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ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION

September 17, 2009 | 28 Elul, 5769 | 28 Ramadan, 1430

Dear friends,

I began writing these greetings in Krakow, Poland, where I attended a unique international conference on the theme "Seventy Years After World War II: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue". It was an amazing gathering of hundreds of religious and political leaders from all over the world, organized by a wonderful Catholic movement called "The Community of Sant'Egidio", with whom I have had the privilege of working for many years. Founded in 1968, this special community of Catholic young people is a splendid combination of a spiritual and activist religious movement, which genuinely believes in the power of dialogue and cooperation to bring peace to the world.



As I sat through many speeches and greetings on the opening night of the conference, I couldn't help but think of the verses in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy which are an annual call for Jews to be an integral part of the human family, to do God's will wholeheartedly with people from other faiths and cultures. At the same time, we can not avoid Jewish particularism, especially as we think back 70 years to the beginning of World War II in Poland. This is why it was imperative that the religious leaders who attended this gathering in Krakow last week visit the Auschwitz/Birkenau death camp as a statement of solidarity with the Jewish People who were slaughtered in systematic mass murder unparalleled in human history.

The fact that so many religious leaders, from so many faiths and cultures from around the world, learned about the Shoah in Auschwitz and stood in solidarity at Birkenau was a major symbolic statement of this conference. Following this, I joined these religious leaders in affirming the hopes and yearnings of all peoples for a world without war and violence.

May I take this opportunity to wish our Jewish friends in Israel and around the world a ***Shanah Tovah***, a Year of Health and Peace; and to our Muslim friends in Israel and internationally, ***Ramadan Kareem*** and ***Eid Mubarak***-- may it be a time of blessings and peace for all.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish
Director, ICCI

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

New ICCI course for Israeli Educators

A special course about **"Encountering Poland: Relations between Jews and Poles – Religious, Historical and Social Dimensions"** will open in October 2009. The course is a collaboration between ICCI and the **Polish Institute**, and will deal with the Polish internal debates about Jewish history in Poland, the living Jewish community in today's Poland, and current Polish-Jewish / Catholic-Jewish relations. The course is aimed at Israeli educators who are involved in teaching these issues both in the formal and informal educational systems. **For more information, contact Ms. Avigail Moshe at youth@icci.org.il.**

ONGOING PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Interreligious Young Adults Retreat



On August 10-12, 2009, a special interreligious retreat seminar for Jewish, Muslim and Christian young adults took place in Ein Karem. The retreat, which focused on **"Interreligious Dialogue in Jerusalem in the Service of Peace: Achievements, Obstacles and Challenges"**, aimed at bringing young people together in an atmosphere of privacy and safety to meditate, study and learn about the possibility of Jerusalem becoming a city of peace. It also aimed at equipping them with the skills required to communicate effectively with the other, so

they can appreciate commonalities and respect differences. The retreat was facilitated by **Mr. Anton Murra**, of Mercy Corps, and ICCI's **Ms. Yael Yechieli**, who is also one of the facilitators of ICCI's **Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adults Forum**. Twelve young men and women from Israel and the West Bank took part in this retreat, which was a joint project of **Mercy Corps, ICCI** and the **Holy Land Trust**.

ICCI ABROAD

International Summit of Religious Youth Leaders on Disarmament for Shared Security

ICCI's Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs, **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, took part in the International **Summit of Religious Youth Leaders on Disarmament for Shared Security**, organized by the **World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)**. The summit, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 10-11 July, 2009, brought together approximately 100



Nepali youth representatives and 50 international religious and civil society youth representatives from 24 countries "to discuss major challenges to shared security and develop concrete action plans for the launch of a global Youth campaign to stop the proliferation of conventional and nuclear weapons, and reduce military spending."

One of the products of the summit was the jointly developed '**Kathmandu Declaration**', in which the participants "committed themselves to challenging the continuous rise in military expenditures and the related neglect of development, while at the same time calling on government leaders at all levels to address the threat of nuclear and conventional weapons, and redirect resources to building secure and thriving communities." To learn more about this event and about the Kathmandu Declaration, please read WCRP's official press release at the following URL:

<http://www.wcrp.org/news/press/nepal-06-10-09>

ICCI Director in the U.S.A.

