



PERIODICAL
NEWSLETTER

DICID

Doha International Center For Interfaith Dialogue ISSUE 5, WINTER SPRING 2011

8th Annual Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue

DICID Holds International Conference in Cairo

2nd Qatar Communities Round-Table Discussion

DICID Officials Visit America





Doha
International
Center for
Interfaith Dialogue

Dear Readers

Welcome to the 5th issue of the DICID newsletter. We are entering in the fourth year of our activities locally and internationally, promoting interreligious dialogue, mutual respect and understanding. In collaboration with other interfaith institutions in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, DICID has planted deep roots in the world's interfaith scene.

In this issue, you have the opportunity to read detailed information about the conference in Doha last October and also about a conference organized by the Center in Egypt, where selected group of academics and scholars participated in this great event. You can also read about the Expatriates second roundtable Discussion in Qatar and about the second promotional visit to the States in April. DICID also decided to yearly honor best personalities and institutions that support interfaith dialogue. Read in this issue those who were honored for 2010.

The second issue of the journal ADYAN will soon be published. The theme of this issue will be "Prayer and Worship". You can also see activities of the center in the following months, which were planned according to the annual DICID plan.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and do not forget to visit us on our newly designed official website and Facebook site. We invite you to post your tips, suggestions and criticisms, if there are any.

Hamdi Blekich
(Head of Public Relations)



Our Mission

We strive for constructive dialogue between followers of different faiths towards better understanding and harnessing of distinct religious principles and teachings to the benefit of all humanity, on the basis of mutual respect and acknowledgement of differences and through cooperation with related individuals and organizations.

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DICID

Tel: +974 4486 46 66 • +974 4486 55 54
Fax: +974 4486 32 22 • +974 4486 99 00
P.O. BOX: 19309 • Doha - QATAR
www.dicid.org

THE 8TH ANNUAL DOHA CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



DR. IBRAHIM SALEH AL-NAIMI



HE the Minister of Justice Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem opened the 8th Annual Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which was held between 19-21 October, 2010 at the Doha Sheraton Hotel.

The three-day conference, organized by Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), was held under the title **“Raising the New Generation with a foundation of values and tradition: Religious Perspectives”**.

The theme of the 8th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue **“Raising the New Generation with a foundation of values and tradition: Religious Perspectives”** has been chosen to highlight and deal with the fact that people nowadays are controlled and led by technology and science which negatively effects human relationships.

Dr. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi Chairman of Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue emphasized that preparations for the conference went according to plan, and stressed that the conference committee has been holding continuous meetings and discussions with the centre’s board members and the international advisory board in order to implement the plans that made this conference a success.

Dr. Al-Naimi added that DICID is in fact exercising its role and responsibility towards society, state and the region in organizing such a comprehensive event. DICID is continuing to be the conduit for interfaith dialogue due to the support provided by the Qatari government.

Dr. Al-Naimi said that the DICID is well prepared to organize this unique event, due to the organising team, which is supported by highly qualified staff from both academic and professional fields.

Addressing the conference, HE the Minister of Justice said that this annual event has become an oasis of understanding, tolerance and coexistence, thanks to the patronage of HH the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and the interest shown by the different religions representatives taking part in the conference.

The Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue has become a milestone in the contemporary world which extends bridges of cooperation between cultures, seeks to achieve greater understanding between cultures and encourages dialogue between religions to consolidate the concept of the brotherhood of mankind.

The participants stressed the necessity to face these challenges and overcome them for the benefit of humanity, noting that it cannot be done without a real solidarity between all religions.

The family is the first social institution and the essential foundation upon which community forms its people. It has a unique role in the social, political and religious development and it is the first source to satisfy the psychological needs of the individual.

Speaking about the role of the educational institutions in raising generations, the participants highlighted the significant role of schools in providing children with the social, moral and religious values and teaching them the values of tolerance, good manners and the respect for other beliefs, values and traditions.

The conference hosted more than 250 guests from more than 58 countries, representing the three major monotheistic faiths, Islam, Christianity and Judaism. A selected group of religious scholars, academics and researchers in this field met to discuss and establish common ground between religions and discussed problems related to this issue.

EIGHTH DOHA CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

DOHA, QATAR ❖ October 19-21, 2010

DECLARATION

Over 220 participants from 58 countries - Jews, Christians and Muslims - met for the Eighth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. They acknowledged the generous hospitality of HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani and of the State and people of Qatar, and paid tribute to the organizers of the conference, the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Qatar University. The Minister of Justice, HE Mr. Hassan Bin Abdulla Al Ghanim, at the opening session of the conference welcomed the participants and spoke for the need to make and to follow up concrete recommendations on the theme of the conference "Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives."

The Conference addressed three main themes: the role of the family, the role of schools and media, and the role of places of worship.

