



NEWSLETTER

The Center For Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land

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EDUCATION FOR PEACE

Fr. Dr. Elias Chacour

Education should start before the school desk tops, it should begin on one's mother's lap. We shape our future through forming our children. Education goes beyond tolerance towards a welcoming acceptance of the other. It is late; but we can still reclaim time and start, today, instead of tomorrow. We can start working and writing in the hearts of our children the history we want in the future. For such education it is vital to embrace every one, old and current victims of discrimination. Also those lucky ones who are victims of no one, but risk corrupting their values with their might. Education at an early stage of life determines the future of humanity. I do believe that the good side in human beings is stronger than the hibernating evil in them. This is the message and the legacy that Pope John Paul II left for us to consider. We can create unity within this beautiful colorful world of diversity. We do not need to forget. We need to forgive. In order to counteract violence, discrimination, and terror, we need to create hope, to respect human rights, to enhance human dignity, and to respect the other's self esteem. We are not called upon to blind the world with our science and our wealth, even less with our might and weapons. "Kill and inherit" cannot be the rule of God or of civilized society. Often we seem to be obsessed, hallucinating, and mesmerized in the presence of this violence of hate culture, and of terrorism.

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AL-LIQA'S JOINT CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Celebrations in Bethlehem took place on Sunday 18 December 2005 with the presence of noted religious and lay personalities, Christians and Muslims, from Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Mr. Mousa Darwish served as the moderator.



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“TOGETHER WE FACE FUTURE CHALLENGES”

Al-Liqa’ Panel in Shafa ‘Amr

25 November 2005

“Together We Face Future Challenges,” headlined Al-Liqa’s panel which was held in the Municipality Hall in Shafa ‘Amr in Galilee on 25 November 2005. Participants included Dr. Geries Khoury, Rev. Dr. Elias Chacour, Sheikh/Professor Fadel Mansour and Attorney ‘Ali Rafe’. Moderator Ziad Shlewet introduced the panel with a brief overview of Al-Liqa’s activities in Bethlehem and in Galilee. He spoke briefly on national unity and made remarks concerning circum-stances surrounding the Shafa ‘Amr massacre.

Sheikh/Professor Fadel Mansour focused on the development of human societies up to and including the post-industrial era and pointed out that poverty and violence are the main dangers facing society.

Rev. Dr. Elias Chacour focused on Christian-Muslim dialogue which is based on tolerance in a pluralistic setting.

He quoted Vatican (1964) documents which support dialogue with followers of other religions.

Attorney ‘Ali Rafe’ stressed the prevailing mood of indifference among the people and pointed out that education at home, school, and in society is essential to counter the many ills inflicting society.

Dr. Geries S. Khoury stressed that Christian-Muslim dialogue is deeply rooted in the political and philosophical spheres and in the writings of Christian and Muslim thinkers in both the Middle Ages and modern times.

At the conclusion of the panel several personalities from Galilee spoke including

Fayza Turki, mother of the two martyrs of the Shafa ‘Amr massacre, Hazar and Dina Turki. Her emotional presentation left a deep impact on the audience.



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Rev. Dr. Atallah Hanna, who was recently promoted to the rank of Archbishop of Sabastia, spoke briefly of the joint celebrations, national unity, and on pressing problems facing Palestinians. The Mufti of Bethlehem, Sheikh 'Abd al-Majed 'Ata, stressed Islam's positive stance toward Christianity and called for cooperation, tolerance and peace.

Dr. Geris S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa, focused on national unity as a practical need and not only as a slogan. He called on Christian and Muslim religious figures to stress in their sermons the noble message of religions. In the process he protested against the interference of the United States Senate in Palestinian domestic affairs.

Rev. Dr. William Shomali, Director of the Latin Seminary in Beit Jala, reflected on the true meaning of Christmas which revolves around love and care for others, especially the poor and the needy. Dr. Mahmoud Abu Kattah presented an Islamic reading from the Qur'an and focused on Virgin Mary and the birth of 'Issa ibn Mariam (the Christ). The highlight of the evening was the outstanding performance of the Eastern Orthodox Chorus, directed by Mr. Lawrence Sammour, who enriched the celebrations with eastern Christmas chants and carols.



Dear Benefactors and Friends of Al-Liqa' Center

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

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.



