

**I**nterfaith dialogue was established in Israel in the late 1950's by a small group of visionaries, including Martin Buber and others. More than forty years later we saw that despite decades of commendable interfaith activities, only an extremely limited circle of individuals was seriously engaged in dialogue. There was an urgent need to supplement existing interfaith efforts, to draw ever larger numbers of individuals into the circle of interfaith dialogue and to widely implement interactive encounter models that can effect true and lasting change in the outlook of participants.

In light of the above, a group of concerned long-time interfaith activists has formed in the Summer of 2001, the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA). Our **vision** is a society in which the otherness of the other is not only tolerated, but truly understood and respected. The IEA is guided by the following **basic principles and goals**: Equal representation of all faiths; Equality of the genders; Outreach to individuals from all faiths, age groups, walks of life and levels of society; Outreach to individuals across the religious-secular and political spectrums; Continual recruitment through committed activists; Implementation of interactive programs that effectively change outlooks and attitudes, such as extended seminars, ongoing study groups; Continual development of new models for effective encounter; Ongoing evaluation of all strategies and programs.

The IEA is dedicated to promoting **real and sustainable coexistence** through interactive inter-religious dialogue. We believe that, rather than being the cause of the problem, religion can and should be a source of solution for the conflicts in the region and beyond. We do not believe in the blending of all traditions into one undifferentiated group, but in providing a table at which all can sit with safety and ease, while being fully who they are in their respective religions. IEA includes more than 8,000 affiliates from all walks of life throughout the population of Israel. In addition the IEA works in cooperation with seven Palestinian organizations across

the Palestinian Authority. In the Middle East the IEA plays a major role in the **Middle East Abrahamic Forum**, together with organizations from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, The Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Turkey.

### Some of our current projects include:

- **Weekend Retreats**

Some eighty participants, across the variety of religious contexts, gather for two to three days of intensive and intimate encounter with each other. They spend most of the time in small groups, where each of them gets to express and hear views on



religious aspects of topics - avoiding divisive political debates. Through that intensive and intimate interaction they meet each other in a very deep sense and thus learn to understand and respect the otherness of the other. The retreats are designed to create a sense of a joint community and encourage follow-up activities that ensure continuation and sustainability.

- **Interfaith Encounters**

Dedicated to one theme each time these sessions usually open with a short presentation followed by joint study and discussion of the beliefs, practices and sacred texts of the respective traditions. Interfaith study is used as a vehicle for understanding, acceptance and respect for the other, and as a way to deepen awareness of one's own religion. Most of the sessions are organized in the frame-work of dozens of ongoing groups for interfaith encounter across the country - from the Upper Galilee to Eilat. These groups develop into "mini-communities" of

harmonious coexistence that respects the uniqueness of each community. They serve as models for the larger communities and grow to develop in them the desired inter-communal relations.



- **Women's Interfaith Encounter (WIE)**

Muslim, Christian, Druze and Jewish women study together topics of relevance to women from the point of view of the different religions. The encounter is a source of strength and empowerment for women to

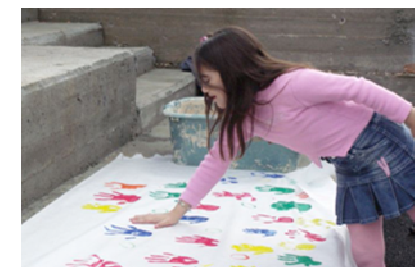


recognize their shared values and struggles. Through monthly meeting, shared religious celebrations and conferences,

WIE creates a sacred space of trust, harmony and support during difficult times.

- **Youth Interfaith Encounter**

Similar to the WIE, the YIE is designed for the youth acting as a space for the special dynamics of



young people and a source of empowerment for them to be involved in interfaith processes and contribute their special input.

We currently hold ongoing groups in Jerusalem and

Tel Aviv. More groups are planned in Haifa, Be'er Sheba and other places.

• **Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue and Sessions**

We hold regular interfaith meetings and conferences in cooperation with Palestinian organizations, with the objective to build sustainable peace between the two nations on a people-to-people level. Because we take an inter-religious, non-political, approach we are able to engage in the process people from all parts of the political spectrum in their respective societies and build deep and sustainable conversation and relations between them.



• **The Middle East Abrahamic Forum**

A forum of people and groups of the Abrahamic traditions in the Middle East to support cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect as a powerful tool for peace building in the Middle East. An annual conference of Muslims, Jews, Christians and Druze meets to consolidate and plan joint work in supporting acceptance and coexistence in and between their local communities and to plan and promote further regional programs.

To join our listserv and receive regular updates from our various activities (1-2 messages a week):  
Send a blank message to:

[iea-reports-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:iea-reports-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

*The Interfaith Encounter Association is dedicated to promoting real coexistence and human peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East through cross-cultural study and inter-religious dialogue. We believe that, rather than being the cause of the problem; religion can and should be a source of solution for conflicts that exist in the region and beyond.*

*We do not believe in the blending of all traditions into one undifferentiated group, but in providing a table where all can come and sit in safety and ease, while being fully who they are in their respective religions.*

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE IEA**

**Supporter options:**

- Affiliate/Friend 30£
- Sponsor (listing your name in the annual report) 90£
- Donor (listing in the beginning of annual report) 280£

Please **send a check** payable to  
"INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER ASSOCIATION"  
12/34 Ha'arazim Street, P.O.Box 3814, Jerusalem  
91037, Israel

Tax-deductible contributions in the U.K.: may be sent to: New Israel Fund of Great Britain, 26 Enfold Street, London W1H 2DD. Contributions must be marked as: "Donor-advised to the Interfaith Encounter Association".

Secure **online contributions** can be made through our website: [www.interfaith-encounter.org](http://www.interfaith-encounter.org)



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