

# PERIODICAL NEWSLETTER **DICID**

Doha International Center For Interfaith Dialogue ISSUE 1, SPRING 2009



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# The Fruits of Our Labor



Led by the example of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, our beloved brothers have dedicated many years promoting the principles of Islam and advocating the peaceful coexistence, respect and rights of the religious beliefs of others. Applying their knowledge and skills in good faith, and combining their successive efforts with inspired ideas, they exemplify the true image of our civilized country.

As a direct result of their sincere dedication, the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (D.I.C.I.D.), has been established and is an example of interfaith cooperation in Qatar. From our new office in Doha, we have started publishing this simple bulletin, which will be followed by an annual scientific journal containing examples of academic research initiated by the centre, in addition to various conference and symposium reports from Qatar and abroad.

I want to take this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt thanks to the D.I.C.I.D. Advisory Board, The Board of Directors and our employees for all their efforts.

*Dr. Yusef M. Al-Siddiqi*  
DICID DIRECTOR



## Our Mission

We strive for constructive dialogue between followers of different faiths towards better understanding and harnessing of distinct religious principles and teachings to the benefit of all humanity, on the basis of mutual respect and acknowledgement of differences and through cooperation with related individuals and organizations.

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Doha  
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# ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue has been proud to participate in the following events and activities over the past months, here we are mentioning just few of them:

## Doha Book Fair 2008

For the first time, the D.I.C.I.D. contributed to the 19th Annual BOOK FAIR 2009 in Qatar. Inaugurated by Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage, H.E. Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, the Book Fair attracts thousands of visitors annually from both the local and expatriate communities. The Book Fair, held from 24 December 2008 to 3 January 2009, was organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage – Q.N.L. Visitors to the D.I.C.I.D. exhibition were presented with a large number of English books, mostly attributed to Islamic Civilization, culture, architecture and monuments in the region and Europe.



## D.I.C.I.D. Sponsors M.L.T. Conference in Doha

D.I.C.I.D. was proud to sponsor and support the 2009 Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow (M.L.T.) Conference.

From January 16-19 2009, dozens of young Muslims gathered in Doha, Qatar to meet and share ideas, and discuss what they perceived to be the Muslim world's most urgent collective challenges. Hailing from over 75 countries, the 300 dynamic Muslim leaders in attendance, debated solutions on pressing issues such as the global 'Crisis of Authority and Leadership' in the Muslim world and the mandate to promote peace over extremism from within.

The Conference was organized by the American Society for Muslim Advancement (A.S.M.A.) in collaboration with the Cordoba Initiative and the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations (A.O.C.).



## D.I.C.I.D. Staff Participated in British Council Project

In February, Head of Public Relations, Mr. Hamde Blektich, represented the D.I.C.I.D. at the three-day, Global Changemakers meeting in Qatar.

Under the patronage of the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and managed through the British Council, Switzerland, Global Changemakers aims to unite young people aged between 15 and 28 from around the world to share their concerns regarding local and global problems, discuss possible solutions to such concerns, participate in awareness-raising campaigns for other young people and take action to bring about change.



## Dr. Al-Naimi participates in regional symposium; 'Dialogue of Civilizations between the Islamic World and Japan.' in Kuwait

On March 11 and 12, 2009 and under the patronage of the Crown Prince, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait was host to the Eighth Symposium of the 'Developments of Islamic thought' entitled, 'Civilized Dialogue between Japan and the Islamic World.'

Dr. Ibrahim Saleh Al Naimi, Chairman, Board of Directors, D.I.C.I.D., participated in the event and contributed to the symposium's theme, 'The environment, challenges and visions.'



## "Living Together" Symposium Organized by DICID in Paris

The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue organizes a symposium in collaboration with the World Conference of Religions for Peace and sponsored by the State of Qatar, titled; "Living Together - How can Believers Contribute to Peace in the Holy Land". The symposium will be held 17 May, 2009 in Paris, and will host a selected group of religious representatives, academics and researchers in this field. The symposium discussions will address a number of themes including:

- The contribution of believers in the Holy Land Peace process
- Practical solutions to pave the way out of the Holy Land crisis
- Where is the peace process in the Middle East?



# HONORED GUESTS OF THE DICID



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During the past several months, the D.I.C.I.D. has been honored to host many distinguished guests at the Centre. These included:

## Bishop Michael Lewis Visits DICID

The Right Reverend Michael Lewis, whose pastoral responsibility includes all Christians presiding in the Gulf, Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and both parts of Cyprus, commented during his visit to us, "The Qatari government has generously asked my congregation to build a facility for all apostles here and we appreciate H.H. the Emir's decision." He added, "Our duty is to continue to work together and try our best in solving problems."



