition for these relations is also determined by the occupying and oppressing power, the split serving the Israeli interest, making Palestinian reconciliation and unity essential.

Women and democratic institutions are underrepresented and the role of popular organizations and trade unions has been diminishing in Palestine. Yet, transparency and accountability at posts and in decisions is still vital for the survival of the party and a functioning society in the long run, and necessary for restoring national unity.

Peter Weiderud put forward the internationalist aspect of Social Democracy and that

## The role of women in promoting dialogue and reconciliation

In the post conflict reconciliation process and in building popular organizations including women is central according to all the parties. Tending to adopt a more inclusive approach towards security, key social and economic issues otherwise ignored, women must be included in post conflict reconstruction and political work, the parties agreed. Women's issues and concerns are otherwise often disregarded why their representation and participation is necessary for building the post conflict society.



*Narmin Osman*

Former minister Narmin Osman, member of the PUK leadership committee, introduced the discussion talking about the necessity of women's participation in peace process for ensuring lasting long term results. Their rights and views as citizens, former combatants and victims, are necessary for the full depiction of the conflict.

She addressed the impact and influence Kurdish women have had on peace in the Kurdish history through women's organizations for welfare, for peace and assistance to families in need.

- During the start of the Iraqi Kurdish Civil War in 1994 women peace activists from the PUK and NGO:s conducted a peace march from Sulaymaniyah to Erbil, calling for dialogue instead of weapons or solving differences, Narmin Osman explained.

Narmin Osman headed the organization BAS, meaning 'enough' in Arabic, working against violence against both women and the people as a whole all over Iraq. It was an inclusive organization uniting all kinds of women, including different religious professions and political habitats under the banner "Yes to Peace", encouraging politicians to have peace and solve difference through dialogue. Narmin Osman stressed the importance of women being included in the peace process:

- We are still fighting for it because we know our rights are not being included, Narmin Osman said.

Desiree Liljevall, Swedish Social Democratic Parliamentarian, stressed the importance of involving men in order to make them understand and support the women's struggle and the women's liberation.

10 Lizete Neto, part of Women in Angola leadership, said that working against violence against women is a good and important way of including women in the work for a more peaceful society.

## After the struggle - how to include citizens and society in the political agenda

The citizens' participation in society and a high level of popular organization is central in social democratic ideology. Thus, the influence of citizens and society over the political agenda was regarded as very important by all parties. Including citizens in politics and society is done through creating forms of participation where citizens are able to freely express their concerns and wishes, organizing being the main tool. The necessity of education, of inclusion of women, and also working with different tools for reaching out were seen as key factors for organization and creating a feeling of citizenship by the parties.

Beleza Fernandes Zita, member of the Frelimo Central Committee, held the introduction and gave examples of dialogue and reconciliation in Mozambique as methods for organizing society, overcoming differences, maintaining peace and as a condition for economic development. Frelimo, a product of dialogue between different anti-colonial organizations, was founded in 1962 during the struggle for independence. After the independence and the civil war, ending with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords in 1992, the first democratic election was held in 1994. During the civil war peace process, initiated in the late eighties, trust was slowly but steadily built between the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebels, through dialogue. The reconciliation following the 1992 General Peace Accord, was partly expressed in the integration of guerilla soldiers in the Army and the Police.

Beleza Fernandes Zita spoke of the importance of political power exerted by the people not only through voting in democratic elections but also through social participation.

- The party has created central teams, normally headed by members of the Political Bureau, who travel to the provinces to engage themselves into dialogue with the population, Beleza Fernandes Zita said. It is important to find legitimacy for decisions in each phase of development.

The Filipino experience showed the importance of including citizenship in order to really change society. The fall of the Marcos dictatorship did not remove the political elites and the question



*Beleza Fernandes Zita.*

of including citizens in politics remained an issue even though the conditions differed from the times of armed struggle.

Inspired by the Swedish Labour Movement, the Akbayan party was born out of trade unions and popular movements with a political platform developed by the grass roots. The political program was built from below through uncovering layers of issues and

problems at the community level and then brought up to the higher level in the organization.

- Inspired by the study circle groups the Swedish friends used, we wanted to craft a political agenda of what we want after the dictatorship, done under trees and in classrooms, not in hotels or conference facilities, said Mario Aguya, International Secretary of Akbayan.

