

RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT

Introduction and Background

Interfaith matters and religious issues have always had a special place in PASSIA's regular meeting program, and having realized the increasing need for better understanding between the various religious communities, in early 1998, PASSIA decided to establish a Religious Study Unit devoted to inter-religious dialogue and activities. The unit's work focuses on the role and significance of religion for different people and tries to promote understanding of, and respect for, others in order to address this religious diversity. Subjects discussed include the causes and consequences of problems within and between the established religious communities and activities that contribute to the elimination of misconceptions and stereotypes. The PASSIA Religious Studies Unit combines the following activities, some of which held 'off the record' to allow for the frankest exchange and debates possible:

- Workshops and seminars are encounters on a specific topic, involving either members of the three monotheistic religions or only representatives of the Christian or Muslim community. These workshops intended to help participants to find common ground and to allow different religions to work in harmony and on an equal footing.
- Participation in conferences, here and abroad, that deal with aspects of religion, belief and interfaith relations, or foster an open and free debate on religious issues and aspects as they concern the people in the Holy Land are also a fix part of PASSIA's Religious Studies Unit.
- In addition, meetings and brainstorming sessions are organized, involving members of PASSIA's Religious Studies Unit and local and foreign counterparts/project partners from the three monotheistic religions with the aim of fostering coordination of ongoing and future activities. Some of the dialogues sessions take place with representatives from one or more of the three monotheistic religions, which usually include a guest speaker presenting a certain topic related to inter- or intra-religious issues followed by a discussion.
- Documentation and publication of research studies or proceedings from meetings/seminars are also part of the Religious Studies Unit's activities.

For meetings related to **Jerusalem** please see also the chapter on Jerusalem.

For more details and related materials on activities under the Religious Studies Unit in 2015 and 2016 please refer to PASSIA's website (www.passia.org).

Meetings:

2015

2 July 2015, Legacy Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: **Muslim-Christian Iftar**

Participant(s): Dr. Salam Fayyad, Head, Future for Palestine, Ramallah; Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head, High Council of Waqf, Jerusalem; Dr. Ekrima Sabri, Head, Supreme Islamic Council, Jerusalem; Sheikh Fathi Mansour, Judge, Shari'a Appeal Court, Jerusalem; Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, Bursar, Custody of

the Holy Land; Mazen Sinokrot, Member, Awqaf Council, Jerusalem; Fouad Dakkak, Real Estate Consultant, Jerusalem; Hatem Abdel Qader, The Jerusalem File, former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; Eng. Mohammad Nusseibeh, Member, Awqaf Council; Dr. Hani Abdeen, Member, Awqaf Council; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Member, Awqaf Council; Adv. Bashir Al-Muhtaseb, Member, Awqaf Council; Rev. Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Head, The Islamic-Christian Commission in Support of Jerusalem & Holy Sites, former Head, Latin Patriarchate; Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, Head, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL); The Rt. Rev. Suhail Dawani, Anglican-Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, St. George's Cathedral; Archbishop Mar Swerios Melki Murad, Patriarchal Vicar of the Holy Land & Jordan, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, St. Mark's Church; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Abdel Qader Hussein, Faisal Hussein Foundation, Jerusalem; Adv. Sami Irshaid; Eng. Khaled Kaloti, Businessman; Dr. Basem Abu Asab, Medical Doctor; Dr. Nafeth Nubani, Medical Doctor, Jerusalem; Dr. Suleiman Ghosheh, Medical Doctor, Jerusalem; Dr. Arafat Hidmi, Chairman of Board of Trustees, Al-Makassed Hospital, Jerusalem; Fadi Hidmi, Director, Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce; Eng. Khalid Khatib, Palestinian Heritage Museum, Dar Al-Tifel Al-Arabi Organization, Jerusalem; Fouad Al-Hallaq, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, Ramallah; Omar Al-Alami, Businessman; Hani Dweik, Businessman; Omar Bitar, Businessman; Mahmoud Jarallah, Businessman; Mazen Sbitany, Businessman; Abed Abu Diab, Businessman; Khalil Assali, Journalist; Wael Idreis, Businessman; Nader Farrah, Businessman; Sami Al-Jundi, Businessman; Abu Adel Al-Joulani, Businessman; Wael Al-Saadi, Head, Price Waterhouse Coopers; Imad Farrah, IT Specialist, PASSIA; Antar Hijazi, PASSIA.