RAMADAN IFTAR, BETHLEHEM

On the 14 of October 2005 leading Christian and Muslim personalities met in Bethlehem to jointly celebrate the Ramadan Fasting and Iftar dinner. Dr. Geris S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa', greeted the audience and spoke about the importance of the common meal of Iftar. This became a common activity in our community. Dr. Khoury mentioned that Al-Liqa' Center was the first to organize a common Iftar which took place in 1984. He also stressed that the aim of the common Iftar is not only a moment in which we meet and eat together, but it is a necessity which shows our mutual respect socially and religiously. It is not enough to meet and have a meal together.

As educators, politicians, religious leaders and media people we must assure our unity in every place and each time we meet. We have to criticize all phenomena which threaten our unity. We must be aware of those who are interested in sowing the seeds of religious fundamentalism, division and hate between our people.

The Mufti of Bethlehem, Sheikh 'Abed al-Majid 'Ata also stressed the necessity of respecting each other religiously and socially in the area of Bethlehem. We should not allow any one to threaten our

unity or our common living in love and peace. He also said that we should not violate the rights and the properties of others. This is what the Prophet demanded from us and this is what the holy Qur'an teaches us.



Dr. Thiab Ayyoush and Mr. Mousa Darwish, members of Al-Liqa' Board, emphasized that national unity is essential in order to rid ourselves of the occupation. They also stressed the importance of equality in front of the law. They spoke about the importance of education and the role of Christian and Muslim institutions in respecting each other and in sharing common living.

Dr. Nabil 'Adileh spoke about the importance of these joint meetings and the importance of the Christian-Muslim conferences which are organized by Al-Liqa' Center. He considered them very useful and important for our national unity and our life together.



AL-LIQA'S BRANCH ACTIVITIES IN GALILEE

Ramadan Iftar

Haifa

On the 11 of October 2005 a joint Ramadan Iftar dinner was held in Haifa. In attendance were many leading Christian and Muslim figures, both clerics and lay, from the Galilee. Dr. Geris S. Khoury, extended to Muslims his greetings and those of H.B. Patriarch Michael Sabbah, President of Al-Liqa' Board of Trustees, on the solemn occasion of the Fasting of Ramadan. In addition, Dr. Khoury talked about plans to establish a branch of Al-Liqa' in Galilee.

Fr. Dr. Elias Chacour called for the return to the simpler way of life of the rural people who treat each other as brothers.

Attorney, 'Ali Rafe' spoke of common living as exemplified by Al-Liqa' Centre. Mr. Muhammad Zaydan, former head of the Higher Arab Committee, thanked Al-Liqa' for this joint initiative and stressed the need to strengthen the national bonds that unite us.

Other personalities participating in addressing this joint celebration included Rev. Fu'ad Dagher of the Evangelical Church in Shafa 'Amr, Attorney Muhammad Mi'ari from Haifa, and Mr. Ibrahim Na'um, Dr. Hatem Khoury, Dr. Johnny Mansour, Mr. Rushdi Madi and Mr. Hanna Abu Hanna from the Galilee.



Christmas Celebrations

Nazareth

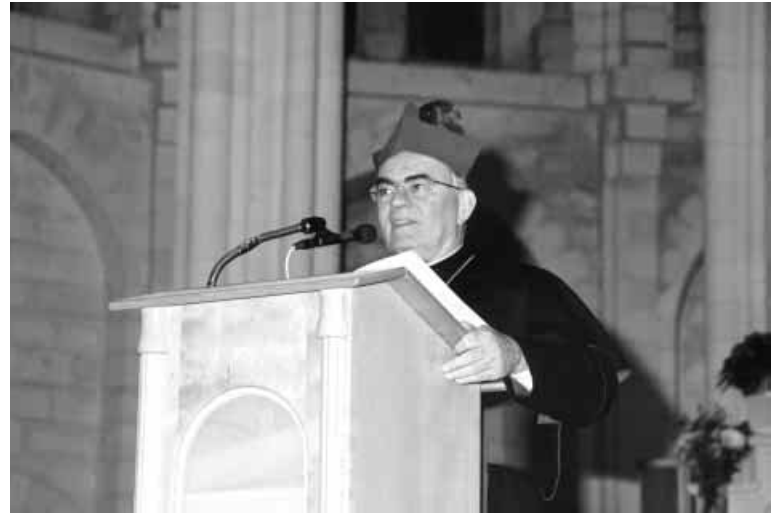
Hundreds of Christians and Muslims from different villages and cities in Galilee attended the joint celebrations in the Salesian Church in Nazareth on the 28th of December. Indeed it was an enlightening and unique scene in the church to see a Muslim Sheikh sitting next to a Bishop, both speaking of Jesus/'Issa ibn Mariam.