1. The Family: the Heart of Raising and Sustaining the Next Generation

Families have a special responsibility and opportunity for an education which will encourage tolerance and respect for neighbors and strangers. While the family can be a great blessing, concern was expressed about the vulnerability of many children who lack family support. There is a great need for children to look beyond their own needs and to replace selfish competition with compassion for others. Children are idealists by nature and are repelled by violence –whether domestic or political.

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY AS A FUNDAMENTAL UNIT IN SOCIETY AND AS THE PLACE WHERE CHILDREN FIRST LEARN TO PRACTICE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION.

2. The Role of Educational, Social and Media Institutions

Schools, social institutions and the media can play a vital role in preparing young people for local and global responsibilities. Any form of discrimination or prejudice must be challenged. All three faith communities, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, have experiences of being victimized or ridiculed, it is therefore very important that ignorance be overcome and that differences be respected. Educational and media institutions should allow young people to search for truth and to make their own choices. Together with the great technological advances in the field of media comes great opportunity for the dissemination of values, as well as the great danger of the misuse of media for the degradation of the lives of young people.

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEDIA TO DEVELOP CURRICULA, SOCIAL PROJECTS AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS WHICH PROMOTE SENSITIVITY TO OTHER RELIGIONS AND CULTURES AND THE RESPECT OF DIFFERENCES.

3. Places of Worship: Supporting and Influencing the Next Generation

As well as the importance of the family, of schools, social institutions and the media, it was highlighted that places of worship can provide many good influences in the upbringing of children and young people. However, it was also recognized that places of worship might be misused to provoke exclusivism and enmity. Group discussions addressed issues such as: "Religious Upbringing and Contemporary Challenges in a Globalized Era", "How to Restore the Active Role of Worship for the Next Generation", and "The Role of Worship in Implanting Religious Principles".

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE PLACES OF WORSHIP TO PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY, FOR IMPLEMENTING VALUES OF COMPASSION AND COOPERATION.

The concluding session was enriched by the contribution of a group of students from Qatar and the Netherlands on the theme "A Youth Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue and the Role of Religion in Raising Generations". This contribution by young people fulfilled a wish expressed made at many points during the conference to listen to the experiences, both positive and negative, of young people who will themselves take responsibility to build a world with more justice and peace.

DICID Holds International Conference in Cairo October-November, 2010



In collaboration with The Cultural Studies and Intercultural Dialogue Center (CSIDC), Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences (FEPS), Cairo University, the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (henceforth 'DICID') held an international conference titled ***“Women’s Role in Cultural and Intercultural Dialogue: Presence and Effectiveness”***. The conference was held in FEPS on October 31 and November 1, 2010 with invitations extended to participants from eight countries; Palestine, Italy, England, Lebanon, UAE, Morocco, Qatar and Egypt.

The conference aimed at highlighting and appreciating women’s role in intercultural, cultural and interfaith dialogue. It also aimed at discussing women’s role from an Islamic perspective, Muslim women’s role in dialogue currently conducted in Western countries, and means to be adopted by such women to face up to acts of discrimination against Muslim women worldwide. Other topics covered by the conference included women-led cultural dialogue from an Islamic point of view.

In the opening session **Dr. Aliah Al-Mahdi**, Dean, FEPS, Cairo University, delivered a speech on women’s role in Eastern and Arab societies, their role in poverty fighting and how to address violence against women. Al-Mahdi announced that the conference is but a start to investigate women’s role in society, adding that women’s role in Arab societies proves to be a confused image to many.



Dr. Yousuf Siddiqi, a DICID director, delivered a speech to expound on the role assumed by Qatari women in Qatar, headed by H.H. Sheikha Muzah bint Naser, the First Lady of Qatar. He briefed participants on Her Highness's leading role that proved outstandingly helpful in Qatari women's progress. Her Highness's constant efforts and women, family and generally society-based projects and achievements speak volumes. In her words during the opening session, CSIDC-affiliated Dr. Bakinam Al-Sharqawi hailed DICID support to conference organization and mutual cooperation, stressing that the conference offers a great opportunity for intercultural dialogue through various topics discussed therein particularly as women are key partners in such dialogue. She went on to announce that the 2-day conference would discuss 10 research papers of different disciplines from eight countries, i.e., Egypt, UAE, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Palestine, Italy and England.

