

PERIODICAL NEWSLETTER **DICID**

Doha International Center For Interfaith Dialogue ISSUE 3, WINTER 2010



“NOT SLOWING DOWN”



“...not slowing down...”

The annual interfaith conference in October 2009 brought the DICID calendar to a tremendous yearend finish. And we are not even slowing down. The conference's success has given us greater resolve to become more active in Qatar and abroad.

As expected, the year 2010 ushered in new challenges for all of us and for interfaith dialogue. For one, the new issue of the 'ADYAN' journal, is packed with for and projected participation at various global interfaith conferences. Then there is the special focus on the youth: organized youth trips are in the pipeline to afford youngsters cultural and scientific experience of other countries, increase their appreciation of religious dialogue and peaceful coexistence among nations, and instill in them the confidence in and the independence to utilize their identity through faith, ethics and the spirit of cultural dialogue among different religions, thus building bridges of cooperation and understanding.

And to succeed in all these, we certainly need your full moral support. An unofficial poll, which was created by our center, shows that approximately 80% of the citizens and residents in Qatar support the idea of dialogue, so we truly hope that you are one of them.

Hamdi Blekich
Head of Public Relations
DICID



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.

Board of Directors:

Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi - (Chairman)
Prof. Yousef Mahmoud Al-Siddiqi - (Member)
Dr. Khalid Nasser Al-Khater - (Member)
Dr. Hassan Abdelraheem Al-Sayyed - (Member)
Dr. Hamed Abdulaziz Al-Marwani - (Member)

Editorial Board:

Hamdi Blekich (Editor)
Ahmad Al-Shahed (Arabic Section)
Judith Britten (English Section)

The International Advisory Board:

Prof. Aisha Yousef Al-Mannai - Qatar
Dr. Dean Mohamed Saheb - Sri Lanka
Dr. Johan Taylor - Switzerland
Rabbi Rolando Matalon - USA
Father Vitorio Ianari - Italy
Bishop George Saleeba - Lebanon

DICID

Tel: +974 486 46 66 • +974 486 55 54
Fax: +974 486 32 22 • +974 486 99 00
P.O. BOX: 19309 • Doha - QATAR
www.dicid.org

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

2nd Time around at the Doha Book Fair

DICID's pavilion was packed with books about Islamic Civilization, expositions about the culture of dialogue, magnificent illustrations of architectural masterpieces and historic monuments around the region as well as of Europe. For the second time running, DICID actively participated in the 20th BOOK FAIR in Qatar organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage, from December 31, 2009 through to January 9th, 2010. It was inaugurated by Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari.



Censorship VS Freedom/Empowerment

Arab journalists have deplored media censorship in their countries and called for greater freedom at a gathering held in the Qatari capital, Doha, to discuss freedom of speech in the region. Culminating on October 27th, 2009, the two-day forum was organised by Al Jazeera's Public Liberties & Human Rights Department in co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco). While speakers condemned tight censorship in Arab countries and blamed a censorship culture for poorly educated societies and generations

ignorant of their rights and duties they hailed the power of modern technology including the Internet, citing the degree of freedom that people derive when they have access to them. DICID was ably represented by Mr. Hamdi Blekich, Head of Public Relations, and Ms. Nadia Al-Ashqar.



Writing the Next Chapter at the US-Islamic World Forum

Global leaders including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, attended the seventh edition of the US-Islamic World Forum held in Doha on February 13-15, 2010.

It was DICID's first participation where it launched the first issue of the scientific journal 'ADYAN' in its pavilion which was laden with resource materials on related subjects.

Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al-Thani inaugurated the three-day event, whose theme is "Writing the Next Chapter." The annual forum is jointly organised by Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, the US.

Aimed at "shaping the next phase of relations between America and the Muslim World", the forum has as its highlight a recorded speech from US President Barak Obama. US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, Malaysian opposition leader and parliamentarian Anwar Ibrahim and US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke were also among its more notable participants.

This year's programme featured a wide range of issues "that would shape up the relations between the US and the Islamic world", an official observed.





