

## Religious Studies Unit

### Introduction

Interfaith matters and religious issues have always had a special place in PASSIA's regular meeting program, and having realized the increasing need for better understanding between the various religious communities, in early 1998, PASSIA decided to establish a *Religious Studies Unit* devoted to inter-religious dialogue and activities. The unit's work focuses on the role and significance of religion for different people and tries to promote understanding of, and respect for, others in order to address this religious diversity. Subjects discussed include the causes and consequences of problems within and between the established religious communities and activities that contribute to the elimination of misconceptions and stereotypes.

The PASSIA Religious Studies Unit combines the following activities, some of which are held 'off the record' to allow for the frankest exchange and debates possible:

**Coordinating Meetings and Briefings:** Meetings and brainstorming sessions involving members of PASSIA's Religious Studies Unit and local and foreign counterparts/project partners from the three monotheistic religions with the aim of fostering coordination of ongoing and future activities.

**Dialogue Sessions and Roundtables:** Meetings with representatives from one or more of the three monotheistic religions, which usually include a guest speaker presenting a certain topic related to inter- or intra-religious issues followed by a discussion.

**Seminars and Workshops:** Encounters on a specific topic, involving either members of the three monotheistic religions or only representatives of the Christian or Muslim community. These seminars and workshops are intended to help participants to find common ground and to allow different religions to work in harmony and on an equal footing.

**Conferences:** Participation in conferences, here and abroad, that deal with aspects of religion, belief and interfaith relations, or foster an open and free debate on religious issues and aspects as they concern the people in the Holy Land.

**Publication:** Documentation and publication of research studies or proceedings from meetings/seminars.

Activities of the Religious Studies Unit in 2006/2007 were all attended by Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; they included the following (presented in the following order: date; place; topic; speaker; participants):

## Coordinating Meetings and Briefings

2 May 2006, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Religious Dialogue**

**Participant(s):** Michael Birkel, Professor of Religion, Earlham College, Richmond Indiana, US.

3 May 2006, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Religious Dialogue**

**Participant(s):** Rev. Dr. Hans Ucko, Programme Executive, Interreligious Relations and Dialogue, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.

22 August 2006, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: The Culture of Islam and Secularism.**

**Participant(s):** Betsy Hiel, Foreign Correspondent Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Newspaper.

6 November 2006, Latin Patriarch Church, Jerusalem

**Topic: French President Jacques Chirac award to Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Archbishop of Jerusalem.**

6 March 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Religious Dialogue**

**Participant(s):** *Researchers from the Church of Sweden:* Dr. Göran Gunner; Ms. Anne Louse Eriksson; Dr. Hanna Stenström.

5 March 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Hamas and the 'Al-Soufia'**

**Participant(s):** Khalid Hroub, Researcher, Oxford University, London, UK.

15 May 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Vision of PASSIA on Interfaith Dialogue**

**Participants:** Jeanne Abdulla, Cordaid, The Netherlands

28 August 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Islamic Issues**

**Participants:** Sherifa Zuhur, Research Professor of Islamic and Regional Studies, Strategic Studies Institute, USA

## Dialogue Sessions and Roundtables

30 March 2006, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic:** The Messiah/Jesus Christ in the Jewish, Christian & Islamic Sources

**Speakers:** Fr. David Neuhaus,sj; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway;Ophir Yarden

**Participants:** Marcin Gazka; Kerstin GÖller; Jordi Marjauedas; Amit Leshem; Fr. Human Khzouz; Fouad Dakkak; Jamal Al Aref; Mohammad Nuseibeh; Donald J. Moore; Omar Haramy; Inas Abu Shilbayih; Terry Bullata; Adnan Husseini.



Fr. David Neuhaus,sj    Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway    Ophir Yarden



1 December 2006, St. George College, Jerusalem

**Topic:** Talk on Abraham

**Lecture by:** Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA

**Participant(s):** Visiting Delegation of Mid-Career Professionals from the UK

5 December 2006, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic:** Religious Dialogue in Palestine

**Participant(s):** Robin Marsh, UPF; Manuel Gallent, former MP; Enrique Sanchez Moros, Civil Administration,Ministry of Finances; Canon George Ansa,Church of England Parish Priest;Brenda Hodgson,Freigh Forwarding Clerk;Richard Donk,Journalist;Dick Leurdyk,Netherlands Institute of International Relations;Margaret Ali, UPF;H.K. Nearskov,Minister,Author;Genevieve Ray,Teacher.



21 January 2007, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

**Topic:** Solidarity Delegation

**Participant(s):** A delegation from the Presbyterian Church (USA):Ms. Linda Valentine, Executive Director, General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church; Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church; Rev. Dr. (Ms.) Allison Seed, Chairperson, General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church; Rev. Dr. Victor Makari Area Coordinator for the Middle East, Presbyterian Church; Ms. Sara Lisherness, Director, Peace and Justice Program Unit, Presbyterian Church.

