

Olive Tree Branch



fyeg discussion on the Israel-Palestine conflict

Project Outline EC proposal - November 2014

Context

The conflict in Palestine-Israel is one of the longest running active conflicts, and also one of the most divisive. Different political, national and cultural backgrounds have different readings of the situation, which has contributed to a very polarised debate. Even within the Greens, one of the most cohesive “political families” on the European level, there is no consensus on the matter.

Within FYEG, numerous attempts have been made in the past to establish an official “FYEG position” on it, although it has become clear that it is challenging to achieve a consensus position within a few hours of discussion. In the last General Assembly, the [resolution Olive Tree Branch](#) was approved, recognising the wide range of views held by FYEG members and calling for a process of further discussion and collective learning.

The requirements in the resolution are the basis for this proposal.

Factors conditioning the process

Inclusivity - In addition to the explicit objectives of Olive Tree Branch relating to discussion and learning, there is the implicit objective that this happens in the most inclusive and respectful way possible. Although this is a topic which emotionally touches most, if not all, of us strongly, the aim of this process is to bring our collective concerns to the table and learn from one another with the understanding that on a base level, our commitment for Human Rights, justice and sustainability bring us closer together than our specific viewpoint on this conflict. The priority should be on understanding mutual concerns rather than point-scoring or dismissing.

Indeed, the debate on the Israel-Palestine is ongoing formally or informally in numerous other social and political forums which are more suited for more traditional political forms of debate.

Timescales - The EC believes that this topic is sufficiently complex to last longer than the time available until the next GA in order to reach sound collective conclusions. However, the process should be started now, with the target of having identified the main barriers to understanding and the origin of the discrepancies between different organisations. There should therefore be a **mid-term report ready for the next GA**, summarising the issues in common, areas sensitive to different MOs, and the process followed.

National contexts - The conflict, and its interpretation, clearly does not take place in a vacuum. Both history and geography have shaped not only how each of us have learnt to perceive the conflict, but also how the societies around us do. It is important that this process takes into consideration the broader national situation of each of the MOs as one of the factors affecting MO's concerns around the process and the topic.

Narratives and language - There are several different "narratives" surrounding the conflict that shape people's view on it. One same sentence or expression can mean very different things depending on one's background and what our main concerns are. Often debates around this conflict become two sets of parallel monologues, as each "side" does not carefully address the others' concerns or viewpoint. Analysing "learnt narratives" will be a key part of the process.

Independence - There are numerous groups and initiatives already in place offering visits to Israel or Palestine, ready-made trainings etc. Whilst we need to evaluate how we can make use of existing initiatives, this is an FYEG project which must ensure the agenda is not set externally.

Logistics

Participants

The proposal is that there is a core **Project Group** of c. 20 people from across MOs and working groups who will be the main focus of the debate and training. Depending on budget and possibilities, specific trainings may include other people as well.

From this Project Group, 8 people will form the **Steering Team**, in charge of coordinating the direction and logistics of the discussions - set up events, bring in experts, pose the relevant questions and set the agenda. By default, this will automatically be a very political set of decisions, but this team should not be a space for opinion creation. The Steering Team will include a member of the EC acting as a "link", and will take its decisions by consensus.

Both the Steering Team and Project Group should be as diverse as possible. The idea is not to frame this as "different sides" being represented or different MOs sending a "delegate" with a pre-made final position to push for, but rather ensure that as many ways of understanding the conflict as possible are included. Nevertheless, because this is a sensitive topic that

requires ownership by the MOs, the EC will discuss applications with the MOs to ensure they feel appropriately represented.

Events

Depending on the funding eventually available, the following are possible, in increasing level of difficulty:

- a) A central meeting/conference in Europe
- b) Training sessions in different areas of Europe
- c) A study visit to Israel/Palestine

In addition, material will be created to allow MOs to organise internal debates and training, and online participation will be facilitated for inter-MO discussion.

Funding

At the last General Assembly, the budget was amended to include a line for this project. However, the funds are very limited, and so for the successful development of this process alternatives will have to be explored with FYEG funding partners as well as other organisations working around the conflict. This is a topic area which FYEG and our closest funding partners do not historically have experience in, but different alternatives will be explored to ensure this project can go forward.

Please feel free to send any questions or clarifications to joan@fyeg.org.