



The Center For Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land

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THE 1948 NAKBA AND THE KEYS OF RETURN

By Dr. Geries Sa'ed Khoury

The Palestinians have left their homes and the Israeli Haganna militiamen did not allow them to take food, not even bread or some fruit from their gardens. Some families even had left their children with other families who opted to remain in their land hoping that they would find somebody to take care about them. Georgette had been left by her father to live in her grand parents home as they were leaving from Mansoura to southern Lebanon and then to Dbai (Beirut) refugee camp. Georgette grew up and became a grandmother herself and each day in her life she remembers the agony she had been through and recalls her parents who were dispersed during the 1948 Nakba. Decades passed and her parents knew nothing about her. She grew up and her dream to meet with them grew as well. Relatives had left and had been shot at and nothing remained to remind her of her family. Homes had been demolished, land and trees uprooted by bulldozers to become the foundations for Jewish settlements, and the small church or mosque was used as a barn.

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Upcoming Event

16th session of the Palestinian Contextualized Theology Conference:
“WHICH THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT FOR WHICH FUTURE?”

16-18 January 2009, Bethlehem Hotel, Bethlehem

GREETINGS

The Board of trustees of Al-Liqa' Center and its President, H.B. Patriarch Michael Sabbah, as well as Al-Liqa's working committees and staff, Christians and Muslims, would like to take the occasion of the Muslim and Christian feasts: al-Fitr Feast (October 2008), Al-Adha Feast (December 2008), Christmas (both Western and Eastern rites, December-January 2008-2009), the New Year of 2009, and the Islamic New Year (January 2009), to extend their warmest and heartfelt greetings and sincere wishes to Al-Liqa's benefactors throughout the world and to fellow Muslims, Christians and friends at home and aboard hoping that these holy events and happy occasions will bring with them peace and tranquility to the Holy Land, the region and to the rest of the world.

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Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land
The Arab Christian and Muslim Heritage in the Holy Land Conference
(20th session)

“PALESTINIAN REALITY: WORRIES AND CHALLENGES”

10-12 July 2008, Bethlehem Hotel-Bethlehem

Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land held the twentieth conference for the Arab Christian and Moslem Heritage in the Holy Land in the city of Bethlehem under the title of “Palestinian Reality: worries and Challenges.” The conference called for maintaining national unity and the rejection of all attempts to break it up. It also called for joint Christian and Muslim education in Palestinian schools.

His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Head of the al-Liqa' Board of Trustees, praised the mission of al-Liqa' Center. He stated that the center works diligently and perseveringly in order to deepen Christian-Moslem dialog and brotherhood in this blessed land.

Dr. Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Chief Judge of Palestine,

talked about the historical brotherly relations between Palestinian Christians and Moslems.

The Greek Orthodox Bishop Atallah Hanna shared with the participants some of his spiritual messages, and Bishop Boutros Mu'allem talked about the necessity for a spiritual uprising among politicians especially as all their means to bring about peace and understanding among people have failed.

The three-day conference (July 10 - 12) was rich with lectures, panel sessions and animated discussions. At the end of the conference, Director of al-Liqa' Center, Dr. Geris S. Khoury, presented recommendations in which he called for reinforcing Palestinian national unity and shunning all internal strife and conflict that undermine it. In addition, Dr. Khoury encouraged moderate religious discourse and respect for the other. He proposed that

Palestinian pupils in local schools should study about both Christianity and Islam.

In a special statement to al-Bayan daily, Dr. Khoury commented on the results of the conference, "I believe that the conference was a great success on more than one level. It addressed various important issues that concern all people, including globalization, its positive and negative repercussions. The conference also talked about interpretation and interpretive judgment in both Christianity and Islam. Other topics addressed by the conference include national unity, coexistence, and deepening the concept of respect for the other."

The first lecture was titled "Challenges facing national unity" and it was delivered by member of the Palestinian National Council, Mr. Issa Qaraqe', and Sheikh Jamil Hamameh. The lecture was moderated by Mr. Mousa Darwish.

