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HOLY WIDOM

VOLUME XXI

FALL 2011

Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a quarterly basis. Please bring this information to the attention of your parishioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the UN.

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary through the collaboration of NGOs to raise awareness among communities as we promote peace. If you will, the need for community consciousness is a way we can connect parties and others. It is important at this time that all parties begin to realize that they are a part of a larger picture, that they are in it together and they have common concerns. If there is a conflict all parties have contributed to the conflict and they have the power to come together to develop a non-violent intervention that results in a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceeds our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations, religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage global consciousness, clear and realistic decisions

as they promote solutions to

non-violent conflicts!

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OUR WORK AT THE UNITED NATIONS

SOCA Representative Anne M. Riccitelli has contributed to the editing effort of workshop reports for the 64th annual UN/DPI/NGO conference, "Sustainable Societies, Responsible Citizens," which was held in Bonn, Germany from September 3-5, 2011. Her contribution to this effort is acknowledged on page 2 of the published edition of the report.



The Sts. Peter and Ignatius Mission Band at the United Nations; left to right: Fathers Michael Verra, Anthony DeLuca and George McBride.

Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events

Nov 2 2011

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS PUTTING GLOBAL PROGRESS AT RISK – UN REPORT

New York, Nov 2 2011

Environmental deterioration threatens to reverse recent progress in human development for the world's poorest, warns a United Nations report released today, calling for urgent action to slow climate change, prevent further degradation and reduce inequalities.

The annual UN Human Development Report, this year entitled *Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* argues that human development is intricately linked to environmental sustainability, and that this in turn must be approached as a matter of basic social justice for current and future generations.

"Sustainability is not exclusively or even primarily an environmental issue, as this report so persuasively argues," says UN Development Programme (UNDP) chief Helen Clark in the report's foreword.

"It is fundamentally about how we choose to live our lives, with an awareness that everything we do has consequences for the seven billions of us here today, as well as for the billions more who will follow, for centuries to come."

The report, launched in Copenhagen today by Miss Clark and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, notes that remarkable progress has been made by poor countries with low rankings on the Human Development Index (HDI). In the past 40 years alone, the countries placed in the lowest 25 per cent of the global rankings improved their overall HDI by 82 per cent.

The report states that if this pace of improvement continues, most countries would be able to enjoy the HDI of the top 25 per cent by the year 2050, which would represent an extraordinary achievement for global human development.

However, the report also warns that if left unchecked, environmental degradation could reverse this growth trend, requiring immediate action from governments to prevent this from happening.

The report paints a scenario in which food prices could soar by up to 50 per cent and efforts to expand water, sanitation and energy access to billions of people could be reversed, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa if countries fail to take measures to achieve sustainability.

The report notes that people in the poorest countries are particularly vulnerable to climate-driven disasters such as drought and flooding, as well as exposure to air and water pollution. It adds that it is not only environmental disasters, but general environment deterioration which threatens other factors crucial to human development.

"Half of all malnutrition worldwide is attributable to environmental factors, such as water pollution and drought-driven scarcity, perpetuating a vicious cycle of impoverishment and ecological damage," the report says.

In addition, the report stresses that growth and high living standards need not be tied to carbon-fuel activities, and presents evidence that fossil-fuel consumption does not correspond with other

measures of human development such as life expectancy and education, making it possible for countries to experience growth while at the same time reducing their carbon footprint.

“Growth driven by fossil fuel consumption is not a prerequisite for a better life in broader human development terms,” Miss Clark said. “Investments that improve equity – in access, for example, to renewable energy, water and sanitation, and reproductive health care – could advance both sustainability and human development.”

The report also includes the HDI rankings, which covered 187 countries according to standard of living taking into account health, education and income data.

This year, Norway, Australia and the Netherlands lead the rankings, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Niger and Burundi are at the bottom of the list.

UN AND CHINA LAUNCH JOINT INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

New York, Nov 18 2011

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and China’s academy of sciences today launched a joint programme designed to promote proper management of ecosystems in developing countries, with a special focus on Africa.

The International Ecosystem Management Partnership (IEMP), an initiative of the UNEP and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), will have the core mandate of synthesizing the science of ecosystem management for government decision-makers through monitoring, capacity-building and policy.

With ecosystems increasingly under threat as a result of a growing population, high rates of deforestation and transformation into agricultural and pasturelands, the role of ecosystem management has become more important than ever, according to UNEP.

The IEMP, based in China, is UNEP’s first South-South cooperation programme to promote sustainable development through sharing best practices and technology among developing countries.

The scope of the partnership’s work covers both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and its clients will include national governments, intergovernmental bodies and programmes, as well as development agencies and the science community.

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary General of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Sha Zukang, stressed the critical role of ecosystems and the challenges of degradation in the context of population growth and increasing inequality.

“Ecosystems are the foundation of human lives and livelihoods,” he said. “The future of human civilization and sustainable development depends on sound, healthy and resilient ecosystems. For too long, humanity has ignored this fundamental truth at its own peril,” Mr. Sha added.

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to promoting ecosystem management as a cornerstone of the transition to the green economy in developing countries.

Jian Liu, the IEMP Director, stressed that sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity is a critical path to the next civilization, which he called the “ecological civilization,” saying it constituted an integral part of the “fourth industrialization” – the development of the green economy.

Nov 18 2011

GREENHOUSE GASES REACH NEW HIGH, SAYS UN METEOROLOGICAL REPORT

New York, Nov 21 2011

The presence of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere last year reached its highest levels since pre-industrial times, a report released by the United Nations World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warns today.

The latest edition of WMO's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, which places special focus on rising nitrous oxide concentrations, also notes that the rate of increase of greenhouse gases has recently accelerated.

"Even if we managed to halt our greenhouse gas emissions today – and this is far from the case – they would continue to linger in the atmosphere for decades to come and so continue to affect the delicate balance of our living planet and our climate," said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud.

According to the report, the 20 years to 2010 saw a 29 per cent increase in "radiative forcing" – the warming effect the gases have on the Earth's climate – from greenhouse gases, with carbon dioxide accounting for 80 per cent of this increase.

"Now more than ever before, we need to understand the complex, and sometimes unexpected, interactions between greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, Earth's biosphere and oceans," Mr. Jarraud said.

Human activities, such as fossil fuel burning and agriculture, are major emitters of greenhouse gases, which trap radiation within the Earth's atmosphere, causing it to warm and spur climate change.

Speaking at a press conference earlier today, WMO Deputy Secretary-General Jeremiah Lengoasa called for further development in the alternative energy sector to stem the rapid growth of greenhouse gases.

"Unless there is the investment made by funding alternative energy sources that are non-polluting, in particular as a viable substitute for fossil fuels, then the kind of steps that are required in scientific terms to cap or stem the growth would not happen and so we anticipate that these investments have to be made," he told reporters.

Carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide are the three main contributors to greenhouse gasses, with carbon dioxide's atmospheric abundance rising by 39 per cent since the start of the industrial era in about 1750.

Religious News From Around the World

1 November 2011

Interfaith Tokyo symposium explores attitudes toward suicide

Tokyo (ENInews)--An interfaith symposium on 29 October explored the attitudes of Japanese religious communities to suicide, including whether the term should be changed to "voluntary death." Sponsored by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Japan, the conference considered a trend toward using the Japanese term "jishi," meaning "voluntary death" instead of "jisatsu," or "killing oneself." Wataru Kaya, a Shinto priest and psychiatrist, emphasized the importance of prayers and compassion for those who die voluntarily, based on Japanese traditional cultures. He said Shintoism "does not see voluntary death as an absolute evil." But Hiroshi Saito, who heads the study office of the Institute of the Doctrine of Oomoto, a Sectarian Shinto sect, noted that Oomoto's canon says, "Suicide is a sin among sins." He warned, "By using the term 'voluntary death,' I am afraid that a sense of sin for committing suicide can be unconsciously weakened."

UN experts criticize China crackdown on Buddhist monks

Geneva (ENInews)--Human rights experts appointed by the U.N. on 1 November called on China to stop repressive measures against Tibetan Buddhist monks, including arrests and enforced disappearance. Security forces using riot gear, automatic rifles and trucks have been deployed at the Kirti monastery, which houses some 2,500 monks, and other monasteries in Aba County, an area of Sichuan province, the experts said. The monks have protested Chinese rule of Tibet. The U.N. experts said Chinese authorities have carried out security raids and surveillance within monasteries to monitor religious activities.

London cathedral suspends legal action against protesters

London (ENInews)--Authorities at London's St. Paul's Cathedral have decided to suspend legal action against scores of anti-corporate protesters who have occupied tents on the church's doorstep for more than two weeks. St. Paul's officials said on 1 November that they "are committed to a peaceful solution at all costs" to the impasse that had closed the cathedral's doors for the first time since World War II, Religion News Service reports. Meanwhile, the City of London Corporation, the local government entity with jurisdiction over St. Paul's, said it would give the protesters 48 hours to decamp with their tents, or else face legal action to evict them.

6 October 2011

Mennonites support Lutheran efforts in Horn of Africa

Geneva (ENI)--An organization supported by Mennonites has made a significant contribution to the Lutheran church's work at refugee camps serving the Horn of Africa, a gesture that both groups said is a practical expression of a reconciliation that was celebrated last year. The Akron, Pennsylvania-based Mennonite Central Committee, a relief and development agency, pledged a contribution valued at US\$369,500 that includes mosquito nets as well as expertise for education projects, said the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which is managing the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Forum: migrant Christian communities transforming traditional churches

Geneva (ENI)--An increase in world migration has spurred the growth of new dynamic Christian communities in many countries, but the trend also poses many challenges for older churches, said religious leaders. In several European cities for example, "traditional mainline churches are struggling with their future, whereas migrant churches are flourishing and growing to the extent that their problem is how to find proper places for worship," noted the Rev. Hielke Wolters, associated general secretary of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC)

Israeli Jewish coalition visits site of burned mosque

Jerusalem (ENI)--Jews visited a burned mosque in the Bedouin village of Tuba-Zangaria in northern Israel on 6 October, with one person declaring that an attack blamed on Jewish extremists represents "a disaster for Israel" and does not reflect Jewish values. "Tomorrow is Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. We ask for forgiveness of this desecration of God's name. It is a desecration to burn a mosque and it is a desecration to burn a synagogue," said Gadi Gvanyahu, director of Banish the Darkness, an umbrella group for 19 religious and secular groups supporting tolerance and pluralism in Israel.