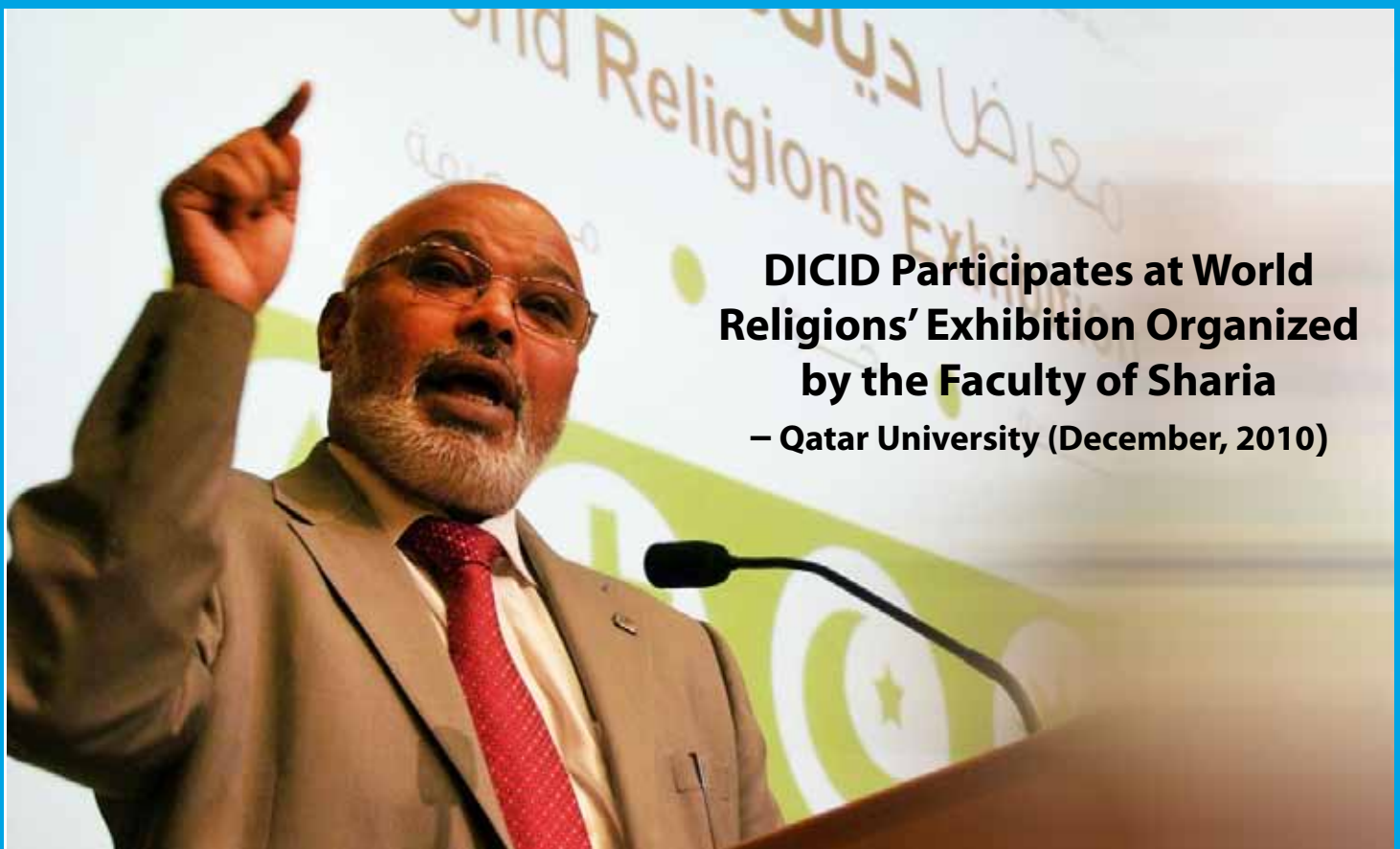
In turn, the second session hosted a speech by **Dr. Nadiah Mustafa**, Chairperson of the Political Sciences Dept., FEPS, where women's role in cultural and intercultural dialogue was highlighted as being a foreign policy leverage. Several discussions and debates on women's role ensued.

Dr. Sa'id Hareb from the UAE talked about the Islamic perspective on women, saying that equality is a key principle in Islam since man and woman are equal. The first democracy ever, according to him, was woman-led i.e. by Balqis (Queen of Sheba), while the first dictatorship ever was man-led i.e. by Pharaoh. He also warned against a backward view of women as being mere tools for commodity and image-promotion!

Other discussions in the conference included women's role in intercultural dialogue from an Islamic perspective, Islamic feminism, intercultural dialogue, and psychological and social dimensions of such dialogue under the umbrella of the three God-given Faiths. Participants addressed views of Muslim and Christian clergies on women issues in their interfaith dialogue as well as Western female converts' (to Islam) role in intercultural dialogue. A comparative approach on women's position and role in religious space was visited by participants, being a topic for interfaith dialogue. Other topics of discussion included women-based issues in interfaith dialogue and women's role in resistance in Palestine. Attendees also touched upon women's role in alternative globalization forums and cultural alliances.

The conference wrapped up proceedings with a closing session of two lectures: the first was about women, cinema and interfaith dialogue, while the second was about women and resistance in Palestine. A seminar titled '**Women and Future of the World**' was part of the proceedings of the conference.

Much to organizers' surprise and in a clear indication of success, the conference received high interest in terms of participation and attendance levels especially by Egyptian and Qatari media. All participants stressed the importance of sustaining such conferences, following up recommendations and completing related actions in the future.



