



E-BULLETIN :: 2009 FIRST-QUARTER EDITION

MARCH 2009

In this e-Bulletin, read about:

- Call for peace and humanitarian aid during Gaza crisis
- Coalition formed to advance UN Decade on inter-religious dialogue, understanding, and cooperation for peace
- Appeal to G20 governments for aid to world's poorest during global economic crisis
- Women of faith call for end to violence against women during UN Commission on the Status of Women
- *Religions for Peace* Sri Lanka identifies priority actions
- *Religions for Peace* strengthens partnerships in Israel-Palestine

GLOBAL ACTION | ADVANCING PEACE AROUND THE WORLD

The stories that follow are just a few examples of dedicated work undertaken by members of *Religions for Peace* from 1 January through 31 March 2009. Additional outstanding efforts have been undertaken by regional and national inter-religious councils and groups around the world.

HQ | CALLS FOR END TO VIOLENCE AND FOR HUMANITARIAN AID IN GAZA

Violence erupted on 27 December 2008, killing more than 1,300 Palestinians and thirteen Israelis. A formal ceasefire was called on 18 January 2009. **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, on 5 January 2009 called for an end to the violence. “The killing and injuring of innocent people in Gaza must stop, as must the rocket attacks on Israeli civilians,” he said in a statement. “Peace can come to the Middle East, but only by honoring the rights of both the Palestinians and Israelis, facilitating painful but honorable compromises through sustained dialogue, and engaging the moral convictions shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims who know the Holy Land to be their common home.”

“Jews, Christians and Muslims, supported by the goodwill of believers of all religious faiths, should unite in their efforts to build peace. *Religions for Peace* knows that real security is ‘shared security’ and that the other’s peace is also their own. In the Middle East, there will be no peace for anyone unless there is peace with justice for all.” ([Read more.](#))

Members of the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network convened Israeli and Palestinian religious youth together on 21 January 2009 for a consultation during this challenging period in Paris, France. “The consultation began with reflections on the impact of the war in Gaza and Southern Israel,” the youth said in a communiqué. “Participants engaged in honest and open exchange of their personal sentiments, pain, fear, and hope. ... There were painful moments when participants found fundamental differences in their respective understandings of the causes of the current conflict. Despite such difficulties, participants kept their courage and commitment to dialogue and listened to different perspectives.” The youth pledged to continue their dialogue. They were also presented with more than 1,600 messages of solidarity from *Religions for Peace* Japan youth. Supporting the youth for the consultation were **H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel**, Director of the Patriarchate Liaison

Office of the European Union and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council; **Mme. Jacqueline Rougé**, a *Religions for Peace* Honorary President; **Ms. Mehrézia Labidi-Maiza**, Coordinator of the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network; and **Rev. Dr. Hans Ucko**, President of *Religions for Peace* Europe. They were assisted by **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Director of Inter-religious Council Development and Network Coordination for *Religions for Peace*, and **Ms. Kinza Ghaznavi**, Program Officer for Youth and Network Coordination for *Religions for Peace*. ([Read more.](#))

In addition, members of the *Religions for Peace* Youth Inter-Faith Network of Uganda, issued a statement of concern over the violence in Gaza. “Conflicts create hardship, fear amongst the communities affected, involving loss of livelihood of both young and old humanity leading to economic setbacks,” the youth said. “Young people, being the leaders of tomorrow, must develop the integrity and security in order to be positively useful to their societies.” The youth statement was issued under the leadership of **Mr. Anthony Rwahwire**, Chairperson of the *Religions for Peace* Youth Inter-Faith Network of Uganda.

UNITED NATIONS| UN DECADE COALITION FORMED FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Religions for Peace was among the forty-five religious, interfaith, and value-based organizations from five continents that agreed to form a coalition to advance a “United Nations Decade for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding, and Cooperation for Peace.” Coalition members expressed the hope that the UN Sixty-Fourth General Assembly, which will begin its deliberations in September 2009, will approve a resolution establishing such a decade from 2011–2020. The meeting took place at Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers in Ossining, New York, on 2–4 March. Participants represented Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, Zoroastrian, and indigenous faith traditions.

