

## Crusades Simulation Reflection

In the simulation, I learned a lot about the reasoning behind the terrible violence that happened during the Crusades. Acting as Kiliç Arslan, the Muslim Sultan and leader during the First Crusade, I researched the Crusades from the Muslim perspective, and accusations were hurled at me from the Christian perspective. Even though it was a simulation, the renewed arguments of the tenth and eleventh century Crusades helped me better understand the reason behind the hatred and discrimination the Christians, Jews, and Muslims began to feel during this time period. Out of context, in the modern world, their arguments may seem completely immoral and unjust, but by listening to a debate consisting only of deeply-religious, old ideas, it is easier to empathize with the different perspectives from the Crusades.

I learned how the Muslims considered the war a defensive war, in a time after Seljuk Turks had been conquering land and taken the Holy Land. They felt that the ruthless Christians were immoral and the Crusades were unnecessary. The Christians took it as a defensive war as well, because the Muslims had taken the Holy Land (former property of the Christians), and because some Turks were attacking Byzantium. Alexius called for help, and Pope Urban II created and called on the Crusaders to fight (with some propaganda). They considered the Muslims barbaric and lowly because they were not Christian. Therefore, both sides mutually hated each other for being ruthless and trying to take over *their* Holy Land, which was interesting to me—they thought of each other as thieves of the Holy Land, and themselves as the only rightful owner of it. I think this had the largest impact on me—how two groups can both have their reasons to consider that they are “good” and the other is “bad,” completely contradicting each other. I also found it interesting that both sides had a very small attempt to achieve peace, and that there were really no realistic ideas for the future of the Holy Land, other than their own domination.

I feel that my contribution to the discussion was minor. The conversation was dominated by the Pope Urban II (Nathaniel), and I could not argue against him. He repeatedly went back to the idea that the Turks had invaded Byzantium and stolen the Holy Land, and I repeatedly could not defend myself. Kiliç’s ancestors were the ones to conquer other lands; in his reign, his only

conflict with the Europeans were in the form of defending against invasion. I did not know what his ancestors thought, nor could I blame them, because it seems wrong to blame elders. To defend myself, I had to bring up other subjects, such as the Muslim right to the Holy Land, the ruthlessness of the Crusaders, and the defensive position of the Muslims. I did contribute, but it was somewhat repetitive and did not rebut all of the arguments against me.

To make this “debate” more interesting and thoughtful, I think that if we could discuss with our allies or subjects, then we would be able to formulate better arguments with a stronger, wider perspective and without the possible misunderstanding that results from one person. I was a little unclear on some of the topics and ideas brought up, and I would have liked to talk about it with the Turkish soldier and Turkish metalworker to support a new argument.