

Voices of the Galilee Dreamers Following the War in Israel

Galilee Dreamers - an Arab-Jewish youth program in the Galilee, north of Israel



For several years, Oranim International has been leading the Galilee Dreamers program, whose goal is to promote relationships, connections, and a shared society between Jewish and Arab teenagers in the Galilee region of Israel. The Galilee Dreamers is a three-year program for teens in Grades 10-12 from Galilee high schools. The program consists of facilitated encounters and activities focused on leadership, dialogue, and peace education and is characterized by open discussion about these topics with an emphasis on understanding, acceptance, and future cooperation. Some of the meetings take place on Zoom with partner communities around the world.

The vision remains strong, but against the current situation and the horrible war, fear is rampant, tensions are running high, and respectful dialogue is far from easy.

We have decided to take some time to think, talk, listen to each other's feelings and hope for the future. Just as we try to stay calm, focused, and optimistic, we wanted to share with you some of the thoughts and voices being shared in Galilee Dreamers.

Voices of Galilee Dreamer Arab and Jewish Teachers

Uri, teacher at Eynot Yarden High School

I am writing this message from my home on Kibbutz Shamir, about five miles from the Lebanese border. The level of fear is very high here on my kibbutz, mostly because of the stories from the kibbutzim in the Otef Aza region. I do not know a single kibbutznik who isn't imagining their kibbutz being overrun by murderers, just as it happened in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, Kibbutz Beeri, and Kibbutz Nahal Oz.

For more than a month, I haven't met the teens with whom I work because the school is closed, and the teens are scattered all over Israel. Some were evacuated, and some left the

area on their own because they feared an attack by Hezbollah from the North. I spend my time trying to stay in contact with them.

Yesterday, a missile fell several yards from one of my students, a participant in Galilee Dreamers. In the midst of all the fear, hatred, death, and evil we are experiencing, the likes of which I have never felt in my entire life, I search for reasons for optimism. I am hoping that my country will be a place where my daughters will be able to live without fear that they will be murdered in their beds. But it is difficult to be optimistic when the current solution is more killing – this time of hundreds of children in Gaza. They, too, like my own daughters, deserve a future devoid of fear.

But I do believe that there is another way. The Yom Kippur War led to peace with Egypt, the Intifada led to the Oslo Peace Accords, and the Lebanese War led to our withdrawal from the Security Belt. Maybe this current horror will bring us to an understanding that might bring about an end to this hatred.

The only solution is for the children to talk, understand, and love one another. *Inshallah* (God willing).



Adi, teacher at Manor Kabri High School

The recent events of last month made me think about continuing to live in the area in which I now live. I saw in my mind's eye my own house as a place that could serve as an example for joint living on the part of all populations, religions, and sectors.

Now, more than ever, we know that we have much more in common with one another. We

really have no other choice than continuing to aspire to joint projects with all the populations of the region.

Of course, in my heart, I have really hard feelings about the situation we find ourselves in and the fact that extreme groups on all sides bring us to hard and painful places. At the same time, I see a big opportunity for the “day after” when we will be able to initiate processes of connection and strengthen the bonds from the understanding that “we have no other choice.”

I believe that Galilee Dreamers can play a significant role in connecting due to the rich experience the organization has accrued. I envision joint meetings (*mifgashim*) that include sharing and getting to know the life of the other as well as figuring out common goals for the future.

Of course, these *mifgashim* can help in creating a network of emissaries who will be able to pass along the messages within their own communities.

I personally will be happy to help in any way I can.

Dr. Emil Halloun, Head of Office for International Relations, Mar Elias Educational Institutions

Physically, I am well, but mentally, I am tortured.

Unfortunately, the familiar feelings, after all the deadly events we have experienced in the past decades and years, have always been overwhelming and complex, but that morning on October 7 has left me with two main feelings: shock and disbelief. My human mind, which for long has proven to be resilient, thanks to those like-minded people who surround me and believe in values that revolve around shared society in this land, failed to comprehend this time the sense of surrealism that began at 6:30 a.m. on October 7 and has continued until this very moment. While I am fully aware that these feelings are nothing but a natural reaction to the extremely tragic circumstances that many people went through, I must admit that I am struggling to persuade myself that brighter days will follow for both Israelis and Palestinians. I hope to transform the magnitude of these negative feelings into positive, productive, and practical notions free from one-sided judgments for a better future with a sense of normality alongside full dignity for all human beings breathing the same air of this region.