Mr. Stein Villumstad, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, will chair the Coalition Steering Committee. The Coalition will meet next in the context of the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009. Coalition members hope the proposed UN Decade will be launched on 21 September 2010, the International Day of Peace. This would immediately follow the current 2001–2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. ([Read more.](#))

ENGLAND| RELIGIONS FOR PEACE LEADERSHIP APPEALS TO G20 GOVERNMENTS

Senior religious leaders in *Religions for Peace* were among the dozens who appealed to the Group of 20 governments (G20) during their summit in London, England, calling for aid to the world’s poorest during the ongoing global economic crisis. In an open letter dated 30 March 2009, the religious leaders said, “At the roots of this crisis lie important moral issues.... We still need to find ways to enable poorer countries to trade their way to prosperity. We hold that promises made to the poor are especially sacred.” Among the signatories were **Dr. Rowan Williams**, Archbishop of Canterbury and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council; **Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra**, Chairman of *Religions for Peace* United Kingdom; and **Mrs. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar** of the Sikh community in Scotland and Co-Chair of the *Religions for Peace* European Women of Faith Network. ([Read more.](#))

KOSOVO| EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS PROMOTE INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

A delegation from the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Europe) on 14 February 2009 concluded a visit to Belgrade and Kosovo. The delegation had discussed *Religions for Peace*’s efforts to promote interreligious dialogue in Kosovo with religious leaders in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Kosovo. “Our meetings have strengthened my conviction that open and sustained dialogue among the religious communities is necessary for Kosovo’s future. *Religions for Peace* will continue to support the dialogue, but it is up to the religious communities themselves to decide how they will move forward,” ECRL Moderator **Bishop Gunnar Stålsett** said at the conclusion of the four-day visit.

The majority population in Kosovo are Muslim and strongly in favour of last year’s declaration of independence, whereas the minority Serb population are mostly Orthodox. The Serbian Orthodox Church is opposed to Kosovo’s independence. Among important issues in discussions on the future of Kosovo are the rebuilding of places of worship that were destroyed during the violent conflicts in the 1990s and first part of the present decade, and the protection of Serbian Orthodox churches,

monasteries and graveyards and allowing access to these for the Serb population. Supporting the delegation was ECRL General Secretary **Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord** and Special Adviser for the Balkans **Mr. Francois Perez**. ([Read more.](#))

COTE D'IVOIRE | WEST AFRICAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS MAKE SOLIDARITY VISIT

The *Religions for Peace* West Africa Inter-Religious Council Coordinating Committee (*Religions for Peace* West Africa) visited Cote d'Ivoire in solidarity with the National Forum of Religions of Cote d'Ivoire leadership on 8–13 February 2009. During the visit the delegation spent time in Abidjan as well as in Bouake. In both cities, they consulted with representatives of the Forces Nouvelle, religious leaders, civil society, and the civil authority of government. In Abidjan they also visited National Democratic Institute, National Elections Commission, and the president of the National Radio and Television.

Participating in the Cote d'Ivoire visit were **Dr. Benjamin D. Lartey**, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Coordinator; **Haja Mariama Sow**, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Deputy Coordinator and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council; **Imam Habib Sheriff**, *Religions for Peace* Liberia; **Rev. L. B. Rogers-Wright**, *Religions for Peace* Sierra Leone; **Mr. Bamar Gueye**, *Religions for Peace* Senegal; **Mr. Radji Saibou**, *Religions for Peace* Benin; and **Alhaji Huseini Sulley**, *Religions for Peace* Ghana. For the Cote d'Ivoire visit into Bouake and consultations in Abidjan, the delegation was joined by NFR-CI President Pastor **Ediemou Blin Jacob**; General Secretary **Pastor Emmanuel Kra**; **Imam Dosso**; and Women's Desk Coordinator **Haja Fofana Coulibaly**. The delegation was supported by **Rev. William R. Tolbert III**, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Coordinator.

GUINEA | WEST AFRICAN LEADERS VISIT FOLLOWING DEATH OF PRESIDENT

On 27 February to 4 March 2009 the *Religions for Peace* West Africa Inter-Religious Council Coordinating Committee (*Religions for Peace* West Africa) visited Conakry, Guinea, following the death of President H. E. Lansana Conte after a long illness. In Conakry, the delegation visited the president's widow, religious leaders, the civil-military committee, civil society, and the Minister of Religious Affairs.

