

Introduction: Dr. Arnold Noyek

Arnie Noyek's work in the health field and in advancing peace has linked peace and the equal treatment of everyone. Though the link is central to the work of organizations like the International Society for Peace and Human Rights (ISHPR) in Edmonton and the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) in the Faculty of Law at Makerere University in Uganda, the connection between peace and non-discrimination is not self evident, even though peace is generally perceived as an important ingredient in advancing the cause of non-discrimination and non-discrimination is considered an essential feature in ensuring domestic peace and minimizing the possibilities of violent conflict within and between nations. For the connection is not only that each is an essential condition for the advancement of the other, but one of the best mechanisms for advancing peace is through ensuring and practicing equal regard for all.

In Arnie's case, there is an additional connection. The World Health Organization, with which I am currently working on the problem of health human resources, states in its constitution that, "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being." Without health, the advocacy of civil and political rights might seem to be empty rhetoric. The right to health is a necessary precondition for the right to life. Arnie's research and educational work have been invaluable in advancing both health and the right to life, not only through his research and teaching, but through applied social programs directed at the improvement in health. However, in that regard, Arnie is possibly no different than any number of dedicated brilliant physicians and scientists at the University of Toronto and its many teaching hospitals. Arnie's exceptional work in linking health and peace, particularly in the Middle East, makes his work stand out.

Canada has made five important contributions to peace in the Middle East. Some, like Ivan Rand's 1947 work on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), have largely been forgotten, but that work left as its legacy the recommendation of a two state solution for the Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East, a solution that has yet to be realized. Lester B. Pearson's work on peacekeeping, however, has not been forgotten and it has undoubtedly been Canada's most important work in the cause of peace both in the Middle East and around the globe. Since the 1970s, many individual Canadians, such as Irwin Cotler, David Dewitt and the late Harry Crowe, have been involved in Track II diplomatic efforts at advancing the cause of peace in the Middle East with some important minor successes. After the Palestinians officially bought into the two state solution with the initiation of the Middle East peace process in Madrid in 1991 and the inauguration in Moscow in January of 1992 of the multilateral talks focused on refugees, Canada assumed responsibility for gaveling those refugee talks, a core problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948. The multilateral refugee talks, in fact, first led to breakthroughs on the issue of mutual recognition and other core issues of the bilateral talks and eventually forged the document that has become the basis for the on-and-off agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis on the refugee issue.

All of the above contributions were made at the high diplomatic level. The very little known fifth major contribution of Canada has been a people-to-people practical co-operative bottom-up project, the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO), which has been both more grounded and demonstrated the most solid and continuing accomplishment. Through fourteen years of the vicissitudes of high politics and war, CISEPO has played a significant, *uninterrupted* and unprecedented role in bringing Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians together for the common purpose of improving the health of the people in the region. As the Israeli Consul-General, Amir Gissin, put it, CISEPO's work enables people in the region "to move beyond our longstanding tensions and suspicions and to see the other as decent human beings and partners for peace." This is what rights are fundamentally about – recognition of the other as equally worthy of respect and dignity, and without that recognition it is difficult to forge a lasting peace. CISEPO is the realization of the Enlightenment dream that scientific advances and application can endure and impact on all of humanity irrespective of borders, faiths, nationality and culture. When cooperative work is founded on evidence and a commitment to equality, the atmosphere for peace is vastly improved.

Such efforts require patient, long term slugging in the trenches without any high profile recognition. When it is accompanied by institutionalization in civil society in the form of health-based continuing education, professional education at the beginner and advanced levels through sharing health expertise, techniques and knowledge in practical, co-operative projects, whether in the hearing field dealing with genetically-based early hearing loss, behavioural neurology or ehealth, 2500 Israelis and Arabs have learned to work together, respect one another and build the essential ingredients of true peace based on trust and confidence. As Arnie Noyek recently said, "Our aim is to spread the best medicine possible to as many people in the Middle East as possible in an inclusive, diverse and non-partisan way." Health works because it is a common language and that common language leads to Israeli and Palestinian medical students working together as volunteers with child cancer patients, Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians developing cooperative health projects in Jordan, and a Jordanian and an Israeli ear surgeon operating together on 30-month-old twins who are deaf, an event watched by tens of thousands on Jordanian television.

On 26 April 2004 when Her Majesty, Queen Noor of Jordan, was invited to speak and present Arnie Noyek with the Canadian Red Cross Power of Humanity Awards for Arnie's contribution to and contributions through CISEPO, that recognition was given as much for the enhancement of cross-cultural relations and durable partnerships in the Middle East and with Canada as for the advances and promotion of multidisciplinary health projects and capacity building. Arnold Noyek, the Director of the Peter A. Silverman Centre for International Health at Mount Sinai Hospital, founder and chair of CISEPO, was most deserving of that honour and recognition.