The Melkite Catholic Chorus from Fassouta, the Anglican Chorus from Shafa 'Amr and Miss Mary Batheesh each enriched this Christian-Muslim gathering with beautiful Christmas carols. Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa' welcomed the audience and spoke about the history of Al-Liqa' Center, its programs, activities, and publications. He mentioned how happy the Board of Al-Liqa' is, especially his president Patriarch Michael Sabbah, of the decision to establish a branch of Al-Liqa' in the Galilee in order to work on interfaith dialogue and on the identity of the church in Israel.

Bishop Bulous Marcuzzo focused on the message of Christmas which was sent by God to all humanity through his Son, Christ the Savior.



He also spoke about the meaning of love which Jesus taught us and about the concept of justice and peace.

Sheikh 'Abd al-Salam Manasrah stressed the common denominator between Christianity and Islam as seen in the Virgin Birth in the Qur'an. He also stressed the important of the common work and dialogue which aims at mutual respect, unity and our life together.

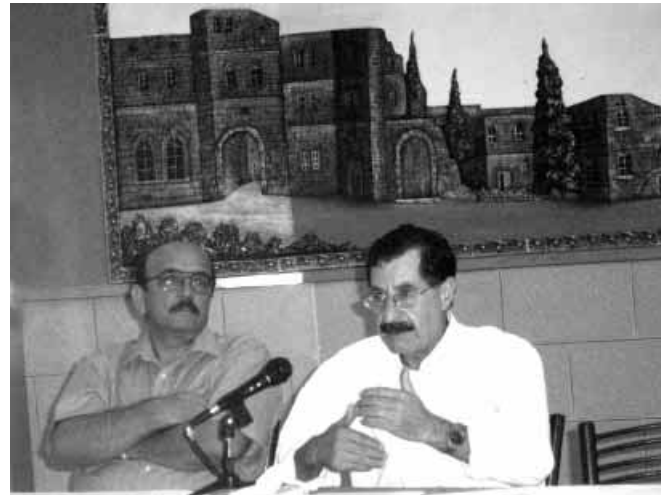
Rev. Fu'ad Dagher of Shafa 'Amr reflected on the philosophy of the Birth of Christ as it was described in the writings of Jubran Khalil Jubran. He stressed that Christmas is not a Christmas tree and decorations but the love of the poor and the needy. Attorney Mary Farah and Mr. 'Amer al-Baba eloquently moderated the joint celebrations.



AL-LIQA' ACTIVITIES

The Political Scenario in Israel after the Withdrawal from Gaza

On the 14th of October 2005, Al-Liqa' organized a large conference which attracted more than one hundred participants. Opening remarks were made by Dr. Khoury, a frequent lecturer and friend of Al-Liqa'. Dr. Aziz Haidar, examined in detail the present political scenario in Israel in which Prime Minister Sharon dominates Israeli political life and is likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable



Dr. Geries S. Khoury's Address to the Social Development Committee in Haifa

20 December 2005



Dr. Khoury addressed this joint Christian Muslim Christmas gathering on the importance of education and curriculum in furthering interfaith dialogue. He stressed that there will be no dialogue or true national unity unless the whole process begins in our homes, schools, universities, churches and mosques.

future. Dr. Haidar's presentation was followed by discussions concerning Israeli disengagement from Gaza in both its negative and positive aspects in light of Israeli policies of annexation and expropriation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank. This scenario has made the concept of a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict irrelevant and obsolete.

The presentation was followed by a rich discussion from the participants who raised many intriguing and thought provoking questions.

Board of Trustees Meeting

8 December 2005

The Board of Trustees met and listened to Dr. Geries S. Khoury's overview of the Center's activities. Following discussions the Board decided on the following:

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Al-Liqa' International Activities

Mr. Mousa Darwish and the Arab Group for Muslim Christian Dialogue The Amman Workshop

At the invitation of the Arab Group for Muslim Christian Dialogue and Common Living, in cooperation with the American Peace Institute, a workshop was held in Amman, Jordan, September 17 to 21 2005, entitled "Exchanging Views".

Participants from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, and Qatar attended. Dr. 'Abed al-Salam al-'Abbadi, Jordan's Minister of Awqaf (Endowments) inaugurated the workshop. The theme revolved around Christianity and Islam; their followers' view of man and their view of others who are religiously different from them.