6 February 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Religious Freedom**

**Participant(s):** Aaron Pina, Foreign Affairs Officer for the Middle East, Office of International Religious Freedom, US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor; Mary Glantz, Political Officer, US Consulate General, Jerusalem.

6 February 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Non-Violent Political & Social Activism: Application to the Palestinian Case within its Political, Economic, Social and Religious Context.**

**Speaker:** Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Director of the Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island, US.

**Participant(s):** Stacy Barrios, Cultural Affairs Office; Amjad Shihab, Al-Quds University; Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan & the Holy Land; Dr. Avi Melech Ben Israel, Educator; Tarek Abu Ata, Director Love the Neighbor; Suzan Nammari, Senior Cultural Affairs Specialist, American Consul General; Mais Zuhaika, Project Officer, Youth Sector; Fouad Dakkak, Engineer; Jamal Al-Aref, Deputy Middle East Representative, ANERA; Rev. Sharon Key, Certified Nonviolence Trainer; Lina Masrouji, Assistant DGM, Jepharm.



12 February 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Muslim-Christian Relations in Palestine**

**Participant(s):** Frans Makken, Head, Netherlands Representative Office, Ramallah; Ronald Wormgoor, Second Secretary, Netherlands Representative Office, Ramallah.

17 April 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Psychology, Culture and Religion**

**Speaker:** Dr. Tim Williams, Psychologist, New Zealand; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Al-Quds University.

**Participant(s):** Dirk Moses, Dr. Historian; Naser Ideis, Information Specialist; Roz Willey, MS UN; Fadia Daibes, Dr. Representative Dan Church Aid; Valerie Feron, Journalist Vatican Radio; Fouad Dakkak, Engineering Management Consultant; Mazen Nuseibeh, Teacher; Mutasem Awad, Head of International Palestine Red Crescent.

5 May 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Jerusalem and the Holy Places**

**Participants:** Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Terry Bullata, Advocacy and Lobbying Coordinator, PARC; Jamil Hamami, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Najeh Daoud Bkeirat, Islamic Waqf Office; Dr. Arafat Hidmy, Makassed Society, Jerusalem; Fouad Dakkak, Engineer; Ishaq Budeiri, Arab Studies Society; Ibrahim Al Joulany, Trader; Nora Karmi, Sabeel; Adnan Hussein, Engineer; Mazen Sinokrot, CEO Sinokrot Group

12 May 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Wasatia (Middling or Midpoints) in Politic, Society and Religion**

**Speaker:** Mohammad Dajani

**Participants:** Jamil Hamami, Lecturer; Amjad Shehab, Lecturer; Adnan Hussein, Engineer; Lecturer; Yousef Dajani, Director of Jerusalem Electric Company; Dr. Abdel Rahman Abbas, Lecturer, Bethlehem University; Mohammed Nuseibeh, Engineer; Nabil Kayali, Director, Bridge International; Fadel Tahboub; Munther Dajani, Dean of Arts, Al Quds University; Ishaq Budeiri, Arab Studies Society; Fouad Dakkak, Engineer; Mahmoud Barakat, Trader; Ze-

nah Barakat, Student; Bashar Al Azzeh, Student; Haitham Hab Romman, Engineer; Ala' E'layan, University Student; Suhad Atrash, Employee; Murad Bustami, Student; Muneer Barakat, Trader.



17 July 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic:** *Salafism: School of Thought in Islam; from Theological Discourse to Political Activism*

**Speaker:** Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Director of Islamic Research Center, Al-Quds University.

**Participants:** Chris Meritt, Diplomat, British Consulate; Jamal Al-Aref, Deputy Director, ANERA; Jumana El-Aref, Student; Frans Makken, Head, Representative of the Netherlands; Mohammed Nuseibeh, Member, Higher Islamic Council; Adnan Hussein, Islamic Council; Ramon Ansoain, General Consul of Spain, Jerusalem; Dr. Ercan Ozer, Ambassador, Turkish Consulate, Jerusalem; Tariq Hilal, Student; Samer Nuseibeh, Engineer; Tova Scherr, Student; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Jorge Torres Pereira, Representative Office of Portugal, Ramallah; Amjad Shihab, Political Teacher. Jerome Drevon, Student; Haj Abed Abu Diab, Adviser; Shaina Chejna, Student, Christine Seisun



13 August 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic:** *Interfaith Dialogue*

**Participants:** Ms. Pamela Scholey, Secretary Dev. Group in Ottawa, Canada; Mr. Teije Hidde Donker, Conflict Research Unit Clingendael in The Hague.