While in the U.S.A. in parts of July and August, ICCI Director Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish met with **Mr. S.A. Ibrahim**, CEO of Radian Group, and his son **Mr. Winston Ibrahim**, who had participated in an ICCI seminar in June as part of the **Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Project in the Middle East** program. During that time, Dr. Kronish met with several key staff at the **University of Pennsylvania**, to plan his upcoming visit to Philadelphia in October with of **Kadi Muhammad Zibdeh**, the kadi (Muslim religious court judge) of Jerusalem. In addition, while in Chicago, Dr. Kronish met with **Dr. Eboo Patel** (pictured), founder and director of the **Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)**, and some of his senior staff, to discuss ways and means of cooperation between ICCI and IFYC in the months and years ahead.



ICCI's delegation to Australia

During two intensive weeks in August 2009 (11th-26th), three ICCI representatives undertook a special lecture tour of Australia, sponsored by the **Pratt Foundation** of Australia in cooperation with the **Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)** and the **Council of Christians and Jews in Australia**.



The delegation comprised of **Mr. Issa Jaber**, Secretary of the **Association of Tolerance and Coexistence in the Judean Hills** and co-chair of ICCI, **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, ICCI co-chair and President of the **International Council of Christians and Jews**, and **Ms. Rula Shubeita**, a tour guide and alumni of ICCI's Women's programs. They spoke to 35 different audiences in Melbourne and Sydney, generating much interest there in the work of ICCI in interreligious dialogue for peace among Jews, Christians and Muslims. In addition, their visit generated much media interest

(see below).

ICCI Director attends international conference in Krakow, Poland

On September 6-8, 2009, ICCI director Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish participated in the **Spirit of Assisi** international peace conference in Kraków, Poland, hosted by the **Community of Sant'Egidio**. The conference's theme this year was "**Seventy Years after the Outbreak of the Second World War: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue**". In addition to being a full participant in the conference, Dr. Kronish presented reflections on peace and reconciliation at

one of the panels of the conference entitled "**Dialogue of Faith and Culture**", which took place on September 7th. In addition to varied panels, lectures and activities, the conference included a special memorial ceremony at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. In another special ceremony, religious leaders handed a document entitled "**Proclamation of the APPEAL for PEACE 2009**" to children of various nationalities. The children, on behalf of all generations, passed it to ambassadors and authorities representing many nations and religious groups. To read more about the conference, please visit:

<http://www.santegidio.org/index.php?pageID=903&idLng=1064&res=1>

ICCI IN THE MEDIA

America Magazine, the National Catholic Weekly, quoted Dr. Kronish in an article by Drew Christiansen dated July 31, 2009. The article, entitled "Hate lit in the IDF", reported on extremists spreading libelous allegations about the Vatican to Israeli soldiers.

http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&id=25282555-3048-741E-9653735851371763

A book review by Dr. Kronish titled "Learning from Luna" was published in the **Jerusalem Post** on September 3, 2009. The review focuses on the autobiography of Ms. **Luna Kaufman**, a Holocaust survivor who devoted her life to helping others and became a notable activist in the field of Jewish-Christian relations in the U.S.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1251804480950&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

On August 14, 2009, the members of ICCI's delegation to Australia – Mr. Jaber, Ms. Shubeita and Dr. Weissman – were the guests of journalists and broadcasters Terry Lane and Jon Faine on their **ABC Melbourne Radio** program 'Conversation Hour'. The discussion covered issues such as Israel as a Jewish state, the prospects of peace in the Middle East, Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations in Israel, and religious extremism vs. interreligious marriage and day-to-day contact in Israel. An audio recording of the full program can be found at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2009/08/14/2656297.htm?site=melbourne>

Additionally, the delegation members were also featured on 'Spirit of Things' an **ABC radio** program, on August 30, 2009. The audio recording and the transcript of their interview with Rachael Kohn can be found at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/spiritofthings/stories/2009/2661452.htm>

During her stay in Australia, Dr. Debbie Weissman contributed an article to the popular Australian news portal **theage.com.au**. The article, published on August 14, 2009 and titled "Here's some good news about religion", focuses on the role religion plays in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its possible resolution.

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/heres-some-good-news-about-religion-20090813-ejsv.html>

Furthermore, on August 21, 2009, the **Australian Jewish News** website published an article by Naomi Levin titled "Choosing a path to peace". The article included some highlights of one of the ICCI delegation's speaking engagements in Australia.

