

Schools Across Borders

Palestinian Student Visit 2012 Final Evaluation

1. Do you feel that the pre-visit sessions helped you to prepare for the visit to Ireland? (State what you did)

- Yes, it helped me a lot to understand what we will do and we got to know some valuable information that helped me a lot during the sessions, about things like settlements, separation wall and the refugees.
- Yes I did, because I got to know about the old conflict between Northern Ireland and Ireland. I also learned a lot of information about settlements, the separation wall and the prisoners, that I didn't know much before.
- Yes I feel that they helped us a lot, and they made our information much better because there was so many things I didn't know about my conflict and it helped me to know about Irish conflict. Now I know a lot of things.
- Yes, they certainly did, they helped us get all the information we need in an organised and ordered way, and from trusted references, and it also helped the whole group to learn how to communicate with each other in the right way.
- Yes, we prepared what we are going to tell the Irish students about Palestinian conflict and human rights and we, as a group got to know each other.
- It helped me a lot and if I need any information I will look at the worksheets and all the papers that Maha gave to us and it was a reference to us to know all the information and the facts about everything.
- I feel the pre-visits were focused on giving me as many facts as possible and tried to shape my opinion of Hebron, from a collective point of view.

2. What were your main expectations for the visit to Ireland?

- To learn about the conflict in Ireland, what are the differences and similarities with the Palestinian conflict. To tell the people about the Palestinian conflict, answer their questions if they have any, know what they know about the Palestinian conflict and to hear what did the Israeli students told them and to know their point of view.
- I really wanted the people of Ireland to learn and understand the Israel/Palestinian conflict from a Palestinian point of view. I also wanted to learn from the Irish students what they learned from the Israeli students about the conflict. I wanted to share my universal values and beliefs and also to learn different cultures. I also wanted to express my feelings about what I know about the Palestinian conflict. I really wanted to interact with people that have different religions and different thoughts about the conflict. Also to answer all their questions.
- The students going to ask a lot of questions and they did!! And were all ready to listen to our stories and about the facts.

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- I expected that I was able to do discussions with confidence. I expected that I could speak with influence. That the students here in Ireland are nice and the people also. I thought doing this would be a little hard for me. I wanted to speak about Palestine and try to cover the whole story and answer all the questions.
- I expected to convey the Palestinian issue to the students in Ireland
- I had my mind set on the fact that most of the Irish students were meeting us because they were forced to, and that they did not care much about what I had to say. I was surprised to find the opposite. I had also expected the visit to be an intense, emotional experience but it was not as emotional as I expected.
- I expect that the schools are interested in our conflict and they want to know more.

3. Do you feel now that they were achievable?

- Yes I did, now I know about the Irish conflict and I know what did the Israeli students told the Irish students about the conflict and their point of view about it and how some of the students are against what is happening in Palestine.
- Yes!!
- Yes
- I think I achieved all of my aims and I feel proud about it.
- The Irish students respected my point of view and opinions and I didn't have a problem with them not accepting the difference between my opinion and the Israelis, and I managed to tell my message to the Irish students.
- In a way they were exceeded.
- No I didn't feel that they would be, but I did very well at the discussions. I didn't think that I was going to speak in front of the group and the Irish students were very interested and they wanted to know more from us.

4. What did you expect to be the main challenges/fears?

- I expected to be challenged by the questions that were going to be asked, but I didn't find that difficult because I knew all the answers. I didn't have any other fears like interacting with other people because I like to make friends.
- To not have the interaction of the group, not to be able to talk to the group about myself and the conflict, and some questions I can't answer.
- That I am going to deal with a group that don't want to hear me and don't want to listen and speak about the conflict. I can't express myself well. I am not going to be able to

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... speak about the conflict and that I don't have that much information to speak about, and that I will not be able to answer their questions.

- No interest or reactions from the students. That I couldn't do this. That I might get into trouble as I am in a foreign country.
- Getting the Irish students to care about what I am saying and that I would not be able to express my thoughts properly.
- That I can not introduce myself in the right way, my English would not be good enough and hard questions that I can not answer.
- Some students interested and others not. Having the Irish students affected by the Israeli point of view and not accepting mine.

