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ICCI UPDATE

10 Tevet 5769

January 6, 2009

9 MuHarram 1430 A.H.

Dear friends,

I write this monthly message to you in the midst of the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. This is a very delicate and dangerous time in Israel and the region.

On the one hand, the state of Israel needs to protect its citizens, as any other state would have the responsibility to do the same. When Hamas sends rockets and missiles to Israeli communities all over the southern part of the country, with almost one million Israeli citizens in danger, the leaders of the state cannot refrain forever from some defensive action.



On the other hand, one wonders if a military strike in Gaza will achieve its purpose, i.e. stopping the firing of missiles into Israel and crushing Hamas. Is the ground invasion really necessary? Will it solve the problem or just create new problems—more hatred and more terrorists? Is it possible to destroy a guerilla army with military might? Or, has this proved to be unsuccessful in so many places in the world that one wonders why it would succeed here?

Would not diplomacy be a better route? More effective? With less casualties on both sides? Have our leaders really exhausted every effort at diplomacy?

And what about the killing of so many innocent civilians? While Hamas targets innocent civilians all the time, Israel tries to target only Hamas people, but many innocent civilians are killed in the process. We are sorry for every innocent civilian that is killed. Both sides should be sorry about the killing of innocent civilians, which is the horrible result of so much war and violence.

This is a very difficult time for those of us involved in dialogue and reconciliation processes. Emotions are running very high. Both sides of the conflict see themselves as victims, and have very little empathy one for the other at this point in time. One of the immediate outcomes of such a nasty violent conflict is the end of empathy, which makes it very difficult for Palestinians and Jews to come together to encounter the divine image in each other and engage in sensitive and substantive dialogue.

Yet, when the violence subsides, as it will in the not-too-distant future, we will still be faced with the same dilemmas: how can we find a way to live together peacefully in this part of the world? Can dialogue offer some hope? Can we engage young people, women, educators and religious leaders in processes of dialogue, education, reconciliation and action that offer an alternative future to the one of continual confrontation and violence?

These are the critical questions and challenges that confront us as we begin a new year. Let us hope that we will find the spiritual and material resources to answer these questions in the affirmative in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish
Director, ICCI

SPECIAL EVENTS

Teaching Judaism to Muslims and Teaching Islam to Jews in Israel

While Jewish and Muslim communities live side by side in Israel, very little is done to bring these different populations together and reduce the existing levels of ignorance, stereotypes, and hostility. Islam and Judaism bear a decisive role toward reaching an understanding of each of the two communities, and, unfortunately, also contribute to widening the distance and alienation between them as well.

Therefore, Al-Qasemi College in Baqa al-Gharbiyya, the Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and ICCI with the partnership of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation have initiated a project entitled "**Teaching Islam to Jews, and Judaism to Muslims in Israel.**" The goal of the project is to bring the Jewish and Muslim communities in Israel together by deepening each community's understanding of the other community's religion and culture.

The project was launched on November 24, 2008 with a workshop and public symposium held at the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center in Mishkanot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem. The workshop, which was designated for a group of about forty professionals, was held in two parts. The first part assessed the current situation in formal and informal education in the Arab and Jewish sectors of education in Israel, and the second part outlined the current situation in universities and colleges and among Arab and Jewish religious leaders.

The second part of the evening began with a symposium open to the general public. The symposium was moderated by Dr. Ron Kronish, Director of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, and featured greetings by a representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Israel, Dr. Faruq Mawasi of Al-Qasemi College, and the vice-dean of the Department of Humanities of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The main speakers included: MK Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson; Professor Khalil `Athamina, Al-Qasemi College; Dr. Mahmud Yazbak, the University of Haifa; and Professor Sarah Sviri, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. All of them spoke succinctly and substantively on the theme of the evening "Teaching Islam to Jews and Judaism to Muslims in Israel," and a lively question and answers period followed their presentations.

Video-Conference with the American Center in Jerusalem

On November 25, 2008, the American Center in cooperation with ICCI hosted a video-conference on the theme of **"JEWISH-MUSLIM DIALOGUE IN THE U.S. AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL/PALESTINE."** The speakers included **Mr. Yehezkel Landau**, of Hartford Seminary, and **Imam Yahya Hendi** of Georgetown University in Washington D.C. This program is part of ICCI's new **INSTITUTE OF JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN ISRAEL**, in formation.