<http://jewishnews.net.au/2009/08/21/choosing-a-path-to-peace/7007>

The delegation's visit was also featured on the website of the **NSW/ACT Independent Education Union (IEU)**, in an article from August 25, 2009, which reported on the IEU's Women's Conference.

<http://news.ieu.asn.au/1152.html>

Another article, titled "Reasons for optimism in Israel and Palestine", was published on **Eureka Street**, a publication of Jesuit Communications Australia, on August 28, 2009. In this article, author Peter Kirkwood talks about how moved and inspired he was by meeting and speaking with the ICCI delegation members.

<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=16012>

VISITING GROUPS

ICCI leadership group meets with visiting Catholic educators

On July 11, 2009, a delegation of ICCI leadership met with a group of Catholic educators from the U.S.A., who have graduated from the **Anti Defamation League's** Holocaust education training program, led by Mr. **Ed Alster**, Director of Education of ADL. The group was accompanied by **Father Daniel Petsche**, OSB, Prior of Conception Abbey, Missouri. ICCI was represented by Mr. **Issa Jaber**, Director of Education of the Israeli Arab town of Abu Gosh and co-chairperson of ICCI, **Sister Trudy Nabuurs**, of the Sisters of Zion and co-chairperson of ICCI, **Rabbi Alona Lisitsa**, a faculty member of the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem and a member of the Board of ICCI, **Rula Shubeita**, a Palestinian Christian woman who is active in our Women's Dialogues Program, and ICCI Director, **Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish**. During the dinner meeting, which was held at the Beit Anna Ticho restaurant in Jerusalem, the ICCI participants discussed their involvement in interreligious dialogue and education over many years in Israeli and Palestinian society in Israel and the region.

ICCI groups meet with groups from the Far East

On July 6th, graduates of ICCI youth and young adults programs Ms. **Bushra Abd El Rahman** and Ms. **Raya Epstein**, along with ICCI director **Dr. Ron Kronish**, met with 8 officials and journalists from Thailand for a dinner and discussion at a restaurant in downtown Jerusalem. The Thai group was on a special study mission to Israel, sponsored by the **Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)**. Additionally, on July 14th, Ms. Abd El Rahman, Ms. Epstein and Dr. Kronish were joined by Ms. **Amira Jaber**, another graduate of our youth programs, for dinner and discussion with student leadership from universities in Australia. The discussions with both groups were lively and challenging, giving our guests from abroad the opportunity to learn first-hand about the achievements and challenges of interreligious dialogue in a situation of ongoing conflict.

INTERRELIGIOUS INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

ICCI's Center for Interreligious Encounter with Israel is offering **programs to participants of visiting and long-term groups/programs in Israel**. Our programs are offered to both **high school and university students** and all of them involve a short presentation, informal conversation and group discussions. Visitors will meet with alumni and current students from ICCI's Youth & Young Adult programs. Our programs are interactive and flexible, and we will work with interested groups on tailoring the program to their size, needs and schedule. Programs involving **lectures and traditional panel discussions** are also available for

visiting/long term groups. For more information and/or to book a program, please contact communications@icci.org.il or 972-2-561-1899.

Our center also prepares and implements **full study tours of 10-14 days for university students and interreligious groups from abroad.** For more information about this, see our website (<http://www.icci.org.il>) or contact Mr. Ophir Yarden, education@icci.org.il.

ICCI STAFF

Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish, Director
Sarah Bernstein, Director of Women's Programs
Ophir Yarden, Director of ICCI's Center for Interreligious Encounter with Israel
Avigail Moshe, Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs
Rakheli Hever, Communications and Development Coordinator
Yael Yechieli, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, JIYAF
Mariam Abad Alda'im, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, JIYAF
Ya'ala Cohen, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, Face to Face
Hiba Alayan, Program Coordinator, Youth Programs
Zuzanna Radzik, Student Intern for Special Programs
Omar Smiley, Student Intern, Youth and Young Adult Programs

ICCI serves as the Israel chapter of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and is a member of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ).

INVEST IN PEACE – SUPPORT ICCI

To support the groundbreaking and innovative programs of ICCI which bring people together from many sectors of Israeli and Palestinian society to learn to live together in peace, to engage in reconciliatory dialogue and education, and to prepare the way for a better future for all citizens of Israel and the surrounding region,

contact us at: communications@icci.org.il.

Please also visit our new JGooders page:
<https://www.jgooders.com//ProjectCard.asp?ProjectID=613>.