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ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION

6 July, 2009 | 14 Tamuz, 5769 | 14 Rajab, 1430

Dear friends,

As we enter the summer months of July and August, we are mindful that many people are already on vacation. Much, or at least part, of the summer months is devoted to reading, reflection and relaxation.



In the Jewish and Muslim calendars, the summer months this year are also a time of intense religious introspection. At the end of this month (July) we will mark the destruction of the ancient temple in Jerusalem with the holiday of Tisha B'Av (the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av) by chanting the book of Eichah (Lamentations) and by singing special piyutim (medieval Hebrew poems). This is also a day of fasting, which encourages us to direct our thoughts to Jerusalem—past, present and future—and to what we need to do to enable Jerusalem to remain a city holy to two peoples, the Jewish People and the Palestinian people, and to three faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

It will also be a time of soul-searching for Muslims worldwide and in Israel, as Ramadan begins on August 22nd (or thereabouts) this year. Muslims have the special opportunity afforded to them by their religious calendar for this long period of fasting, prayer and study which is the essence of their celebrations during the month of Ramadan. Muslims too look towards Jerusalem as a spiritual center, to which they make special pilgrimage during this holy month in their calendar.

At this time of year, then we are well aware of the centrality of Jerusalem to Judaism and Islam. Yet, there remains a great gap between the “heavenly Jerusalem” and the “earthly” one, between the idea and the real. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” say the psalmists.

But prayer is not enough. We must also engage in dialogue and action. This is what we do within ICCI. During the past year, three of our dialogue groups—two with youth and young adults and one with women from East and West Jerusalem—continued to meet during the Gaza War. This was a tribute to the dialogue process, which had engendered strong bonds of trust and commitment among the participants. These dialogue groups help keep a flicker of hope alive in a sometimes desperate situation of ongoing conflict.

Have a peaceful and restful summer.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish
Director, ICCI
rkronish@icci.org.il

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

September 6-8, 2009 – ICCI director in Poland

ICCI director Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish will participate in an **International Conference for Peace** in Kraków, Poland, September 6-8, hosted by the Community of St. Egidio. In addition to being a full participant in the conference, he will also be presenting reflections on peace and reconciliation at one of the panels of the conference on September 7th. He will also be the guest of **Bet Warsaw**, the Reform Jewish community of Warsaw, on the Shabbat of September 4-5, 2009.

September 13-17, 2009 – Visit to ICCI

On September 13-17, 2009, Justine Huxley of the **St. Ethelburga's Center for Peace and Reconciliation** of London and Jane Clements of the **Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine (FODIP)** will be visiting Israel. They will be meeting ICCI staff in order to discuss ways and means sharing methods of Interreligious dialogue and facilitation and cooperation between ICCI and the St. Ethelburga's Centre in the years to come.

ONGOING PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Jewish-Muslim Seminar in Baqa el-Gharbiyya

A seminar and symposium on "The Role of Teaching Religions – Judaism and Islam – in Promoting Peaceful Co-Existence between Jews and Arabs in Israel" took place on June 21, 2009, at the Al-Qasemi College of Education, in the Israeli-Arab town Baqa el-Gharbiyya. The event was a collaboration between **Al-Qasemi College**, the **Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI)**, the **Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem**, and the **Konrad Adenauer Foundation**.



This event was a follow-up to the highly successful previous seminar and symposium in Jerusalem (November 2008).



During this event, religious leaders and staff members of universities, colleges, schools and informal education programs met in specialized simultaneous workshops to discuss the current situation in Israel regarding teaching Islam to Jews and Judaism to Muslims, and to devise concrete ideas for improvement. The event concluded with a public symposium, moderated by **Dr. Ron Kronish of ICCI** and **Dr. Ahmad Ghabin of Al-Qasemi**

College and featuring **Dr. Khalid Mahmoud of Al-Qasemi College**, **Sheikh Samir Assi, Imam of Al Jazaar Mosque in Acre**, **Prof. Gabi Salomon of Haifa University**, **Dr. Ben Mollov of Bar Ilan University**, and **Mr. Mohammad Marzuk, director of Shatil Baqa**. **Dr. Jamal Abu-Hsein, Al-Qasemi vice-president**, greeted the assembly, which numbered some 50 people.

