



The World Council of Muslims For Interfaith Relations (WCMIR)

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2006

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Support The Peace Initiative

Greetings of Peace.

We are writing on behalf of three organizations that are deeply committed to greater mutual understanding and constructive cooperation among the world's great religious faiths. Those organizations are: (1) The World Council of Muslims for Interfaith Relations (WCMIR) - a global Muslim organization committed to fostering mutual understanding and friendly relations among people of different faiths. WCMIR was founded in Leicester, UK in June 2001, at the initiative of Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan. WCMIR works to foster Muslim engagement with other religions and cultures to shape a better world; (2) The Interreligious Engagement Project (IEP21). IEP21 is a network for the 21st century. Founded in 2002 by Jim Kenney, IEP21 works to assist global religious and spiritual communities to develop appropriate strategies for addressing critical issues relating to social and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and the promotion of cultures of peace; (3) The Peace Council - an international and interfaith group of religious leaders working together for peace. The mission of the Peace Council is to demonstrate that peace is possible, and that effective interreligious collaboration to make peace is also possible. In a world where religion too often is used to justify division, hatred, and violence, the peace councilors offer an alternative. Peace Councilors include three Nobel Peace Laureates: His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Mairead Maguire (Northern Ireland). Muslim members include Dr. Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia), Dr. Saleha Mahmoud Abedin (Saudi Arabia), Dr. Warith Deen Mohammed (USA), Dr. Dalil Boubakeur (France) and Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan (U. S. A.)

FOR YOUR ATTENTION:

In early 2007 the Peace Council will convene a several-day conference of European Muslim community leaders and organizations, along with several Peace Councilors. Invitees will be those who are committed to interfaith understanding and cooperation and believe that such efforts are critical to the future of the human community and to world peace. **WCMIR and IEP21 fully endorse and are actively supporting this effort.** (Dr. Irfan Khan and Jim Kenney are Trustees of the Peace Council.)

The Conference will focus on the most critical issues facing the European Muslim community. Participants will also work to establish a viable Network of European Muslims committed to working for justice and peace in their own communities, in Europe, and in the world.

We're asking you to help in any (or all) of several ways:

1. Recommend potential European participants (organizations and/or individuals) in the conference.
2. Suggest possible sources of financial assistance (to defray the costs of travel and accommodations for participants and to secure appropriate venues for the conference).
3. Consider making a contribution on behalf of your own organization. Contributors' names will be listed in conference materials: \$100+ (Supporter); \$250+ (Friend); \$500+ (Sponsor); \$1000+ (Patron).

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

In peace,

Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan (President, WCMIR) raoifanahmad@yahoo.com

Jim Kenney (Executive Director, IEP21) iep21@seachanges.net

Peter Brinkman (Associate Director, Peace Council)

Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez (Executive Director, Peace Council)

News From Across the Globe

Report From Mustafa Y. Ali, PhD WCMIR Regional representative for Africa

Apart from working with the Geneva-based **Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children**, Dr. Ali continues to coordinate the activities of the **Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)** in Africa. In the conflict-prone zone of the Great Lakes Region in East and the Central Africa, Dr. Ali has helped to set up the **Great Lakes Zone Young Peace Builders Network (GYOPEN)** which was launched in January 2006 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It consists of young persons from Christian and Muslim faith traditions, who are now working on peace building in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo. Earlier, the network conducted a debate with the theme of 'Conflicts: Are They Avoidable?'.

Dr. Ali traveled to Geneva, Switzerland early 2006 to attend the Second Committee meeting of the **Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children**. Under the GNRC Africa, numerous trainings to the Muslim and Christian young people on peace building, media and ethics education, and activities on intercultural and interfaith dialogue, have been conducted so far.

Dr. Ali represented the Arigatou Foundation and the GNRC at the conference organized by the Africa Child Policy Forum in the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 11 – 12 May 2006. GNRC was keen to make its contribution especially on the theme on **Violence against the Girl Child**, which was the theme of the conference.