Mr. Mousa Darwish, Deputy Director of Al-Liqa'



Centre, and a member of the Arab Group addressed the gathering regarding the role of universities in furthering knowledge of the other and cited examples of common living form Palestine.

Dr. Geris S. Khoury's Travels in the United States

19 October - 4 November 2005

- Dr. Khoury attended a conference sponsored by the Latin Patriarchate's Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation in the Washington, D.C. area in which Dr. Khoury addressed the issue of "Arab Christian identity in Israel."
- In Washington, D.C. he met Mrs. Karen Farrell of the National Endowment for Democracy and explored with her the possibilities of assistance to Al-Liqa' Center.
- Also in Washington, D.C., he met Dr. Qamar ul-Huda from the United States Institute of Peace

and explored the possibility of organizing joint activities as well as support for Al-Liqa's activities.

- In Indianapolis, Indiana, Dr. Khoury visited Indianapolis University and met its Vice President and faculty members from the Religious Studies Department as well as Dr. Kenneth Sheetz, Executive Director of Capital Gifts Program. Dr. Sheetz organized Dr. Khoury's program and accompanied him as he visited different institutions, churches, and friends who are

supporting the university branch in Israel, Mar Elias Campus-Ibillin.

- In Indianapolis Dr Khoury met church leaders and spoke to them about Al-Liqa' Center and Mar Elias Campus.
- In Chicago, Dr. Geries met Bethlehem's native, Dr. Iman Saca, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Saint Xavier Universtiy who arranged for him visits with faculty and students and a lecture entitled "Arab Christians and Interfaith Dialogue in the Holy Land."
- In Chicago, Dr. Khoury met with the Executive Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla and with Rev. Dr. Said Ailabouni, Director for Europe and the Middle East in the Division of Global Missions. He explored with them possibilities of

support to Al-Liqa's activities.

- In Chicago, Dr. Geries met Dr. Scott Alexander of the Catholic Theological Union who expressed great interest in joint activities with Al-Liqa in the areas of Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue.
- In Chicago, Dr. Khoury met the Senior Pastor of the Chicago Temple of the First United Methodist Church, Rev. Philip Blackwell and explored with him possibilities of support to Al-Liqa's activities and programs.

Dr. Khoury's overall travels in the United States were impressive, having met representatives of various organizations, universities and churches. Dr. Khoury felt that there are many open doors and open minds that are willing to listen, to help Al-Liqa's activities, and to work jointly with Al-Liqa' Center.

Dr. Geries S. Khoury's Travels in Italy

8 November - 15 November 2005

Dr. Khoury visited Italy at the invitation of Pax Christi. Rev. Nandino organized a lecture tour for Dr. Khoury that took him to Rome, Florence, Venice and Udine where he addressed the issue of "Interfaith Dialogue and Peace."

In Venice at a school activity against "walls" between peoples, Dr. Khoury spoke against building "Separation Walls" between peoples. Instead of walls, Dr. Khoury stressed the need for bridges. In Udine Dr. Khoury gave four

talks, two of them to students in high schools organized by Paolo and Giorgio from Caritas, and two of them in St. Christoforo Church, organized by Fr. Nicola Borgo.

Dr. Geries was very impressed with Italians and Pax Christi and their solidarity with Palestinians, for they are working daily for peace and justice and a solution to the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

CONGRATULATIONS

Al-Liqa's Board of Trustees and its President, H.B. Michael Sabbah, and Al-Liqa's working committees and staff extend their heartfelt congratulations to Al-Liqa's Board member

Rev. Dr. Atallah Hanna

on his recent promotion to the rank of Archbishop of Sabastia. We wish him God's blessings and the best of luck in his new rank.



The Board of Trustees of Al-Liqa' Center, its President H.B. Patriarch Michael Sabbah, and Al-Liqa's working committees and staff would like to extend their warmest and heartfelt greetings to Al-Liqa's benefactors and friends throughout the world and to fellow Muslims and Christians at home and abroad on the solemn occasions of the Muslim and Christian feasts: The Month of Ramadan and the Feast of Fitr (October-November 2005), Christmas (Western and Eastern Rites, December 2005-January 2006), and Al-Adha Sacrifice Feast, January 2005. We, at Al-Liqa', hope that these holy events will bring with them peace and tranquility to all people in the Holy Land, in the region, and to the rest of the world.



The Board of Trustees of Al-Liqa' Center, its President H.B. Michael Sabbah, and Al-Liqa's working committees and staff would like to express their heartfelt thanks and deep gratitude to their benefactors and friends of Al-Liqa' throughout the world whose support help to maintain the mission of Al-Liqa' and its many activities wishing them A Happy New Year.