Following this day, working groups will continue to meet to develop policy recommendations and action plans for the future.



ICCI's 18th Annual General Meeting

ICCI's 18th Annual General Meeting took place on June 16th, 2009, at the Hebrew Union College. This year, the meeting revolved around the topic of "Challenges and Dilemmas in Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel." The program included an exhibition by the participants of

Face to Face/Faith to Faith, a presentation about the Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF) and a lecture by former M.K. and cabinet member **Rabbi Michael Melchior**. Rabbi Melchior, introduced by **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, elaborated on "Challenges the Interreligious Community in Israel Is Facing: Present & Future." During the subsequent business meeting, ICCI's program plan and budget for 2009, as well as the 2008 audit and comptroller report, were approved by a quorum of ICCI's General Assembly.



Dirasat Weekend

A **Dirasat Weekend** took place on June 4-6, 2009, as a collaboration between ICCI and **Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam**, in the Christian village of **Nes Ammim** in the Western Galilee. The Dirasat ("study" in Arabic) program, an innovative program of interreligious study, created by **Doumia-Sakinah**, the Pluralistic Spiritual Center of the Arab-Jewish village of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam ("Oasis of Peace"), in partnership with ICCI, offers

Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians and clergy the opportunity to study their respective sacred texts together, in an environment committed to political change and social transformation. After initially working with the faculty of religious seminars, we plan to develop joint study opportunities for their students as well in the years to come.

Face to Face / Faith to Faith

The Face to Face / Faith to Faith participants took part in a seminar at **Beit Meir**, on May 7-8, 2009. During the seminar, they focused on two issues: preparations for their upcoming summer intensive in the U.S. and a special booklet to summarize their activities this year.

In June 2009, the group completed their **special booklet project**. The booklet, written, designed and produced entirely by the children, focuses on their personal experiences in the F2F program throughout the year. Almost all of them emphasized the strength of their group and their ability to deal with the realities of war and ensuing inter-group conflicts, working through difficulties to remain friends and to continue their meetings.





Thanks to a recent generous donation, it became possible for six additional teens from Jerusalem to join F2F's **summer intensive** trip to the U.S. The two-week summer intensive this year will be held at the Presbyterian Center Holmes, Upstate New York, June 28-July 12, 2009. During these two weeks, the 14 Face to Face program participants will engage in joint activities and dialogue with their Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish peers from Northern Ireland, South Africa, and the

United States. In addition to the 2008-2009 participants of F2F, the group travelling to the camp includes 2 Face to Face graduates who are part of the Leadership in Training Program and 5 staff members, themselves graduates of ICCI's youth and young adult programs.

The Face to Face program is a partnership between ICCI and the **Auburn Theological Seminary** in New York.

The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF)

On May 6, 2009, the JIYAF participants visited the **Swedish Theological Institute** in Jerusalem, and heard a lecture from **Rev. Dr. Håkan Bengtsson** on the role of Europeans in promoting dialogue and conflict resolution in our region. They additionally attended a workshop on the analysis of cinematic subtext, facilitated by **Amy Kronish**, in preparation for the film screening event they were planning.

On June 3, 2009, the Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum invited the public to a special evening about "**Encounters between People, Cultures & Stories**", at the Lutheran Church in Jerusalem's Christian Quarter. Some 100 people attended the program, which included



a screening of Erez Tadmor and Guy Nattiv's film 'Strangers'. The plot of 'Strangers' revolves about a chance encounter between an Israeli kibbutz member and a Palestinian living in Paris that turns into a love story, against the backdrop of the 2006 World Cup and the 2nd Lebanon War. The film screening was followed by an open discussion about the film and interreligious/inter-cultural encounters in general. To read more about the film and the discussion that ensued, see this **Israfilm** blog post by Amy Kronish:

<http://israelfilm.blogspot.com/2009/06/strangers-by-erez-tadmor-and-guy-nattiv.html>

The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum is funded by grants this year from the World Conference of Religions for Peace, The Embassy of the Netherlands to Israel, and the Embassy of the U.S.A. to Israel.