23 August 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic:** *The Christian Theology of Liberation*

**Participants:** Samuel Kuruvilla, PHD Student, Exeter University, UK

5 September 2007, PASSIA, Ramallah

**Topic:** *The Muslim between Faith & Politics*

**Participants:** Hazem Qawasmi, GTZ; Adnan Hussein; Ibrahim Joulani, B. Man; Asad Sinnokrot, Gen. Man. Security Co.; Mohammad Hussein, Mofiti of Jerusalem & Palestine; Jorge Torres Pereira, Representative of Portugal, Ramallah; Mustafa Abu Sway, Lecturer, Al Quds University; John Lynch, Political Officer, European Commission; Jerome Drevon, Student/ Intern; Erik Abild, Student; Egu Bjornsen, University Teacher; Michelle Pace, Research Councils UK Research Fellow; Raed Awashreh, Executive Manager; Chris Merritt, British Consulate, Jerusalem; Fadi Abdul Razeq, Training Coordinator; Eman Abu Sway, Manager; Ghazaleh Arar, Teacher.



5 September 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Jerusalem and the Holy Places**

**Participants:** Group from the Church of Sweden's Information Department and International Secretaries; Group from the Church of Sweden's Information Department and International Secretaries: Ella-Britt Eriksson, Policy Adviser; Karin Hollmer, Communication Officer; Mattias Carlsson, Policy Adviser; Iréne Holmström Wiborg, Program Director; Communication; Lasse Bengtsson, Communication Officer; Peter Andersson,



Lutheran Deacon; Marie Körner, Secretary of International Affairs; Maria Lundström, Editor Public Relations; Daniel Bramsell, Press Secretary; Rickard Bonnevier, PR and Communication Manager; Louise Andersson, Communication Officers Assistant; Kajsa Kvarned, Lutheran Pastor; Helena Kedja, Communication Officer; Inger Hägg, Deacon; Roland Asplund, Communication Officer; Britt-Marie Helgesson, Lutheran Pastor; Lena Bergquist, Press officer; Mats Lagergren, Communication Officer; Maria Eddebo, press Officer; Thomas Janfalk, Communications Officer; Emelie Simmons, Communications Officer; Mogens Amstrup Jacobsen, Lutheran Pastor; Hiba Abu Arafah, Program Coordinator, STI; Hikan Bengtsson, Director.

27 October 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Islam and Politics**

**Participants:** Katerina Dalacoura, Lecturer in International Relations, Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

12 December 2007, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Topic: Islamic and Interfaith Religious Ethics in World Crises**

**Participants:** Cecelia Lynch, Associate Professor, Political Science Director, CGPACS, Center of Global Peace and Conflict Studies, University of California, IRVINE, USA.

## Seminars and Workshops

21 February 2006, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

**Topic: Biography of the Prophet & The Western Media**

**Participants:** Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Professor, Al-Quds University; Fr. Atallah Hanna; Katja Franke, FES; Elisabeth Petersen, FES; Karim Naffa; Mohammed Abu Teir, PLC Member ('Change and Reform', Jerusalem); Mohammed Totah, PLC Member ('Change and Reform', Jerusalem); Ahmad Atoun, PLC Member ('Change and Reform', Jerusalem); Roland Friedrich, DCAF; Jamal Ghosheh, Director, Palestinian National Theater; Haj Abed Abu Diab, Consultant, Electricity Co.; Mahmoud Abu Ghazaleh, Electricity Co.; Dr. Arafat Hidmi, Director, Maqassed Hospital; Ahmed Hashem Zughaiar, Director, Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce; Adnan Hussein, Director of Waqf, Jerusalem; Fuad Dakkak, Islamic Bank; Mahira Dajani, Director, Dar Al-Tifl; Ishaq Qutteineh, Engineer; Hayel Sandouka, Welfare Association; Walid Assali, Lawyer; Khaled Arafah, Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; Dr. Rosemary Hollis, Chatham House, London; Dr. Nadim Shehadeh, Chatham House, London; Olli, Finnish Representation Office, Ramallah; Mustafa Abu Zahra, Welfare Association; Nabil Hamoudah, Islamic Housing Bank; Dr. Rafiq Hussein, Welfare Association; Amit Leshem, Van Leer Institute; Abdul Rahman Abu Teir, Engineer; Ibrahim Joulani, Businessman; Abdul Rahman Abu Leel, Lawyer; Nora Karmi, Sabeel; Salah Abu Qteish, Trade Unionist; Khalil Assali, Radio Sawa; et al.