Major demographic shift is under way in Christianity, say scholars

Manado, Indonesia (ENI)--Scholars claim the biggest change in the history of Christianity is underway amid the religion's move to Africa, Latin America and Asia. "The story of Christianity as a worldwide faith is being written before our eyes," declared Dr. Dana Robert of Boston University School of Theology, as she addressed a group of world church leaders at the Global Christian Forum (GCF) in Manado, Indonesia.

Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss key issues in Africa

Blantyre, Malawi (ENI)--The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, today began a three-nation, eight day visit to Africa during which he hopes to discuss the persecution and harassment of Christians with Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe. "My visit to Africa is not political, it is a pastoral visit," said Williams. "What difference that will make, I cannot tell now," he said upon arrival in Blantyre, Malawi's commercial capital.

7 October 2011

German university courses aim to help Muslims integrate

Berlin, Germany (ENI news)--As more Muslims become part of European society, German universities have begun courses aimed at helping Islamic clergy (imams) and religious teachers understand German culture, including Christianity and Judaism. The first program began last year at Osnabrueck University, with another due to start this year at Tuebingen. "The idea was to have a program for imams because most of them are educated in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt or Bosnia," Moussa Al-Hassan Diaw, coordinator of the Osnabrueck program, said in an interview. "The focus [of their previous education] is very much on theology and the society where they come from, but they don't have enough knowledge concerning the situation in Germany. Some imams don't speak the German language, for example; they don't know [German] history," he said.

People of faith join Wall Street protests

New York (ENI news)--As police helicopters hovered overhead, seminarian Rix Thorsell, wearing a clerical collar, marched on 5 October with other members of Brooklyn's Greenpoint Reformed Church in a "Occupy Wall Street" protest that has captured national and international attention. "Jesus stood with the 99 percent [of society that is not wealthy]," said Thorsell, a student at New York's Union Theological Seminary. Thorsell and the members of his church and seminary were among people of faith who have joined the protests in lower Manhattan against what activists are calling "corporate greed" and growing economic inequity in the United States.

Williams, Malawi president discuss church agriculture projects

Blantyre, Malawi (ENI news)--Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams on 7 October discussed the Anglican church's involvement in economic and agriculture projects with Malawi President Bingu wa Mutharika. "I talked about how sustainable agriculture methods should be developed and I am glad our church is involved in this," said Williams, who is visiting Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia from 5-13 October.

Peace Prize winner Gbowee says faith helped in peace campaign

New York (ENI news)--One of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winners, Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian activist who helped bring her country out of a brutal civil war, said on 7 October that the best way to achieve global peace is to start in local communities. "It is time for us to do justice in our communities ... one day the world's problems will meet you at your doorstep," she said at the Interchurch Center in New York. Gbowee, Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Yemen's Tawakkul Karman, who leads opposition to dictatorial President Ali Abdullah Saleh, shared the prize.

13 October 2011

Faith groups respond to urgent anti-malaria appeal

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI news)--Religious denominations have boosted efforts to provide families fleeing famine and drought in the Horn of Africa with insecticide treated bed nets, a mechanism experts say is most effective in halting the spread of malaria in Africa. In the U.S., the United Methodist Church and the Union for Reform Judaism on 12 October separately pledged contributions that will provide more than 12,000 nets through the Washington, D.C.-based U.N. Foundation's Nothing But Nets campaign.

Activists: Honor Japan constitution's peace clause

Tokyo (ENI news)--More than 200 religious peace activists from ten countries have urged the U.S. and Japanese governments to honor the war-renouncing clause of the Japanese Constitution and stated their opposition to militarization in Asia and elsewhere. In a statement on 8 October following a three-day meeting at Okinawa Christian University, the Third Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution urged the U.S. and Japanese governments "to honor Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and strongly oppose any attempt by the Japanese government to revise [it]." The Okinawa islands are a former fierce battlefield between the U.S. and Japan during the Second World War, and U.S. military bases are still located there.

Repression of religious minorities is increasing, says human rights group

Geneva (ENI news)--Intolerance and violent repression of religious and ethnic minorities, often the most vulnerable groups in many societies, is on the increase, said a prominent human rights advocacy group. "There is a growing trend of growing intolerance," Philippe Dam, acting Geneva director of Human Rights Watch, told ENI news. Recently, he said, the advocacy body studied repression against Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Tibetan monasteries, and Coptic Christians in Egypt.

12 October 2011

Ecumenical Cuban seminary celebrates 65th anniversary

Matanzas, Cuba (ENI news)--The Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas marked its 65th anniversary with a celebration from 3 to 4 October that focused on the theme "The Mission of the Church and Theological Education in Cuba today," according to a news release from the Latin America and Caribbean Communication Agency (ALC). "In the complex religious and ecumenical situation, but also the economic, political and social one that we are living, God calls us each one of us who attempt to respond to that call [and gives] a reason for hope," said Reinerio Arce Valentin, dean of the seminary.

After Japan disaster, faith leaders explore "another way of living"

Tokyo (ENI news)--Will the 11 March earthquake-tsunami-nuclear-plant accident cause the Japanese people to re-evaluate their society and re-consider the balance between spiritual and material things? What role does religion have in this environment? These were some of the questions considered at a 10 October interfaith symposium in Tokyo called "Thinking about Natural Disasters and Religion: Looking for Another Way of Living," supported by several Buddhist groups and the Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief. Spiritual-material balance is the key for building a new civilization following the 11 March disasters, said Ahangamage Tuda Ariyaratne, leader of Sri Lanka's Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, a Buddhist-based relief and development organization centered on small communities.

Kazakhstan religion law would re-impose controls over churches

Warsaw, Poland (ENI news)--A Roman Catholic church leader in Kazakhstan has warned legislators they will be violating international commitments if they press ahead with legislation that would reimpose Soviet-style controls over churches and religious communities. "There's an international agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Holy See, spelling out our rights to freedom of religion and worship," said Bishop Theophilus Howaniec, former secretary-general of the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference. The draft "Law on Religious Activity and Religious Associations," approved on 29 September by Kazakhstan's senate upper house, would ban unregistered religious activities, restrict religious literature and require government permission for "missionary activity."

11 October 2011

Archbishop of Canterbury asks Mugabe to halt attacks on Anglicans

Harare, Zimbabwe (ENI news)--Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams on 10 October met Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe and asked him to intervene to stop attacks on Anglicans

by allies of an excommunicated bishop who has seized church property and intimidated clergy and worshippers. The leader of the Anglican Communion handed a dossier to Mugabe with descriptions of attacks on parishioners and priests by supporters of former bishop Nolbert Kunonga, who formed a breakaway clique in 2007, seized church property and locked out Anglicans from their church buildings.

Philippine church seeks support for probe into bishop's murder

Manila, Philippines (ENI news)--A homegrown Philippine church is seeking international backing to help pressure the government to reinvestigate the unresolved murder of a bishop five years ago. "We continue to ask our partner churches -- such as the Anglican, Episcopal and Old Catholic Churches -- in the international community for solidarity and support for the case," Bishop Ronelio Fabriquier of the Philippine Independent Church told ENI news in an interview in early October.

UN condemns Coptic killings in Egypt

Geneva (ENI news)--U.N. officials condemned the sectarian violence in Cairo on 9 October that left at least two dozen dead and hundreds injured. A protest against a church attack in Aswan turned violent as some Christians and Muslims battled each other and others joined forces to protest military rule and oppose soldiers and riot police. Meanwhile, in an interview with ENI news, the U.N.'s special rapporteur (or reporter) on religious freedom said that governments must create an atmosphere of religious tolerance and communication.

3 November 2011

Sudan churches remain united despite country division

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI news)--Despite this year's vote by South Sudan for independence, churches in Sudan and South Sudan have decided to remain united, mainly to help denominations in Muslim-majority Sudan. Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church on 28 October approved maintaining one conference covering the two states, alluding to shared history and existing "very real practical human links." In July, the Episcopal (Anglican) Church decided to remain one body for the next two years and the Sudan Council of Churches has also said it will not split.

Too many magicians, faith is just hocus-pocus

Washington, D.C. (ENI news)--Magician Penn Jillette and his shorter, quieter partner Raymond Teller have mystified audiences around the world with their card tricks and other illusions that would make even Harry Houdini proud, Religion News Service reports. With a TV series that seeks to disprove supernatural beliefs, including religious ones, the duo have long been a public face of atheism and skepticism. Now, Jillette, in his new book, "God, No!," says he has little use for performers who try to use magic tricks to lure audiences into a spiritual message. Magic doesn't make someone an atheist, he says, but it makes it a lot harder to be a believer.

8 November 2011

In Indonesia, religious peace is at risk, says leader

Berlin, 8 November (ENI news)--Indonesia has seen a sharp increase in religious violence over

recent years, with radical Muslim groups targeting both Christians and members of the minority Ahmadiyah community. But at an ecumenical seminar in Germany, the chair of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) explained that the country's religious leaders have a common aim in promoting tolerance and harmony. "Leaders of the Christian community, together with other religious leaders (especially Muslims), have always made an effort to maintain healthy cooperative relationships," the Rev. Andreas Yewangoe said at Ruhr University, Bochum on 8 November. "The nation's problems are seen as problems that we must face together."

Burma stepping up attacks on Christians, says rights group

8 November (ENI news)--Soldiers shot at worshippers at a church, tortured the pastor and forced dozens of congregants to work as porters for the army in military-ruled Burma, also known as Myanmar, an organization that advocates for religious freedom said in a statement on 8 November. Soldiers from the Burma Army's 88th Light Infantry Division had attacked the Assemblies of God church in Muk Chyik, a village in Kachin, Burma's northernmost state bordering China, on 6 November, according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), based in New Malden, Surrey, England.

9 November 2011

Faith groups urge dialogue in Indonesia on West Papua

9 November (ENI news)--Faith groups are calling attention to what they see as injustice for the indigenous people of West Papua at the hands of the Indonesian government. An Indonesian church group has urged the government and the people of West Papua who are seeking independence to "carry out a dialogue as a commitment to resolve the issue of violence." The natives "are still treated unfairly by the government and ... treated inhumanely by security officials because [the natives are] accused of having committed treason," said the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) on 7 November.

British judge rules church liable for abuse claim

London, 9 November (ENI news)--A High Court judge's ruling in London on 8 November that the Roman Catholic Church would be liable for alleged sexual abuse committed by one of its priests is likely to have repercussions in other countries, observers said. Justice Alistair MacDuff ruled the Bishop of Portsmouth, Crispian Hollis, would be liable for compensating a former resident of a Catholic children's home if her claim that she was raped and abused by a priest within the diocese is proven.

