

The Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land

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EDITORIAL

The United Nations' Recognition of Palestine as an Observer State, is a Serious Step Toward a Comprehensive Peace in the Middle East

It was a great victory for peace in the Middle East when 138 states of the U.N., voted for a Palestinian Observer State on the 29th of November 2012. The enemies of comprehensive peace did not like that step and began a tirade against Palestinians including building more colonial settlements and withholding millions of shequels that belong to Palestinians in accordance with the Paris / Oslo Agreement of 1994. Palestinian quest for peace is now very clear to all the U.N. states who voted for a Palestinian Observer State. This is one reason why so many states voted for Palestinians and why so few voted against the state.

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Christian – Muslim Dialogue Conference
24th Session, Titled

“Arab Uprisings... Where are they heading to?”

Bethlehem Hotel - Bethlehem, 18-20 October 2012

The 24th session of the conference was attended by tens of Christian and Muslim clerics, educators as well as academicians and community leaders and others from different sectors of society, women and men. Participants were from many cities and villages in Galilee, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilia, and Ramallah and from the Bethlehem area. In this conference most of the lecturers were new. Those from Gaza were not able to get permission from the Israeli authorities to attend the Conference. Nevertheless, their papers were read and discussed by the audience.

The proceedings of the conference focused on the future of Arab uprisings; Arab uprisings and transformation toward democracy in Tunisia; The Role of women in Arab Uprisings; The Impacts of Arab Uprisings on the Palestinian Problem; The Impacts of Arab Uprisings on Muslim Christian Relations; Arab Uprisings and Regional and International Conflicts. The conference was highlighted by a panel which focused on “Arab uprisings ... where are they heading to?”

The conference and conferees stressed the dire need of Palestinians to strengthen their relations, their shared living and pay more attention on the role of education at home, at schools and in churches and mosques, and in the media.

Among the recommendations of the final communiqué are the following:

1. Conferees welcomed changes that are taking place in the Arab countries with the aim of establishing a just and a democratic society. They added that external interferences, regional and international, are totally rejected.
2. Conferees expressed their pride of women’s role in society and their struggle in all aspects of life including their active role in the Arab uprisings.
3. The need to be very careful about judging the march of the Arab uprising. We need to see the results pertaining to human rights, human dignity, pluralism, freedom of worship and the protection of democracy.
4. Conferees appreciate the role of young people in the changes that are taking place in the Arab countries.

(Read more details on al-Liqa website)





Theology and the Local Church in the Holy Land Conference
(Palestinian Contextual Theology Conference - PCT) 20th Session

**“Liberation... Liberation from...
And Liberation for the sake of...”**

14-16 December 2012, Manger Square Hotel - Bethlehem

Al-Liqa' Center held the 20th session of the conference in the Manger Square Hotel, next to the Nativity Church, in Bethlehem on Friday the 14th to the 16th of December 2012. The conference was attended by a good number of educators, religious leaders and friends of Al-Liqa Center from Bethlehem Governorate, Jerusalem, Hebron and Galilee. There was a very active Islamic presence in the conference.

Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa, welcomed conferees in the opening session of the conference on the 14th of December. Fr. Ya'qoub Abu Sa'da of the local Melkite Catholic Church also gave a prayer and meditation followed by the first lecture by Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader which was moderated by Ms. Haneen Abu Sa'da. Fr. Jamal Focused on Liberation and Salvation.

In the second session of the conference in the morning of December 15th, the Melkite Catholic Bishop Butrus Mu'allim gave prayers and meditations which were followed by a lecture by Dr. Geries S Khoury which was moderated by Attorney Badera Khouryeh. Dr. Khoury focused on "Revolving around the self: causes... results and manifestations". Following a coffee break, Bishop Butrus Mu'allim gave a lecture which was moderated by Dr. Peter Qumri. Bishop Butrus

focused in his lecture on "The Christian and authority: rights and duties".

