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ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION

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Dear friends,

It's almost Hanukah in Israel, where the festival atmosphere is part of the national culture. In many of the children's songs for this holiday, we are constantly reminded of the miracle of the "small flask of oil". Indeed, in the popular mindset Hanukah is the holiday of miracles.



This reminds me of a story that I experienced several years ago. At an interreligious conference which I attended in Italy on the theme of peace, several Christian and Jewish religious leaders spoke eloquently about the importance of peace in their religious traditions at one of the major morning plenums. After the session, a journalist from the U.S.A. interviewed Professor Sari Nusseibah, the president of Al Quds University in Jerusalem. Professor Nusseibah is a scholar of Islamic Culture and Civilization, but not a particularly religious man. When asked for his reactions to the speeches of the morning, he said that he did not like them because religious leaders are often hypocrites—they give lip service to peace but actually don't do much about it. As a rejoinder, the interviewer asked him: "so, what then is your solution to the Middle East Conflict? To which, Professor Nusseibah responded: "we need a miracle!"

Indeed, it seems that we do need a miracle to move the Middle East Peace Process forward. It seems to be stuck in the mud. When Sadat came to Jerusalem, it was a miracle. It is time now for some more miracles! Perhaps there will be some unexpected advances in the peace process in the year ahead. But, we can not wait for miracles. We need to move forward with creative and innovative programs for building peaceful relations between peoples and people in Israel and the region. This is what we do in ICCI, now and for the years to come.

At this special time of year, I want to wish all our Jewish friends in Israel and around the world a Happy Hanukkah and all our Christian friends a Merry Christmas.

L'shalom, in peace, salaam,


Dr. Ron Kronish, rabbi
Director, ICCI

ONGOING PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Further reflections on the ICCI delegation's visit to Poland

The reflections of **Rabbi Yehuda Gilad**, **rabbi of Kibbutz Lavi**, on the ICCI delegation's special journey to Poland in October 2009 are now available on our website: http://icci.org.il/Poland/Rabbi_Gilad-Impressions_Poland.pdf

The full reflections of **Rabbi Prof. Yehoyada Amir**, lecturer in Jewish Thought at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, are also available: http://icci.org.il/Poland/Prof_Amir-Impressions_Poland.pdf

Videoconference about Jewish-Muslim Youth Dialogue in the U.S.A and Its Implications for Israel

On Monday, November 16, 2009, fifteen members of the Jerusalem community—among them students, Imams and leaders and members of Jerusalem organizations—met at the American Center, which is the Jerusalem affiliate of the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, for a conversation on "**Jewish-Muslim Youth Dialogue in the U.S.A. and Its Implications for Israel**". **Dr. Eboo Patel**, the founder and Executive Director of the **Interfaith Youth Core**, a Chicago-based institution building the global interfaith youth movement, and **Rabbi Or Rose**, Associate Dean and Director of Informal Education at the **Rabbinical School of the Hebrew College in Newton, MA**, joined the group via videoconference to share insights from their experiences in the field. The discussion was the 3rd in a series of videoconferences co-sponsored by ICCI and the **American Center** in Jerusalem.

Between Memory and Reconciliation

On November 19-20, 2009, the opening seminar of the **Between Memory and Reconciliation** program took place at the **Tantur Ecumenical Institute** in Southern Jerusalem. During this seminar, the participants became acquainted with one another through various social activities, and a sense of being a group was developed. Additionally, the participants prepared for their joint seminar in December with the Japanese students from **Rissho Kosei-Kai** by learning about the culture, history and society of Japan, and acquiring relevant skills for dialogue.

The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum



The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum inaugurated its new program cycle for 2009-2010 by traveling to the **Nes Ammim** village in the Northern Galilee on November 13th-15th, for the program's opening weekend seminar. The fifteen participants-- Jews, Muslims and Christians-- met one another in this special, intensive seminar, in order to build the foundation for this year-long program. Weekend

activities included observing and discussing the prayers of all three Abrahamic faiths, a discussion regarding the Nes Ammim community, and meetings with **Rabbi Yosef Yashar**, the **Chief Rabbi of Acre**, and **Sheikh Samir Assi**, **Imam of Al Jazaar mosque in Acre**. This program is currently funded by grants from the **World Conference of Religions for Peace**, the **Pontifical Mission** and the **Embassy of the U.S.A. to Israel**.

Face to Face / Faith to Faith: Peace Is Possible Event

The world-wide **Face to Face / Faith to Faith** held its third annual benefit dinner on November 9, 2009, in New York City. The event, which went extremely well, featured Face to



Face participants from the four regions of the program, including **Gedalia Gillis** and **Sireen Tutunji** from ICCI, who spoke about their experiences throughout the year and what the program has given them. Sireen and Gedalia spent five days in NYC, during which they received media training and spoke to various religious congregations in the region.

ICCI ABROAD

Director of ICCI's Center for Interreligious Encounter with Israel speaks in New England

Mr. Ophir Yarden, ICCI's Director of Educational Initiatives and Director of our Center for Interreligious Encounter with Israel, conducted a speaking tour in New England during November. Ophir met with Jewish and Christian clergy groups from Lexington and Boston Massachusetts (in cooperation with the **Boston Jewish Community Relations Council**) and with students at the following colleges: Bowdoin, Middlebury, Williams and Bard. He also met with Jewish and Protestant seminarians at Boston's **Hebrew College** and the **Andover Newton Theological School**.



