# Religious Contributions to Peacemaking

## When Religion Brings Peace, Not War

**Edited by David R. Smock**

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# Introduction

The post-September 11 world is seized with the dangers of religious extremism and conflict between religious communities, particularly between two or more of the Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The threat of religious extremism is real and well documented.[1] The connection between religion and conflict is in the process of being thoroughly explored, however, to the extent that hyperbole and exaggeration are commonplace. In the popular mind, to discuss religion in the context of international affairs automatically raises the specter of religious-based conflict. The many other dimensions and impacts of religion tend to be downplayed or even neglected entirely.

The contribution that religion can make to peacemaking—as the flip side of religious conflict—is only beginning to be explored and explicated. All three of the Abrahamic faiths contain strong warrants for peacemaking.[2] There are past cases of mediation and peacemaking by religious leaders and institutions. For example, the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches mediated the short-lived 1972 peace agreement in Sudan. In South Africa, various churches were at the vanguard of the struggle against apartheid and the peaceful transition. The most dramatic and most frequently cited case is the successful mediation the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio achieved to help end the civil war in Mozambique in 1992.[3]

Repeatedly citing these cases as the main points of reference distorts the reality of religious peacemaking. Most of the cases of religious or faith-based peacemaking are less dramatic in their outcomes. Also, religious peacemaking is becoming much more common, and the number of cases cited is growing at an increasing pace.

The field of religious peacemaking is also maturing. With more sophisticated reflections of its growing experience, a body of knowledge is developing. I made an earlier attempt to reflect on this experience in the book I edited titled *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002). Some of the leading thinkers and practitioners in the field, including Marc Gopin, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and David Steele, contributed chapters to that volume. The book contains an analysis of the keys of success in interfaith dialogue as a mechanism for resolving violent conflicts. It lifts up the unique elements of religious peacebuilding, with a particular focus on apology and forgiveness. It also emphasizes the importance of keeping issues of social justice front and center, so that religious peacebuilding does not merely make the participants feel better.

There are a number of other important contributions to this literature.[4] When communal identities, particularly religious identities, are key causal factors in violent conflict, traditional diplomacy may be of little value in seeking peace or conflict management. Douglas Johnston, president of the International Center on Religion and Diplomacy, has identified conditions in several conflict situations that lend themselves to faith-based intervention:

- religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or both parts to the conflict;
- religious leaders on both sides of the dispute can be mobilized to facilitate peace;
- protracted struggles between two major religious traditions transcend national borders, as has been the case over time with Islam and Christianity; and/or
- forces of realpolitik have led to an extended paralysis of action.[5]

Johnston also identifies the attributes that religious leaders and institutions can offer in promoting peace and reconciliation, including:

- credibility as a trusted institution;
- a respected set of values;
- moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments;
- unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to rehumanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict;
- a capability to mobilize community, nation, and international support for a peace process;
- an ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement; and
- a sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise debilitating, obstacles.[6]

By way of example, African peacemaker Hizkias Assefa, emphasizes the commendable role of religious leaders as an asset in peacemaking. Such religious leaders are particularly effective in working together for peace when they are from different faith communities. When the faiths explore and practice common values, such as justice and compassion, in public life, religious leaders can be an inspiration to others. Gerrie ter Haar summarizes Assefa's contention as:

> "Bringing the spiritual dimension into the peacemaking process can create access to the more deep-seated, affective base of the parties' behavior, enabling them to examine critically their own attitudes and actions. People's conflict behavior is often based on more emotional considerations and thus may not be changed simply by rational negotiation processes and subsequent agreements. Cognitive decisions and commitments, he argues, do not necessarily translate into feelings and actions."[7]

Religious resources are contained in the four main elements of which religions consist. Haar identifies these elements as: religious ideas (content of belief), religious practices (ritual behavior), social organization (religious community), and religious—or spiritual—experiences. These dimensions can all be used in the service of peacemaking.[8] Two critical elements in religious life that are centrally important to peacemaking are empathy and compassion, and the value of tapping into these attributes is readily apparent in effective religious peacemaking.[9]

The development of studies and practice relating to the connection between religion, conflict, and peace is paralleled by United States Institute of Peace (USIP) program development on religious peacemaking. In 1990, USIP established a program on religion, ethics, and

human rights led by David Little, now a professor at Harvard Divinity School. That program focused on compiling case studies on the sources and nature of religious conflict in such countries as Sudan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine. Several publications resulted from these case studies, including books on Sri Lanka and Ukraine regarding conflict between the faith communities. Overall, these studies viewed religion principally in terms of creating conflict.

After David Little retired from USIP in 1999, the Institute decided to continue prioritizing religion in relation to international conflict and peace, but decided to shift the emphasis from religion as a source of conflict to peacemaking. This shift fully acknowledged the contribution of religion to conflict, but lifted up the peacemaking potential of religious leaders and institutions. Working with local institutional partners, USIP's Religion and Peacemaking Program has collaborated in religious peacemaking in Nigeria, Sudan, Israel and Palestine, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Macedonia, and Indonesia. The emphasis is on peacemaking when two or more Abrahamic faiths are in conflict. In some cases, USIP's efforts have focused on helping believers reinterpret their religious principles in ways that contribute to peaceful coexistence with adherents of other faiths.

This *Peaceworks* builds upon and goes well beyond the book, *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, which presented general principles to guide effective interfaith dialogue as well as profiles of some of the leading organizations in the field. This report provides a series of case studies addressing specific religious conflicts through a variety of methodologies. Some of the cases describe dramatic successes, like the Inter Faith Mediation Center mediating peace between Christians and Muslims in some of the most strife-torn regions of Nigeria. Others tackle some of the most intractable conflicts in the world, such as the Alexandria process among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian leaders working to establish a religious peace track in Israel and Palestine. The analysis of the Iraqi Institute of Peace shows how the organization has grappled with the most critical issues currently facing a religiously fragmented Iraq. Not all the cases presented here describe dramatic success stories, but even the less decisive cases provide experiences and lessons that are instructive for future religious peacemaking in other places.

All of these cases explore projects by organizations that have been USIP partners in religious peacemaking and have received USIP financial support. Two of the cases (Kashmir and Sudan) describe projects undertaken prior to the Institute providing financial assistance, but all the other projects have been collaborative efforts with USIP. Presenting these case studies describes some of the richest material on this topic and also illuminates the Institute's involvement in this field.

This is not an analysis about interfaith dialogue in the traditional sense of members of different faith communities meeting to simply tell their stories, share their religious convictions with each other, or seek common religious understanding. Rather, the cases presented here are stories of religious communities and leaders joining together to resolve religious conflicts that are at least partially rooted in religious conflict.

Religion in many parts of the world is contributing to violent conflict, although exaggerated in many cases. This is well documented and broadly accepted. Usually disregarded, however, are opportunities to employ the assets of religious leaders and religious institutions to pro-mote peace. Traditional diplomacy has been particularly remiss in its neglect of the religious approach to peacemaking. The cases described in the following sections illustrate the creative contributions that religion can make to peace in places like Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Macedonia, Nigeria, and Sudan. As these cases illustrate, religious approaches to peacemaking do not provide a panacea, but can complement secular peacemaking productively. This *Peaceworks* is meant both to demonstrate the value of religious contributions to peacemaking, and to extract lessons about what is and is not effective.

The following sections describe and analyze religious peacemaking in Kashmir, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, and Macedonia. Though all employ religious approaches, these cases illustrate several methodologies. The Kashmir case uses interfaith dialogue. The Israel/Palestine project describes an effort to develop a religious track to peace as a complement to diplomatic/secular negotiations. The Iraq example describes the establishment and operation of the Iraqi Institute of Peace to promote interfaith comity in that strife-torn country. The Nigeria cases describe training religious leaders in peacemaking, and mediating between Muslims and Christians successfully in Plateau State to end bloody conflict. The Sudan case describes both religious peacemaking between two ethnic groups in Southern Sudan and a project to improve Christian/Muslim relations in Southern Sudan. Lastly, the Macedonia piece describes efforts to establish an interfaith council to promote peace among Macedonia's faith and ethnic communities.

# What Faith-Based Diplomacy Can Offer in Kashmir

*by Daniel Philpott and Brian Cox*

As faith-based intermediaries in a land that *The Economist* has called "the world's most dangerous neighborhood," we were not encouraged when, at the start of one of our seminars on reconciliation, a participant rose to launch a volley of invective against his rival ethnic community. Our enraged orator was a Hindu Pandit, a member of an ethnic group that fled their homes fearing the attacks of Muslims shortly after violence broke out in the Kashmir Valley in 1989. They settled in squalid camps in Jammu, where Hindus are a majority.

At the end of the three-and-a-half-day seminar, our attention was naturally piqued when the same man stood up again before the participants, but with a different message. He apologized to Muslims for his insensitivity to their suffering in the conflict, and forgave them for their violence against Hindus. What had elicited the change? The man had experienced telling his story to Muslims for the first time. The seminar allowed him to understand the complexity of social justice, and to come to terms with the historical wounds of his community, ultimately moving him to embrace apology and forgiveness. All this was accomplished in an atmosphere of religious ritual and reflection. We learned that Muslim members of the seminar leadership team had stayed up with him into the wee hours of the morning to hear about his suffering and to express remorse for the plight of the Pandits. Might the transformation of this Pandit's heart bear an important resource for high-level peace negotiations?

Over the past eighteen months, new possibilities for negotiating the end of the war in Kashmir have emerged. In February 2004, former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharaff committed their countries to comprehensive peace talks. Meanwhile, the Indian government has begun to talk with Kashmiri separatists. In recent months momentum has accelerated. In February 2005, the two states established a bus service across the Line of Control (LOC) that separates Indian- and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, an important symbol of their willingness to negotiate. Now, they are stepping up the pace of their talks. Progress is essential: the conflict in Kashmir has taken the lives of somewhere between 30,000 and 80,000 people, and is the most likely source of a nuclear conflict in the world today.

Peace in Kashmir, however, will not come easily. Pakistan has long maintained that in 1947 India illegally seized the part of Kashmir it now controls, and that Kashmiris are entitled to a plebiscite to determine whether all of Kashmir will accede to India or Pakistan. If Pakistan were to compromise on some of these claims, it would likely face the violent internal opposition of Muslim militant groups. For its part, the Indian government maintains that Kashmir is not a disputed territory; it is a legal state in the Indian federal union, one whose sovereign member-

ship requires no plebiscite. India views the LOC as a legitimate international border. India further insists that Pakistan must also cease supporting cross-border terrorism.