GNRC Africa continues to have good working relationship with both the local and international media. Dr. Ali attended several meetings with journalists, and discussed with one of the daily newspapers – *The Citizen*, on ways in which faith-based organizations could highlight Ethics Education, conflict and children in the African continent.

Dr. Ali has been appointed as the Coordinator of the Media and Values theme of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children. The Council aims to work with faith-based communities and all interested persons to transform this world. It is developing a resource kit on Ethics Education for Children.

In the coming months, Dr. Ali will be traveling to Kyoto, Japan, to attend the 8th Assembly of the World Conference of Religions and Peace.

Report of WCMIR Southeast Asia & Pacific (AUSTRALASIA) Region By: Dr. Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman

For the year 2005 - 2006, WCMIR Australasia again manages only to concentrate on interfaith works in Malaysia and Singapore due to financial constraints and also lack of response to our calls for commitment to WCMIR works from other countries. Nonetheless, our members were invited to numerous countries which hosted programs related to inter-faith dialogue and engagements, such as the JUST-INEB program in Bangkok, Thailand in June, 2006, the IALRW and IARF in Kaoshiung, Taiwan, in March, 2006. Insha Allah WCMIR representatives will be participating in the National Catholic Education Commission Conference to be held in Sydney, in September, 2006. Last year, we also participated in programs in Jakarta, Kyoto, Singapore and Brisbane.

In Malaysia itself, we were part of interfaith discourses conducted by WCMIR as well as by other bodies and a couple of our papers were published in monograph form. What is most encouraging is the growth of interest in interfaith dialogues and engagements in Singapore undertaken by Muslim organizations, both newly registered as well as established agencies. Another very good development is our interfaith dialogue that we carry out through the internet. The internet is enabling us to keep in touch and sustain communication with those people and groups that we met at seminars etc. This way our dialogue and engagements continue without much expense. We are also able to forward messages across to others and these messages are in turn circulated among their own circles and thus we are able to reach out to those we have never even met.

Next year, WCMIR with JUST and ABIM, are planning an international interfaith youth program targeted for June 2007, involving about 100 youth leaders from various countries. It is encouraging indeed that we are getting positive responses from both the US and UK. We aim to invite mainly South East Asian participants other than those from the US and UK because of financial constraints. In this program, WCMIR Australasia is led by our Vice President, Prof. Dr Abdullah Ahsan. We pray that this will be a successful program.

WCMIR President, Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan and Secretary General, Dr. M. A. Siddiqi have accepted invitation to attend the Annual Interfaith Unity Banquet to be held on Sunday, September 3, 2006 during the 43rd Annual Convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in Chicago.

Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid attends E. U. Sponsored Interfaith Meeting in Brussels

A one day meeting was held in Brussels on May 30, 2006 to discuss how to promote religious tolerance and harmony among various communities that live in Europe. The meeting was called by the European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Austrian Chancellor and current President of EU, Wolfgang Schuessel. "We need common values more than common currency and more than economic ideas," Schuessel said. Imam Abduljalil Sajid emphasized that, "there is no alternative to dialogue, but what we need now is action to follow it all up." In addition to numerous other activities, Imam Sajid also participated in the first and second Imams and Rabbis Congress and the first European Imams conference.

Dr. Amir Al-Islam continues with his efforts to focus on pressing world issues.

On August 14, 2006, **Dr. Amir Al-Islam** met with the Chairman of the Save Darfur Coalition which consists of an interfaith group of over 150 organizations. The meeting focused on strategic planning for the national rally that the coalition is sponsoring on September 17th in New York City.

On August 17, 2006 **Dr. Amir** met with the Co-Director of the Global Ethics Consortium. The Consortium is made up of 15 organizations of various faiths and it is planning to organize a conference at the United Nations in October this year with a focus on peace education and conflict resolution.