Freedom of religion in Russia faces increased limits

9 November (ENI news)--A veteran human rights campaigner has warned of growing restrictions on religious freedom in Russia, and urged Western governments and churches to do more to address the issue. "Although the [officially atheist] Soviet Union collapsed 20 years ago ... religious believers still face serious problems," said the Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, president of the Oxford, U.K.-based Keston Institute, which studies religion in Russia and Eastern Europe. "What really worries me is that no one is holding Russia to account. The right and duty to monitor each country's human rights record, established in the 1970s, seem to have been forgotten," he said.

U.S. church council leader to step down

New York, 9 November (ENI news)--The National Council of Churches announced on 9 November that General Secretary Michael Kinnamon is resigning due to health reasons. Kinnamon, 63, told the ecumenical group's governing board that he must "immediately and significantly" reduce his activity; especially the frequent travel required by the job, under the advice of his cardiologist, Religion News Service reports. A minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Kinnamon was elected to lead the New York-based NCC in 2007, amid staff layoffs and budget cuts.

21 November 2011

Despite protests, Polish order defends silencing priest

Warsaw (ENI news)--A Polish monastic order has defended its decision to bar a former superior-general from speaking to the media, despite a protest against the decision from thousands of the priest's supporters. "Like all monks, the Marians take three community vows: chastity, poverty and obedience - no Marian can be the property of a TV station or editorial board, or of an institution or office," the Rev. Pawel Naumowicz, the head of Poland's Order of Marian Priests, wrote in an open letter. The order was reacting to an 11 November petition urging the withdrawal of a media ban on the Rev. Adam Boniecki.

In London, people of faith reach out on Mitzvah Day

London (ENI news)--A dozen members of South London Liberal Synagogue walked through the Streatham High Street shopping center on 20 November, but they weren't looking for pre-Hanukkah bargains. They talked to shopkeepers, asking how they coped with crime, keeping streets safe and helping neighbors. It was one small project that was part of "Mitzvah Day 2011," an international day in which the Jewish community reaches out to neighbors with a range of good deeds, and it had extra resonance after a week of rioting last summer affected London and other British cities.

Indian churches propose anti-corruption legislation

New Delhi (ENI news)--Mainline churches in India have prepared a suggested version of anti-corruption legislation and sent it to the government as it is drafting comprehensive anti-corruption legislation to be presented in Parliament in early December. "We want the government to take into consideration the views of the Christian community," Samuel Jayakumar, executive secretary of the Commission on Policy, Governance and Public Witness of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), told ENI news in an interview from New Delhi.

22 November 2011

U.S. fundamentalist university maintains stunning Catholic art collection

Greenville, South Carolina (ENI news)--Walking across the tidy campus of Bob Jones University (BJU) in Greenville, South Carolina, there's no obvious sign this bastion of Christian fundamentalism is also home to one of the nation's largest collections of Renaissance and Baroque religious art from the heart of Catholic Europe. It's all the more surprising since the school's old-time Protestant leaders have for years taught that Catholicism is a "cult" and even

the "Mother of Harlots," Religion News Service reports. But the school has amassed the collection out of a sincere belief in the teaching mission of great religious art, according to school leaders and art curators.

Norwegian Christians and Muslims condemn religious extremism

Oslo, Norway (ENI news)--In the aftermath of attacks last July that killed 77 and were carried out by a self-described "cultural Christian," Norwegian Christians and Muslims on 22 November jointly condemned religious extremism as "contrary to the teachings of our religions." Religious extremists "put themselves in the place of God and believe that they are fighting on behalf of God against the enemies of God," said a statement released on 22 November from the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations.

Faith groups oppose proposed cluster bomb accord

Geneva (ENI news)--Religious groups are opposing a proposed new international law on cluster bombs currently being discussed in Geneva since they say it would put more civilians at risk than an existing treaty. The proposal is being considered at the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons, which is taking place from 18 to 25 November at the United Nations offices. The new law, supported by the U.S., Russia, Israel, China and India, would mandate the destruction of all cluster bombs produced before 1980, but allow stockpiled weapons to be used for up to 12 years. Faith groups say an existing law, the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, offers better protections.

Asian bishops hold closed-door meeting on pedophilia

Bangkok (ENI news)--Asian Catholic bishops held a conference from 14 to 19 November in Bangkok on the "considerably serious problem" of child sexual abuse, but the meeting was closed to journalists and no communique had been issued as of 22 November. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences told news media that the conference, entitled "The Impact of Pedophilia -- Crisis in the Church in Asia," was closed and advised reporters not to attempt to visit the venue at Assumption University, according to UCAnews, the Union of Catholic Asian News service. An open letter posted in January on the federation's website invited cardinals, archbishops and bishops to the gathering to discuss "letters from different quarters of the Church that pedophilia has already become a considerably serious problem in Asia."

5 December 2011

In India, tribunal says state government failed to protect Christians

Bhubaneswar, India (ENI news)--An independent tribunal investigating anti-Christian violence in India's eastern Orissa state in 2008 has indicted the state government for failure to protect Christians and has made several recommendations. "[Government] officials have played a variety of negative roles during the violence, ranging from being silent spectators and bystanders to the violence [to] refusing to protect or assist the victim-survivors even in the context of brutal killings," wrote the jury of the National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal.

In Ethiopia, gay health meeting moved after religious protest

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (ENI news)--Protests from religious leaders in Ethiopia prompted the relocation of a conference on 3 December in Addis Ababa on gay rights and health issues to the

United Nations Conference Centre from a hotel. A group called African Men for Sexual Health and Rights organized the meeting, which they said would shine attention on issues affecting lesbians and gays in Africa, including HIV/AIDS and the state of response among "MSM [men who have sex with men] communities." It took place one day ahead of the 16th International Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa, which is taking place from 4 to 8 December in the Ethiopian capital. STDs refer to sexually transmitted diseases.

Christian youth learn about 'eco-justice' at climate conference

Durban, South Africa (ENI news)--Christian young people are bringing their passion for change to a U.N. climate conference in Durban, South Africa, eager to learn how to spread the message that God's creation needs better care. About 28 youths from church and faith-based organizations on six continents are taking "Youth For Eco-Justice" training during the 17th Conference of Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP 17, which runs from 28 November to 9 December.

As church-based civil unions kick in, Church of England says no

London (ENI news)--New laws that allow same-sex civil unions to be performed on religious premises took effect in England and Wales on 5 December, but the Church of England says it won't permit them without approval from its top body. Civil partnerships have been legal since 2005, but until 5 December the ceremonies had to be held in secular venues, Religion News Service reports. Civil partnerships, which cannot be called marriages, give same-sex couples the same legal rights as heterosexual couples who are married in a church.

16 December 2011

In Canada, Jewish, Muslim comedians joke about Christmas

Toronto (ENI news)--Christmas can be a lonely time for non-Christians in North America. Jews have Chanukah--and traditionally go to Chinese restaurants on Christmas Day. Muslims, well, can always go to the movies. On the other hand, the Christmas season can be pretty funny for Christianity's fellow Abrahamic faiths. Certainly, the "Kosher Jokes for the Halaladays" comedy revue thinks so. (The terms Kosher and halal refer to ritual dietary laws for, respectively, Jews and Muslims.) Bringing together Jewish and Muslim comics for a three-city Canadian tour this month, the show tries, as its news release states, "to laugh and be very merry."

Christian group presses for passage of communal violence bill in India

Andhra Pradesh, India (ENI news)--The All India Christian Council (AICC), an ecumenical advocacy group, has urged the Indian government to expedite the passage of a bill which can "effectively curb communal violence and bring justice" to victims of religious intolerance and violence. The AICC, along with other Christian groups, has made a nationwide call for a prayer campaign in favor of the bill, a draft of which is in circulation ahead of being introduced in the Indian parliament.

Renowned writer and polemicist Christopher Hitchens dies at age 62

New York (ENI news)--Both opponents and advocates of religious faith are mourning the death of author, polemicist, and atheist Christopher Hitchens, who died 15 December after a long battle with esophageal cancer. Though known principally for his iconoclastic political writings--

which included sharp barbs, bordering on contempt, for political figures as varied as Henry Kissinger and Bill Clinton--in recent years Hitchens became known for his criticism of religion, arguing that human decency is not derived from religious faith.

Small nations aren't well-served by World Trade Organization, say religious leaders

Geneva (ENI news)--Policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are tilted in favor of the rich and powerful, and marginalize poor farmers and vulnerable communities in many developing countries, according to religious figures and advocates for the poor. "We have a very big concern about Vanuatu joining the WTO. In villages, people still do not have access to government services such as education, or medical care in remote areas," said Allen Nafuki, a Presbyterian pastor from the Pacific island nation.

Local Ecclesiastical News

THE OFFICIAL ORIENTAL ORTHODOX-ROMAN CATHOLIC CONSULTATION 1978 - 2011

Assessment of Our Dialogue and Suggestions for Future Work. October 6, 7, 2011

Father Anthony DeLuca, Ph.D., Psy.D., Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church

I think I have been on the Consultation somewhere between ten and fifteen years and under three or four Malankara Archbishops depending on how you count.

Firstly, whatever else may be said today, I deeply appreciate being on the Consultation; I don't think I have missed any meetings because I find them exciting and some of the finest hours of my fifty years as a priest. But most of all, I really enjoy the company of all of you and remember in my prayers our departed brothers.

The question arises as to why at this point are we asking about the viability and relevance of the Consultation. I believe this questioning is in the wider context of how we feel about the church and religion in general. Certainly these views were expressed at a reception (departure of first assistant to Bonn nunciature) of the Holy See UN Mission that I attended on Tuesday night.

There were the big players in the Churches whom I have known over the last 20 years. As I said to Monsignor Stern, I think I have come away with more challenges to my faith than when I entered the reception. It was certainly a bleak picture and quite radical and surprising solutions proposed not to be entirely dismissed because of the open bar.

In reading Father Cody's article "The Official Oriental-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States of America," one is very impressed with the tremendous amount of work and thought that has gone into this endeavor over the 33 years, the number of people involved, all those names who have gone before us- many departed - but continuously and uninterruptedly replaced by new members. There were times of high and low feelings, which is the history of any organization. The New York Times a few months ago had an article "Is Sex Passé." Our group has a bigger problem, "Is religion Passé." To not be in touch with this is to be in denial with all the risks and accompanying peril to the church and self.

I would like to hit briefly on what impressed me most and apologize if I leave out the efforts and work of others.