The lecturers emphasized the need for Palestinian national unity, and the end of the deep friction between Hamas leadership in Gaza and PLO's leadership in Ramallah.

In the morning of the second day of the conference a panel session titled "Local and International current challenges facing Christian-Muslim Dialog" took place with the participation of Dr. Abdel Rahman 'Abbad and Palestinian Legislative Council member Dr. Bernard Sabella. The session was moderated by Mrs. Hanadi Soudah.

The speakers stressed the rich heritage of dialogue between Islam and Christianity, and pointed out some present western negative attitude toward Islam and Muslims as seen in the negative cartoons about Prophet Muhammad.

The third panel session was titled "The role of the media in facing current challenges." Mr. Ziyad Shlewit, Managing Editor of al-Bayan weekly, talked about the progress of Arab press inside Israel and the

challenges it faces since the establishment of the state of Israel. According to Mr. Shlewit, Palestinian press inside Israel passed through two distinctive periods; the first covered the 1980s of the last century and was characterized by both commitment and opposition to authority inside the Arab society, while the second trend was pluralistic which caused a coup in the concept of challenges that became more of a commercial and recreational nature.



The journalist Miss. Nidal Rafe', who works in the CNN field investigation section in the Palestinian territories, talked about the Western, especially the American, attitude towards the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people and their suffering under the Israeli occupation. Miss. Rafe' spotlighted the Western aggressive attitude that rejects the Palestinian position and sympathizes with Israel. She leveled severe objective criticism at the Palestinian inertia in addressing critical matters and the negatives of the Palestinian society which in fact nourish the Western aggressive view towards the Palestinians.

Following Miss. Rafe', journalist Ibrahim Milhem, former Director-General of the Palestine TV station, talked about the changes in Palestinian media discourse after Oslo in which terms about peace became predominant.



This was followed by a lecture given by Dr. Mahdi Abdel-Hadi about the regional conflict in the Middle East and its impact on coexistence. He stressed regional influences and rise of alliances such as that of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. If the Arabs join this alliance their importance becomes greater. Concerning the Palestinian problem, American coming elections, internal Palestinian frictions and weakness of Israeli government minimize the possibilities of a viable peace. The lecture was moderated by Dr. Amal Jado.

On the third day of the conference two lectures were delivered, one titled “Globalization and Its Repercussions on the Palestinian Society” delivered by two lecturers from Bethlehem University Dr. Adnan Mussallam and Dr. Salim Zoughbi. Dr. Mussallam talked about the disadvantages and advantages of globalization on weak nations, especially the Arab and Palestinians, while Dr. Zoughbi talked about the advantages of globalization on world economy, calling for making good use of the advantages of globalization instead of cursing it.

The final lecture which was moderated by Fr. Dr. Ibrahim Shomali and it was on “Ijtihad in Islam and Interpretation in Christianity”. Dr. Hamzeh Deeb talked about Ijtihad (interpretation) in Islam, its fundamentals, meaning, legitimacy, ranks and conditions. Father Rafiq Khoury talked about interpretation of the Bible in Christianity, stressing that it is based on the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures and that interpretation demonstrates divine as well as human cooperation and development.

Dr. Khoury summarized and reflected on the three day conference and read the final communiqué of it.

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land held the twentieth conference for the Arab Christian and Moslem Heritage in the Holy Land in the city of Bethlehem under the title of “Palestinian Reality: Worries and Challenges.” The conference took place on July 10 - 12, 2008, in Bethlehem Hotel, and it was attended by a number

of Christian and Muslim clerics, most notably His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah and Chief Judge of Palestine Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi. The conference was also attended by a number of academics and intellectuals from local universities and other sectors of society. Participants in the conference focused on what happened and what is now taking place in the Palestinian arena, and called for comprehensive dialog because any delay might increase tension and ignite more division among the Palestinian people and have a negative impact on the Palestinian cause. Both the Christian and Muslim communities stressed the need for patience and common efforts in order to nourish hope and raise spirits of people. It is a long travail that we are living in and birth is imminent: the birth of freedom, the land and the Palestinian and Arab

individual. Together we will build a new Palestine and a new Arab world.