## Kazakhstan's Ambassador Visits DICID

As Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Azmat Berdibay is seeking greater co-operation between his country and Qatar in regards to interfaith dialogue.

On a visit to the D.I.C.I.D., Mr. Azmat Berdibay met with Dr. Ibrahim al-Naimi, Chairman of the D.I.C.I.D. and Dr. Yusuf Al-Siddiqi, Manager of the centre and held fruitful discussions concerning possible student exchange programmes and interfaith dialogue between the D.I.C.I.D. and Kazakhstan universities. Mr. Berdibay expressed the Kazakhstan Embassy's support for the D.I.C.I.D. as a leading international centre for interfaith dialogue.



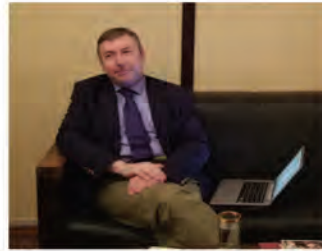
## Shaikh Dr. Bilal Philips Visits DICID

The Centre was honored to welcome Dr. Bilal Philips. Author of over 40 books on Islam, Dr. Philips is also the founder of a number of Islamic organizations, including, The Islamic Information Centre, Dubai, The Islamic Studies Academy, Doha, as well as the Islamic Online University.

He was met by the members of the D.I.C.I.D. administration; foremost among them was the Executive Director, Dr. Yusuf Al-Siddiqi and the Chairman of the D.I.C.I.D., Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi.

Dr. Bilal was impressed by the centre and its policies regarding interfaith dialogue and offered his help and support in the field of interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

Dr Bilal Philips official website is [www.bilalphilips.com](http://www.bilalphilips.com)



## Rev. Alistair Radcliff Visits DICID

The Very Reverend Canon Alistair Macdonald-Radcliff, Director General of C-1 West-Islam Dialogue, made a visit to the D.I.C.I.D. and met with Dr. Yusuf Al-Siddiqi, Executive Manager. Canon Alistair discussed many different aspects of Interfaith Dialogue and introduced Dr. Yusuf to the C-1 West-Islam Dialogue concept. Dr. Yusuf expressed his enthusiasm in regards to the D.I.C.I.D. being a participant to the C-1 Interfaith Program and also invited Reverend Alistair to contribute to the D.I.C.I.D.'s Interfaith Journal in addition to extending him an invitation to attend the Seventh Doha Interfaith Dialogue Conference, due to be held on October 20 -21, 2009 in Doha.



## DICID Welcomes French Ambassador

Dr. Yusuf Al-Siddiqi, Executive Director, D.I.C.I.D. received H.E. Mr. Gilles Bonnaud, France's Ambassador to Qatar. The Ambassador was accompanied by Mrs. Elisabeth Ponsolle des Portes, President of Comité Colbert. During his visit, His Excellency exchanged views and opinions on a wide variety of issues with Dr. Al-Siddiqi, and discussed the co-operation between the two countries regarding interfaith issues. Mrs. Elisabeth Ponsolle des Portes, presented Dr. Al-Siddiqi with a copy of the Comité Colbert catalogue. Comité Colbert is an organisation comprising the top 70 French luxury companies governed by French Law.

# Roundtable Discussion on Global Economic Crisis Organized by the DICID

The D.I.C.I.D. organized and hosted a Roundtable discussion in collaboration with the Earth Mates Dialogue Center of London entitled, "The Role of Faith in the Global Economic Crisis: A Religious Perspective" which was held 3-4 May, 2009 in Doha. The roundtable discussion hosted a selected group of professionals, academics and economic experts.

The Roundtable discussion addressed a number of significant themes including:

- The Economic Crisis: Reality or Illusion?
- The Concept of Economic Growth and Development: An Islamic perspective.
- The Islamic Economy: A viable and proven alternative.
- The Global Economic Crisis: Where to from here?
- Visions and Concepts: How to present the Islamic alternative to the world?