In 1970, Paul VI and the Armenian Patriarch issued a common declaration that urged theologians of their two churches to come together for common study and the first two meetings centered on

Christological questions (p.61). In 1976, Cardinal Baum asked Dr. Thomas Bird to be the executive secretary of a USA dialogue (p. 62) I remembered that Prof. Bird was

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singled out for special commendation by Cardinal Keeler at the funeral of Father John Long and now I know the reason. Bird has done a lot of important work.

With the Armenians, some are subject to the Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians at Etchmiadzin in Armenia, and others subject to the Catholicos of Cilicia in Anthelia, Lebanon. So only the Armenian Church in America (Etchmiadzin) attends this Consultation. Likewise, those Indians of the Syrian Orthodox Church who are subject to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and not those subject to the Catholicos of the Malankara Syrian Church in India may attend the Consultation. (p. 63).

In the agreement of Paul VI, the theologians of their two Churches devote themselves to concurrent study. The two committees were to maintain contact and decide what shape the proposed dialogue would take (p.64). I see this a providing flexibility as the situations change around us. In 1977, the participants decided that papers to be given in the meetings should deal with historical, theological and pastoral questions. (p.64)

In 1978, topics to be covered and not covered; and for any topic, two people, one from each Church should read the paper. The Consultation is for the United States and not necessarily to be applied to other countries. In 1985, Bishop Hubbard joined the Consultation for the Catholic Church; in 1989, Father Meno was to be chair for the Oriental Orthodox; thus these two then became the co-chairs of the Consultation (p.65).

One cannot claim that the dialogue has always continued with unabated enthusiasm. Many of the consultation's members have at various times wondered whether it should continue. A planned celebration of the 10th anniversary was planned and subsequently cancelled. But in 1989, the members wished the Consultation to continue (p.67).

In 1992, Fr. Cody drew up a suggested list of topics: the long-range goal was the unity of the Churches and there were other short-term goals. In the dynamics of the group, there was more ease in working together and confidence in Episcopal support. it was felt that the Churches now went beyond the basic theological knowledge of each other and ready to explore ecclesial knowledge and dealing with mutual problems (p.68).

In 1992, Father Roberson reported on the Vatican principles on evangelization and ecumenism in nations of the former USSR including Armenia. In 1993, 1994, he analyzed current relations between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox. Father Long in 1992 commented on *Principles for Guiding the Search for Unity between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church* signed by John Paul II and Pope Shenouda III in 1979. The two popes envisaged full recognition of one another's Churches and sacramental life, in a union without absorption or

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domination, with respect for each Church's right to govern itself according to its own laws and traditions (p. 69).

In 1993, Bishop Hubbard obtained a Vatican clarification indicating that there is to be no Catholic proselytizing among the Orthodox faithful of Armenia (p 71).

Working in 1992, 93, 94, Father Meno then brought forth a document, *Guidelines for Oriental Orthodox / Roman Catholic Marriages*. In 1983 through Fathers Cody and Abdelsayed, a document came forth, *An Agreed Statement on the Eucharist*. Before our Churches were

separated after the Council of Chalcedon, our shared view of the Eucharist and Eucharistic ritual was already in place (p. 72).

Among the Consultation's practical achievements is the pamphlet on the Oriental Orthodox Churches edited by Father Taft, including material on each church furnished by the Orthodox members of the Consultation. To help Catholic priests working with mixed marriages, proper official contacts were provided. Meetings of the Consultation have also made it possible to clarify specifically questions of jurisdiction or hierarchy within Oriental Churches in order to help Roman Catholic authorities uncertain how to proceed correctly in a given situation (p 74). The Consultation was able to share that our Christological differences lie mainly on the level of terminology (p 75).

A decision made at the highest level affecting two of our Churches- the authorization given by John Paul II and Patriarch Zakka I of Syrian Orthodox Church to the faithful of each of their Churches for receiving the sacraments of penance, Eucharist, and anointing of the sick from priests of the other Church when they need these sacraments but find it either physically or morally impossible to reach a priest of their own Church - has not been communicated effectively to bishops and parish priests of the Catholic Church in this country (p 76). I wish to mention that there have been numerous occasions when this situation has arisen and this document is not know which lead later in the recommendation section of the future role of the Consultation in the promulgation of the agreements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thomas Aquinas in his Eucharistic hymn writes *And let the old instruction give way to the new rite; faith for all defects supplying where the feeble senses fail.*

So inspired by faith, we look for something new and not afraid of letting old things go. And our goal is for the unity of the Churches as directed by Christ in his prayer for Unity.

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1. Promulgation of Work of Consultation

I think the Consultation in all its work, for whatever reason, has been remiss in the promulgation of its work - almost hiding it under a bushel basket. I think this is a time for promulgation. How do implement this. The internet probably gives us access to every priest in United States for both our Churches. I am in favor of the Consultation directly contacting each priest, as there does not seem to be the need of an Episcopal middleman in promulgating what is already approved by the hierarchs. Of course, each bishop should receive the same.

There should be a Consultation website on which the full documents of agreement may be found i.e. documents which are practical and operational and not necessarily theoretical. At least once a year, a one-page letter is sent to each priest outlining e.g. agreed marriage regulations between the two Churches. One topic per year is plenty. In that one page letter, reference should be made to the website where the full details and particulars may be found and a caveat that it is advisable to contact the local Chancery for necessary clarifications.

The one letter saves on postage and highlights the issue without compromise to obtaining further information.

2. Praying together

It is hard to imagine people uniting as one Church when they do not know each other. The fact that we know each other and are open to each other is in this room and not out there. And I think this is very serious mistake in strategy.

A. Annual Prayer Service

I would propose that we use the Roman Catholic division of the United States into Dioceses. As this is most clear while the Oriental jurisdictions overlap states, regions and even countries. Within the geographical region of the specific Catholic Diocese that includes numerous or not so numerous Oriental Orthodox Churches, there should be held an annual prayer service. The format of the service to be determined by the hierarchs involved. One year the service is held in a Catholic Church and the alternate year in an Oriental Orthodox Church. The location of the service is to be changed annually so as to provide geographical accessibility over the expanse of the diocese. This provides the opportunity, over time, for all to attend at some time and not be prevented by remoteness. Bishops of each Church should preside. Proper instruction and notification is given in advance. And a light repast with plenty of time follows the service to give the people the opportunity to mingle and get to know of each other's existence. *This should not be held during Church Unity week as it waters down the particular significance and there is something else for the Unity week.*

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From this annual meeting, the two churches should encourage and set up networks so that in specific local areas, the churches may repeat the above model on their own thus allowing for further interchange on all levels from liturgy, study clubs to folk dancing, sports etc. Whether this second level goes forth is not of paramount importance; the annual prayer service is.

B. Church Unity Week

The Sunday in Church Unity Week, in all Catholic Churches, the prayer should be read, *we pray for the full union with the Oriental Orthodox Church and the names of the five Patriarchs mentioned with each of their Churches.*

In all Oriental Churches, the prayer should be read, *we pray for the full union with the Roman Catholic Church and the name of the Pope mentioned.*

OTHER

This is not a good time for religion. Strange as it may seem, open conflicts within the same religion and between religions, may be healthier than the mere ignoring of religion. The latter means religion is irrelevant and dead. (I am not talking about the seeming vitality of religion used for political purposes. That is not religion but fanaticism and mental disorder.)

And I am afraid that the irrelevance of religion is what lies ahead. It is well on its way in the West and with the geometrical expansion of knowledge and concomitant rapid change in attitudes and thinking; it will take hold in the East. It is extremely important to talk to college students to find out what they really think and how they live. Welcome to the 21st century! The Holy Spirit moves through time and we have to respond to the forms and manifestations it takes- no matter how strange, jarring and peculiar. *And Thou shall renew the face of the earth.*

The hour is late. If we do not unite, we perish. Does this not touch deeply some of those at this table whose people suffer in the aftermath of the Arab spring? Whatever political machinations, minor and major master plans- that are taking place in the Middle East, what is for certain is that Christians are in a far worse situation than before. Tuesday, I was in the General Assembly where the matter of terrorism was discussed and the definition of terrorism has not yet been arrived at thus preventing a Convention from being signed by all nations. There is a problem with the Islamic countries that seek an exemption in calling activities terrorism, if they occur in the "struggle in the right for self-determination under foreign occupation and colonial or alien domination." I do not think, personally speaking, that this position for exemption is tenable as I wrote in my review of *The New Global Insecurity* by Fathali Moghaddam (*Journal of International Psychology*, Summer 2010). The author of the book, an Iranian scholar, believes

the same. And Uganda in 2010 in Committee VI at the General Assembly made a statement not in favor of the "exemption."

In our goal towards church unity, this calls for personality change- for some a more difficult task than for others. A move toward unity, demands a personality that is open to change, and has the ability to tolerate difference and diversity. Impulses to domination and derivatives of deep self-loathing expressed in meanness, vindictiveness and self-interest have to be recognized in order to go forward. Some people have a fear of intimacy and closeness. If they get too close, they fear they will be lost in the other; they will have no self-identity. Accordingly, they entrench and become hardened, stubborn and hold on to their uniqueness for dear life. So they stay separate and isolated. They cannot be a part of another. This is what my granddaughter does but she is 2 1/2 and her behavior is age appropriate. Institutions may also suffer from developmental arrests. These personality aberrations will not make for unity. *Cleanse my heart and my lips with a burning coal...*

Father Cody ends his article by saying " With the patient and committed perseverance of our Churches and of the members of the Consultation, we move onward, asking that God, effecting in us what is pleasing in his sight, equip us with everything good, that we may do his will." (p.77)

His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim Delivers Lecture to Youth



His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim delivered a lecture on the Syriac Heritage of the Church of Antioch on Sunday, October 16th at St. Mark's Cathedral to an eager audience comprised mostly of youth of the Archdiocese. Young adults came from all the New Jersey and New York parishes to hear His Eminence speak on this topic. His Eminence began by covering the early history and establishment of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, highlighting its very clear Apostolic Line of Succession

from the time of the founding of the Church by St. Peter to the present day. He also spoke about the doctrine of the Syriac Orthodox Church and its role in the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus. The Archbishop continued by explaining the cause of the divisions that occurred within the Orthodox Churches and also within the Syriac Orthodox Church itself, after the Council of Chalcedon. He claimed the survival of our church as being, no less than a miracle, considering the persecution and hardships faced over time, surviving against all odds, yet remaining steadfast in its belief and Christian faith.

