



Great Britain: Jews and Christians join for day of dialogue on Middle East

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Last week 15 Rabbis and 15 members of the Christian clergy gathered together at St Petersburg Place Synagogue London for a “Jewish-Christian Day of Dialogue and Discussion on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East”.

Organised by the Board of Deputies and the Council of Christians and Jews, the symposium was an opportunity for discussion of how those who care about what many refer to as the Holy Land, but are based in the UK, can contribute to a lasting peace for all people of the region.

Participants included Rabbis from all of the main Jewish denominations and Christian clergy from the Church of England, Baptist Union and Methodist Church. Participants travelled from as far away as Durham and Manchester to attend.

The day began with a political analysis of the situation facing Israelis and Palestinians, delivered by Professor Alan Johnson of BICOM and Palestinian academic Hitham Kiyali. They examined how we had reached the modern day situation from both the Israeli and Palestinian perspective and, in light of the contemporaneous flaring of violence in Gaza and Southern Israel, commented on hopes for peace.

This was followed by personal theological narratives from two participants - Rabbi Herschel Gluck and Jeremy Worthen, Principle of the South East Institute for Theological Education. The group were then addressed by Ahmed and Ori, speakers from One Voice Palestine and One Voice Israel respectively. They spoke about the difficulties they face in daily life but also their desire to use dialogue as a means to find peace.

After lunch Revd Gary Mason, a Methodist Minister from East Belfast, talked about searching for peace in Northern Ireland. He did not draw a direct comparison between the two conflicts but discussed how his own experience of finding peace with a sworn enemy could inform our approach to the Middle East. It was an inspiring presentation and Revd Mason invited participants to visit Belfast to understand more – as long as they took away what they learnt to inform practical projects to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

Finally, the 30 faith leaders were introduced to three UK based projects which promote dialogue between Israelis, Palestinians, Jews and Muslims; the Witness Programme, the Olive Tree Programme and Forum for Discussion of Israel/Palestine. We hope that these programmes will give practical ways that the Rabbis and Christian Clergy can engage their communities in a positive, moderate and non-divisive way regarding the situation in the Middle East.

In reflection on the day, Jeremy Worthen commented, “The range and calibre of speakers I heard was most impressive, and I also very much enjoyed the more informal conversations and opportunities to make connections. It was a hopeful event, at which there were glimpses of life beyond polarisation and endemic conflict.”

Source: [Board of Deputies of British Jews](#)