DICID Participates at World Religions' Exhibition Organized by the Faculty of Sharia – Qatar University (December, 2010)

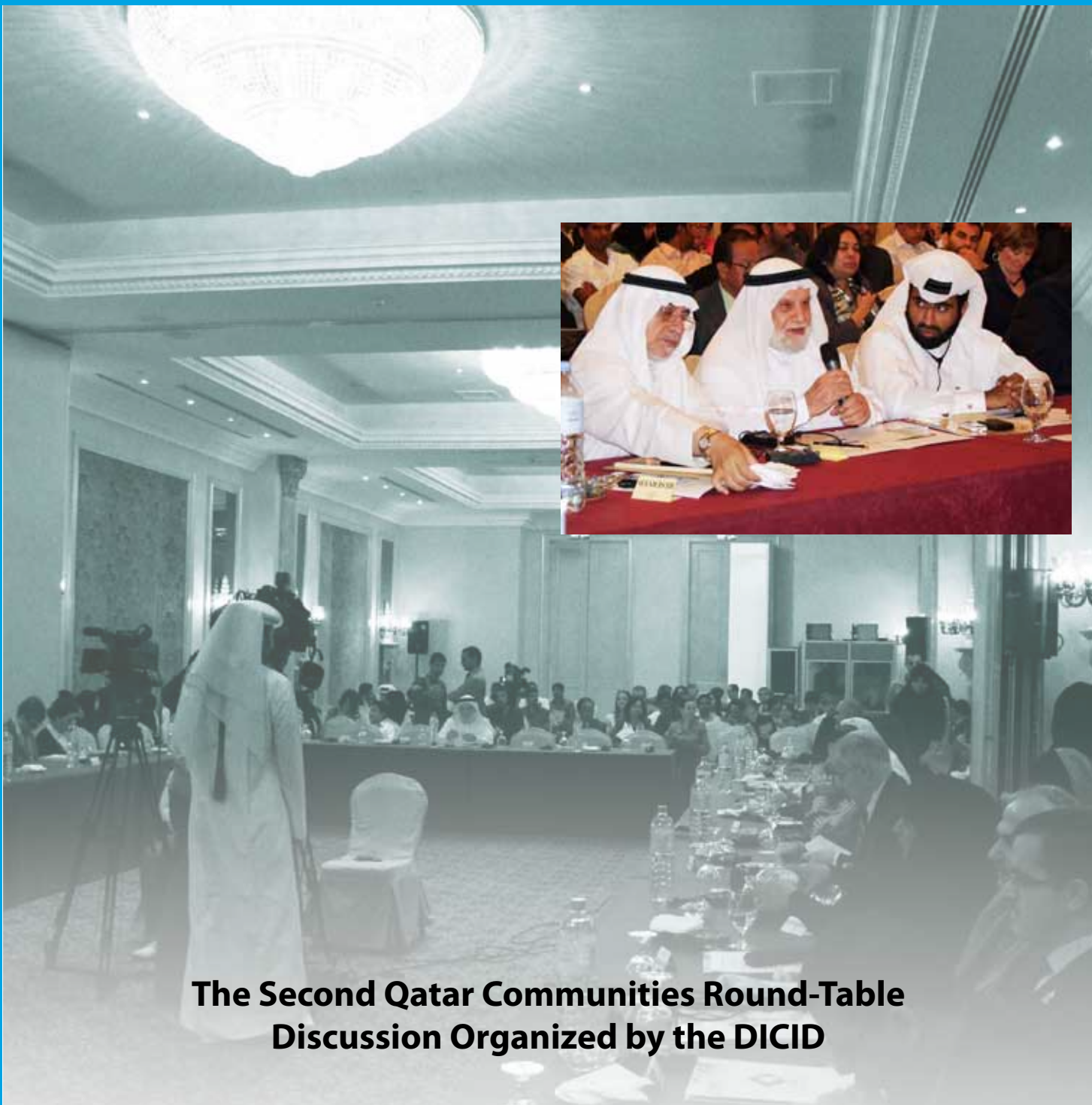
The faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies organized an exhibition, presenting major world religions. Dean of the faculty, a number of Christian clergy and many others interested in comparative religions, including a great number of faculty members and university students attended this exhibition.

Dr. Aisha Al-Mannai, Dean of the Faculty of Sharia stressed that organizing of this exhibition comes within the framework of practical training for the students of comparative religions in Department of Al-Dawa. It aims to confirm the College's interest in achieving one of the Islamic constants, which is acquaintance between nations. So the followers of different religions are invited to get acquainted and deal kindly with each other and which is only possible through knowledge of each nation of other nations.

Dr. Aisha also praised the efforts of the professors of the course and the students of Al-Dawa Department who have had the greatest impact in the output of this monumental work. She thanked the audience for being interested in this exhibition, confirming that the faculty always seeks the practical aspects more than being interested in theoretical ones.