Participants on the solidarity visit to Guinea were Dr. Benjamin D. Lartey, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Coordinator, and Imam Ibrahim Kone of National Forum of Religions of Cote d'Ivoire. They were accompanied by **Haja Mariama Sow**, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Deputy Coordinator and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council, who formalized all local meeting arrangements. They were supported by **Rev. William R. Tolbert III**, *Religions for Peace* West Africa Coordinator.

GHANA | RELIGIOUS LEADERS ADVOCATE FOR END TO VIOLENT CONFLICT

Ghana Conference of *Religions for Peace* (*Religions for Peace* Ghana) co-sponsored a conference in Accra on 26–27 March 2009, bringing together religious groups, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the media to explore ways of resolving post-election conflicts. The government pledged to strengthen all institutions put in place to facilitate and promote the culture of non-violence and ensure the passage of the National Peace Council Bill this year. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation also co-sponsored the event. A former Supreme Court judge, Justice V.C.R.A.C. Crabbe, said the alternative dispute mechanism is an effective tool for resolving conflict and also charged Ghanaians not to neglect their values, since it is the surest way to ensure discipline in the society. ([Read more.](#))

LIBERIA | WOMEN'S ALLIANCE HELPS ADDRESS POVERTY AT GLOBAL FORUM

Religions for Peace played a leadership role at the International Colloquium on Development and Women's Empowerment, a special initiative hosted by H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, on 7–9 March 2009. *Religions for Peace* is a co-founder of the Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA), which made a central presentation at the colloquium.

In April 2008, *Religions for Peace* helped co-found the WFDA, a groundbreaking initiative that seeks to help end dire poverty around the world by investing in women and girls. The alliance brings together the strengths of the women's, faith, and development communities, which historically have worked in isolation. *Religions for Peace* also helped to found WFDA-Liberia in Monrovia, the alliance's first national affiliate in the Global South. At a series of side meetings to the recent colloquium, a WFDA-Liberia steering committee was formed to outline steps forward; Ms. Esther Newberry was named Interim Coordinator of WFDA-Liberia. Supporting the women of faith were **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the Women's Mobilization Program at *Religions for Peace*; **Ms. Emma Kang'ethe**, African Women's Project Director of *Religions for Peace* Africa; and **Rev. William R. Tolbert III**, Coordinator *Religions for Peace* West Africa. Several follow-up meetings and workshops to help reflect on the mission and objectives of WFDA-Liberia are scheduled to take place in Monrovia in 2009

Co-founders of the Alliance are The Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation at the Washington National Cathedral, InterAction, and Women Thrive Worldwide.

ETHIOPIA | WOMEN OF FAITH HELP TRAIN RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN HIV/AIDS ISSUES

Members of the *Religions for Peace* African Women of Faith Network trained thirty-three religious leaders of different faiths—Christian, Muslim and Baha'i—to help orphans and other vulnerable children who have been affected by HIV and AIDS. The training, conducted on 23–25 March 2009 in Addis Abba, Ethiopia, helped equip women religious leaders with the knowledge to help women and children and learn how HIV and AIDS is linked to violence against women. The religious leaders also learned how to use the media to publicize their work. Participants discussed the need to launch a women of faith network in Ethiopia and formed a working group composed of twelve members to work on the modalities with the assistance of the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia.

GUATEMALA | THE ROLE OF FAITH COMMUNITIES IN ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Elias Szczytnicki, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Latin America and the Caribbean, on 30–31 January 2009 participated in the World Faiths Development Dialogue in Antigua, Guatemala. The dialogue was sponsored by Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The consultation focused on the role of faith-inspired organizations in responding to development challenges in Latin America and brought together practitioners, religious leaders from a range of faith traditions, and academics to review major issues facing the region. The group explored issues including the role of fast-growing Protestant churches in delivering services, major challenges facing children and youth in the region, and the need for an ongoing forum for faith-inspired organizations working on development to collaborate and share ideas. ([Read more.](#))

UNITED NATIONS | COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Religions for Peace participated throughout the Fifty-third United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held at UN headquarters in New York. *Religions for Peace* co-sponsored a number of key side events: "Integrating Gender into a Locally Owned HIV/AIDS Response," with **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the Women's Mobilization Program at *Religions for Peace*; "Elimination of Violence Against Women: The Role of Religious Leadership and Community," with **Ms. Lisa Locke**, Director of Institutional Support at *Religions for Peace*; "Lobbying Governments to Increase Budgets of the Programs for Women and Girls," with **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General at *Religions for Peace* and **Ms. Layla Alkhafaji** of the Al Hakim Foundation and a member of the Iraqi parliament; and "Women and Disarmament," with Ms. Alkhafaji.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | SECOND MUSLIM PHILANTHROPISTS CONGRESS

Religions for Peace was an official program partner at the Second World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP), held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 22–23 March 2009, at which Muslim leaders explored strategic ways to address global development challenges. The Congress is a high-level network of donors and foundations established to promote informed and effective giving. The conference provided opportunities for the major Muslim philanthropic organizations—such as the

Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic Development Bank, and other major regional or international organizations share and seek collaboration on issues.

Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, gave a keynote address at the Congress, “Confronting Global Challenges: The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation for Peace.” In addition, *Religions for Peace* President Emeritus, **HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**, sent a video greeting to attendees. ([Read more.](#))

USA | SRI LANKAN LEADERS EXPLORE SPIRITUAL ASSETS TO BUILDING PEACE

Sri Lanka is a nation state with diverse religious heritages and has suffered nearly fifty years of civil strife. On 26–27 February 2009, three Sri Lankan religious leaders of different faiths—Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim—explored together in New York their traditions’ spiritual assets that may be harnessed for peacebuilding. Sri Lankan Hindus were also formally engaged. *Religions for Peace* is developing a unique research methodology to understand how religious individuals and communities can access the socially transformative power of their spiritual assets for reconciliation, healing, and the building of compassionate communities. In their consultation, the Sri Lankan religious leaders worked with social scientists to design a pilot project that will be launched later this year in Sri Lanka. Ultimately, the project will provide a powerful model that may be used to marshal the spiritual assets for building loving and caring communities in other contexts. The project is being underwritten by the Fetzer Institute. The Sri Lankan delegation included **The Most Venerable Dr. Bellanwila Wimalarathana**, **Mrs. Jazima Ismail**, and **Bishop Norbert Andradhi**. They were supported by **Dr. Jehan Perera**, Executive Director of the National Peace Council in Sri Lanka; **Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo**, the newly elected Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Sri Lanka; **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*; the **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Director of Inter-religious Council Development and Field Coordination at *Religions for Peace*; and **Ms. Lisa Locke**, Director of Institutional Support at *Religions for Peace*. A team of scholars and Fetzer Foundation staff was also engaged in the consultation, led by Dr. S. Wesley Ariarajah, Professor of Ecumenical Theology, Drew University.

STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK | LOCAL, REGIONAL, GLOBAL

Religions for Peace is strengthening its network and developing partnerships around the world at local, national, regional, and international levels. Following are selected actions from 1 January–31 March 2009.

NORWAY | RELIGIONS FOR PEACE SRI LANKA IDENTIFIES PRIORITY ACTIONS

Religions for Peace Sri Lanka identified its priority actions when its senior religious leaders met in Oslo, Norway, on 19–21 January 2009 for discussions on the work of the council. The religious leaders committed to: “build mutual understanding, trust and collaborative relations between the different religious communities; mediate where there are local and national level religious, social and ethnic conflicts; collaborate with world religious leaders and organizations in reconciliation and peace building; and uphold values of good governance, accountability and transparency in public life.”

The meeting was facilitated by the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Europe). The delegation of faith leaders from Sri Lanka consisted of five senior Buddhist monks, three Roman Catholic bishops, one Muslim representative, and two Hindu representatives. They were supported by **Dr. Jehan Perera**, Executive Director National Peace Council; **Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo**, newly elected Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Sri Lanka; **Bishop Gunnar J. Stålsett**, Moderator of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders; and **Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord**, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders

Elected for one-year terms were: President, **Most Ven. Prof. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thero**; Vice Presidents, **Most Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thero**, **Rt. Rev. Bishop Vianney Fernando**, **Moulavi S.H. Athambawa**, and **M. Ramachandrayyer Veerapandiyaniyer**. The council plans to reconvene by June 2009. ([Read more.](#))