In the afternoon, H. B. Patriarch Michael Sabbah lectured on "Our presence in and for the sake of our societies", a lecture which was moderated by Ziad Shleweit of Al-Liqa' Center branch in Galilee. Following a long break in order to give conferees ample of time to attend celebrations in Manger Square to lit the Christmas Tree, Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoury lectured on "Liberating the Christian Arab from illusions and complexities".

In the third session of the Conference, Sunday the 16th, and following the morning prayer and meditation by 'Amer Baba, Dr. Bernard Sabella lectured on "A future vision of the nation and the East with its citizens". The lecture was moderated by Dr. Adnan Musallam.

The conference was concluded with a panel titled "Who are we in our societies? And what is the meaning of our presence in it?" which was moderated by Ms. Sawsan Bitar of the Sabeel Center. Panelists included Fr. Dr. Faisal Hejazeen, Rev. Saliba Rishmawi, Attorney Ibtisam Mu'allim, and Dr. Charlie Abu Sa'da.

The conference was concluded when Dr. Geries S. Khoury thanked all conferees for their lectures and lively discussion which enriched

the proceedings of the conference. He thanked fellow Muslims who attended and participated actively in the conference. The final communiqué of the conference included the following recommendations:

1. To reiterate the need to be opened to the others. A Christian is asked to liberate oneself and not to revolve around the self. The strengthening of faith is done by dialogue and cooperation and by overcoming fear and the respect of human rights and women's rights.

2. The dire need of Christian Arab to participate in building his / her society through liberating oneself.
3. The conferees stressed the need to deepen the foundation of civil society and citizenship as well as national belonging and not to resort to religious affiliation only.
4. Conferees stressed the need to encourage research, especially on the role of Arab Christians and their relations with fellow Muslims.

(Read more details on al-Liqa website)



Al-Liqa' Center's Annual Celebration of Christmas Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land **Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year 2013** **A Christmas Evening**

14th of December 2012, The Manger Square Hotel, Bethlehem

On the evening of the 14th of December a distinguished Christmas evening took place which was attended by Christian and Muslim personalities from Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Galilee. Tens of others from all sectors of society joined this celebration.

Dr. Geris S. Khoury inaugurated and moderated this distinguished gathering of talented Palestinians. Following a brief message of inspiration and meditation. H. B. Patriarch Sabbah focused on the 30 years of the march of Al-Liqa' Center and he thanked God for the thirty years of continuity and hard work. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Zeer of Hebron followed

with his Christmas message. He stressed that this gathering clearly reflects the national meaning of the Birth of Christ Who has been greatly presented in the Qur'an along with His mother Mariam.

Christmas carols and chanting were presented by the Melkite Orthodox group of the Nativity Church led by Mr. Lawrance Sammour and by the Syrian Orthodox carol group led by Fr. Butros Ni'meh.

Mrs Luna Juha also sang Christmas carols and chanting. The last presentation was by Dr. Sulaiman Al-Lousi and Mr. 'Isa Hazboun of the Anabella orchestra who were accompanied by the songs and the unique voice of Mr. Lawrance Sammour.



A Muslim Christian Conference in Bethlehem: **Together Against Racism**

Thursday, 4 October 2012
The Jacir Palace – Intercontinental Hall - Bethlehem

A conference on **“Together against Racism”** was held on Thursday 4 October 2012 at 3:00 p.m. This conference was organized by Al-Liqa’ Center in cooperation with the Learned Muslim Association in Palestine, Sabeel Center in Jerusalem, The Social Development Society in Haifa and the Wi’am Center in Bethlehem. The meeting hall was crowded with two hundred and fifty participants: religious leaders, and lay personalities from Jerusalem, the West Bank and from Galilee.