5. Did any of them arise? If so, how did you deal with them?

- No, from the first school that we went to I managed with them and I could answer all of their questions.
- I don't think so; I think I was able to control my fears.
- No none of them arose to me. I introduced myself well to all the students and my English was good and if I needed any meaning in English, I asked any of the Palestinian students with me.
- The first one, but I dealt with that by trying to joke more and make the discussion feel like friends talking.
- Well no it didn't arise, but some of the groups were very shy and they did not want to speak so I kept asking them questions to take the information and to know what they knew about the conflict.
- Maybe sometimes. Having some students that weren't interested and not joining in the discussion but I managed to deal with that by asking them questions, so that wasn't a problem.
- Well, almost every group discussion I was asked questions about everything that had to do with the Israel/Palestinian conflict. I was prepared for the different types of questions so I didn't have any trouble dealing with them.

6. Did you feel that there were enough briefing and evaluation sessions for your group in Ireland?

- Yes, it was very good and enough because it made us do better in the discussions.
- Yes!

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- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- I felt that we needed more evaluation sessions, because each day I had new thoughts and feelings that I did not get the chance to express.

7. What is/are your general opinion/s of the Irish school groups?

- They exceeded my expectations and they were generally interested and welcoming and were fairly easy to open up to.
- Great, they were all well prepared; they knew a lot of things about the conflict and what is happening in Palestine. They were good listeners, they asked a lot of good questions.
- I think that most of the Irish groups were well prepared and ready to ask questions.
- Most of them are smart, understandable, nice, interesting, well prepared, and they are like us.
- They were very interested in our conflict and that is what made us happy and they were supportive and they wanted to help us by sending messages. Some of them were too shy to go and speak but like they showed us that they want to go and help us.
- I think that some schools were better than others because they were more prepared and ready to ask reasonable questions. I also thought that most of the schools were very nice and friendly to us. We made friends with some students from some schools. The Irish schools have a very good curriculum and the students there are very smart and very well educated.
- Interested, sometimes active and others not, all were friendly.

8. How did you find the format of working within small groups?

- I think it is the best format and it avoids shyness or lack of confidence when speaking in very big groups. It is also the best way to make effect on the students.
- I found it really interesting and amazing because all of the students had enough time to ask all the questions and had enough chance to learn everything.
- It was a very useful way I think to work in small groups, because in this way you can get the students to pay attention better, and have them participating in the discussion in an

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active way. I also feel that it's better than the larger group discussions because in small groups I can control the discussion better, especially when it's one of us in each group.

- It was good, working with small groups was good for us because we could discuss the issues with the students, answer their questions and not have problems with the students.
- Well for me that helped me a lot, because for me I can't control big groups and if I work with big groups, it has to be one of my group to help me and that were very annoying because they don't give me a chance to speak.
- Working with small groups was great and fun because almost everybody in the group participated and I learned more about their personal interests, because I had enough time to talk about everything. The only thing I think is a little problem is that sometimes I would finish early and I have already summarised everything about the Palestinian issues and problems we have with Israel. So basically talk about anything near the end of the discussion.
- It was great when it was four students or less because I got to interact on a more personal level with each of them, but when it was more than that, I would have preferred if it was two students interacting as I felt overwhelmed sometimes.

9. Did you feel that you were able to express your opinions in the group discussions?

- Yes, in a nice way.
- Yes, I was very able to express my opinions freely; I didn't feel that there was anything to stop me from expressing what I actually believe in.
- Yes, the groups we discussed the issues with were very good listeners. They gave me the chance to give them my point of view, feelings about what is happening, the Human Rights and the issue in general.
- Yes, and before Schools Across Borders I think that I cannot be able to express my opinions to people just like my age.
- Yes I was able to do that especially at the last discussions because I was more confident and able to speak without fear.
- Yes, most of the questions I was asked were usually more personal, which was great for me because I got to relay my thoughts not the collective thoughts and opinions of Palestine. I wish if there were more time to get to know each other though because it helped getting the students interested.
- Yes sometimes. I have told the Irish students everything you need to know about our conflict, that they didn't ask any questions about it so they could move on to asking me more personal questions.

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10. Did you find any questions difficult to answer? If Yes, please state which questions.