During the latter part of the lecture, His Eminence spoke about the present day church under its Spiritual Head, our beloved Patriarch, His Holiness Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. He also spoke about the diaspora and the new challenges facing our Holy Church worldwide during these modern times.

During the Q & A session His Eminence was happy to listen to the youth and answers questions asked. Those in attendance appreciated the opportunity to hear the Archbishop and converse with him afterwards.

Clergy members in attendance included His Eminence Archbishop Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak, Patriarchal Office Director, Rev. Fr. Joseph Chamoun, Pastor of St. Mark's Cathedral, Very Rev. Fr. Chamoun Asmar, Pastor of St. Barsawmo Church, Rev. Fr. Aziz Hadodo, Pastor of St. Gabriel's Church.

As a result of the success of this lecture, the St. Mark's Youth Group, sponsors of the event have committed to promoting more educational and spiritual lectures and gatherings as part of future Youth Activities and Programming.



Pro-Oriente Third International Syriac Colloquium took place in Vienna
Nov 17, 2011

The Third Colloquium Syriacum, organized by Pro-Oriente was held at Vienna from November 9-11 2011. Scholars, who belong to the Syriac tradition were invited to the Conference. The focal point of the meeting was the special Synod for the Middle East, which took place in Rome. The

Syrian Catholic Patriarch H.B Ignatius Yussif 111 Younan inaugurated the conference. Cardinal Schönborn, the Archbishop of Vienna expressed his hope that the oriental churches with their unbroken tradition going back to the beginning of Christianity will someday be able to live in their home countries in freedom of religion and conscience. The pattern of the programme of the meeting was to have each session focused on a special topic arising from the special synod for the Middle East: General Experience, Results and reactions, Christian-Muslim, Christian-Jewish, Christian-Christian and Church State implications. Papers were presented on the topics and extensive exchange and discussions took place.

The conference discussed about the present situation of Christians in the Middle East, their struggles and sufferings, marginalization and persecution. The conference underlined the need of the Christian Unity especially in those regions and pleaded for the freedom of conscience along with the freedom of religion of the Christians in the Middle East. It is noticed that the universal charter of human rights is either violated or absent in many of the Middle East countries and the conference called upon the immediate attention of the International Human Right Organizations in this regard.

19 scholars participated from different parts of the world. Metropolitan Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo and Mor Theophilose Kuriakose resident metropolitan of Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Seminary represented the Syriac Orthodox Church.



COMMON DECLARATION BY THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES.

THE MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Cairo, Egypt
14 November 2011

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, H.H. Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, H.H. Catholicos Aram I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia of the Armenian Orthodox Church and H.H. Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, give thanks to God for bringing us together here in Cairo, Egypt, on Monday, 14 November 2011, to pray together and to reflect together on matters and concerns pertaining to our Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Family in general. Metropolitan, archbishops and bishops of our Churches accompanied us.

In fact, the Churches of the Oriental Orthodox Family are united in faith, theology, doctrine, tradition and spirituality. This strong bond of unity has sustained this Family and became a source of spiritual strength, missionary outreach and social action in spite of tremendous challenges and crisis, which surrounded these Churches in the course of their long history. The unity of faith of our Family is grounded on Apostolic Tradition and the teachings of the first three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). We developed our theological teachings and shaped our doctrinal positions on the basis of the teachings of these Ecumenical Councils, and adopted a common position in respect to heresies and heretics.

It is vitally important that we re-affirm and re-strengthen our unity, and re-invigorate our Christian witness. In a world, which is constantly threatened by secularistic and materialistic ideologies and different sort of heresies, which may jeopardize the integrity, identity, and unity of our faith, therefore, re-organizing and re-revitalizing our intra-family collaboration is of decisive importance. The Oriental Orthodox Family has a long and rich history. Its relevance needs to be re-affirmed and its common witness to be re-activated in those regions and countries where the faithful of our Churches have organized their church and community life.

For H.H. Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I, H.H. Catholicos Aram I and H.H. Abuna Paulos, participating in the 40th anniversary celebration of the enthronement of H.H. Pope Shenouda III was indeed a source of spiritual joy and a unique opportunity to express our brotherly love and unity. The pontificate of His Holiness has been one of dedicated service to the sister Coptic Orthodox Church; a committed service marked by so many achievements in different spheres of the life and mission of the Church. We pray the Almighty God to strengthen H.H. Pope Shenouda III to carry on his pontifical ministry with renewed commitment and vision.

We appeal to our faithful to remain firm in their Christian faith and participate fully in the witness of our Churches. May God lead our Churches in faithfulness to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

14 November 2011

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Cairo, Egypt

Pope Shenouda III
Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I
Catholicos Aram I
Patriarch Abuna Paulos

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Rome: January 25 to 28, 2011

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (JACOBITE SYRIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH)

This agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) on the Sharing of Sacred Places has been prepared taking into account the common profession of faith on the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Common affirmation of the faith in the mystery of the Church and the Sacraments. Besides, the possibility given by the declaration for a pastoral collaboration including the mutual admission of the faithful belonging to both the Churches to the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick for a grave spiritual need and the agreement on Mixed Marriage have also been taken into account.

Churches are consecrated buildings which have an important theological and liturgical significance for both the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. However, if one of these two Churches do not have a place or the liturgical objects necessary for celebrating worthily the Eucharistic liturgy, the diocesan bishop of the other Church may allow them the use of a church building of their Church and also lend them what may be necessary for their services. Under similar circumstances permission may be given on sharing of the cemeteries.

The Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church proposes the following as guidelines for the sharing of church buildings and cemeteries.

Agreement between the parishes:

1. Where a community of the Catholic/Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christian of a particular place does not have a place for celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy or cemetery for Christian Burial, the parish priest of that community may request the diocesan bishop of the Church who owns such a place with the recommendation letter of their diocesan bishop.
 - 1.1 Having made the necessary consultation with the parish priest and considering the local situation, the bishop may give the written permission indicating that this permission does not give any claim on the land.

2. While giving permission for sharing of the cemetery the following conditions have to be included.
 - 2.1 Minister of the funeral must be the minister of the person concerned. But when the minister of one's own Church is not available, the minister of the other Church is entitled to officiate the ceremony. He has to do it using liturgical text and liturgical vestments of his Church.
 - 2.2 Post funeral prayers in the cemetery shall be allowed without causing inconvenience to the parish to which the cemetery belongs.
 - 2.3 The formalities regarding the funeral and erection of the tombstone, cross etc. at the burial place must be according to the norms of the parish community to whom the cemetery belongs.

Other Related News

Case Study - The Socio-Psychological Grounds for Peaceful Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Martin Harrich

Martin Harrich is a PhD Student at the Faculty of Philosophy. He currently works for the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in Vienna/Austria. During his professional career he spent about 5 years in various countries in the Middle East, whereas he gained direct and in-depth insight into the long on-going conflict in the Region.

For the purpose of his PhD dissertation he conducted a field study to evaluate the influence of personality factors (e.g. hope, forgiveness and authority) on the readiness for a peaceful solution of the conflict.

Scarcely a day goes by without newspaper headlines announcing yet another effort at negotiating peace in the Middle East followed by reports of escalating violence and casualties. In this on-again-off-again environment, some analysts suggest that negotiating a peaceful resolution to the problems that exist between Israel and the Palestinians is not only possible, but inevitable. Other experts, though, caution that unless and until both sides come to the negotiating table with a profound sense of forgiveness in their hearts that refutes previous intractable views, no lasting peace can ever be negotiated between these peoples. Brokering a peaceful solution to the hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians has been especially difficult because of the complexity and multiplicity of the issues that remain unresolved between these reluctant and mutually belligerent neighbors. Indeed, history has shown time and again that when people are convinced they are doing God's will – even if it means the destruction of an entire country, it is enormously difficult to persuade them otherwise. Nevertheless, because the stakes are so high, identifying opportunities to improve the negotiating process by better understanding the manner in which personality affects conflict resolution represents an important and timely enterprise which was the focus of this study.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the ongoing dispute between Israelis and Palestinians, and one of the most enduring and explosive of all the world's conflicts. The conflict is wide-ranging, and the term is also used in reference to the earlier phases of the same conflict, between Jewish and Zionist *yishuv* and the majority Arab population living in Palestine under Ottoman or British rule. It forms part of the wider, and generally earlier, Arab-Israeli conflict. The remaining key issues are: mutual recognition, borders, security, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and legalities concerning refugees. The violence resulting from the conflict has prompted international actions, as well as other security and human rights concerns, both within and between both sides, and internationally.

The level of violence witnessed for virtually its entire duration is just one of the worrying aspects of the conflict. Fighting has been conducted by regular armies, paramilitary groups, terror cells and individuals. Casualties have not been restricted to the military, with a large number of fatalities in civilian population on both sides.

Change is needed – and possible - for a better future. Experience shows that a crisis situation could be a starting point, where the suffering population starts to realize that something fundamental has to change to move forward and secure a better and peaceful future.

Normal, peaceful relations between Palestinians and Israelis based on mutual respect, dignity and cooperation are possible. With the continuous failure of international efforts (e.g. Peel; General Assembly Resolution 181; Camp David; Declaration of November 15, 1988 - Israel and the PLO; Oslo Accords; Camp David II; Roadmap for peace etc.) to negotiate a peace agreement acceptable to both sides, it is up to the Palestinians and the Israelis (i.e. civil society) to reach a comprehensive and fair peace agreement that ends 100 years of bloody conflict. The time has come to focus on peace and reconciliation from the bottom up, characterized by a serious paradigm shift, whereas the affected population on both sides of the conflict, starts to take serious mitigating initiatives, which are to be based on intensified dialogue and exchange between Israelis and Palestinians.

Statement of the Problem

Activities that bring together Palestinians and Israelis are an integral part of creating sustainable peace. Hence, this study is geared to show that there are people on both sides of the conflict, Israelis and Palestinians alike, who – as a result of their core values and beliefs – are convinced that a better (i.e. peaceful and stable) future is feasible, while fostering cooperation and dialogue with the aim of changing mindsets and advancing humanism in daily interactions.

Strong civil society is a strategic element in every peace building process. As such, activities that bring together Palestinians and Israelis are an integral part of creating sustainable peace. Such efforts, of course, needs to be supported by the international community, whereas political actors must be prepared to provide the framework and create the breeding ground for a lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

Introduction

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is certainly not new, but rather has been the focus of attention from the international community since the end of World War I and was even a source of major concern to the former League of Nations (Peretz, 1996). Following the end of World War II, the conflict became one of the first issues that was addressed by the United Nations (UN) and the conflict has remained on the organization's agenda at every session of the UN General Assembly since 1946 (Peretz, 1996).

