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ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION
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Dear Friends,

It is almost Spring in Israel and the flowers are already blooming. Spring is a sign of hope, renewal and rebirth in nature.

It is also the season of our spring festivals: Passover, for Jews, and Easter for Christians. It is a time for prayer, study and lots of family time together.

For us Jews, this is the time that we retell the story of our Exodus from Egypt in our homes, synagogues or communal institutions. We do so by using the classic text of the *Hagadah*, which has been transmitted to us over many centuries, in many variations via our tradition, and by adding our own creative and innovative readings and discussions.

For me, it is always the ceremony of opening of the door for Elijah, the harbinger of the messianic era, which symbolizes the hope for a better future for us and for all God's children. In so doing, we express our yearnings for a world without war and violence, of a world of peace and tranquility. In many homes, we have added a "fifth cup" of wine in honor of Elijah to remind us of the need to continue to hope and act for a better future for all.

May I take this opportunity to wish our Jewish friends in Israel around the world a *Chag Sameach V'kasher*, a Happy Passover Holiday; and to our Christian friends, we wish a Happy Easter.

Sincerely,

L'shalom, in peace, salaam,


Dr. Ron Kronish, rabbi
Director, ICCI



ANNOUNCEMENTS

ICCI blog launched

We at ICCI are pleased to announce the launch of the new ICCI blog, to be edited by ICCI Director Dr. Ron Kronish, with the assistance of Jennie Grayson, a student from Brown University who is interning with us this semester. We hope to use this blog—in Hebrew, English, and eventually Arabic—to share the more personal dimension of our work, sharing personal stories, pictures, videoclips, reviews and opinions from our staff, program participants, board members and visitors. We invite you to learn more about us and to discover the challenges and rewards of interreligious dialogue in Israel through following this blog. Currently, the blog includes Dr. Kronish's account of his visit to Shfaram High School in the Arab-Israeli town of Shfaram. In the following weeks and months, more and more contributors will add their input. To read the blog (RSS feeds also available), please visit: <http://icciblog.wordpress.com>



“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>

Coexistence in the Middle East -- Academic Tour in Israel Program, June-July 2010

Registration is ongoing for this special academic tour program, which will be coordinated and partially taught by ICCI director Dr. Ron Kronish, as well as for other programs of the **Coexistence in the Middle East Initiative**. To learn more about this initiative and to register, please visit: <http://coexistencetrip.net> and/or read the following document: <http://icci.org.il/summercourse.html>.

SPECIAL EVENT

ICCI's Special Study Session with Kehillat Yedidya and JCJCR, March 2010

A special study session entitled "Why do some Jews spit on Christians in the Old City?" was held on Monday, March 15, 2010, at Kehillat Yedidya's Jerusalem headquarters, attended by some 75 people. This public event, co-sponsored by **ICCI**, **Kehillat Yedidya**, and the **Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR)**, revolved around a problem that should concern all of us. The evening commenced with an introduction by **JCJCR Director, Mr. Daniel Rossing**, followed by a panel

moderated by ICCI director, Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish, including panelists **Ms. Yisca Harani, Lecturer on Christianity, the Avshalom Institute, Tel Aviv, Archbishop Aris Shirvastian, the Armenian Patriarchate, Jerusalem, and Fr. Athanasius Makora, Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land,** as well as respondent **Dr. Debbie Weissman, ICCJ President and ICCI co-chairperson. Ms. Andrea Katz of Kehillat Yedidya** concluded the session with a call for action.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Between Memory and Reconciliation

The participants of the ***Between Memory and Reconciliation*** program met on March 2, 2010, in Jaffa. This program, funded by the **Rissho Kosei-Kai** organization of Japan, brings together Jewish and Palestinian young adults—all Israeli citizens—for dialogue and action, including seminars with Japanese Buddhist students, in Israel and in Japan. At the meeting in Jaffa, they encountered models of partnership and collaboration between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel in civil and national projects and initiatives: challenges, successes and dilemmas. The discussion included meetings with representatives of Jewish-Arab organizations in Israel such as **Sadaka Reut** (www.reutsadaka.org), **The Peres Center for Peace** (www.peres-center.org) and the **Jaffa Popular Committee for Right of Land and Housing**. The meeting was planned and led by a group of participants with a special interest in this topic, including Elias Wakim and Hamutal Raber, whose personal reflections are included below.

Elias: "I would like to emphasize--as one of the organizers of the meeting-- that understanding the day-to-day life of all of us, whether it's in Jaffa or in any other mixed city, is a very important thing. One of the most meaningful ways of gaining such an understanding is meeting with the people who live and work in that place. For me, and for many of the others, this important meeting was an experience that opened up our minds and made us rethink the very complex reality we live in. When people talk about Jaffa, they usually think it's [part of the] Tel Aviv-Jaffa [joint municipality], [...] that the municipality invests equally in Tel Aviv and in Jaffa. But reality is completely different. Sometimes I really don't realize that these two cities are right next to each other, with no physical distance between them!"

Hamutal: "What interested me on this day in Jaffa was the need to examine, as a Jewish Israeli, how my wish to live here, in a state that maintains my national rights, can be reconciled with my wish to have the rights of the Palestinians maintained also. Meeting with [representatives of] the various organizations gave me different answers to that question, but at the same time this made the issues much more difficult and complex, as well as clearer and sharper, especially the immense gaps between both sides on this matter."

