



The Center For Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land

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## Palestinian Quest for Stability & Democracy

**The** death of the Palestinian historical leader and figure, President Arafat, on 11 November 2004, the smooth transition from one-man rule to institutional rule in the PLO and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the free and orderly municipal elections on December 2004, and the PNA presidential elections on January 2005 in which Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) was elected by a majority of 62% of ballots casted in a fair and democratic elections are all testimonies to encouraging signs and trends in Palestinian society. The sweeping January 2005 municipal elections victory by HAMAS- Islamic Resistance Movement in Gaza Strip should not be seen as a victory for terrorism.

Instead, there is a good chance that HAMAS will turn from an armed resistance group into a political mass movement after having won political legitimacy in both West Bank municipal elections, in December and January. HAMAS' Victory could pave the way as well for other armed resistance groups like AL-Jihad group and AL-Aqsa Brigades to opt for the way of the "ballot" instead of the "bullet".

The challenges facing the newly elected leader of the PLO and the PNA, Abu Mazen, are many, chief among them are his ability to bring harmony,

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### Happy Muslim & Christian Feasts

The Board of Trustees of AL-Liqa' Center and its President H.B Patriarch Michael Sabbah, and AL-Liqa's working committees and staff would like to extend their congratulations and warmest greetings to all benefactors and friends as well as Muslims and Christians at home and abroad on the occasion of Muslim and Christian feasts: Ramadan Fiter (November 2004), Christmas (Western and Eastern rites, December 2004-January 2005) and AL-Adha (Sacrifice) Feast (January 2005) hoping that these holy events will bring with them in the future peace, prosperity and tranquility to the people in the Holy Land, the region and the world.

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# The 12th Session of the Conference on Theology and The Local Church in the Holy Land

“The Church in Galilee Today, Past and Future”

Al-Ein Hotel - Nazareth

9-11 December 2004



Far from the city of the Nativity, the twelfth session of Theology and Local Church in the Holy Land Conference was held in the city of Nazareth in Galilee. The Conference was titled “The Church in Galilee Today, Past, and Future.” It took place on 9-11 December 2004, at AL-Ein Hotel.

The Conference hall was crowded with distinguished representatives of all sectors of the Palestinian Christian Community in Galilee: young and old men and women, advocates, theologians, lay people and clergy. His Excellency the Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah and Bishop



Boutros Mu'alem were among the distinguished guests.

In his opening word, his Excellency Patriarch Michel Sabbah stressed the important role of AL-Liqa' Center and its efforts in creating channels for dialogue and preserving the unity of the Church. Patriarch Sabbah emphasized the need for establishing a branch for AL-Liqa' Center in Galilee where such a center is badly needed. His Excellency talked about the challenges that face the church in Galilee.

Director of AL-Liqa' Center, Dr. Geries S. Khoury stressed that the message of the church is a message of justice and truth. He called attention to the need for openness to and acceptance of the other. In addition, Dr. Khoury urged local Christians to be actively present in the community and think well about the present. He also stressed the need for Christian unity and the preservation of Christian heritage.

After a short break and a reception, the first lecture titled "Churches or Denominations?" began. In the lecture Dr. Father Rafiq Khoury talked about the characteristics of the society based on sectarian structure. He said that sectarianism conceals the face of Christ and alienates us from Him and the other. Father Khoury ended his lecture with giving 4 practical suggestions.

On the second day of the Conference, Dr. Geries Khoury lectured on "Local Theology and the Church in Galilee." According to Dr. Khoury, Jesus Christ is the first local theologian because He spoke with the people a language that they understood as indigenous inhabitants of the land. "In fact, local theology stemmed from Jesus Himself," Dr. Khoury said.

The second lecture for the day consisted of a panel session titled "Are We a Minority or an Inseparable Part of the Arab Society." According to Dr.

Sabella, the majority ignores the role of the minority. For example, unlike Jerusalem, Christians in Damascus, Syria, are important because their number is large.

On the other hand, Dr. Sabella criticized the failure of the educational system to bring about dialogue and communication between Christians and Muslims. Both Muslims and Christians fail to identify with each other. Dr. Sabella said that the rights of the minority can be secured by respecting and recognizing one another. The other is an enemy as long as you ignore him.