ICCI co-chairperson in London



Dr. Debbie Weissman, co-chairperson of ICCI and president of ICCJ, was in the UK from November 12-25, 2009, for Interfaith Week and related activities. Dr. Weissman gave many talks, both to Jewish and interfaith groups. Additionally, she met with representatives of the **Tony Blair Foundation**, to continue the budding relationship we began when they visited the ICCI office in Jerusalem, as well as with representatives of the **Church of England, Orthodox, Liberal and Reform Jewish movements**, the **Councils of Christians and Jews** and the **Three Faiths Forum**. She also visited a **Muslim College** and the **Woolf Institute for Abrahamic Faiths at Cambridge University**, in addition to attending a reception at Lambeth Palace, sponsored by the **Archbishop of Canterbury**, a meeting at the **House of Lords**, with the first Muslim M.P., **Mr. Shahid Malek**, and meetings with rabbinical students at **Leo Baeck College** and students of the **London School of Jewish Studies**.

VISITING GROUPS

ICCI hosts ICCJ's November 2009 seminar

On November 3-11, 2009, ICCI hosted a special seminar of the **International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)**, on the topic of "From Two Narratives to Building a Culture of Peace". Ten Jewish and Christian representatives from six different countries participated in this seminar, arranged by **Dr. Debbie Weissman**. **Dr. Ron Kronish** gave a lecture at the seminar, and **Mr. Ophir Yarden** was one of the tour guides for this group, which visited, among other places, **Neveh Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, Nes Ammim** and the **Center for Humanistic Education at Ghetto Fighters' House**, all institutions that are members of ICCI. ICCJ would like to thank **Mr. Issa Jaber** for his generous help and hospitality.

Institute for Young Leaders from Abroad delegation visits ICCI

On November Nov. 22, 2009, twenty-five students from the **Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad's** English Speaking Program attended a special panel discussion with Israeli and Palestinian participants in the Jerusalem Interreligious Young



Adult Forum (JIYAF) and Face to Face/Faith to Faith (F2F) programs. Seven alumni of these programs participated in this panel on the challenges faced when dealing with interreligious dialogue in the midst of conflict and the relationships formed within their respective programs. Afterward, the students from abroad got the opportunity to sit down and have in-depth personal discussions with each of the panel members over pizza and ice-cream, in an informal atmosphere. To read more about this event, please click the following link: <http://icci.org.il/Nov22nd.pdf>

ICCI Director speaks at Tantur panel for Lutheran bishops from the U.S.A.

On December 1, 2009, ICCI director **Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish** spoke on a panel with **Mr. Abdelsalaam Najjar** of **Neveh Shalom/Wahat al-Salam** and **Dr. Bernard Sabella** of **Bethlehem University** about "Interreligious Dialogue for Peace in Israel and in Palestine". This panel was organized by the **Tantur Ecumenical Institute** for visiting Lutheran Bishops from the U.S.A. and their spouses, who were visiting in Israel and Palestine as part of their "Bishops Academy". In addition, Rabbi Kronish welcomed the group to Shabbat worship services at **Congregation Kol HaNeshama** on Friday night, December 4th, and gave them a briefing about Reform/Progressive Judaism in Israel.

Tony Blair Foundation representatives meet with ICCI representatives

On October 27, 2009, ICCI representatives **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, **Ms. Avigail Moshe** and **Mr. Ophir Yarden** met with representatives of the **Tony Blair Foundation**. One of the many initiatives of the Tony Blair Foundation has to do with connecting between schools both nationally and internationally, via a joint curriculum that involves learning about the Other and via videoconferences between students and staff members of these schools. Given ICCI's long experience in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the representatives discussed the possibility of ICCI's participation in this project.

NEWS FROM ICCI MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



Rabbis for Human Rights and **Jerusalem Peacemakers** organized an extraordinary and touching prayer event at the entrance to the Sheba hospital in Tel-Hashomer on December 1st. Some forty Muslim, Jewish and Christian Religious leaders and worshipers, including **Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari**, **Eliahu McLean**, **Hadj Ibrahim Ahmad Abu-Hawa** and other venerable religious figures attended, praying for a just, honorable and peaceful future. The prayer was followed by a visit to the injured from Gaza and Israel, currently being

treated at the hospital.

Over the last semester, the **Tantur Ecumenical Institute** has hosted the **Rainbow Group**, Jerusalem's oldest ongoing group for Jewish-Christian Dialogue. Furthermore, it has hosted a number of ecumenical and interfaith groups, including a large delegation from the United States of Lutheran bishops representing the **Evangelical Lutheran Church** in America (ICCI director Dr. Ron Kronish was among the panelists for this group), a delegation of Danish pastors and church workers, and the **Communions de Prière pour l'Unité Les Montées de Jérusalem** ecumenical group from France. This group, founded about forty years ago, seeks to support and initiate new efforts both at intra-Christian relations and understanding (ecumenism, strictly speaking) and at interfaith relations.

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