

5. 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 Study 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 2008/2009 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

7 January 2008, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Interfaith Dialogue

Participant(s): Ian White, Director, International & Political Programs, Glencree, Ireland; Amit Leshem, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem.

31 April 2008, Augusta Victoria Hospital, Jerusalem

Topic: Peace and Human Rights – A Multi-Faith Concept

Speaker: Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Chairman of PASSIA, Jerusalem.

Participant(s): Visiting Delegation from the Lutheran World Federation.

30 August 2008, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Interfaith Dialogue

Participant(s): Presbyterian Leadership Group: Carol Adcock, General Assembly Council, PCUSA; Victor E. Makari, Ph.D, Coordinator, Office for the Middle East, PCUSA; Rev. Tom Taylor, Ph.D, Deputy Executive Director for Mission, PCUSA; Hunter Farrell, Director, PCUSA; Sara P. Lisherneess, Director, Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry, PCUSA.

2 Feb 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Day after Gaza

Participant(s): Presbyterian Church (USA) leadership delegation: The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Clerk of the General Assembly; J. Randal Ackley, Coordinator of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance; The Reverend Dr. Victor E. Makari, Coordinator of the Office for the Middle East; Mr. Douglas Dicks, Regional Liaison to Jordan, Israel and Palestine for the PC(USA).

16 April 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Christian-Muslim Relations

Participant(s): Michel Nseir, Program Executive, Public Witness, Special Focus on the Middle East, World Council of Churches, Geneva.

12 May 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Holy Land

Participant(s): Shahrukh Asad, Correspondent, Dubai TV; Ithar Abu Gharbieh, Cameraman, Dubai TV.

19 May 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Christianity, Islam and Peacemaking

Participant(s): Lee C. Camp, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics, LIPSCOMB University.

12 August 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Interfaith Dialogue**Participant(s):** Rabbi David Rosen, Sharon Rosen, Avner Haramati.

10 December 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Bioethics, Multiculturalism and Religion**Participant(s):** Prof. Alberto Garcia; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway; Sheikh Jamil Hamami.**Dialogue Sessions and Roundtables**

7 January 2008, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Open Discussion on Interfaith Dialogue**Speaker(s):** Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Chairman of PASSIA, Jerusalem.**Participant(s):** Group from Catholic Relief Services, Jerusalem, Rev. Paul Esser, Priest Pastor; Thomas Ulrich, Catholic Relief Services; Rev. Louis Anderson, Diocese of Grand Rapids, MI; Mikaele Sansone, Catholic Relief Services; Rev. Joseph Muth, Catholic Priest; Rev. Msgr. Joseph Ciampaglio, Priest; Rev. Jon Fapiente, Priest Ret.; LeAnn Hager, Catholic Relief Services Deputy Representative, Jerusalem.

24 September 2008, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Religious Issues**Participant(s):** Linda Louise Batton, DD, Director of the Office of Evangelization, Justice & Peace, Diocese of San Jose - Mountain View, CA; Densy Rijanto Chandra, Asian Ministry volunteer, Lady of the Holy Sepulchre - Highland, CA; Gregorius Mintono Chandra, Knight of Holy Sepulchre - Highland, CA; Bonita Jean Cler, DD, Parish leader, Archdiocese of Anchorage - Wasila, AK; James DeHarpporte, Regional Director, CRS West - San Diego, CA; Shirley Ann Giacomi, DD, Chancellor Diocese of Orange - Seal Beach, CA; Fr. Marc Christopher Howes, Pastor, Diocese of Las Vegas - Henderson, NV; Msgr. Patrick Loftus, Global Fellow, retired priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles - Woodland Hills, CA; Sheilah Eileen Lynch, DD, Director of Family Life, Diocese of Monterey - Santa Cruz, CA; (Rev.) Peter L Ruggere, Maryknoll, Co-leader of Delegation - Los Altos, CA; Theresa Marie Scargill, Director of Faith Formation, Diocese of Monterey - Monterey, CA; George Alexander Wesolek, Director of the Office of Social Policy, Archdiocese of San Francisco - Sonoma, CA; Catherine Rose Willett, Director, Office of Justice & Peace, Archdiocese of Portland - Portland, OR; Joseph Symkowick, Partnership & Advocacy officer, CRS West - Sacramento, CA; Patricia Symkowick, Spouse - Sacramento, CA.

10 November 2008, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: My Community and the Land**Participant(s):** The Swedish Technological Institute visitors' group: Hakan Bengtsson, Director of the Swedish Theological Institute; Lind Gessesse, Course Assistant; Hilda , Freayehu Mathewos; Ivy Singh; Ralte, Lalrinawmi; Catubig, Emma C; Dagandan, Lucia L; Mapangdol, Gloria Lita Diawan; Lubunga Kenge, Esther;

Mungure, Elieshi Ayo; Casarotti Peirano, Ana Maria; Anna Jagell; Margareta Olsson; Rose Elizabeth.