The exhibition included visual presentations of the monuments associated with religions that have been talked about, which are Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The shows included moral aspects, origins and method of their views about creation and the Creator, life and death, and holidays. The exhibition also included debates between students, and it included inputs and comments of a number of college professors including short speeches of Dr. Deen Muhammad and Dr. Hamid Al-Marwani.





The Second Qatar Communities Round-Table Discussion Organized by the DICID

The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue organized and hosted in collaboration with the Qatar Debates Center, Christian Church Steering Committee and Friends Cultural Center the second round-table discussion on the topic ***“The Role of Education in strengthening ties among Communities in Qatar”***. The event was held March 19 in Doha, at the Millennium Hotel.

Prominent members of Doha’s civil society and Academics spoke at this event. Some of the key themes that were discussed included religious values in curriculum, inter-community understanding promoted by schools and religious views on education’s role in building societies.

Dr. Ibrahim Al Naimi welcomed the participants, speakers and chairs to the second roundtable discussion on “The Role of Education in Strengthening ties among Communities in Qatar”. Father Bill Schwartz stressed the importance of learning about different religions as a base to understand each other and co-exist peacefully. “Each one of us should be willing to learn about the other and have the due respect of his values and views”, Father Schwartz said, “Schools should be supported by parents, mosques, churches, and the community at large in order to carry its role properly in educating children good values”.



Mr. Saeed Muhammad argued for education to become a tool that may strengthen ties between different communities. He raised the importance of compassion in interaction between communities that may lead to a feeling of empathy. If we can feel pain of the other than we can relate to others better.

These preliminary speeches were followed by a student debate organised by Qatar Debate Center in which the proposition argued for **“Religious tolerance Education should be made mandatory in schools”**. The opposition argued that tolerance should be substituted by mutual respect and understanding. They also demonstrated through examples how difficult it would be for young children to understand the concepts on which different religious traditions are built on. The debate focused on the comparison between family and schools in influencing the personality development of young children.

Panelists argued that children should be instructed indirectly in values pertaining to religious values. They argued that Islamic education is education of values. They further stressed the importance of teachers and administrators as role models whose example is emulated by their students. Religious values remain constant since their source is not society but the Divine that is unchanging. Truth, non-violence and tolerance are common to all religions and should be part of school curriculum. However, religious education which focuses on the difference between different religions can be delayed for a later age. The notion of development for understanding early childhood psychology was highlighted. It was mentioned that Islamic identity is by nature open.

A lecturer at Qatar University, Dr. Qhadnana Al-Binali, emphasized that the curriculum at school should focus on teaching children the general norms and values like mutual respect, honesty, forgiveness. “The curriculum should not address complex issues like concept of religious tolerance. The children tend to learn by example, it is the teacher, the parents and the community who should practice these concepts and then children will definitely follow suit”, said Dr. Al-Binali.

The speakers encouraged creating bridges between different cultures based on this open Islamic identity. We must recognize the inherent nobility in all humans so that we can become humble participants of our communities. Education seeks the transformation of personality so that she can be dignified to every person and bring us closer to our Creator. Teachers must treat every student as they would treat their own child. If we change attitude rather than aptitude, we can reach high altitudes, said one speaker. Although Qatar is an Islamic state however we interact with each other on the basis of common humanity and civility which does not contradict religious values.

The forum was attended by a large number of experts, students, and school teachers. The debate focused mainly whether it would be proper to introduce concepts of religious tolerance at the early age of schooling or at a later stage. The debaters differed widely on the role of teachers in instilling values and changing attitudes of children at school.

DICID officials visit America

April, 2011



The DICID team visited the United States of America between April 2-14, 2011 to promote the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and its activities to national interfaith organizations in North America. The DICID group included Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, Dr. Khaled Al-Khater and Dr. Hamed Al-Marwani. The visit was made in collaboration with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) to the cities of Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington. Another goal of the trip was to get a comprehensive understanding of methods to collaborate with interfaith partners for the common good, in order to build peace at home and abroad and to provide much-needed services to the communities in which they live.

The visit began with a discussion with Dr. Scott Alexander, Director of the Catholic-Muslim Studies Program, and other faculty, about the Roman Catholic Church's interfaith dialogue efforts in the United States. Catholic Theological Union (CTU) is the largest Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry in the United States.

DICID officials visited the Inner-City Muslim Action Network's projects and facilities, and met with Dr. Rami Nashashibi. The Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) is a community-based nonprofit organization that works for social justice. Next, they met with Members of the SouthWest InterFaith Team (SWIFT) and Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). The SouthWest InterFaith Team (SWIFT) provides a forum for Christian, Muslim and Jewish people in the area to educate, interact with and learn from each other. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) is an international organization that is considered the organized rabbinate of Reform Judaism. There was a discussion about how and why interreligious, grassroots efforts do and do not work. This was followed by a visit to a Reform Jewish synagogue where they learnt about the Reform Jewish movement, and discussed the Jewish community's involvement in interfaith work.