Most difficult of all are historical wounds. Muslim patriots nurture communal memories of thousands of martyrs who died for the cause of *azad,* or freedom, and of decades of rigged elections, denials of democracy, and human rights abuses at the hand of the Indian government. Kashmiris loyal to India also remember the thousand lives lost, many of them civilian, at the hands of Muslim militants.

Activists, analysts, and officials have proposed scores of schemes for a settlement, involving varying arrangements of borders, sovereignty, power-sharing institutions, and economic transfers. It is highly uncertain whether or not negotiation on these issues alone can overcome long memories and still distant positions. Even a comprehensive settlement may fail to endure, as Bosnia, Angola, Northern Ireland, and Israel all attest.

Something else is needed. What diplomats often overlook are resources for peace outside of official channels. For example, Dennis Ross, chief U.S. negotiator of the Israel/Palestine 1993 Oslo Accords, commented in a speech in 1999: "[I]f there is one area that has been neglected but needs to be worked on between the Israelis and the Palestinians, it is the people-to-people component . . . Peace will not last if it is made only by the negotiators and the leaders." Ross's words apply in Kashmir as aptly as they do in Israel/Palestine.

Herein lies the importance of the transformed Hindu Pandit. Through a seminar rooted in religious faith, he experienced a change in heart and began to restore his relationships with Muslims. Repeated and integrated into a strategy for an entire country, this kind of initiative can be called faith-based diplomacy. If Ross is correct, then faith-based diplomacy, like other unofficial "track two" efforts, may well deserve the attention of official, "track one" diplomats.

Track two diplomacy—that which is practiced by actors outside of official "track one" channels—cannot replace the power and authority that government officials bring to negotiations. Yet actors who are unchained from official objectives and national interests can exercise a freedom that allows them to create initiatives for a lasting peace, often in unconventional and surprising ways. Faith-based actors will be particularly important in regions like South Asia, where religion is integral to culture and politics. Still, how might faith-based diplomacy—the experience of the Pandit and scores of others like him—specifically create "capital" for the peace process between India and Pakistan, particularly as it involves Kashmir?

Faith-based diplomacy, in fact, can yield two kinds of assets. One is the transformation of the hearts of grassroots and civil society leaders. As Ross suggests, a sustainable settlement depends vitally on such leaders. Their choice to become either actively supportive, violently oppositional, or passively indifferent to a settlement may well determine whether it succeeds. The strategic role of civil society has indeed informed some of the great faith-inspired political movements of the twentieth century—the American civil rights movement, India's colonial independence, and the movements that toppled authoritarian regimes in Poland, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Though their targets were structures of injustice rather than com-

munal conflict, their strategy is portable: impart to cadres a vision of justice rooted in faith that can motivate a political movement.

In our work in Kashmir, civil society leaders have come to embrace a vision of reconciliation through a seminar in which they reflect on what their own faith traditions teach about subjects like conflict resolution, social justice, healing historical wounds, and forgiveness, and on the meaning of these teachings for themselves and their communities. Since September 2000, working on behalf of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, we have conducted eight of these seminars, involving more than 400 members of Kashmiri civil society on both sides of the LOC. The results have sometimes been dramatic, as in the case of the Pandit, and of a Muslim man who forgave militants eight years after they had killed his father and brother and had riddled his own body full of bullets. More common are simpler expressions of a will-ingness to embrace and promote reconciliation like these from a recent seminar: "Religion is often blamed for conflicts. This is a whole new concept. Reconciliation is in the religious texts. We can study that and bring reconciliation to this place. My heart has been changed."

Such transformations alone, though, are not enough. Civil society leaders need support to connect and coordinate with each other. The networking of civil society leaders committed to a common cause is a second asset for peace that faith-based diplomacy begets. In his book, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), political scientist Ashutosh Varshney demonstrates that in Indian cities where Hindus and Muslims are connected through civil society organizations, communal riots are much less likely to occur. A key tool in this networking is spiritually based friendships, ones created through conversations that reach beyond positions and arguments to the sharing of experiences of the loss of loved ones, property, homes, businesses, and careers. Rooted in mutual concern about spiritual welfare, such friendships create a level of trust that allows effective cooperation.

In Kashmir, our seminars have created linkages across civil society organizations by giving rise to a core group of committed leaders and a network of cell groups that meet together for mutual encouragement in reconciliation. The resulting connections are sometimes surprising. At recent conferences in London and Geneva, leaders from both sides of the LOC who had never met before discovered a common commitment to faith-based reconciliation formed through their involvement in the seminars. We have also established spiritual friendships with various top political, religious, and military leaders.

## Recommendations for the Kashmir Peace Process

How can these assets of transformation and connectivity be brought to bear on the Kashmir peace process? We propose an organic linkage between civil society initiatives and track one negotiations. It can be forged through creating two Kashmir Diplomacy Roundtables, one on each side of the LOC, that would connect faith-based diplomacy in civil society to the work of track one officials involved in the peace process. Roundtables can be fruitful in three key stages of a settlement: attainment, maintenance, and deepening.

Roundtables would convene regularly—quarterly or semi-annually—and include diplomats from foreign ministries and related liaison offices, representatives from Kashmiri civil society, and nongovernmental organizations involved in faith-based diplomacy. To minimize the risk of participation, the roundtables could meet privately, away from media exposure, and on separate sides of the LOC. Over time, though, links between the roundtables could be forged across borders, creating a new dimension of support for the peace process.

The story of the transformed Pandit suggests one way in which a roundtable contributes to a settlement and its sustenance. The return of the Pandits to their homes in the Kashmir Valley is one of several thorny problems in the negotiations. The Pandits' need for security in the Valley, compensation for lost property, and reconciliation of the hostilities all stand in the way of an agreement, and will likely hamper its implementation. Over the past four years, several Muslim core group members have traveled to the Pandit settlement camps to meet with their leaders, speak at community meetings, hear the Pandits' stories, apologize for their fate at the hands of Muslims, invite their return, and offer assistance in the transition. By and large, the Pandits have welcomed the visits, and have showed an increased willingness to return. Through the roundtable mechanism, official negotiators now might become linked with these track two efforts, gaining confidence that the Pandit issue can be resolved and discovering allies and expertise for this resolution.

The Pandit issue, of course, is only one of many that divide India, Pakistan, and the several factions of Kashmiris. It does illustrate, however, how track two efforts informed and motivated by faith can be linked with track one efforts. Roundtables can create this link and make policymakers aware of civil society reconciliation initiatives, which can encourage them to lend their support to these initiatives and to cultivate the assent of civil society and grass roots leaders for an agreement. Several steps are recommended to create and to implement these roundtables:

- Faith-based intermediaries should convene two concurrent Kashmir Diplomacy Roundtables respectively for participants in India and Pakistan.
- The purpose is to exchange ideas regarding the assets that faith-based civil society initiatives bring to negotiating and to sustaining a peace settlement.
- Faith-based intermediaries should meet quarterly or semi-annually.
- The roundtable goal should be to develop and to carry out concrete initiatives that are important to negotiating and to sustaining a peace and that require their cooperative efforts, such as the return of displaced Hindu Pandits to the Kashmir Valley.
- After each of the two roundtable groups have gained experience working together, they should begin to meet with the other on both sides of the LOC to explore joint initiatives.

Multiplied over several issues and regions, the work of roundtables will bring crucial, but too often overlooked, assets of civil society leaders into the peace process, as well as the fresh, but underemployed, logic of reconciliation. Together, these amount to an innovative approach to resolve international conflicts.

# Bringing Religious Leaders Together in Israel/Palestine

*by Canon Andrew White*

For years diplomats and politicians have sought ways to resolve the conflict between Arabs and Israelis—the children of Ishmael and Isaac. To some degree, this conflict has involved the people and land as with the covenant first revealed to the patriarch Abraham. Despite the duration of the conflict and the myriad of peace negotiations, including Oslo, Taba, Wye River, and Camp David, none of the negotiators have given serious attention to the religious dimensions of the conflict. References are facilely made to the "Holy Land" without truly acknowledging the religious elements. This is true both of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators as well as the mediators, including the United States.

Because the Middle East is one of the most religious regions of the world, religion's connection to the Middle East conflict is inevitable. In fact, religion is playing an increasingly important role. Religious dimensions are critically important in such contentious issues as control of land, Jerusalem, and other holy places.

As Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said, "[To] Christians this is the Holy Land but to us as Jews this is the Promised Land." It can be added that to Muslims this is *waf* (Islamic territory). Thus, this is no ordinary place to the three Abrahamic traditions. Complicating this is the fervent belief of millions of evangelical Christians around the world—particularly in the United States—that Jewish control of all of the Holy Land is required to fulfill Biblical prophecy.

Rabbi Michael Melchior, minister for Jewish diaspora affairs in the Israeli Cabinet, has said that all previous peace plans lacked religious legitimization. Partly for this reason, key Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders from Israel and Palestine joined forces to promote a religious approach to peace. The effort commenced at the very beginning of the second Intifada in 2000. These leaders, including a chief rabbi from Israel, the most important Palestinian sheikh, and the Latin patriarch in Jerusalem, gathered in Alexandria, Egypt in January 2002. The goal was to work out a joint commitment to promote peace, and to oppose violence and terror.

## The Alexandria Process

The meeting had the backing of both the president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, and the prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. It was chaired by the then archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and the grand imam of the Al-Azhar Islamic University, Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi. Negotiations continued around the clock to achieve agreement on the wording of the document. The Archbishop described his chairing of the meeting as the hardest task he had ever undertaken. At the end of the second day, all parties reached an

agreement and signed the Alexandria Declaration. For the first time, representatives of all the faith traditions in Israel and Palestine signed a declaration calling for a religiously sanctioned cease-fire and an end to both violence and demonization of the "other."

Despite the fact that this was an historic document and an historic day, this was the beginning, not the end, of a complex process. This process has unfolded against the backdrop of increasing violence both Palestinian militants and the Israeli Defense Forces committed. Also, part of the declaration called for a permanent committee to implement the declaration. This committee has met monthly to move forward what became known as the Alexandria process. These meetings have continued despite the difficulties encountered in obtaining permits for the Palestinians to travel to Jerusalem for the meetings. One offshoot of this process was the central role that I played in the ultimately successful mediation that ended the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. I was asked to become involved because of the religious dimension of the standoff at the church.

A major hope for the Alexandria process is that it will serve as a religious track for the anticipated Middle East peace process. This track recognizes the need for the peace process to engage both religious and political leaders. It does not seek to replace the political process, but rather to complement it. The process is complex and has involved the establishment of various centers in both Israel and Palestine, which seek to make known the religious dimensions needed in peacemaking. For example, the Adam Center created in Jerusalem and parallel centers are being established in the West Bank and Gaza to promote interfaith peace. Together they will be known as the Israeli-Palestinian Institute of Peace.