MIDDLE EAST | FOSTERING MULTI-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Religions for Peace is fostering multi-religious cooperation in the Holy Land. On behalf of **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, the **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Director of Inter-religious Council Development and Network Coordination for *Religions for Peace*, was engaged for two weeks in March in strategic consultations in both Israel and Palestine, visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Ramallah for meetings with *Religions for Peace* World Council Co-Presidents **His Beatitude Michel Sabbah**, Emeritus Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; **Sheikh Tayser al-Tamimi**, Chief Sharia Court Judge, Palestinian Authority, and **Rabbi David Rosen**, Special Advisor to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, as well as **H.B. Theofilos III**, Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem; **H.B. Fouad Twal**, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; **H.E. Sheikh Muhammad Ahmed Hussein**, Mufti of Jerusalem; **Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna**, Greek Archdiocese; and Lutheran **Bishop Munib Younan**, and other senior religious leaders. Partnerships were explored to strengthen *Religions for Peace* Palestine, which was formed last year. In addition, **Ms. Kinza Ghaznavi**, Program Officer for Youth and Network Coordination for *Religions for Peace*, supported Rev. Sugino in meeting with university students to help develop a *Religions for Peace* youth empowerment project in Palestine.

In Israel, Rev. Sugino met with **Rabbi Ron Kronish**, Director of the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Coordinating Council of Israel; and **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, member of the *Religions for Peace* International Youth Committee and Coordinator of the Jerusalem Inter-religious Young Adult Forum and other staff to discuss inter-religious cooperation and youth-led reconciliation in Jerusalem.

PERU | STRENGTHENING THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COMMITTEE

On 15 January 2009, the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Committee of Peru identified new goals and strengthened its organizational structure. For the period, 2009–2015, religious leaders committed to: recognizing the rights of individuals to human dignity, especially the poor and excluded; working to advance development that is based on ethics and religious values and grounded in respect for human dignity; demonstrating solidarity and care for the benefit of the environment; and promoting common action for peace.

HQ | NEW ASSOCIATE FOR RELIGIONS FOR PEACE WOMEN'S MOBILIZATION PROGRAM

Ms. Erin E. McNamara joins the *Religions for Peace* International Secretariat as the Women's Mobilization Program Associate. Ms. McNamara received her master's degree from Columbia University in human rights with a concentration in gender and international development; she earned her bachelor's degree from Binghamton University with a double major in women's human rights and English with a concentration in international studies. She served as an intern for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and participated in the negotiation and adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict. Ms. McNamara has also interned at Amnesty International's Women's Human Rights Program and at Americans for Informed Democracy. Ms. McNamara assists **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the Women's Mobilization Program at *Religions for Peace*. Please join in welcoming Ms. McNamara.

HQ | EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROGRAM AND DISARMAMENT STAFF

Ms. Deepika Singh, formerly Associate Director of Programs at *Religions for Peace*, has been named Director of Program Coordination. Ms. Singh will coordinate the program planning, implementation, and reporting between the International Secretariat and regional and national *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Councils. In addition, she will develop capacity-building initiatives and advise field program staff and the Inter-religious Councils.

Ms. Allison Pytlak, formerly Project Coordinator for Cluster Munitions and Disarmament at *Religions for Peace*, is now Disarmament Program Coordinator. Ms. Pytlak will represent *Religions for Peace* at disarmament-related conferences at the United Nations; in addition, she will actively participate in the Cluster Munitions Coalition, the NGO Committee on Disarmament, and the International Action Network on Small Arms. She will also develop new projects related to issues on nuclear weapons, small arms and light weapons, and other programs on disarmament and security.

USA | RELIGIONS FOR PEACE WINS NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Religions for Peace won a De-Rose Hinkhouse prize for its 2007 *Annual Report* from the Religion Communicators Council. The award was presented to **Ms. Andrea Louie**, Communications Manager for *Religions for Peace*, at the council's national convention on 29 March 2009 in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. In addition, the **Rev. Donald (Bud) Heckman**, Director of External Relations for *Religions for Peace*, received a De-Rose Hinkhouse prize for his book, *InterActive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook* (SkyLight Paths, 2008), which he co-edited with **Ms. Rori Picker-Neiss**, former Interim Director of *Religions for Peace* USA. ([Hear more](#) about the book.)

GOVERNANCE | WORLD COUNCIL, HONORARY PRESIDENTS, & TRUSTEES

Religions for Peace World Council Co-Presidents, Honorary Presidents, and International Trustees have been advancing peace around the world. These are some of their achievements during the period 1 January through 31 March 2009.

