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ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION

April 19, 2010 | 5 Iyyar, 5770 | 5 Jumada Al-'Awwal, 1431

Dear Friends,

I recently wrote an article entitled "Notes for a Humanist Liberal Understanding of Zionism"*. In recent years, I have often been asked if such position is still tenable in contemporary Israel.

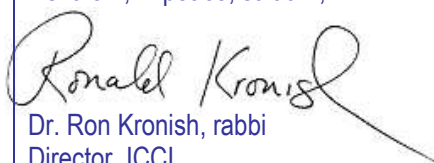


My answer, of course, is yes. In many ways, all that is called for is a return to the basic values enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, published on May 14, 1948. It is an inspirational statement of the ideals on which this state and society are based: "freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel". The declaration pledges "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex," guarantees "freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture", and promises to "safeguard the Holy Places of all religions" and to "be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." It goes on to request the Arab inhabitants of the state to preserve the peace and invites them to be a part of the new state, "on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation". A hand is then extended in peace to all the neighboring states, appealing them to establish bonds of cooperation "for the advancement of the entire Middle East".

But life is not so simple. We cannot simply go back to 1948! Too many wars and too much violence have occurred since then. For a long time, until the Oslo Accords in 1993, both sides did not even officially recognize the existence of the other. Despite the mutual recognition (at least in principle!) and peace agreements of 1993, peace has eluded us for the past 16 years. Instead, we have been witness to terror and counter-terror, the Second Lebanese War in summer 2006, rockets shot at our communities in the South, and Israeli military operations in Gaza last year. Naturally, people on both sides have begun to despair of the possibility of peace in our region. Instead of normalization, we have separation. Instead of negotiations, we have walls and fences.

My answer to this—and the answer shared by many of my colleagues in Israel—is not to give up! Even if we can not solve all of the political problems at once, we must persevere via dialogue wherever possible. In this spirit, I wish all who celebrate the miracle of the rebirth of the Jewish People in their ancient homeland as the essence of *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*, Israel Independence Day, a *Chag Sameach*—a joyous and fulfilling holiday.

L'shalom, in peace, salaam,


Dr. Ron Kronish, rabbi
Director, ICCI

* The full article is available at <http://icci.org.il/downloads/RK-22.2.2010.pdf>

UPCOMING EVENTS

ICCI/JCJCR/Kahillat Yedidya: Study tour of the Old City, April 30, 2010

The public is invited to a unique study of the Armenian and Christian Quarters of Jerusalem's Old City, entitled "**Get to Know Your Christian Neighbors and the Problems They Face**", which will take place on Friday, April 30, 2010 (08:30-13:00), starting at the Jaffa Gate. The program, jointly sponsored by ICCI, the **Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR)** and **Kehillat Yedidya**, is a follow up to the highly successful study evening recently held at Kehillat Yedidya on the topic "Why Do Some Jews Spit on Christians?" The tour will be led by **Daniel Rossing, Director of JCJCR**, and the program is set to include visits to a variety of Christian institutions and meetings with Church leaders, notably the **Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land, Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa ofm**, and Archbishop **Aris Shirvanian of the Armenian Patriarchate**. Registration for this study tour is already closed, but ICCI has scheduled another study tour for Friday, May 14th, at the same times. **To register, please contact us at communications@icci.org.il.**

ICCI Library Lecture: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue, May 12, 2010



Prof. Harold Kasimow (left), the George Drake Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus at **Grinnell College** in Iowa, will give a library lecture on the topic of "**Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue**". Prof. Kasimow studied with Rabbi Heschel at the **Jewish Theological Seminary** in New York and has published numerous articles about Heschel and interreligious dialogue. He is co-editor, with Byron Sherwin, of "No Religion Is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue". The Lecture will take place on May 12 at 17:00 at ICCI's Jerusalem Headquarters. **To register, please contact us at communications@icci.org.il.**

ONGOING PROGRAMS

The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF)

On Friday and Saturday, March 19-20, the JIYAF program participants took part in a two-day seminar in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. They were there to reflect on their experiences in JIYAF, as well as to plan for the final trimester of the program. The participants planned various activities for the group, including a screening of the Academy-Award-nominated film **Ajami**, as well as a panel discussion with members of the **One Voice Movement**, which advocates for a two-state solution. The participants also toured a Christian school and learned about the challenges that it faces because of the political situation.

This program is currently funded by grants from the **World Conference of Religions for Peace**, the **Pontifical Mission** and the **Embassies of the U.S.A. and the Netherlands**.

Special course about the relations between Jews and Poles

ICCI's special course about "**Encountering Poland: Relations between Jews and Poles – Religious, Historical and Social Dimensions**", a collaboration between ICCI and the **Polish Institute**, with added support from **Ms. Luna Kaufman** of New York, has been ongoing since October 2009. The speakers in the bi-weekly meetings are alternately guest lecturers from Poland and Israeli experts. In recent meetings, **Fr. Piotr Zelazko**, a Polish priest studying in Israel, spoke about the role of the Catholic Church in Poland; **Prof. Bozena Szajnok** of the **University of Wroclaw** discussed Polish-Israeli diplomatic relations between 1945-1967; and **Mr. Bralek Zeichner**, a representative of Polish Immigrants living in Israel, spoke about the forced emigration of 1968.