- No I did not they were easy I didn't expect that, I answered them without any difficulty.
- No, most of the questions were realistic and honest so answering them only took giving my honest thoughts and opinions on my part.
- No actually all of the questions were good. I could manage with all of the questions because in general they were about our daily life
- In fact no, because I was well prepared for any question, whatever it was, hard or easy.
- I think I was able to answer them all, but there are hard questions like:
 1. Do you want to meet the Israelis?
 2. How will the conflict be solved?
- No I didn't. But some questions I thought were foolish. There was this kid who asked me 'Have you ever thought of doing suicide?'. My answer was 'Have you?' and then I said 'Why would I?'. The question lead to nowhere and the answer for the question meant nothing.
- I didn't find any questions very difficult that I couldn't answer, but there were some challenging questions such as "What do you think the solution to this conflict is?" It wasn't difficult but you can't put its answer in one or two sentences, the solution is more complicated than that. And another question was "Would you agree with the solution of having Palestinians and Israelis living in the same country together, and having Israeli friends?" Well my answer would be no, because I don't think the Israelis after all they did will truly live in peace with the Palestinians, but I found that saying no might make the students think that we are the bad ones who don't want peace, especially after what the Israeli students said that they would want to be friends and everything.

11. Do you think your answers helped the Irish students to have a better understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

- Yes, they helped a lot because the questions helped them to make things clear and to understand more.
- Yes, many of the Irish students told me that now they understand the conflict in a better way after they heard the points of view from the two sides (The Israeli and the Palestinians) now they compare the two answers from me and from the Israeli students.
- Yes I do because now they know information about what is happening from a person that has experienced it. So now the Irish students can compare and understand two different points of view from a Palestinian and an Israeli.
- Absolutely, because I believe that my answers were objective, and hold a message about what really is going on in Palestine, and the situation that the Palestinian people went through, that helps giving them the complete real view about the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

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- Yes, it was obvious that they have a better awareness of the conflict.
- Sure, yes.
- I hope so, I tried being as honest as possible, while remaining natural, but I feel that to understand the conflict, you need to be there in Israel and Palestine.

12. Which group discussions did you appreciate the most and why?

- The French school group. They were smart, nice, interesting questions, well prepared and they know a lot and that helped me building on their information, and they were very interested in what I say.
- St. Killians, I felt that I connected to the students on every personal level, and I was very sad when it ended. Both me and the students were discussing as normal teens.
- For me, Sancta Maria College was the best because they were very prepared. They were good listeners, they let me talk about the conflict then they asked me a lot of good questions, they knew a lot about the conflict so I didn't have any problems with them.
- The groups St. Dominics and St. Killians German School, they were really interested to know and learn about the conflict and all the human rights and they all asked me a lot of questions and I answered all of them.
- For me personally, I think the ones that are girl schools, because they don't fool around and most of them are well prepared like Sancta Maria College and Caritas College. I liked St. Killian's German School and the French School because they were really well prepared.
- For me, most of them were great, but Caritas College I think it was my best one, because I covered a lot of things about the conflict and they were focused and interested asking a lot of questions and they want to help us.
- Our Lady of Mercy School, The French School, Caritas College.

13. Do you think the reflections and feedback sections were useful and effective?

- Yes I do. Everyone of the Palestine group has different styles and ways and the feedback helps mixing and sharing different ways.
- Yes, they helped me think of where I stand and how I feel which lead me to figuring out where I want to be and how to get there.
- Yes sure because when I tell the group that we are going to make feedback at the end of the discussion, it makes them very focused with me, they were writing a lot of notes.
- Yes sure, because the feedback gave the main issues or facts that we were talking about.

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- Yes I do because sometimes one of the Palestinian students may have forgotten to say something and during the feedback a person from a different group would have said something new that another group didn't say. So the Irish students learn different thoughts from different students.
- Yes because it shows how much the students were interested and focused in the discussions and it shows how much the Palestinian students covered about the conflict and how good they are.
- Yes they were. I think they helped us realise how the students actually understand what we are saying, and how to choose the better way to explain everything.

14. Do you have any other comments on the group discussions?

- I think they helped me a lot to identify my views. I also made friends with the Irish students.
- Interesting!
- No
- No
- I feel that we need to focus less on facts and numbers and be more interested of the personal experience of each student, facts go to the brain and emotions go to the heart which controls the brain.
- I think that the bigger groups should be given more time to brief up the information about the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.
- Everything was good, and choosing the small groups choice was great, but the only thing I wished for was more time.

15. What were the benefits to you of the tour in Belfast?

- I knew more about the conflict, how the people live there. What their daily life is like and I know that the students are against violence and they want peace so it is similar to our own conflict because all of us are against violence and we all want peace.
- A lot of things like I met new students and I learned a lot from the schools there like I learned about the conflict there and how they deal with it.
- Learning about the conflict in Northern Ireland and how they solved it and we also had fun.