Yasmin, English teacher in Dir El Assad

I am an English teacher from an Arab village in the North of Israel. This period, the war, is one of the most difficult periods we have ever experienced, and I feel that I am at a loss. But at the same time, I feel that there is hope that we will be able to overcome all the hurdles in our lives. As an English teacher in an Arab school in Israel, I feel that with the young generation, it is possible to achieve a society based on the belief that it is possible to achieve peace between the two nations in Israel. I believe that only through programs of co-existence, such as “Galilee Dreamers,” will we be able to reach peace and tranquility.

I truly feel that we need such programs to overcome the worry and fear that we are experiencing in the current period. I believe that through education and programs, it is possible to bridge the gaps that exist between the two societies.

I, Yasmine, as a teacher and a human being, feel and believe that it is possible to build a society based on peace and tranquility in a most simple way. Education is the way and through programs such as this one. This generation is our future.

Although it may be a long and not easy path, there is always hope with light at the horizon. We have to figure out how to sow the proper thoughts and aspects that will bring about peace. Peace can and does exist. We must figure out how to pass it on to our children.

Raida, guidance counselor, Galilee High School, Nazareth

Writing a letter about where I am today vis a vis what is happening is very complex and not at all easy. In my life in general and as a partner in Galilee Dreamers in particular, I always believed and will continue to believe that a human being is a human being and that humanity cannot be divided.

Regarding what is happening now, I look at people who were healthy and how their lives turned upside down and became a complete tragedy. My heart breaks for them.

I feel fear and concern facing the current reality and about who we will be afterward. So as not to deepen this worry, it is important for us to continue to be together – to talk about the pain and to dream about a better future. That is not an easy task. And it will take a big effort on our part.

The main challenge facing us will be to bring our teens to an open, emotional, human conversation. They should not remain in their own bubble but should instead understand that each side has its deep pain and its big dream to be in a healthier world.

It is good that in Galilee Dreamers, there are supportive people who believe it is possible.



Voices from our Alumni

Several Galilee Dreamer students recently engaged in a spirited WhatsApp conversation. As you might imagine, some of the Jewish students expected more compassion and understanding from the Arab students regarding the Hamas atrocities of October 7, while some of the Arabs expected more compassion and understanding from the Jewish students.

Here are two quotes from that conversation that should bring us hope: one from Mohammed, an Arab, and one from Barak, a Jew.

Mohammed - I am a human being before I am anything, and I sanctify every human being's right to life. I cannot be optimistic at this time, but I believe that in the end, there is hope, no matter how far away. Thanks to my friends. Take care of yourselves. You are very dear to me and to many others. Please be ok. I believe that time will pass, and our dream to live in peace will become a reality. Be patient.

Barak - Before we get into conversations about the current situation here, we need to make a clear separation between supporting Palestine and supporting Hamas. Supporting Palestinians is a legitimate option. You don't have to agree with it, but the fact that the Palestinian people are suffering from this conflict is undeniable and, in my opinion, important to talk about. But supporting Hamas is a whole different thing. Hamas is a terror organization that committed inhuman acts of violence and slaughter of innocent civilians, including babies and elders. That is not only an inhumane thing to do but also a very non-Muslim thing to do. It shows that this organization and its values are no different than ISIS or Al-Qaeda. To support this kind of terrorism is not legitimate on any level.

In conclusion, I think we should all take a deep breath before we write anything here, and we should try to understand the pain the other side is going through before we write out of anger and hate. I think the key is to start having a healthy conversation about the situation in this group because, after all, we had lots of experiences together, and I don't think anybody here wants to tear our connection apart.

Dr. Rachel Ravid, Director of Galilee Dreamers, Oranim College:

My Dear Dreamers,

I have just read your exchange of opinions on WhatsApp. Your voices are the greatness of the Galilee Dreamers. We talk about things we don't always agree upon and stay friends. Please listen to the voices you hear, see how it touches you, and how you can relate to the other, even when you are hurt and in pain from what someone said. If we don't go through this process, we will never be able to live together. I love you all, and I am in a great deal of pain because of the lives lost.