Dr. Geries S. Khoury was the moderator who introduced the governor of the Bethlehem Governorate ‘Abd Al-Fattah Hamayel whose brief remarks included special greetings from President Mahmud ‘Abbas, and the address by H.E. Sheikh ‘Ikrama Sabri the President of the Islamic Higher Council, the address of H.E. The Archbishop Elias Chaccour of the Melkite Catholic Church in Galilee, the address of H.E. Archbishop of Sabastya ‘Atallah Hanna of the Melkite Orthodox Church, and the address of H.E. Sheikh ‘Abd Al-Majeed ‘Ata, the Mufti of Bethlehem Governorate. The conference included a documented film about Muslim and Christian holy places which have been desecrated by colonial settlers. Journalist Zuheir Al-Sha’er also presented a documentary about holy places

which were desecrated. There were commentaries by those attending the conference. In conclusion, Dr. ‘Abd Al-Rahman ‘Abbad read the final communiqué of the Conference, which included some of the following recommendations:

1. The necessity of respecting the privacy of religions as being the basis for local, regional and international stability, peace and security.
2. Working on issuing a UN resolution which incriminates aggression on prophets and apostles whether by writing or drawing or sculpting or films or any other form of expression.
3. Appealing to the believers who protest against these insults to adhere to the ethical values of Christianity and Islam in order not to give the opportunity to the claims of those who accuse us of being violent and terrorists.



Study Days

The Contribution of the Educational Curricula to the Shared Living

Thursday, 11 October 2012, Bethlehem Holtel – Bethlehem

More than 160 persons of all sectors of society: religious and lay, school principals, teachers, and academicians from different areas in Palestine attended this study day which focused on the Palestinian curricula and its contribution to shared living.

The program included welcoming remarks on shared living by Sawsan Bitar, coordinator of Shared Living programs in Sabeel, Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Mrs. Hind Khoury and Archbishop Atallah Hanna.

In the first session which was moderated by Mrs Sima Al-Ghawali, Dr. Walid Mustafa presented a power point presentation about history books used in the 6th to 12th grades. The response was made by Dr. Adnan Musallam.

In the second session which was moderated by Dr. Iman Saca, Prof. Qustandi Shomali presented an examination of the Arabic language books used at the schools. Dr. 'Abd Al-Rahman 'Abbad

responded.

In the third session which was moderated by Mrs Haneen Abu Sa'da, Sister Virgini Habib presented a study of school books dealing with Christian education. Sheikh Maher 'Assaf presented a reading in Islamic education books.

At the conclusion of the study day, recommendations were adopted by participants.

(Read more details on al-Liqa website)



"The Role of Education and Religious Discourse in Shared Living"

Friday, 6 December 2012, The Bethlehem Hotel - Bethlehem

Sabeel and Al-Liqa' Centers organized this study day with the presence of more than 120 persons of all walks of life led by educators, religious persons and academicians. The Mufti of Bethlehem, Sheikh 'Abd Al-Majeed 'Ata, Director of Education in the Bethlehem Governorate, Mr. Sami Mrowa, and a representative of the military commander of the Bethlehem Governorat, Mr. Adnan Al-Nayef, also attended the study day.

Mrs. Sawsan Bitar, coordinator of Shared Living in Sabeel, welcomed those participating in the study day.

The first panel was on "The Role of Education and Religious Discourse in Shared Living", which was moderated by Mr. Mousa Darwish. The panelists were Dr. Geries S. Khoury and Fr. Dr. Faisal Hijazin.

Dr. Khoury focused on the educational curricula and shared living, and Fr. Dr. Faisal Hijazin, on his part, focused on the meeting held between him and a Christian delegation with the deputy secretary of Ministry of Education, Dr. Jihad



Zakarneh, Director of General Education, Mr. 'Omar 'Anbar, and the person in charge of private schools, Mr. Muhannad 'Abed. Fr. Dr. Hijazin put forth in the meeting the need to develop the curricula in order to be attuned with the Palestinian reality.