As a result of intensive sessions, the participants presented the following recommendations:

1. It is our duty (Islamic nations) to provide quality and suitable solutions to humanity in eradicating the mitigating root causes of the economic and financial crisis. This requires further studies, research, and seminars at the individual, group and state levels.
2. Acknowledging research (Islamic and others), that highlights the absence of an ethical dimension and its impact on the creation of this crisis. We are required to focus our efforts to build our communities more actively, and achieving our legitimate interests, without violating or abusing the rights and interests of others. The education of the human being and improving their situation culturally, intellectually and practically is the main issue. This should be reflected in social and legal institutions, and the regulated procedural instructions such are central banks and other regulatory bodies.
3. We call upon all Islamic governments to activate the Islamic economy within their financial and economic institutions. This will provide an opportunity to present the Islamic alternative to the world. This opportunity and potential impact is only achievable if Islamic countries deliver: "Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture?" (Quran, 2:44)
4. Review of the U\$ dollar as a reserve currency, and strengthening the currencies of the Arab and Islamic countries.
5. In order to achieve global human and environment development, the following elements should be incorporated;
  - faith (religion),
  - education and moral values,
  - science and technology,
  - improving the individual and group competencies,
  - becoming more self-sufficient with agriculture, industry and trade,
  - achieving integrated economic, political and military power,
  - becoming independent as much as possible,
  - combating administrative, financial, political and environmental corruption.
6. Reviewing the integration and cooperation with emerging economies countries, thus creating a new global economic map based upon active participation. Strengthening the bilateral trade between the Arab and other Islamic countries resulting in genuine integration and partnership.
7. Unification of policies regarding customs between the Islamic countries, the facilitation of foreign transfers, and improving the manufacturing of goods and services making them compatible. Activating medium and large industries, and stimulating transportation between the Islamic countries. Unifying the import-export standards between countries.
8. Giving special attention to universities, institutes, schools and research centers. Creating sufficient budgets in promoting the benefits of education, research, thought and creativity.
9. Maintain growth rates, while adopting appropriate and suitable methods to deal with financial development using the tools of Islamic finance.
10. Take advantage of low prices of international materials and commodities, created by the global recession in serious attempt to address the bottlenecks in supplies.
11. Exploiting the current global situation in an attempt to reduce the effective rates of domestic inflation in order to maintain acceptable levels of real growth.
12. Provide monetary policy a bigger role so that central banks can combat inflation and achieve monetary and financial stability.
13. Review of the methods and methodologies used in the management of a country's assets abroad.
14. Giving priority to real domain investments, particularly financial assets. Working on economic diversity which is worthy of investment. Investing in human capital.
15. Halting excessive investment in the real estate sector, especially the construction of urban entertainment centres. Having realistic expectations regarding the current market economy.
16. Review of global financial openness.
17. Studying successful experiences in Islamic Economics.



## DICID Organizes in Beirut a Symposium: "Religious and Ethnic Diversity in the Arab world, Richness or Disintegration Factor?"



The D.I.C.I.D. in collaboration with the Syriac League of Lebanon recently organized a roundtable titled, 'Religious and Ethnic Diversity in the Arab world, Richness or Disintegration Factor?' on April 8th-9th, 2009 in Beirut, Lebanon.

The main session titles were entitled;

- Is there really a religious or sectarian conflict?
- Eastern Christendom - its future role and the Western influence
- Nationalities in the Middle East region
- The ways of the proposed solutions to diversity?

As a result of the symposium, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 - The need for joint inter-religious initiatives to ensure that the Arab region becomes an oasis of diversity, free from clashes and hatred.
- 2 - Recruitment, adoption and promotion of religious teachings and values which are common to the culture of tolerance.
- 3 - Revision and improvement of current curricula and educational programs to ensure the support of diversity, in line with the methodology of dialogue and respecting other opinions.
- 4 - Stimulation of national and global media and the establishment of initiatives that promote the practical coexistence amongst nations and communities.
- 5 - Devoted studies for establishing the principles which underpin the concept of citizenship.
- 6 - Call upon the Arab world to consider the benefits of religious diversity and ethnic richness, rather than a determining factor of disintegration.
- 7 - Focusing on the coherence and resilience of nations and territorial integrity.
- 8 - Conscious and peaceful deterring of internal and external factors which prevent countries of the Arab world making informed decisions.
- 9 - Reliance on development and democracy, eradication of poverty, and marginalization.
- 10 - Striving to eradicate and reject violence using educational programs and the media.
- 11 - Prevent the exploitation of any religion as a means of creating disorder.
- 12 - Setting up a joint agreement based on the principles of tolerance and coexistence resulting in peace and security.

Send Us Your Interfaith Proposal  
[info@dicid.org](mailto:info@dicid.org)



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# WORLD INTERFAITH NEWS

## Qatar Renews its Commitment to Promoting Dialogue and Understanding

The State of Qatar reiterated its intention to supporting the efforts of national, regional and international initiatives which promote dialogue and understanding among religions, cultures and nations. Calling for positive partnerships between all sides, the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and the D.I.C.I.D. have dedicated themselves to strengthening relations between different religions and promoting the implementation of common goals.

