

## Galilee Dreamers Alumni Profile: Rima Qassem from B'ine

*Where are our alumni today? How has Galilee Dreamers impacted them in the long run? We interviewed Rima Qassem to find out.*



Rima Qassem, age 20, from B'ine, participated in the first ever Galilee Dreamers delegation in 2016, to the United States. Three years later, we interviewed her to see where she is now and how Galilee Dreamers affected her.

Rima is currently a first-year student at Tel Aviv University studying Linguistics. Next year, she hopes to study English Literature as well.

### **Building Understanding and Connections between Jews and Arabs**

Looking back at the Galilee Dreamers program, Rima describes its impact on her, her understanding of the Jewish-Arab

conflict, and her connections with Jewish people:

**“This program changed me for the better and I am absolutely glad that I got to do this.** Because visiting the US was a big dream of mine. I also wanted to help and to change something for the better. For both of these things to come together as one was a big deal. The trip was amazing. I got to see things I didn't know existed. Here [in my community] we didn't talk about the conflict – we just kind of lived with it. We didn't think about what the effect was on us. And I figured that out on the trip.

We weren't prepared for the questions that they asked us [in the US]. They asked really hard questions. They wanted to know. I got asked – why don't you go to the army? I had never thought about this before.” (As a woman from the Arab sector, Rima is neither obligated nor expected to serve in the Israeli army.)

**Now I look at things differently. Now I think – why don't we [Jews and Arabs] communicate more? We live together, so why don't we?** It got me thinking about things more.”

Now, Rima has many connections with Jewish people. Since the program, Rima has kept up her friendships with the other participants from her year, both Jewish and Arab, and she has also made connections with Galilee Dreamers from other years. “We are all like one family.”

Rima also has made friends with Jewish students at university – an experience she didn't have in her school growing up, but that Galilee Dreamers gave her a taste of. “[In university] I have friends [who are Jewish] and I get to talk to them more and go out with them... We get really close. They are nice people. They help and they care, and they ask. That was surprising but nice.”

## Helping Realize Her Dreams

Galilee Dreamers also gave Rima the opportunity to practice her English, a crucial skill for higher education in Israel and beyond. “I love to talk English. I needed someone to talk to. I didn’t have friends or anyone to do that with. The program gave me that. Some really nice people to listen and share that with and care.”

Today, Rima plans on studying English at university. At a time when many of her friends are getting married and will soon have children, she decided she wants a different path for herself. She dreams of one day teaching English at a university.

## Future of Galilee Dreamers

Rima also has big dreams for Galilee Dreamers: **“I definitely see the program going really far and expanding and becoming huge. And I am really excited to be part of the program as it continues to grow.”** She explains: “When we were in the US, we went to schools and talked about the conflict, and we thought – why don’t we do that here?” She also would like to create joint activities for young people from her community and young people from neighboring Jewish communities, together with her Jewish friends from Galilee Dreamers. She hopes that the Jewish and Arab young people will get to know each other and become friends, as she did on Galilee Dreamers. She emphasizes: “I am in this for the long run. I am happy to just be a part of it.”