

# Jewish, Muslim youths to meet as Middle East violence flares

LAURA DANNEN

ldannen@metro-boston.com



**BOSTON** As violence escalates in the Middle East, local young adults — both Jewish and Muslim — will try to bridge the religious divide this weekend.

Twenty members from the Moishe House Boston: Kavod Jewish Social Justice House, the Boston chapters of the Muslim American Society and the Center for Jewish Muslim Relations, will hold a dialogue in Brookline on Sunday to discuss their common ground.

Metro spoke to Moishe House head Margie Klein, 27, and Boston MAS Associate Director Bilal Kaleem, 26, before the event.

▶ **What are some common misperceptions about Jewish-Muslim relations?**

Margie Klein: I think that people often think Jews and Muslims have an inherent hate for one another. While we're sad and horrified by the violence in the Middle East, we don't think that's the result of a fundamental



**MEMBERS OF THE** Moishe House Boston: Kavod Jewish Social Justice House, site of a Jewish-Muslim dialogue in Brookline on Sunday, gather at its opening last year.

incompatibility between our two communities.

Bilal Kaleem: I think we're definitely aware that there's a lot of recent history of political issues, but our particular project right now is trying to focus on issues we have a strong connection to, to serve our communities and our societies.

▶ **What common ground do your religions share?**

Klein: Both of our tradi-

tions have a real concern for the dignity of poor people. ... Our group and the Muslim American Society are both committed to fighting poverty, protecting civil liberties, working for immigrant rights — issues that are often left out of the "faith agenda."

▶ **Will the recent events in the Middle East affect this weekend's dialogue?**

Kaleem: Personally, I don't think it will ... In many ways, it only reinforces our

desire to reach across [boundaries] and work on something positive, so our interaction isn't always framed by the negative things going on in the world.

Klein: We're hoping that this dialogue is just the beginning ... We're young, religious people faced with modern problems, looking at our common cause for social justice ... It's important to us to focus on local issues.

STEPHEN LINDO