Die ungewöhnliche Delegation aus Israel

Jüdische und arabeche Studenten besuchen Hamburg. Mit dem Abendblatt sprechen sie über Iran, die Sorge vor Krieg und wie Witze helfen

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Dann muss man ein paar Tage spielen, scherzt der Journalist. Die Geheimsitzungen der Regierung und die Konflikte mit dem Iran machen es ihm unmöglich, die normalen Leben in Israel zu führen.

Schon beim ersten gemeinsamen Frühstück diskutieren sie über den Iran. Sie sitzen an einem Tisch und teilen sich die Gedanken und Erlebnisse. Der Iran ist kein Alltagsthema, es ist eine Schlagworte, die in der arabischen und jüdischen Gemeinschaft geführt werden. In einer gemeinsamen Delegation nehmen sie an der Hannover Messe teil. Für ein paar Tage treffen sie sich, um die Konflikte in der Region zu diskutieren.


Hamburger fördern die Universität Haifa

Jewish and Arab students visit Hamburg and speak with the *Hamburger Abendblatt* newspaper about Iran, fears of war and the power of humor.

Apart from the *Knesset*, newspaper headlines and TV reports about the nuclear threat that Iran presents to Israel, you can hear jokes: A kind of humor and irony that can offer as much protection against the fear of war as tanks. “In Israel, everyone has to have a safe room against the missile attacks,” tells Hadas Lavi. “We store clothes and boxes in there, but lately my mum told me: ‘We should clean up here some time, we might need the shelter soon’”.

**Already at the first joint breakfast they discussed about Iran**

They are sitting at a table and are laughing, Hadas Lavi and the six other students from the University of Haifa that just arrived in Hamburg for a visit. They are Arab and Jewish Israelis. As a joint delegation, they are participating in the HamMUN 2011. For a couple of days they reenact conferences of the United Nations; a role play of highest diplomacy. The 24-year-old Hadas Lavi is going to represent Japan and 24-year-old Rina Dorfman is going to represent Japan Germany. In 2010, more than 300 students debated in simulated councils, committees, tribunals and general assemblies of the HamMUN.

Dania Masarwa identified herself as a Palestinian Arab from Israel. She is 22 years old and studies Conflict Management. She is currently acting as a delegate of Iran in a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Dania has read newspaper articles, blogs on the internet and also studies the nuclear dispute between Israel and the Islamic Republic. Iran uses nuclear energy peacefully; the report of the Atomic Energy Commission was full of prejudices: These are her arguments, as the Iranian delegate. Dania prepared her arguments for her role as a representative of Mahmud Ahmadinejad properly. Dania Marsawa concludes: “Iran is striving for power; an ambition that many countries share. As soon as Iran is going to have nuclear weapons the whole balance of power in the region is going to shift”.

Already during the first joint breakfast of the delegation the topic of Iran arose. Of course, they were not thinking of Ahmadinejad immediately when they wake up, said the 24-year-old Alon Sasson who studies economics and political sciences in Haifa. “Also Israelis check first of all if there is still enough coffee in the house.” However, in the last couple of months they felt the tension. “How to deal with Iran is one of the most important political decisions in the history of our country,” claimed the 24-year-old Sefi Shalman who studies political sciences and history.

“One thing is sure,” argued Asya Bongard (24) who immigrated to Israel with her family from Ukraine in 1990, “the Israeli government will not make any decisions on its own without the support of other Western countries”. However, the conflict was not only a problem for people in Israel: “Iran also represents a danger for Europe,” said the student of political sciences. Also, China and Russia are not interested in an escalation.

Jews and Arabs in Israel go to different schools. Only at the University, they sit next to each other in
seminar rooms. Whoever speaks to the young people of the delegation will hear little about the Arab-Israeli conflict, but of the shared fear of a war with Iran. Bombs do not distinguish between ethnicity or religion, they say.

The Arab Spring expelled dictators, but riots are still an issue

And the young students claim that, as citizens of Israel, they carry an especially heavy burden on their shoulders: The burden of being the only real democracy in the region, whether in the conflict with Iran, the Palestinians, Lebanon, Egypt or Syria. People in Israel realize that the Arab Spring helped to expel dictators and young Israelis were feeling solidarity with the people in Tunisia and Egypt. However, after the rebellion, instability in the region remained.

The students will stay in Hamburg until Monday, in politically stable Germany, that as they claim, worked more than any other country to account for its past. In a lot of places they noticed memorials remarked Sefi Shalam. He told his parents on his day of his departure: “If there is going to be a war between Israel and Iran then please now, when I am in Germany”. The group is laughing.

People from Hamburg support the University of Haifa

The University of Haifa has a German Friends Association, headed by Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel. The association rewards scholarships to needy and talented students. The initiative was founded 40 years ago by Eric Warburg. The Association has been supported by prominent members such as Iris Berben and Helmut Schmidt.

Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel is the wife of Prof. Manfred Lahnstein, former Minister of Finance. Among others, Prof. Manfred Lahnstein was active in the International Currency Fond, the World Bank, the Dräger and the Bertelsmann Foundation.