



Sulaiman Khatib is co-founder and co-director of Combatants for Peace. He comes from a Palestinian nationalistic family from the village of Hizma, near Jerusalem. Sulaiman is a committed advocate for peace in the Middle East and an active member of various programs and projects that promote a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Sulaiman's work allows him to draw upon his own personal story and background to connect with youth on peace building projects. He is an elected member of the Peace NGO's Committee, an umbrella organization for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs working for peace. Sulaiman is a co-founder of al-Quds for Democracy and Dialogue Organization and the People's Peace Fund. He lives in Ramallah, Palestine.

I am Sulaiman al-Khatib from the village of Hizme in north-east Jerusalem. I was raised in a family which was badly affected by the occupation and fought it, according to the outlook that the only possible solution is a military one. I joined the "Fatah" movement at the age of 12, and was involved in various actions, such as throwing stones, writing slogans and preparing Molotov Cocktails. That was in 1986, before the first Intifada. As Chen pointed out, it is very possible that people who are sitting here today were harmed by my actions. At the age of 14, I stabbed Israeli soldiers with a friend of mine. We were arrested. I was sentenced to 15 years in jail and my friend to 18 years.

For the first two years, I was in the children's section of the Hebron jail, where the management and staff were extremely tough. Settlers from Kiryat Arba were among the jail staff, which made the situation more difficult and enhanced the suffering. There were many problems in this jail. For example, often there was a lack of drinking water, and of course there was not enough water for showers. Hitting prisoners, spraying tear gas into prison cells, and stripping prisoners were daily occurrences.

Later on I was transferred to the Janad jail, near Shechem, where I worked in the Jail's library. This provided me with an opportunity to read a lot, also about the history of the Jewish people. In fact I acquired my entire education and constructed my world view in jail. I never went to a university, but I did attend the learning groups in jail every day. This is when I started having new thoughts about the conflict and the means for resolving it. In 1997, after 10 years and 5 months in jail, I was freed. The Beer Sheva jail was my last prison.

In spite of numerous difficulties, such as the separation wall, the curfews, the settlements and more, some of us, who are here today, have established the Abu Sukar Center for Peace. We believe that combatants, who personally paid a price for their active involvement in the conflict, are the ones who can significantly change the situation.