This commitment was announced by Sheikha Alia bint Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Adviser Permanent Delegation of the State of Qatar to the United Nations at the opening of the second meeting of the Tripartite Commission of the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace. In her speech, Sheikha Alia explained that the State of Qatar firmly believes in the importance of dialogue between religions as an effective means of seeking common ground on which to build a world of peace and understanding. Sheikha Alia further explained that this commitment was strengthened by the decision of His Highness, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, to host a series of international conferences focussing on the dialogue between different religions. In what has become an annual event, these international conferences serve as an opportunity to demonstrate how the people of Qatar are committed to strengthening dialogue and communication between religions.

It was also pointed out that the dialogue currently occurring through D.I.C.I.D. is a direct result of appeals made by Heads of State and Governments at the end of the World Summit in 2005 which emphasized the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity, and the value of the dialogue on interfaith cooperation



## Negative Perceptions on the Rise in Europe

Ethnocentric attitudes are steadily increasing across Europe as a growing number of people in several major European countries expressed unfavorable opinions regarding both Jewish and Muslim communities.

A 2008 survey by the Pew Research Centre's, Pew Global Attitudes Project found 46% of the Spanish population rated the Jewish community unfavorably. More than a third of Russians (34%) and Poles (36%) echoed similar views. Somewhat fewer, but still significant, is the number of Germans (25%) and French (20%) who expressed, when interviewed negative opinions. While these figures should ultimately cause concern, more worryingly is the increase in negative opinions between the 2006 and 2008 polls.

Great Britain alone stands out as the only European country included in the survey where an increase in anti-Semitic attitudes is not evident. Just 9% of Britons have unfavourable views, which is largely unchanged from recent years. In terms of a more global picture, a relatively small percentage in both Australia (11%) and the United States (7%) continue to view Jewish believers unfavourably.

Opinions towards Muslims in almost all of these countries are considerably more negative. Fully half of Spanish (52%) and German respondents (50%) rate Muslims unfavourably. Opinions about Muslims are somewhat less negative in Poland (46%) and considerably less negative in France (38%). About one-in-four in Britain and the United States (23% each) also voice unfavourable views of Muslims.

Overall, there is a clear relationship between anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim attitudes. (www.pewglobal.org)



## Annual Meeting between Vatican and Al-Azhar Held in Rome

The Joint Committee for Dialogue, originally established in 1998, held its annual meeting in Rome on Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th February 2009. The meeting was jointly presided by His Eminence, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and by Prof. Sheikh Ali Abd al-Baqi Shahata, Secretary General of the Academy for Islamic Research of al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt.

The Catholic delegation was composed of Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata - Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Monsignor Khaled Akasheh - Head Officer for Islam, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and Dr. Bernard Sabella, Associate Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Bethlehem University. The Al-Azhar delegation was composed of Prof. Sheikh Ala' al-Din Muhammad Isma'il al-Ghabashi - Imam of the Grand Mosque of Rome, and Prof. Sheikh Hamdi Muhammad Dasouqi al-Atrash - Imam of the Mosque of Ostia (Italy). The participants listened to a presentation entitled, The Promotion of a Pedagogy and Culture of Peace with particular reference to the role of religions, by Dr Bernard Sabella, and Sheikh Ali Shahata.

## Appeal for Humanity

In the wake of Israeli aggression on the civilians of Gaza, the D.I.C.I.D. has issued this official humanitarian appeal:

*“For that cause We decreed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind...”* (Quran, 5:32)

In a time when many are striving to take the necessary goodwill steps towards establishing mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among followers of different faiths, Israel’s actions have once again stunned the world. Peaceful coexistence in this region will continue to be purely hypothetical while such irrational actions continue.

One only needs to remember many of the shocking images exposed through the media to realise that this aggressive behaviour was a war waged against innocent individuals.

Yet again, we see the government of Israel ignoring the cries of Palestinian children, widows, and old people. Such actions are not merely an attack on a nation, but upon our fundamental religious beliefs and principles. We affirm and recognize that such acts are contrary to any religion.

If we seek a world of peace, justice and tranquillity, which emphasizes the respect for humanity, then no religion can remain silent or ignore such violations of human rights. The D.I.C.I.D. strongly condemns the government of Israel’s actions and calls upon all leaders and adherents of all world religions to stand united in condemning this senseless massacre and act of genocide.



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