Dr. Father Louis Hazboun defined the minority from a partisan perspective dissociating it from citizenship. Father Hazboun ended his lecture





with these questions: What do we expect from the church in Galilee in the future? What are the ideal relations that we expect to see between the Christian minority and the majority in the Galilee?

Dr. Marwan Dweiri said that the definition of identity is compound and relative. He said, "Our society is a pluralistic society and we have to accept the different identities in it. Relationships among



session titled "The Message of the Church in a Pluralistic Society" was held. Bishop Younan said that there is a Lutheran message that concerns humanity and another that concerns issues of justice, tolerance, and peace. He added, "Our Church has its responsibilities that include helping the needy irrespective of their affiliation."

If the church does not fulfill its duties and responsibilities then it is not a church at all.



identities are contextual and differ from one context to another," he said.

According to Dr. Dweiri, democracy does not secure the rights of the minority and that it is a two-edged sword. It could protect the rights of the minority or violate them. The liberal democracy of Israel generates unjust rules that violate the rights of the minority. However, what protects the minority is pluralistic thinking and giving minorities their right to vote and use the veto in matters that concern them.

On the afternoon of the second day, a panel

From the viewpoint of Professor George Qanaze, the Church is not made of stones but of people, the living stones.

Professor Qanaze expressed worry about Christian immigration, although he understands why Christians leave their homeland. He criticized the harsh economic, political, social conditions in the Holy Land. "We live through difficult time. We should study our problems well and find solutions to them," he remarked.



The last lecture on the second day of the Conference was about "Media and Education in the Church in Galilee." Mr. Youssef Matar reported that

there are 872 religious classes but practically only 406 classes are given because the religious syllabus consists of one to five educational units. "The Ministry of Education is not helping to solve this problem," Mr. Matar said.

In addition, Mr. Matar talked about problems concerning training teachers in religious education as well as about difficulties that the private schools face in general, which are many.

Mr. Ziyad Shlewit talked about the role of the media in Galilee. First, he talked about the history of the Arab Christian media and how the media



The last lecture in the conference was titled "The Church in Galilee Today, Past and Future." Bishop Marcuzo said that we as Christians need to get into



deals with Galilee Christians. He also talked about the private and formal media of the Church stressing the fact that the Church in Galilee published various periodicals about its activities. Then, Mr. Shlewit discussed the role of the Church and the media in pluralistic societies, as well as the topic of the Church and the media after the Synod. "Many recommendations have been made but only a few have been implemented," he concluded, Thus, we come to the last day of the Conference in which the Anglican Bishop Riyah Abu Asal talked about the need for counter emigration. "What future are we talking about when we see Christians leave their homeland?" he asked. "Thus we need to work for counter immigration," he stated.

the depth of things. "Despair and inertia do us no good." We stand together and we need not boast only of our past. We are running back and thus we escape the present," he stated. According to Bishop Marcuzo, we should learn from the past.

The Journalist Mr. Atallah Mansour, who participated in the panel, said we need not cry any more about what happens or what does not happen. "The truth of the matter is that we have become indolent. We should put an end to this," he stated. He added, "Whoever works hard will reap a plentiful harvest. This is our role as Christians living in Galilee."

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# AL-LIQA'S EVENING FORUMS AND JOINT CELEBRATIONS



**\*31 Oct. 2004:** Professor Aziz Haydar, who is a lecturer at AL- Quds University, was the guest speaker at AL-Liqa' Center. Professor Haydar, a friend of AL-Liqa' and a frequent guest speaker at the Center, presented and analyzed the political situation inside Israel which has a bearing on the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

**\*Oct. 2004:** Tens of Muslims and Christians, laity and religious people, participated in a joint Iftar (dinner) during the blessed month of Ramadan. Before the dinner, Muslim and Christian religious leaders as well as the Director of AL-Liqa' Center, Dr. Geris S. Khoury, talked about the concept and meaning of fasting and the importance of this annual gathering which deepens our unity and makes us exposed to our traditions and customs. Such event increases our respect to each other and

strengthens our relation and renews the spirit of friendship and love between the Muslims and Christians in Palestine.

