



## Monthly Highlights

April-May 2015

*International Interreligious Affairs*

### April 21/22 New York

I was invited by Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon and the President of the UN General Assembly H.E Mr. Sam Kutesa to speak at the UN at a special "High Level thematic debate" on the theme of "Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism" which took place on April 21/22. In addition to addressing the General Assembly Plenary, I was also one of the presenters at a round table discussion with the Secretary General on the theme.



**April 23/24, Fes**

I continued on to Fes, Morocco, to participate in a consultation on “The Role of Religious Leaders In Preventing Incitement That Could Lead To Atrocity Crimes”.

These deliberations were convened by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, with the King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) and the Mohammedan Council of Religious Scholars of Morocco.

Participants also included leading Muslim scholars from Egypt (Al Azhar) and Saudi Arabia and an extensive exchange of information of different initiatives to combat radicalizations and violent extremism.



**April 28, Rome**

On April 28<sup>th</sup> I participated in a consultation at the Vatican convened by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences , the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the World Conference of Religions for Peace, entitled : 'Protect the Earth, Dignify Humanity' - The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Development Climate Change and Sustainable Development. This was in preparation for Pope Francis' encyclical on the Environment.



I was one of the speakers on the panel entitled “Religious Perspectives on Justice, Responsibility and the Environment .” Other panelists included: Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of the Orthodox Ecumenical patriarchate and Din Syamsuddin, head of the Muhamaddiyah from Indonesia.



## May 10 – 12, UK

The British Council of Christian and Jews (a founder member of the International Council of Christians and Jews of which I am an Honorary President) held events in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of Nostra Aetate

### May 10-11 London

On the evening of May 10<sup>th</sup>, Archbishop Kevin MacDonald and I held a public discussion on the significance of Nostra Aetate. The event took place at the Jewish community center JW3 and was moderated by Dr. Edward Kessler of Cambridge's Woolf Center for Jewish/Christian/Muslim studies. A seminar program was held the following day in which I participated; and that evening I addressed a public event at the London School of Jewish Studies on the subject of Jewish perspectives on Jewish-Christian relations specifically, and Inter-Faith relations generally.



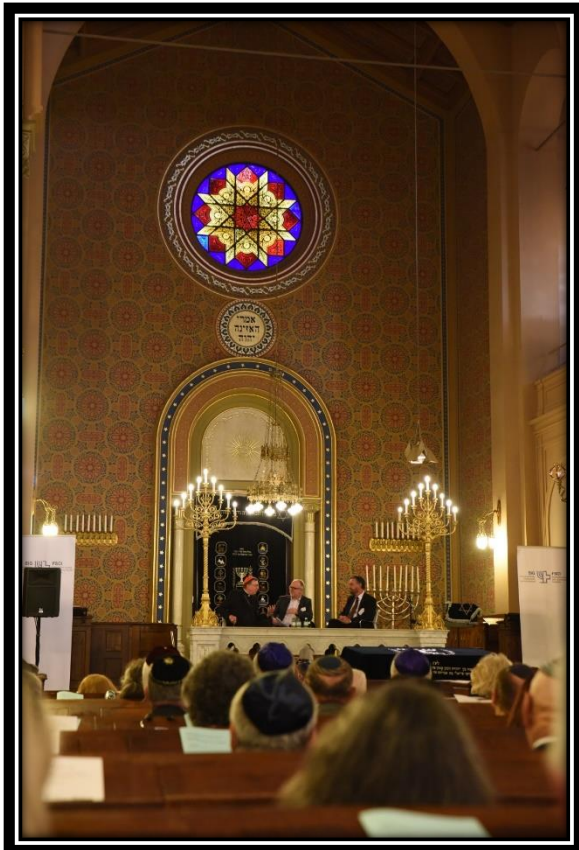
### May 12, Manchester

The Lord Mayor of Manchester hosted the official celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nostra Aetate at the impressive city hall. My keynote address highlighting the revolution ushered in by this document, was followed by a panel discussion with the Anglican Bishop David Walker, Catholic Bishop John Arnold and Rabbi Arnold Saunders.

See: <http://www.ccj.org.uk/manchester-nostra-aetate-celebrations/>

**May 13, Basel**

The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (with which AJC has a partnership agreement) invited Rabbi David Rosen and Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Jewry, to hold a special moderated conversation in the Basel Synagogue to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nostra Aetate, opening the Federation's annual meeting. The audience was made up of delegates from all the Jewish communities across Switzerland



### **May 5-7, Israel, Domus Galilea**

The Catholic movement, the Neocatechumenal Way, convened a Catholic-Jewish gathering at its center Domus Galilea, on the Mount of Beatitudes bringing together some 120 Rabbis from all over the world, along with 7 Cardinals, 25 Bishops, 50 Priests, and the founders of the Neocatechumenal Way, Kiko Argüello, Carmen Hernandez, and Fr. Mario Pezzi.

The event included lectures, workshops and the rendition of the choral orchestral homage composed by Arguello "Suffering of the Innocents"

In addition to a message from Pope Francis, presentations were given by Cardinal George Pell, Prefect of the Holy See's Secretariat for the Economy (and former primate of Australia) and Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna. The Jewish speakers were Rabbis Yitz Greenberg, Eugene Korn, Jay Rosenbaum and myself.

The event received extensive media coverage such as the following :-

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/where-cardinals-and-rabbis-go-to-forgive-and-pray/>



### **Media**

The agreement tentatively concluded between the PA and the Holy See concerning the rights and freedoms of the Catholic Church was widely misrepresented as a new decision by the Holy See (in fact the latter has been using the name "Palestine" for some time.) I was quoted in the New York Times in this regard :-

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/vatican-to-recognize-palestinian-state-in-new-treaty.html?emc=edit\\_au\\_20150513&nl=afternoonupdate&nid=10768308](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/vatican-to-recognize-palestinian-state-in-new-treaty.html?emc=edit_au_20150513&nl=afternoonupdate&nid=10768308)