Despite the offer of funding from the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the Alexandria process principals have not accepted funding from these local authorities. The United States Institute of Peace, the British and American governments, Coventry Cathedral, and the Church of Norway have funded the process. It has been very expensive to maintain. This complex and significant peace process requires a lasting presence to achieve peace even when the situation seems most difficult.

The journey is still long, but those involved will not give up the struggle for peace. At a meeting in Europe, someone in the audience asked one of our leading Palestinian sheikhs, Tal El Sadr, what he was doing to promote religious peace. Sheikh Tal El took Rabbi Melchior's hand and said, "Rabbi Melchior is my brother and we will walk this long and difficult road together until we find peace. My job is to pull up the thorns on the road and to plant flowers in their place." Sheikh Tal El was one of the founders of Hamas, and now he is dedicated entirely to finding peace.

The belief that people can change is fundamental to any effort to promote peace. If people cannot change, then there is no point in this work. That is why we must not just talk to nice people; in most instances it is not the nice people who cause wars. Our challenge is to

engage with some of those who are responsible for the perpetuation of violence or, if not them, then those who can influence them. One such effort was a gathering we organized at Al-Azhar University in Egypt with twenty-five Palestinian religious leaders who did not previously have reputations as peacemakers. We were able to elicit their support for the Alexandria Declaration and the religious peace process. The process has entailed a continuous effort to expand the network of religious leaders supportive of the Alexandria Declaration and of religious peacemaking.

"If there is no peace among religions there will be no peace amongst nations," writes Hans Küng, president of the Global Ethic Foundation. The Alexandria process in Israel/Palestine has helped inspire similar efforts at religious peacemaking in both Nigeria and Iraq. Proclamations of religious peace modelled on the Alexandria Declaration have been signed in both Kaduna, Nigeria, and in postwar Iraq.

## Commitment to Peace

Religious peacemaking in Israel/Palestine is arduous. It requires a long-term commitment. We spend time in the region each month just encouraging the different partners to stay involved. Palestinian delegates struggle to gain permits to enter Israel to attend key meetings.

We often face opposition to our efforts. The opposition comes from many different sources, not least from among religious leaders themselves. There is also political and diplomatic opposition. These opponents are often hostile because they feel threatened by our efforts to do what should be their work or what they have failed to do. Yet at other times, these same people have provided us immense support.

The search for peace in the Middle East is a highly complex and difficult process. It is filled with joy and sadness. The religious dimensions of conflicts are growing internationally; therefore, the religious track to peace is more important than ever. It takes time, money, and an enduring commitment. A third party, trusted by all sides, is often an essential catalyst. As stated, it has not been possible to enjoy the support of all our partners in all situations. However, peace in the Middle East will come, but only when the religious and political leaders are willing to put aside their differences and to work together for lasting peace in a land where the very capital is called the City of Peace. Fortunately, the surge in recent optimism about the progress toward peace has also generated new appreciation for the importance of the religious track in peacemaking.

# Establishing the Premier Interfaith Organization in Iraq

*by Canon Andrew White*

Despite the obvious problems involving Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity, contacts with the British Foreign Office and the U.S. Department of State following the defeat of Saddam Hussein revealed that religion and religious peacemaking were not high on their agendas. At that stage, only the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and various private individuals saw the need for religious peacemaking in postwar Iraq. A letter from the British Foreign Office stated that the priority had to be resuming public water and electricity services. However, within days of receiving that letter, my office at the International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral received a message from the British government indicating that religious and tribal issues were impeding the resumption of basic public services.

Early on, the occupying forces decided that the Ministry of Religious Affairs, or *Aw Qaf*, was compromised, and thus would not be re-established within the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). This denied the CPA ready access to religious leaders, and it would take time to form these relationships. It was therefore fortunate that for the previous five years, I had been working closely with many of Iraq's religious leaders. These relationships proved to be vitally important in our effort to promote religious reconciliation in the postwar period.

Particularly important was my relationship with the Ayatollah Hossain Al Sadr. Many pivotal meetings took place with him. Having been one of the persecuted Shia majority leaders, Ayatolla Al Sadr now had new prominence. In a meeting soon after the war, he identified the need for an institute of religious tolerance. The Alexandria Declaration experience in Israel and Palestine demonstrated that key Iraqi religious leaders should sign a similar sort of document to promote religious peace. In other countries, effective interfaith organizations already existed, which could benefit from outside support. In Iraq, however, no such organizations existed, and given the tense nature of relations among Iraq's religious communities, it was imperative to establish such an organization.

My colleagues and I spent many days visiting important religious leaders to gain their support for this initiative. Although most were very positive, many were also skeptical. Some, particularly Sunni leaders, concluded that I was an undercover agent for the Central Intelligence Agency trying to make them admit guilt for the developing insurgency. When they realized that I was a close friend of some of the prewar Sunni leaders, their attitudes began to change. It also became evident in this process that the Sunni minority were feeling increasingly marginalized. This led us to make it a key priority to encourage Sunni religious leaders to promote the restoration of Iraq, as well as reconciliation among the religious communities. Many Sunni religious leaders were afraid that if they were seen working with us, they would be targeted for violence. Sadly, this proved to be true. While we were working energetically to convince an

important Sunni leader to return to Iraq, the home of a fellow sheikh was bombed because he had been part of a delegation of Sunni leaders we took to meet CPA leaders.

## Creating the Iraqi Institute of Peace

Work on the foundation document for religious reconciliation culminated in an event on February 23, 2004, at the Babylon Hotel in Baghdad funded by the British government. Chaired by Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, a Shiite member of the Governing Council, the meeting attracted a wide array of religious and tribal leaders. Debate focused on how to ensure that Iraq not fall prey to deep sectarian divisions. The document was eventually signed and became known as the Baghdad Religious Accord. Those present pledged to establish a Centre for Dialogue Reconciliation and Peace. The meeting and document were only the beginning, however.

Religious divisions deepened, principally between Sunni and Shiites. Sunni religious leaders felt threatened by the "debaathification" process, which they interpreted as targeting the Sunni leadership. A complex process of sustained interreligious dialogue followed. This was not the nice interfaith encounter often experienced in the West. It was, and continues to be, interreligious dialogue at the cutting edge. In Iraq, it is a matter of life or death. They do not meet to say nice things to each other in the safety of Western suburbia. In Iraq, dialogue is often painful; there are shouting and tears. In the end, however, greater understanding and a renewed commitment to the search for peace usually result.

Formed after the signing of the Baghdad Religious Accord, the Centre eventually became known as the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP) based in an impressive facility in Baghdad. Fadel al-Fatlawi became the first executive director and Mowaffak al-Rubaie is chair of the board of advisors. Even the selection of a site was problematic because each religious community wanted it located in their own area. To ensure security at the opening of the IIP, thirty-nine armed guards had to be present to protect the dignitaries. This was not the usual scenario for opening a center for peace, but this was Baghdad, one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

IIP's leaders established task forces to promote its basic objectives.

- The **Women, Religion, and Democracy Task Force** has addressed such questions as: How do women fit into the new Iraq? What is to be the role of religious women? What can be done to end domestic violence against women and the law that allows multiple wives?

- The **Interreligious Dialogue Task Force** seeks to create a new environment conducive to dialogue. Previously, there was an unnatural truce among religious communities based on mutual fear rather than understanding and respect. Little, if any, real dialogue or encounter occurred.

Interreligious dialogue is still very difficult, but IIP promotes the idea that each community must view the religious other as they see themselves. Interim Prime Minister Allawi looked to IIP as the principal adviser to the interim government on interreligious matters. When the Sunnis threatened to boycott the elections in early 2005, IIP took the lead in trying to convince Sunni religious leaders to support participation in the elections. IIP organized a conference for 200 Western Region tribal leaders and Sunni clerics aimed at renouncing violence in the region. IIP has also provided forums for disaffected Sunnis to participate in Iraq's constitution writing. IIP has engaged the rebellious militia of Muqtada al-Sadr, nephew of Ayatolla Hussein al-Sadr, in a process of dialogue at regular meetings in Sadr City. Out of these meetings IIP produced some of the ideas that led to the cessation of violence in Sadr City. After Christian churches were bombed, IIP convened Christian and Muslim leaders to strategize about how to reduce the violence.

- The **Media Task Force** addresses the politically and religiously divisive impact of the Iraqi press. This task force has sought to help the press understand the negative impact of much of its current reporting and the positive role that the media can play in promoting peace.

- The **Youth and Young People Task Force** aims to ensure that the generation approaching maturity adopts the message of tolerance, understanding, and peacemaking. A key challenge is helping religious leaders adopt a new approach toward young people.

- The **Conflict Resolution Task Force** has been one of the most active by necessity. It has had to deal with the multiple components of the ongoing conflict, as well as work to obtain the release of the many hostages taken since April 2004. During 2004–2005, the task force succeeded in obtaining the release of several hostages, both Iraqi and foreign. However, many more hostages have been killed. This has been particularly hard on IIP's staff as they feel they have failed in saving those hostages.

- The **Human Rights and Religious Tolerance Task Force** addresses past human rights abuses of the Saddam era and current violations of human rights. Although a number of organizations, including a Ministry for Human Rights, are addressing human rights, IIP's special role is to focus on religion, particularly discrimination against particular religious communities and minorities. The task force aims to learn lessons from past abuses to prevent future reoccurrences. IIP has set up regional offices to address these concerns.

IIP was thus primed to confront some of the most vexing issues facing contemporary Iraq. The attempt to create a peace respected by both religious and secular Iraqis has been a huge challenge. Winning the war was easy compared to gaining the peace. Iraq has shown that as many resources need to be invested into peacemaking as into waging the war, or even the work of postwar reconstruction. USIP and the British Foreign Office have provided very significant support to this endeavour in terms of funds and the provision of advice, logistical support, and training. However, sufficient resources for peacemaking have not been forthcoming. The work has just begun, and it may appear as if the battle is being lost, but the Iraqi colleagues at IIP will not give up until the peace is won.

