

RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

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 Study Unit devoted to interreligious 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 held 'off the record' to allow for the frankest exchange and debates possible:

- **Workshops and seminars** are encounters on a specific topic, involving either members of the three monotheistic religions or only representatives of the Christian or Muslim community. These workshops intended to help participants to find common ground and to allow different religions to work in harmony and on an equal footing.
- 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 are also a fix part of PASSIA's Religious Studies Unit.
- In addition, **meetings** and **brainstorming sessions** are organized, 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. Some of the dialogues sessions take place 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.
- **Documentation and publication** of research studies or proceedings from meetings/seminars are also part of the Religious Studies Unit's activities.

During 2014, the following activities took place/were organized:

MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS

13 March 2014, Abrahams Herberge, Beit Jala

Topic: World Council of Churches-Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum Meeting

Organizers: World Council of Churches (WCC), Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF)

Resource person(s): Dr. Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi, Head of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA); Fr Dr. Jamal Khader, Dean, Faculty of Art, Bethlehem University; Rev. Rajbharat Patta, General Secretary, Student Christian Movement of India; Yusef Daher, Executive Secretary, Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC); Anna Hjalm, Ecumenical Officer for JIC; Nader Muaddi,

Advocacy Officer, Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI); Jet den Hollander, Local Program Coordinator, EAPPI, Jerusalem Coordination office; Michel Nseir, Program Executive, Special Focus on the Middle East, World Council of Churches; Ranjan Solomon, PIEF Communication Officer.

Participant(s): Nidal Abuzuluf, Manager, Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI); Simon Awad, Executive Director, Environmental Education Center (EEC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL); Dr. Mark Braverman, Executive Director, Holy Land Education and Peace Building Project; Rev. Mark B. Brown, Regional Representative, The Lutheran World Federation; Nora Carmi, Kairos Palestine; Rev. María Araceli Ezzatti Rodriguez, Methodist pastor and ICM pastor, Member and Coordinator of EAPPI; Catherine Gordon, Representative for International Issues, Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry, General Assembly Mission Council; Fuad Giacaman, Adviser and Co-president, Arab Educational Institute (AEI); José Henriquez, Secretary General, Pax Christi International ; Rifat Odeh Kassis, General Coordinator, Kairos Palestine; Rami Kassis, Executive Director, Alternative Tourism Group; Dr. Felipe Gustavo Koch Buttelli, Kairós Palestina Brasil; Hildegarde Lenz, Ecumenical Accompanier, Coordinator of the German Palestine Solidarity Network; Rania Murra, Director, Arab Educational Institute (AEI); Dr. Muna Mushahwar, Arab Orthodox Union Club; Dr. Audeh B. Quawas, WCC Central Committee member, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem; Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, President, Diyar Consortium; Rev. Eilert Rostrup, Director, The Karibu Foundation; Rev. Dr. Robert O. Smith, Area Program Director for the Middle East & North Africa, ELCA Global Mission; George Stephan, ACT Palestine Forum Coordinator; Dr. Martha Tonsern, Kairos Palestine, Advocacy Officer; Dr. Stiaan van der Merwe, Kairos Southern Africa; Robert van Drimmelen, Former APRODEV General Secretary; David Wildman, Executive Secretary, Human Rights & Racial Justice, General Board of Global Ministries; H.G. Bishop Munib A. Younan, Lutheran Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land; Ramzi Zananiri, Executive Director, International Christian Committee – Jerusalem; Dr. Zoughbi Zoughbi, Founder & Director, WI'AM Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center, Bethlehem.

12 April 2014, Al-Iman School, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Brochure Contest at Al-Iman School, Jerusalem**

Participant(s): Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Al-Iman Schools; Students.



16 April 2014, Legacy Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: **Challenges Facing Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Organizer: PASSIA

Participant(s): Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; Mahfouz Abu Turk, Journalist; Murad Isaid, Journalist; Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem; Dr. Arafat Hidmi, Chairman of Board of Trustees, Al-Makassed; Dr. Ishaq Yacoub Al-Qutob, Director General, Samer Nusseibeh, Engineer; Qusai Abbas, Project Coordinator; Mahira Dajani, President, Dar Al-Tifl Al-Arabi; Fayza Zalatimo, Deputy President, Dar Al-Tifl Al-Arabi; Fadwa Zalatimo, President, Friends' Society of the

Islamic Orphanage School; Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head of the High Council of Waqf, Ahmad Hashem Al-Zughayyar, President, Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture; Adnan Hussein, Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf; Mazin Jaabari, Director; Dr. Bassam Abu Libdeh, Medical Doctor, Al-Makassed; Nasser Hidmi, Political Activist; Dr. Abdel Rahman Abbad, Secretary General for the Muslim Ulama and Scholars in Palestine; Nimer Shaaban Al-Safadi, Teacher/Translator; Murad Bustami; Human Rights Officer, UN; Khaled Kaloti; Khaled Halabi Hamo; Mazin Abu Al-Soud; Sheikh Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Prof., Al-Quds University; Mohammad Nusseibeh, Engineer; Dr. Ahmad Fawaqa, Lecturer; Dr. Mahmoud Ibrahim Nasser Al-Dein, Financial Director, Awqaf; Nabil Hammouda, General Director; Sheikh Yacoub Shabaneh, Member of the Sharia'a Appeal Court; Dr. Mohammad Qutob, President, Arab Development Society; Itedal Al-Ashhab, Educational Portfolio & Member at the National Conference; Bashir Nusseibeh, Lawyer; Dr. Awad Mansour; Ahmad Safadi, Director, Elya.