The modern conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people is widely regarded as being one of the most dangerous problems facing the world today, but the origins of the conflict are highly complex and date to time immemorial. Likewise, while the specific sources of the conflict are multifaceted, they are related to many of the same issues that people have warred over since the dawn of time, including most especially scarce land and resources, as well as their rightful ownership. The conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people, though, is further

complicated by the manner in which the Israeli state was carved out of the Middle East by the partitioning of Palestine following the end of World War II when biblical prophecies concerning the establishment of a modern Israeli state came to fruition, a process that is viewed as both fundamentally unfair and arbitrary by the Palestinian people it displaced.

Although enormously complex in nature with a number of sources having been identified as contributing to its intractability, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been focused in large part on the struggle between Jewish nationalism, or Zionism, and its loose counterpart in the form of Arab nationalism, all with a view to establishing who has rightful control of the Palestine region. To date, the conflict has embroiled the Jewish and Arab residents of Palestine, of course, but the conflict has also come to include their respective proponents in the international community who support one side over the other for various political, religious and social reasons (Peretz, 1996).

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Statement of the Problem

One of the harsh realities involved in the allocation of scarce resources such as land is that some people will be advantaged at the expense of others. Perhaps nowhere else has this reality been played out on the geopolitical maps of the world as the situation between Israel and Palestine today. Although this conflict has been millennia in the making, it has become especially pronounced in recent years as the Jewish people seek to consolidate their hard-won gains following the end of World War II while simultaneously seeking to develop a sustainable relationship with their Arab neighbors. Given the widely perceived intractability of the conflict, a working solution that addresses the ostensibly irreconcilable historical claims by the antagonists of the conflict seemed to be in need of a divine miracle. In this charged environment, it is little wonder that international policymakers are confounded in their efforts to broker a lasting peace in the region and some observers suggest that there will always be war and strife in the Middle East as a result of the age-old and fundamental religious, social and political differences that exist between Israel and the Arab world. Indeed, some authorities suggest that the differences between Israel and Palestine are so great and intractable that a peaceful solution is unlikely.

The recent (2010) interdiction of a fleet of relief vessels and deaths of several Turkish relief workers headed for Gaza by the Israelis and the international condemnation it has provoked is clear evidence that the hostilities remain acute.

The current situation represents a serious reversal of previous trends that pointed to reconciliation between the belligerent parties, with the fundamental issue of the right to exist for each side being a major stumbling block to negotiations. Nevertheless, it is useful for the purposes of this study to seek to understand both sides of the conflict in order to identify common ground and opportunities for compromise that might otherwise be overlooked.

There have been some modest signs of progress along the way, though, that have caused some analysts to believe that a negotiated settlement to the fundamental differences that exist between the Israelis and Palestinians might be possible that does not involve the outright destruction of the former by the latter.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was two-fold:

1. To provide a critical review of the relevant literature to develop an informed assessment of the salient factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs in the Middle East and to identify opportunities for nurturing understanding and forgiveness as a means to

promoting a peaceful resolution of the differences that exist between Israel and the Arab world; and,

2. To present the results of a survey of a series of workshop/seminar participants to identify the manner in which personality may play a role in the forging of a lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Pursuant to this two-fold purpose, the study was guided by the two hypotheses which are described further below.

Hypothesis of Study

The study's guiding hypothesis was two-fold as follows:

1. The three personality predictors (i.e., hope, forgiveness, and authority) will correlate more than the demographic bio data (as measured by responses to the Conflict Resolution Survey) with the two criteria (i.e., the attitude scales), which were used to measure respective attitudes concerning optimism for a peaceful solution, the value of outside/international efforts vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and a one-versus two-state solution. The attitude scales were based on a series of Likert-scaled questions in the Conflict Resolution Survey (which was based in part on existing scales from survey instruments with known reliability and validity and which is described further in the methodology chapter) that were designed to elicit this type of responsive information. In other words, an Israeli or Palestinian who scored high on predictors like "hope" and "forgiveness," was expected to also be optimistic about the potential for a peaceful solution of the conflict (criteria # 16 - # 20) and to see a generally positive impact of the role of the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (criteria # 21 - # 25).
2. The workshops (which are also described further in the methodology chapter below) will cause an increase in participants pre- versus post-criteria scores (but not personality scores), i.e. during the second survey (*post-survey*), participants will score higher on the criteria (questions # 16 - # 25), which measure optimism of a peaceful solution (# 16 - 20) and the value of outside/international efforts vis-a-vis the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (# 21 - 25) in comparison to the survey conducted as pre-survey at the beginning of the workshops/seminar.

The three surveys (pre- and post-surveys) were administered during three different seminars/workshops that were recently conducted in Bethlehem/Israel and Amman/Jordan which were organized by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) Amman/Jordan and the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People.

Importance of Study

As noted above, despite some indications of progress being made towards the end of the 20th century in brokering a peace between Israel and Palestine, the process has become mired in acrimony and mutual hostility to the point where little progress has been made in the past decade. In this regard, Barari notes that, "New developments that have taken place since the second half of the 1990s have considerably contributed in a total breakdown in the Middle East peace process, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli track" (p. 1). Indeed, given the trends during the 1990s, the violent reaction that erupted at the turn of the century was viewed by some observers as being an abrupt about-face by the Palestinians. For example, Barari adds that, "Many are still puzzled by this rather tragic development that peaked in September 2000 when

the disgruntled Palestinians launched what is known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Violence, counter-violence, and mutual incrimination and demonization replaced dialogue and peaceful coexistence” (2004, p. 1).

Rationale of Study

History has shown time and again that most conflicts can be resolved; however, the events that have transpired since the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s have shown that the conflict between Palestine and Israel may not be amenable to a peaceful solution unless and until both sides are willing to come together in a collaborative enterprise that recognizes the rights, goals and obligations of all parties involved. To the degree that personality can be used to gauge the propensity of the parties to these negotiations to forgive past transgressions and harms caused by the others will likely be the degree to which such negotiations will enjoy success where previous efforts have failed.

Review of the Literature

While it is clear that all people wear a number of different “hats” during the course of their lives that will affect their opinions and propensity to forgive, and their views about the world around them tend to change over time, it is also clear that some people appear to be more amenable at times to the resolution of conflicts than others, but in many cases for reasons that remain better described than understood.

Nevertheless, people can and do change and it is reasonable to suggest that many elderly people have vastly different views about the world compared to when they were younger, views that might be more inclined to amiable solutions to complex problems.

Personality Philosophy. The study of personality theory in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is useful because it can provide some useful insight into what motivates some people to favor resolution while others may remain adamant and unwilling to forgive or forget any past transgressions. In this regard, personality psychology is a branch of psychology which studies personality and individual differences. One emphasis in this area is to construct a coherent picture of a person and his or her major psychological processes. Another emphasis views personality as the study of individual differences, in other words, how people differ from each other. A third area of emphasis examines human nature and how all people are similar to one other. These three viewpoints merge together in the study of personality.

Personality Development

Personality development is the development of the organized pattern of behaviours and attitudes that makes a person distinctive. Personality development occurs by the on-going interaction of temperament, character, and environment.

Personality is what makes a person a unique person, and it is recognizable soon after birth. A child's personality has several components: temperament, environment, and character. Temperament is the set of genetically determined traits that determine the child's approach to the world and how the child learns about the world. There are no genes that specify personality traits, but some genes do control the development of the nervous system, which in turn controls behaviour.

A second component of personality comes from adaptive patterns related to a child's specific environment. Most psychologists agree that these two factors—temperament and

environment—influence the development of a person's personality the most. Temperament, with its dependence on genetic factors, is sometimes referred to as "nature," while the environmental factors are called "nurture".

While there is still controversy as to which factor ranks higher in affecting personality development, all experts agree that high-quality parenting plays a critical role in the development of a child's personality. When parents understand how their child responds to certain situations, they can anticipate issues that might be problematic for their child. They can prepare the child for the situation or in some cases they may avoid a potentially difficult situation altogether. Parents who know how to adapt their parenting approach to the particular temperament of their child can best provide guidance and ensure the successful development of their child's personality.

Finally, the third component of personality is character—the set of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural patterns learned from experience that determines how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. A person's character continues to evolve throughout life, although much depends on inborn traits and early experiences. Character is also dependent on a person's moral development.

Identity formation

Identity formation is the process of the development of the distinct personality of an individual in a particular stage of life. In developmental psychology, a stage is a distinct phase in an individual's development, e.g. infancy, childhood, adolescence, in which individual characteristics are possessed by which a person is recognized or known. This process defines an individual to others and themselves. In addition to carving out a personal identity based on the need for uniqueness, people also acquire a social identity based on their membership in various groups—familial, ethnic, occupational, and others.

The ecological perspective of personality development

There are many potential factors, e.g. resulting and influenced by interactions with society and culture, the interplay of individual with social systems ---the micro (immediate social setting in which an individual is engaged in, e.g. family, peers, neighborhood), mezzo (communities, groups and extended family), exosystem and macro systems that are involved in shaping a personality.

Bronfenbrenner's holistic general systems concepts and principles provide a foundation for understanding of the characteristics of all systems, and the unique possibilities for the many variations in experience that make for diversity among people. Individuals and their environment are viewed as mutually shaping systems.

Macro systems describe the culture in which individuals live. Cultural contexts include developing and industrialized countries, socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity.

These factors are usually seen as coming from heredity and the environment. Research by psychologists over the last several decades has increasingly pointed to hereditary factors being more important, especially for basic personality traits such as emotional tone.

However, the acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations seem to be due more to socialization and unique experiences, especially during childhood. Some hereditary factors that

contribute to personality development do so as a result of interactions with the particular social environment in which people live.

Influence of culture on personality development

Every human being enters the human community at birth, and from then on the community (parents, siblings, family, neighborhood, country, culture, etc.) creates the individual. People create people. Children are affected by their culture through the communication of beliefs and customs parents receive from other structures in the mesosystem and exosystem. Our culture dictates beliefs concerning religion, school, family, and community life.

In a world deprived of obligation, no agent can persistently do what is right, nor possess a willingness to alter her behavior when tendencies to wrongdoing are recognized. A cluster of issues has to do with how it would be best to regard our reactive attitudes or feelings such as resentment, anger, gratitude, and forgiveness if determinism were true. As noted, these reactive attitudes are important, among other things, for interpersonal relationships.

