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Signs of Hope from Jerusalem

On 25 March 2008 the Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Emun(means 'trust' in Hebrew)-TRUST organized an evening on religious perspectives on nonviolence in Judaism and Islam in light of recent violence in Jerusalem and the region. There was some scepticism and resistance from within both communities: Israeli Jews saying that this was not the right time to meet because of anger about the massacre at the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva in Jerusalem; Palestinians saying they could not meet with Israelis because of anger about on-going killings and the closure of Gaza.

Fifty Palestinian and Israeli residents from East and West Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, and Bethlehem came and heard the teachings from Rabbi Daniel Landes, the Director and Rosh Yeshiva of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, and Sheikh Izhak Taha, the Deputy Mufti of Jerusalem.

The meeting took place in Abu Tor, a mixed neighbourhood on the seam between East and West Jerusalem. There were orthodox Jews in black hats sitting with secular Jews and Muslims in hijab and modern dress, from all age groups. After an opportunity for people to introduce themselves to each other in one on one encounters, the invisible walls and barriers in the room disappeared.

Rabbi Landes taught from the Midrash (Biblical commentary): how Aaron would resolve conflicts by going to both wronged persons in a conflict and telling each how badly the other felt for what he had done and how much he regretted it. Then when the two would meet, they would embrace and reconcile immediately. The Rabbi said that today we have the opposite of Aaron because we have the media and our leaders continually telling us how much the other side hates us and wants to kill us and doesn't want to reconcile. He emphasized how important it is for each of us to share our experience here with our own communities, that members of the "other side" do feel badly for what has been done to us and wants to reconcile.

Sheikh Izhak Taha said that the basic teaching of the Quran is a message of love and tolerance and that this love extends to all creatures and all humanity. Those who do turn to violence are choosing the path of darkness rather than the light that the Quran offers. He shared that his grandfather told him many stories of the time when Jews and Arabs lived together here like family, how his grandmother wet-nursed the Jewish baby of a neighbour who couldn't give milk.

The sheikh sees that two nations in the Land are suffering. We should eat and dance at each other's celebrations, this will build trust and love between us, he said. We have forgotten how we used to live together.

Participants shared in small groups. Both Israelis and Palestinians spoke of frustration and despair

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about the extreme attitudes in each society and the reluctance of the majority to work together nonviolently to find solutions. Both spoke of the need to hear the other side acknowledge their own violence and express regret. Possible ways to do this were discussed.

One Israeli mother spoke of her fears for her son about to enter the army. One Palestinian with tears in his eyes spoke of his hope for the time when Israeli and Palestinian children will play together and grow up together in harmony. A young Hasidic rabbi said it all depended on the lens through which we read our religious texts, affirmation of tolerance, respect and dignity for the 'other' can be found throughout textual sources.

The evening ended with a circle of spontaneous prayers for peace. People were reluctant to leave the warmth of our oasis of trust that had been created. We are planning more such gatherings in the near future.

Written by Eliyahu McLean

Edited by Martina Weitsch

Photo by Jerusalem Peacemakers

The Stability Instrument – a successful new tune?

The Stability Instrument was the 'new' financing mechanism which the EU introduced into its financial 'orchestra' in 2007. One of the family of external action instruments, it is intended to be an effective mechanism to assist in situations where normal development assistance does not reach because of the security situation. Its fore-runner, the Rapid Reaction Mechanism was much more limited and was restricted to funding for only six months at a time. The Stability Instrument is broader in its approach and can fund actions for longer periods (for up to eighteen months for the crisis response part and longer for the other aspects).

The Stability Instrument has three priorities (though the 'crisis response and preparedness' could just as easily be split into two sections):

- Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Counteracting global and trans-regional threats
- Crisis response and preparedness (including 'building capacities for effective crisis response').

The bulk of the money – 78% of the total – goes on the last of these. And the bulk of this goes to crisis response, with the 'preparedness' element taking up no more than 5% of the total Instrument. The money can be spent anywhere in the world.

The annual report for 2007 has just come out and shows some interesting trends in terms of where the spending goes. Here, we focus on the spending on crisis response and preparedness.

In 2007, twenty-four actions have been funded under the crisis response and preparedness element of the Stability Instrument. Of these, only one related to preparedness. Twenty were specific responses to specific situations of conflict and a further three related to conflict resource programmes, mediation or policy advice. One could see those three as a sort of conflict preparedness.

The bulk of the resources (42%) was spent in African, Caribbean, and Pacific Countries; specifically, in the DR Congo, Guinea Bissau, Somalia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Chad, Sudan/Darfur and Haiti. With 18% of the funds, the Middle East was the second largest allocation. Lebanon, Israel/Palestine and Syria all received allocations.

