

CASE STUDY 13



Tanya

From Haifa, Israel

Tanya and her son Dan live in the Israeli city of Haifa, where they attend the synagogue that welcomes ecumenical companions.

Tanya is originally from Croatia, which was part of Yugoslavia when she was a child. After she finished university she volunteered in a kibbutz and learnt Hebrew.



'Righteous among the nations'

Tanya's mother was orphaned when her grandparents were killed by the Ustaše (Croatian fascist militia) during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum and memorial centre in Jerusalem, commemorates the 'Righteous Among the Nations'. These were non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust, always at great personal risk to themselves and their families.

Reflecting on this, Tanya said:

"There are no good or bad nations, just good or bad people."

The Hebrew students in Tanya's kibbutz came from all over the world but had one thing in common – being a Jew. Being among them was very powerful for Tanya. She reconnected with her Jewish identity and, since her homeland had fallen apart during the breakup of Yugoslavia, decided to make a life in Israel.

Tanya feels that the Palestinian Authority "does not pay due attention to their own people". But she also feels pain when facing up to what the government of Israel, a country that represents hope for her and so many Jews, has become when it comes to the treatment of Palestinians.

Military service and settlers

Aged 17, Tanya's son Dan will have to join the army when he turns 18. Tanya said, "the government is taking my son for three years, after I've invested so much love in bringing him up. It's out of our hands. I'm scared for his life because many soldiers do not come back home. When he was born I had hoped that there would no longer be war by the time he came to this age. I was wrong. But the existence of Israel is based on the army, and with all my sorrow I find it essential."

Since 1967 over 600,000 Israelis have settled in the occupied Palestinian territory in contravention of international law.

"I don't feel comfortable with some of the settlers... There are some who spit on our soldiers. I can only imagine the way they treat Palestinians."

Because they can visit the West Bank more freely, Tanya says that "ecumenical companions are precious because they tell us what we cannot see".

Synagogue – Jewish place of worship

Kibbutz – a volunteer community of Jews in Israel, usually working the land

Settlers – Jewish Israelis living in a Palestinian Territory (see the Israeli settlers case study)

Palestinian Authority – the elected Palestinian government, formed under the Oslo peace process