The second panel was moderated by Mr. Younis Jaddou'. Mrs Haifa Baramki, from Birzeit University, stressed the importance of religious discourse and the ways to utilize these texts to shared Living. She stressed also the need to introduce the subject of "ethics" in the Palestinian curricula in order to present to students an education based on openness, respect and balance. Sheikh Zuheir Al-Dab'i of Nablus focused on the importance of a tolerant religious discourse which unites but does not divide, and he stressed the role of religious discourse in strengthening national unity and



in undermining hatred and violence. The third participant, Pastor Ibrahim Nairouz from Rafidia / Nablus spoke about harmony in society and the need to select and train preachers in mosques and churches in order to stress in their messages the importance of loving and respecting the others. Furthermore, there is a need to activate places of worship for the cause of dignified living. This responsibility contributes to shared living and national unity.

At the conclusion of the conference, the participants adopted few recommendations. (Read more details on al-Liqa website)

Wednesday Evening Forums

A lecture on

The Challenges of Preserving the Palestinian Self

By Brig. 'Uthman Abu Gharbiyyeh,
Member of the Central Committee of Fateh Movement

5 September 2012

Al-Liqa Center hosted Brig. 'Uthman Abu Gharbiyyeh, member of the Central Committee of Fateh Movement, who focused on the theme: "The Challenges of Preserving the Palestinian Self". Prof. Thiab Ayyoush, Vice President of Al-Liqa's Board of Trustees, moderated the lecture. Brig. Abu Gharbiyyeh traced the setbacks that faced the Palestinians since the Camp David Peace Agreements between Egypt and Israel in 1979 and added that the present situation of the Palestinians, economically and politically, leaves much to be desired. There are many challenges that face Palestinians in their daily lives and especially the unprecedented rise in prices and in

the area of Palestinian Israeli negotiations, which have reached a deadlock.



Activities in Bethlehem & Galilee

Third International Islamic Conference on Jerusalem titled “The Problem of Relations between Religion and Politics”

17-18 June 2012, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Al-Bireh – Palestine

The Third International Islamic conference was inaugurated Sunday 17th of June 2012 by the President of the PNA, Dr. Abu Mazen (Mahmoud ‘Abbas) and Minister of Awqaf in the PNA, Dr. Mahmoud Al-Habbash.

President ‘Abbas’s address was comprehensive touching all aspects of the Palestinian problem and people. All the lectures of the conference were already printed in two large volumes totalling 1,000 pages. Each lecturer was given 15 (fifteen) minutes to present one’s topic and recommendations.



Attorney ‘Ali Rafe’ of Galillie represented Al-Liqa’ Center in the Conference.

A Panel on Fr. Rafiq Khoury’s Book, “Open Borders between Time and Eternity: Toward Contextual Theology in Our Native Soil”

Mar Antone Hall, the Latin Parish Hall - Nazareth, 28 September 2012

Al-Liqa’ Center and in cooperation with H.E. Bishop Bulos Marcuzzo and the Franciscan parish priest, Father Amjad Sabbara, held a panel in Mar Antone Hall, the Latin Parish hall in Nazareth to put forth the above-mentioned publication of Al-Liqa’.

H.E. Bishop Marcuzzo gave the major address focusing on Fr. Rafiq, his personality, style, his faith and his

commitment to his nation and to his church as well as the content of the new book. Fr. Rafiq spoke briefly thanking H.E. Bishop Marcuzzo and all those present, and he thanked Fr. Amjad Sabbara and the many lay and young people who came to such an important evening. Dr. Geris S. Khoury was the moderator of the book in Nazareth. At the end of the meeting, discussion and comments were made.





A Panel on Fr. Rafiq Khoury's Book,
**"Open Borders between Time and Eternity:
Toward Contextual Theology in Our Native Soil"**

Latin Church Hall - Shafa 'Amr, 29 September 2012

Al-Liqa' Center in cooperation with the local Churches in Shafa 'Amr held a panel in the Latin Church Hall in Shafa 'Amr to launch Fr. Rafiq's new book.