Additionally, participants in the conference called for creating a religious discourse that respects the three monotheistic religions and put an end to attacking the other. Participants also wished that al-Liqa' Center will hold a conference on the common factors between Arabs and the West as well as about the negative and positive relations between them. Participants highlighted the significance of religious culture in schools where pupils ought to study the three monotheistic religions. They emphasized the unity of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the Diaspora. To them the Palestinian cause is so special and efforts must be made not to melt it in the globalization pot that is becoming prevalent worldwide.

Wednesday Evening Forums

27 November 2008

“DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS TODAY: IS THIS DIALOGUE A RELIGIOUS OR A POLITICAL ONE”?

By Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoury

Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoury pointed out that the dialogue leads to life while confrontation only leads to death. Dialogue is pluralistic. It is a dialogue with God, with self, with others which lead into dialogue of religions, cultures and peoples. Fr. Rafiq noted that politicians who have entered the dialogue of religions. This causes problems for politicians exploiting dialogue to their end as seen in the dialogue of religion in the United Nations. Following his presentation detailed discussions ensued.



AL-LIQA' CENTER JOINT MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RAMADAN IFTAR DINNER

Preceded by A PANEL ON "CHARITY (SADAQA) IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY"

18 September 2008

The Shepherd's Hotel - Bethlehem

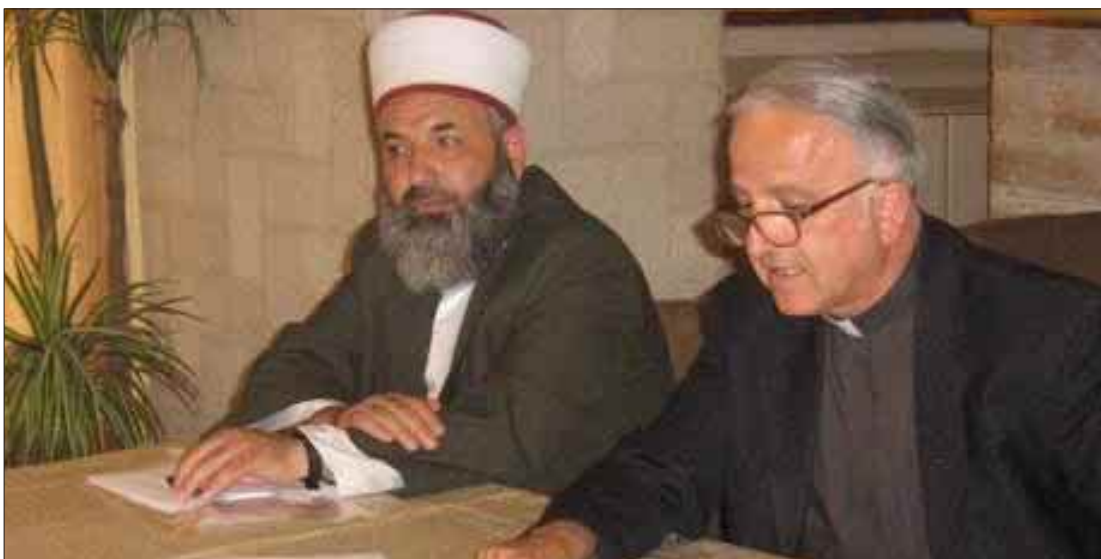
Al-Liqa' Center organized a panel on "Charity (sadaqa) in Islam and Christianity" as a prelude to the Joint Muslim-Christian Ramadan Iftar Dinner. Sheikh 'Abd al-Majeed 'Ata, the Mufti of the Bethlehem Governorate, and Fr. Dr. William Shomali, President of the Latin Patriarchate's Seminary in Beit Jala, took part in the panel which was moderated by Mr. Mousa Darwish, Deputy Director of Al-Liqa' Center. Large numbers of clerics and lay people including community leaders, academicians and Director of Education in the Bethlehem Governorate, Mr. Abdallah Shakarneh, attended this gathering.