13 May 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Change of the Political Landscape in Palestine

Participant(s): Swedish Theological Institute visiting Delegation-Church of Sweden in Jerusalem: Sasa Farkas, Student; Bernice Magnusson, Student; Johanna Risenfors, Student; Christina Packalén, Student counselor; Kenan Habul, Journalist student; Puneet Acharya; Stefan Adolfsson, Student; Marie Korner, Pastor; Jeppelina Schoug, Student; Atilla Palcso, Priest; Annika Wenemark, Teacher; Jessica Tranlander, Student; Kim Lofqvist, Student; Helena Eriksson, Student; Christina Roeser, Student; Lars Michael VS Adrian, Head of Education in a Town in Sweden; Tobias Rydqvist, Student; Maria Widermark, Priest; Jennie Forsberg, Student; Hakan Bengtsson, Director, Swedish Theological Institute.

13 October 2009, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque Events

Participant(s): Yousef Al-Dajani, Chairman of the Board, Jerusalem District Electricity Co.; Azzam Al-Khatib, Director, Islamic Waqf; Sheikh Mohammad Hussein, Mufti of Jerusalem & Palestine, Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Al-Quds University; Khalid Abu Arafah, Engineer; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Al-Quds University; Zahi Khoury, Businessman; Michel Sabbah, Former Latin Patriarch for Jerusalem; Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head, Council for Waqf & Islamic Affairs, Jerusalem; Hatem Abdul Qader, Jerusalem file, Fateh; Dr. Arafat Al-Hidmi, Head, Al-Makassed Charitable Islamic Society; Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, President, Al-Quds University; Dr. Ekrima Sabri, The Islamic Supreme Committee; Munib Al-Masri, Muntada Falastine; Mazen Sinokrot, Sinokrot Group; Afif Safieh, Palestinian Ambassador in Europe.

Seminars and Workshops

13 August 2009, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: The Dome of the Rock and Al-Haram Al-Sharif: Restoration, Archaeology, Religion and Politics

Speaker: Dr. Beatrice St. Laurent, Professor of Islamic Art, Chair of the Art Department, Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA, NEH Senior Fellow, ACOR, Amman

Participant(s): Khalil Assali, Al-Quds TV; Katharina Galor, Professor; Ziad Zughayar, Architect; Meejeong Hong; Khaled Abu Nafeh; Azzam Abu Saoud, Director, Chamber of Commerce; Darwish Hijazi, Engineer; Ghaleb Mashni; Mazen Sinokrot, CEO Sinokrot Group; Nabil Al-Jabari; Fouad Dakkak, Engineer; Helana Elusfeder, Assistant to the Director, Albright Institute; Diana Steigler, Albright Library; Sarah Sussmal, Albright Library; Ligia Maria Scherer, Head of the Brazilian Representative office, Ramallah; Felipe Losta, Brazilian Representative office, Ramallah; Itidal Al-Ashhab, Deputy for Jerusalem office, Ministry of Education and Higher Education; Lina Masrouji, Pharmacist; Dr. Arafat Hidmi, Chairman of the

Board of Directors, Makassed Charitable Islamic Society; Sami Sockol, Journalist; Hani Abdeen, Al-Quds University; Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, Director of Islamic Waqf; Osama Kanaan, Chief of Mission, IMF - International Monetary Fund; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Al-Quds University; Ola Skuterud, International and Federation of the Red Cross; Giancarlo de Picciotto, Head, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Laila Sheikh, Deputy Head, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Rima Barakat.

Conferences

10-12 July 2008, Bethlehem Hotel, Bethlehem

Topic: The Palestinian Reality: Worries and Challenges - The Arab Christian and Muslim Heritage in the Holy Land Conference

Organizer(s): Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land.

22 January 2009, Cairo

Topic: Mutual Respect between Religions

Organizer(s): Arabic Group for Islamic-Christian Dialogue.

1 October 2009, Best Eastern Hotel, Ramallah

Topic: Third Conference on Islam in Contemporary Palestine

Organizer(s): PASSIA.