2016

4 January 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque 2014 (Israeli Atrocities)**

Participant(s): Dr. Wasfi Kilani, Director, Hashemite Fund for the Restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock; Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Secretary of Islamic Higher Committee in Jerusalem; Dr. Nazmi Al-Jubeh, Professor of History and Archaeology, Birzeit University.



9 February 2016, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: **Honoring Ceremony Lunch on the Occasion of the Retirement of Sheikh Abdul Azim Salhab from the Post of Acting Chief Justice and Head of the Jerusalem Islamic Court.**

Organizer(s): Acting Islamic Chief Justice Department.



15 March 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Islamic Waqf Council

Participant(s): Dr. Wasfi Kilani, Director, Hashemite Fund for the Restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, Amman; Sheikh Abdul Azim Salhab, Head, Waqf Council, Jerusalem; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Secretary of the Islamic Higher Committee in Jerusalem; Mazen Sinokrot, Member, Waqf Council, Jerusalem; Mohammad Abbadi, Ministry of Waqf, Amman; Ahmad Rwaidy, Representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Ramallah.



8 November 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Jerusalem & the Holy Places

Participant(s): Rev. Victor Makari, Bethlehem; Sewickley Presbyterian Church: Sylvia Dallas; Sandy Cooper; Joan Murdoch; Toby Orem Graham; Patricia Stover; Kevin long; Hayes Stover; Susan Wardrop; Ann Strong.



1 December 2016, PASSIA Jerusalem

Topic: Consultation on the Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head, High Council of Waqf, Jerusalem; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, General Secretary, The Islamic Higher Committee; Dr. Ahmad Fawaqa, Former Lecturer, Al-Quds University; Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Member, Awqaf Council; Fouad Hallak, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, Ramallah.



7 December 2016, PASSIA Jerusalem

Topic: Consultation on the Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Fr. Rafiq Khouri, Latin Patriarchate, Jerusalem; Rev. Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Head, The Islamic-Christian Commission in Support of Jerusalem & Holy Sites, former Latin Patriarch; Bishop Munib A. Younan, Head, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL); Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sevastia, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.



10 December 2016, Al-Quds University Jerusalem

Topic: Consultation on the Holy Places in Jerusalem

Organizer(s): Al-Quds University, Abu Dis.



Briefings:

2015

21 January 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Interfaith Dialogue in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Jonathan Merritt, Senior Columnist for Religion News Service, Contributing Writer for "The Week", New York; Mahmoud Jarallah, Businessman.



4 February 2015, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem

Topic: "Prayers for the Absent" for the Jordanian Martyr, Captain Muath Kasasbeh

Organizer(s): Islamic Waqf Directorate in Jerusalem.



7 February 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf; Ihab El-Khatib



24 February 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Dialogue with Neturei Karta

Participant(s): Ben Harun Baruch, Neturei Karta, Jerusalem.



7 March 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Research and Publishing Cooperation on "The Guide to Al-Aqsa Mosque"

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



28 March 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Carpet Donated to Al-Aqsa Mosque by HM King Abdullah II

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf.



7 April 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Ofer Zalberg, Senior Analyst, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group; Dr. Wilfried Graf, Co-Director, Kelman Institute.



18 April 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: A Conference on Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam El-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.

20 April 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Carpet Donated to Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office to the PA, Ramallah.



8 May 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Interfaith Dialogue

Participant(s): Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi, The Movement for Reform Judaism, London, UK; Alex Fenton, Public Affairs Advisor to Rabbi Janner-Klausner, The Movement for Reform Judaism, London, UK; David Parter, Archbishop of Canterbury's Director to Reconciliation, UK; Amy Taylor, Coventry Cathedral, UK.



