

HOLY LAND CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL FOUNDATION



17th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

October 17, 2015

Conference Program

Saturday, October 17, 2015

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8:00 - 8:40am **Registration, Refreshments, and Open Exhibits**

8:40 - 8:45am **Opening Prayer**

8:45 - 9:00am **Introduction to the Conference**

Stephen B. Corbin, D.D.S., M.P.H., *Former Special Olympics Senior Vice President of Community Impact and Support, Washington, DC; Living Faith Lutheran Church Elder, Rockville, MD*

Saliba Sarsar, PhD, *Professor of Political Science, Monmouth University, and Chair of HCEF's Research and Publication Committee*

9:00 - 10:00am **Palestinian Christians: Persecuted on all Sides**

With the burning of churches and holy places, such as the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fish, Palestinian Christians continue to fight for their rights against occupation and oppression. Adding to this burden is the new threat by ISIS, which has threatened to “purify” Jerusalem if Christians do not leave this sacred city. As if this were not enough, our Evangelical brethren have for a long time denied the Palestinian Christian presence and identity in the Holy Land. These nails add to the already heavy cross Palestinian Christians are carrying: refugee status for many, lack of access to education, limited employment, and humiliations in daily lives. This panel will discuss the conditions affecting Palestinian Christians and look to signs of hope for the future such as the canonization of the first Palestinian Saints and the recognition of the State of Palestine by the Vatican.

Moderator: Zuhair Madanat, *First Theology Seminarian - Diocese of Peoria, IL, Mount St. Mary's Seminary Emmitsburg, MD*

Speakers:

Fr. Michael McDonagh, *International Advisor to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem*

Mazin Qumsiyeh, Ph.D., FABMG Professor & Director, *Cytogenetics Lab, Palestine Museum of Natural History, Bethlehem University*

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10:00 – 10:15 am **Who Are the Christians of the Middle East? Presented by Dr. Saliba Sarsar, Professor of Political Science, Monmouth University, and Chair of HCEF's Research and Publication Committee**

10:15 - 11:30 am **Christians of the Middle East in Crisis**

Christianity's presence in the Arab Middle East dates back to the advent of Jesus Christ, and for the past two millennia Christian Arabs have been a fundamental part of their region's culture, contributing to art, technological innovation, scholarship, nation building, and economic development. Despite their firmly established traditions and respected reputations, many Arab Christians currently live as victims of extremism, civil war, and occupation. Many are subjected to discriminatory laws, a profound lack of security, and dispossession due to internal displacement from war and the actions of fanatics. This antagonistic environment is a recent development in a long history of coexistence between Muslim and Christian Arabs. This panel, featuring Muslim and Christian speakers, will discuss the current living conditions of Arab Christians, how extremists in the region are not representative of Islam at large, and the ways by which organizations like the U.S. Muslim & Christian Coalition (MCC), organized by HCEF, can protect religious minorities in Arab countries and promote the return of peaceful coexistence.

Moderator: Fr. Drew Christiansen, SJ, Distinguished Prof. of Ethics & Human Development, Georgetown University; HCEF Board of Directors

Speakers:

Dr. Sayyid Syeed, National Director of the Office for Interfaith & Community Alliances, Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

Bishop Barry C. Knestout, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington

Dr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute

11:30 - 11:45 am **Coffee Break**

Visit the Holy Land Gifts Display

UNIQUE HOLY LAND GIFTS ITEMS
MAKE PERFECT & MEANINGFUL GIFTS!

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11:45am – 1:00 pm **Join the HCEF Movement: Serve The Holy Land, Serve Palestine**

At a time when the Holy Land and Palestine are experiencing tough challenges, HCEF has been a cell of positive energy, living, as Pope Francis says, “to serve.” In addition to celebrating the sainthood of two Palestinian women in Rome, we opened the Bethlehem Museum, led the fifth delegation of the Know Thy Heritage program, inaugurated the Future Business Leaders program, and formed and are heading the U.S. Muslim & Christian Coalition (MCC), which is committed to putting faith into action, protecting Christians and other religious minorities in the Arab world, and to advancing coexistence and peace. We will soon be starting our center in Medjugorje to reach out to pilgrims so as to educate them about the Holy Land and Palestinian Christians. This session will highlight major HCEF accomplishments and extend an invitation for all to become involved, live an integral, purposeful life, and join the HCEF movement to make a real difference.

Roundtable Moderator: Sir Rateb Y. Rabie, KCHS, President/CEO, Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation

1:00 - 2:00 pm **Lunch**

2:00 - 3:00 pm **Human Rights Violations in the Holy Land: Legal and Ethical Perspectives**

Palestinians live under Israeli policies and practices -- on both sides of the Green Line -- that consistently deny them their basic human rights. This panel will examine Israel's behavior toward Palestinians from legal and ethical perspectives, highlighting the village of Iqrit as a clear example of human rights violations. Speakers will also discuss Palestinian youth development as a primary means for positive change, and how we all can cooperate globally to protect Palestinian rights through the effective implementation of international law.

Moderator: Delinda Curtiss Hanley, Executive Director and News Editor, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

Speakers:

Adv. Raffoul Rofa, LL.M., Director of the Society of St. Yves.

Shadia Sbait, Co-Founder and General Coordinator of Iqrit Community Center; Media Marketing Specialist at the MOFET Institute, Tel Aviv, Israel.

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3:00 – 4:15 pm

The Role of Women and Youth in Building the State of Palestine

Palestinian women are at the heart of their families, society, and national development. The youth are the future leaders of Palestine. If we are to take building the State of Palestine seriously, then we must consider the essential roles of both women and the youth in that effort. Palestinian women have served as the guardians of Palestinian identity through their art, culinary tradition, and activism, through which they have inspired and empowered their peers and families. Palestinian youth, both in Palestine and around the world, have a strong attachment to their national identity. They are educated, skilled, and passionate for their homeland's cause. This panel will address ways by which Palestinian women and youth in Palestine and around the world are already mobilizing as active champions of justice, peace, and coexistence as well ways we can further empower their efforts.

Moderator: Noor Shayeb, *Human Resources Associate at Chemonix, and Know Thy Heritage Alumni*

Speakers:

Rana Shouman, *Pharmacist, Mercy Hospital, and Know Thy Heritage Alumna*

Rami Ayyub, *Former Program and Financial Analyst at Lockheed Martin, and Know Thy Heritage Alumni*

4:15 – 5:15 pm

Western Policy toward Palestine

Over the past year, the international community has paid more attention to Palestine after Israel's assault on Gaza, and it seems mainstream opinion is changing more favorably toward the Palestinian cause. There are a number of indicators for this change, including the Vatican's recognition of Palestinian statehood, the increasing number of protests in countries throughout the West critical of the occupation, the rising popularity of the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and Western media becoming gradually more inclusive of the Palestinian narrative. This panel will discuss this change in general outlook toward the Palestinian cause and the impact this new perspective will have on Western policy toward Palestine. How might Western leaders change their positions on Palestine in light of popular sentiment? Panel speakers will also consider how Palestinians, both experts and the general population, view this development.

Moderator: Saliba Sarsar, PhD, *Professor of Political Science, Monmouth University, and Chair of HCEF's Research and Publication Committee*

Speakers:

Mazin Qumsiyeh, Ph.D, FABMG Professor & Director, *Cytogenetics Lab, Palestine Museum of Natural History, Bethlehem University*

Khalil Jashan, *Executive Director of Arab Center Washington DC, Inc.*

5:15 – 5:30 pm

Closing Remarks

5:30 pm

Closing Prayer