Confronting a New Reality: The Polish Catholic Church, the Jews, and Israel



From November 30th to December 1, 2008, ICCI, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, and Laboratorium Wiesz in the framework of the Polish Year in Israel 2008-2009 conducted an intensive internal seminar and public symposium on the theme **"Confronting a New Reality: The Polish Catholic Church, the Jews, and Israel."** Speakers at the public symposium included the Polish Ambassador to Israel, Agnieszka

Magdziak-Miszewska, Prof. Gabriel Motzkin, Director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Abp. Jozef Zycinski, Archbishop of Lublin, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, Zbigniew Nosowski, Co-Chair of Polish Council of Christians and Jews, Yossi Klein-Halevi, The Shalem Center, Dr. Stanislaw Krajewski, Co-Chair of Polish Council of Christians and Jews, Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gotstein, The Elijah Institute, Rev. Roman Indrzejczyk, Chaplain of the Office of the President of Poland, with Dr. Ron Kronish, Director of ICCI as the moderator.

Both the internal seminar and the public symposium opened up important new channels of communication between Israel Jews and Polish Catholics, which bode well for the future of Polish-Israel relations.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

KEDEM Holds a Seminar in Memory of Rabbi Eli Kahan

"KEDEM: Voices of Religious Reconciliation" is a ICCI's longest lasting program of interreligious dialogue and education comprised of rabbis, imams, kadis, sheikhs and ministers who have been meeting for the past five years in different parts of Israel. A few months ago, one of the leading rabbis of KEDEM, Rabbi Eli Kahan of Kibbutz Ayn HaNatziv, died of cancer, and the KEDEM group decided to hold a special study day in his memory on November 26, at the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center at Mishkanot Sha'ananim.

The first session of the seminar included two reflections on the life of Rabbi Kahan by two of the KEDEM rabbis—Rabbi Shmuel Reiner, co-head of Yeshivat Ma'aleh Gilboa, and Rabbi Ronen Lubitz, rabbi of Moshav Nir Etzion. Both rabbis spoke meaningfully and sensitively about the qualities of Rabbi Kahan which were important in advancing interreligious dialogue and greater understanding among Jews and Arabs in Israel. In addition, a text-study session was led by Rabbi David Stav, rabbi of Shoham and one of the leading rabbis of KEDEM, on the story of the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau in the Bible. This text study session

engendered a lively discussion on the contemporary meaning of this Biblical story for Jews and Arabs in Israel today.

After a coffee break, a second session featured Arabs who talked about the life of Rabbi Kahan. Rev. Nadeem Chacour of Me'ilyah spoke softly yet eloquently about Rabbi Kahan as a sincere man who engaged genuinely in dialogue and cared deeply about the Other. He was a man from whom all who engage in dialogue can learn and emulate. In addition, Kadi Muhammed Zibdi, the kadi of Jerusalem, taught texts from the Koran about the concept of tolerance, which led to a lively discussion and learning session about basic ideas in Islam.

ONGOING YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

Face to Face/Faith to Faith – November/December Activities

The Face to Face group of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim teenagers met in early November, a week before the Jerusalem municipal elections, to discuss issues of mutual concern in Jerusalem.

The group also participated in a full day (plus overnight) program from November 13-14, 2008, during which they went on a tour of Malcha, a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem today that was an Arab village until 1948. As part of the study tour, they discussed the history of Malcha within the context of the Palestinian and Israeli narratives, as well as how people live with the history today.



The group also began working on an innovative photography project with the professional help of Mr. Tziki Eisenberg. In late November, they met to learn more about Jerusalem and the different people who inhabit the city. In December, the group met again with photographer Mr. Tziki Eisenberg, to continue working in different teams, learn new photography techniques and critique photos that they had already taken. The Face to Face program is a partnership between ICCI and the Auburn Theological Seminary in New York.

Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF) December Meetings

Within the framework of the JIYAF meetings in December, this very special group of 16 Jewish, Muslim, and Christian university students went on a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem to learn about the narratives of the three faiths. During the study tour they visited such sites as the Tomb of David, the Old City Walls and the Armenian quarter, where they discussed the Armenian identity as a "minority within a minority." Later in the month, members of this dialogue and action group participated in a photography project wherein they divided up into pairs—one Israeli Jew and one Palestinian (Christian/Muslim)—and took photos of themselves in places they love in Jerusalem. JIYAF, which is coordinated by ICCI facilitators Yael Yechieli and Mariam Abad Alda'im, is made



possible by grants from the World Conference of Religions for Peace and the Pontifical Mission.

ICCI IN THE PRESS

- "Visions of the Old Settlers," *The Australian*, November 29, 2008
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24722059-15084,00.html>
- "Interreligious Dialogue in the Service of Peace, *Crosscurrents*, Summer 2008
- "Not all U.S. Olim are Extremists," *Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 2008
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1228728246385&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
- "A Sacred Pilgrimage by Greensboro Clergy," *News-Record.com*, December 21, 2008
http://www.news-record.com/content/2008/12/19/article/a_sacred_pilgrimage_by_greensboro_clergy
- In a new book entitled, **Patriarch Michel Sabbah-- Faithful Witness on Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land**, Dr. Ron Kronish contributed a tribute to Patriarch Sabbah's efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in the region.

