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## **ICCI INSIGHTS & INFORMATION**

**November 5, 2009 | 18 Cheshvan, 5770 | 17 Thw al-Qi`dah, 1430**

Dear friends,

During this past month I had the privilege of journeying to Poland for five days with five colleagues from Israel – three rabbis, one Jewish educator and one Polish-Catholic student intern – for a unique seminar on Polish-Jewish relations. The seminar took place in three Polish cities – Lublin, Kielce and Warsaw. This was a sensitive and substantive educational, religious and spiritual experience, in which we engaged in personal and profound interreligious dialogue and intellectual discussions with Jewish and Christians friends and partners, who were brought together by our colleagues, leaders of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews.



Among the highlights of our experience together in Poland were:

- A visit to the Majdanek concentration camp, near Lublin, with the Archbishop of Lublin, His Eminence Archbishop Józef Życiński, in which we commemorated the Shoah together with a reading from Psalms and a joint moment of silence.
- Celebrating Shabbat in the city of Kielce, a small city between Warsaw and Krakow, known for a pogrom against the Jews in July 1946. Members of Kielce's Christian community, led by Mr. Bogdan Białek, are taking the lead in commemorating this event – and the Jewish heritage in their city – in remarkable ways, leading to a new reconciliation between Jews and Catholics in Poland.
- Participating in a special "Simchat Torah" convocation convened by the Polish Conference of Christians and Jews in Warsaw, one week after the Jewish holiday was actually celebrated. At this special ceremony, both Jews and Christians read a biblical text together and shared brief reflections on this text in an atmosphere of genuine friendship and shared community.

This was a rich and meaningful experience for all of us. Personally I can say that this journey taught me a lot about the value of the actions of one person – or small groups of people – to make significant contributions to social and religious change in their communities.

L'shalom,

Dr. Ron Kronish, rabbi  
Director, ICCI

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

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



A videoconference about **Jewish-Muslim Youth Dialogue in the U.S.A. and Its Implications for Israel** will take place on November 16, 2009, at the American Center in Jerusalem. This invitation-only videoconference is the 3rd in a series of videoconferences co-sponsored by the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel and the **American Center** in Jerusalem. The American speakers will be **Dr. Eboo Patel** (pictured, left), the founder and Executive Director of the **Interfaith Youth Core**, a Chicago-based institution building the global interfaith youth movement, and **Rabbi Or Rose** (pictured, right), Associate Dean and Director of Informal Education at the **Rabbinical School of the Hebrew College in Newton, MA**, where he also teaches Rabbinics and Jewish Thought.

## ONGOING PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

### **ICCI delegation to Poland**

An ICCI delegation of religious leaders visited Poland (Warsaw, Lublin and Kielce) for a reciprocal visit hosted by the **Polish Council of Christians and Jews** during October 14-18, 2009. The delegation included ICCI Director, **Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish**, ICCI's Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs, **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, **Rabbi Prof. Yehoyada Amir**, of the **Hebrew Union College**, **Rabbi Shlomo Brin** of **Yeshivat Har Etzion** and the **Yaacov Herzog Teachers' College**, **Rabbi Yehuda Gilad**, the Founder and Head of **Ma'ale Gilboa Yeshiva** and Rabbi of Kibbutz Lavi, and **Ms. Zuzanna Radzik**, a Polish-Catholic student intern with ICCI.



On October 16-17, 2009, the delegation members took part in a special Shabbaton in the city of Kielce, in which there was an anti-Jewish pogrom in 1946. This was an extraordinary religious and cultural event, which included prayer in the old synagogue of the Jewish Community, in which no Jews have prayed since the Second World War. During this Shabbaton, Kielce became a place of prayer, discussion, exhibitions, concerts and plays dedicated to Jewish culture. The event was made possible thanks to the patronage of **Mr. Michael Traison** and the dedication of **Mr. Bogdan Bialek**, and other Christian members of the **Jan Karski Society**.