Mr. Mousa Darwish welcomed guests and congratulated them on the solemn occasion of Ramadan Fasting stressing in the process Al-Liqa' Center's mission of strengthening brotherly ties

among Palestinians.

Sheikh 'Abd al-Majeed 'Ata, explained the concept of "sadaqa" in Islam pointing out the need for this "sadaqa" to reach all needy people in the community.

Fr. Dr. Shomali also explained the concept of "sadaqa" in Christianity and its characteristics and the need to distribute it to all needy people in a comprehensive and secret way. Discussions followed in which panel members answered many questions. Dr. Geris S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa', concluded the panel by pointing out similarity in Christianity and Islam, as far as charity (sadaqa) is concerned and he quoted one of the Church Fathers and one of the Arab Christian Theologian from the Middle Ages who said: "If you fast and you do not give sadaqa, then your fasting is null".



AL-LIQA' CENTER JOINT MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RAMADAN IFTAR DINNER

Preceded by

A PANEL ON "CHARITY (SADAQA) IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY"

22 September 2008

Abu Yusuf Restaurant - Haifa



Al-Liqa' Center's Galilee Branch organized a panel on "Charity (sadaqa) in Islam and Christianity" as a prelude to the joint Muslim-Christian Ramadan Iftar Dinner. Dr. Geris S. Khoury, Director of Al-Liqa', welcomed the large numbers of clerics, educators, academicians and Arab community leaders stressing brotherhood and love that bind all people together in this holy month. Mr. Fathi Fourani moderated the panel and spoke about the activities of Al-Liqa' Center and its diversified role in the nation. Fourani added that both Christianity and Islam stress social solidarity and the giving of charity (sadaqa) as seen clearly in the Qur'an, the Hadith and Arabic traditions. The New Testament, likewise, stresses

the importance of charity (sadaqa) as a base for social solidarity. Fourani was followed by Fr. Elias 'Odeh who focused on charity (sadaqa) as seen in the New Testament, and Attorney 'Ali Rafi' who focused on charity (sadaqa) in Islam and its nationalist human and religious significance.

Sheik Muhammad Rammal implored Christians not to emigrate while Dr. Butrus Dalleh delivered a poem for those who are fasting. Others like Nahid Khazim from Shafa 'Amr, Dr. Hatem Khoury from Haifa, Rev. Fu'ad Dagher and Dr. Nabil Sa'adi from Shafa 'Amr extended their greetings to Al-Liqa' Center and those present in this joint Iftar Dinner.

AL-LIQA CENTER'S MOST RECENT PUBLICATIONS

January - November 2008

• **Risalat Al-Liqa'**,
June 2008, no. 12: This is the Arabic language newsletter which is targeted to the Palestinian community. It reflects Al-Liqa's activities, January-June 2008.



• **Al-Liqa' quarterly review**
Vol. 23, no. 2 (2008)

This issue of the Arabic language review comprised an editorial on sixty years of al-Nakbah (Tragedy), and a series of articles on dialogue in the Qur'an and in Christianity. There were articles on "shared living", and on Christian - Muslim relations as seen by the Maronite Church. Included as well is a book review.

