

Prepublication praise for

IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

There can hardly be a better person to record and analyze the history of Israel's peace movement than Mordechai Bar-On, who combines a rigorous academic discipline with first-hand experience and knowledge of the movement from the inside. This is a grand tour-de-force and a first rate analysis of the movement. His treatment of the subject is well documented, comprehensive, engaging, and lucid—the best resource on the subject so far.

—Shulamit Aloni,
Israeli minister of culture, science and communication

In an engaging and simple style, Bar-On relates the trials and tribulations of the “peaceniks” of Israel, who struggled against many odds and reached out to their counterparts among the Palestinians, who were ready to stand up and hold hands together. This study is a conclusive and creative analysis of the Israelis peace forces; it certainly invites the recording of the parallel forces of the Palestinian side.

—Faisal Husseini,
Palestinian leader in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio

The endeavors of the Israeli peace movement, their collisions and collusions, are the main theme of this brilliant book. The fact that they were proven right is the more reason to have their arduous and persistent exertions documented—for which difficult task none is more competent and better equipped than the learned and distinguished author.

—Chaim Cohen,
retired Israeli Supreme Court justice

Bar-On's book is full of fascinating, little-known details, enriching a sweeping historical synthesis of the whole course of the Israeli-Arab conflict since the 1930s. Bar-On has a unique way of looking at the history through the eyes of peace pioneers and activists, without overstating their roles. An extraordinarily balanced treatment of the subject.

—Samuel W. Lewis,
former U.S. ambassador to Israel

In Pursuit of
PEACE

A History
of the
Israeli
Peace
Movement

MORDECHAI BAR-ON



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The views expressed in this book are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

United States Institute of Peace
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*For my daughters
Einat, Tal, and Hilla
who were there too*

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Foreword

The title of this book neatly encapsulates its twofold aim: to cover the history of the Israeli peace movement, and to demonstrate that it is very much a work in progress—the pursuit of a peace that is by no means assured.

In this fascinating work, Mordechai Bar-On traces the evolution of the Israeli peace movement over a period of no less than forty-five years, from the birth of the Jewish state to the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Israeli prime minister and PLO chairman in 1993. While the first two decades of this period were relatively quiet in terms of peace activism, thereafter an increasing number and variety of groups appeared on the Israeli political scene urging their fellow countrymen and women to come to some peaceful accommodation with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. Bar-On, himself a prominent activist as well as a former senior army officer and member of the Knesset, presents intimate portraits of the impressively diverse range of groups and individuals involved in this peace movement: soldiers, statesmen, professors, poets, diplomats, journalists.

This volume is much more than a narrowly focused examination of a protest movement, however. Bar-On's chief objective, to be sure, is to detail and explore the dynamics, character, and development of the Israeli peace groups, and he fulfills this objective masterfully, providing the most readable and best-researched account of the Israeli peace movement available in English. But he accomplishes much more than this. With an even-handedness remarkable for one so deeply enmeshed in public debate on peace and security issues, Bar-On portrays the sweep of Israel's shifting ethnic, ideological, and political tides, which at times buoyed up the peace activists, but at other times threatened to overwhelm them.

Furthermore, he presents an impressive historical synthesis of the entire course of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Capturing the way in which diplomatic and political developments influenced the agendas and activities of the peace groups, the action switches back and forth between street politics and high diplomacy, between mass demonstrations in Tel Aviv and maneuvering and negotiations in Washington, Cairo, Amman, New York, Tunis, and Oslo. The galvanizing shock of war, terrorism, and civil unrest is likewise conveyed, with fascinating analyses given of the course and consequences of the Six Day War, the October War, the Lebanon war, and the Intifada. The fate of the territories occupied in 1967 and of the Palestinian people—the issue that most preoccupied and animated the peace activists—appropriately receives much attention.

This work is certainly a history, but the issues it discusses are very much alive today. In the conclusion, written after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 and before the bombings of February and March 1996, Bar-On notes that the story of the Israeli peace movement, like that of the Middle East peace process, is far from complete. In part because of the efforts of groups such as Peace Now, Yesh Gvul, and the Women in Black, Israelis and Palestinians are edging toward implementation of an agreement that would have been almost unimaginable only a few years ago. But continued progress in the peace process is by no means assured, and Israeli society is deeply riven with disagreement on how best to assure the country's security. This awareness of the uncertain future of the process begun in Madrid and Oslo—and, indeed, of the fact that peace can never be secured once and for all, and must instead be cultivated constantly—prompted our choice of title, that of a quest as yet unfulfilled.

