

Unofficial English Transcription of ICCI/KAS Iftar Seminar Coverage on Israeli Radio

Taken from Arye Golan's Reshet Bet radio program "HaBoker HaZe", 30.08.10. Audio (in Hebrew): <http://icci.org.il/downloads/ReshetBet-300810-IftarSeminar.mp2>

(Eran Zinger, Reporter:) The words of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef have caused, as expected, many responses both in Israel and abroad. Wishes for the death of Palestinians—and similar wishes regarding the Jews and Israel—are not a rare thing in our region. However, it is certainly rare, especially at this time, to give voice to and to listen to other voices. For example, an interreligious gathering: priests, rabbis, and Muslim and Druze clergy, all under the same roof. It's not happening in Sweden or in the United States, it's happening here, these days, at Mishkenot Shaananim in Jerusalem. The attendees came to hear the lecture of Mohammad Zibdeh, the qadi of Yaffo, regarding 'The Fast of Ramadan: Social and Moral Implications'.

(Qadi Zibdeh, snippet from lecture:) "A Jewish religious person can understand the things that I am talking about and raises an eyebrow, because he sees the things that are common/shared between Islam and Judaism. A person who's not religious would feel like something dropped down on him from the sky; he doesn't understand anything, he thinks we're just punishing ourselves, starving ourselves, making ourselves thirsty, for no reason, just for nothing."

(Eran Zinger, Reporter:) The people who took part in the gathering may be of different religions, but (their) values (regarding) fasting are very similar, almost identical. Fr. David Neuhaus, the Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew-Speaking Catholics, says that Jews and Muslims, and even the Christians—who don't fast but abstain from certain foods before Easter—certainly have a common denominator."

(Fr. Neuhaus, snippet from response to lecture:) "A person's meekness/modesty when meeting/confronting the Creator, and discovering that he (the person) is indeed very limited, weak, or, to use religious terms, a sinner... Fasting is supposed to strengthen this awareness, that we are indeed limited when coming before the Creator of the World."

(Eran Zinger, Reporter:) Dr. Debbie Weissman heads an international organization of Christians and Jews, and thinks that such an event should not be treated lightly. "This is about leaders of entire communities," she says, "and the message coming out of this is spread further on, to the interreligious space that we all live in."

(Dr. Debbie Weissman, interview snippet:) "People claim that this is just convincing those who are convinced already, that those who attend such an event are already moderate (in their views), not extremists or fanatics, etc. And that's true. Because the extremists don't show up (to such events). But, the question is whether all these people who are here, that for the most part are leaders, leaders of communities, educators, there are rabbis here... there are people here who can make a difference."

(Eran Zinger, Reporter:) The event organizer, the director of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Rabbi Ron Kronish, is overall optimistic.

(Dr. Ron Kronish, interview snippet:) "There are people here who want, if not to solve all the problems of peace in the region, at least to strive for a more just society, at least within the State of Israel."