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## Religious Studies Unit

### Introduction

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 are held 'off the record' to allow for the frankest exchange and debates possible:

**Coordinating Meetings and Briefings:** Meetings and brainstorming sessions 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.

**Dialogue Sessions and Roundtables:** Meetings 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.

**Conferences:** 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.

**Seminars and Workshops:** Encounters on a specific topic, involving either members of the three monotheistic religions or only representatives of the Christian or Muslim community. These seminars and workshops are intended to help participants to find common ground and to allow different religions to work in harmony and on an equal footing.

**Publication:** Documentation and publication of research studies or proceedings from meetings/seminars.

Activities of the Religious Studies Unit in 2003 were all attended by Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; they included the following (presented in the following order: date; place; topic; speaker; participants):

## Coordinating Meetings and Briefings

15 January 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Islamic Political Trends in Palestine**

Participant(s): Dr. Jung Sang Ryoul, Center for International Area Studies, Institute for the Middle Eastern Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies; Dr. Young-Chol Choe, Myong Ji University, South Korea

17 January 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Christian-Muslim Institutional Cooperation in East Jerusalem**

Participant(s): Alexa Smith, Journalist, Baptist Church, Atlanta.

15 May 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Islamic Movements in Palestine**

Participant(s): Reinhard Uhrig, Head of Cultural Affairs, Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany

25 May 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Benedictine Community of Hagia Maria Sion, Jerusalem - Service of Blessing at the Beit Benedict Academy for Peace**

Participant(s): Jeremy Milgrom, Rabbi, Jerusalem; Ibrahim Kandalaft, Lawyer, Jerusalem.

19 June 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Islamic Movements in Palestine After September 11**

Participant(s): David Thaler, Defense and Policy Analyst, RAND, Arlington, VA – USA

7 July 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **The Holy Places in Jerusalem**

Participant(s): David Sielaff, Associates for Scriptural Knowledge.

9 July 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **The Culture of Religious Dialogue**

Participant(s): Elias Amidon, Boulder Institute for Nature and the Human Spirit; Lilian Peters, Quakers, Jordan.

24 July 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **The Greek Orthodox Patriarchy of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Society**

Participant(s): Archimandrite Theodosius Atalah Hanna, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem

31 July 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **The Role of Religious Leaders in Crises**

*Participant(s):* Bawa Jain, Secretary General, The World Council of Religious Leaders, New York, US

30 September 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **The Islamic Movement in Palestine and the Road Map**

*Participant(s):* Reinhard Uhrig, Head of Cultural Affairs, Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ramallah

31 October 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Access to the Holy Places in Jerusalem**

*Participant(s):* Adnan Hussein, General Director, Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem; Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, Director of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

1 November 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Nordelbisches Zentrum für Welt Mission / The Northern Elbian Center for World Mission**

*Participant(s):* Hanna Lehming, Evangelische Akademie Nordelbien, Hamburg, Germany.

3 November 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Upcoming Visit of World Religious Leaders to the Region in December**

*Participant(s):* Mr. Bawa Jain, World Council for Religious Leaders, New York.

6 November 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Visit of the Dalai Lama**

*Participant(s):* Alona Vardi, Project Coordinator Environmental Justice, Shatil, Israel.

10 November 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Future of Muslim-Christian Dialogue**

*Participant(s):* Geir Valle, Norwegian Church Aid.

## *Dialogue Sessions and Roundtables*

6 March 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

### **Christian-Muslim Relations in the Context of the Occupation, Review of Conflict of Jerusalem**

*Participant(s):* Visit of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniers from the U.S., Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark: Jespro Olsen, Dan Aid Church; Rudolph Hinz, Pastor; Ken Taylor, Retired Pastor; Aaron Chan, Student; Justunne Grimheden, Priest; Joel Carillet, Undecided; Lynne Rigg, Retired Pastor; Hansruedi Guyer, Retired Pastor; Tord Strom, Retired Pastor and General Secretary; Hallstein J. Laupsa, Student; Vaon Fellaberg Theo, Retired; Rebecca Johnson, Program Coordinator.

22 May 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Visit of International Ecumenical Accompaniers - Introduction to the Work of PASSIA / Muslim-Christian Relations in Palestine / Conflict Over Jerusalem**

*Participant(s):* Rebecca Johnson, Program Coordinator, World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, Jerusalem; Elisabeth Lann, M.A. Student in Peace and Development Research, Jerusalem; Kent Jonsson, EAPPI, Sweden; Marja Caparsson, Journalist, Nicklas Hagberg, M.A. Student in Peace and Development Research, Jerusalem; Margrit Moser, Coordinator of Caritas, Canton of Solothurn, Switzerland.

19 June 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Visit of International Ecumenical Accompaniers - Interfaith Dialogue**

*Participant(s):* Rebecca Johnson, Program Coordinator, Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel; Matt Robson, EA, TV Cameraman; John Lynes, University Lecturer (Retired); Angela O' Donogue, Hospital Chaplain, United Kingdom.

3 July 2003. Al-Aqsa Compound, Jerusalem

**Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Issue of Foreign (Non-Muslim) Visits**

*Participant(s):* Sheikh Abdul Azim Salhab, Head, Council for Waqf and Islamic Affairs, Higher Islamic Council, Jerusalem; Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, Director of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem; Adnan Hussein, General Director of the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, Jerusalem; Nader Al-A'asser; Consul, Egyptian Embassy, Tel Aviv; Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA.

5 August 2003. PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Miriam in the New Testament & the Koran: Divergence & Common Grounds**

*Paper presented by:* Ahmad Ashqar, Researcher

*Participant(s):* Archimandrite Theodosios Atallah Hanna, Greek Orthodox Church, Jerusalem; Khalil Assali, VOA; Fadia Daibes, Consultant, Water Expert; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA; Elise Aghazarian, Project Coordinator, PASSIA; Sana Shannak, PASSIA; Mahmoud Abu Rameleh, PASSIA.