The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF)



Image by Tamar Hayardeni

During January and February 2010, the participants of the ***JIYAF program*** have been working to widen and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the situation and needs of the Jerusalem public. One encounter was dedicated to meeting a resident of the East Jerusalem neighborhood Sheikh Jarrah, in order to learn more about the recent Jewish-Palestinian conflict there. Another encounter exposed the participants to facets of day-to-day reality in Jerusalem from the other side's point of view, using Jewish and Palestinian media and newspapers dealing with current affairs. Additionally, the forum members have been getting to know people and organizations in Jerusalem and in Israel who are engaged in social activism. Recently, they met with representatives of **Combatants for Peace** (www.combatantsforpeace.org), a group of Israeli

and Palestinian individuals who were once actively involved in the cycle of violence in the area and are now working together to promote peace. 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**.

Face to Face/Faith to Faith

During the weekend of February 18-21, a new group of 12 tenth graders, participating in the **Face to Face/Faith to Faith Program**, took part in a 3 night/4 day retreat at the **Tzipori Conference Center** in the Jerusalem Forest. The group, made up of Jews from West Jerusalem and Palestinians (Christians and Muslims) from East Jerusalem and Abu Ghosh, learned about each other's religions from religious leaders and completed an outdoor leadership course together.



Following this weekend, on March 4, 2010, the group held its bi-weekly meeting at ICCI. The larger part of the meeting was dedicated to a lecture and discussion with **Prof. Muhammed Dajani**, a professor at **Al Quds University** and founder of **Wasatia**, a new organization which promotes the "middle way" in Islam, who spoke to them about the basic concepts of tolerance and peace in Islam. This program is a partnership between ICCI and the **Auburn Theological Seminary** in New York.

IN MEMORIAM

ICCI mourns the passing of two of its leaders and extends heartfelt condolences to their families:



Judge Mayer Gabay, who served as a co-chairperson of ICCI's Board of Directors for several terms and who was deeply committed to promoting good relations among the major faith communities in Israel for most of his professional life in many important positions in Israel's civic service. Judge Gabay passed away last week.

Ambassador Shmuel Hadas, who served on ICCI's Board of Directors for many years, and who, as Israel's first ambassador to the Vatican, was helpful to ICCI in promoting good relations between the Catholic Church and Jews in Israel and around the world. Ambassador Hadas passed away in January of this year.



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS OF THE ICCI STAFF

ICCI welcomes two new student interns, Ms. Jennifer Grayson and Ms. Ronit Paz.

Jennifer (Jennie) Grayson is ICCI's new Young Adult Programs and Communications Intern. Among other things, she is responsible for setting up **ICCI's new blog and Facebook page**. Jennie is a junior at Brown University majoring in History, Late Antique Cultures, and Middle East Studies. She has studied Arabic at Al Akhawayn University in Morocco and has been involved in interfaith and inter-cultural programming, both at Brown and through an internship with the University of the Middle East Project. Originally from Montclair, NJ, she is currently spending a semester at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.



Ronit Paz is ICCI's new intern for the *Between Memory and Reconciliation* program. A General History and General Studies graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, she is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Conflict Management and Negotiation at Bar Ilan University. As part of the requirements for her final project, Ronit will focus on ICCI's activities, which deal with dialogue and conflict mitigation.



ICCI IN THE MEDIA

In its English edition dated March 5, 2010, Israeli newspaper **Ha'aretz** (www.haaretz.com) published an article entitled "Capital Anglos mobilize against practice of spitting at Christians". Author Raphael Ahren describes the problematic phenomenon of Christians being spat at and the attempts at improving the situation, including the abovementioned March 15th event, a collaboration between **Kehillat Yedidya**, ICCI and the **Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations**.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1154366.html>

The **Florida Jewish Journal** (www.floridajewishjournal.com) published an article by veteran columnist Rabbi Bruce Warshal on February 23, 2010. The article, entitled "It's time to stop Islam-bashing", followed a lecture by ICCI director Dr. Ron Kronish in Boca Raton in January and highlighted the need to become less prejudiced against the Muslim citizens of the U.S.

An article by Dr. Ron Kronish entitled "Notes from a Humanistic, Liberal Zionist: A Personal Perspective" was published as part of the **Presbyterian Church (USA)**'s Middle East Study Committee report in March 2010. Dr. Kronish offers his views on Jewish identity and Zionism, past and present.

<http://www.pcusa.org/middleeastpeace/pdf/part3a1.pdf>

NEWS FROM ICCI MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

The Focolare Movement is an international organization that promotes the ideals of unity and universal brotherhood, establishing a strong dialogue between faiths. As part of this movement's activities, a group of 30 Arab Christian and Muslim children from the Galilee visited an orphanage in Sephoris in December 2009, where they put on a two-hour program for the 70 Christian and Muslim children who live there and gave everyone Christmas presents. The girls of the Focolare Movement also held a program in the children's oncology sector of the Rambam hospital in Haifa, during which they played with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim patients. **Ms. Margaret Karram**, the head of the Israeli branch of the movement, reports that in both cases, the children enjoyed getting to know people of different faiths in an atmosphere of peace and love.



<http://www.floridajewishjournal.com/ /opinion/fl-jjps-warshal-0224-20100223,0,3374396.story>

Shalom Hartman Institute's Bernard and Barbro Osher Department of Religious Pluralism held its 23rd Annual International Theology Conference on February 14-18, 2010, at the institute's campus in Jerusalem. The annual conference brings together Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars, writers and interreligious professionals from around the world and from within Israel, for a unique interreligious intellectual experience that combines profound text-study and academic deliberation with intensive informal discussion, dialogue and fellowship. The conference was attended by ICCI's Dr. Ron Kronish and Mr. Ophir Yarden. For more information about this conference and about the Shalom Hartman Institute, see

http://www.hartman.org.il/Center_Adv/Program_View.asp?Program_Id=9

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<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>