Interesting, too, is the link (or otherwise) of spending from the Stability Instrument with other EU measures, especially because the Instrument is intended to pave the way for long-term programmes. 46% of the funds were spent in countries where there are also European Missions ongoing; that is, missions deployed in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Specifically, this is the case in the DR Congo, Guinea Bissau, Chad, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Israel/Palestine. In the latter case, the funding from the Stability Instrument is contributing to the cost of the Quartet's Middle East Envoy, Tony Blair.

What sort of work is being funded? This ranges widely from the more obvious Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration projects, Security Sector Reform, Justice Reform, Police Training, and assistance with civil administration, to the education of refugees in Syria, the

reconstruction of refugee camps in Lebanon, dialogue and pre-election activities in Zimbabwe, and electoral census in Chad, and a coca leaf study in Bolivia. All this is, no doubt, very useful work and the European Commission should be commended for this. But is it crisis response?

Finally, it is interesting to look at who is actually doing the work which the EU is paying for. The EU and EU-related bodies (such as Tony Blair) feature quite largely, implementing projects which account for 25% of the spending. The UN, with projects accounting for 24% of the spending, is not far behind. And civil society organisations are also reasonably well represented.

As a first step on the road, the Instrument seems to be delivering useful work, implemented in a variety of ways and seeking some degree of coherence and complementarity with other EU activity. On balance, quite a good start.

Martina Weitsch

Neil Endicott Joins QCEA

I'm delighted to have been appointed Policy Officer on the new Energy Security, Climate Change and Conflict project. QCEA's work in this area could not be more timely with oil prices spiralling to unprecedented levels, and with the publication of more alarming reports which suggest that the effects of climate change are likely to be more severe than many had anticipated. We are certainly on the verge of a major shift in the way we generate and use energy, and it's brilliant that QCEA wants to influence the nature of that shift.

On a personal level, I will also be undergoing a major shift in relocating to Brussels. Over the past year I have been working on energy issues for a Member of the UK Parliament, which has involved shuttling to and fro between Westminster and his Birmingham constituency. I'll be happy now to be based in one place, and I'm looking forward to getting to know Brussels, with its rich history, architecture, food, beer – and eccentricity! When I visited the city previously I discovered a whole shop dedicated to honey; the Clockarium (a museum of the art deco ceramic clock!); surrealist painter René Magritte's old house (now a museum), and an ornate restaurant named after Shakespeare's jolly drunk Falstaff. Of course I will need to brush up my French to engage fully with the quirky side of Brussels, but I'm really looking forward to the challenge.

I'm most excited though about working on an ambitious and important project at a critical time for policy-making in Brussels, and in national capitals around Europe. The Quaker contribution to the energy problem could be invaluable.

Neil Endicott

Geopolitics and Climate Change – a new mantra?

Late April was one of those periods when there was suddenly a whole batch of events in Brussels, all tackling the theme of 'Geopolitics and Climate Change'. In light of the new project QCEA is about to embark on, Martina Weitsch attended two of these to get a feel for what the mood in political circles is on these issues.

First, this is not an entirely new issue, but the seriousness which is accorded the subject would indicate that no-one this side of the Atlantic is really in doubt that there is such a thing as climate change.

Second, the immediate reaction seems to be: what security issues does this raise (for us)? The list of speakers at such events highlights this. The first of the sessions (a mere afternoon, organized by the Institute for Environmental Security and the Swedish Defence Research Agency at 'The Centre' – a Brussels-based think tank) was addressed principally by Peter Halden, who has just published a book on the Geopolitics of Climate Change.

He was also one of the main speakers at the second event, organized the following day by the Madariaga Foundation, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the European Peacebuilding Liaison

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Office.

Both events were characterized by a number of key features:

1. There were few (if any) people from countries more likely to be affected by climate change (though the Arctic region was represented through an NGO active there); there were no speakers from Africa and only one from Asia (Japan).

2. There was an unspoken undertone that it is already too late to do anything about the causes of climate change; we have to adapt to it.

3. There was a clear tendency to look at how other people (poor people, people in the developing world, in China, etc.) could adapt to this – and to some extent how we might help them do that – but there was virtually no reference (except from isolated voices in the audiences) that we have to do something about the root causes right here and right now.

Looking in this context at the recent communication from the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, which makes no references to changing the way we behave, changing our use of energy and other resources or looking at the world through the lens of global security, it is clear that we have an uphill task if we don't want to face the prospect of the debate about the geopolitics of climate change being yet another chance to change which has been missed.

Martin Wentsch

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