

I seek to sustain dialogue about the Middle East throughout my college and professional careers. I am currently a member of several cultural and religious organizations in order to expand discourse across various communities on campus. When entering college, I made a detailed plan of all the goals I wanted to accomplish through the course of these four years. At the very top of the list were increasing my firsthand experience in the Middle East and organizing events to advance the discourse on the region. As a part of the Society of Arab Students, I have helped execute Harvard Arab Weekend, the largest Arab conference in all of North America. As a part of this project, I was able to listen to captivating speeches, such as a public address made by Queen Rania of Jordan and a pitch competition featuring entrepreneurial ventures focusing on the Middle East. Aside from this conference, I have helped organize several other Middle East-related events to foster constant discussion about the growth and progress of the Arab World.

I believe that my religious background would also enrich the program's dialogue. As a practicing member of the Baha'i Faith, a religious minority traditionally persecuted in the Middle East, I believe that I have a great deal to contribute to the interfaith discourse that the Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Program seeks to create. The Baha'i Faith is a new world religion whose main tenets are the unity of humanity and the pursuit of world peace. In this context, I strongly believe in interfaith dialogue as a means of creating harmony among people of different cultures and faiths.

I seek to incorporate this invaluable experience into my academic and surrounding communities in several ways. First of all, I believe that my university does a good job at covering political issues regarding the region. I have had the bounty of listening the speeches from politicians such as the President of Tunisia and journalists such as the senior correspondent of the Wall Street Journal on the Middle East, who have all discussed the problems they see in the Middle East's past and the problems they foresee for its future. What they oftentimes overlook, however, is the growing resilience of entrepreneurs and social activists in the region. Therefore, through this experience, I would like to learn more about this very resilience: how leaders from a wide range of backgrounds are seeking to transform the Middle East for the better.

I hope to directly take this experience back to my school by organizing several seminars related to the progress of the Middle East. While I see great value in discussing current conflicts plaguing the region, I see even greater worth in listening to those who have already made strides to move the Middle East forward: social activists, entrepreneurs, and other like-minded leaders. I would like to gain inspiration from this program by speaking with leaders in the Middle East and absorb their various perspectives on the Middle East's growth and development.

Personally, I would also like to develop my capacity as a catalyst for change. I believe that this experience would allow me to better understand the growing areas of progress, and how I as a Middle Eastern-American and aspiring entrepreneur could contribute to the region's advancement. Through dialogue, I believe that I will be able to fortify my role in the Middle East's progress, enabling me to generate even more dialogue with my surrounding community here at Harvard.

Thus, I hope to incorporate this experience into my surrounding communities through interfaith events, future Harvard Arab Weekends, seminars on progress in the Middle East, and my daily interactions with my peers and teachers. I believe that many in the US do not quite

understand the potential for growth in the Middle East, and so I hope that my participation in this program will better enable me to advocate interfaith and cross-cultural communication and empathy.

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