**\*21 Dec. 2004:** Tens of Muslims and Christians accepted the invitation of AL-Liqa' Center to participate in a conference titled: "Jesus birth in the Bible and the Holy Qur'an." Dr. Father Rafiq Khoury and Dr. Mahmoud Abu Kitteh were the main speakers. Dr. Mahmoud Abu Kitteh, associate professor of Arabic at Bethlehem University, recited the "Sura" of Virgin Mary from the Holy Qur'an and gave commentary on it so as to show the great respect that the Muslims have for Virgin Mary and her Son.

Furthermore, Father Rafiq Khoury presented Christmas readings from his own writings about

Herod who represents the tyrant ruler and the Baby Jesus who represents humanity's dream for better life and better world.

**\*Dec. 2004:** It became an annual tradition at AL-Liqa' Center to invite Muslims and Christians to celebrate Christmas together. One hundred persons accepted the invitation and the Director of the Center welcomed them and stressed the importance of such gathering. Then, they listened to some Christmas music and chanting performed by the Melkite Catholic Choir led by Mr. Charles Abu Sa'da from Bethlehem and to religious talks by Father Ya'qoub Abu Sa'da and Sheikh Abd AL-Majid Ata.

**\*Feb. 2005:** Dr. Walid Mustafa, Dean of Faculty of Arts and lecturer in Geography, History and Political Science at Bethlehem University, was the guest speaker. Religious, political, academic and business figures and others from all Palestinian walks of life attended and participated in the lively discussion that took place. Dr. Mustafa discussed the pressing challenges and problems facing the newly elected leader of the PLO and the PNA, President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazin), Palestinian armed factions and Palestinian people in the light of the Palestinian National Authority presidential elections of 9 January 2005 in which Abu Mazin won 62 percent of ballots casted.

**\*March. 2005:** Rev. Dr. Jamal Khader, chairperson of the Dept. of Religious Studies at Bethlehem University and Dr. Geris S. Khoury, Director of AL-Liqa' Center, addressed the issue of "Christianity and Democracy." Both speakers compared and contrasted this vital issue and indicated that there are many common issues that are shared by Christianity and democracy.



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stability and unity in the Palestinian street, and to improve the economic lot of the Palestinians.

All indications point out that he is trekking in the right direction. His immediate goal of demilitarization of the uprising (Intifada), 2000- 2005, and securing a ceasefire through his dialogue with HAMAS, AL-Jihad, AL-Aqsa Brigades and other Palestinian armed factions is being realized gradually. And Palestinian national security forces are now being redeployed all throughout Gaza Strip with mutual Palestinian- Israeli military arrangements in order to maintain law and order.

The biggest hurdles in the way of Abu Mazen and his determination to unite all Palestinians behind him in his quest for a mutual ceasefire are the unclear policies of the Israeli government toward mutual ceasefire. The window of opportunity for peace and tranquility in the Holy Land is wide open for the first time in many years. Israeli policies in the occupied territories can help or hinder all the encouraging signs coming out of Palestinian society.

Dear Benefactors  
and Friends of Al-Liqā' Center

We hope this latest Newsletter will find you well hoping that we will continue to keep in touch with each other through AL-Liqā' Center's publications, forums, annual conferences and special events. In order to proliferate our mission throughout the world, Al-Liqā' Center has developed its own Web Site:

[www.al-liqacenter.org](http://www.al-liqacenter.org)

We hope you will have the opportunity to visit the site. Besides, we will appreciate any comments and any suggestions that would help us to improve the content of our site.