# Mediating Between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State, Nigeria

*by David R. Smock*

Tens of thousands of people have perished in Nigeria over the last five years due to violence between Christians and Muslims. The worst of the violence has occurred in Plateau State. The most recent Christian-Muslim conflict in Plateau State occurred in Yelwa-Nshar, in the Shendam local government area, where nearly 1,000 were killed in May 2004. When I visited Nigeria in November 2004, I witnessed several mass graves for Muslims and one for Christians, with each grave containing 100 bodies. The killings in Yelwa-Nshar provoked reprisals in both Kano State and Southeastern State. To subdue the unrest in Plateau State, 25,000 soldiers and security personnel were deployed. The administrator of Plateau State convened a peace conference that resulted in recommendations for resolving the conflicts, but the Muslim community rejected them.

To characterize these conflicts as Christian versus Muslim is only partly accurate. Religious identities frequently overlap with identities of ethnic groups, local people (primarily Christian), and migrants (primarily Muslim). In Plateau State, Muslims tend to be better off economically than Christians, generating class conflict. Conflicts also arise over land ownership, cattle rearing, and political power. Even when religion is not the most basic cause of conflict, it is frequently used to incite either or both sides to mob violence.

Although Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria are usually tense and too frequently violent, a local evangelical pastor and an imam have been forging peace in Yelwa-Nshar and other parts of Nigeria. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) offers advice and financial support, but theirs is truly an indigenous effort.

## Religious Peacemaking Negotiations

The story of Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Ashafa is itself a narrative of religious peacemaking. In 1992, they fought on opposite sides of a religious conflict. Wuye lost his right arm, and Ashafa lost his spiritual teacher and two cousins in a Muslim-Christian clash in Zongon Kataf. In 1995, they recognized that their two faiths both contain warrants for peace. They established the Inter Faith Mediation Centre, and committed themselves to work collaboratively to promote interfaith reconciliation. In 1999, they coauthored a book titled, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (Lagos: Ibrash Publications, 1999), which describes their experiences and sets out the biblical and Koranic mandates for peace. Since then, they have helped bring religious peace to the troubled city of Kaduna. With USIP support, they have trained many religious youth leaders to be peacemakers, as described in the next section.

At the invitation of the administrator of Plateau State, in November 2004 Wuye and Ashafa carried their message and skills to Yelwa-Nshar. They gathered key leaders for five days of sharing and negotiation. This event was the first time the two communities were brought together for a face-to-face encounter. As facilitators, Wuye and Ashafa used a combination of preaching and conflict resolution techniques. The most remarkable feature of the process was the pastor's frequent quotes of the Koran and imam's references to the Bible.

The atmosphere at the outset was tense and confrontational. By the end of the third day, however, the two sides agreed on the core issues that provoked the killing. On the fourth day, they addressed each of these issues. The first issue was the Christian complaint that Muslims, who migrated to the area from Northern Nigeria, failed to respect local traditions and leaders. To buttress their claim, the Christians leveled specific charges.

The principal Muslim leader responded to these charges by agreeing that all of them were valid, and that the behavior of the Muslims was unacceptable. The Muslims then apologized to the Christians and sought their forgiveness. This unexpected response stunned the Christians. In turn, they asked the Muslims to forgive their unacceptable behavior. Tears flowed on both sides.

On the final day, the two sides worked through all the remaining issues, either agreeing on a resolution or on a process to find a resolution ultimately acceptable to both sides. They drafted a peace affirmation, which was subsequently shared with the two communities. The participants prepared the following Peace Affirmation:

> In the name of God, the Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we the representatives of the Muslims and Christians of various ethnic nationalities in Shendam local government area of Plateau State who have gathered here pray for true peace in our community and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed that deny the right to life and dignity.
>
> 1. LEADERSHIP: We the representatives of this community hereby acknowledge the paramountcy and rulership of His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam. We condemn the use of derogatory names to the paramount ruler by anybody within the community.
>
> We hereby resolve that His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam be addressed by his title and be acknowledged and respected as such. We acknowledge that lack of central leadership in Yelwa had contributed to the disharmony in Yelwa community. We resolve that the issue of chieftaincy of Yelwa be referred to Shendam traditional council for urgent steps to be taken, without prejudice to the accepted and approved method of the government.
>
> 2. RELIGION: We hereby affirm our belief and faith in the sanctity of all religious places of worship, whether it is a Mosque, a Church or a Shrine.

We condemn in strong terms the desecration of all places of worship, killings in the name of God, and call on all to refrain from incitement and exhibition of religious sentiments and or the instigation of such sentiments for selfish ends.

We resolve to create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust in one another.

We pledge to educate our young ones to embrace the culture of respect for these values.

3. ETHNICITY: We acknowledge our ethnic and tribal diversity. We condemn in strong terms their negative application in our day-to-day life.

   We resolve that our ethnic and tribal diversity should be a source of our unity, strength and also a source of our economic and social development.

4. PROVOCATION: We acknowledge the existence of the use of derogatory names toward each other in the past.

   We condemn in strong terms the use of derogatory names to each other. We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from this. We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from the use of such derogatory names like 'Arna', 'Falak Muut', Jaap nhaat Yelwa, Gampang, etc. as perceived to be derogatory by groups concerned or affected.

   We resolve to refrain from the use of the media to cast aspersions and give incorrect and misleading information about our community. We call on the media to always cross check and balance information they publish in relation to our community.

5. INTIMIDATION: We acknowledge and condemn the unruly behavior of our youth due to high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and exploitation of the youth as thugs and hanger on by politicians. We call upon all stakeholders, i.e. religious, community and political leaders, to put hands on deck to reverse this trend.

   We also resolve that the use of parallel markets in Yelwa-Nshar and the conversion of houses into market square in Yamini be referred to the local government council.

6. INJUSTICE: We acknowledge and condemn the conversion of residence and places of worship into markets and other uses. Having so observed

we are appealing to the parties concerned to in the name of God vacate those places for their rightful owners.

7. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)/MISSING PERSONS: We note with concern that some of our brothers and sisters are still at large having been displaced. We therefore appeal to the authorities to take adequate steps to ensure their return and necessary rehabilitation. We also resolve that a joint search committee be constituted between the local government council, the Shendam traditional council and the law enforcement agents for the search of the missing members of the community.

8. GOVERNMENT ROLE ON EVEN DEVELOPMENT: In view of the prevailing circumstances existing in our community, i.e. the non-functioning government structures and organizations like NITEL, Ministry of Agriculture (M.O.A.), Plateau Agricultural Development Project (P.A.D.P.), Water Board, Electricity, Schools and Primary Health Care (P.H.C.), we passionately call on the government to resuscitate these institutions as they were prior to the crises in the community.

9. CONCLUSION: We resolve to work collectively with the security agencies to maintain law and order in our communities.

## Celebrating Peace

On February 19, 2005, several thousand people celebrated the peace agreement, including many of those who had fled their homes the previous May and now felt sufficiently safe to return and resettle. The governor of Plateau State and many other dignitaries attended and declared their support for the peace settlement.

Only time will tell if this peace will hold, but the two sides amazed themselves at the reconciliation they achieved. The Yelwa-Nshar experience demonstrates that even the bloodiest religious conflicts in Nigeria can be addressed creatively. Moreover, progress would not have been achieved if the pastor and the imam had not combined both religious exhortations with well-tested conflict resolution techniques. The reconciliation process in Yelwa-Nshar instructively parallels the reconciliation the pastor and imam experienced ten years previously.

Wuye and Ashafa subsequently turned their peacemaking attention to the city of Jos, capital of Plateau State, which has experienced comparable religious violence. After three days of interactions between representatives of the Christian and Muslim communities, a similar peace accord was reached and signed. With USIP support, they have also worked in the towns surrounding Yelwa-Nshar to train youth, women, and elders in religious peacemaking, and to resolve incipient conflict to avoid repeating the past violence in Yelwa-Nshar elsewhere.

# Training Peacemakers: Religious Youth Leaders in Nigeria

*by Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movel Wuye*

Over the last two decades, Nigeria has experienced a succession of ethnoreligious and socio-political crises that have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and millions of dollars worth of property. Deep-rooted anger and hatred are widespread. These tend to be implanted by the elites, who in turn manipulate the most vulnerable within the Nigerian population, namely the youth, to engage in destructive acts. Economic deprivation and corrupt leadership have contributed to the violence. Militia groups using religious or ethnic slogans for recruitment and mobilization easily attract unemployed young people.

Alert to the early warning signs of a crisis that could have materialized during the 2003 election, the Inter Faith Mediation Centre swung into action to prevent this potential catastrophe. Empowered by a contract from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), a proactive strategy was developed to help young religious leaders confront and revise their stereotypes, phobias, misconceptions, and prejudices. As a result, nonviolent behavior, interdependency, and collaboration replaced their previous perspectives.

The venue of Kaduna was carefully and strategically chosen because it is the nerve center of the North, a place where politicians experiment with political schemes. It is said that when Kaduna sneezes, the country catches a cold.

Participants were carefully selected from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. They hold positions of influence among their peers and have the capacity to escalate or de-escalate crisis situations within their constituencies. They are commanders in religious groupings. Also, both politicians and religious leaders respect them. It was imperative that we hold the program before the elections in order to reach the following goals:

- transform religious youth from being in the vanguard of violence to instruments of peace by exposing them to conflict resolution skills;
- increase understanding and improve relationships between Christian and Muslim youth nationwide;
- set up a network of peace advocates among religious youth and extend religious dialogue to the grassroots; and
- establish conflict monitoring and de-escalation structures in all six geopolitical zones.

Nigerians are known for their religious passion, which in some instances leads them to kill in God's name. However, after thorough exposure to scriptural references in both the Bible and the Koran relating to religious mandates for peace, the participants unanimously condemned killing in the name of religion.

The format of the workshop entailed two days of intrareligious dialogue, during which Christians and Muslims met separately. Topics discussed during the intrareligious sessions included: the concept of neighbor, the rights of nonbelievers in monolithic religious communities, respect of religious minorities, and their common beliefs and practices.

## Intrareligious Reorientation

Both the Christians and the Muslims participated in separate discussions. Pastor James Movel Wuye and Rev. Bitrus Dangiwa facilitated an intrareligious session for Christians. This intrareligious session enabled Christian participants to discuss issues freely, and to express their fears as well as their expectations about meeting with the Muslims. They feared that the Muslims would be insincere, and that there would be violent disagreements between the Christians and Muslims. The facilitators managed to allay these fears. Participants were encouraged to live by the dictates of their religious beliefs based on the fruits of the spirit (forgiveness, love, endurance, peace, and respect). Participants were also encouraged not to find fault with the Muslims, to listen carefully and empathetically, to dialogue, and to offer apologies for wrongs Christians committed. They were also urged to speak the truth in love. For their part, the Christian participants expressed their concerns about the Christian community in Nigeria. Among these were intolerance, ignorance, lack of true love, denominational differences, unfaithfulness, sectionalism, covetousness, domineering attitude by the rich, pride, hypocrisy, prayerlessness, influence of culture on religious practices, and lack of unity among Christians.

