



The 2013 Transitional Justice Workshop: Northern Ireland as a Case Study

This new workshop, held for the first time in the spring of 2013, explored and analyzed transitional justice concepts and mechanisms in the context of conflict-transformation, focusing on the case-study of Northern Ireland. The course was developed for the Transitional Justice Program and taught by Dr. Ron Dudai, a young Israeli scholar who recently completed his PhD in Belfast and has published extensively on transitional justice, including specifically in the Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian contexts.

The Northern Ireland conflict was the bloodiest and most high-profile conflict in Post-WWII Western Europe. The peace process which led to the end of the conflict is considered largely successful, though tensions and violence between the communities still exist. As part of this process, a wide range of transitional justice mechanisms and initiatives have been established in Northern Ireland, both by the state and by civil society.

In the comparative study of transitional justice and conflict transformation, the Northern Ireland case is considered among the most complex and interesting, and in this workshop it serves as a basis for a critical discussion of transitional justice in broader theoretical and practical contexts. The workshop examined issues such as dealing with the past, commissions of inquiry, reconciliation processes, institutional reforms and the role of actors such as civil society, armed groups, and former political prisoners. Importantly, the workshop also explored comparative aspects of the issues, including aspects relating to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ten top-notch students of diverse academic backgrounds were selected from the dozens of applicants for the intensive semester-long workshop, which included a one-week study tour of Northern Ireland. The tour included numerous meetings, workshops and site visits with politicians, civil society organizations, community leaders, ex-combatants and ex-prisoners from the IRA and from Protestant paramilitary groups, engaged academics in the fields of law, criminology and education, and students. As reflected in the testimonials below, the course and study trip had a profound impact on our students – providing them with academic and practical tools, with hope and with inspiration necessary to personally work for transition, justice and human rights in Israel.

Student Testimonials

"When we landed in Northern Ireland I was very sure of what I know... But already after the first day this sense of confidence was replaced by big question marks. It is true that you told us many times that if we are confused, we're on the right track... My confusion was due to the fact that you can't really say that the conflict has been resolved. Just from walking in a neighborhood in Belfast and seeing a gate in a dividing wall that is still locked at night in order to prevent passage between neighborhoods, just from hearing from about the failure of the mixed school system, just from the very fact that the receptionist at the hotel still whispers the word "Catholic" - I understood that "peace" is a more complex concept than I had grasped until now...



I came back with a big smile. The intensity of the tour, the meetings with people, the personal conversations with students in the group and with locals were a very powerful experience....

I want to thank you again for the amazing opportunity I was given to participate in the workshop. It is so unusual to be the recipient of so much access to information and openness from all of the speakers. This was the best educational experience of my legal studies."

- **Michal Klein** (LLM student)

"For some eight years now I have been engaged in social, educational and political activism in Israel.... During the last three years I have also been studying law, something I turned to in the hope of acquiring tools for social change. In light of the deteriorating situation in our region – the disenfranchisement and segregation that are less and less ashamed of themselves, the nationalism and racism that lift their head up high, both in the street and in parliament, and the absence of hope that any of this will change – I too began slowly losing hope....

How grateful I am for this week, that felt like a month, and was so packed with men and women working for years, in the field, every day, each in their own way, in work that is often so exhausting and discouraging, but from whose fruits – and from the determination and faith driving it – one can only be amazed. How wonderful and confusing it was to hear so many different perspectives - of politicians, academics, activists on the ground – on "what is this conflict about" and on how to deal with its implications. How riveting it was to deconstruct these dichotomies into sub-stories and absent or hidden or silenced stories, and to give them voice. How interesting it was to talk directly with people we met by chance because we happened to be there, in a market or pub or street. How moving was the generosity, patience and willingness to answer every question, however direct or personal, that everyone bestowed upon us.

Thank you for awakening the hope that had fallen asleep in my heart."

- **Mia Biran** (3rd-year student of Law and Literature)

"Like a forest after a fire, Northern Ireland 15 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement is sprouting thin branches through which one can still easily see the burnt ground and the struggle of new wisps to rise above it.... The trip to Northern Ireland was significant for me, as it enabled me to see myself playing a role in our transition from a society in conflict to a society that is going (one day) to turn to peace. It made apparent the roles possible for me in such a transition... The trip made it possible for me to look at our society here and now and identify in it those branches that are trying to raise their head despite the fire that is still burning."