SPECIAL EVENT

Galilee Religious Leaders Forum: Hanaton event



On March 17, 2010, 30 religious leaders from the Galilee – Jews, Druze, Christians & Muslims – gathered at **Kibbutz Hanaton**, a Masorati (Conservative) Kibbutz, which is undergoing renewal and rejuvenation, for a special seminar. Prior to the formal program of the day, which included joint study, reflection and action plans, these members of the Galilee Religious Leaders Forum held informal discussions over lunch with a visiting group of students from Columbia University's School of Journalism (see "Visiting Groups" section). The clergy then reconvened at the Hanaton synagogue to learn together some texts about the Jewish holiday of Passover, with **Rabbi Shmuel Reiner** of Mitzpe Netofa in the Galilee, one of the heads of **Maale Gilboa Yeshiva**. The non-Jewish religious leaders were fascinated by this opportunity to learn about what Jews do and say on the eve of Passover. Following the study session, the forum members began planning a day of joint lectures and activities at a high school in the Arab Israeli town of Shfaram, to take place on April 22, 2010.

ICCI expresses gratitude to Mr. **Yakub Salame** and the staff of the **Division of Religious Communities of Israel's Ministry of Interior** for their partnership with us in this program and to **Rabbi Yoav Ende**, Rabbi of Kibbutz Hanaton, for hosting the event.

CONGRATULATIONS

ICCI bids farewell to **Fr. Mike McGarry** (right), who has served as Rector of the **Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies** as well as serving on the Board of Directors of ICCI for the past 12 years. We thank Rev. McGarry for many years of faithful service, and congratulate him on becoming the new President of the **Paulist Fathers**, to be based in New York City as of May 1, 2010. ICCI also extends a warm welcome to Israel to Fr. McGarry's replacement, **Friar Timothy Lowe**, a priest of the **Orthodox Church of America**.



ICCI also congratulates Rev. Dr. **Katharine Rhodes Henderson** (left), who was inaugurated on April 15, 2010, as the Sixth President of **Auburn Theological Seminary** in New York City. We in ICCI are grateful for her leadership in the field of Jewish-Christian Relations in general and in the field of Interreligious dialogue/conflict resolution via the Face to Face/Faith to Faith youth leadership program of Auburn, with whom we have partnered for the past 8 years.

ICCI ABROAD

ICCI's Youth and Young Adult Programs Director in the U.S., March 2010

Between March 8-27, 2010, ICCI's Youth and Young Adult Programs Director Avigail Moshe participated in the **U.S. State Department** program "International Visiting Leadership Program (IVLP)", with the special theme of "American Youth: Inspiring Leadership and Civic Participation". She received the honor of being invited to this exclusive program by virtue of her work within



ICCI during the past 5 years in promoting dialogue and action projects with Jewish and Palestinian youth and young adults. The program exposed Avigail and the other participants to many models, programs and people in the U.S. who are actively involved in this field. "Spending time as part of a group of young leaders from all over the world and learning about their challenges and achievements was an invaluable experience", according to Avigail.

VISITING GROUPS

The following groups have recently taken part in ICCI's educational programs for groups visiting from abroad:

- the **HAVERIM JOURNEY TO ISRAEL** group from Texas and Colorado, led by **Joy and Ben Warren** and **Barbara and Bob Rosen**, who met with Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish over breakfast at the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem on Sunday morning, April 11th for a briefing on Interreligious Dialogue and Education in Israel.
- a group of students from **Columbia University's** School of Journalism, led by **Prof. Ari L. Goldman**. The group visited Israel and the region in March 2010 as part of Prof. Goldman's 'Covering Religion' class and took part in a special program organized by the Director of ICCI's **Center for Interreligious Encounter** with Israel, **Mr. Ophir Yarden**. To read more about this program, please visit our [blog](#) as well as the special blog set up by the journalism students themselves at <http://www.coveringreligion.org>.
- a group of Catholic educators from Sydney, Australia, who were in Israel under the auspices of **Glenn Witmer**, director of **Menno Jerusalem Programs Inc.** who is a specialist in Bible Land Tours, and was the former director of the **Bat Kol Institute** in Jerusalem. On Friday night, April 16th, Rabbi Ron Kronish, rabbinic student intern Brandon Bernstein and 2 other students from **Hebrew Union College** who are studying in Israel this year—**Jeremy Simons and Sarah Lauing**—led and participated in a special Shabbat dinner at the **Tantur Ecumenical Institute** in Jerusalem for this group.

