

Mennonite Students See Israeli Society from the Inside

After touring throughout the Middle East, a group of Mennonite students arrived at Oranim International School to learn about Israeli society from an insider's perspective – or, more accurately, from many different insiders' perspectives.

"I've learned so much about the different perspectives that exist in Israel, and I want my friends and family to know how diverse of a place Israel really is," one student summarized the trip.

For the sixth year in a row, Oranim International School facilitated a weeklong study tour for undergraduate students from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Virginia. The Mennonites are a pacifist Christian group who emphasize service to those in need and the importance of community.

The program highlighted *mifgashim* (encounters) with many diverse parts of Israeli society, including kibbutzniks, *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox Jews), Druze, and Muslim Arab Israelis.

Particularly meaningful were *mifgashim* with Oranim students and IDF soldiers. One EMU student explained, "One thing I really enjoyed was getting to talk with Israeli students and soldiers. It... gave us an opportunity to connect with people our own age." As pacifists, meeting with Israeli soldiers was a crucial opportunity for the Mennonite students to see the soldiers in a different light and to understand that they, too, want peace.

The Mennonite students also enjoyed fascinating encounters with Oranim faculty and staff, including Dr. Jack Pastor, Hadas Marcus, Dr. Udi Manor, and Dr. Elizabeth Goldwein.

For more information about Oranim International School's short-term programs for university students from around the world, read [here](#).

