



Monthly Highlights

August-September 2015

International Interreligious Affairs

Vienna , August 27

The King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue convened an historic gathering of rabbis and imams to establish a Muslim Jewish Leadership Council to work together on Religious Freedom in Europe – in particular on the right to provide and obtain kosher/halal products, conduct ritual circumcision and maintain other religious ritual traditions. This cooperation agreement is on the basis of a joint commitment to European civil law and a joint commitment to repudiating and combatting prejudice, bigotry, violence and terror.

The two partners in establishing this Council who approached KAICIID to facilitate this meeting are the Conference of European Rabbis and Islamic Relief Worldwide. The KAICIID Board of Governors from the Muslim faith and the Jewish faith (i.e. me) were invited to participate in the meeting accordingly. (see <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/europe/85463-150912-jews-muslims-create-leadership-council-to-defend-religious-freedom-in-europe>)



Participants of the founding meeting of the Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council in Europe

Kazan, September 3-6

A unique series of events took place in Kazan, Tartarstan in the Russian Federation in which I was honored to participate. The occasion was the hundredth anniversary of the construction of the synagogue in Kazan which was refurbished and opened anew after having been taken away from the Jewish community under Communist rule and after scores of years of neglect. This event was given far greater substance and meaning by Limmud FSU that held its national Jewish educational conference in Kazan accordingly; and preceding these events, the city of Kazan and the regional authority of Tartarstan held a unique interfaith conference celebrating the new era of religious revival and interreligious cooperation that flourishes in a place where Muslim and Christian populations are of equal size. Moreover the region around Kazan contains the third largest Jewish population after Moscow and St. Petersburg. In addition to addressing the interfaith gathering, I also gave two lectures at the Limmud conference



The Rabbis and Muftis attending the Interfaith event in Kazan

Tirana, Sept. 6-8

From Kazan I went on to Tirana, Albania for the annual interfaith conference (arguably the most impressive of its kind) held by the Catholic community of Sant Egidio that has continued “the Spirit of Assisi” following on from the initiatives of Pope John Paul II and his successor.

The theme of the convention was “Peace is always possible” and I was privileged to address the opening plenary together with the country’s main religious and political leaders and international leadership (see <http://www.santegidio.org/pagelD/7712/langID/en/event/592/PANEL-11--The-Spirit-of-Assisi-from-the-Cold-War-to-the-Global-World.html>)

I also addressed a panel on the subject of the achievements of “Nostra Aetate, fifty years on “