Similarly, the participants in the Muslim intrareligious sessions expressed fears that the Christians would distort the facts. They were also concerned there would be long arguments, confusion, and misunderstandings that would undermine the success of the workshop. Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Imam Muhammad Sani Isah reassured the Muslim participants, and cited relevant Koranic verses to buttress their assertions. They explained the imperative of interfaith dialogue by quoting from the Koran. During this session, the Muslim participants expressed a number of issues of great concern especially to Nigerian Muslims, including ignorance about Islam among both Muslims and Christians, competition for leadership within Muslim communities, verdicts issued in Muslim courts without full understanding of sharia law, discord and animosity within the Muslim community, lack of obedience to the teachings of the Prophet, and illiteracy and poverty.

## Interreligious Session

To initiate the interreligious session, the four facilitators—two Christian and two Muslim—introduced ice-breaking exercises, set ground rules for the discussion, and reached agreements on other issues, such as setting aside times for Muslim prayers, which has not always been settled amicably in Christian-Muslim dialogue. To help build community, the Christian and Muslim participants were moved from their separate hotels to a single hotel with adjacent

rooms. This, however, had some participants fear the other group might attack them during the night. Participants had mixed expectations for the joint sessions—ranging from simplistic beliefs that all their differences would be settled to pessimism that nothing would be accomplished. Senior religious and government officials were invited to attend at key intervals as a strategy to consolidate progress and to set the stage for potential joint follow-up activities among the participants.

The techniques the facilitators employed included stating positive and negative sentiments about the other faith group, discussing misconceptions and stereotypes, and identifying steps for a productive, ongoing dialogue. The Christians said that Muslims respect and honor their Muslim culture, have a sense of unity, are prayer conscious, have impressive foresight, and are generous. On the negative side, Christians said that Muslims are self-centered, very aggressive, lazy, and sycophantic. Muslims said that Christians cooperate effectively with each other, have foresight, and are well organized, industrious, and economically enterprising. Their negative views on Christians included the view that Christians have a deep hatred of Muslims and blackmail them deliberately. They also felt that Christians are programmed to take the opposite view of Islam on issues, and they are uncompromising.

The facilitators then addressed the participants' common misconceptions and stereotypes of each other. Both groups were surprised and pleased to hear the other side saying positive things about them, along with the negatives. This exercise generated intense interaction between the two faith groups, preparing them for open and intimate dialogue. As the dialogue progressed the participants identified several conditions for successful dialogue, both in this setting and more generally in Nigeria.

- Both parties should strive to learn the basic tenets of each other's faith.
- They should be sensitive to each other, approach inflammatory issues with care, and respect each other's religious values.
- A nationwide interfaith center should regularly assess issues that divide the religious communities and monitor incipient conflict.

## Muslim-Christian Joint Communiqué

At the conclusion of the five-day interfaith workshop, the participants issued the following joint communiqué:

1. We identified causes of Nigeria's religious conflicts as: lack of tolerance and respect for each other's faith and practices, ignorance, failure to forgive, lack of understanding, lack of dialogue, rumor mongering, godlessness, lack of patience and restraint.

2. Resolve that in handling conflicts, both Christian and Muslims need to pray for one another, exercise patience and restraint, respect each other's faiths and holy books, be willing to forgive and pursue peace, be honest and sincere and transparent with each other.

3. Recommend that a central interfaith body be established with branches in states, local government areas (LGAs) and wards to monitor and evaluate interfaith dialogue in Nigeria.

4. Resolve to see and love each other, unconditionally as brothers and sisters, showing goodwill at all times.

5. Resolve to educate and enlighten our respective adherents, especially at the grassroots, about the true tenets of the other's faith.

6. Recommend that Muslims and Christians freely continue to preach and propagate their respective religions as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution.

7. Recommend that we shun religious bigotry in politics.

8. Resolve to cultivate a culture of nonaggression at all times.

9. Resolve to promote equity, fairness and justice even at the expense of our respective communities.

10. Call on the media to avoid biased and inciting journalism and to be objective and truthful in their reporting particularly as it relates to matters of religion.

11. Recommend that an interfaith media monitoring unit be established.

12. Recommend that guidelines for interfaith dialogue be published and circulated.

13. Resolve to avoid using aggressive and abusive language [as well as] avoid finding fault and being confrontational.

14. Enforce basic human rights and redress of wrongs through compensation.

15. Resolve to ensure a peaceful and successful civilian-to-civilian transition come April 2003, for the survival of our nascent democracy in Nigeria.

16. Muslim and Christian youth resolved to cooperate with the government to checkmate and expose perpetrators of violence in the name of our faiths for punishment according to the due process of law.

17. Express concern about the failure of security services to make prompt and decisive responses to early warning signals of violent religious eruptions.

Some believe that the dialogue among Nigeria's youth also helped tremendously in reducing violence during and after the April 2003 elections. The number of people affected by this workshop far surpassed those who participated directly. For example, one participant has subsequently influenced a network of thousands of followers. The workshop will have an impact on those who are followers of these youth leaders. After returning home, some of the participants established interfaith centers in their regions of residence, and other efforts have been made to promote interfaith peace.

The presence of members of the press and the resultant publicity in both the electronic and print media also broadened and extended the impact. Furthermore, the reduction of hostilities in most of the conflict prone states following the workshop indicates that the entire program was a big success. Moreover, the renewed government involvement and support for various interfaith initiatives in some Nigerian states is another positive outcome.

# 6

# Intrafaith and Interfaith Dialogue in Southern Sudan

*by Emmanuel LoWilla*

Religious peacemaking has been notably successful in southern Sudan. Religious leaders took the lead in building interethnic peace among the Christians and the animists, who adhere to traditional faiths. More recently, Christian and Muslim leaders have worked to achieve reconciliation between Christians and Muslims living in southern Sudan.

Civil war set the Sudan afire in 1955, cooled between 1972 and 1983 after the Addis Ababa peace agreement (mediated by the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches), and reignited again in 1983. A peace agreement was finally signed in January 2005. This lengthy war has generally been interpreted as a conflict between the dominant, more developed Arabized Islamic North against the less developed, predominant Christian and animist African South. This is an over simplification, however. It is more accurate to say that the division lies between northern Muslims and southern Christian and traditional believers. This still disregards other sources of division and tension over access to resources, such as land and oil.

Though religion is not the sole or even principal source of division between the North and South, religion has nevertheless been used to perpetuate the war, particularly by northern government leaders. This has generated considerable mistrust between Sudan's Christians and Muslims. The religious issue became especially prominent after September 1983 when President Numeiry abruptly decreed the enactment of sharia as state law without any regard to Sudan's non-Muslims.

Islam and Christianity have historically coexisted peacefully in Sudan. In the sixth century, three major Christian kingdoms existed in Sudan, Makurra, Nobatia, and Alwa. After Arabs brought Islam to Sudan in the year 641, Christians and Muslims signed treaties and lived peacefully together. It was during only more recent history that sharp divisions and conflict developed.

Given the religious dimension to the conflict and the way religion has been exploited to divide Sudan's population, it has become essential for people of different faiths to come together to speak openly about their desires, concerns, and hopes for peace and justice in Sudan. The efforts of the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) with its partner organization, Reconcile, to facilitate interfaith dialogue should be viewed against the backdrop of their earlier efforts to promote reconciliation among peoples in the South through the people-to-people peace process.

In 1991, at the height of their military success, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) experienced a split within its leadership. The two factions were SPLM/A main-stream, based in Torit and led by Dr. John Garang de Mabior, a Dinka, and SPLM/A–United, based in Nasir and led by Dr. Riak Machar, a Nuer. This split resulted in fighting between the two armed factions, as well as seven years of conflict between Nuer and Dinka populations. The perpetrators raped women, abducted children, and stole cattle.

In 1998, NSCC brought together Nuer and Dinka tribal leaders in Lokichoggio, Kenya. The topic for discussion was "Why do we fight each other?" To help end the internecine fighting among southerners, the tribal leaders recommended a larger and more representative gather-ing, including women and youth. The follow-up meeting was held in Wunlit as a conference in 1999. The Wunlit conference ended the bloody conflict between Dinka and Nuer. Some of the abducted children and looted cattle were returned, and some of the forced marriages were dissolved. This conference provided the participants an opportunity to share their pains and joys, and to resolve the issues that divided them. Various approaches were employed, including modern mediation techniques and traditional confidence-building measures. For instance, before the conference, traditional leaders visited each other's villages to become acquainted. During these visits they washed each other's feet and carried each other on their shoulders in order to convey humility and a willingness to reach out to the other side.

During the conference, the facilitators engaged in religious exhortation. Moreover, partici-pants read from the Bible, particularly passages dealing with reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace. At the conclusion of the conference, traditional rituals were performed. Participants slaughtered a white bull whose blood signified in both Dinka and Nuer traditions that an agreement had been sealed. Anyone who broke the covenant would be cursed by the bull's blood. With few exceptions, the agreements reached at Wunlit have been honored.

Due to the success of the Wunlit conference and subsequent efforts to promote reconciliation among southerners, the NSCC gained confidence in its peacemaking methodology. NSCC concluded that through using its three techniques of conflict resolution, traditional rites, and appeal to religious conviction, reconciliation can be achieved. The NSCC then decided to pro-mote interfaith reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in anticipation of the end of the civil war between the North and South. The New Sudan Islamic Council (NSIC), represent-ing Muslims in the South and other marginalized areas, initiated this project, and invited the NSCC to host a meeting for Christians and Muslims living in SPLA-controlled areas. After extended debate, NSCC's member churches recognized that Muslims needed to be accepted as full partners in southern Sudan and other marginalized areas. Dialogue was recognized as a means to promote reconciliation. The NSCC viewed this project as supporting the peace negotiators working to bring agreement between North and South. In the Sudanese context, religious leaders and institutions can help achieve a sustained peace.

During the three-day interfaith conference in July 2004, the NSCC realized that interfaith dialogue can reduce ignorance about the religious beliefs and traditions of the other side. Through greater mutual understanding, we can learn to live peacefully with each other and

to resolve our differences nonviolently. Moreover, when new tensions arise, we can return to dialogue. When Christian and Muslim leaders interact with each other, their followers can learn how to interact creatively and nonviolently as well.

## Conference Agreement and Recommendations for Peace

By the end of the meeting, the participants agreed on several key points, namely the following.