The wide purview of this study covers many themes of continuing interest to the United States Institute of Peace: conflict and reconciliation in the Middle East; the ability of nongovernmental organizations to build support for nonviolent solutions to long-standing disputes; the role of track-two diplomacy in bringing longtime political adversaries into dialogue; the interrelationships among domestic, regional, and international actors and events; and the lessons of successful efforts to manage conflicts. Among its other achievements, this work stands as an impressive case study of the strengths and limitations of nongovernmental organizations in effecting some degree of reconciliation in highly charged national and regional climates, and in helping to bring about remarkable shifts in the attitudes of political leaders and the conduct of national policy.

The Institute of Peace has long had an interest in Middle East issues, and has addressed them through numerous grants, fellowships, workshops, and publications. Notable among the latter are *Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis: Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience*, by Kenneth W. Stein and Samuel W. Lewis; *Arms Control and Confidence Building in the Middle East*, edited by Alan Platt; and *Palestinians, Refugees, and the Middle East Peace Process*, by Don Peretz.

A former Institute peace fellow and grantee, Mordechai Bar-On has written a book that advances the Institute's congressionally mandated task of furthering knowledge about peacemaking and conflict resolution. *In Pursuit of Peace* may be read for its account of the struggles of a diverse and determined cast of Israeli peace activists; for its insights into the dynamics of protest groups and democratic processes; for its exploration of half a century of Israeli-Arab conflict; for its analysis of the interrelationships among national, regional, and international politics; and for the sheer enjoyment of reading a dramatic and meaningful tale well told. For whatever reason, it deserves to be read, and we are pleased to publish it.

Richard H. Solomon, President
United States Institute of Peace

Acknowledgments

During the academic year of 1992–93 I had the good fortune to be selected as a Jennings Randolph Peace Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. My project was to research and write a book on the history of the Israeli peace movement. Although I completed some of the research before I arrived in Washington, most of the writing was done under the auspices of the Institute. My year in Washington was wonderful due in large part to the supportive environment at the Institute. By sharing their thoughts and ideas with me, the other peace fellows, their research assistants, and the Institute staff helped to create an intellectual environment beneficial to this study.

Although I cannot mention all the kind people I met at the Institute, I would like them to know how much I appreciated their help and friendship. I would particularly like to thank Michael Lund, who was the director of the Jennings Randolph Fellowship Program, and Barbara Cullicott, the program administrator. Joseph Klaitz was not only my program officer but also a friend and colleague who provided me with useful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of the manuscript. Nigel Quinney of the Publications Department gave my project special attention, offered many important comments that helped me avoid a number of pitfalls, and at the end trimmed and fine-tuned the manuscript. After completing my fellowship year in Washington, I received an additional grant from the Institute that allowed me to continue working for another year in Jerusalem. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the Grants Program at the Institute.

My partner in producing this study was Joseph Helman, my research assistant from 1992 until 1995. Joe played a vital role in the research and bibliographic components of this study. He provided me with valuable advice

throughout the course of the project, and his comments and suggestions enriched every aspect of the study. He also edited the entire manuscript and transformed my "Hebrew English" into proper English. Additionally, he compiled the bibliography. This book could not have been completed without his friendly contribution.

The Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem became my new academic home upon my return to Israel. The last four chapters were completed under its auspices, and I want to thank Tzvi Tzameret and other members of the staff for their help.

Many members of the peace movement provided me with interviews that helped guide me throughout the study. Some also gave me access to their private archives, which yielded a wealth of information. Although all of them are mentioned in the relevant notes, I want to thank them again for their generous assistance. Special mention is deserved by Janet Aviad, who encouraged and assisted me in numerous ways.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the hundreds of friends and colleagues whom I met over the years as a result of my own activity in the peace movement. These sensitive, intelligent, and energetic young people (most of them around the age of my daughters) were active in the movement before I joined. They always gave me great hope for a brighter future. By dedicating this study to my daughters, I want to thank them all for who and what they are.