One of the participants in the ICCI delegation, Rabbi Prof. Yehoyada Amir has shared with us some of his impressions and experiences in Kielce during the delegation's visit there. Here is an excerpt:

*In Kielce, the full intensity of Polish anti-Semitism was demonstrated. In this town, a pogrom took place **after** the Holocaust. Kielce is like a capsule holding within it the horrible venom poisoning the Jewish-Polish relationship, forming a barrier against normalization and a joint future. It is exactly there, in that terrible place, that we had the privilege of spending the Sabbath in the company of Polish Catholics who have dedicated their lives to remembering and making sure others remember, to condemning murder and hatred, to healing the wounds. The*

*small-framed figure of the man who took it upon himself to make a change, Mr. Bogdan Bialek (no relation to Chaim Nachman and no Jewish roots that I know of), will stay in my mind for many years. He is a modest man, almost invisible, who has transformed Kielce into a focal point of memory and repentance. And when the hopes he had carried in his heart were realized beyond his wildest dreams, and in the desecrated and ravaged synagogue of Kielce a Jewish prayer once again took place – with many dozens of Jews and Christians forming one sacred community during that Sabbath – he could no longer hold his tears.*



### **ICCI Director and Kadi Mohammad Zibdeh's North-American lecture tour**

On 21-29 October, 2009, **Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish** and **Kadi Mohammad Zibdeh**, the Kadi (Islamic judge) of Jaffa Jerusalem, visited the U.S. and Canada for a special lecture tour (photograph by Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen).

The purpose of this tour was to discuss issues, challenges and achievements relating to "The Other Peace Process: Interreligious Dialogue in Israel in the Service of Peace." Dr. Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh addressed together Jewish, Muslim and mixed audiences in Ottawa, Canada, hosted by **Rabbi Steve Garten/Temple Israel** and funded by the **Danbe Foundation**, at the **University of Pennsylvania**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the **Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)**, Indianapolis, Indiana, sponsored by the **Muslim Alliance of Indiana**, and at the **Westchester Reform Temple**, Scarsdale, New York, hosted by **Rabbi Richard Jacobs**.

Rabbi Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh were also hosted for two lunch-seminars—one at the **Institute of International Education** in New York City, where they met with key professional staff of the IIE and with leading members of their board, including **Mr. S.A. Ibrahim** (photo right) and **Mr. Victor Goldberg**, and the other at the office of S.A. Ibrahim in Philadelphia, for business, religious and educational leaders in the community. Gratitude is hereby expressed to Mr. S.A. Ibrahim, Chief Executive of Radian Group, Inc., for hosting both of these meetings.



After Kadi Zibdeh returned to Israel, Dr. Kronish traveled to Chicago for three events:

- the Fall Shapiro Lecture on the topic "The Other Peace Process – Interreligious Dialogue in Israel", at the **Catholic Theological Union's Bernadin Center for Theology and Ministry**, hosted by **Prof. John Pawlikowski**.
- a "Lunch and Learn" seminar on the topic of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict's Impact on Jewish-Christian Dialogue", hosted by **Rabbi Michael Zedek** at the **Emanuel Congregation** in Chicago. Respondents were the **Rev. John M. Buchanan**, Pastor of the **Fourth Presbyterian Church** and Editor/Publisher of "The Christian Century" and **Sister Joan McGuire**, O. P., Director for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the **Archdiocese of Chicago**,
- a workshop at the conference of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago.

### **Galilee Religious Leaders Forum - 'Sukkat Shalom' event**

On October 6, 2009, during the Jewish festival of Sukkot, 25 religious leaders from the Galilee – Jews, Druze, Christians & Muslims – met at **Kibbutz Lavi** in the Lower Galilee for a 'Sukkat

Shalom' gathering. The participants learned about Sukkot from Rabbi **Yehuda Gilad**, rabbi of Kibbutz Lavi and one of the heads of Yeshivat Ma'aleh Gilboa, and enjoyed a tour of the kibbutz led by Rabbi **Meir Rubinstein**. In addition, many practical ideas for cooperation among religious leaders in the Galilee were brought up in group discussions with grass-roots religious leaders from the region. ICCI expresses gratitude to Mr. **Yakub Salame** and the staff of the **Division of Religious Communities of Israel's Ministry of Interior** for their partnership with us in this program and to **Rabbi Yehuda Gilad** for hosting the event.