■ Pursuit of justice and peace for Sudanese people requires affirming interfaith spirit and cooperation, as well as building understanding and respect for diversity towards a shared vision of harmony and peace for Sudanese people.
■ Common space is needed for both Christians and Muslims in southern Sudan and other marginalized areas to work together on their common and religiously inspired desires for peace, greater understanding, and reconciliation within Sudan.
■ Dialogue requires not mere tolerance, but acceptance and mutual respect of others' unique way of life.
■ Unifying through diversity and working together for peace and justice in Sudanese society is of paramount importance.

The participants recommended that (1) an interfaith platform be established to strengthen relationships and to build confidence among religious leaders in southern Sudan and other marginalized areas, and (2) capacity building in peacemaking skills should be organized for religious leaders at all levels. They also recognized their need to organize a Christian-Muslim dialogue throughout the country, especially between southern Christians and northern Muslims. These interfaith efforts can help normalize relations in a peaceful Sudan so that mutual trust and confidence between the religious communities can grow.

## Conference Lessons Learned

Several important lessons emerged during the discussions. The exchange was cordial in large part because all the participants were African, including the Muslims. The Arab-African divide that differentiates so many Christians and Muslims in Sudan was not a factor. When racial differences reinforce religious differences and the racial factor is introduced, the level of suspicion and hostility increases significantly. Many participants, particularly Christians from the North, asserted that because of racial prejudice, Arab Muslims are unwilling to reconcile with Christians. Although they may convey the appearance of openness to change, this is only a tactical maneuver. Christians contended the Muslims revert to their belief in their own superiority when their position is stronger. Illumination of the racial factor occurred in part because Muslims and Christians from Uganda, all of whom are African, participated in the conference. As the racial factor is not present in Uganda, interfaith relations are much warmer than in Sudan. The following are additional outcomes of the conference.

- The participants identified values that the two faiths share, which can contribute to unity and peace. The values emphasized neighborly coexistence, justice, family, peace, and respect for the other.
- Both religious groups expressed great concern about foreign religious organizations attempting to convert new adherents. Both conservative Muslim and Christian organizations use humanitarian assistance as a cover for their efforts to convert. Participants concluded that the government should regulate such international religious organizations. Their activities should be confined to humanitarian assistance. Proselytizing should be reserved to Sudanese religious organizations.
- It became evident that the two sponsoring organizations, the New Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Islamic Council, did not have the same institutional capacity. NSCC has a longer history and a much stronger institutional base. In turn, it tended to dominate the discussion. There was an acknowledgment that NSIC needed help to build itself into a stronger institution so that these two organizations are effective partners in the future. To do so, NSCC subsequently has worked with NSIC.

## Conclusion

Religion touches upon the deepest levels of identity. It can mobilize people for war, but also for lasting peace. Mohammed Abu-Nimer,[10] professor at American University, views spirituality as the most powerful feature of interfaith engagement because it can change deeply embedded attitudes and beliefs. Through this new information, minds can be changed. Interfaith exchanges facilitate developing safe and trusting relationships, and can change emotions as well. Working together on concrete tasks can reinforce positive attitudinal change. Change of head and heart reinforces reconciliation, a process that brings healing to wounded spirits. This uplifts people to realize their potential, and in turn, it contributes toward nation building, which Sudan needs now more than ever.

# Peacemaking through Interreligious Dialogue in Macedonia

*by Paul Mojzes*

Macedonia has a critical need for institutional arrangements that permit greater interreligious dialogue and collaboration to address the tensions that plague Macedonia's fragmented society. Throughout the centuries, religious differences tended to be seen to cause conflict in the Balkans despite the population being religiously intermingled. During times of reduced conflict, religiously diverse people lived *next* to each other, but not *with* each other. As ethno-religious groups gained or lost ascendancy, those in power sought to control the other groups, especially those whom they considered to have been culprits in previous oppressions. This led to increased conflict, which culminated during the two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913 when mutual genocides were the order of the day in the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula.[11]

The Tito regime's religious policy treated all religious groups fairly equally, namely equally controlled and oppressed. From the late 1950s onward, the government favored the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox from the Serbian Orthodox Church in order to strengthen the sense of Slavic Macedonian statehood and loyalty to Yugoslavia. As Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, amidst a conflagration that sometimes took genocidal dimensions, Macedonia was the only former federal state that extricated itself without violence. The Macedonians were jubilant at obtaining independence—peacefully. Some considered Macedonia as a model of successful coexistence of diverse inhabitants.

Macedonia's interfaith relations, however, were not as good as they seemed. Both external and internal developments seriously undermined this apparent tranquility. The 1998–99 Kosovo crisis posed an external threat to Macedonia. As the conflict between the Kosovar Albanians and Serbs worsened, so did its impact on the relationship between the Slavic major-ity Macedonians (65 percent of the population) and the sizeable ethnic Albanian minority (25–30 percent). The ethnic Albanians naturally sided with their compatriots in Kosovo, of whom many were blood or clan related. The Macedonian Slavs, however, viewed the Albanian uprising a threat to their own independent statehood, as they feared an attempt to create a "greater Albania." The government of Macedonia still permitted North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops to use Macedonia as a staging ground for entry into Kosovo during the NATO attack against Serbia, and it permitted entry to hundreds of thousands Kosovar Albanian refugees during this 78-day war. Many Macedonians, however, were not sympathetic to either decision, and while they cooperated with the humanitarian support, they demonstrated against the access given to NATO forces.

The radical change in Kosovo severely discombobulated Macedonia. Even when most Albanians returned to Kosovo, many stayed permanently in Macedonia. The border between Macedonia and Kosovo was porous, and armed groups from Kosovo crossed back and forth easily. The successful bid for Albanian control of Kosovo increased the appetite for a similar autonomy in Macedonia, with the more militant groups actually engaging in military action against police and the ill-equipped and poorly trained Macedonian army. Once the country was facing a civil war, there was an increase of UN peacekeepers.

Internally, the conflict between Macedonians and Albanians increased. Macedonians felt that they had given the Albanians all the minority rights due to them, especially in their terms of Macedonia being a state of Macedonian people. The two Albanian ethnic parties and some even more radical elements among Albanians of Macedonia sought to change the constitutional system to make Macedonia a pluralist country of equal rights, claiming that the Macedonians subjugated them. These efforts brought them EU and U.S. mediation, but many Macedonians saw this as a transparent effort to partition Macedonia like Serbia. By 2002, the country was in an uproar with many wondering if it could survive and stop its neighbors, who had ancient claims against them, from partitioning their country. The situation in the country became very polarized. Violence flared, some of it with explicitly religious overtones, such as with the destruction of both Orthodox and Islamic places of worship. Lives were lost, and even the capital of the country, Skopje, was threatened with terrorist attacks. By the summer of 2001, the city looked like a military camp, and the question was whether the crisis would escalate into a full-fledged civil war or eventually de-escalate the confrontation.

Tensions did escalate, and President Boris Trajkovski sought to engage the religious communities of the country to assist in peacemaking, rather than contribute to the tensions. Being an Evangelical Methodist, as a part of the United Methodists in Europe, President Trajkovski had heard about interreligious dialogue during his previous trips abroad, and he thought introducing this approach would help diminish the tensions.

Trajkovski contacted the author asking if the International Scholars' Jewish-Christian-Muslim Trialogues would convene a meeting in Skopje. He knew the practice of interreligious dialogue was unknown in Macedonia, but he thought it may prove to be practically useful as one of the steps in preventing a civil war. The representatives of the major religious communities of Macedonia were in contact with one another, but only in the form of "protocol ecumenism," such as showing personal courtesies at special occasions despite mutual suspicions and barely covered intolerance. No real dialogue or cooperation took place.

The World Council for Religions and Peace (WCRP), headquartered in New York, had become active in the Balkans during the wars of the 1990s. They were able to facilitate closer cooperation between the religious leaders in communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. They also sensed the ominous threat in Macedonia; thus, they attempted to generate interest in creating an interreligious council among the religious community leaders of Macedonia.[12] One of the steps they undertook was to bring from Sarajevo members of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to promote the idea. However, Macedonian reli-

gious leaders shied away from this process, as some felt it seemed too public and too rapid. Nevertheless, WCRP maintained contact with all the religious leaders through a Balkan field representative.

The Council of European Churches undertook the next step, also with Trajkovski's prodding. Representatives of the five religious communities were invited to Geneva in May 2001. Under the thoughtful leadership of Archbishop Anastasios (Yanoulatos) of Tirana, Albania, they signed a Joint Communiqué in which they called for peaceful settlement of the conflict and for free access to drinking water, interestingly. That may appear to be a strange ingredient in such a document, but the Albanian terrorists specifically had threatened to poison the Skopje drinking water supply; hence making this an important concern.

Earlier that spring, President Trajkovski visited the United States and had been invited to make a presentation at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). At that meeting, he urged USIP to assist in promoting interreligious dialogue as a means of peacebuilding in Macedonia. He identified Paul Mojzes and the Institute for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue (IIID) as facilitators of such a process. Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler took two exploratory trips to Skopje in 2001 to explore the significance and feasibility of this process. Each time, they met with President Trajkovski and the heads of the five religious communities, which resulted in a USIP-funded contract to assist this process. Other donors provided additional funds, most significantly a matching grant by the Fund for an Open Society, which made it possible to proceed.

Since the collapse of socialism and the establishment of an independent Republic of Macedonia, religion had become an increasingly important social factor. This was particularly true of the two major religious communities. Slavic Macedonians regarded the Orthodox Church as a symbol of their nationhood, which they saw threatened by Albanian insurrectionists. The Albanian population was predominantly Muslim and frequently expressed itself by means of Islamic traditions.

Religious leaders of the other three communities, Jewish, Catholic, and Methodist, were willing to be buffers between these two major communities in conflict. It was one way for them to assert their own social relevance despite being small minorities. All religious leaders shared the cultural characteristic of being cautious about consenting to formally enter into anything more than casual contacts. None ruled out dialogue, but found frequent reasons to postpone meetings. At the separate meetings with us, they willingly shared their grievances about the others. However, they were not eager to do so face-to-face and had difficulties agreeing on whose turf joint meetings were to be held.

Our approach was that, as outsiders, we (IIID) were not going to be patronizing or tell them what to do, but we could model the interreligious possibilities. We did so by almost always bringing to Macedonia team members who corresponded to the same make-up as the five Macedonian religious groups, and beginning with a "big bang," namely organizing a major international Jewish-Christian-Muslim Trialogue conference in continuity with previous conferences organized by the Interreligious Annual Scholarly Trialogues (ISAT) and IIID.[13] The hope

was that the presence of very distinguished international scholars and religious leaders would stimulate participation by Macedonian religious leaders and scholars. We also encouraged them to propose a topic for the conference and to organize a preparatory committee.