In relation to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, resentment and anger are two of the hardest obstacles that people have to overcome. Too many hostilities over an extended period of time left many scars, and the feelings of loss and deep hurt are constantly nourished. However, once resentment and anger are overcome, new opportunities will emerge for a better and hopefully peaceful situation for both sides.

The consequences of failing to forgive are to become completely isolated from others, a process that does more harm to the victim than the perpetrator of the original transgression. This is true in general terms and very much applies to the focus of this dissertation, the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. Without engaging with the perceived enemy, without serious attempts to overcome the violent past and re-focus on a better (= peaceful) future for generations to come, both conflicting parties will just deepen the trenches (or building higher walls), which will isolate them even further.

Related to the conflict in the Middle East, this means that a lot of progress needs to be made on both sides, to finally create an insight that wrongdoings have been initiated on both sides. For example, Israeli settlers should realize that attacking farmers and schoolchildren helps in no way to secure a peaceful solution. Or, sending homemade rockets targeting civilian areas in Israel by various militant groups located in Gaza clearly represent acts of aggression which do not suggest that lots of progress has been made to truly view the other side as a party which is worthy to be forgiven.

Personality Theories

Given its fundamental role in the course of human affairs and its importance in understanding what motivates some people to act in a certain fashion while others are more inclined to take a different path, it is little wonder that a wide range of sometimes-conflicting theories of personality have been developed over the years that can also be useful in divining the motivational forces at play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. To this end, there are several

theoretical perspectives on personality in philosophy, which involve different ideas about the relationship between personality and other philosophical constructs, as well as different theories about the way personality develops.

Because personality is so fundamental to human relations, it is not surprising that it is been the focus of attention from scholars for thousands of years. Perhaps the most important is the trait approach.

The construction of personality is a universal human enterprise wherein everyone is actively involved in constructing their own as well as personalities of others; as a result, there is an overarching focus on identity, reputation and the images that are being communicated in a dynamic and iterative process. In this regard, Hampson (1988) notes that, “The construction of personality is a social process, involving the active participation of the actor, observer and self-observer. The application of the constructivist view to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict would be amongst the ingredients to embark on a serious pathway towards peace, as it entails various possibilities of personality, including cultural and inherited differences, to change.

Just as everyone wears a number of different “hats” in their day-to-day interactions with others as spouse, parent, co-worker, subordinate, supervisor, sibling and so forth, Hampson believes that a useful way of viewing personality as a construct is to discard prior notions of personality being completely within an individual, but rather as a dynamic process that not only relies on outside influences to shape personality, but to define it as well.

Personality as Predictive of Peaceful Solution

The foregoing factors all tend to suggest that personality types can help identify individuals who will be more amenable to forging a peaceful solution to a convoluted and longstanding conflict such as exists between the Israelis and Palestinians. In fact, researchers have used personality to predict other outcomes including the willingness to work in a team (O’Neill & Kline, 2008), overall work performance (Peterson & Mannix, 2003), college achievement and even the likelihood of contracting lung cancer (Furnham & Heaven, 1999). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of consensus concerning the precise influence that one personality type has compared to another in conflict resolutions scenarios. In this regard, Furnham and Heaven emphasize that, “Existing theories are imprecise, they conflict in many ways, their findings are still conjectural, and the merging that has already taken place has not produced a single consensus” (p. 47). Moreover, a study by Goodfield (2007) maintains that it is possible to discern an individual leader’s personality type and propensity to engage in substantive conflict resolutions negotiations by observing several nonverbal clues, but that there are so many extremes that exist within each personality type and the fact that people change over time makes blanket judgments about the predictive ability of such measures difficult or even impossible to formulate accurately.

Notwithstanding the lack of a general consensus and these confounding factors, some indication of what types of personality may be more predisposed to engaging in and ultimately accepting a peaceful solution to a given conflict can be gleaned from the body of knowledge that has been accumulated to date.

There have been a few studies to date that have examined the effect of personality types on the willingness of individuals to pursue a peaceful solution rather than a violent one. Personality types that are accepting of high levels of gratuitous violence in their entertainment or who have experienced high levels of violence during the formative early years of their lives are also predisposed to accepting violence as a solution to conflicts.

Effective communication between conflicting parties is an essential requirement to negotiations, personality types that are characterized by higher levels of accommodation may be predictive of their predisposition to a peaceful solution. Because many conflicts, especially the one raging between the Israelis and Palestinians, are complicated by intractability by the parties involved, even this minor concession might be perceived as a sign of weakness by the opposing party or even among the more hardliners in either camp. Nevertheless, there must be some common ground forged between conflicting parties and communication represents the first step in the long road to success.

Therefore, by making the effort to improve communications, conflict negotiators with personality types that make them willing to reach out to the opposition stand a better chance of achieving at least part of what they want rather than pursuing an “all or nothing” settlement.

Taken together, although personality types can provide some indication of the willingness and predisposition of individuals to pursue a peaceful solution at a given point in time, the research was consistent in emphasizing that the analysis is enormously complicated from the outset, and that confounding factors such as individuals’ current state of mind can play a major role in how they perceive a conflict and what steps may be deemed most effective in resolving it.

Methodology - Description of the Study Approach

In order to develop an idea concerning the “readiness for a peaceful solution” of Palestinians and Israelis, three surveys (pre- and post-surveys) were conducted during three different seminars/workshops, which took place in Bethlehem/Israel and Amman/Jordan as follows:

3.1.1 January 4-5, and April 11-12, 2008 - Bethlehem/Israel: *'Peace Education Workshops'*, organized by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI).

The Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information was established in 1988 in an effort to facilitate dialogue at different levels between the Israeli and Palestinian civil societies (IPCRI, 2010). Today, the goal of the IPCRI is to provide an intellectual framework in which Israelis and Palestinians as well as others can develop and sustain new concepts and ideas that contribute to the political and public discourse in order to influence decision makers and to challenge the current political reality with the aim of advancing the political solution of two-states for two-peoples. These workshops brought together over 250 peace educators, curricula writers, encounter facilitators, peace studies practitioners from Israel, Palestine and many other countries. Additionally, the workshop participants included conflict resolution practitioners, mediators, and activists from academia, research sector, governmental and community organizations and others from Israel, Palestine and beyond who were recruited to participate in this study.

3.1.2 February 19-20, 2008 - Amman/Jordan: *'United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People'*.

The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was conducted pursuant to the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which was established by General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX) of November 1975 (United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People concludes, 2010).

The overarching goal of this series of seminars is to “raise the profile of and garner support for the Programme of the Palestinian Authority, “Palestine: Ending the occupation, establishing the State” (UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, 2010). These

seminar gauge the on-going socioeconomic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and provide a platform for discussing ways to provide relief and reconstruction to the Gaza Strip; consider approaches to advancing the Palestinian State-building agenda; and examine alternatives to mobilizing broad international assistance in support of the Palestinian economy and alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people (UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, 2010).

The participants in this Seminar represented a mixed group of Israelis and Palestinians; many of them representatives of the local NGO community.

Data-gathering Method and Database of Study - Questionnaire:

Based on the different survey methods available, it was determined that the use of a questionnaire was a superior approach based on its several advantages. The instrument was presented to the target audience, i.e., Israelis and Palestinians, in either English or Arabic, who attended the workshops which are also described further below. Translation of the questionnaire was accomplished by the principal researcher. The survey was administered in a “paper-and-pencil” version wherein each respondent was requested to answer a set of 36 questions.

- The surveys were standardized to ensure reliability, generalizability, and validity; each respondent was presented with the same questions and in the same order as other respondents.

The ‘conflict resolution survey questionnaire’ developed for the purpose of this dissertation (*see Annex A for the English and Arabic versions*), contained a total of 36 questions, and was structured as follows:

1. **#1 - #15, Predictors:** These personality predictors were based on the existing scales of:
 - a) *Hope* (*‘Life Orientation Test-Revised’ (LOT-R)*)
 - b) *Forgiveness* (*‘Heartland Forgiveness Scale’*)
 - c) *Authoritarian Scale*
2. **#16-27, Criteria:**
 - a. #16-20 measures optimism for a peaceful solution.
 - b. #21-25 measures value of outside/international efforts vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.
 - c. #26-27 one versus two state solution.
3. **# 28-35 bio data.**
4. **#36 was added for comments.**

The final situation (= result of three rounds of surveys) is as follows:

42 participants completed the pre- and post-surveys; (26 Israelis/16 Palestinians)

48 completed only the pre-survey,

29 completed only the post-survey.

All told, **119** participants in total completed the survey questionnaires in the course of the three seminars/workshops. (*a total of 162 survey questionnaires have been evaluated using the SPSS statistical software package*) to develop corresponding respective mean scores, correlation and reliability analyses for the pre- and post-test survey results to confirm or refute the study’s guiding hypotheses are described above.

Human beings are notoriously difficult subjects to study, particularly over the long term, and there remains a dearth of timely and relevant studies concerning personality and how it can affect cross-cultural negotiations and conflict resolution efforts. In spite of the increasing

globalization of the marketplace, the vast majority of the research to date has focused on various cultural dimensions (i.e., Hofstede); however, there are a sufficient number of differences involved in personality types among the peoples of the world to make any such comparison more complicated than a simple analysis of various cultural dimensions. Certainly, as members of the human species, it is also reasonable to expect that there will be a wide range of diversity in the personality types within any population, but it is also reasonable to suggest that powerful environmental factors will contribute to shaping the type of behavioural responses that characterize certain personality types. These similarities and differences can be used to help identify those members of a given group who might be more amenable to the nurturance of forgiving.

Hypothesis:

The study's guiding hypothesis was two-fold as follows:

1. The three personality predictors (i.e., hope, forgiveness, and authority) will correlate more than the demographic bio data with the two criteria (the attitude scales).

In other words, an Israeli or Palestinian who scored high on predictors like “hope” and “forgiveness,” is expected to be more optimistic about the potential for a peaceful solution of the conflict (criteria # 16 - # 20) and to see a generally positive impact of the role of the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (criteria # 21 - # 25).

2. The workshop will cause an increase in participants pre versus post criteria scores (but not personality (= ‘predictors’) scores; survey questions # 1 - # 15), i.e. during the second survey (post-survey) participants will score higher on the criteria (questions # 16 - # 25), which measure optimism of a peaceful solution (# 16 – 20) and the value of outside/international efforts vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (# 21 – 25).

Part two of the hypothesis states that the workshop will cause an increase in participants' pre- v. post-criteria scores (but not personality scores), i.e. during the second survey (*post-survey*) participants will score higher on the criteria (optimism and value of outside efforts) in comparison to the benchmark data from the survey conducted as pre-survey at the beginning of the workshops/seminar.