WORLD COUNCIL | METROPOLITAN KIRILL ELECTED RUSSIAN PATRIARCH

His Eminence Kirill, Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, was elected head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, on 27 January 2009. He was enthroned in a ceremony in Moscow on 1 February. Patriarch Kirill is among the founding members of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Europe) and is a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council. The **Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky**, Moderator of *Religions for Peace*, attended the enthronement. He observed that “His Holiness is well prepared to lead the Russian Orthodox Church as it seeks to meet the needs and challenges of its internal mission as well as the needs and challenges of collaboration among religious communities for the building of peace and justice.” ([Read more.](#))

TRUSTEE | A. HUDA AND SAMIA FAROUKI CO-CHAIR MAJOR ARABIC EXHIBIT

Religions for Peace International Trustees **Mr. A. Huda Farouki** and **Mrs. Samia Farouki** served as organizing committee Co-Chairs and major contributors to “Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World,” an exhibit featuring the cultural treasures of the twenty-two Arab nations that represent the Arab-speaking world. The exhibit was showcased from 23 February to 15 March 2009 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. For videos from the festival, visit the [Kennedy Center](#) and [PBS](#) Web sites.

TRUSTEE | JOHN W. KISER ON BOOK TOUR FOR *COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL*

Religions for Peace International Trustee **Mr. John W. Kiser** has been on tour for his recently published book, *Commander of the Faithful—The Life and Times of the Emir Abd el-Kader: A Story of True Jihad* (Monkfish, 2008). Mr. Kiser recently visited Elkader, Iowa, a town named after the famous Emir, and gave an interview to Mr. Greg Shanley on Iowa Public Radio. ([Listen here.](#)) For a list of future public presentations, please visit www.truejihad.com.

TRUSTEE | IDANNA PUCCI AND TERENCE WARD LAUNCH ART EXHIBITS

Religions for Peace International Trustees **Ms. Idanna Pucci** and **Mr. Terence Ward** launched two art exhibits in New York on “Brazza in the Congo,” one at the National Arts Club and one at New York University. The exhibits, which ran from late March through 19 April 2009, are a celebration of an nineteenth-century explorer and Italian-born, French-educated aristocrat, Mr. Pietro Savorgnan di Brazza. The shows coincide with the release of Ms. Pucci's new book, *Brazza in Congo: A Life and Legacy* (Umbrage, 2009). The exhibits were arranged with the assistance of *Religions for Peace* International Trustee **Dr. John Brademas**. ([Read more.](#))

TRUSTEE | STEVE KILLELEA'S FILM *SOLDIERS OF PEACE* WINS AWARDS

Religions for Peace International Trustee **Mr. Steve Killelea's** new film, *Soldiers of Peace*, won the Angel Peace Award for Best Feature Film and Best Documentary Director award at the 2009 Monaco International Film Festival on 4–7 December 2008 in Monaco. In addition, the film has won Golden Ace Award for superior and outstanding film making at the 2009 Las Vegas International Film Festival; presentation of the award was on 9–12 April 2009 in Las Vegas. Featuring some of *Religions for Peace's* network partners on the ground, the film is narrated by Hollywood actor and United Nations Messenger of Peace Mr. Michael Douglas. ([Read more.](#))

NEW TOOLS & PUBLICATIONS | EQUIPPING THE NETWORK

Religions for Peace is strengthening its network by providing new tools for use by communities of faith around the world. These were the products produced from 1 January–31 March 2009.

NEWSLETTER | *MOSAIC ABOUT WOMEN OF FAITH*

The Fall 2008 issue of *Mosaic*, about the work of the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network, has been published. The issue highlights what women of faith around the world have done to help end violence against women. ([Read more.](#))

CALENDAR | GLOBAL WOMEN OF FAITH NETWORK

The ever-popular Women's Interfaith Calendar for 2009, published by the *Religions for Peace* Women's Mobilization Program, is available for download. ([Read more.](#))

HEADS UP | FORTHCOMING EVENTS

18–19 May	<i>Religions for Peace</i> Thailand launch meeting
25–27 May	<i>Religions for Peace</i> European Council of Religious Leaders meeting, Lille, France
16–17 June	G8 Religious Leaders' Summit, Rome, Italy
1–3 July	Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Kazakhstan
10–11 July	<i>Religions for Peace</i> Disarmament Summit, Kathmandu, Nepal

KEEP US POSTED | YOUR WORK, YOUR SUCCESS

Send us your news and work, and we'll include it in the next quarterly e-Bulletin!

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RELIGIONS FOR PEACE—the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of

senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; more than seventy national and five regional inter-religious bodies; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.