The conference took place in Skopje, May 10–14, 2002. The Macedonian Preparatory Committee suggested the topic "Confidence Building among Churches and Religious Communities in Macedonia Through Interreligious Dialogue." The participants included over 40 international scholars from many countries, 50 Macedonian participants, and about 100 observers. At the festive, first session, President Trajkovski and five communities' religious leaders greeted the participants, and did the same at the closing session. Most of the sessions took place at a hotel, but two sessions took place spontaneously at the Orthodox Theological School and the School of Islamic Sciences. Significant negotiations occurred when the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Stefan, and the head of the Islamic Community, Reis-ul-Ulema Arif Emini, both accepted three suggestions the conference participants offered:

1) a Council for Interreligious Cooperation should be established and consist of representatives of the five religious communities;
2) the heads of the religious communities, especially the Archbishop and the Reis, should meet several times per year to deal with issues affecting the well-being of their communities; and
3) the two religious schools should conduct lecture exchanges to teach about each other's communities.

The conference issued a joint communiqué and convened a large press conference, which the media noted.

Subsequently, the major papers delivered at this significant conference were published in English in Philadelphia and in Macedonian and Albanian in Skopje.[14] IIID has pledged itself to continue to promote the process that it helped begin. For that purpose, IIID subsequently visited Macedonia five times in November 2002, August 2003, October 2004, and May and October 2005.[15] The trip in August of 2003 was connected with a large international conference titled, "Dialogue of Civilizations," held in Ohrid, Macedonia. President Trajkovski organized the conference in cooperation with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, at which eight heads of state,[16] many international dignitaries, as well as culture and religion representatives participated. The participants stressed the significance of the dialogical approach for the security and progress in southeast central Europe that had recently been the place of bloody wars.

During the other three trips, smaller groups of international scholars (Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim) conducted numerous meetings. They convened separate and joint meetings with representatives of the religious communities, lectures at the Orthodox and Islamic faculties for fairly large groups of students and faculty, as well as meetings with the new President of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski,[17] who, on his own part convened a meeting of all religious leaders of Macedonia in Ohrid in order to encourage them to meet regularly.

The May 2002 trip realized all three of the conference recommendations that Archbishop Stefan and Reis-ul-Ulema Emini accepted. Archbishop Stefan and Reis-ul-Ulema Emini convened meetings which they expanded in October 2004, another in the spring of 2005 to include their close collaborators and President Crvenkovski. There is a realistic expectation that these meetings will continue. Meetings of the Council for Interreligious Cooperation are taking place sporadically. Considerable progress has been made with student exchanges regarding lecturers and visits between their theological schools and places of worship (Orthodox and Islamic).[18]

The two deans of the theological schools, Dr. Jovan Takovski from the Orthodox Theological School and Dr. Ismail Bardhi from the School for Islamic Sciences, made some joint appearances on television and radio, and lectured at each other's institutions. The two theological schools received funding to promote their interactions, particularly from the Danish and Norwegian Church Aid organizations.[19] As outcomes of this aid, the Orthodox and Muslim professors provided students with joint lectures to promote interreligious dialogue as well as conferences with religious scholars from Norway (in Kotor, May 2004) and Denmark (in Skopje, September 2004).[20] This aid also funded an interreligious information office with a small library, centrally located in Skopje and briefly in operation since July 2004.[21] Training in accounting and office skills for employees of the five religious communities and a summer interreligious youth camp have also taken place. As mentioned, prominent international scholars, mostly from the United States, who traveled to Skopje on behalf of IIID, contributed challenging lectures at the two schools as well as in other cultural centers and the media. Other scholars, such as David Steele of the Conflict Management Group, continued to work for peace in Macedonia. In order to provide exposure to an international Jewish-Christian-Muslim trialogue devoted to confidence building, the Orthodox and Muslim representatives to the Council for Interreligious Cooperation, Ratomir Grozdanoski and Ismail Bardhi, participated in a scholars conference in Philadelphia in March 2005, and presented papers on religious contributions to peacemaking in Macedonia.[22]

The Council of Interreligious Cooperation, however, is making slow progress. Except for the Macedonian Orthodox Church, initially all of the churches and religious communities formally sent a letter to each other assigning their official consent and naming their representative to the Council. The Macedonian Orthodox Church did not do so formally, but, informally, the Secretary of the Holy Synod, Professor Ratomir Grozdanoski, attended all of the meetings and was formally named as the representative. There is an impression that the conflict between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church over Macedonian assertion of autocephaly seems to divert church's attention away from other issues. The Macedonian Orthodox Church was also embittered that the negotiations to end the insurrection made that church equal to other religious communities in the Constitution—a departure from its privileged status in the previous constitution. This may be another reason why the Macedonian Orthodox Church is less inclined to cooperate.

The other religious communities also lack sufficient initiative to work together. Individually, the representatives of religious communities accepted to work with each other with the support

of additional USIP funding, but the pace of their collaboration was distinctly slower than out-siders may wish. However, a marked change occurred in 2005 when the members of the Council for Interreligious Cooperation started working together in earnest due to grasping that it is in their enlightened self-interest. As the government proposed a draft law on reli-gious communities the Council worked intensively to critique the law. It gave them self-confidence, earned them praise from their religious superiors, and more respectful attention by the government. This may be a turning point toward greater mutual cooperation. In the meantime, Macedonia has backed off from the verge of civil war, mostly due to the political leadership of the late President Trajkovski, his successor President Crvenkovski, and the Macedonian Parliament, as well as with the help of diplomatic representatives of the interna-tional community, especially the United States and the European Union. One can only hope that the slow pace of cooperation will suffice to keep up with the potential volatile relation-ships between Macedonians and Albanians.

# Conclusion

The preceding sections provide seven cases from six different countries spanning the Middle East, Africa, the Balkans, and Asia. Each conflict situation and each intervention had its unique characteristics, determined by history, culture, societal structure, as well as the particular orientations of the religious peacemakers.

Despite these significant differences, some overarching lessons can be drawn. These lessons are not necessarily generalizations applicable to all the cases, but they apply to two or more of the cases. These lessons are worth exploring and highlighting because of their likely relevance to other conflict situations, particularly religiously based conflict.

**Generally, these cases do not tell stories of dramatically successful peacemaking—with the exception of the Yelwa-Nshar case in Nigeria.** Many of the projects are still in process and may ultimately lead to conflict resolution. Like most religious peacemaking, however, these projects make modest contributions to peace while not changing the course of history. As all other kinds of peacemaking, those initiating faith-based peacemaking should approach their tasks with modest expectations, particularly in situations of intractable conflict. This leaves open the possibility that there may be a dramatic contribution to peace, but this should not be the measure of whether the project is worthwhile. Improving relations among significant segments of religious communities in conflict is certainly a worthy goal, even when this does not end violent conflict.

**All these cases demonstrate that without credible local partners, no international actor has a chance of making much of a contribution to conflict resolution.** This is certainly the case in Nigeria and Sudan. In such cases as Kashmir, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, and Macedonia, a major purpose of the international intervention has been to facilitate the creation of a local partner that can sustain the process and give it local roots. If there is no pre-existing local partner, the purpose of international intervention should focus on helping create such a partner.

**A corollary of this lesson is the recognition that no cookie-cutter approach will work.** Local institutions must provide guidance on the most effective methodologies. As I watched Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa successfully mediate the bloody conflict in Yelwa-Nshar, I marveled at how they successfully integrated and modified Western conflict resolution methodology with religious exhortation and local custom. Similarly, the Wunlit peace process in Sudan used local traditions very effectively. *Nevertheless, some conditions can favor transferring particular methodological tools from one location to another.* For example, the Alexandria Declaration for Israel/Palestine served as a model for the Kaduna Declaration to promote religious peace in Kaduna, Nigeria. The Interreligious Council in Bosnia served as a model for the creation of a Council for Interreligious Cooperation in Macedonia.

**It is critical to link faith-based peacemaking to secular and political processes and authorities.** Faith-based peacemaking independent of this cross-sector collaboration almost never creates peace. Even in the most dramatic case of faith-based peacemaking, that of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique, the religious peacemakers only succeed by engaging the United Nations and the governments of Italy and the United States as partners. The Alexandria process is poised to serve as a parallel religious peace process for the Arab-Israeli conflict, recognizing that political leaders will direct the principal negotiations. The peace agreement mediated by the Inter Faith Mediation Center in Yelwa-Nshar had to be coordinated with the governor of Plateau State who had to sanction the agreement reached. The same holds in Kashmir, Iraq, Sudan, and Macedonia. The Wunlit process may have been an exception to this, but only because there was no existing, effective government structures in southern Sudan at the time.

**Given the necessity of a faith-based/secular partnership, peacemaking can be particularly effective when some key persons hold both secular and religious authority.** Rabbi Michael Melchior is both a prominent rabbi (formerly chief Rabbi of Denmark) and a member of the Israeli Cabinet, the *Knesset*. He was deputy foreign minister in the Israeli government at the time of the Alexandria Declaration. He effectively utilized both his religious and secular roles to orchestrate the Alexandria process. Similarly Sheikh Tal El Sadr was both a member of the cabinet of the Palestinian Authority and one of the most prominent religious leaders in Palestine. He was instrumental in obtaining Yasser Arafat's support for the Alexandria process. The Iraqi Institute of Peace has a governing board that combines both religious and secular authorities. The late President Boris Trajkovski of Macedonia, who initiated the interfaith work described in the Macedonia chapter, was a devout Methodist, recognized both for his religious commitment and his political skills and authority.

**Faith-based institutions can engage in some of the most pressing conflict issues.** Participants in the Alexandria process are primed to play an indispensable role in an Arab-Israeli peace process if secular authorities initiate such a process. The Iraqi Institute of Peace's (IIP) combination of religious and secular authority continues to help legitimate its engagement with some of Iraq's toughest and most sensitive transitional issues. When Sunnis planned to boycott the elections in early 2005, IIP reached out to religious and tribal authorities in the Sunni community to encourage greater electoral participation. It also helped bring Sunni leadership into the constitution-writing process.