- **Enav Morgenstern** (4th-year student of Law and Social Work)



"Going to Northern Ireland was a chance to explore a conflicted society as an outside observer. During our study trip we met academics, politicians and activists from civil society organizations, some of whom were ex-prisoners. The women and men who met with us spoke with great honesty about their personal experiences as well as their professional insights. As the days passed I felt that each meeting unfolded another layer of the story of Northern Ireland and made it richer and more complex. Thus I became more and more confused and troubled yet fascinated by this beautiful and wounded country. During these meetings I felt privileged to be introduced to such a variety of angles and incredible life experiences of the conflict. I was especially inspired by the people we met who promote coexistence and reconciliation between and inside the different communities, despite the immense hardships they've personally been through. Their actions and life courses led me to think deeply about my future personal path in Israel-Palestine..."

I am still processing the great amount of knowledge given to me during our visit. Yet I already feel that observing closely a different conflict as an outsider has given me tools to better understand the reality I live, as well as inspiration for future actions and projects relating to human rights and transitional justice in our region.

I am grateful for the opportunity to go through this amazingly enriching experience."

- Raheli Hefetz (3rd-year Law student)

"I am a great believer in comparative research in general between conflicts, but I think that for Israelis in particular a comparative view is of decisive importance, far beyond academia or research. It has political and public significance, it presents new perspectives and it challenges existing frameworks of discourse. I believe that as many Israelis and Palestinians as possible should see Northern Ireland, in order to observe a place where a protracted conflict was overcome and change was achieved. Of course we need to avoid superficial comparisons... but the discussion is in itself vitally important and enables you to observe "your" conflict a little from the outside and from a new angle.

Throughout the trip thoughts are racing all the time between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine... about similarities and differences and what can be learned. Questions about the present – is the argument about the Protestant flag marches through Catholic communities similar to that regarding our Jerusalem Day marches of Jews through Eastern Jerusalem, or the Gay Pride Parade in Jerusalem?... And about the future – what role can ex-prisoners play in our process of reconciliation? Can the British apology over Black Sunday be an appropriate model in the context of Jews and Arabs in Israel?..."

The makeup of our group had a huge contribution to the success of the trip. The group was excellent and the good vibe provided a very fertile framework for deep discussions both as a group and in the discussions that went on throughout the trip in informal smaller forums.

Thanks to the course and the trip I was able to dive into these issues in the deepest and most complex manner imaginable... I am grateful for the opportunity that was given to me."

- Lior Lehms (PhD student in International Relations and Conflict Transformation)



2013 Transitional Justice Workshop: Northern Ireland as a Case Study

Dr. Ron Dudai

Course Study Trip to Northern Ireland, May 26 – June 2, 2013

Sunday, 26 May

- 0800 Depart Ben Gurion Airport on British Airways
- 1600 Arrive at Belfast City Airport
- 1800 Walking tour of downtown and the "Titanic" Quarter
- 2000 Group dinner and discussion

Monday, 27 May

- 07:45 Group preparatory discussion
- 09:00 Tour of West Belfast and political murals with Prof. Bill Rolston of the University of Ulster's Transitional Justice Institute
- 12:00 Discussion at the University of Ulster's Transitional Justice Institute – with Prof. Bill Rolston, Dr. Louise Mallinder, Dr. Kris Brown and Dr. Anne Smith
- 16:00 Discussion at "Relatives for Justice" – with Mark Thompson, Director
- 19:00 Group dinner and discussion

Tuesday, 28 May

- 07:45 Group preparatory discussion
- 09:00 Guided tour of Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly (Stormont)
- 10:00 Meeting with MLA David McIlveen of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- 11:00 Meeting with MLA Pat Sheehan of Sinn Fein (former senior IRA prisoner and hunger striker)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 Visit to WAVE Trauma Centre – group workshop with WAVE facilitator Hedley Abernathy, discussion with terror victim Alex Bunting
- 16:30 Tour of North Belfast and murals with Prof. Peter Shirlow of Queen's University
- 19:30 Group dinner and discussion

Wednesday, 29 May

- 07:45 Group preparatory discussion
- 09:00 Discussion at "InterAction" – with Roisin McGlone, CEO of InterAction, and senior ex-combatants/prisoners Sean Murray (IRA) and William "Plum" Smith (UVF)
- 11:00 Tour of the "Peace Wall" area with Roisin McGlone, CEO of InterAction
- 12:30 Lunch and group discussion at InterAction
- 13:30 Travel to Tí Chulainn Center, Mullaghbawn, South Armagh



- 15:00 Tour of South Armagh region with ex-combatant/prisoner Thomas Marron (IRA)
- 18:00 Travel to Newcastle
- 20:00 Group dinner and discussion