28 August 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**Challenges Facing the Holy Sites and Understanding Islam**

*Organized by:* Ecumenical Accompanies Program (EAs)

*Participant(s):* Jacob Raeder, Student; Sebastian Fornered, Theologian; Larry Fata, Teacher (History); Pereinar Sønnesyn, Retired Minister; Esther Nelson, Teacher; Don Christensen, Pastor, USA; Hilde Hylland Uhlving, Medical Student; Maren Rytter, Medical Student; Louise Dalum, Journalism Student; Arn Lou, Web Coordinator; Mariane Ruden, Teacher; Cecilia Arvidsson, Physiotherapist; Tadashi Mitsui, Clergy; Lena Ohlsson, Guidance Counselor; Klaus Engell-Nielsen, Theologian; Britta Samuelsson, Journalist-Social Work; Oystein Bru Frantzen, Music Teacher; Morten Schroder, Medical Student; Anna Ebbesen, Media Student.

20 November 2003, PASSIA, Jerusalem

**The Role of Religious Dialogue in the Current Crisis in Palestine**

*Participant(s):* William Pierre, Director, Middle East Region International Programs, American

Friends Service Committee, Quaker Organization; Geri Sicola, Associate General Secretary, Middle East Region International Programs, American Friends Service Committee, Quaker Organization.

## **PASSIA Forum**

13 December 2003, Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

### **Holiness & Holy Places-Discussion With The Delegation of The World Council of Religious Leaders**

*Participant(s):* Master Sheng Yen, Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, USA; Mohammed & Sa'eda Nusseibeh, Ad-Dar Hotel; Azzam Al-Khatib, Director, Jerusalem Islamic Waqf; Yukako Nimi-Arti; Swami Veda Bharati, Hindu Monk, The Meditation Center, USA; Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, Rabbi; Adnan Hussein, General Director of Jerusalem Islamic Waqf; Guo Yao Fa Shi Chang Ji Shi, Personal Attendant & English



Secretary to Master Sheng Yen; Mae Chee Sansanee, Founder and Director of Sathira Dhammasthan, Buddhist Leader, Thailand; Madhu Sawlaey, Regional Director, Asia Pacific, World Council of Religious Leaders; Janki Kripalani, Brahma Kumaris Tram, UK; Dayananda Saraswati, All India Movement for Seva, Inc., India; Usama Salman, Director, St. Vincent Association, Jerusalem; Hanlie Booysen, Deputy Head, South Africa Representative Office; Walid Shomaly, Executive Director, Palestinian Center for Research & Cultural Dialogue,





Bethlehem; Mohammed Hussein, Director, Al-Aqsa Mosque; Nader Al-Asar, Consul, Egyptian Embassy, Tel-Aviv; Azzam Abu As-Su'oud, Director of the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, Director, Chautauqua Institution, USA; Sister Joan Chittister, Executive Director, Benetvision, USA; Phra Thepsophon, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand; Lalit Kumar Bakashi, President, Golden Eagle Group Co. Ltd., Japan; Charles Mendies, India; Setsuko Nakanishi, Japan; Bawa Jain, Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders, USA; Fadia Daibes, Water Law Specialist; Suleiman Abu Dayyeh, Palestine Desk Fredreich Naumann Foundation, Jerusalem; Mahmoud Abu Rmeileh, Nick Kardahji, Sana' Shannak & Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, PASSIA.

## Conferences

**3-19 September 2003, YMCA, Jerusalem**

### **The Ecumenical Forum for Young Theologians**

Organized by: The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem; The East Jerusalem YMCA; The Anglican Diocese of Oxford.

Lecture by: Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi and Dr. Timothy Winter on 12 September 2003, Session: Three Faiths Challenged – Challenges to Islam.

**23 September 2003, Amman, Jordan**

### **The General Islamic Congress for Jerusalem**

Organized by: The Office of the General Islamic Congress, Amman, Jordan.

Participant(s): 50 scholars representing major organizations in the Muslim World.

**23-25 October 2003, London, United Kingdom**

### **Arab Western and Christian Muslim Relations**

Organized by: The Arab Working Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue.

## Seminars and Workshops

20 July 2003. PASSIA, Jerusalem

### Musa/Moses in the Three Monotheistic Faiths

Speakers: Rabbi David Rosen; Suhad Husseini Qleibo; Father Louis Hazboun



Participant(s): Douglas Dick, Presbyterian Church (USA); Rev. Sandra Olewine, United Methodist Lisaon, Jerusalem; Judeh Majaj, General Secretary, YMCA, East Jerusalem; Joel Crillet, Ecumenical Accompaniment Program, Acting Coordinator; Suhad Qleibo, Author; Adnan Abdulrazek, Arab Studies Society; Sami

Abu-Dayyeh, Net Tours; Rafeef Abdelrazek, IOCC – accountant; Fr. Dr. Louis Hazboun, Priest; Dr. Ali Qleibo, Professor.



## Publications

### \* **Musa/Moses in the Three Monotheistic Faiths**

by Rabbi David Rosen, *International Director of Inter-Religious Affairs, American-Jewish Committee, Jerusalem*

Fr. Dr. Louis Hazboun, *Lecturer at Mar Elias University, Galilee, and at Bethlehem University, Bethlehem*

Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, *Associate Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem*

December 2003  
(English, pp. 68)

Compilation of three papers by a Muslim, a Christian and a Jewish scholar on the topic of Moses. The papers were presented as part of the 2003 dialogue program of the Religious Studies Unit and were authored by Rabbi David Rosen, Father Louis Hazboun, and Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway.