Next, the DICID officials attended a Roundtable with Bishop Mark Hanson, Bishop Donald McCoid and Dr. Michael Trice from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and with Faculty at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago which is a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This was followed by a meeting with the Executive Members of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metro Chicago (CRLMC) and with the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC). Next, they met with Dr. Eboo Patel and Staff from the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) which creates relationships based on mutual respect and religious pluralism across the world by inspiring, networking, and resourcing young people, who are the leaders of this movement.

DICID officials had a roundtable with Faculty at Claremont School of Theology followed by Lunch with its President, Jerry Campbell. They discussed with the faculty about Claremont's new "University Project". Claremont School of Theology is an ecumenical and interreligious institution founded in the United Methodist tradition that will become the first institution of its kind to train not only Christian, but also Muslim and Jewish clergy. They had a roundtable with Leaders of the South Coast Interfaith Council (SCIC) where they discussed about regional interfaith projects with a focus on SCIC's programs in Southern California.

This was followed by a tour of the UMMA Community Clinic and a meeting with Dr. Yasser Aman, president of the Clinic, which is the most recognized Muslim free clinic in the country. Under the leadership of the Muslim community in Southern California, UMMA seeks to improve access to health care and the health status of a multi-ethnic, economically disadvantaged community.

The DICID team prayed Friday Prayer at the Islamic Center of Southern California followed by lunch with the Islamic Center leadership and students visiting from Loyola Marymount University, a local Catholic liberal arts institution. This was followed by reception with the Leaders of Muslim organizations in Southern California. Discussion was hosted by Dr. Maher Hathout of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, Shakeel Syed of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, and Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi of The Fiqh Council of North America.

There was a roundtable with Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord and Other Leaders of the Christian-Muslim Consultative Group of Southern California (CMCG) where their local interreligious collaborations and experiences were discussed, especially their "Standing Together" project which develops mutual study guides on Christianity and Islam. This was followed by a visit to Saddleback community who have been on a "PEACE team" to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Native American communities.

DICID team attended a Sunday Morning Service at Saddleback Church and met with Pastor Rick Warren to discuss about his interreligious service to those in need, particularly in Rwanda, Burundi, and other countries in Africa. This was followed by a roundtable at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) where they discussed with Rabbi Dr. Reuven Firestone, Professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam, and other faculty about Muslim-Jewish relations in academic settings.

The DICID team finally participated in the U.S.-Islamic World Forum at the Brookings Institution on the topic of "Inside the Middle East: Security, Political and Social Dynamics".



DICID Honors 2010 Interfaith Supporters and Activists ❖ January 2011



Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue held a ceremony to honor the most outstanding supporters selected by a special committee from prominent persons and institutions in Qatar those who participated in DICID Programs and activities for the year 2010 at Hotel Ritz-Carlton January 25 .The ceremony was attended by a large number of academic, diplomatic and media dignitaries.

On this occasion, Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi, Chairman of Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue Expressed his thanks to the attendees for the honor to attend this ceremony.

He praised the personalities for their active efforts for enriching the dialogue between the followers of different religions and highlighting Qatar in interfaith field. Prof. Al-Naimi also praised the main supporters of DICID since its opening, emphasizing on Permanent Committee for Organizing Conference, led by HE Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Rumaihi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences, University of Qatar and its president Dr. Sheikha Abdullah Al-Misnad, Mr. Ghanim Bin Sa'ad Al-Sa'ad, Chairman of Barwa Company, Mr. Jabir Al-Harami, Editor in Chief of Al-Sharq newspaper, and Prof. Patrick Laude from Georgetown University, editor in chief of ADYAN Journal which is issued by DICID.

Prof. Al-Naimi stressed the role played by the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences which was also reason for the success of DICID as well as Barwa's support for DICID's youth trip to Canada that aimed cultural and educational awareness. He also recognized the role of Faculty of Sharia in Qatar University and its dean Prof. Aysha Al-Mannai and faculty's professors through their participation in various conferences and symposiums. He also expressed his gratitude for the keen support from Qatari media represented by Al-Sharq Newspaper through their publications, articles and unremitting follow up of DICID's ongoing activities. He also thanked Dr. Patrick Laude, who graciously has undertaken as editor in chief of DICID Journal "Adyan-Religions" which deals with major interfaith issues both in English and Arabic languages.

Dr. Al-Naimi appealed and called upon Qatari companies, institutions and social figures for financial and moral support in interfaith activities that will assist in achieving its noble goals.