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### The 12th Session

**The following are some of the recommendations which were issued at the conclusion of the Conference:**

**1-There is a need to focus on a life together, and this can be done through education in our schools, churches and mosques. There is a need also to encounter dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Holy Land.**

**2-The Church has the obligation to address the issue of Christian emigration which will inevitably result in weakening and marginalizing Christian presence in the Holy Land.**

**3-Participants urge the family of AL-Liqā' Center to open a branch in Galilee in order to encourage co-existence and support the Church.**

**4-Participants discussed the issue of local media and its relation with the Church in Galilee. They wondered about the absence of a media center in the local Church and the absence of the Church in the media. Accordingly, there is a need to create a Christian media center that regulates relations between the Church and the media, and develops into an authorized and formal mouthpiece for Church matters.**

**5-There is a need to focus on local theology and encourage interested laity and the clergy to do research and write about it. It is important to introduce local Christian believers to this thought.**

**6-Teachers and young men and women are encouraged to attend the theological department at Mar Elias educational institutions in Ibillin in order to deepen their understanding and knowledge of Christian history and faith. Thus, we can provide schools with trained teachers qualified to teach religious education.**



# AL-Liqa' Center's Condemnation of the Sale of Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate's Real Estate to Extremist Jewish Investors

Al-Quds daily newspaper / Arab East Jerusalem / 26th March 2005

The Center condemned the sale of real estate which belongs to the Patriarchate to extremist Jewish investors in AL-Quds daily newspaper of Arab East Jerusalem. This sale is seen as another aspect of Israeli plans to empty Jerusalem from its Arab Christian and Muslim native population. The Center

greeted all those who are standing solidly against this sale and requested Palestinian, Jordanian and Greek governments to take a firm stand against those involved in this shady real estate deal in order to protect Muslim and Christian religious estates and Christian presence in Arab East Jerusalem.



# Al-Liqa' Center's Publications



**Six publishing activities are currently underway. These are:**

1- The Arabic Language quarterly review, *AL-Liqa'*, now in its 20th year of publication (1985- 2005). The review is directed toward the Arab community in the Holy Land, the Arab region and the world.

2- The English Language biannual review, *AL-Liqa' Journal*, is now in its 13th year, 1992- 2005. This review is directed toward the international community. It is a scholarly journal concentrating on Christian- Muslim relations, interfaith dialogue, Christianity and Islam and Palestinian studies.

3- Proceedings of the annual "Conference on Arab Heritage for Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land), now in its 17th session. Contents reflect the activities of the annual conference, 1983- present.

4- Proceedings of the annual "Conference on Theology and the Local Church in the Holy Land", better known as the Palestinian Contextualized Theology Conference. These reflect the activities of the annual conference, 1987- present.

5- Also available are miscellaneous pamphlets and publications giving brief but overviews of a number of religious, social and cultural topics of current interest. *AL-Liqa'* documents are included. (see list of publications, p.11.

6- The bi-annual English Language Newsletter has been published since 1989. It includes news of the Center's activities and is directed toward the international community.

## AL-Liqa' Center's Most Recent Publications

*AL-Liqa' Arabic Language quarterly,*  
Vol.19 # 3, 4 (2004©)

This issue focuses on intra- Christian developments paving the way for Christian unity in the East. Content comprises contracts and understandings reached between the Catholic Church leadership and those of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church, and the Eastern Assyrian Church as well as between the Chalcedonian and non- Chalcedonian Churches. Documents concerning intra- Christian quest for unity and ecumenical activities are included. Christian-Muslim relationship, likewise, are examined. The concluding pages focus on a book review revolving around the life of the late father Ibrahim Ayyad of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

List and Prices of  
**Al-Liqa's Publications**  
 (1983-2005)

(All publications are in Arabic unless specified)

**Christian - Muslim Dialogue Conference**  
 (1983 -2005 )

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Proceeding of the First Conference, Jerusalem, 1983 (221\$6 pages). |      |
| 2. Second Conference, Jerusalem, 1984 (257 pages).                     | \$6  |
| 3. Third Conference, Jerusalem, 1985 (257 p.).                         | \$6  |
| 4. Fourth Conference, Jerusalem, 1986 (289 pages).                     | \$7  |
| 5. Fifth Conference, Jerusalem, 1987 (206p.).                          | \$7  |
| 6. Sixth Conference, Jerusalem, 1988 (216 pages).                      | \$7  |
| 7. Seventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1989 (143 p.).                       | \$6  |
| 8. Eighth Conference, Jerusalem. 1990 (143 pages).                     | \$7  |
| 9. Ninth Conference, Jerusalem, 1991 (149 p.).                         | \$7  |
| 10. Tenth Conference, Jerusalem, 1992 (143 p.).                        | \$7  |
| 11. Eleventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1993 (82 p.).                      | \$7  |
| 12. Twelfth Conference, Jerusalem, 1994 (154 p.).                      | \$7  |
| 13. 13th Conference, Bethlehem. 1995.                                  | \$15 |
| (see no. 9 Miscellaneous)  |      |
| 14. 14th Conference, Bethlehem, 1996 (107 pages)                       | \$7  |
| 15. 15th Conference, Bethlehem, 1998                                   | \$7  |
| 16. 16th Conference, Bethlehem, 2001                                   | \$7  |