ICCI IN THE MEDIA

Prof. Shalom Goldman, a lecturer at the **Emory University** in Atlanta, Georgia, who is currently in Israel for a two-month sabbatical, wrote a blog posting about ICCI, JCJCR, and Kehillat Yedidya's campaign against harassment of Christians in the Old City for ReligionandstateinIsrael.org blog. The post is entitled "Holy Spit: Why Do Ultra-Orthodox Jews Spit at Christians?" and dated April 7, 2010. http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/mediaculture/2401/holy_spit:_why_do_ultra-orthodox_jews_spit_at_christians/

An interview with Dr. Ron Kronish and Fr. Mike McGarry was broadcast by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority's IBA news program, in April, and was also broadcast on the Middle East Television (METV).and featured online on April 5, 2010. Erin Viner talked to Dr. Kronish and Fr. McGarry about interfaith dialogue in troubled times and its impact.

Dr. Ron Kronish was interviewed by Polish TV (the TVP1 channel, for the program "Wiadomosci") and radio on April 4, 2010. The interviews revolved around the connections between the Jewish holiday of Passover and the Christian holiday of Easter and Jewish-Christian relations in Jerusalem.

NEWS FROM ICCI MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



The **Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education** in the Arab Israeli town of Baqa al-Gharbiyya has held several events in the past few weeks. On March 3, 2010, college president **Dr. Mohammad Essawi**, representatives of the Board of Trustees, faculty members and employees assembled to sign the newly modified covenant of the college. On March 10, 2010, the college held a special gathering for the local community of Baqa al-Gharbiyya, in order to strengthen community relations and to tell the public about Al-Qasemi's history and plans for the future. On March 17, 2010, Al-Qasemi's Computer Science Department held a special seminar on "the Synthesis of Experience, Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Teaching

The **Tantur Ecumenical Institute** will be hosting a special lecture by ecumenical and interfaith specialist **Fr. Thomas Ryan**, entitled "**Spiritual Gifts to Share for Our Mutual Enrichment: Ecumenical & Interfaith Offerings**," to mark **Fr. Michael McGarry's** departure from Tantur and from Israel. The lecture will be held on Monday April 26 at 3:45pm, at the Tantur Institute in Jerusalem at the corner of Ha-Rosmarin Street and Hebron Road.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Changes in Officers of ICCI Board of Directors

During ICCI's Board of Directors meeting in March, **Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman** (right) of **Rabbis for Human Rights** (and Rabbi of Kehillat Kol HaNeshama in Jerusalem) was elected as co-chairperson of ICCI; **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, President of the **International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)**, was elected as co-vice chairperson; and the **Rev. Dr. Håkan Bengtsson**, Director of the **Swedish Theological Institute** in Jerusalem, was elected to replace **Fr. Mike McGarry** as co-vice chairperson.



Upcoming ICCI/AEI WCRP-sponsored Collaboration

ICCI is proud to announce an upcoming collaboration with the **Arab Educational Institute (AEI-Open Windows) of Bethlehem**. ICCI and AEI will jointly plan and implement a series of programs dealing with non-violent education. These activities will be funded by a special grant from the **World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)**, as part of the WCRP's youth campaign for shared security.

ICCI blog updates

The following is a list of recent updates to the ICCI blog (<http://icciblog.wordpress.com>):

- [‘Covering Religion’: Columbia Journalism Students Visit ICCI – by Jennie Grayson](#)
- [“Pour out Thy Wrath” at the Pesach Seder, or “Pour out Thy Love”? – by Dr. Ron Kronish](#)
- [Why Do some Jews Spit on Christians in the Old City? -- by Jennie Grayson](#)
- [Remembering March 7, 2002 - by Dr. Ron Kronish](#)

We welcome your comments to postings on our blog, now and in the future.

“So that You May Know One Another”: ICCJ's Annual Conference, June 2010, Istanbul

The annual conference of the **International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)** will take place on June 20-23, in Istanbul, Turkey. The conference, held for the first time in a predominantly-Muslim country, will explore both the potential and pitfalls of inter-religious dialogue. To download the conference program, or to register, visit:

<http://www.iccj.org/en/index.php?area=Conferences/Awards&category=Istanbul%202010>

Arms Down! The WCRP Campaigns for Shared Security

The **World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)** has recently launched **Arms Down!**, a year-long global multi-religious youth campaign that will focus on "advancing shared security by abolishing nuclear weapons, stopping the proliferation and misuse of conventional arms, and reducing military expenditure" ICCI, which is the Israeli chapter of the WCRP, is cooperating with this organization in spreading the word about the campaign and invites you to do so as well. To sign the campaign petition, or for more information, visit:

<https://secure3.convio.net/rfp/site/Advocacy?pagename=homepage&id=115&JServSessionIdr004=oxewnm9t11.app331b>

Support ICCI via PEF/NIF:
<http://icci.org.il/support.html>



or online, via JGOODERS:

ICCI's L'Chaim Campaign -
<http://www.jgooders.com//ProjectCard.asp?ProjectID=613>

ICCI's young adult programs -
<http://www.jgooders.com//ProjectCard.asp?ProjectID=1053>