

SPECIAL REPORT

ICCI and YMCA Commemorate 9/11 with H.E. Richard H. Jones, Ambassador of the United States of America to Israel

The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) and the Jerusalem International YMCA hosted an annual interreligious 9/11 commemoration at the YMCA with the participation of Richard H. Jones, Ambassador of the United States. In his remarks to the gathering, he said:



Ambassador Jones

“It is our solemn duty to honor the victims and all those who risked, and in many cases lost, their lives helping others that day. I can think of no better way to honor these heroes than by ceaselessly striving to bring lasting peace to this country, this region and throughout the globe.”

In addition, he commended the ICCI for its work in promoting interreligious dialogue in Israel when he said: " I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the ICCI, an organization committed to promoting interfaith understanding. The U.S. Embassy is proud to provide support for many of its projects, such as *Kedem – Voices for Religious Conciliation* – which brings together Muslim, Jewish and Christian religious community leaders; and the *Jerusalem Women as Catalysts for Peace* – a women’s dialogue and social action program.”



Ambassador Richard Jones and Rabbi Ron Kronish pose with "Face to Face; Faith to Faith" youth from the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel.

The ceremony opened with greetings from YMCA chairperson Dorothy Harman and ICCI Co-Chairperson Dr. Deborah Weissman

“In the midst of these uncertain times, the YMCA is an example of what is best and most hopeful about Jerusalem, declared Harman. “This is a place for all of us – Jews, Christians and Moslems – to come together in a spirit of coexistence.”

In her remarks, Weissman spoke about a powerful lesson from Jewish tradition: "One of the most important messages of our High Holiday season is the triumph of life over death. A prayer we recite much during this time says, 'Remember us unto life, O King who desires life, and inscribe us in Your Book of Life.' I wish for all of us a good year, a year of health and life and a year in which we increase our efforts to achieve peace."



R to L: Rabbi Ron Kronish, Director, ICCI; Mr. Norris Lineweaver, Director, Jerusalem International YMCA; Ambassador Richard H. Jones; Ms. Dorothy Harman, Chairperson, YMCA; Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukahara, Sheikh of the Naqshabandian Religious Order; Father. Michael McGarry, Rector Tantur Ecumenical Institute

Religious leaders from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths also presented prayers and reflections: Rabbi Ron Kronish, Director of ICCI; Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukahara, Shiekh of the Naqshabandian Religious Method; and Father Michael McGarry, Rector of Tantur Ecumenical Institute.

Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish, Director of ICCI noted, "This year's commemoration is especially timely as it comes a day before Rosh Hashanah and at the beginning of Ramadan, seasons of intense introspection for Jews and Muslims in Israel and worldwide. This wonderful

coincidence offers us a special opportunity for prayer and reflection."

Kronish also spoke about the reason why Jews read the story of Isaac and Hagar during the Rosh Hashanah service: "I believe that the answer can be found in the famous verse 'God hears the cry of the boy wherever he his. On this day we are mindful of the idea that God cares for Ishmael (the father of Islam) just as he cares for Isaac."

In addition, Norris Lineweaver, Director General of the Jerusalem International YMCA, the hosts for the commemoration this year, added, "The World Trade Center Towers were a beacon of hope to promote prosperity and freedom of trade around the world. We take this special moment to mourn the losses of those who remain in sorrow for their loved ones."

Throughout the program youth from ICCI's Face to Face program and from the YMCA coexistence programs sung and participated in a candle-lighting ceremony. Additionally, the Catholic Arab Scouts of East Jerusalem performed "Amazing Graze" on the bagpipes.

This report was written by Rebecca Zimmerman, ICCI intern for 2007-08. For more information about ICCI, see our website: www.icci.org.il or contact us at communications@icci.org.il