The main initiative is to establish a global ethics institute in collaboration with Touro College in New York and other strategic partners.

The Institute will conduct workshops for diplomats, interfaith leaders and other interested in developing an interfaith approach to addressing conflict.

Dr. Mohammad A. Siddiqi participated in an International Conference of Media and Communication Scholars held in July, 2006 in Cairo, Egypt. He chaired several sessions and presented a paper on the "Current debate on Islam between radical and moderate Muslims." Dr. Siddiqi also delivered two lectures in New York in the last week of July on Islam, Muslims, and American media. He recently published an article titled, "What do we want the other to teach about Islamic Ethical traditions?" in a book on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Dialogue published by the Sacred Heart University Press, Fairfield, Connecticut, U. S. A.

WCMIR Executive Committee Appoints Transition Team, Encourages Members to Reactivate and Reorganize.

A meeting of the available members of the executive committee, held on Sunday, June 4, 2006 at Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan's residence in Chicago, Illinois, affirmed the need for continuing with WCMIR and planned for renewed efforts to energize WCMIR through fresh initiatives. Dr. Amir Al-Islam, Dr. Zahid Bukhari, Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan and Dr. Ahmadullah Siddiqi attended the meeting. Following team was appointed until the next General assembly in June/December 2007 insha Allah. **President:** Dr. Irfan Ahmad Khan; **Secretary General and Treasurer:** Dr. Mohammad Ahmadullah Siddiqi; **Vice President:** Dr. Ghazali Basri; **Regional Representatives:** **Africa:** Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali; **Europe:** Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid; **Middle East:** Dr. Saleha Abedin; **North America:** Dr. Sulayman Nayang; **South Asia:** Dr. Anis Ahmad; and **Southeast Asia and Pacific:** Dr. Kamar Oniah. Dr. Zahid Bukhari and Dr. Amir Al-Islam will continue to serve on the Executive Committee.

The meeting urged members to:

1. Pass on this information to other members and supporters of WCMIR.
2. Mail their membership dues (\$50.00 from Europe and North America and \$20.00 from other countries).
3. E-mail their brief interfaith related activities report to the Secretary General for the newsletter.

In a later meeting between the President and the Secretary General, following decisions were made.

1. WCMIR newsletter will be published by August 25, 2006.
2. WCMIR website will be ready by the end of November 2006.
3. Regional representatives will be advised to organize regional interfaith meetings/workshops/

seminars in their respective regions. Tentatively the following dates are proposed. Regional representatives will decide the themes, venue and exact date in consultation with the headquarters at their earliest. Africa (December 2006); North America (March 2007); Southeast Asia and the Pacific (June 2007); and Europe (December 2007).
 4. General Assembly will be held either in conjunction with the regional meeting in Malaysia in June 2007, or in December 2007 in U. K.
 5. WCMIR is actively cooperating and supporting the initiatives taken by the IEP's Dialogue of Civilization project and the International Peace Council's initiatives to organize a conference in Europe early next year.

BOOKS & JOURNALS.....

REFLECTIONS ON The QUR'AN. Understanding Surahs Al-Fatiha & Al-Baqarah
 BY
Irfan Ahmad Khan

Published by the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, U.K. (i.foundation@islamic-foundation.org.uk), this 782 page book is an effort to understand the Qur'an with a modern mind. "These reflections," according to the author, "see the Divine Book as encountering the situation we face today. - guiding the present-day world which it sees as being on the verge of destruction, due to its neglect of the Hereafter and prevalent lordship of Man over Man." "Immense possibilities of progress will open up if the Ummah regains its lost relationship with the Divine text.," writes Irfan Khan in the preface of the book.