• **Al-Liqa' quarterly review**
Vol. 23, no. 3 (2008)

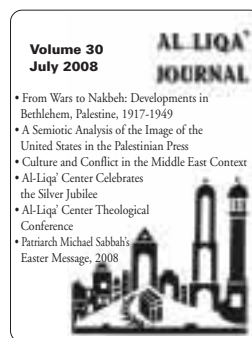
Contents include an editorial on religious and nationalist identity and a series of articles reflecting the proceedings of Al-Liqa's conference on Arabic Heritage for Christians and Muslims, July 2008. These include articles on globalization, challenges to national unity, the role of the mass media, Ijtihad (interpretation) in Islam, interpretation of Bible, and challenges to Christian Muslim dialogue. Also included are several articles on Christian presence, and on the late Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish. Documents and two book reviews are featured.



Al-Liqa' Journal, Vol. 30
(July 2008)

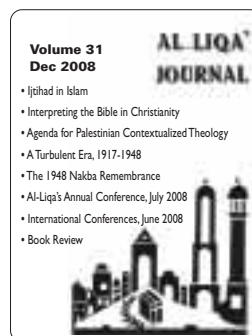
Two research articles on Bethlehem under the British and one on semiotic analysis of the image of the United States and an opinion article on culture and conflict in the Middle East are the main features of this volume.

Comprehensive coverage of Al-Liqa's Silver Jubilee celebrations, 1982-2007, is included in addition to the proceedings of the 15th Session of the Palestinian Contextualized Theology Conference, 2 February 2008. Latin Patriarch Michael Sabbah's Easter Message is included as well.



Al-Liqa' Journal, Vol. 31
(Dec. 2008)

The focus of the journal was several articles on Ijtihad in Islam, Interpreting the Bible and an Agenda for Palestinian contextualized theology. Other features include an article on turbulent times in the life of the Palestinian press, an opinion of the 1948 Nakba, a coverage of Al-Liqa's annual conferences and other international conferences as well as a book review.



Al-Liqa's International Activities

A GROUP FROM ITALY LED BY FR. MARIO VISIT

August 7, 2008



A group from Italy led by Fr. Mario visited Al-Liqa' Center and listened to a panel discussion about Muslim-Christian relations and the importance of local theology and to the church role in a life



together. After the lecture, the group asked many questions about Palestinian-Israeli relations, the Palestinian concept about peace, and Islamic-Christian relations.

THE VISIT OF AN ITALIAN YOUTH GROUP FROM THE "PAX CHRIST" ORGANIZATION FROM FLORENCE

led by Fr. Nandino

August 8, 2008



An Italian youth group from the "Pax Christ" organization from Florence led by Fr. Nandino visited Al-Liqa' Center. They met with the Center's Director Dr. Khoury, his deputy, Mr. Darwish, and



Dr. Adnan Musallam. Al-Liqa staff explained the center's goals and activities, answered the groups' questions. After that they all had lunch together in friendly and family atmosphere and as one family.



Many books and articles have been written in memory of the Nakba, and hundreds of TV interviews were conducted with elderly Palestinian civilians who talked about their enforced departure from their homes and how they had become refugees. They spoke about the stages of their pain and suffering; they said that real happiness cannot be achieved unless they return home. Um Ahmad, for example, described the journey of her suffering in simple but impressive words sixty years after her expulsion from home: "We had a front yard cultivated with grapevines and fig trees. We used to till the land and eat from its food. We lived in a house of clay but we were extremely happy. But then we tasted the bitterness when we were removed from our cities. We are still dreaming of return and we will not give up a single inch of our land."

A few days back, I heard an elderly Palestinian who left to Lebanon in 1948 say to a reporter from Al-Jazeera station: "They made us homeless. They expelled us from our homes.

They took our land. They demolished our homes and killed our children. Nothing is left to us. They want the land but not the people."

Likewise, Um Faisal relates to her grandsons and daughters about the 1948 Nakba asking them not to give up their right to their land. She said, "Before the Nakba we used to live in our cottage in peace and security. We lived among the green grass, grapevines and fig trees. We used to relax under the trees. We

cultivated our land ourselves and sell our products in the market. But one day the Jewish Haganna terrible groups came and opened machine gun fire at us. They forced us to leave our homes and land and threatened to kill and torture us if we did not. We ran away, children, boys, girls, women and men. But until today we live with the memories of our beautiful past. We will not give up until the last breath and you too my children should do the same. We have the title deeds and the keys to our homes."