Summary of Survey participation

The result of three rounds of surveys is as follows:

42 participants completed the pre- and post-surveys; (26 Israelis/16 Palestinians)

48 participants (25 Israelis/23 Palestinians) completed only the pre-survey,

29 participants (17 Israelis/12 Palestinians) completed only the post-survey.

Therefore, a total of **162** questionnaires were collected.

The average age of the workshop/seminar participants was 39.63 years. Of these, there were 27 college graduates, 102 participants with graduate degrees, seven participants who had completed high school and 19 participants with some college education.

As to the religions of the participants, there were nine Christian participants, 80 Jewish participants, and 61 Muslim participants, 10 participants who reported their religion as “other” and two participants who responded they did not subscribe to a specific religion.

CONCLUSION

The research showed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is certainly not new, and in fact many observers suggest that it would be possible to cover ongoing events in the region simply by replacing the names of the key players and current statistics because of the similarities with the events of the past several decades. From the Israeli position, the declared and formal goal of organizations such as Hamas to destroy them makes a negotiated settlement impossible, while the converse is essentially true for the Palestinians who view the Israelis as the original interlopers and violators of their property rights to Gaza and elsewhere. When people are absolutely and sincerely convinced they are doing God’s will, it is also difficult or impossible to persuade them that an alternative course of action is more appropriate. It may be possible, though, to help forge an atmosphere in which dialogue can replace violence by better understanding the personality types that are most amenable to conflict resolution over continuing violence, no matter how severe the provocations or how justified each party might believe their respective positions are with regards to their goals.

While it is unlikely that there will be wholesale changes in the mentality of the Israeli or Palestinian people in the short-term with regards to their fundamental right to exist, it may be possible to inculcate the power of one individual to make a difference by forgoing what is held to be rightful and righteous vengeance for transgressions that have been committed in the past, no matter how egregious they might have been at the time and how they are perceived in retrospect today. The power of one individual to persuade others might be the stepping stone that is needed to harness the act of forgiveness in ways that will overcome these seemingly intractable obstacles to the peace process rather than trying to address the myriad issues that are simply contributing to rather than solving the problem.

Despite these challenges, the stakes involved between a negotiated settlement of the glaring differences that remain between the Palestinians and Israeli camps suggests that unless and until the all-or-nothing positions adopted by the extreme elements on both sides can be moderated, it makes little sense to continue to debate the other differences that exist between the current belligerents in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

When personality is taken into account in the negotiation process, some interesting possibilities emerge. Because personality is such a varied construct, it would be difficult to extrapolate how an individual with a certain personality type would respond to a given set of circumstances but it may be possible to discern some general trends along these lines. For instance, with regards to the findings of the instant study, it is reasonable to suggest that the individuals who were participating in the workshops used for recruiting the subject population were predisposed to compromise compared to their respective extremist counterparts on both sides who remain intractable on the fundamental issue of the right of the other to exist.

A quick look at a map of the region clearly shows that there is in fact little room for compromise absent other concessions on both sides, but a review of the headlines from the past several decades also suggests that compromise has not only been elusive, it has been downright impossible. In terms of the personalities of the affected individuals involved, it is also reasonable to suggest that the different contingents that comprise the positions on both sides consist of people with the same variances in personality types that characterize the larger population from

which they are drawn; however, it is also reasonable to suggest that the overarching importance of the issues that are involved in these debates overshadows any personality predisposition to forgiving and forging a new beginning. The absence or presence of a given personality type among the respective schools of thought that are influential in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations is less important, perhaps, that the fact that even those personality types that may be most amenable to forgiving in order to reach an amicable compromise will be outweighed by the intransigent among these camps that will continue to press for their own agenda without regard for the consequences.

Certainly, complex problems demand complex solutions and the issues involved in forging a lasting peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis is no exception. The fact that genocide and wars continue to take place in various regions of the world today is proof positive that differences between humans will continue to be resolved by bloodshed for the foreseeable future, and this appears to also be the unfortunate case in the Middle East. One scenario would have the current actors beating themselves to death against the wall they have built between each other until they were all dead or no longer capable of being influential whereupon new actors would take their place who might be more accepting of a two-state compromise, together with all of the other fine points that remain to be worked out between the Palestinians and Israelis.

People can and do change over time and even the most enlightened workshop/seminar participants might well experience a sea change in opinion if a sufficient amount of provocation was perceived to be taking place by the opposing sides, but the reverse may also be true wherein the most adamant one-state advocate today may become more amenable to more peaceful resolutions as they grow and mature.

The first part of the study's guiding hypotheses (that an Israeli or Palestinian who scored high on the three personality predictors [i.e., hope, forgiveness, and authority] is expected to be more optimistic about the potential for a peaceful solution of the conflict (criteria # 16 - # 20) and to see a generally positive impact of the role of the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (criteria # 21 - # 25) was confirmed by the data analysis.

Furthermore, the findings largely support part two of the hypothesis that the workshop will cause an increase in participants' pre- versus post-workshop scores related to questions # 16 - # 20, which measure optimism for a peaceful solution of the conflict. Hence, the 16 Palestinians and 26 Israelis who completed the pre- and post-surveys and scored high in the pre-workshop on predictors like "hope" and "forgiveness," could be reasonably expected to reach a higher score on the criteria of optimism for a peaceful solution. (i.e. questions # 16 - # 20).

The same has been confirmed for Palestinian participants regarding questions # 21 - # 25, which measures value of outside/international efforts vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. E.g. Palestinians reached a mean score on question # 21 in the pre-workshop survey of 3.00; the same group showed an increase in the mean score (post-workshop mean: 3.13) on the same question. In contrast, the findings related to the Jewish participants regarding questions # 21 - # 25 did not support the original assumption, as they scored slightly lower in the post-workshop on the questions related to the value of outside/international involvement in the peace process.

The standard deviations, correlation and reliability analyses for these data also supported the reliability and validity of these findings.

It should be noted, though, that these findings may not be generalizable beyond the immediate pool of participants and other like-minded individuals because their attendance at the workshops/seminars is likely indicative of personalities that are already primed for identifying

opportunities for a peaceful resolution to the irreconcilable differences that exist between the Israelis and their Arab neighbors in general and the Palestinian people in particular.

Furthermore, the sampling method (,convenience sampling’) used to administer the three surveys, is a form of nonprobability sampling, where members are selected from the population in some nonrandom manner – here, only participants in the workshops have been presented with the questionnaires. As much as this sampling technique is useful in documenting that a particular quality or trait (e.g. in the context of this dissertation, ‘optimism for a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’; measured through questions # 16 - # 20), it is also subject to criticism.

The most obvious criticism about convenience sampling is sampling bias and that the sample is not representative of the entire population. Another significant criticism about using a convenience sample is the limitation in generalization inference making about the entire population. Since the sample is not representative of the population, the results of the study cannot speak for the entire population.

The above is in particular true in regard of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, which is very controversial and characterized by a multitude of at times extremist ideas found in people on both sides of the conflict. It is reasonable to assume that participants in the three workshops are ‘moderate’ and ready for dialogue as one of the key starting points for a peaceful solution of the conflict through negotiations.

Hence, the final results of the three conducted surveys has only limited external validity, as the sample did not mirror the actual diversity of opinions and mind-sets which at times are responsible for increased level of violence in the region.

Regarding the three workshops/seminars used for the collection of 162 standardized questionnaires it is important to note that they did not follow exactly the same agenda. The IPCRI sponsored workshops, which were used to administer the first and third survey addressed issues related to peace-making and peace building by emphasizing that these efforts – to eventually yield the expected positive results – must be joint and bi-partisan.

Amongst IPCRI’s core objectives is the recognition of the rights of the Jewish people and the Palestinian people to enable the fulfillment of their national interests within the framework of achieving national self-determination within their own states (,two-states for two-peoples’) by facilitating the establishment of peaceful relations between two democratic states living side-by-side.

By contrast, the overarching goal of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, which was used to administer the second survey, was to “raise the profile of and garner support for the Programme of the Palestinian Authority, “Palestine: Ending the occupation, establishing the State”. The seminar’s core focus was the establishment of viable strategies to positively influence the socioeconomic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and provide a platform for discussing ways to provide relief and reconstruction to the Gaza Strip; consider approaches to advancing the Palestinian State-building agenda through International assistance.

Resulting from the above, it is prudent to suggest that resulting from the minimal differences in the IPCRI sponsored workshops used for the 1st and 3rd survey, which produced

151 questionnaires, (= 93.3 % of the total number of 163 survey questionnaires received), the agenda of the workshops had no significant influence in the overall results.

In comparison, the United Nations Seminar resulted in only 11 questionnaires (3 from Israelis, 8 from Palestinians), which represents 6.7 % of the total of 162 questionnaires completed by participants in the three workshops/seminars.

Reviewing this relative small number of questionnaires regarding their influence on the two-fold hypothesis of the study, it can be reasonably suggested that there is no significant influence on the study's guiding hypotheses that an Israeli or Palestinian who scored high on the three personality predictors [i.e., hope, forgiveness, and authority] is expected to be more optimistic about the potential for a peaceful solution of the conflict (criteria # 16 - # 20) and to see a generally positive impact of the role of the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (criteria # 21 - # 25).

Regarding part two of the hypothesis, which was not supported by the findings related to Jewish participants who completed the pre- and post-survey on questions # 21 - # 25 (measure the value of outside/international efforts), it can be reasonably assumed that the influence of the single Israeli, who completed the post survey as participant in the United Nations Seminar, is not significant regarding the overall outcome and final analysis of data.

Contributions to the Scholarship

The results of this study provide a valuable benchmark by which future studies can compare changes in the respective negotiating positions adopted by the Palestinians and Israelis as the negotiations continue their on-again-off-again approach to resolving problems that on their face appear to be intractable. The IPRCI-sponsored peace education workshops and the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People initiative represent important steps towards reaching this elusive goal.

The results of this study also confirmed the efficacy of these programs in helping both Israeli and Palestinian participants improve their ability to forge a new beginning by forgiving past transgressions, whether real or perceived, and making the bold first moves that require courage and fortitude in the face of potential condemnation by their more radicalized peers.

Finally, this study contributed to the body of scholarship concerning personality and how it can be used to better understand the individual and groups dynamics involved in conflict resolution in ways that can facilitate the formulation and administration of peace education workshops in the future.

[Martin Harrich was also mentored by Anthony DeLuca, Ph.D., Psy. D., while at Ignatius University.]