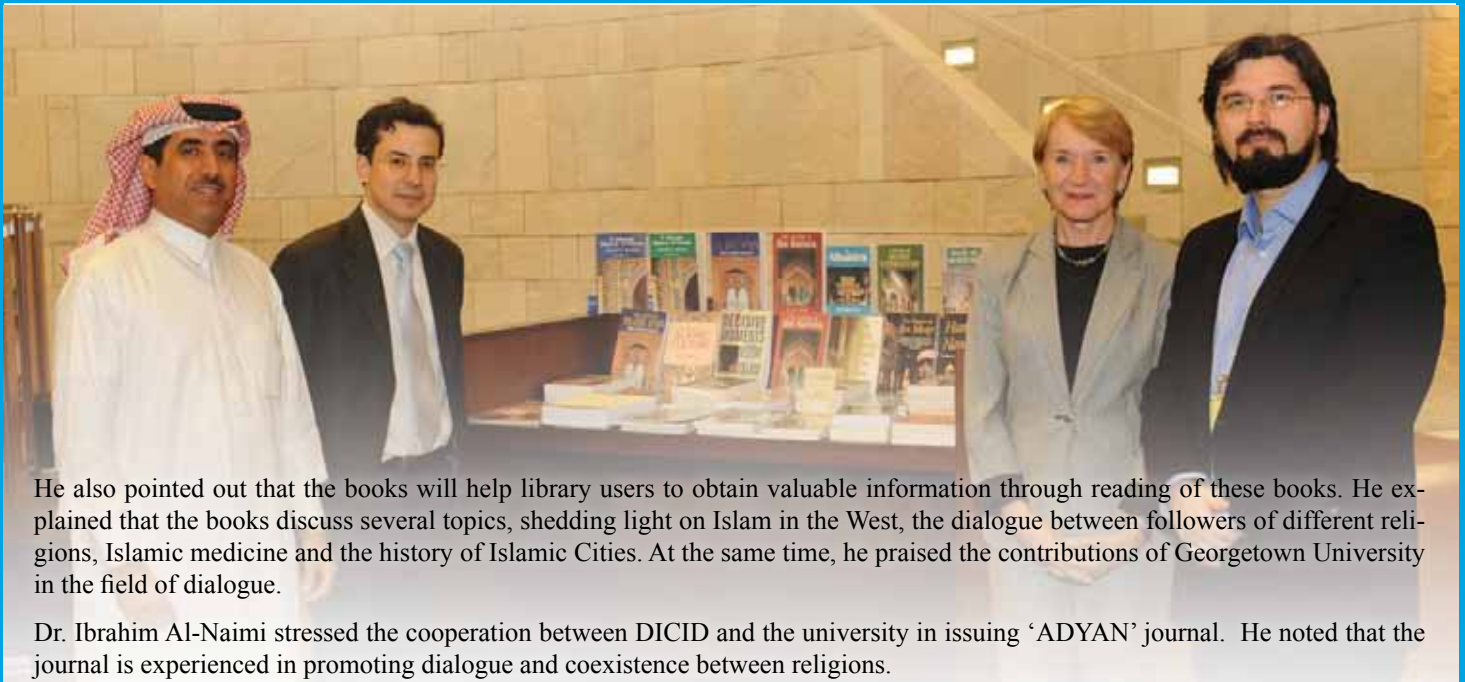
Appreciation Mementos 2010 were distributed at the conclusion of the Ceremony to the guests.

DICID Donates Books to the Georgetown University Library

In the framework of cooperation between the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the Georgetown University, DICID has donated a collection of books to the university. The collection was delivered by Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, Chairman of Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and received by Mrs. Friede Wiebe, director of the library, in the presence of Dr. Mark Farha, visiting assistant professor of the university, and a number of the officials from the DICID and the Georgetown University.

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, confirmed that donating this collection to the Georgetown University will contribute in enhancing the library with a set of rare and valuable books. He pointed out that presenting the books to the university comes within the framework of the existing cooperation between the DICID and the university.





He also pointed out that the books will help library users to obtain valuable information through reading of these books. He explained that the books discuss several topics, shedding light on Islam in the West, the dialogue between followers of different religions, Islamic medicine and the history of Islamic Cities. At the same time, he praised the contributions of Georgetown University in the field of dialogue.

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi stressed the cooperation between DICID and the university in issuing 'ADYAN' journal. He noted that the journal is experienced in promoting dialogue and coexistence between religions.

He also clarified that the move will open the door for further cooperation between the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the University of Georgetown in order to promote dialogue and encouraging it in the Qatari society.

For her part, Mrs. Friede Wiebe, director of the library, praised the decision taken by the Centre for Interfaith Dialogue. She noted that this was the result of existing cooperation between the Centre and the University through the various activities of the institutions.

