



# ICCJ Mourns the Death of former Roman Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff (1915 – 2015)

30.04.2015 | Anette Adelman; ICCJ General Secretary

**While preparing for our Annual Conference in Rome we received the sad news of the death of Rabbi Elio Toaff, Rome's emeritus Chief Rabbi who passed away on Sunday night eleven days before his hundredth birthday.**

Rabbi Toaff served as Chief Rabbi of Rome from 1951 till 2002 and played an essential role in rebuilding Jewish life in Italy in the aftermath of the Shoah.

On April 13, 1986 he welcomed Pope John Paul II to the Great Synagogue of Rome during the historic first visit of a reigning pope to a Jewish house of worship.

ICCJ makes its own the words of Renzo Gattegna, the president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities:

In these hours we mourn the death of an extraordinary man. He was a leader, a spiritual guide capable of making an impact on his times and the time of the future generations. Thank you Rav for everything you have done and represented. Your teachings will not be forgotten. May your memory be a blessing.

*(quote from [Pagine ebraiche – International Edition](#))*

In a letter to Chief Rabbi of Rome Riccardo Di Segni Pope Francis also expressed his "heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members and to the entire Jewish community of the Capital on the death of Prof. Rabbi Elio Toaff, the long-distinguished spiritual leader of the Jews of Rome."

The Pope acknowledged Rabbi Toaff as a "leading authority for decades on Jewish and civil Italian history" and noted his "widespread esteem and appreciation for his moral authority, combined with a profound humanity."

Francis particularly recalled "with gratitude his generous commitment and sincere willingness to promote dialogue and fraternal relations between Jews and Catholics, who witnessed a significant moment in his memorable meeting with St. John Paul II at the Synagogue of Rome."

Pope Francis finished his letter by offering "prayers to the Most High, full of love and fidelity, to welcome him into his kingdom of peace".