25 May 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office to the PA, Ramallah.



11 June 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Ramadan and Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



15 July 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Christians in the Arab World and the forthcoming book by D. Williams on the subject.

Participant(s): Daniel Williams, Correspondent, The Washington Post.



15 July 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Jewish Holidays in September 2015

Participant(s): Ofer Zalzburg, Senior Analyst, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group.



25 July 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Dialogue on Political Islam in Palestine

Participant(s): Oliver McTernan, Director, Forward Thinking, UK.



28 July 2015, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem

Topic: Recent Events at Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Arab Members of the Knesset; Members of the Islamic Waqf Council.



8 August 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound Targeted

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



19 September 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Crisis at Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



10 October 2015, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem

Topic: Meeting at Al-Aqsa Mosque

**Participant(s): Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem & Palestine, Jerusalem;
Sheikh Abdul Azim Salhab, Head of Council for Waqf & Islamic Affairs, Jerusalem.**



21 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Spain and the Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Juan José Escobar Stemann, Consul General, Consulate General of Spain, Jerusalem.



28 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office to the PA, Ramallah.



31 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Haram Al-Sharif / Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



18 November 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Husamettin Arslan, Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of Turkey, Jerusalem.



3 December 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Haram Al-Sharif

Participant(s): Ofer Zalzburg, Senior Analyst, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group

12 December 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Islamic Waqf Council

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



2016

2 January 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Islamic Waqf Council

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.

31 March 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: The Islamic Waqf Council

Participant(s): Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office to the PA, Ramallah.



9 April 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Islamic Waqf Council

Participant(s): Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, General Director of the Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem.



7 June 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Ramadan in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Hazem Gheith, Political Officer, Egyptian Representative Office to the PA, Ramallah.



16 November 2016, Notre Dame, Jerusalem

Topic: Holy Places

Participant(s): Ben Harun Baruch, Neturei Karta, Jerusalem.



17 November 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Holy Places in Jerusalem

Participant(s): Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sevastia, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem



21 November 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, Head, High Council of Waqf, Jerusalem; Sheikh Jamil Hamami, General Secretary, The Islamic Higher Committee.



Media:

2015

14 January 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Christine Rinawi, Palestine TV, Jerusalem



3 March 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Tunnels Underneath Al-Aqsa Mosque

Participant(s): Christine Rinawi, Palestine TV, Jerusalem

18 April 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: Documentary for the 50th Anniversary of the Promulgation of Nostra Aetate

Participant(s): Sister Judith, the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue; Sister Monica, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

27 July 2015, Seven Arches Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound Targetted**

Participant(s): Christine Rinawi, Palestine TV, Jerusalem

27 July 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound Targetted**

Participant(s): Wahib Abu Wasel, Monte Carlo Doualiya

17 September 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant(s): Dalia Nammari, Journalist, Russia Today; Dana Abu Shamsiya, Journalist, Russia Today; Mohammad Osho, Cameraman, Russia Today.



19 September 2015, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Crisis at Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant(s): Khadija Benguenna, Al-Jazeera TV



5 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Events at Al-Aqsa Mosque and What Lies Ahead**

Participant(s): Bing Xuan, Correspondent, CCTV; Rajai Khateeb, Cameraman, CCTV, Jerusalem.



8 October 2015, TV Interview

Topic: **The Challenges Facing Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant(s): John Joe Regan, Field Producer, TRT World.

14 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Uprising 2015**

Participant(s): Naoufer Ramoul, Senior Presenter, News Center, Dubai Channels Network.

22 October 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **The Conflict over Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Recent Violence in Jerusalem**

Participant(s): Allyn Fisher-Ilan, The Jerusalem Report.

28 October 2015, TV Interview

Topic: **The Palestinians' Refusal to Change the Status Quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant(s): Sky News Arabia.

3 December 2015, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Haram Ash-Sharif**

Participant(s): KerenSetton, Journalist, XINHUA China TV; Danny Superstein, Cameraman, XINHUA China TV.



2016

1 January 2016, PASSIA, Jerusalem

Topic: **Al-Aqsa Mosque**

Participant(s): Special Coverage Program, Al-Kofiya TV.