VISITING GROUPS

German CCJ Visits ICCI

On November 25, 2008, the board of the German Coordinating Council for Christian Jewish Cooperation met with Dr. Ron Kronish, Dr. Debbie Weissman, and Margaret Karram at ICCI for a dynamic and fruitful exchange of information and ideas about **"Interreligious Relations in Israel Today – Implications for the Dialogue in Germany."**



AIJAC Groups Meet with Alumni of ICCI Youth and Young Adult Programs

During the past two months, graduates of ICCI's Face to Face/Faith to Faith program and of the Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF) have met with visiting delegations brought to Israel by AIJAC (The Australian/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council) to share their experiences and reflections on dialogue and conflict transformation in Israel. These programs were organized by Hiba Alayan on behalf of ICCI.



Clergy from Greensboro, North Carolina Visit ICCI

A group of 26 clergy from Greensboro, North Carolina met with Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish, Issa Jaber, and Hanadi Soudah-Younan on December 9, 2008 at the ICCI Education Center to learn about the possibilities and problematics of interreligious dialogue in Israel. Led by rabbis Fred Guttman and Eli Haviv, this was a rare opportunity for American clergy to learn first-hand about the work of interreligious dialogue and education in Israel.

Delegation from Washington D.C. Meets with ICCI Director

On December 17, 2008, Ambassador and retired U.S. Congressman Tony Hall, Dr. Mounzer Fatfat, and David Austin— all of Washington D.C.—visited the ICCI Education Center to hold a frank and thoughtful consultation with ICCI Director Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish. Ways and means

of strengthening the impact of interreligious dialogue for the sake of peaceful coexistence in Israel and the region were discussed.

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

Rebecca Keys Miller, Communications and Development Coordinator

Yael Yechieli, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, JIYAC

Mariam Abad Alda'im, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, JIYAC

Ya'ala Cohen, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, Face to Face

Buthaina Ayad, Project Coordinator and Facilitator, Face to Face

Hiba Alayan, Program Coordinator, Youth Programs

Adrienne Mannor, Student Intern for Women's Programs

Zuzanna Radzik, Student Intern for Special Programs

Rebecca Russo, Student Intern, Youth Program

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

Interreligious Interactive Educational Programs For Visiting/Long-Term Groups in Israel

ICCI's Center for Interreligious Encounter with Israel is offering programs to participants of visiting and long-term groups/programs in Israel.

For High School and University Students:

ICCI offers interactive programs to both high school and university student groups in Israel and works with you to arrange a program fitting your group size and needs. All programs involve a short presentation, informal conversation, and group discussions. Meet with alumni and current students from ICCI's Youth & Young Adult programs:

***Face to Face/Faith to Faith:* ICCI's leadership and dialogue program for Israeli Jewish and Palestinian (Christian/Muslim) high school students. The program includes attending a summer intensive experience in the U.S and a full-year follow-up program of dialogue and social action projects.**

***Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF):* ICCI's JIYAF program brings together Jewish, Christian, and Muslim university students from different colleges and universities from both East and West Jerusalem to change the tenor of public discourse and improve relations between Palestinians (Christian and Muslim) and Jews at their universities and in the city of Jerusalem as a whole.**

- ***Dinner & Dialogue:*** Meet local Jewish, Muslim, and Christian alumni and current students of ICCI Youth & Young Adult programs for informal discussions, dinner, and dialogue. Depending on the size of your group, 2, 4, or 6 students will share experiences and personal stories of what it means to be involved in interreligious dialogue in a conflict situation.
- ***Round Robin Discussion:*** This program enables groups to have a more intimate encounter with alumni and current students active in interreligious dialogue.

The exact methodology of each program will be tailor-made to your group's needs and schedule. To accommodate the schedules of our students, however, all programs must begin no earlier than the late afternoon.

Also Available to Visiting/Long Term Groups:

Lectures & Traditional Panel Discussions

- **Interreligious Relations in the Service of Peace – Briefing or lecture by ICCI Director, Dr. Ron Kronish**
- Panel Discussion with Local Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Religious Leaders**

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

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,

Send a donor-advised donation to:*

The PEF ISRAEL ENDOWMENT FUNDS
317 Madison Ave., Suite 607, NYC, NY 10017

Or

The New Israel Fund, 1101 14th St. NW, 6th Floor, Washington D.C. 20005-5639

Or

New Israel Fund, 26 Enford St., London W1H 2DD, England

*Checks should be made out to PEF or NIF, and one writes "for ICCI" on the bottom left side of the Check!

Kindly send ICCI a fax to let us know that you have made the contribution. Fax no: 972-2-563-4148 or

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