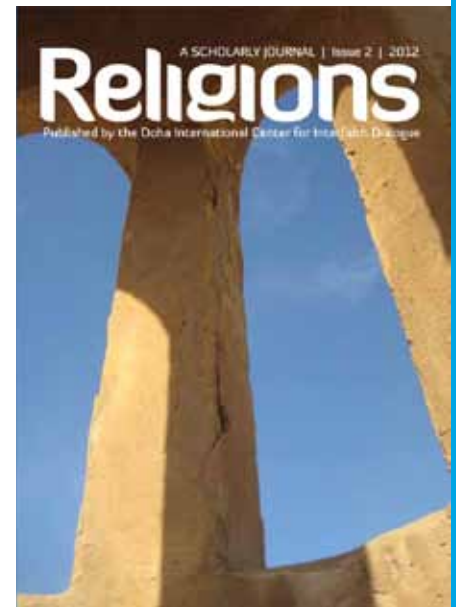
The Forthcoming Issue of RELIGIONS - Prayer and Worship

The editorial team is busy in preparing the third issue of Adyan focusing on the theme of PRAYER and WORSHIP. The issue is expected to be published in September 2011. We have invited academic contributors from universities around the world to write for this new issue. There will be an interview with Bishop Khodr appearing in both Arabic and English. We also expect that the articles appearing in the issue will help shed light on how different religions approach prayer and discuss it in their narratives. We are hoping to have several articles in Arabic as well so that our Arabic readers can benefit as well from our journal.

It is widely recognized in all religious worlds that nothing is more important than prayer, since prayer involves a direct relationship between the human and the Divine. Nothing can be deemed as spiritually necessary as prayer, in all its forms, from the most outward to the innermost, since among all possible actions none engages as direct a communication with the Divine Reality. No aspect of life distinguishes religion more clearly from any other human endeavor or ways of being as prayer, simply because it is, among all human acts, the only one that uncompromisingly presupposes and affirms transcendence, while works of charity, service, learning, and others do not necessarily do so.

In monotheistic traditions, prayer defines the essence of the human condition because man was created to worship God. Christian teachings tell us that mankind was created "to know, love, and serve God," and how could this be achieved better than through prayer, which is both a gift of oneself to God in service and love, and a knowledge of his Reality through and in this gift? That prayer may be considered as a mode of knowledge may come as a surprise to many of us today who have been conditioned to limit knowledge to matters of the mind, thereby ignoring the deep connection of prayer with knowledge by assimilation and identification. We may also tend to forget that prayer is ultimately service—a point that is often overlooked by a world engrossed with outer actions—because the best way to serve God is to give oneself to Him through prayer, and to discover, as a result of this gift, the specific modes in which we may best become of service to Him and to our fellow humans.

It should therefore be evident that there is no spiritual tradition that does not place a strong emphasis on prayer as a central connection between the human and the Divine. This holds true whether the forms of this connection may derive from revelation and tradition or be the spontaneous expressions of our personal needs, whether they be individual or congregational, silent or celebratory. The essays included in this issue explore the various dimensions and facets of this most central aspect of religions that is prayer.



Patrick Laude, Editor-in-Chief

The Importance of Conversation for Healthy Interfaith Relations

Adeel Khan

In my seven year stay in Cambridge University while I was completing my PhD there I was involved in forums for dialogue between different disciplines between the humanities and social sciences. The lessons learnt from that experience were that people become comfortable in their own terminologies and concepts that help them move the debate forward in their own disciplines. While these same concepts and terminologies become hurdles for outsiders to access these debates. It was learnt that conversation across people from different disciplines over similar thematic interests helps to translate the boundary making concepts into simpler terms. When researchers would be forced to communicate with researchers from outside their discipline they would attempt to communicate their research in language that would be understandable to others.



These lessons can also be applied to theologians from different religious traditions. By being forced to communicate their boundary-making concepts that are so integral to their group identity theologians would be forced to simplify their religious categories so that theologians from other religions can understand them. Command over language of communication and its nuances are essential for making this communication fruitful. Language is such an essential equalizer while also boundary maker. Reflecting on these aspects of language will help those involved in dialogue to reach fruitful results. After all if understanding is reached then the other becomes less distant. The aim should not however be radical equalization. Rather, the aim of such communication should be to understand religious traditions in the context of their own concepts, vocabularies and the historical development of categories used by the practitioners of the religious tradition.

The importance of conversation can be recognized only after it takes place. The way researchers of different disciplines became more aware of the debates in disciplines other than their own, similarly theologians may benefit much from learning about the historical development of conversations in other religious traditions. In today's interconnected world this should be essential knowledge for a practicing theologian so that she is able to communicate an empathic understanding of other religions in her own religions categories to her congregation. There is hope that recognizing the importance of conversation can help us achieve a world with better understanding of others and avoid historically established prejudice.

As in the case of interdisciplinary experience where centers for interdisciplinary research played an important role in hosting interdisciplinary conversation, so in the case of interfaith dialogue there are needed centers of interfaith activity that can host such interfaith conversations. DICID can play such an important and necessary role in today's world and help reduce prejudice that people hold about each other's religions. This work has to involve theologians as well as ordinary believers. Though the impact of a changed attitude of a theologian can have much deeper impact on society compared to changed attitude of an ordinary believer.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

First Pre-Forum of Civil Society of the Alliance of Civilizations
3 – 4 May 2011
Doha - Qatar

**International Conference
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Al-Qunaitira - Morocco

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Conference: Islam and Economics – Importance of Moral Values in the Banking – Social Responsibility
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