



## Monthly Highlights

May/June 2014

### *International Interreligious Affairs*

#### **Munich**

In advance of the AJC ACCESS summit and Global Forum in Washington DC, I was in Munich for a few days at the beginning of the month for the meeting of the Board of World Religious Leaders of the Elijah Interfaith Institute see: [www.elijah.org](http://www.elijah.org)

#### **Washington**

At the ACCESS summit I addressed a session on Interreligious Diplomacy; and at the Global Forum I spoke on “the Francis factor” assessing the character of the new papacy. I moderated a plenary discussion that provided the audience with various voices from the world of Islam. See [http://www.ajc.org/site/c.7oJLSPwFfJSG/b.9130101/k.BBOE/AJC\\_Global\\_Forum\\_2014\\_Highlights.htm](http://www.ajc.org/site/c.7oJLSPwFfJSG/b.9130101/k.BBOE/AJC_Global_Forum_2014_Highlights.htm)

#### **Jerusalem**

A successful conference in anticipation of Pope Francis’ pilgrimage to the Holy Land was held by Search for Common Ground and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. I spoke on the history of the transformation of Israel-Vatican relations at the final plenary that was also addressed by the Latin Bishop of Jerusalem, William Shomali.



## Papal pilgrimage

Pope Francis' pilgrimage to Israel, Jordan and the PA followed the format of previous papal visits, except that it was much shorter – in particular, notably avoiding the Galilee altogether

The primary purpose of this pilgrimage was for Francis to meet with the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, celebrating the historic reconciliatory meeting fifty years ago between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. Bartholomew was accompanied by some one hundred American Greek business leaders and clergy from the Orthodox world. I chaired a luncheon that AJC hosted in honor of the Ecumenical Patriarch and his party, which was attended by the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Jewish religious and civic leaders from Israel and the Jewish world, as well as leaders of other faith communities.



I contributed to the preparation of educational materials for Israeli schools in advance of the Papal visit, describing Catholic-Jewish relations and the popes who were key in leading the historic transformation in Catholic teaching regarding Jews, Judaism and Israel. The booklet we issued as a joint publication of KAS and AJC containing the declarations of the Chief Rabbinate-Vatican Bilateral Commission (published in Hebrew and English) were disseminated to the audience at the event in Hechal Shlomo with the Pope and the Chief Rabbis, as well as the first ever Hebrew publication on rabbinic teaching regarding Christian-Jewish relations which AJC produced and circulated.

A papal visit is a state visit, and inevitable as in the past, there was a degree of political exploitation. However despite a few inevitable sour voices, the visit was widely acclaimed as a success.

In addition to participating in the meetings with Pope Francis with the Chief Rabbis and attending the event at the Israeli President's residence, I provided live commentaries on other parts of the visit on Israel national television and radio; and gave scores of media interviews and comments. Below are a few examples of these, the last of is a short op-ed that appeared in *The Forward* as a response to one or two negative comments on the visit.

PBS: [Pope Francis Middle East Trip](#) as well as the [extended related interview](#).



NPR: [Pope To Travel To Holy Land With Rabbi And Muslim Leader](#)

CBS News: [Interview with Adriana Diaz](#)



The Times of Israel: [Torn between competing 'claimants,' Pope faces uphill battle to spread peace on Holy Land visit](#)

AP report reprinted in over a dozen media outlets in North America, Europe, and around the world: <http://news.yahoo.com/popes-mideast-trip-test-diplomatic-skills-100908656.html>

La Stampa/Vatican Insider: [Francis has been given a unique charisma for peace and must not waste this opportunity](#)

The Jerusalem Post: [Pope maintained diplomatic balance during visit, religious leaders say](#)

The Forward: [The Point of the Pope's Visit](#)

Pursuant to this visit I was one of three rabbis from Israel invited to participate in the historic prayer meeting for Peace in the Holy Land scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup> in the Vatican, convened by Pope Francis with Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas; together with religious leaders/representatives from the three Abrahamic faiths primarily from the Holy Land, but also with participation of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p\\_fdxpwWKHQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_fdxpwWKHQ)

