Faces and Voices of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict presents
The Olive Tree Initiative, a diverse group of University of California, Irvine students, just returned from the Middle East where they heard perspectives from Israeli and Palestinian academics, community leaders, and activists with firsthand knowledge of the conflict. The mission of the journey is to gain knowledge beyond what is received through secondhand information and mainstream media, to hear directly from Israelis and Palestinians, and to share this learning with the community.

Join the dialogue.

Beyond Stereotypes
Thursday, October 23, 2008
UCI Student Center ~ Crystal Cove Auditorium
6:30 p.m. – Forum
Moderated by Professor Wayne Sandholtz, UCI School of Social Science
8:30 p.m. – Reception with live music by Knossos

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The Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Vice Chancellor Student Affairs, the School of Social Sciences, the Division of Undergraduate Education, and the UCI Difficult Dialogues Project, for their support in the preparation and follow-up of this trip.

The Consulate General of Israel in Los Angeles, the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Israel, and the Palestinian Authority, for their support with the travel logistics.

Guido Baltes, Shannon Shibata and the Center for New Diplomacy’s staff, for their amazing guidance on the ground.

And the wonderful people who we met on our journey.

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Middle East Studies Student Initiative
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Additional Thanks

The Olive Tree Initiative would not have been possible without the combined vision of many individuals and organizations. The diversity of viewpoints and perspectives gives our work both a depth and relevance. Our partners – both acknowledged and silent – have strengthened the relationships among us all.
Olive Tree Initiative

SAMEERA ALI, senior (Muslim Student Union) is a Biological Sciences and Global Cultures double major. She joined OTI to experience the conflict and what the situation is like in Palestine and Israel firsthand.

DANA BALLOUT ’08 (Model United Nations, Middle East Studies Student Initiative, Society of Arab Students) majored in International Studies with a focus on the Middle East. She grew up in Lebanon and moved to California three years ago. Having witnessed the damages of conflict, OTI is her way of trying to better educate herself and others on the perspectives of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in order to find realistic compromises. She has now moved back to Lebanon and hopes to return to Palestine and Israel in the near future.

MORAN COHEN, sophomore (Hillel) is studying Business/Economics at UCI. She was born in Israel and moved to the US at the age of twelve. Seeing both worlds has made her very concerned with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, she is very involved on campus with various organizations, such as Hillel and Anteaters for Israel, and hopes to contribute and improve the relations through the promotion of dialogue and understanding.

OMAR BUSTAMI, senior (Muslim Student Union) is a returning dual degree, Political Science and Civil Engineering major, of Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi and Palestinian ancestry. The OTI is Omar’s first international travel experience. Despite his never having left the States, Omar maintains a strong interest in West and South Asian history, culture and politics through the legacy of his grandfather, the Syrian ambassador to India in the 1950s.

KATE KEITH ’08 (Middle East Studies Student Initiative) graduated as an International Studies major with a focus on the Middle East. For the last year she has been working with the Middle East Studies Student Initiative to promote cultural outreach and establish a Mid East Studies major at UCI. She also has been working with the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding on various peace-building activities. She is now a first year graduate student in Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California.

EVONNE LIEV, junior (Model United Nations) is a Political Science major. Her participation in Model United Nations and interest in the Middle East has led to her involvement in OTI, pursuit of the Middle East Studies Certificate, as well as her study of Arabic. She hopes to learn and grow from this experience and parlay that to UCI students to help foster dialogue and understanding.

PAUL MAGUIRE, senior (Middle East Studies Student Initiative) is an International Studies major with a focus on the Middle East region and Spanish. He is a member of the World Affairs Council of Northern California. After taking a couple of years off to work, Paul plans to go to law school to study international humanitarian law.

ALI MALIK, senior (Muslim Student Union) is a history major and Religious Studies minor. Born to Muslim parents, Ali was taught that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) said, “spread peace amongst yourselves.” Thus with this in mind, Ali decided to join the Olive Tree Initiative in order that he may live up to the imperative of spreading peace and creating a more perfect world. He believes that as citizens in a democracy, we must take a more active role in securing peace in the world.

SALLY MOUAKKAD, senior (Middle East Studies Student Initiative) is a Political Science major and Anthropology minor. She is currently also working on her Middle East Studies Certificate. As a student leader, she finds OTI vital for the understanding and respect of the different views in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the UCI community.

AMANDA NAOUFAL ’08 (Society of Arab Students) graduated in 2008 as a Cognitive Psychology major with a Biology minor. She was president of Society of Arab Students. Amanda grew up in both Lebanon and the US and is very optimistic about the change that the OTI can bring to UCI. She believes that with knowledge of the conflict, individuals can form a respectful understanding of one another, allowing for a more productive and peaceful solution for the future.

ALEKANDRE SCHMITT ’08 (unaffiliated) graduated in 2008 as a Criminology, Law and Society and Global Cultures double major. After studying in France for a year, he became increasingly interested in countries’ foreign policies and cultural interactions. He hopes to pursue a Ph.D in diplomacy with a focus on Near East foreign policy.

SHAHROOZ SHAHANDEH ’08 (unaffiliated) graduated with a double major in Political Science and Int. Studies and a certificate in Middle East Studies. He is actively involved in organizations such as The Africa Project, was Interfraternity Council president and many more. Shahrooz joined OTI for his passion for reconciliation and humanitarian issues and hopes that OTI can facilitate more thoughtful and constructive dialogue on campus.

SEPI TERMECHI, sophomore (Hillel) is a cognitive psychology major who has immersed herself in the UCI community by joining numerous organizations such as Hillel and Anteaters for Israel. After having read about the situation in Israel and Palestine, she joined OTI to learn more about the conflict and share her knowledge with her peers. She believes that dialogue is essential to establishing understanding and bringing about peace.

ISaac Yerushalmi, senior (Anteaters for Israel) is a fourth year Political Science major, and is currently President of Anteaters for Israel and a member of. Hillel, Jewish Student Union and Alpha Epsilon Pi. He is the son of two refugees, his mother and father fled from Egypt and Iran, both due to religious persecution. Isaac believes dialogue and understanding lead the road to a peaceful future.

Dr. Paula Garb is Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology and the co-director and co-founder of the UCI Center for Citizen Peacebuilding. Her academic focus is on the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus, and she is fluent in Russian having lived in the (then) Soviet Union for 17 years.

Dr. Manuel Gómez is UCI’s Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. He obtained his Ph.D. in Higher Education Policy and Organization from the University of Southern California. Dr. Gómez is dedicated to improving student life and establishing educational partnerships, and is a published poet.

Tzvi Raviv is the current Israel Program Coordinator for the Hillel Foundation of Orange County. He works to create programs and events that encourage Israeli awareness and knowledge for university students. As an Israeli citizen and obtained his B.S in Biology and Science education from the University of Haifa-Israel. Tzvi is a proud Zionist-Jew and is dedicated to creating a better civil society in the state of Israel.

Daniel Wehrenfennig is currently a Ph.D candidate at UCI. His research focuses on dialogue processes and conflict resolution, particularly in the regions of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Daniel is also an active member of the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding, among other non profit organizations.

University of California, Irvine