The Iraq case points out the nervousness of Western governments to engage with religious institutions and faith-based peacemaking. The cases presented here, however, demonstrate the close interrelationship between secular and religious institutions, and between secular and religious peacemaking. **This suggests that Western governments need to be more open and more sophisticated in their interactions with religious institutions in countries where religion is a significant source of conflict.**

Several of the cases reveal international actors' salutary contributions in facilitating faith-based peacemaking. The Sudan case, however, highlights a reality that is probably true for

many other countries: **international religious institutions can exacerbate conflict.** When foreign religious organizations engage in aggressive proselytizing in religiously polarized countries, they can do serious damage. This is true of both Christian and Muslim organizations. The participants in the Sudan interfaith dialogue advocated that proselytizing should be reserved to local religious organizations, and international religious organizations should be confined to providing humanitarian assistance.

**All of these cases illuminate how complications arise when religious divisions overlap with and reinforce ethnic or racial divisions.** This holds for Kashmir, Israel/Palestine, Nigeria, Sudan, and Macedonia. As salient in the Sudan experience, Muslim-Christian relations can be much smoother in other countries, such as Uganda. This is partly because racial tensions underlie much of the conflict between Christians and Muslims in Sudan; whereas, no racial distinctions exist between Muslims and Christians in Uganda. In addition to racial/ethnic factors, economic disparities also exacerbate religious differences. Overall, issues confronted in religious peacemaking are diverse and complicated.

**Sometimes it is more productive for religious leaders to consider emotionally divisive issues than for them to be debated in secular/political contexts.** This is particularly true in contexts where governmental and religious authorities overlap. When two communities share a faith commitment, even when the commitment is to different faiths, issues can be discussed that might be off limits in secular/political debate. We see evidence of this in some of the cases described.

**In some situations, it is more productive to begin dialogical peacemaking by working with faith communities separately prior to bringing them together.** In both Kashmir and Nigeria, emotions ran too high and the edges were still too sharp to bring the two communities together from the outset. Working with a single community separately at the beginning can prepare its members for more productive dialogue, as opposed to pushing them together without adequate preparation. The sections on Kashmir and Nigeria describe the effective techniques of breaking down the fears, misconceptions, and stereotypes that the respective groups perceive about each other.

**Religious communities are not monoliths and should not be treated as if they are.** Both the Alexandria process and the Macedonian case illustrate the danger of sharp divisions opening up within particular faith communities. Frictions within the leadership of the respective Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in Israel/Palestine interfered with interfaith collaboration in the Alexandria process. Divisions within the Macedonian Orthodox hierarchy and among Macedonian Muslim leaders slowed progress toward creating a Macedonia Council for Interreligious Cooperation, even though the divisions had nothing to do with the proposed Council.

**Faith-based peacemaking can often be enhanced through the selective use of religious texts and religious exhortation.** Remarkably in the Yelwa-Nshar case, the imam and the pastor moved freely between the Koran and the Bible, with the imam often quoting the

Bible along with the Koran and the pastor quoting the Koran along with the Bible. Their comfort and conversance with the texts of both traditions generated an atmosphere of interreligious tolerance that impressed the participants. The Sudan case also illustrates the central role that scripture can play in the peacemaking dialogue. Although greater use could have been made of religious rituals than is evident in these cases, the Wunlit experience in Sudan effectively utilized both Christian and traditional rituals. Enemies washed each other's feet and a white bull was slaughtered.

**The religious environment created by faith-based peacemaking can be conducive to expressions of apology, repentance, and forgiveness.** This is probably the most distinctive feature of religious peacemaking. Such personal expressions are much less likely to occur in secular than in religious contexts, where repentance and forgiveness are explicitly valued. All of the cases illustrate this. In the Yelwa-Nshar case, the apology and repentance by the leader of the Muslim community constituted a transforming moment in the mediation. As a dramatic gesture, it resembled the often-cited trip of Egyptian Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. Such gestures are very powerful, but occur only rarely in peacemaking processes.

**Time spent identifying values and virtues that are shared across religious lines can contribute to effective peacemaking.** Both the case of training youth leaders in Nigeria and the interfaith project in Sudan demonstrate the efficacy of this type of personal sharing. It was an important revelation to both Christian and Muslim participants in Nigeria to recognize that many values are shared by their two faiths, particularly values that can contribute to peacemaking.

**All three Abrahamic traditions share a vision of social justice rooted in their faiths and theologies.** Openness to hearing and responding to the suffering of those on the other side should result. This was a powerful force in Kashmir, Alexandria, the Iraqi Institute of Peace, and both Nigeria cases.

**Effective interfaith collaboration among leaders offers a powerful model for emulation.** The fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rabbi Melchoir, and Sheikh Tantawi of Al-Azhar Islamic University partnered so effectively in convening the Alexandria meeting helped nudge the Israeli and Palestinian participants toward interfaith concord. Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa collaborate so impressively with each other they serve as a model for interfaith amity to those with whom they work. The initial meeting in Skopje brought together forty Jewish, Christian, and Muslims scholars from various parts of the world to work with their Macedonian counterparts. The international participants demonstrated to the Macedonians what is possible in terms of interfaith partnership.

**While the focus of this work has been on interfaith peacebuilding, faith-based peacemaking can also be undertaken within a single faith community.** In the Wunlit process in Sudan, the NSCC orchestrated a peace process between the two largest ethnic communities in southern Sudan. The fact that a majority of the participants were Christian gave the NSCC particular credibility as a peacemaking agent.

**Finally, the most successful faith-based peacemaking occurs when the religious communities in dialogue approach parity in terms of institutional strength.** The Alexandria process in Israel/Palestine and the interfaith dialogue between NSCC and the New Sudan Islamic Council demonstrate the handicap imposed on interfaith dialogue when one of the communities is much better resourced and organized than the other.

The cases included in this volume have both demonstrated the power of faith-based peacemaking and revealed ways in which it can be made more effective. This work is certainly not the last word on this topic, but hopefully it has advanced our knowledge of the existing resources and future possibilities as we augment our understanding of religious peacemaking processes.

# Notes

1. See Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Christopher Catherwood, *Why the Nations Rage: Killing in the Name of God* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003); Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

2. See Douglas Johnston, *Trumping Realpolitik: Faith-Based Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. See Cameron Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1994). For other cases, see Appleby and Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

4. See Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

5. Douglas Johnston, "The Religious Dimension," Unpublished paper, n.d., p. 3, based upon Johnston, ed. *Trumping Realpolitik:Faith-based Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

6. Ibid., p. 4.

7. Gerrie ter Haar, "Religion: Source of Conflict or Resource for Peace?" p. 22 in Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil, editors, *Bridge or Barrier: Religions, Violence, and Visions for Peace* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

8. Ibid., p. 29.

9. Marc Gopin, "World Religions, Violence, and Myths of Peace in International Relations" in Haar and Busuttil, *Bridge or Barrier: Religions, Violence, and Visions for Peace* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

10. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?" in David R. Smock (editor), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2002), pp. 15–32.

11. While the term "genocide" was not yet invented the Carnegie Endowment Inquiry Report clearly describes countless instances of massacres, most of which were, however, not religiously but ethnically based as the nations of the Balkans were attempting to create ethnically pure areas so that they could claim them for holding sway over a territory. See *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict* by George F. Kennan (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, c. 1993).

12. The five "historic" religious communities were the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church, and the Jewish Community. There are other "free church" communities in Macedonia like the Pentecostals and Baptists but they are not included in this process for various internal reasons.

13. ISAT began in the United States in the 1980s followed by conferences in Graz (Austria), Jerusalem, and Jakarta (Indonesia).

14. The English version was *Interreligious Dialogue Toward Reconciliation in Macedonia and Bosnia* (Philadelphia, PA: Ecumenical Press, 2003) and concurrently as a special number of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Vol. XXXIX, Nos. 1–2* (Winter-Spring 2002). The title of the book in Macedonia was *Gradenje doverba pomegu crkvite i verskite zaedici vo Makedonia preku dialog /Ndertimi i besimit perms dialogut ndermjet kishave dhe bashkesive fetare ne Maquedoni* (Skopje: Ecumenical Press, 2004). Both books were edited by Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler.

15. The visit was October 11–16, 2004. The team was created to reflect the denominational membership of the Council: Dr. Leonard Swidler, Temple University, PA (Roman Catholic), Rev. Peter Baktis, U.S. Army Chaplain residing in South Carolina (Eastern Orthodox), Dr. Mahmut Aydin, Ondokuz Mayis University, Turkey (Muslim), Dr. Reuven Firestone, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles (Jewish), Dr. James Payton, Redeemer College University, Canada (Reformed), and Dr. Paul Mojzes, Rosemont College, PA (United Methodist). In May 2005 Reuven Firestone worked with faculty and students of the two theological schools and interviewed numerous religious leaders. Mojzes and Swidler held meetings in October 2005.

16. Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro), and Macedonia.

17. President Trajkovski having tragically died in an airplane crash in March 2004.

18. Reports about these events can be found in the four issues of the "Bulletin for Interreligious Cooperation" which has been published in 2004 both Albanian and Macedonian languages, published under the auspices of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation.

19. Channeled through the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, an NGO. Among the concrete results were the publications of attractive interreligious calendars, address books with a variety of data on 23 officially registered religious communities.

20. Prof. Aco Girevski, for instance, delivered a paper, "Pastoral View on Christianity and Islam." Some participants pointed out that religion can be manipulated for the escalation of conflicts but that religious leaders can exert political influence upon the people and

therefore various models of interreligious dialogue need to be explored. See Mile A. Risteski, "Potrebna e sorabotka megu verskite zaednici [Cooperation is needed between religious communities] in *Formula 1* in http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/pecati.as?VestD=37126.

21. This office and library were short-lived and have since been closed.

22. At a session entitled "At a Fork in the Road: Prevention or Disaster" Prof. Grozdanoski's presented a paper, "Faith: Source of Peace or Cause for Unrest" while Prof. Bardhi's paper was entitled, "Dialogue is the Only Way to Prevent Disaster."

# About the Contributors

Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa is codirector of the Inter Faith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, Nigeria and coauthor of *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (1999) with Pastor James Movel Wuye.

Brian Cox is senior vice president and Kashmir project leader of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Washington, D.C., www.icrd.org.

Emmanuel LoWilla is executive director of Reconcile in Kampala, Uganda, an organization affiliated with the New Sudan Council of Churches.

Paul Mojzes is professor and former dean at Rosemont College in Pennsylvania.

Pastor James Movel Wuye is codirector of the Inter Faith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, Nigeria and coauthor of *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (1999) with Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa.

Daniel Philpott is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, and is chair of the Task Force on Faith-based Diplomacy at the Council on Faith and International Affairs, www.cfia.org.

David R. Smock is the director of the United States Institute of Peace Religion and Peacemaking Initiative. Previously he served as director of the Institute's Grant Program and coordinator of Africa activities. He is editor of *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (2002).

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