

## WIHW Event: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Personal Stories



### Host

[Unity is Strength](#) is a fast-growing online forum focused on Israel-Palestine discussion, community-building, and peacebuilding. Its goal is to remain open to the public and to allow airing of diverse, respectful opinions about Israel-Palestine. Ultimately, we explore solutions to Israel-Palestine at any scale, from local to international, that could be based on shared efforts. Unity is Strength has received over one million views in the less than two years of its operation, and has approximately 100 writers and 15 Admins and Moderators. Forum participants may come from all over the world, but are heavily concentrated in Israel, Palestine, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa region. Although Unity is Strength is almost entirely a volunteer effort supported by the community, we are Quora.com's first forum to be awarded small external grants for operating and other expenses. Recently, we were accepted into the United Religions Initiative (URI) as a Cooperation Circle (CC), another first for a Quora forum.

### Event

For World Interfaith Harmony Week, we held the event "Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Personal Stories" online, to contribute our part to the larger WIHW efforts of the URI. Our approach was inspired by the culture of Quora.com, where we started. Quora was originally a question-answering website, and its answers are heavily oriented toward personal stories humanizing people across national and cultural barriers. We brought a similar approach to our event, livestreaming and recording a panel of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim active forum participants sharing basic information about their religions and telling personal stories about their experiences as practitioners. All three participants were heavily connected to Israel and Palestine - the Jewish participant came from a family active in Israel issues, and both the

Christian and Muslim participants were Palestinian. As a result, the event also promoted a larger message of inter-religious and inter-cultural peacebuilding in Israel-Palestine. Our event was honored with a 2021 World Interfaith Harmony Week Award from the URI.

The event was one of our first video calls and our first explicitly interfaith activity. It also expanded Unity is Strength to two new Internet platforms - [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). It was live-streamed on our new Facebook group and made available on our new YouTube channel. Before and after the event, the activity was publicized both by our team on our own platforms and by the larger URI to all Cooperation Circles. Across the various Internet platforms, our event was attended or watched by over 150 people.

### **Testimonials about the event**

“Well-done...Many thanks for this great activity. Many URI folks enjoyed the video.”

-URI MENA team

“That's the kind of discussion thousands and thousands of people around the world should be having with each other - it's unifying to share life stories. From my minority ethnic and agnostic perspective quite a bit of what you call religion is what I would call culture - something we might perhaps discuss at some future time. There's overlap in mine too. You're all open to new experiences and you're positive thinkers.”

-Alan Armstrong, Maori activist, New Zealand

“Your explanations are excellent...great first attempt. All 3 of you are good speakers, I loved that all 3 of you were not suggesting your faiths were perfect.”

-Lee Boueri, serial startup founder and Business Review Weekly's (BRW) Fast 100 for 3 years consecutive, Lebanese Roman Catholic, Australia

### **Testimonials about Unity is Strength**

“Extremely cool. Those [Israelis and Palestinians] are two groups that notoriously, throughout history, have not gotten along, and have tried a lot of different ways to figure out how to get along. To go after a tense and emotional situation and work toward peacemaking is cool, and to use technology in a way that brings people together instead of drags them apart is also cool. It's really heartening to see this technology being used in a way that helps people find common ground, as opposed to fight with people they never would have met otherwise...It helps me feel a little bit more optimistic about the Internet, honestly.”

-Nick Holder and Brian Reitz, [How Cool is This? podcast](#)

“The rise of a grass roots movement 😊...I can feel the rocket boosters igniting under UIS. Well done.”

-Lee Boueri

“I think we need more spaces like this, to have people engage in a dialogue that is constructive.”

-David Katibah, [Telos Group](#)

“Wow this is a very novel and unique approach to this issue...I find your approach is more constructive than anything I've ever considered...I didn't even try to consider the Palestinian

point of view until now...Both groups have suffered throughout history. They should see that as a shared struggle and work together to end it. Make it a win win instead of win lose situation.”

-Josh Nunn, unit movement officer, U.S. Department of Defense

“I feel fully embraced by the lovely members of Unity is Strength. So many have commented and reached out to me. You have succeeded in creating a truly welcoming and warm community which is exactly the right recipe for productive and honest discussions. A big thank you!”

-Sylvie Hodes, Cambridge University student, Roots/Shorashim/Judur intern assigned to write for the Space, British Jewish

“I’m thankful for what you’ve introduced me to. I’ve made so many friends and connections....never in my life did I think I’d see the day that I could ever walk this route. I truly will always be grateful to you...Your dedication is unreal. I really would like to see a documentary made on this.”

-Nadia Ramahi, Admin, Palestinian American

“When people like Rebecca, Nadia, and so many others send encouragement and support, one does not feel so alone. I guess that is why groups like this exist. It helps a lot.”

-Joseph Saad, Moderator, Palestinian Canadian

“Thank you so much, Rebecca, for this wonderful post, as well as your support for my country! This really means a lot to us, thanks :D”

-Serge Elia, lawyer and contributing writer, Lebanese, in response to post supporting Lebanon after Beirut explosion

“Unity is Strength is the most smart vision that I've heard of, and I don't say it lightly.”

-Hojjat Mohseni, Quora writer, Iranian