

Monthly Highlights

September 2012

International Interreligious Affairs

Casablanca, Sept. 6-7

In preparation for the launch of the King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) due to take place in Vienna on November 26th, the Board of Directors convened in Casablanca at the request of the Saudi King who has a summer palace near the city where he spends his summer vacation. King Abdullah asked to meet with the Board in order to express his appreciation for their time and effort in developing and overseeing the Center which has been established at his initiative, but together with the governments of Austria and Spain.

Accordingly, the Board meeting was held in Casablanca, in the course of which we were hosted for dinner and a private meeting with the King and a number of his ministers and advisors, at the palace.



Mons. Khaled Akasheh, Vatican;
Dr. Hamid el Majid, Saudi Arabia;
Dr. Mohammed Sammak, Lebanon;
David Rosen; Metropolitan
Emmanuel; King Abdullah

The meeting received extensive coverage in the Saudi and wider Arab media:

<http://www.elaph.com/Web/news/2012/9/760200.html?entry=gulf>

<http://m.aawsat.com/content/1347054423414286500/aaa%20News%20and%20Politics>

I believe that this was the first time that a Saudi King had invited and received an Israeli rabbi. In addition to thanking us, King Abdullah spoke eloquently about what he described as “the common vision of the Torah, the Gospels and the Quran, to make the world a better place for all” and that this is the task he hopes we will pursue through the center. To my surprise, my colleagues, including the Muslims, had requested that I be the one to respond to the King on behalf of the group. In my words I expressed our appreciation to him for his initiative and his courage, not least of

all for the inclusion of an Israeli rabbi on the Board of management. I expressed our hopes that this initiative will advance the cause of religious freedom and human dignity in Saudi Arabia itself as well as globally; and also help to make religion what it should be , a source of healing from conflict and not fuel to exacerbate such.

Sarajevo, Sept. 9-11

From Morocco I travelled to Bosnia Herzegovina to participate in the annual interfaith meeting of the Community of Sant Egidio, the Catholic community that has continued Pope John Paul II's vision at Assisi and has held international interfaith meetings annually since, in a different country each year. This year on the twentieth anniversary of the terrible war with the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities invited Sant Egidio to hold its convocation in Sarajevo. In addition to all the moving aspects of this very symbolic demonstration of interfaith harmony, there was a special Jewish dimension to the event and not only due to the leading role of the President of the Jewish community and good friend of AJC, Ambassador Jacob Finci.

At the opening session, the Mufti of Bosnia Herzegovina, Dr. Mustafa Ceric presented the Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, Mr. Oded Wiener, with a facsimile of the famous Sarajevo Haggadah which had been saved twice from destruction by Muslims out of respect for the Jewish religion and its religious symbols. In presenting the Haggadah to the official representative of the Israeli religious establishment, the Mufti eloquently condemned all bigotry and violence and specifically Holocaust denial.



Mr Oded Wiener,
Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric

During the conference I gave a presentation on Jewish teaching on a panel on The Family. Also participating on that panel were Msgr. Vincenzo Paglia of the Sant Egidio community who is now the head of the pontifical council for the family; and the Orthodox Primate of Cyprus Chrysostomos III.



http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/2460/langID/en/text/577/Contribution_of_David_Rosen.html

The Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Dr. Mustafa Ceric, a longtime friend, is retiring from his position in a month or two and a book paying tribute to him has just been published which I had contributed to, addressing the relationship between Muslims and Jews. Accordingly I was invited by the Mufti to participate in a special lunch launching the book.

The Sant Egidio meetings conclude with parallel prayers for peace by the different religions in separate venues, from where they all join together in a parade through the streets to the tribune where the concluding event and ceremony take place.



Prof. Andrea Riccardi, Founder of Sant Egidio and Minister in the current Italian Government; Rabbi Isak Haleva, Chief Rabbi of Turkey; Dr. Mario Paliuzzi, President of the Community of Sant Egidio; David Rosen



http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/2460/langID/en/orator/260/David_Rosen.html

See media reports:-

<http://www.news.va/en/news/europebosnia-and-herzegovina-appeal-for-peace-from>

<http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/blogs/faith-in-action/posts/from-sarajevo-a-compelling-and-spiritual-call-for-peace>

It was a special privilege to lead prayers for the small local Jewish community and the guests who gathered at the beautiful synagogue in the city.

