

## CASE STUDY 10

### Bassam

#### Former fighter

Bassam Aramin was a teenage fighter, but would eventually come to form Combatants for Peace, made up of former Israeli and Palestinian fighters nonviolently resisting the occupation.

“As a child I fought the occupation by raising the Palestinian flag in our playground. We never felt safe. We were always running from jeeps to avoid the soldiers beating us. At the age of 12 I joined a demonstration where a boy was shot by a soldier. I watched him die in front of me.”

“From that moment I developed a deep need for revenge.”

Bassam joined a group of fighters. “We called ourselves freedom fighters, but the world outside called us terrorists.” One day he threw grenades at Israeli army jeeps. No one was killed, but he was caught and in 1985, aged 17, he was sent to prison for seven years.

In prison, Bassam and other Palestinians were beaten and mistreated, but he started to think about the reasons for Israeli violence and the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. He also gradually made friends with a prison guard.

“We discovered many similarities, and some months later the guard said he understood now that [Palestinians] were not the settlers. He even became a supporter of the Palestinian struggle.”

This experience helped persuade Bassam of the power of nonviolence. After he was released from prison, Bassam and other Palestinians began secretly to meet former Israeli soldiers – the beginning of Combatants for Peace.



Photo: Dubi Roman.

“We were meeting as true enemies who wanted to speak.”

But in 2007 Bassam’s daughter Abir was killed by Israeli Border Police outside her school. Bassam pushed for the Israeli soldier responsible to be tried.

“I want to bring this man to justice because he killed my ten-year-old daughter; not because he’s an Israeli and I’m a Palestinian but because my child was not a fighter.

“Abir’s murder could have led me down the easy path of hatred and vengeance, but for me there was no return from dialogue and nonviolence. After all, it was one Israeli soldier who shot my daughter, but one hundred former Israeli soldiers who built a garden in her name at the school where she was murdered.”



Read more about Bassam

[cfpeace.org](http://cfpeace.org) and [theforgivenessproject.com](http://theforgivenessproject.com)