

The Future Media Leaders

Eight months ago when Taly Gerber - a first year government student - presented her initial idea during the weekly StandWithUs Fellowship meeting, it all seemed like a pipe dream. But after only six months on August 23rd, this dream became a reality. That day, twenty eight young journalists and students arrived at the IDC to participate in the first-ever Media in Conflicts Seminar - MICS.

By Nuphar Schwartz

Second year student, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy and MICS committee member

The StandWithUs Israel Fellowship is a year-long program from the international, non-profit Israel education organization that trains students to become ambassadors for Israel. On its' brochure, one can find an ambitious aim: "to empower Israeli young adults to be informed, active, articulate and globally minded future leaders". This year StandWithUs's desired goal was successfully achieved.



Seminar participants

As part of the program, each fellow is asked to present his or her idea for a group project, a project that concerns Israeli advocacy, and that will later be implemented by the group.

Taly's idea was bold - to conduct a seminar for European communication students that will explore international media coverage of conflicts with emphasis on the Israeli situation.

After declaring the winning project, the twenty fellows joined together to carry out the Media in Conflicts Seminar - The MICS 2009. This seminar, as they envisioned, was to enable European media to experience Israel not from a distance, but up-close, with the goal of improving public opinion: "In the current media age, journalists' opinions are often interpreted as facts by the masses. We feel that with this power comes great responsibility and the need for informed, honest, accurate reporting is crucial"

After only six months of preparations the seminar took shape. In the planning stages, the MICS wanted to challenge various terms such as objectivity, truth, balance, honesty and reality.

The main challenge was bringing young journalists and students to Israel at such short notice. Advertising and marketing were not enough - fundraising was a major challenge as well, as the team decided that the delegates would not pay for any of their expenses, other than the cost of their flight ticket to Israel.

Eventually, twenty eight future media leaders from 11 different countries - Albania, Belgium, Czech



Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Israel - participated in MICS. For almost 50% of them, it was the first visit to Israel.



Seminar participants

During the seminar, delegates attended sessions, workshops and lectures on topics such as, “how to cover a terrorist attack”; “psychological repercussions of conflict coverage;” “the use of military censorship;” and “conflict coverage by foreign correspondents.” The Israeli-Arab conflict was analyzed as a case study. Delegates also toured Channel 10 news desks, Jerusalem and its surroundings and Tel-Aviv.

Among the key speakers were: Moty Crystal, international negotiation and crisis management expert; Ron Ben Yishai, Senior Political Correspondent and International Affairs Senior Correspondent & commentator; Dr. Jonathan Fine, expert on Political Military Studies, Terrorism & Guerilla Warfare, Arms Control and Israeli Studies; and - Foreign European Co-responders.

MICS ended in a glorious gala evening, and it was clear that the team's ambitious project had succeeded. Not only was the success of the seminar itself obvious, but also the interpersonal relationships

established during the seminar between all delegates, European and Israeli, were evident.

Hopefully, in the future, when one of the delegates will write, publish or broadcast anything about Israel, he will view the events through a different lens using the experience and understanding he gained from the time spent in MICS and in Israel.



Seminar participants