



Interreligious & International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP)

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Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI)

IIFWP formally launched its Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) with an international consultation held on February 27-March 2, 2003, in Washington, DC, called, Beyond Coexistence Toward a New Culture of Peace: Focus on the Middle East. That and subsequent consultations have been designed to offer a broad approach to the challenges facing the Middle East with a focus on bringing religious leaders to the table along with political, academic and activist experts.



IIFWP's approach to this global crisis is innovative. Perhaps what speaks loudest about this approach is that in September of 2003 the Al Aqsa' Mosque hosted the first international and interreligious gathering since the second Intifada of October 2001. Supporting this breakthrough, IIPC initiatives have repeatedly gathered together people from the three Abrahamic faiths. Jews, Christians and Muslims have reconciled their past histories of enmity and recommitted to one another with a new vision of peace for the Middle East.

Peace-building has not been approached from this angle in any substantial way before. The International Peace Council (IIPC) initiated a unique process that starts from the most "internal" points of convergence—from the most profound and critical convictions that Jehovah/God/Allah is the one Origin and Source of all, and whose Will is for peace and prosperity, not for violence, poverty or hatred. This becomes the core and starting point for the peace process.

Grounded in the above fundamentals, IIPC's efforts at this time could best be described as "The Restoration of the Family of Abraham" and has three components:

Component I: includes consultations, conferences, roundtables, grassroots programs, peace walks and seminars, giving all people the opportunity to come together on "common ground"—recalling our common origins, convergent aspirations and unique contributions as individuals and members of various religions and nationalities. By establishing our common origins, ancestry and desired destination (a world of peace), and by recounting that we are all acting within a set of universal principles at play in our lives, we can then start another critical part of the process.

Component II: seeks to establish recognition of accountability to a "higher" source—one to whom all are equally accountable. By recognizing past grievous actions on all sides, what becomes most critical is that each person commits to constructive, self-giving preventive actions rather than resentment and revenge. To accomplish this phase quite literally requires each person to genuinely turn and face their God. Then to seek and adopt that point of view as their own, as a sign of submission to, or faith in, or obedience to Him.

Component III: builds solidarity to strengthen the tenuous “new beginning” of the first two phases. Actions will take the form of interreligious and international cooperation guided by the needs of the “larger good.” In other words, we will start to see the emergence of one “family of Abraham” seeking the greatest opportunities for peace and prosperity for all in the region.

HEART-TO-HEART RALLY FOR PEACE

Historically enlightened religious leadership has been crucial to the advancement of justice and morality, from the movements to abolish slavery and end colonial oppression to the movement for civil rights. Why do we march and rally for peace? In biblical times, Joshua led the Israelites on a march around the city of Jericho, bringing down the walls. In modern times, Gandhi’s march to the sea grew from hundreds to thousands, overcoming scepticism and derision, and sparked a movement that touched the conscience of the world, leading to Indian independence. In 1963 when an American president refused to consider civil rights legislation, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marched on Washington, DC with hundreds of thousands of freedom-loving Americans of many races who shared a dream, and changed the course of American history.

We, too, share a dream, and if we march together as never before in history we, too, can “bring down the walls” of resentment, prejudice and hatred, heal the wounds of war, and change the course of history. Whether Jewish, Moslem, Christian or Druze, the leaders of the world, and all who love and long for peace, will demonstrate that the power to create peace lies in the hands of those of us who truly love God and love our fellow human beings, those who will to join us to proclaim with one voice, “Peace! Shalom! Salaam Alaikum!”



The IIPC's Philosophy of Peacemaking

The IIPC sees peace as the establishment of a permanent condition of prosperity, joy, equality of opportunity, and respect for every person and every family. It is predicated upon the removal of enmity and historical resentment. Peace is characterized by giving more than receiving, a common respect for the origin of life, and by a life lived for the greater social good and support for all.

The key to peace lies with God, who is the Parent of humankind and the Revealer of each of the monotheistic religions. Therefore, an essential precondition for peace is reconciliation among religious leaders of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, along with their commitment to work in solidarity for peace and understanding among their peoples. Violence and conflict form the saddest chapters of human history. The IIPC encourages parties to express their legitimate grievances in non-violent ways as part of a social dialogue aimed at helping the sides to understand each other and to have compassion for each other's suffering.

Religious leaders and believers are those whom history would expect to respond first and having opened the way, would then encourage others to follow. The accomplishment of peace is in large part a spiritual undertaking. Good will and trust must be generated in order to change the political atmosphere and to give governments the political will to make the sacrifices that meaningful peace entails. This calls for leadership from religious leaders to generate a spiritual atmosphere of reconciliation and good will. Political and social leaders, educators and the media, should collaborate with enlightened religious leaders to promote and extend that spirit throughout the society.

Partnerships for Peace

New hope needs to be installed in the hearts and minds of the religious leaders no less so than in the hearts and minds of all people, including political leaders. This is where the support from international religious leaders is so important; they can catalyse the process.

Much of the preliminary work of the MEPI has been to create the necessary international support system and foundation for the overall IIPC strategy. Without this tremendous level of support from outside, those in the region will not be able to take the necessary, life-threatening steps to peace. The support that comes from "outside" must be a total investment, i.e. "at the cost of their lives." Otherwise, it will not be taken seriously. Persistence, commitment, sacrifices are needed. Financial sacrifices are needed to enable this process and mobilization to move forward, just not from governments, but from the people and families all over the world

Under the banner of the IIPC, a series of gatherings and peace walks "re-establishing the Family of Abraham" will take place, binding together hearts, families, nationalities—and faiths—in partnerships for peace.