### **Special course about the relations between Jews and Poles**

ICCI's special course about "**Encountering Poland: Relations between Jews and Poles – Religious, Historical and Social Dimensions**" opened on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with a lecture by the ambassador of Poland to Israel, Her Excellency Mrs. Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska. The course, which is a collaboration between ICCI and the **Polish Institute**, deals 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. This innovative and contemporary new course is aimed at Israeli educators who are involved in teaching these issues both in the formal and informal educational systems.

### **ICCI IN THE MEDIA**

ICCI's delegation to Australia in September 2009 is discussed on the **Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council** website, in an article by Jeremy Jones, published on September 25, 2009. The article, entitled "The Last Word: Food for Thought", focuses on the delegation's contribution to changing misconceptions and promoting interreligious understanding in Australia. Specifically, it describes how a number of Australian Muslims attended functions in which the delegation members spoke or heard them on the radio, and were inspired by that experience to rethink preconceptions about the reality of daily life in Israel. For example, "The fact that there are functioning mosques and churches in Israel came as a surprise to some who had been misled into perceiving Israel as a crypto-theological totalitarian state, indicating just how important the visit to Australia was for increasing knowledge and understanding."

[http://www.aijac.org.au/?id=articles&\\_action=showArticleDetails&articleID=6663](http://www.aijac.org.au/?id=articles&_action=showArticleDetails&articleID=6663)

Dr. Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh's lecture tour in the U.S. and Canada has also received much media attention last month. The following is a partial list of related media items.

The **Indianapolis Star** ([www.indiestar.com](http://www.indiestar.com)) published an article by Robert King on October 23, 2009, entitled "Different religious backgrounds don't rule out trust". The article highlights the importance of "the other peace process", a process that involves the intensive, long-term personal engagement of people who are neither politicians nor lawyers. Mr. King also wrote about his interview with Dr. Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh in his personal blog, summarizing the experience with the following question: "*If a Muslim and a Jew from Jerusalem can travel together and speak the language of interreligious peace, what excuse do those of us in America have for not doing the same?*"

<http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091023/LOCAL/910230376>

[http://blogs.indystar.com/thoushalt/2009/10/two\\_visitors\\_fr.html](http://blogs.indystar.com/thoushalt/2009/10/two_visitors_fr.html)

The **Ottawa Citizen** ([www.ottawacitizen.com](http://www.ottawacitizen.com)) published an article by Jennifer Campbell on October 26, 2009, entitled "Finding common ground". The article includes highlights from Dr. Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh's appearance at Temple Israel in Ottawa. Among other things, they

spoke of the media's attitude towards interreligious peace efforts, about the KEDEM project, and about their vision of peaceful relations between people and communities in the region.  
<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/Finding+common+ground/2144262/story.html>

The **Jewish Week** ([www.thejewishweek.com](http://www.thejewishweek.com)) published an article by Merri Rosenberg on October 27, 2009, entitled "Figuring out how to live together". The article includes highlights from Dr. Kronish and Kadi Zibdeh's appearance at the Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, MA. Among the topics discussed were the stereotypes each side has about the other, dialogue as a religious obligation and the role of interreligious dialogue. In the words of Dr. Kronish: *"We're not politicians. We're not here to write the treaty between Israel and Palestine. For us, engaging in interfaith dialogue is not an academic or intellectual exercise. We're bringing people together to live together. The focus of our discussions is religious, educational and spiritual. The goal is learning to live together for the purpose of coexistence."*  
[http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36\\_a17050/News/New\\_York.html](http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36_a17050/News/New_York.html)