Dr. A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Professor Emeritus of World Religions, Asbury Theological Seminary, notes that this commentary of Qur'an "has provided me with insights into the nature and purpose of Qur'anic revelation, into the main values and crucial perspectives of the Islamic faith, and into the meaning of what it means to be humans." To get a copy in the U. S., please e-mail to raoirfanahmad@yahoo.com

What Do We Want The Other To Teach About US? Jewish, Christian, And Muslim Dialogues
 Edited By
David L. Coppola

Publisher: Sacred Heart University Press, Fairfield, Connecticut, U. S. A.; pages 421; (www.ccju.org; look under the heading "CCJU Publications).

The book is a collection of papers presented in five conferences organized by the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of the Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. These conferences were held in Jerusalem and Edmonton, Canada (2000), Rome, Italy (2001), Bamberg, Germany (2002), and Fairfield, Connecticut, U. S. A. (2003). The first conference focused on, "setting a context for dialogue; the second on "what do want the other to teach about our theological traditions." the third focused on historical traditions; the fourth on prayer and liturgy; and the last on "what do we want the other to teach about our ethical traditions. Eminent Jewish, Christian, and

Muslim scholars and faith leaders participated in these discourses. The book is an excellent resource guide for all who are engaged in interfaith work as well as for those who would like to understand the three great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, from the insiders of these religions.

INTERRELIGIOUS Insight is a journal of dialogue and engagement. The journal is in its fourth year of publication and aims to reflect on practical projects by bringing examples of faith-communities that are working together to make a difference. The editors wrote in its first issue that, "No doubt the failure of religious communities to cooperate has contributed to the sum total of anguish and pain in the world. Yet this history can be reversed, for religions at their ethical best are fountains of compassion, harmony and hope." The editors hope that the journal "will provide opportunities for hearing varying voices — voices crossing spiritualities, spanning generations and embracing practitioners from many different contexts around the world."
 The Journal is published four times in a year. For details, contact one of the following e-mails.
 alan.race@ntworld.com
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WCMIR

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Malaysia Prepares for Civilizational Dialogue 2007 Youth Camp in Kuala Lumpur

An international youth camp is being proposed for June 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The objectives of the camp are 1) To develop a deeper understanding of global challenges and how to cope with them; 2) To examine whether religious values can contribute to peaceful co-existence of various peoples on the globe; and 3) To foster closer relationship between Malaysian and non Malaysian youths from various cultures and religions. The camp organizers include WCMIR, Malaysian Youth Movement, ABIM, and JUST. For more information about this program, please contact Dr. Kamar Oniah at kamar_oniah@hotmail.com.

WCMIR NEEDS YOUR DONATIONS

Please send your membership dues (\$50.00 from the United States and Western Europe; \$20.00 from other regions) and donations, payable to WCMIR at a U. S. bank, and mail it to **WCMIR, P. O. Box 142, Macomb, IL 61455, U. S. A.**

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WCMIR Newsletter

Please e-mail to m-siddiqi@wiu.edu your submissions for the next issue of the newsletter to be published insha Allah in December, 2006. You may send;

- * A brief (300-words) report of your interfaith related activities in MS-Word file.
- * An interfaith related article that you would like to share with our readers (no more than 500 words please).
- * A review of a book or journal that the interfaith community could benefit from (300 words).

Your suggestions to make this newsletter more effective are always welcome.

Please introduce WCMIR and this newsletter to others who are interested or engaged in interfaith work.

GLOBAL DIALOUE OF CIVILIZATIONS Muslim Cultures and Western Cultures in Quest of Justice and Peace

In October 2006, the Global Dialogue of Civilization will publish a report on issues that divide and unite Muslim cultures and Western Cultures around the world. Those who would like to participate in this dialogue should log on to the website www.iep21.org/roundtable or e-mail to iep21@seachanges.net. One has to first register and then answer the two key questions posted on the website. The two questions are:

- (1) What do you identify as the most divisive current issues affecting Muslim cultures and Western cultures?
- (2) What are the issues on which Muslim and Western cultures tend to come together?

**MAY GOD BRING PEACE TO
ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE
WORLD**