**Al- Liqa' Journal (in English)**  
 1992 - 2005

- |                      |                  |                  |       |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------|
| Vol. 1 - 1992        | Vols. 7/8 1996   | Vols. 18/19-2002 |       |
| Vol. 2 - 1992        | Vols. 9/10- 1997 | Vols. 20/21-2003 |       |
| Vol. 3 - 1994        | Vols.11/12 1998  |                  |       |
| Vol. 4 - 1994        | Vol. 13-1999     |                  |       |
| Vol. 5 - 1995        | Vols. 14/15-2000 |                  |       |
| Vol. 6 - 1996        | Vols. 16/17-2001 |                  |       |
| Annual subscription: |                  |                  |       |
| Individuals          |                  |                  | \$ 15 |
| Institutions         |                  |                  | \$ 30 |
| Price per one issue  |                  |                  | \$ 7  |

**Al-Liqa' Arabic Language**  
**Quarterly Review**  
 (1985 - 2005)

- |                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Year 1-Year 3 (3 issues each)  | \$ 20 per Year |
| Year 4-Year 20 (4 issues each) | \$ 30 per Year |
| Price per one issue            | \$ 7           |

**Al-Liqa' Center's Documents**  
 (Available in Arabic and English)

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 1. Theology and the Local Church in the Holy Land, (16 pages)   | \$ 4 |
| 2. In Jerusalem, Justice and Peace Embrace Each Other, (5pages) | \$ 2 |

**Palestinian Contextualized Theology**  
**Conference (1987-2005)**

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Proceedings of the First Conference, Jerusalem 1987 (196 pages).                   | \$7 |
| Second Conference, Jerusalem, 1988 (208 p.).                                       | \$7 |
| Third Conference, Jerusalem 1989 (193 p.).   | \$7 |
| Fourth Conference, Jerusalem, 1990 (234p.).  | \$7 |
| Fifth Conference, Jerusalem, 1991 (174p.).   | \$7 |
| Sixth Conference, Jerusalem, 1993 (125 p.).  | \$7 |
| Seventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1994 (177 p.).                                      | \$7 |
| Eighth Conference, Jerusalem, 1995 (199p.).  | \$7 |
| Ninth Conference, Bethlehem, 1996 (Contained in Al-Liqa' Journal, Vol. 9/10, 1997) | \$7 |

**Miscellaneous**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Fr. Peter Madrous, <b>Paul the Apostle and the Man</b> (67 pages)   | \$5  |
| 2. Najib Nassar, <b>Under the Protection of the Arabs</b> (91 pages)   | \$5  |
| 3. Younis Amr, <b>Jerusalem the City of God</b> (152pages)   | \$5  |
| 4. Louis I. Hazboun, <b>Principles of Sociology of Religion</b> (162 pages)  | \$5  |
| 5. <b>Western Christian Zionism</b> , (43 pages)   | \$3  |
| 6. <b>Jerusalem Between Religious Freedom and Political Sovereignty</b> ,(in English) (78pages)                        | \$5  |
| 7. <b>Christian Feasts between Unity and Pluralism</b> , (96 pages).   | \$5  |
| 8. Qustandi Shomali, <b>El-Carmel</b> (534 pages)  | \$10 |
| 9. Jerusalem: <b>Palestinian Muslim- Christian Studies</b> (600 pages)   | \$15 |
| 10. Anton Shomali, <b>Collected Poem's</b> (255 Pages)   | \$7  |
| 11. Fr. Rafiq Shomali, <b>Contextualized Eastern Churches</b> (393 pages).   | \$7  |
| 12. Jamal Salsa', <b>Palestinian Poetical Message Between Religion and Nationalism</b> (174 pages)                     | \$6  |
| 13. Thiab A. Ayyoush, <b>Social Problems: An Islamic Perspective</b> (212 pages) (in English)                          | \$7  |
| 14. Sami Adwan, <b>Reality of Religious Education, both Muslim and Christian, in Palestinian Schools.</b> (404 pages). | \$10 |
| 15. Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoury, <b>Say Your Word and Go! Quick Inputs into Vital Files</b> (273 pages)                       | \$7  |
| 16. Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoury, <b>The Book of Days: In Search of the Lost Word</b> (159 pages)                              | \$7  |



