The Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an intractable conflict has a long history and has cost thousands of Israeli and Palestinian lives and instilled fear and distrust to the Other. The conflict has been and still is a source of friction for regional and global stability. The need and benefit of settling this conflict is paramount but efforts by political leaders with the support of international community, so far, are failing. Various studies have been conducted in trying to explain the reason for the failure of peace process, mostly from an international politics perspective with the focus on political leaders. It is true that the peace agreement will be ultimately signed by two leaders but in democratic societies like Israel and Palestine, leaders are not capable of making decisions against the will of their constituencies.

Building on Galtung's Conflict Triangle and Lederach's constructive social change approach, this research will use approach arguing that peacebuilding must encompass and encourage a wide public sphere of genuine human engagement that involves a wide range of activities both preceding and following formal peace accords and accommodates all levels of society: top-leadership, middle-range leadership and grassroots. However, because of the international nature of the conflict as well as the current impasse of peace process between the parties, it is not only one but three societies (Israel, Palestine and international community) that needs to be synchronized in order to have influence to the policy and/or public discourse in the direction of peacebuilding.

This research will try to highlight some of the efforts made by civil society in both Israel and Palestine, as well as in the international community in pursuit of peace, and how they influenced the policy or social perception of the conflict.

This research is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on historical overview of peacebuilding activism. Chapter 1 covers the period from the 1880s to 1987 and review the origin of the conflict and efforts to search for peace by the PLO and Israeli peace movement. Chapter 2 examines Palestinian non-violent nation-wide resistance to the Intifada and how it influenced the Israeli peace movement and international community that eventually led to Madrid and to Oslo Peace Process. Chapter 3 examines peacebuilding activities conducted during the Oslo Peace Process which came to impasse with the failure of Camp David Summit.

Part II focuses on peacebuilding activism that emerged after the collapse of Oslo Peace Process. Chapter 4 summarizes the political condition and peacebuilding activism that emerged despite deteriorating circumstances. The following three chapters analyze three cases. Chapter 5 is a case study of Palestinian protest movement against the Wall which emerged in 2002 as Israel begun to build the Wall. How this Palestinian local initiative movement made a significant result in pushing the Palestinian authority to bring the case to International Court of Justice and subsequently managed to change the route of the Wall and delayed the further construction of the Wall will be covered. Chapter 6 is a case study of international initiative of the Free Gaza Movement. The movement started with two small boats to bring humanitarian goods to Gaza and advocate international community to end the siege of Gaza by Israel. By 2010, its ninth voyage has grown to a flotilla of six vessels including the Mavi Marmara carrying some six hundred passenger and 10,000 tons of humanitarian goods which was intercepted by Israeli navy on international water off the coast of Gaza and resulted in death of nine Turkish nationals. How this movement succeeded in easing the siege of Gaza is analyzed. Chapter 7 is a case study of women peacebuilding activism in which both Israeli and Palestinian women were forerunners. Women from both sides share their burden because of the continuing conflict and occupation, and because of the militarization of society, traditional patriarchy, and violence against women. UNSCR 1325 was adopted in October 2000 calling parties in a conflict to respect women's rights and to support their participation in peace negotiations. This chapter will examine efforts of Israeli and Palestinian women in peacebuilding and how UNSCR 1325 is helping these women.

Part III concludes the findings from this research project. Subsequently, an attempt is made to present a set of guidelines and recommendations regarding the future efforts for building peace between Israel and Palestine. The solution, of course, must be arrived at by two societies, however, the international community also has a part to play in supporting them toward making and building peace.

This research is based on 7 years (2002-04, 2006-09, 2010-12) of field observation through participating in dozens of peacebuilding programs and talking to hundreds and interviewing dozens of organizers and participants in such programs while I myself held positions in NGO, UN, and governmental cooperation agency in Israel/Palestine and through other projects funded through private foundations. In addition, hundreds of books, reports and public opinion polls are reviewed.

References