Jerusalem Women as Catalysts for Peace

In April, some members of ICCI's Jerusalem Women as Catalysts for Peace program attended the Open House held by the Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem.

In May, the group met in a home in Mevasseret Zion and discussed Christian texts on the theme of celebrating birth. The women are working on texts from the three religions, which they will attach to the knitted baby hats they plan to distribute in maternity wards in East and West Jerusalem in the coming months.

ICCI IN THE MEDIA

An interview with **Rabbi Ron Kronish** appeared in **Issue 7624** of British newspaper **Church Times**, from May 1, 2009. In the article by Ed Beavan, titled "The human face", Rabbi Kronish describes ICCI's interfaith work as "the other peace process."

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=74376>

Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Israel in May generated intense attention from the media. Several related interviews and articles appeared since our previous update in May.



In an **Ecumenical News International** article published on May 5, 2009 and titled "Jerusalem bishop urges Pope to reject 'occupation and violence'", Judith Sudilovsky interviewed the speakers in ICCI's joint symposium co-sponsored by **MercyCorps** and the **US Department of State**, which took place on April 30th.

Bishop Munib Younan, Head of the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land**, and **Rev. William Shomali**, Rector of the **Latin Seminary in Beit Jalla**, spoke to Ms. Sudilevsky about their hopes and expectations from the visit and religion's role in conflict resolution.

<http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=2967>

In addition to this article and the articles mentioned in the previous newsletter, ICCI's April 30th symposium was covered by several TV and radio stations, such as **IBA TV** (Israel, Arabic News), **IBA Radio** (Israel, English News), the **Media Line**, **Canção Nova TV** (Brazil), **Polish Radio**, and **NHK Japanese Public TV**.

The Pope showed his appreciation of the people, organizations and institutions working to promote interreligious dialogue and peace by dedicating a special event and reception to them on May 11th, at the Notre Dame Educational Center in Jerusalem. Much media attention was drawn to the controversial speech of **Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi**, **Chief Islamic Judge in the Palestinian Authority**, during this event. **Dr. Ron Kronish** shared his thoughts and insights about this incident in a **Jerusalem Post** op-ed titled "Dialogue or Diatribe?", published on May 16, 2009.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1242212387788&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>

Reader reactions to the op-ed by Dr. Kronish were printed on the May 19th online edition of the **Jerusalem Post** under the header "Job security in the peace profession."

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1242212406791&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>

Dr. Debbie Weissman, co-chairperson of ICCI and president of ICCJ, expressed her views about the incident and the visit of the Pope to Israel in general, in a June 8th **Jerusalem report** guest column, entitled "Lackluster Visit".

http://www.icci.org.il/downloads/Jerusalem_Report-Lackluster_Visit.pdf

US TV station **CBS 2** broadcast a segment titled "Pope Returns to Vatican after Mideast Tour" on May 15, 2009. The segment includes parts of an interview with **Dr. Ron Kronish** by Charlie D'Agata. Dr. Kronish stated his belief that although the Pope didn't say everything that was expected and wished of him, he said enough to keep the dialogue going.