Rev. Fu'ad Dagher and journalist Ziyad Shlewet spoke in the panel focusing on the content of the book. Rev. Dagher presented the first part of book and Ziyad presented the second part of the book.

Fr. Rafiq on his part thanked the panel members and spoke about the importance of the book in order to understand deeply the aims of the local contextual theology.

Dr. Geris S. Khoury was the moderator of this event. Fr. Bassam Al-Deir, the Latin Parish priest, gave welcoming remarks as well.

Lecture titled
"Christians of the Holy Land and life together"

25 October 2012, Ramada Inn - Jerusalem

Dr. Geris S. Khoury addressed a group of Italians about Christians in the Holy Land, their churches, their rites and their rich spirituality which characterize the mother church. He focused on several challenges that face the local church including the political and economic instability resulting from Israeli occupation and the emigration of Christians, both of which are leading to a high unemployment rate and preventing people from freedom of mobility and freedom of work. Dr. Khoury stressed that there has been no persecution of Christians by Muslim as some poor souls are claiming. In case one finds problems, these latter will be of social nature which could happen between Muslims or between Christians.

Dr. Khoury encouraged the Italian group to focus on comprehensive and just peace for the people of the Holy Land, Jews and Palestinians.



Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth

7 December 2012

Dr. Gerios S. Khoury took part in a panel titled: "Kairos: Life Strategy on the Road Toward Liberation." According to Dr. Gerios, Kairos is a recognition of our Christian faith and our message in the Holy Land. Dr. Gerios reiterated Kairos' Christian stand toward violence, hatred, oppression, and Israeli occupation. It is a message that underscores the need to get rid of fear and to demand Palestinian right to attain justice and peace for all the people of the region. Dr. Gerios stressed the need to crystalize a Church document in Israel, and a Kairos for the Arab world which will take into consideration all changes that have taken place in the region and which emphasizes the role of the church and its prophetic voice in shared living when facing all these challenges hoping that this church will open itself to all the people.

International Activities

Panel titled

"Christian Arabs and the Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI"

14 October 2012, Amman, Jordan

The Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center in cooperation with the Royal Cultural Center organized the panel on Sunday, 14 October 2012. The panel comprised researchers, religious personalities and others from Lebanon, Jordan and the PNA.

Fr. Nabil Haddad, Director of the Coexistence Center, welcomed all participants and gave a brief idea about the importance of religious tolerance and life together in Jordan and in the all other countries of the region.

The panelists were Dr. Muhammad al-Sammak (Beirut), Mr. Zeyad al-Sayegh (Beirut), and Dr. Gerios S. Khoury (Bethlehem). Dr. Mundhir Haddadin (Jordan) was the moderator of the panel. All panelists emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue and life in dignity, and pointed out the importance of the visit of His Holiness to



Lebanon at this period in which many countries in the Middle East are witnessing real changes. Fr. Dr. Gabi Hashem, Director of the International Center for Dialogue – Beirut, gave the concluding remarks.

Al-Liqa' Center's Most Recent Publications

July 2012 – December 2012

Al-Liqa' quarterly review (in Arabic); Year 27, no. 3 (2012)

This volume focused on a variety of topics which comprise Al-Liqa's editorial on Christian Arab presence in Gaza as well as a detailed file on "from a faithful identity to an active presence" and included studies on Christian presence in the East, the features of a faithful, the identity of the church, the quality of Christian presence, the others and us, how to stress further rejuvenation in our church and do we have new horizons with the others?. This issue included as well documents, study of Bethlehem's touristic sector, and book reviews.