Doha
International
Center For
Interfaith Dialogue

HONORED GUESTS OF THE DICID



Future Exchanges between Pinner Parish Church and DICID (Nov. 2009)

The representative of the Parish Church from has sought greater co-operation between the United Kingdom and Qatar through interfaith dialogue. During a visit to the DICID, Mrs. Susan Cooper and Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi DICID Chairman had enthusiastically explored possible exchange programmes in interfaith dialogue between the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the Parish Church from UK. Mrs. Cooper was impressed by the DICID offering the Parish Church help in the field of interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

Palestinian Ambassador and ICSJHS General Secretary Visit DICID (Jan. 2010)

Palestinian Ambassador HE Mr. Munir Ghannam and Dr. Hassan Khater Secretary General of the Islamic Christian Commission for Support of Jerusalem and Holy Sites paid an official visit to the DICID. The guests were received and welcomed by DICID's Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi. Dr. Hassan Khater presented the mission and goals of the Islamic Christian Commission in Support of Jerusalem and Holy Sites and the role which ICSJHS plays in the occupied Palestine. The ICSJHS is based in Ramallah and it consists of thirty-six members, half of whom are Muslims, and the other half Christians. A number of Muslim and well-known Christians scholars such as Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, and Bishop Atallah Hanna comprise the Commission, which calls upon the principles of dialogue and tolerance between the followers of the two religions. The Commission is a body of culture and information that promotes and common goal which is to defend the city of Jerusalem, in particular, and all the Islamic and Christian holy places of in all parts of Palestine, in general.



Dr. Hassan explained the tragic situation experienced by the city of Jerusalem with its forced Judaization by Israeli occupation authorities. He stressed that Israeli excavations beneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the buildings surrounding it resulted in cracks and rupture making some buildings unfit for human occupancy, thus massively evacuated in case of structural collapse. The Israeli authorities were able to create an entire building under Al-Aqsa making it a tourist attraction for foreign tourists, to prove alleged existence of Solomon's Temple under the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the buildings surrounding it and to justify the destruction of the mosque.

Dr. Ibrahim emphasized that the issue of Jerusalem and Palestine holds special place in the hearts of Muslims and Christians, and it was a recurring issue during October 2009 interfaith conference in Doha.

Dr. Ibrahim saw the importance of cooperation between the DICID and the Islamic Christian Commission for Support of Jerusalem and Holy Sites, thus providing several suggestions to Dr. Hassan. Dr. Hassan said that he strongly desires to establish cooperative work between the two centers that will shed turn on a light of hope for Jerusalem.

DICID Receives Guests from Azerbaijan (Dec. 2009)

The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue received representatives of the Azerbaijani Islamic World Council for Moderation 'IDRAK'. The guests had enthusiastic discussion with Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, the DICID chairman, regarding interfaith dialogue on the international level. During the meeting the possibility of establishing a joint workshops in Qatar and Azerbaijan was also discussed with Mr. Raafat Coliov, Head of Public Relations of 'IDRAK' stressing that the Council wishes to benefit from the DICID experience in this field while acknowledging that Qatar is a pioneer in interfaith in the Gulf region. After the meeting, the guests presented valuable gifts to Dr. Al-Naimi thanking him for the Qatari hospitality.



PENN University Delegation Visits DICID (Jan. 2010)

Two professors from the University of Pennsylvania visited the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. Dr. Sam Richards and Dr. Laurie L. Mulvey were invited to Qatar by the United Development Company to forward a proposal for the production of an unbiased documentary film presenting ideas of dialogue among cultures with special focus on the relationship of the Arabs in the Middle East and the United States in the light of the growing hatred against Muslims and Arabs around the world. A detailed presentation by the visiting professors was held



at the Pearl complex in the presence of representatives of the UDC and Mr. Khalil Sholy, Managing Director and Director General of the UDC.

French Researcher Visits DICID (Dec. 2009)

A French researcher from "Albin Michel" institute Dr. Jean Moutappha was welcomed at the DICID. Mr. Moutappha presented a new project - an Encyclopedia on Muslim and Jewish relation throughout history. Dr. Moutappha invited DICID to participate to this project, the first of its kind.