Thursday, 30 May

- 08:00 Group preparatory discussion
- 10:00 Visit to "Healing Through Remembering" – workshop with HTR Facilitator Joe Blake on "Living Memory" exhibition, discussion with HTR Director Kate Turner and Project Coordinator Dr. Jayme Reaves
- 14:00 Picnic lunch at Botanical Gardens
- 15:00 Discussion at Queen's University Faculty of Law with Queen's faculty and doctoral students – with presentations to the group by Prof. Kieran McEvoy, Prof. Shadd Maruna, Prof. Gordon Anthony, Prof. Ruth Jamieson, Dr. Cheryl Lawther and Dr. Alex Schwartz
- 18:30 Dinner with Queen's University faculty and students

Friday, 31 May

- 08:00 Group preparatory discussion
- 09:30 Discussion at Queen's University Department of Education with Queen's faculty and "From Prison to Peace" project ex-combatants/prisoners – including presentation by Ms. Lesley Emerson, Deputy Director of the Centre for Children's Rights, workshop with Queen's facilitators, discussion with Jackie McDonald (UDA), Danny Murphy (IRA) and other ex-combatants/prisoners
- 14:00 Discussion at the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) with Daniel Holder, Deputy Director of CAJ
- 15:30 Tour of the Northern Ireland Political Collection at Linen Hall Library with the Director of Linen Hall Library
- 17:00 Free evening

Saturday, 1 June

- 09:00 Concluding group discussion with course instructor Dr. Ron Dudai and Minerva Executive Director Att. Danny Evron (scheduled until 11:00, but continued until 13:00)
- 17:00 Visit to Ulster Museum exhibit on "the troubles"
- 19:00 Visit to traditional Irish music pub (optional)

Sunday, 2 June

- 06:30 Depart Belfast City Airport
- 18:00 Arrive Ben Gurion Airport



Militant Protestant murals in East Belfast, May 2013



The group at the University of Ulster's Transitional Justice Institute;
Bottom (L to R): Students Lior Lehr, Enav Morgenstern, Inbal Hezekeli, Prof. Bill Rolston



Discussion with Mark Thompson, Director of "Relatives for Justice"



With Sinn Fein Member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly Pat Sheehan
(former senior IRA prisoner and hunger striker)



A tour with Prof. Peter Shirlow of Queen's University Belfast
Above: "Nothing about us without us is for us" mural
Below: Protestant neighborhood with Union Jack flags and curbstones



With Roisin McGlone, CEO of InterAction Belfast, a grassroots organization working to diffuse tensions in the seam zone between the Protestant and Catholic working-class neighborhoods



Student Raheli Hefetz during a discussion at InterAction Belfast



Gate in a "Peace Wall" separating Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods



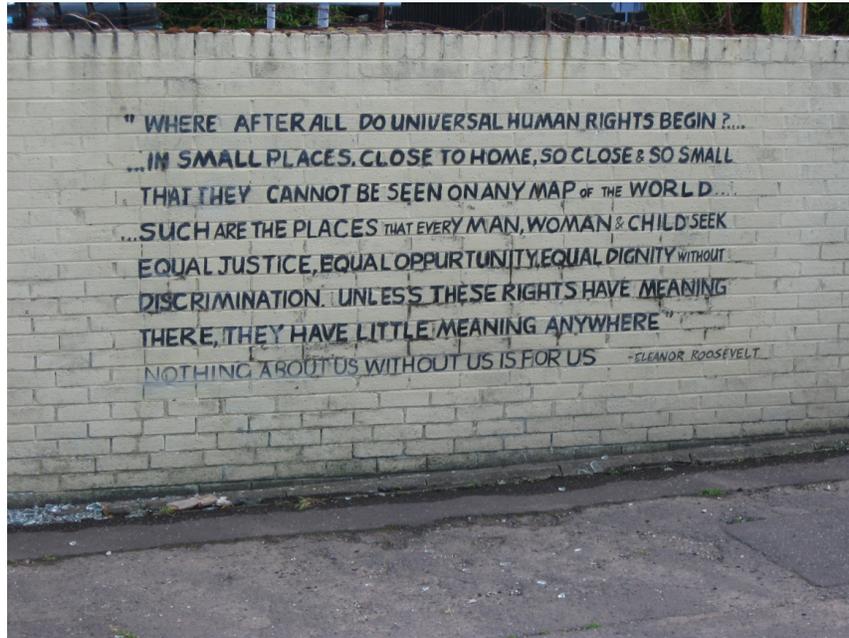
A workshop on trauma at WAVE Trauma Centre



The Minerva group outside the Queen's University School of Law



Prof. Kieran McEvoy of Queen's University Belfast during a discussion with the group hosted by 10 Queen's law professors and PhD students



The words of Eleanor Roosevelt on a wall in Belfast



Display at Linen Hall Library: Belfast newspaper of May 23, 1998 announcing the results of the public referendum on the Good Friday Agreement