## **VISITING GROUPS**

### **Delegation of Dutch students meets with ICCI co-chairperson and JIYAF alumni**

On October 19, 2009, a group of Dutch theology students visited ICCI to meet with **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, ICCJ president and ICCI co-chairperson, and with Eli Brom and Tareq Samman, alumni of the Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum. Also present was Raphaela Khurgin, a student participating in the Nir project, aimed at students from Israel, the West Bank and Jordan who are interested in medicine. The Dutch group numbered some 15 Christian students (20-25 years old) and their teachers, all from the **Christian University in Ede**. During their two-week stay in Israel, these students' main goal is to gain a better understanding on the reality of Israel and Jewish-Christian relations, past and present. Their meeting with ICCI representatives revolved around ICCI's interreligious work and interreligious dialogue in general as a path to creating a culture of peace.

### **Rhineland Church leadership delegation meets with ICCI representatives**

On October 20, 2009, ICCI co-chairperson **Dr. Debbie Weissman** and ICCI women's program alumna, **Ms. Rula Shubeita**, met with a delegation from Germany. This delegation numbered 11 leaders of the **Rhineland Church**, including a bishop and several priests. Dr. Weissman and Ms. Shubeita, who recently returned from a tour of Australia on behalf of ICCI, spoke to the delegation members about ICCI's work and the importance of interreligious dialogue in the service of peace.

### **Australian psychologists meet with ICCI representatives**

On October 25, 2009, **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, along with ICCI's Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs, **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, met with a group of six Australian psychologists, invited to the country by the **Israel-Australia Chamber of Commerce**. Dr. Weissman and Ms. Moshe spoke to the group about the educational and psychological aspects of the conflict in our region, ICCI's youth and young adult programs and ICCI's joint projects with Japanese and Polish organizations.

### **"Experience Bezalel" and "Rimon Music Experience" students visit ICCI**

On October 6, 2009, a group of some 25 foreign students currently participating in the **Israel Experience's** "Experience Bezalel" and "Rimon Music Experience" programs visited ICCI.

These 18-27 year old students have come from Europe, the U.S., Canada, Australia, South America and South Africa to study for a year at the Rimon or Bezalel schools in Israel, to both study art or music and to learn about Israeli society and culture. The group met with ICCJ president and ICCI co-chairperson, **Dr. Debbie Weissman**, ICCI's Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs, **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, and alumni of our Face to Face / Faith to Faith program: Mustafa Ghanem, Salem Abdelrahman, David Djemal, Avital Djemal, Shaked Green, Hiba Alayan, Bushra Abdelrahman and Plia Gillis. Dr. Weissman spoke to the group about interreligious dialogue in Israel, followed by joint musical improvisations led by Salem Abdelrahman. Later, the discussion revolved around the ways in which the situation in Israel affects these foreign students' lives both abroad and during their stay in the country, and about the reasons that led them to join the Israel Experience programs.

### **NEW ADDITIONS TO ICCI STAFF**



ICCI welcomes the new Palestinian co-coordinator of the "From Memory to Reconciliation" program, **Mr. Wasim Biroumi**. Wasim holds a B.A. in Behavioral Sciences from the Ben Gurion University in the Negev, and is currently working on his Educational Psychology thesis there as well as finalizing a M.A. degree in Clinical-Educational Psychology from Haifa University. He has served as a facilitator, coordinator, lecturer and educator in various capacities since 1999, and has in recent years gained expertise regarding the facilitation and guidance of conflict groups.



ICCI also welcomes to our Youth and Young Adult Programs department a new student intern, **Mr. Omar Smiley**, who will also assist us in the areas of communications and development. Omar is an undergraduate student at George Washington University and is currently attending the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the 2009 Fall semester. He intends to graduate in 2011 with a major in International Affairs and a minor in Semitic Languages. Omar grew up in Toledo, Ohio.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:education@icci.org.il).**