

Monthly Highlights

March-May, 2017

International Interreligious Affairs

March 16th

As a member of the Steering Committee of the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, I was invited with the other members of the committee, including the chief rabbis of Israel, the head of the supreme sharia courts of the PA, and the patriarchs and bishops of Jerusalem, to a meeting with President Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt.

Hosted by Consul General Donald Blome at the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, discussion focused on the role of religious leaders in promoting peace and combating violence and incitement. A statement was issued expressing the commitment of all present to these goals.



See: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/in-historic-move-trump-envoy-hosts-interfaith-meeting/>

April 20

A special event at the President's Residence took place on April 20, when President Rivlin was presented with the new TAU publication, *The Holy See, the Jewish People, and the State of Israel* – the first comprehensive Hebrew publication on the subject, including all the major Vatican documents since *Nostra Aetate* to which I had contributed a chapter.

I was honored to be the featured Jewish speaker at this event and the Catholic speaker was the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa.

The event was attended, inter alia, by the Papal Nuncio, the Custos, the Ambassador of Italy to Israel, Israel's Ambassador to the Holy See, members of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Commission for dialogue with the Holy See, as well as the authors/editors of the publication, Professors Dina Porat and Aviad Kleinberg and Dr. Karma Ben Yohanan of Tel Aviv University.



See <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=488549>

May 2nd

The large Catholic movement the Neocatechumenal Way, held its second ever gathering of Catholic and Jewish leaders from Israel and from around the world at its exquisite center Domus Galilaeae on the Mount of Beatitudes. More than a hundred Catholic leaders including four Cardinals and ten bishops, together with more than seventy rabbis from Israel and around the world participated.

The event commenced with a performance of the symphony The Suffering of the Innocents at which I was honored to speak.



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

May 3rd

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby paid an official visit to Israel during which I participated in a number of events on his itinerary including his meeting with the Chief Rabbis of Israel Rabbi David Lau and Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef at the offices of the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem. Also attending this meeting was the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, and the British Ambassador to Israel David Quarrey.



The next day at his residence in Ramat Gan, Ambassador Quarrey hosted a meeting of the Council of the Heads of Religious Communities in Israel (of which I am a member of its Steering Committee) with the Archbishop.



May 19-21/20

The World Economic Forum's Middle East summit took place at the Dead Sea in Jordan. I was invited as a guest of the Forum and participated in deliberations on the role of religion in civil society in the region.



See <https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-on-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-2017>

May 22/23

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Sigmar Gabriel hosted an international meeting in Berlin titled “Responsibility of Religions for Peace” attended by some one hundred spiritual and religious representatives from Europe, the Middle East, North and West Africa .The purpose of the conference was to engage religious leaders and communities in advancing social cohesion.

I was honored to be the opening speaker after the introductory presentation by the Minister. The other speakers at this opening session were the Grand Mufti of Bosnia Husein Kavazovic and Dr. Agnes Abuom of Kenya, President of the World Council of Churches.



See: <http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/germany-religious-leaders-urged-to-promote-peace/823811>

Recent media coverage included comments of mine regarding President Donald Trump’s Middle East visit and peace initiative, see:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/05/19/trump-trip-middle-east-vatican-offers-religious-opportunities-pitfalls/101884388/>