



“Oom Shmoom” (United Nothing)

Model UN is a program training students to represent the country at a conference simulating the work of the United Nations. Students in the program hold debates and look for solutions to the latest and most sensitive issues in international relations, in accordance with the rules of debate and of the “game” that are exclusive to the UN.

By Gal Gingis

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Initiative, determination, international conferences and cross-continental diplomatic struggles. This sounds like the storyline of a James Bond movie, but is characteristic of the Model UN Club that gathers once a week at IDC Herzliya. I met with the project's coordinator in Israel and at IDC Herzliya, **Danielle Baron**.

Baron, a second year student at the School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, immigrated to Israel at the age of 19, and immediately after the army, started her studies at IDC Herzliya.



“Oom Shmoom”, David Ben Gurion once said about the United Nations, but for an understanding of the Model UN project, it should be emphasized that the UN fills a very significant role in the global village of today, on many levels.



Danielle Baron, what is Model UN?

“Model UN is an international student conference simulating the committees and the different arms of the United Nations organization. The participating students are picked from leading universities around the world, and at the conference, the delegates from each country have to represent a foreign country, after studying the arena in depth. During the conference, the students hold debates and look for solutions to the latest and most sensitive issues in international relations, in accordance with the rules of debate and of the “game” that are exclusive to the United Nations.”

How widespread is the Model UN organization?



"United Nations simulations are held in over 90 different countries, including the UN Club at IDC Herzliya, which is the first and only one of its kind in Israel. The Model UN is as common throughout the world as the famous Debate Club, perhaps even more so. In Israel, as I said, this is the first one, apparently because of the attitude of people in Israel towards the United Nations. But with the model so widespread in leading universities all around the world, Israel cannot remain indifferent. As a result, Israel chooses to be a member of the United Nations even though sometimes it is the subject of sharp criticism for its actions, and the same is true with regard to Model UN."

What is the importance of Model UN?

"When I was studying at McGill University in Montreal, I was sent to represent the University at the Harvard conference. At the conference, a celebratory announcement was made because, for the first time, there was a team from Baghdad in attendance. However, a quick glance at the other participants showed that there was not even a single Israeli representative. This illustrates the importance of Model UN. Conferences of this kind are attended by outstanding students from all around the world who, after completing their studies, take up important positions in their countries. So it is important to be properly represented at such gatherings, which provide an opportunity for direct influence. Israel cannot pass up such a golden opportunity to strengthen diplomatic relations with people who, in the not too distant future, will be in a position of influence in their countries."

How was the Model UN at IDC Herzliya set up?

"The story of the establishment of Model UN at IDC Herzliya is illustrative of the academic environment, which encourages excellence, initiative and leadership. When I began studying at IDC, I approached the head of the Students' Association, Ofir Yehezkeli, who was very enthusiastic, and shortly afterwards an academic adviser was appointed for me from IDC. We notified students about the start of the program and received hundreds of applications, from which a group of 11 students was chosen, half of them from the Raphael Recanati International School."

What happens at the meetings?

"We practice the form of debate that takes place in the United Nations. The debates are naturally held in English, so that Israeli students get a wonderful opportunity to practice their language skills. We also learn techniques of persuasion and putting across messages, and we study comparative research and analyze diplomatic speeches. It is all aimed at preparing a first delegation from Israel to attend the Harvard University International Model UN conference - which will take place in The Hague, Holland in March 2009. Because this is an innovative project, we are currently involved in raising funds, and I'm happy to say that we have also received a budget and professional support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

In conclusion, it is clear that in its first year at IDC Herzliya the Model UN, which has already set itself the target of hosting the next international conference in Herzliya, has gathered together a group of ambitious and pioneering young people representing a uniquely effective element in Israel's public relations landscape.



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