Lizete Neto provided an example of the ground level involvement of women in Angola and working with everyday issues in local communities. Women centers help with issues such as violence against women, land issues and others concerns. Through mediation and preparing for court processes women are helped out but the centers are also involving men in the solutions. Free lawyers are provided with the support of the government and continuous dialogue with the police is integrating the civil society's needs with the functions of the state.



*Desiree Liljevall.*

The internet and social medias have changed the conditions for social interaction between peoples. Parliamentarian Desiree Liljevall described its advantage of using it in dialogue with citizens and voters and creating interest in politics is effectively done by using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media.

- People contact me on Facebook and want to know about my political work. Listening to people is the main focus of my mission as a MP, Desiree Liljevall said.

## **How do you get different sides in the revolution to constructively work for the better of the whole country together?**

Getting former enemies during the liberation period to work together was seen as a condition for a stable and efficient society by the delegates. Lizete Neto was the main presenter on this topic, stressing the importance of involving churches, political parties and the civil society in the process.

Angola is still after a civil war raging on and off since 1975 until 2002 in the process of reconciliation. The reconciliation process, starting after the signing of the Luena Peace Agreement between the MPLA government and the UNITA rebels in 2002, took place without external interests. The international dimension of the civil war, fueled by struggle for recourses, with interventions from the USA, Cuba and apartheid South Africa, prolonged the conflict. The peace and reconciliation process following was thus restricted to a national matter.

Through the Luena agreement the former soldiers were integrated into the national army (FAA) and reintegrated into society, and amnesties of crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict were given.

Another experience discussed were the Iraqi Kurdish history of building fronts together with other factions and sides during the liberation struggle. The PUK took initiatives to intermediate between the Kurdistan movements and the regime Baghdad in

order to build a common Kurdish stand.

- The other organizations did not want to go directly into negotiations with the central government but there was a mutual understanding that the PUK would lead the negotiations, explained Abdul Razzaq Mirza, Head of PUK Foreign Relations.

On December 3, 2012, the central government and the Iraqi Kurdistan government sent troops to the outskirts of the city of Kirkuk. The Kurdish organizations have an agreement on common security and military policy regarding situations like this.

- This internal reconciliation is useful in a national emergency situation like these, Abdul Razzaq Mirza said.

In the Palestinian case the internal reconciliation is a matter of being stronger in negotiations with the occupier but the Palestinians are split in the dispute of who will lead the PLO and the PA.

- In the end we are all for the same political program although there are some divergence, we recognize a two state solution, Mahmoud Allabadi said. We have to reconcile to face the Israeli occupation together!

## In what ways can the young generation contribute



*Exuperio Lloren and Mario Aguja.*

The necessity of active young people in the party was discussed. The delegates put forward different experiences of involving young people but everyone agreed that no political party will survive long without including the young. Mario Aguja, international secretary of Akbayan, held the introductory speech sharing experiences of working in a party consisting of several generations. The idea of active citizenship, the citizens understanding their rights and responsibilities, taking part in shaping the society, stipulates that the movement should engage and encourage young people to take responsibility in their organizations and the party. In Akbayan the young party members have independent units and decision making on all levels of the party.

Young people provide new ideas and methods, like working with social media, are able to attract other young people, create interest in politics through cultural events and other activities, and are a source of leadership. When it comes to reconciliation processes young people are less biased and lack prejudice, tending to have an easier time getting together over cultural, religious or ethnic borders, some of the delegates said. The delegates agreed that the parties need to engage and challenge young people in order for them to learn the party work. In Akbayan young people get to take vast responsibility.

- Young leaders run the party affairs while the senior provide political advice, Mario Aguja explained.

Jwan Ihsan Fawzi saw that extending the possibility of voluntary work for the party would be a good way to introduce young people to politics.

- Many young people accept to be volunteering, it's a good way to become politically aware and active, she said.

Mario Aguja agreed that volunteers are a good way of recruiting, not necessarily having to be strictly political initially.

- One of the best venues for engaging young is voluntarily disaster work where they get a chance to impress and help out.

The interests and experiences of generations differ more in societies coming from struggle for liberation and democracy. While it is important that the elder generation share their experiences and narratives with the young it is important to get the young people to agree on what society the citizens should build. In order to bridge the generational gap the older generation must have tolerance for the ways of the young.

- It's important that we provide space for young people to be young in our party, Mario Aguja said. Coming from our early experience of our political work, we like them to be as rigid and serious as us but then we make a mistake. What we want is their vibrancy, energy and new ideas.



**OLOF PALME  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTER**