<http://www.truveo.com/pope-returns-to-vatican-after-mideast-tour/id/1114538074>

Summarizing the Pope's visit, Matthew Wagner of the **Jerusalem Post** published an article titled "Pope's subdued style lends lackluster finish to visit" on the May 14, 2009. The article includes interviews with **Rabbi Kronish**, **Daniel Rossing**, director of the **Jerusalem Center for Jewish Christian Relations**, and **Rabbi David Rosen**, international director of the **American Jewish Committee's Department for Interreligious Affairs**, highlighting the differences between **Pope Benedict XVI** and **Pope John Paul II** and providing insights regarding the Israeli response to the papal visit.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1242212379918>

Another report summarizing the Pope's visit is that of Kim Lawton of **PBS** from May 15, 2009, titled "Pope's Mideast Trip Wrap-Up." Lawton's report includes video footage and transcripts of interviews with **Dr. Kronish** and representatives of ICCI member organizations such as **Rabbi David Rosen** (of the **American Jewish Committee in Israel**) and **Issa Jaber** (of the **Association for Jewish-Arab Coexistence in the Judean Hills**).



<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/may-15-2009/popes-mideast-trip-wrap-up/2962/>

An additional concluding report of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Israel from the Israeli point of view can be found in an article by Michele Chabin of the **Catholic Register (NCRegister.com)**, published May 22, 2009 and titled "What Jews Saw in Benedict." According to Dr. Ron Kronish, who was interviewed for this article, the papal pilgrimage achieved exactly what it set out to do: "to show concern for local Christians, to reinvigorate the Jewish-Catholic dialogue... and to give strength and encouragement to those engaged in interfaith dialogue."

<http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/18284> (subscribed users only)

Furthermore, Roger Bolton of **BBC Radio 4** interviewed **Rabbi Kronish** of ICCI and **Dr. Abu-Sway**, director of the Islamic Research Center at the **Al-Quds University** in Jerusalem, to get their views on the visit and its impact on both Israelis and Palestinians. The interviews were part of Mr. Bolton's Sunday program on May 17, 2009 and the relevant segment can be downloaded from our website in MP3 format (7:44 minutes, 5.31MB).

<http://www.icci.org.il/downloads/BBCRadio-170509-RKinterview.mp3>

Interviews with Dr. Kronish regarding the Pope's visit were also broadcast or published by:

- **N24/Sat 1 German TV**, May 10, 2009, by Monique Junker.
- **Rotativo de Querétaro**, May 15, 2009, "Aboga Benedicto XVI por la paz entre Israel y Palestina", by Jana Beris.

- **ORF Austrian TV**, May 15, 2009, producer: Daniela Segenreich.
- **The Canadian Press**, May 15 2009, "Benoît XVI assure que la paix est possible en Terre sainte."

Finally, ICCI intern **Zuzanna Radzik** was interviewed for **Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna** for an article titled "Rabin Kronish: Żydzi nigdy nie są do końca zadowoleni z tego, co mówi Watykan (wywiad)," published on May 15, 2009.

VISITING GROUPS

ICCI hosts the Ibrahim Interfaith Dialogue Project in the Middle East.

On June 23rd, ICCI hosted nine U.S. university students, two program staff, and one faculty advisor for a workshop on "Interreligious Dialogue in the Service of Peace" at the ICCI EDUCATION CENTER. Dr. Ron Kronish presented a lecture and discussion on the topic, which was followed by a panel of Jewish and Palestinian graduates of our FACE TO FACE/FAITH TO FAITH PROGRAM, who shared their experiences of dialogue in the midst of conflict in recent years. After the formal program, everyone joined together for lively person-to-person discussions over lunch.

This new program introduced these students to leaders and organizations in Abu Dabi, Jordan, and Israel working to promote interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding. These Jewish, Christian, and Muslim students will utilize knowledge gained through this program to raise awareness in their academic community and surrounding neighborhood about the importance of respectful dialogue and religious tolerance. The students also visited a number of historical and religious sites to enhance their appreciation of culture and society in the Middle East. The program was sponsored by the **Ibrahim Family Foundation** and implemented by the **Institute of International Education**, based in Washington D.C.

SPECIAL SUMMER SALE ON ICCI PUBLICATIONS!

From now until the end of August, we offer a special discount of 25% on all ICCI publications. For details, please visit our website at <http://www.icci.org.il> (under Resources=>Publications).

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.](mailto:communications@icci.org.il)

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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>.**