

Local and Visiting Youth Share Perspectives at a Druze Community in Israel

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Daliat El Carmel, Israel - Israeli youth and visiting youth from Europe and the Americas joined Druze youth for an evening discussion on July 21, 2014 in the Druze community in Daliat El Carmel, northern Israel, culminating a week of service-learning experiences.



The discussion, in the recreation center of the Druze village, was the culmination of a week-long stay in the Druze community by members of the Special Task Force, a service-learning group of young people from many countries including Italy, England, the USA, Sweden, Denmark and Venezuela.

During the week, the visiting youth participated in a Religious Youth Service-type service project in the Druze village with the vision of uniting and bringing peace through team activities, particularly football (soccer, in America).

The evening discussion focused on the current situation between Israel and Palestine--including Israeli, Druze and international perspectives. The participants were divided into three groups led by local Religious Youth Service leaders Koriel Ben Zvi and Liel Shmueli along with Jungyong An, a Religious Youth service member from Korea. Once the discussions were concluded, the three groups came together to share their findings.



Kori's group emphasized the importance of cultivating an understanding heart, noting that problems exist in and between many countries, not just between Israel and Palestine. How to make an impact and push change forward was considered important by the group. Negative judgments made by other countries or their citizens by focusing on who is right and who is wrong are a major part of the problem, according to the group's consensus. A young woman named Analisa, from Denmark, said that most of the international community assume that the people of her country are happy, based on the fact that they are externally wealthy. However, most people there are very unhappy, she said, because they lead their lives without any meaning. She wondered what she could do to change this situation.



Liel's group expressed the importance of setting an example and also the heart of caring for others; big changes cannot come without first setting an example and developing an internal well-spring of about others. Another point was that it would be useful to bring more young people from the international community to Israel for service projects. To the locals it would give hope and encouragement while to the international people it gives a sense of connection to the heart and struggles of the people of the region; through learning to know each other and cooperating, a sense of community can develop. The group kept asking themselves how they could help and came to the conclusion that each of them should take more responsibility within their communities after returning home from Israel; that through an attitude of giving, positive changes can take place in communities which could even affect the world.

Jungyong's group added that connection and cooperation between the youth of Israel and Palestine offers the best chance of moving forward and leaving hatred and fear behind; by working together they could develop and strengthen a heartfelt connection that would help to sustain both communities through difficult times. The group thought that a good medium for this could be sports activities. They also expressed and emphasized that education is a very important aspect of growth for the younger generation and that the children are inheriting their parents' hatred and prejudices, which too often lead children in the wrong direction--not toward peace but rather to continue the cycle of hate.



Overall, the discussion was thought to have gone very well, and the international youth felt they came out of this meeting with a fresh perspective about the situation between Israel and Palestine and with the heart to cooperate and strive to make a positive change for the future.