Center for Islamic Contemporary Studies and Dialogue of Civilizations (Dec. 2009)

Saudi delegation which represents the Center for Contemporary Islamic Studies and Dialogue of Civilizations, visited the DICID. During the visit its Director, Dr. Mubarak Saeed Al-Zair, exchanged views and discussed with Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi the importance of interfaith dialogue in the Gulf region whilst exploring future cooperative opportunity between the two organizations. Dr. Mubarak stressed the multiple objectives of the Center for Islamic Contemporary Studies and Dialogue of Civilizations such as presenting Islam through its dealing with current issues, identify human rights issues, dealing and emphasizing women's issues and their rights in Islam, clarifying Islam's position towards terrorism and identifying contemporary civilizations and implementing agreements of continuity of dialogue among the Islamic civilization and other civilizations.



Director of Al-Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Renewal Visits DICID (Dec. 2009)

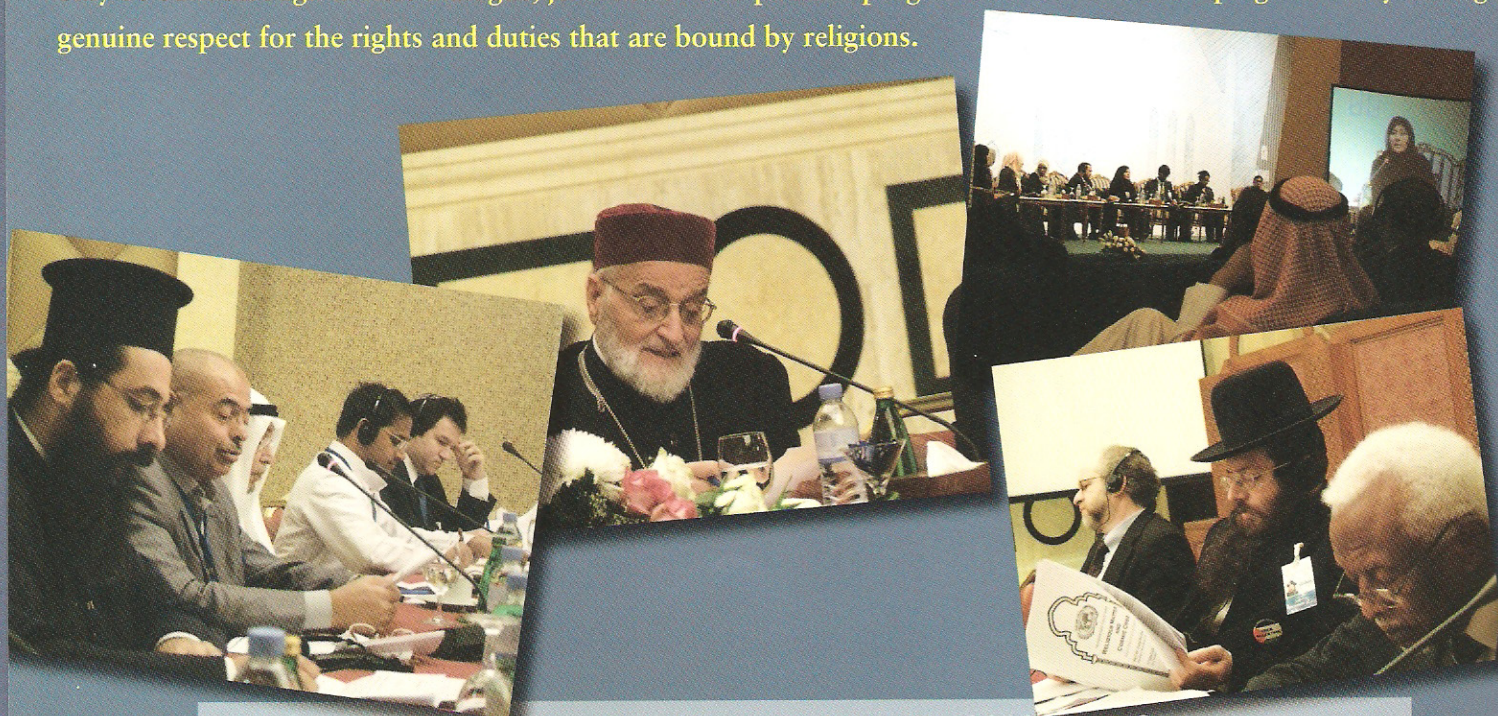
Professor Dr. Muhammad Khalifa Hasan Ahmad, Director of the Al-Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Renewal from the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Qatar Foundation paid an official visit to Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. He was received by Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, Chairman of the Center and by Ms. Nadia Al-Ashqar, Conference Affairs Coordinating Officer. The aim of the visit was the establishment of the network and cooperation in the field of interfaith dialogue. They also discussed the possibility of a joint venture workshops and interfaith awareness courses in Doha for the postgraduate students. Dr. Mohammed also presented his latest book, "Approach and Culture of Dialogue" to Dr. Ibrahim who in turn offered his support and assistance to the Al-Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Renewal.