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- It showed me that I am not alone, not like my people in our suffering, and that there is always hope for a better future, something I had gave up on.
- I learned about the old conflict between the Protestants and the Catholics and I've learned that their old conflict was not much different then ours. I think we Palestinians still have hope for having our land back, but I think it is still a long way to go.
- Well now we know that there is conflict similar to us, and to know there are people who are standing on their feet after what happened to them, it gives us hope.
- Belfast was different from Dublin, I felt the people there were different too, and the benefit was knowing that it was a bit similar to Palestine, with all the walls and fences everywhere, and that people there can maybe understand what we are talking about more, because they went through similar experiences, and how there was peace at last in Northern Ireland there might be peace in Palestine, even though I think it's a bit more complicated than that, and also another benefit was that it was a new experience, I didn't even know before about the conflict there.

16. How did you find the group discussion with the Belfast students?

- They were very polite, nice and they were the most interested group in our conflict and they were informative.
- It was so good and I think that they were really ready to understand everything.
- Great, we felt that they are like us because they live in a conflict area and how it affects their life.
- They were very interesting people because they told us about the conflict between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Some students considered themselves to be Irish, they were mostly Catholics. Others considered themselves to be British, they were protestant.
- I didn't find it much different, but there was one difference that they were actually telling us about their conflict and lives and stories, not just us talking about ourselves and our conflict, and that's what I liked most.
- With the first school it was amazing, I had yet to meet such smart and interesting students but the two schools that followed were not so great as I felt that the students there were not as informed and interested.
- Well the first two schools were good and interested but the last one was not because we didn't speak about the conflict or their conflict and I found it useless and they didn't show us their posters.

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17. What was the highlight of the trip to Belfast?

- Seeing the walls and the areas that were related to the conflict in real life.
- Visiting the wall, it felt strangely familiar to the wall in my country and that moved me greatly.
- To know about the conflict, to meet other people and to know how the conflict affects their daily life.
- That in Belfast there is a wall, just like Palestine and there is a lot of the area there the Irish can not go and the conflict there.
- Learning what they know about the Catholic – Protestant conflict. Also meeting new people that are Protestant. Also, I went on a train for the first time.
- To talk to the students in there, and to know more about their life and their conflict and to know there are people like us and they didn't give up and it gives us strength to keep going.
- Meeting new people that have experience conflict and hard situations.

18. Did you feel comfortable with your host family? (*Give your reasons*)

- Yesss! Because they treated me like I was one of their family and they took care of me very well.
- Yes they were very nice, I felt like I was in my home. The food was great; they were very kind to me.
- Extremely, the mother was very nice and caring, and the father was very interesting to talk to.
- Sure I did because my first and the second host family they were amazing and very welcoming.
- Yes I do because they are very respectful. They are religious and they respect my religion. I have my own bathroom and my own room to sleep, this gave me more privacy. The food they made I was fine with it.
- Yes, very comfortable, because they have been very kind and friendly. From the beginning they provided me everything and they treated me as a family member.
- I had two host families and both of them were very nice, polite and understanding. They made me feel like home. They also offered me everything I needed every day like food, shower etc.

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19. Did you feel comfortable with the Irish host student? *If Yes, why?*

- Yes, he is nice and we have lots in common.
- Yes, he reminded me a lot of my best friend and we shared a lot of interests. He was also genuinely interested in what I had to say.
- Yes, my host student was like my sister we went shopping sometimes. She was very kind with me, she didn't let me feel like I'm different from her I loved staying with her and her family and I hope she will feel the same when she comes to Palestine.
- Yes I do, because his interests are similar to mine. In sports, music and food. I felt really comfortable with my Irish student. He likes to chat with me and telling me his personal feelings.
- Yes because she is nice, beautiful, kind and we were very good friends.
- Yes! I feel like more than just a Palestinian student hosted at their house, we're best friends now, and there is much in common between us.
- I do not have to lie but I will say that I feel that the first Irish host, she was a little bit different to me and I feel that she became mad from everything I did but the second one she was amazing. I like her so much and I did not say that I do not like the first one.

