

Monthly Highlights

October-November 2016

International Interreligious Affairs

Oct. 31-Nov.1, Rome

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences hosted a newly formed Ethics in Action Council to address the role of religion in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals, bringing together some thirty persons, global experts and academics in the relevant fields together with religious leaders and representatives of which I am honored to be one. The Council is led by the PAS President Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo who hosted the meeting, Professor Jeffery Sacks of Columbia (who is the special advisor to the UN SG on the SDGs) and Dr. William Vendley, SG of Religions for Peace. The Council is very much the product of Pope Francis' concerns/priorities and this inaugural meeting included both scientific assessments of the challenges for the SDGs and perspectives of religious leaders (from six religions) on the various themes (in particular, combatting poverty, trafficking, and the threat of climate change.)



(Front Row. R-L: Ayatollah Damad; H.E. Dr. Sammak; Rabbi David Rosen; H.E. Metropolitan Zizioulas; Rev. Kosho Niwano)

<http://religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au/2016/11/18/international-partnership-in-ethics-in-action-initiative-multireligious-collaboration-for-moral-solutions-to-global-challenges/>

Nov. 2, Auschwitz

I had to leave Rome before the close of the Ethics in Action Council meeting to fly to Krakow to join the delegation of the Israel Council of Heads of the Religious Communities on a four day visit to Poland culminating in a pilgrimage to Auschwitz for which I joined them and where I led prayers and moderated a dialogue session at the Catholic Center for Shoah education and reconciliation in Oswiecim, together with the center's leadership and Polish bishops.



http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3899002/Israeli-religious-leaders-condemn-extremism-Auschwitz.html?ito=email_share_article-bottom

<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4873801,00.html>

<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/we-repudiate-racism-fanaticism-and-extremism-the-council-of-religious-community-leaders-in-israel-at-the-memorial-1227.html>

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1219451/israeli-religious-leaders-condemn-extremism-auschwitz/>

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Religious-leaders-pledge-to-increase-understanding-among-groups-471605>

Nov. 3, Rome

I returned that night to Rome for a Papal audience the next day for the multireligious event celebrating the conclusion of the Year of Mercy hosted by the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue and KAICIID. The meeting with Pope Francis was followed by a multifaith conference that afternoon at the Gregorian Pontifical University where I gave a presentation on Mercy as a Vehicle for Peace and Reconciliation



<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/11/03/we-all-thirst-for-mercy-pope-tells-religious-leaders-at-the-vatican/>

<http://www.pcinterreligious.org/site.php?id=354>

Nov. 11-17, India

A first ever AJC interreligious mission to India was a tremendous success. The leaders of the mission were David Inlander, Chair of AJC's Commission for Interreligious Affairs and Ms. Ayesha Bulchandani . The program commenced sharing Shabbat with the Jewish community in Mumbai and continued in Delhi with meetings with the Israeli and American Ambassadors and an incredible tour at Akshardham, at the exquisite mandir of the Swaminarayan movement and its impressive Hindu cultural historical exhibit.



The group was uniquely honored to be hosted by H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Sarawsati at the amazing Dev Diwali celebrations in Varanasi on the banks of the Ganges before hundreds of thousands of pilgrims ; <https://www.facebook.com/events/1496134277079804/>





And two days later at a most impressive multifaith gathering in support of environmental protection at his ashram, Parmarth Niketan in Rishikesh, at which Rabbi Noam Marans (AJC's US Director of Interreligious Affairs) and I were among the speakers.



<https://www.gg2.net/news/india-news/East+meets+West+at+inter-faithgathering+in+Rishikesh/11074>

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10154688286837698&id=86246862697

Nov.28-30, Rome

The latest annual meeting of the bilateral commission of the Vatican and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, of which I am a member, took place in Rome on the theme of Promoting Peace in the face of Violence in the Name of Religion.



The concluding declaration which summarized the meeting included a joint Catholic-Jewish condemnation of attempts to deny the historic attachment of the Jewish People to its holiest site, the Temple Mount.

See: <http://en.lpi.org/2016/12/01/holy-sees-commission-for-religious-relations-with-the-jews-statement-of-the-last-bilateral-meeting-with-the-chief-rabbinate-of-israel/>