3 May 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Relations of the Islamic Tradition to Jerusalem

Participant(s): Majin Pries, Pastor, PhD; Martina Severin Kaiser, Ecumenical Officer, Lutheran Church, Northern Germany; Martin Lowensdein, Dipl. Meol, M.A., President of Oeom Christian Council, Hamburg; Matthias Bohl, Rev., District-Pastor, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hamburg; Kerto Salmehen-Thiene, Lay Women Board, ACKH; Ortrun Onnen, Lay Women Board, ACUH; Sylvia Yildiz, ACKHH; Agocan Anetta, ACK, Hamburg; Behige Uihic, ACK, Hamburg



8 July 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Palestinian Christian Schools and the Issue of Al-Hijab

Participant(s): Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; Dr. Khaldoun Bader, Assistant Prof., Al-Quds University; Mohammad Abu Assab, Merchant; Sonia Nasser Eddin, Housewife; Mamoun Farrah, Merchant; Dr. Nader Salaymeh, Pharmacist; Alaa Shweiky, Merchant; Fatima Al-

Muaqet, Gen. Dir.; Rifat Nasser Eddin, Head, Faithful League of JDECO; Terry Boullata; Yousef Daher; Jumana Talhami Salaymeh, Pharmacist.



16 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Reality and Challenges Facing Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Awqaf and the Islamic Affairs Council

Participant(s): Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Acting Chief Judge, Head of the High Council of Waqf; Mohammad Nusseibeh, Awqaf Council Member, Mohammad Subhi Jabarein, Head, Al-Aqsa Association for Waqf and Heritage; Dr. Suleiman Ahmad Al-Masra Association; Sheikh Ibrahim Said Sabri, Awqaf Council Member; Hatem Abdel Qader, The Jerusalem File, former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; Ali Abu Sheikha, Islamic Movement inside the 1948 Palestine; Adv. "Mohammad Bashir" Al-Muhtaseb, Awqaf Council Member; Adnan Husseini, Governor of Jerusalem; Hani Abdeen, Dean, Medicine Faculty, Awqaf Council Member; Mustafa Abu Zahra, Hammad Abu Deibes, Head, Islamic Movement inside the 1948 Palestine; Hani Issawi; Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim Nasser Al-Din, General Director Assistant, Islamic Waqf; Jamal Abu Taameh, Legal Consultant, Islamic Awqaf; Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director, Islamic Waqf, Sheikh Jamil Abdul Rahim Hamami, Secretary General, Supreme Islamic Council, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Mohammad Zeidan, Head, Higher Arab Monitoring Committee; Mazen Sinokrot, Awqaf Council; Sheikh Kamal Khateeb, Islamic Movement; Dr. Ikirma Sabri, Supreme Islamic Council; Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem; Ziyad Hammouri; Safwat Freij, Aqsa Association, Islamic Movement; Ahmad Hisham Zghayyer, Chamber of Commerce; Abdel Latif Ghaith, Head, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association; Fouad Daqqaq, Awqaf Council Member; Sheikh Qasem Rayyan, President, Aqsa Association; Tasneem Kassem, Consultant, Dimensions Consulting; Firas Zaghal, Consultant; Omar Kiswani, Director, Al-Aqsa Mosque; Hikmat Naamneh; Director, Al-Aqsa Association; Adv. Khaled Zabarkah, Director; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Dean, Faculty of Da'wa and Principles of Religion; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA.





20 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Custodianship of Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Ibrahim Shaaban, Lecturer & Advocate; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Mazen Sinokrot, Awqaf Council, Former Minister of Economy; Musa Dweik, Lecturer; Dr. Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA.



25 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Rosary Sisters' High School and the Issue of the Veil

Participant(s): Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem; Bishop William Shomali, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; Yousef Daher; Hazem Kawasmi; Dr. Nader Salaymeh, Pharmacist; Terry Boullata; Adnan Joulani; Talal Nasser Eddin, BZU Pharmaceutical; Itedal Al-Ashhab, Educational Portfolio & Member at the National Conference; Abdel Qader Hussein, Faisal Hussein Foundation; Aref Hussein, Founder of Al-Nayzak; Mohammad Abu Assab, Merchant.