Participant(s): Muntaha Jarrar, Chair, Women Union Society; Khaled Abu Arafeh; Yakoub Abu Asab; Eman Hamouri, Director, Popular Art Centre; Peter Schaefer, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; Lily Habash, UNDP; Arwa Abu Hashash, Student; Paola Caridi, Journalist; Rima Tarazi, Director, General Union of Palestinian Women; Farida Amad & Nahla Bseiso, In'ash El-Usrah Society; Goetz Herrman, FES Intern; Haya Al-Fara, Advocacy Officer, MA'AN; Khitam Saafin, Union of Palestinian Women Committees; Walter Miller, US Consulate; Pia Rantala Engberg, Head, Finland Representative Office; Amal Abu Srouf, Resource Development Officer, MA'AN; Muhammed Boukayeo, Student; Jamal Atta, Diplomatic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt; Dr. Jawad Najji, Prime Minister's Advisor; Hani Al-Masri, Director, Bada'el Center; I'tedal Al Ashhab; Dr. Arafat Al Hidmi, Chairman, Makassed Charitable Islamic Society; Angelo Fratini, Italian Cooperation Logistic Officer; Dr. Khalil Nakhleh, Researcher; Kat Hanna, Student; Eva Schmidt, FES Intern; Muhammed Daraghme, Journalist; Ghazaleh Arar, General Union of Palestinian Teachers; Omar Shweiki, Assistant Director, Kenyon Institute; Bishop Dr. Munib Younan; Fajr Harb, Program Coordinator, Carter Center; Timothy Rothermel, Director, Carter Center; Abdul Rahman Abu Al Filat; Ashraf Tannous, Lutheran Church; Maysoon Al Ramahi, Al Khansa Women Association; Jamal Al Aref, Deputy Middle East Representative, ANERA; Bashir Barakat, Director, Dar

Is'af Nashashibi; Naemeh Baydoun; Janet Michael, Ramallah Municipality; Ayshah Odeh; Abdul Raman Abad; Abdul Rahim Malouh; Ahmad Abbas, Planning Ministry; Almut Woller, Trainee, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; Oskar Wuestinger, Austrian Representative; Ivo Silhavy, Czech Republic Representative Office; Lenka Hazbunora, Assistant of HM, Czech Republic Representative Office; Nils Eliasson, Swedish Consul General; Tristan Dunning, Doctoral Candidate; Henrik Meyer, FES; Bogustaw Odwolek, Polish Representative Office to the PA.

PROGRAM

- 9.00-9.15 WELCOMING ADDRESSES
Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, *Head of PASSIA*
- 9.15-9.30 OPENING ADDRESS
Abdel Azim Salhab, *Director of the Islamic Waqf Council, Jerusalem*

SESSION I: POLITICAL ISLAM IN PALESTINE

Chair: Dr. Khaled Hroub, *Director of Cambridge Arab Media Project (CAMP), Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, UK*

- 9.30-9.50 **The Transformation of Political Islam in Palestine since 2006 – Where To?**
Dr. Khalil Shikaki, *Director, Palestinian Center for Policy & Survey Research, Ramallah*
- 9.50 -10:10 **Islam and Democracy**
Dr. Abdel Rahim Al-Shaikh, *Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Birzeit University*
- 10.10-10.30 **Islam and Governance: The Palestinian Experience**
Dr. Ali Sartawi, *Dean of the Shari'a College, An-Najah National University, Nablus*
- 10.30-11.15 **Open Discussion**

SESSION II: ISLAMIC IDENTITY, NATIONALISM AND RESISTANCE

Chair: Dr. Ghassan Faramand, *Director, Institute of Law, Birzeit University*

- 11.30-11.50 **Islam in Nationalism – A Unifying Factor?**
Dr. Khaled Hroub, *Director of Cambridge Arab Media Project (CAMP), Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, UK*
- 11.50-12.10 **Islamic Resistance – Social and Religious Origins of Islamic Militancy**
Dr. Bassem Zubeidi, *Head of the Political Science Department, Birzeit University*

- 12.10-12.30 **Islamic Movements and the Occupation**
Sheikh Jamil Hamami, *Lecturer, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem*
- 12.30-13.15 **Open Discussion**
- 13.30-14.30 Lunch

SESSION III: ISLAM AND THE WORLD

Chair: Hani Al-Masri, *Director of Bada'el - Palestine Media and Research Studies Center, Ramallah*

- 14.30-15.30 **Islam and Jerusalem**
Video Conference Cairo-Ramallah with Dr. Mohammed Salim Al-'Awa, *Head of the Egyptian Association for Culture and Dialogue, Cairo*
- 15.30-15.50 **Christian-Muslim Relations in Palestine**
Father Dr. Rafiq Khouri, *Latin Church, Jerusalem*
- 15.50-16.10 **Islam and the West**
Prof. Dr. Helga Baumgarten, *Head of the MA Program Democracy and Human Rights, Birzeit University.*
- 16.10-17.00 Open Discussion

Publication

■ **Introduction to Islamic Culture**

Various Palestinian Contributors; edited by **Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway**
May 2008 (Arabic, 181 pages)
ISBN: 9950-305-17-9

The book - designed as a text book to be used by university students and others interested in the issue of Islam – was written by the best-known Palestinian scholars and Islamists and covers subjects such as “Biography of the Prophet and the Islamic History,” “Faith in Islam,” “Al-Quran Science Unit,” “The Concept of *Sunnah* and *Hadith*,” “The Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) Science,” “History of Islamic Law and *Fiqh*,” “Ethics in Islam,” “Women in Islam,” “Islam and the People of the Book (Jews and [Christians](#)),” “The Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization,” and “Islam and Science.”