Yes, they left everything and took the keys of their home hoping that one day they will return. All refugees have keys to their homes and they are transmitted from one generation to another. The father hands over the key to his son and says, "This is the key to your house." Thus the key has become a symbol for the Palestinian hope for return. It has indeed become part of the identity and culture of the Palestinian people. Indeed the false Israeli claim that "the old die and the young forget" has become a myth. The old Palestinian generation has given the young generation the keys of return as an invaluable treasure. The old do not die because the stories of their heroic steadfastness are still alive in the minds of the younger Palestinian generation. Such stories have also become essential part and parcel of the Palestinian identity and culture, kept and cherished by all Palestinians until the day of return.



AL-LIQA' CENTER'S ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

December, 2008

BETHLEHEM

Tuesday, 16 December 2008

6:00 p.m.

The Bethlehem Hotel

Bethlehem

Program

1. Panel: What do we tell our people in the Christian Season?
 - Dr. Geris S. Khoury
 - Prof. Thiab Ayyoush
2. Christmas Carols
 - The Eastern Orthodox Church's Choral Group
3. Christmas Invocation and Reflections
4. Reception

SHAFa 'AMR

In Cooperation with

St. Paul Anglican Church

Shafa' Amr

Wednesday, 17 December 2008, 8:00 p.m.

Program

1. Panel: the Message of Christmas: Now and Here?
 - Rev. Fu'ad Dagher
 - Fr. Andraws Bahouth
 - Dr. Geris S. Khoury
 - Moderator: Attorney Badira Khoury-Khourieh
2. Christmas Carols
3. Christmas Carols by Suhier Jarrous
4. The Melkite Catholic and the Anglican Choral Groups, Shafa' Amr
5. Refreshments

PROJECT ON "PALESTINIAN CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY"

A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN READING OF JEREMIAH, CHAPTER 32

A program to discuss Jeremiah, Chapter 32 is being organized by Al-Liqa' Center in cooperation with Dutch doctoral candidate Janneke Stegeman who is writing her dissertation on Prophet Jeremiah. Meetings will comprise the following:

First Meeting:

Lay people Galilee

Tuesday, 9 December 2008

Place: Faculty of Theology, Mar Elias College, Ibillin

Second Meeting:

Lay people areas the Bethlehem and Jerusalem

Thursday, 11 December 2008

Place: Al-Liqa' Center

Third Meeting:

Clerics / The Bethlehem area

Thursday, 15 January 2009

Place: Al-Liqa' Center

Fourth Meeting:

Christian Arab and Jewish Theologians

Thursday, 19 February 2009

Place: Talitha Qumi School, Beit Jala



October 30, 2008

An Italian youth group from "Pax Christi" led by Fr. Nandino visited Al-Liqa' Center where they met Deputy Director of Al-Liqa', Mr. Mousa Darwish who briefed them on the various activities and goals of the center, and discussed with the group the socio-political situation in Palestine



November 21, 2008

A group from the city of Andria, Italy's municipality, local teachers and students led by Fr. Mario visited the uprooted Galilee villages of Ikrit, Kufur Bir'am, Al-Mansura, Deir al-Qasi accompanied by Dr. Geris S. Khoury who explained the story and circumstances of these uprooted villages. And together they visited the church of Ikrit.

**DEAR BENEFACTORS AND
FRIENDS OF AL-LIQA' CENTER**

A Change in Al-Liqa' Web Site
www.al-liqacenter.org
is now

www.al-liqacenter.org.ps

We hope you will have the opportunity to
visit Al-Liqa's web site.



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. H.B. Patriarch Michael Sabbah, President, Board of Trustees, and Dr. Geris 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