7th Doha Inter-faith Dialogue Conference Underlined Religions Role in Achieving Human Solidarity



Participants of the 7th Doha Inter-faith Dialogue Conference underlined the significance of religions role in human solidarity in order to meet the challenges that facing humanity including wars, calamities and conflicts. This came in the Declaration issued by of the Doha Conference, which concluded on 21st October after two days of serious deliberations on a number of difficult issues ranging from violent conflicts and extreme poverty, which is wasting human dignity. The participants of the Conference expressed conviction that human solidarity in a broad sense could only be built through tireless dialogue, joint action and planned programs with a view to helping the needy through a genuine respect for the rights and duties that are bound by religions.





Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H.E. Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud opened the 7th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. Addressing the opening session, H.E. the Minister said the conference has become a notable event that practically represents Qatar, under the wise leadership of H.H. the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, as a believer in the significance of solidarity among religions, which certainly help maintain world peace and security. "Believing in God, worshiping Him and constructing earth is the key to the human pleasure and peace", H.E. the Minister said. Al Mahmoud referred to the current situation in world communities, including wars and destruction, poverty, disease and ignorance, starvation, natural disasters, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the absence of social justice, deterioration of human rights and basic freedoms, all together require, more than any time before, an effective action to be taken by religions, in order to save human communities. H.E. the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs also referred to the previous six conferences held in Doha, which he said have greatly helped thawing the ice and removing the psychological barriers standing between the followers of divine religions, barriers that never existed before, but recently resulted because of oppression, aggression and non-administration of justice.



Secretary General of the OIC

Speaking at the conference, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu highlighted the importance of the 7th Doha Interfaith Dialogue as it covers several key issues on both Islamic and international levels. Prof. Ihsanoglu hailed the State of Qatar and expressed appreciation for its great attention to major dialogue issues and its sponsorship of several activities meant to solve conflicts and crises. He noted to the Islamic civilization as being very distinguished, because it focused and valued the human being, saying that Islam made it clear that human solidarity and integration is a basic way of bringing about a decent life for peoples. Prof. Ihsanoglu referred to the OIC as a leading institution that dealt with dialogue as a mean of understanding, tolerance and ending conflicts among world nations. He noted that the OIC was the first to add the topic of the interfaith dialogue to the UN agenda in 1998, which later adopted the issue and marked 2001 as the year of interfaith dialogue across the world.



DICID Chairman

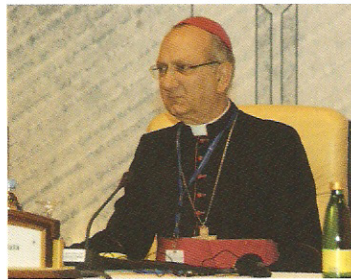
Meanwhile, Dr. Ibrahim bin Saleh Al-Naimi, Chairman of the board of directors of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, said the humanity is suffering today from natural disasters, wars, poverty and starvation, noting that up to 60 per cent of the human beings lack the basic needs of a decent life, including drinking water, education, proper housing and health services. More than 800 million people are starving, 240 million of them exist only in Africa, Dr. Al-Naimi said, adding that such pain suffered across the world needs a moral organization to be established in order to enhance dialogue, depending on common bases. The Doha international Centre for Interfaith Dialogue works to establish a unified vision towards well upraising and good acts, as God ordered us in the Torah, the Bible and the Holy Quran, Dr. Al-Naimi noted.