20. What other experiences did you enjoy during the visit?

- Meeting different people from different parts of the world. Learning different cultures and habits. Making new friends and learning new ideas.
- Meeting new people everyday. I enjoyed the hiking trip to the waterfall and the bowling.
- The hike to the waterfall. I was getting a lot of mixed feelings about the project and it helped me clear my mind.
- We went ice skating and it was amazing, it was my first time doing that. We went to the waterfall and also it was my first time seeing it. When we went shopping with the Irish students because they were amazing. When we played bowling with the Irish students, meeting new people every day.
- Well, I enjoyed going to the waterfall and walking, bowling, going to the sea, sailing, ice skating, quasar, meeting lots of friends and people, shopping.
- Going to the waterfall, shopping centres, getting lost in the train, and visiting the museum and the Dublin castle.
- When we got lost on the Luas train!

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21. What aspects of the visit did you find difficult?

(What aspects would you have changed to make the visit better for you?)

- I think the journey was very successful and I wouldn't change anything of it.
- It was a very good visit, an amazing experience for us. It made me feel more confident, now I can talk about the conflict without any problem.
- I will never ever change anything in this visit.
- Nothing.
- I felt that meeting with the rest of the Palestinian students at night was extremely difficult and we didn't get as much free time together as I had hoped.
- Well, I didn't find any difficulties during the visit but the time and the plans were not organised well.
- That we weren't given enough free time to meet the other students after the group discussions.

22. What is your general feeling of the visit to Ireland?

- Amazing, great, it was one of the best things that I did in my life, it has made me more confident now, more focused, I can depend on myself easily.
- A wonderful experience that comes only once in a lifetime.
- It was an amazing experience, it made me think a lot about myself and where I wanted to be in my life and it made me decide to come here and study for college after I finish school, mainly because of the people.
- Very happy, I liked everything in Ireland especially the people because they were very nice with us, it was the most beautiful experience I have ever had in my whole life.
- My general feeling is 'I don't want to leave Ireland'. It was an amazing city and there people here are amazing too.
- It was a good experience for me and now I feel that I have become a better person morally and becoming more confident in myself and standing up to people. Being in Ireland was amazing.
- Great visit.

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23. What are the benefits to you personally?

- It was an eye opener, it showed me that there is always hope, and it helped me better understand myself.
- Before S.A.B I was not able to express my feelings and what I think to the people but now I can express all my feelings and opinions.
- I feel that I am very confident now, and I can easily stand up in front of people and talk, also building up my personality and learning communicating skills, and how to make things clear for others and knowing how to explain things better.
- Learning about new culture, realising my own views, learning a lot about the two conflicts, the Palestinian/Israeli and the Irish conflict. I had fun.
- Good listener, talkative, confident, able to talk in front of groups, can discuss a lot of problems.
- Improving my speaking skills and becoming more confident.
- I can listen to people, I am very interested in knowing more about the people, I know I can speak easily without any fear and I can stand up and talk.

24. What do you think the group can do now as a follow-up action with the Israeli students in the project?

- That we can learn from each other directly the opinion of each other about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and finding a solution for peace.
- For me, I really would like to meet an open minded Israeli student because I believe that in a conflict it is very important to know what does the other side think about the conflict, his point of view because after the program, I knew that some of the Israeli students are against what is happening and about what does the Israeli government do for us.
- Maybe if we can all put writings of some sort or self- expressing method such as drawings in one magazine or website that would be an eye opener for others and us.
- Maybe we can go to Skype and make a video conference or maybe write a message to them.
- We can send them messages.
- Maybe write them a letter.
- I prefer not to answer this.

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25. What can you do to report or present the visit to your school upon your return?

- I would say that it was a great visit and it helped me a lot. I represented the Palestinian views and I'm proud of it. You have the opportunity to join the project and I hope it would be successful for you.
- I can say what I heard and talk about what I saw as honestly as possible, and relay my own thoughts and experiences to my friends and family.
- I can tell my family and friends about what a beautiful experience and how the people here care about the conflict because when I saw that Irish people care about us, that gave me hope and I'm sure that it will give hope for the people in Palestine and I will tell them about the great idea of the program.
- I will write everything I did in my school magazine and I will share all the information that I learned with my friends.
- That being in Ireland is a wonderful experience for making new friends and learning different cultures. Also telling people from another country about the Palestinian- Israeli conflict makes you feel that you are doing a big duty for your country.
- To talk about the trip and how it made me more confident.
- I can tell students in my school about my experience, and maybe a presentation about the conflict.