

Globe West
BRANDEIS TO HOLD MOCK ISRAELI ELECTION
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WALTHAM - As Israelis go to the polls Tuesday to vote in national elections, students at Brandeis University will be among those at 50 campuses nationwide where ballots will be cast in mock Israeli elections. The event leads up to a Feb. 4 panel discussion on the outcome of the races and their impact, which is open to the public.

Ari Stein, a student who is organizing a series of programs around the election, hopes that more than half of the university's approximately 3,000 students will turn out to vote.

"The purpose is to highlight the Israeli democratic process and highlight issues that are pertinent right now in Israeli society. Despite everything that's going on, there's certainly more than just day-after-day tragedy," said Stein, a junior majoring in politics. "We want to put facts where people were lacking facts, and put history and background where people were lacking history and background."

Visiting professor Moshe Maoz will be one of the panelists at next week's post-election discussion. He said that several potential outcomes are being shaped by factors that include high unemployment, the issue of Palestinian statehood, and fallout from a possible US invasion of Iraq.

"The election will determine whether Israel continues to fight against the Palestinians and there's a vicious cycle of violence that can spread and get worse, or if they'll have negotiations, but the question is with whom," said Maoz, who teaches at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "According to the polls, there is some outline of what's going to happen, but things can change. We have miracles from time to time, every 2,000 years or so."

The election was organized by Hasbara Fellowships in New York, which runs yearly programs in which students travel to Israel and learn how they can bring activism back to their campuses.

"One idea that's not getting out there is that Israel is a democracy. It's not a perfect democracy. It's making mistakes," said Elliot Mathias, director of Hasbara Fellowships. "The idea is really to demonstrate, and in some way even celebrate, Israeli democracy. The election shows this to students in a way that allows them to participate."

Students will vote throughout the day Tuesday, and a running tally of election results will be posted online at www.israelvotes.com/newengland.

On Feb. 4, the panel discussion will take place at 8 p.m. at the Carl and Ruth Shapiro Campus Center at Brandeis.

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