30 March-2 April 2006, Cairo, Egypt

Topic: التعددية من منظور المواطنة

Organized by: Arab Group for Muslim-Christian Dialogue

23-25 June 2006, Cairo, Egypt

Topic: Internal Agenda

Organized by: Arab Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Participant(s): Judge Abbas Halabi; Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour; Dr. Mohammad Salim Awwa; Dr. Tarq El-Bishiri; Dr. Samir Murqus; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi; Dr. Saud Al-Mawla; Kamil Manasa; Sayyid Hani Fahas.

15 April 2007, St. George Cathedral, Jerusalem

Topic: The Holy Eucharist and Installation of the Right Reverend Suheil Salman Dawani, the Fourteenth Anglican Bishop in the Diocese of Jerusalem

15 September 2007, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: Celebrating Ramadan Iftar

Participants: Ali Ayed; Asem Ababneh; Nader Asr; Sameh Nabil Said; Joerg Ranau; Jorge Torres Pereira; Dr. Ercan Ozer; Richard Makepeace; Lehlohonolo Shadrack Ted Pekana; Jean-Paul Ghonem; Tim Petschulat; H.E. Ambassador Heikki Hannikainen; H.E. Archbishop Fouad Twal; Fr. Shawki Bateria; Gabriel Morin; Bishop Munib Younan; Fr. Housam Na'oum; Father Dr. Anba Abraham; Fr. Malki Murad; Gousan Torjman; Fr. Atallah Hanna; Emil Jarjoui; Bernard Sabella; Mazen Qubti; Sami Abu Dayyeh; Sheikh Mohammad Hussein;



Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib; Sheikh Jamil Hammami; Shiekh Ishaq Abdul Jawad Taha; Eng. Mohammad Nusseibeh; Eng. Adnan Hussein; Mazin Sonukrot; Dr. Mustafa Abu Swai; Ahmad Hashim Zughiar; Hatim Abdel Qader; Ibrahim Al-Joulani; Dr. Raifiq Hussein; Ahmad Rwaidi; Jamal Abu Tou'meh; Dr. Eyad Hallaq; Abdul Qader Hussein; Dr. Nazmi Ju'beh; Dr. Sulayman Ghosheh; Dr. Basim Abu Assab; Haj Abed Abu Diab; Jibril Rijoub; Azzam Abu As-Sou'od; Munib Al-Masri; Omar Baitar; Marwan Abu Zuluf; Dr. Sabri Saidam; Nasir Kidweh; Imad Farrah; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi.

## Conferences

20 May 2007, Grand Park Hotel, Ramallah

Topic: Second Conference on Islam in Contemporary Palestine

Organizer: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA),

Participants: Conor O'Riordan, Irish Representative; Asem Khalil, Researcher; Magdy Eldakiky, Consultant; Ghada Al Madbouh, PHD Student; Tim O. Petschulat, Friedrich Ebert Foundation; Nizar Sulaiman; Ross Allen, Political Consul, British Consulate; Haitham Arar, Ministry of Interior; Amal Jadou, President Office, Ramallah; Dr. Issa Abu Zuhairah, Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University; Tariq Rabaiah; Judith Johannes, Project Manager, EU; Maria R. Fort, Editor Psychological; Husam Shakhshir, ICRC; Mazen Sinokrot, Engineer; Wafa Amr, Journalist, Reuters; Adnan Hussein, Engineer; Muhsin Yusuf, Professor, Birzeit University; Nadia Hajal, Researcher; Fadwa El-Shair, Ministry of Interior; Loay Shabaneh, Head, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; Jebriil Al Rjoub, Adeb Zeyadeh, Teacher; Lina Masrouji, Pharmacist; Nasir Al Qudweh; Khadijeh Habashneh, Researcher; Samia Khoury, Volunteer; Olevaer Brochenin, Deputy Consul France Embassy;

Mohammed Nusseibeh, Engineer; Bad Inier, Consulate General France, Jerusalem; Bellion Jourdan, ICRC; Maria Gonzales, Communication Consultant, UNRWA; Ercan Ozer, Ambassador Turkey.



## Publications

### ■ *Jesus in the Christian and Muslim Faiths*

*Father Rafiq Khoury and Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway*  
*December 2007 (English, 58 pages)*

One of the most passionately told and perceived narratives in Christianity as well as in Islam is that of Jesus Christ, or *Isa Ibn Maryam*: his birth, his words and deeds, his disciples and followers and his mother, the Virgin Mary. Therefore PASSIA decided to add the case of Jesus to its series of monographs on religious figures and commissioned two versions of Jesus' story by Christian (Father Rafiq Khoury) and Muslim (Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway) scholars to help understand people's beliefs in Jesus as well as the Virgin Mary and the special places they hold in both the Holy Qur'an and the Bible.