Concluding, Dr. al-Naimi expressed sadness over the absence of participants from Jerusalem, who he said couldn't participate in this year's conference for the difficult situation in the occupied Jerusalem.



Bernard Kanovitch

The President of the Council of French Jewish Institutions praised the conference, which deals with such a significant subject of concern to humanity and the elite participants representing the divine religions. Kanovitch stressed that all people were created on the same bases that require us to come together, saying that we all have only one God and what the messengers of God have said, came in the three divine books, this is what all religions share.



Pier Luigi Cellata

The Archbishop and Secretary General, Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican, Pier Luigi Cellata, also thanked Qatar for hosting such an important event, noting that people should integrate, co-exist and establish political, economic, cultural and social ties, a matter he insisted will spread an atmosphere of equality and tolerance among world nations.



Dr. Prof. Aisha Yousuf Al-Mannai

"The Holy Quran talked a lot about the human solidarity," said Member of the International Advisory Board and chairperson of the session, Aisha Yousuf Al-Mannai, who also stressed on the importance of the co-existence and the acceptance of others through dialogue, to reveal the values and principles needed to face those who she said call for uncontrolled freedom.

SEVENTH DOHA CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

October 20-21, 2009
Sheraton Hotel, Doha

DECLARATION

1. HUMAN SOLIDARITY THROUGH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Over 250 participants from 59 countries, Jews, Christians and Muslims met for the Seventh Doha conference on Interfaith Dialogue. They expressed their deep gratitude to HRH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and the people of Qatar for their generous hospitality. In addition, they paid tribute to the organizers of the conference, The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Qatar University for continuing this series of conferences and thereby helping to build confidence and trust among all the participants.

This made possible serious but serene discussion on a number of difficult and sometimes painful issues ranging from violent conflict to extreme poverty which degrades humanity.

The theme of human solidarity challenged the participants to draw on the best of their spiritual resources while at the same acknowledging that no community can be complacent that they have implemented the high ideals of their respective religions. Only through cooperation, understanding and mutual respect can a truly human solidarity be achieved.

2. HUMAN SOLIDARITY THROUGH COOPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO NEED AND SUFFERING

Participants discussed together the continuing existence of wars, violence and injustice. They recognized that it is often the weak and innocent who are the first victims. In the context of the current global financial crisis they deplored the increase in extreme poverty, hunger and disease. Recognizing that religious communities are deeply involved in humanitarian response to such need and suffering, they urged greater cooperation in tackling these challenges.

Whether disasters are natural or human-made, there remains a major responsibility on humankind to deploy resources with greater equity and more ecological sustainability. Human beings need each other to overcome obstacle to peace and justice, and should draw on the guidance of the common wisdom of their particular but often converging religious traditions.

3. HUMAN SOLIDARITY THROUGH PROTECTION FOR ALL HUMAN RIGHTS

While claiming human rights of all human beings there must be a recognition of the duties to protect such rights and to promote their implementation. It is not only necessary to have protection through constitutions and internationally recognized conventions but there to be a change in mentalities and attitudes whereby one is conscious of one's own rights but of those of the neighbor and stranger.

There was a specific concern for the need to protect places of worship and holy sites, whether in a place as central to all three religions as is Jerusalem, or whether expat communities seek hospitality and facilities such as have been generously offered by the State of Qatar.

A further fundamental right which was emphasized was the right of education and this should include the right for a child to be educated in her or her own religious tradition as well to learn with truth and sensitivity about other religions and cultures: it could well be a constructive project for DICID to study and develop models for such relevant educational materials.

The participants were convinced that human solidarity in the widest sense can only be built through patient dialogue, common action to help all in need and through scrupulous respect for the rights and duties which our respective religions should inspire us to embrace. The participants committed themselves to seek to overcome the conflicts and injustices which still too often separate us and to work at every level international, regional and local to build human solidarity.