



Castan Centre Israel Study Tour Confronts Middle East Dilemmas

A Castan Centre study group was confronted with the harsh realities of Middle Eastern politics when it toured Israel in December. The group, co-organised by Castan Centre Deputy Director Melissa Castan and the Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce, was exposed to a number of human rights issues, including of course those arising from the Israel-Palestine conflict. The week-long schedule included presentations from 49 speakers including activists, journalists, academics, judges, military officers and the father of a bomb blast victim.

Castan Centre Deputy Director Adam McBeth summed it up: 'We heard some very different perspectives and explanations about the same policy, the same event, the same structure or piece of land on numerous occasions. I found the exposure to these different understandings of events, and the opportunity to engage with people to discover the reasons they saw things that way, to be invaluable in understanding the situation in the Middle East. The underlying historical, cultural, religious, security-related, land-related complexity of issues in Israel will certainly inform my teaching in international law and human rights law. It is a perfect example of a situation where every decision has far-reaching consequences, which warns against evaluating legality or desirability in narrow terms.'

The short tour promoted extensive debate among the participants which has continued since the group returned.

See *page 12* for more about the trip.

Top: Castan Centre Associate Patrick Emerton thanks Professor Hanoeh Dagan, Dean of Law, Tel-Aviv University for speaking with the group.

Bottom: A view over Jerusalem, with the Temple Mount at the centre.