# International Activities



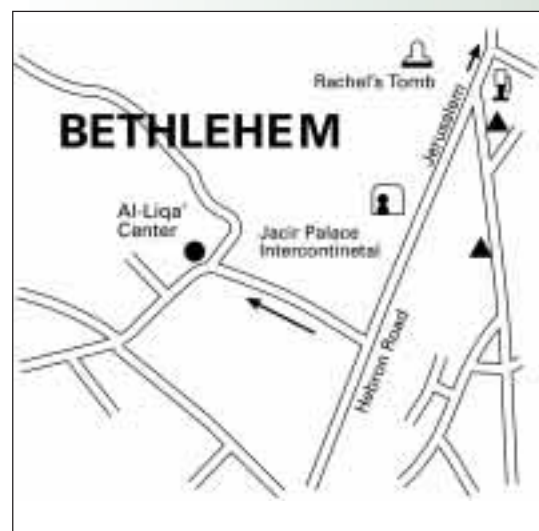
**On 18 of December 2004**, Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director of AL-Liqa' Center, was invited by the GEMONA church and municipality in northern Italy to join a conference titled "the significance of the grotto and Jesus birth". Dr. Geries explained the significance of Jesus Birth for him as a Palestinian and talked about the grotto and Jesus birth in the Eastern Christian Heritage. Dr. Shalom Zilberskbidt talked about the Jewish perspective concerning Jesus Birth and Jesus the baby. Both lecturers wished that Christmas and the new year 2005 will be a year of peace and justice all over the world, especially in the land of birth of the Prince of Peace in the Holy Land, Palestine, that the two sides Palestinian Christians and Muslims live in this land peacefully and in freedom and that they respect one another and build the future together.

**On 25 of January 2005**, Dr. Geries S. Khoury participated in a conference titled "Education for Peace" in a small town near GEMONA in north Italy. In his lecture, Dr. Geries stressed the importance of education and the necessity of changing the curriculums in the Israeli and Palestinian schools after both sides reach a peaceful solution. As far as being optimistic as a Palestinian, Dr. Geries stressed that achieving peace is a real desire for Palestinians but he is not sure about the Israeli attitude. Peace has principles and rules that should be applied and that the Palestinian people will not accept peace imposed on them that will deprive them from their national rights and their land that has been occupied by Israel since 1967; also there must be a solution for the refugees problem.



## Al-Liqa' Center

In Jerusalem, the city sacred to billions of diverse believers, a Palestinian interfaith initiative led to the establishment of "AL-Liqa' Center", a unique place of research, study and dialogue on the religious traditions, institutions and daily life of the people of the Holy Land and the region. The program includes, interfaith dialogue, Palestinian Contextualized Theology in the Holy Land, international activities, and the publication of journals, newsletters, books, and occasional papers. Patriarch Michal Sabbah, President, Board of Trustees, and Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director.



### AL-Liqa' Center's New Headquarter 54- 56 AL-Quds Jerusalem Str.

The Center is now located less than 200 meters to the southwest of Rachel's Tomb at 54-56 AL-Quds Jerusalem Street. After passing the Jacir Palace Intercontinental to the right on the Hebron- Jerusalem Rd, take a right turn at the first intersection at the end of which AL-Liqa' Center is situated on the right side of the street.