Al-Liqa' Center

Most Recent Publications

Al-Liqa' Quarterly Review (in Arabic)

No. 3 & 4 (2005) This issue of Al-Liqa' review focuses on Al-Liqa's July 1, 2005 celebrations of the Jubilee of H.B. Michael Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and President of Al-Liqa's Board of Trustees. These celebrations were also commemorated in the message of Pope Benedictus XVI, in Patriarch's Sabbah's Golden Jubilee Sermon, and in the extracts from the writings of the Patriarch. The content includes articles on the concept of the "other" in Islam, the place of the New Testament in the philosophy and theology of the Arabs, Christian presence in the East, globalization and the Arab East: an historical reading, the commercial importance of Jerusalem in the pre-1948 era, and Christians in the Galilee. Included are other articles, documents, and a book review.

Al-Liqa' Journal

Vol.24 (August 2005) The content revolves around "the Church in the Galilee". It contains an editorial and articles focusing on churches and confessions; the mission of the church in multi-religious, multi-national and multi-cultural society; the church in Galilee: past, present and future; the church in the Galilee in the media and in education; Christian Arab presence in Palestine, and international political changes and their influence on Christian Arabs in the Middle East. The journal also includes articles on Christian-Muslims dialogue, the formative stages of Globalization and the need for reasonable solutions, as well as a report on Al-Liqa's 18th session of the Christian-Muslim Dialogue Conference.



20 Years of Al-Liqa' Quarterly Review 1985-2005

A special issue of Al-Liqa' review (vol.21, no.1) will include an index of the quarterly review for the years 1995-2005. An index of the content of the review for the first ten years, 1985-1995, appeared in early 1996. The 20 year celebrations will take place soon.

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We reduce our activities and our commitment to become fighters of evil with evil and become peace “contemplators”. Peace needs no contemplators but actors; it needs committed people and healthy societies. Peace needs the implementation of the wisdom of the Prophets: If you want peace and security pursue justice and integrity. Peace needs justice, and justice needs forgiveness and sharing. I feel privileged every morning to greet with respect and reverence four thousand students at Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Galilee. It is an act of worship to remind myself that these children, these youngsters are the most precious creatures of God. They are beautiful and precious because all are born babies in the Image and with the likeness of God. This is why they are different; they are Christians, Moslems, and Druzes. They make me discover the beauty of unity within the greatness of diversity.

This paragraph was taken from a speech which was delivered in Spain by Fr. Dr. Elias Chacour, President of Mar Elias Educational Institutions-Ibillin.

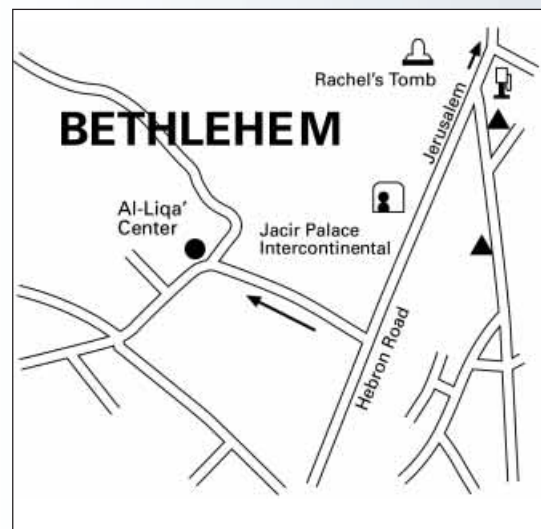
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1. The need to activate a research unit that focuses on Islam and the West, Christian-Muslim relations and dialogue, Christian Arab presence in the East, and Palestinian contextualized theology.
2. The need to activate Al-Liqa’s branch in Galilee which is a national and a social necessity. There is a dire need to establish Al-Liqa’ offices in the Galilee especially since the activities of Al-Liqa’ in the area have been numerous in the past twelve months.
3. The need to expand the current library holdings of the Center with publications concerning Christianity in the Middle East, Arab Christians, Islamic movements, political Islam, interfaith dialogue, and Palestinian contextualized theology.
4. The need for Al-Liqa’ Center to keep abreast of political developments in the world and in the Arab countries, paying special attention to issues that incite religious fanaticism and violence.
5. The need for Al-Liqa’ to cooperate with all institutions that work for interfaith dialogue and common living.



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 Michael 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.