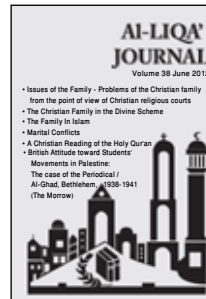
Al-Liqa' quarterly review (in Arabic); Year 27, no. 4 (2012)



This last issue of 2012 included an editorial on Christian Arabs and Pontifical Guidance and a detailed file on Arab uprisings. Studies included a sociological approach, social transformations, national facts, Arab uprisings and democracy and social justice, the educated elite and the uprisings, Arab uprisings and the Palestinian problem, Arab uprisings' impact on international relations, foreign interference in Arab uprisings,

and the impact of uprisings on Muslim – Christian relation. There was also a report on Muslim – Christian Heritage Conference of Al-Liqa'.

Al-Liqa' Journal, Volume 38, June 2012



Contents of this Volume focuses on "the family" in Christianity and Islam. Other articles include a study of British attitude toward students' movements in the British era in Palestine and a Christian reading of the Holy Qur'an.

Al-Liqa' Journal, volume 39, December 2012



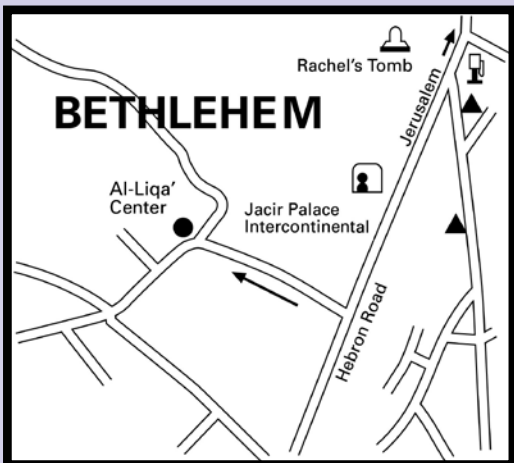
Volume 39 comprised a file on arab revolution and included several studies, essays and reports. Studies focused on the Holy Qur'an, and the Emergence of the Arabic Language Press, 1514 – 1914, with a Case Study of Printing and Press Developments in Egypt and Ottoman Syria / Lebanon.

List of Prices of Al-Liqa' Publications can be found on our website www.al-liqacenter.org.ps



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 journal, newsletters, books and occasional papers. H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah, President, Board of Trustees; and Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director.



Al-Liqa' Center's Headquarter 54-56 Al-Quds Jerusalem Str.

The Center is 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.

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The PLO's insistence on destroying the Israeli entity in the 1960s and early 1970s gave way gradually to a more pragmatic approach, more in tune with the changes in the balance of world power. Eventually, it came to endorse a two-state solution on the historical soil of Palestine. The beginning of this shift became evident in the aftermath of the October 1973 War and the start of Israeli – Egyptian peace negotiations. In June 1974 the Palestine National Council (PNC) called for the establishment of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in any part of the occupied areas evacuated by Israel.

Likewise, Palestinian leadership and the PNC seized the opportunity of the unprecedented massive national Intifada in December 1987 to declare Palestinian Independence on 15 November 1988. The Declaration states that despite the unjust U.N Resolution 181 (1947) which divided Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish, the same resolution "Still provides these conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty". Palestinian peace offensive took another turn when mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO took place in September 1993 as a prelude to the Oslo Accords of 1993. Likewise, Palestinians became an integral part of the pan-Arab peace offensive of March 2002 (reiterated in 2003, through 2012) which calls for recognition and normalization of relations with Israel on the condition that Israel agrees to withdraw from all Arab occupied areas (Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese), and to recognize a sovereign Palestinian state with Arab East Jerusalem as its capital, and to help solve justly the Palestinian refugees problem taking into consideration UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Palestinian and PLO's quest for peace is authentic. Israel needs to release all 5000 Palestinian political prisoners and to begin to withdraw to the 4th of June 1967 borders as a first step toward a comprehensive peace. It will be a good gesture that needs to be taken when discussing the final status issues: Jerusalem, colonial settlements, refugees, water and final borders.

Website of Al-Liqa' Center

www.al-liqa-center.org.ps

We hope you will have the opportunity to visit Al-Liqa's web site, and to send us your reflections