22 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Challenges Facing the Holy Sites in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Loris Elqura, Coordination Officer; Kristofor Carlin, Political Affairs Officer; Yih Peng Chia, Political Affairs Officer, UNSCO; Gregory Raikes, Political Affairs Officer, UNSCO; Shifa Jayousi, UNSCO.



BRIEFINGS

6 February 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant: Archimandrite Dr. Atallah Hanna, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem



8 February 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.

1 March 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: His Holiness Pope Francis' Visit to Jerusalem in May

Participant(s): Andrea Semplici, blog writer; Vittore Buzzi, Photographer.



10 March 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Jerusalem and the Holy Sites**

Participant: Ben Harun Baruch, Neturei Karta, Jerusalem



13 March 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Holy Places in Jerusalem**

Participant(s): Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs for the America Jewish Committee, Jerusalem; Avner Haramati, researcher.

29 March 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **His Holiness Pope Francis' Visit to Jerusalem and the Holy Places**

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.

5 April 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Political Islam and Europe: UK Politics**

Participant(s): Sir John Jenkins, HM British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Muna Shamsuddin, HM Consul (Political), British Consulate-General Jerusalem.



28 May 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Christian Community in Jerusalem**

Participant: Nicos Panayi, Representative of Cyprus.

10 June 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Holy Places in Jerusalem**

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.



17 June 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **PhD Research Study on the Islamic Movement**

Participant(s): Charles Kirchofer, PhD Candidate, Department of War Studies, King's College, London.

20 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Challenges Facing Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant: Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

23 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.

30 September 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Jewish Religious Schools of Thought**

Participant: Ofer Zalzburg, Senior Analyst, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group, Jerusalem.

18 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Islamic Waqf and the Question of Jerusalem

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf; Mazen Sinokrot, Awqaf Council, Former Minister of Economy; Ihab El-Khatib.

19 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Research Study on the Mufti of Jerusalem

Participant(s): Prof. Yitzhak Reiter, Chair, Land of Israel Studies, Ashkelon Academic College, Senior Research Fellow at JIIS and the Truman Institute, Hebrew University; Jumana Muhtaseb, Intern, PASSIA.

22 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Sherif Eissa, Second Secretary, Political Department, Embassy of Egypt, Tel Aviv; Afif Safieh, Former Ambassador to the Russian Federation; Dr. Wilfried Graf, Co-Director, Kelman Institute; Ofer Zalberg, Senior Analyst, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group.



29 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jewish Provocations

Participant: Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem



1 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque on Thursday, 30 October 2014

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.

5 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Cairo-Amman Coordination on the *status quo* in the Holy Places of Jerusalem

Participant: Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office, Ramallah

26 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant: Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head of the High Council of Waqf

29 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant: Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.

MEDIA BRIEFS & INTERVIEWS

27 February 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Israeli Knesset Debate on Al-Aqsa Mosque: Control or Sovereignty and its Implications

Participant(s): Alan Fisher, Senior Correspondent, Al-Jazeera English Language Channel; Mimi (Mariam) Daher, News Producer/Bureau, Al-Jazeera English Language Channel.



6 March 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Current Situation on Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem

Participant: Valerie Feron, Journalist

22 May 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: His Holiness Pope Francis' Visit to Jerusalem and the Holy Places

Participant: Kristell Bernaud, Middle East Correspondent, French National Radio Europe 1

27 May 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: His Holiness Pope Francis' Visit to Jerusalem

Participant(s): Christine Rinawi, Palestine TV, Jerusalem; Ali Yassin, Cameraman, Palestine TV

8 August 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque Today

Participant: Khalil Assali, Journalist

9 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound and Israeli Provocations

Participant: Nicolas Pelham, Jerusalem Correspondent, The Economist



23 October 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Holy Mosque

Participant(s): Mimi (Mariam) Daher, News Producer, Jerusalem Bureau, Aljazeera English; Imtiaz Tyab, Correspondent, Aljazeera English; Samir Abu Gharbiah, Cameraman, Aljazeera English



5 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Recent Israeli Aggressions against Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant: Saadet Oruc, TV 24, Istanbul, Turkey

5 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Israel's Closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant: Ahmad Budairi, Palestine Today TV (Filasteen Al-Youm)

5 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Background of the Israeli Attacks on Al-Aqsa and the Consequences

Participant(s): Al-Jazeera TV, Behind the News Program

6 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Spiritual Dimension of Al-Aqsa Mosque to Muslims

Participant(s): Matt Brown, Journalist, ABC Australia; Fouad Abu Ghosh, Producer, ABC Australia.

6 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Challenges Facing Al-Aqsa Mosque and other Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Tom Rayner, Journalist, Sky News-English Sameer Bazbaz, Cameraman, Sky News-English.



20 November 2014, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Challenges Facing Al-Haram Al-Sharif**

Participant: Marie de Verges, L'Express French Newspaper