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## FODIP

The Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine



First Trustees' Annual Report 2008/9

## PATRONS

**Lord Harries of Pentregarth**

**Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield**

**Shaykh Dr Abdal Hakim Murad**

**Dr Usama Hasan**

*"This work is not easy, and the differences to be overcome are legion. It is only by confronting the fears, prejudices and stereotypes of the Middle East conflict that they can be overcome."*

*Michael Hirst, writing about FODIP in The Tablet (12 July 2008)*

*Haram el Sharif Photograph on previous page appears by courtesy of R.Grocott*

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR-ELECT



*Steven Longden, speaking at Columbia University*

Throughout my 21 years of interest in the Israel Palestine conflict I have consistently been struck by the reluctance of inter-faith dialogue initiatives in the UK to discuss the issues raised by this nearly 100 year dispute. I have come across the suggestion that even the smallest of closed discussions on the subject might, somehow, wreck years of hard won inter-faith trust.

Whatever the causes of this 'elephant in the room' my experience tells me that the inability to appropriately address the creature is a major barrier to increasing the number of people involved in inter faith dialogue in the UK, particularly amongst Muslims and Jews. On the one hand, many Muslims feel that dialogue with Jews (who may or may not be Zionists) would somehow betray their Palestinian brethren. And on the other hand, Jewish (and Christian) Zionists quite probably feel that any attempt to engage with Muslims will lead to accusatory fingers (and worse) being pointed at them for their support of Israel.

What to do? Well, I am pleased to say that there are signs in some places that this impasse may be breaking down. Muslims, Jews and Christians, particularly the younger ones, are increasingly prepared to engage each other in dialogue about Israel and Palestine. For example, an American Jewish colleague, working in this area, tells me that she has seen a significant increase in recent years in the number of American Jews who are prepared to engage in meaningful dialogue with non Jews about Israel and Palestine.

FODIP seeks to encourage similar developments in the UK and remove the elephant from the room as humanely as possible. We seek to encourage and equip people of faith and none to discuss the Israeli Palestinian conflict with integrity and free from fear. Achieving this we seek to make a significant contribution to the emotional intelligence of participants, which will, in turn, further improve trust, dialogue and community cohesion in the UK.

Thank you to everyone who has given their support to FODIP during this first year of its existence. Special thanks must go to Jane Clements, FODIP's Director. FODIP owes everything to Jane's vision, commitment and sacrifices over the last 12 months.

Please come and join FODIP on this important journey, where we seek to bring hearts and minds closer together by enabling meaningful discussions to take place on one of the most pressing political conflicts of our age!

*Steven Longden*

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**FODIP is a not-for-profit organisation, established in July 2008 to improve inter faith relations in the UK by means of engagement in the more difficult issues.**

**Its charitable objectives are to:**

- Promote mutual understanding and respect between Jews, Christians, Muslims and the wider public;
- Encourage dialogue and education, where community relations are threatened by differences in perspectives regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and other related global problems;
- Educate the public concerning religious issues involving, and approaches towards, events and people in the Middle East.



*“very, very badly needed.” Education adviser*

## What we have done this year

### *Tough Option Programme: Pilot Project*

FODIP is based on the premise that dialogue is not a soft option, but can be an incredibly tough one. The pilot project for local dialogues was delivered with the help of inter faith groups in London and Manchester. A range of tools from listening events to DVDs as stimulus were used.

A series of workshops for practitioners explored the range of materials available and evaluated current approaches.



*“Listening events such as this one are an important contribution to community cohesion, bringing as they do a measured, informed and mature tone to a very sensitive subject.” Local Councillor*

## *Working Together*

To make good use of its expertise on limited resources, FODIP has begun to build up strong working relations with partner organisations and is a point of contact and referral others.



In response to the crisis in Gaza in January, FODIP joined with St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, the Three Faiths Forum and the Christian Muslim Forum in holding several events both for the general public and for inter faith activists. These included 'Listening Events' in which people were invited to express their own feelings, without getting into a debate, but as a contribution to a general 'picture' of approaches.

Advice and consultancy forms a central part of our work. FODIP worked with Christian Aid in planning its Lent 'virtual pilgrimage' – Journey to Jerusalem – FODIP was able to suggest venues and individuals that reflected all the voices, hopes and fears of those living in the region. Working with the Council of Christians and Jews, in partnership with Yad Vashem, FODIP's Director took a group of Christian leaders and clergy for a 2-week seminar in Jerusalem.

Other events in which FODIP has been asked to participate include presenting at the Annual Conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Berlin, chairing a panel on Gaza for the René Cassin organisation, and contributing to Carnegie UK Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society.

## *Briefing Meetings*

A number of informative briefings have been held during this period. The first took place in the Gary Weston Library at Southwark Cathedral when over 40 people heard Robi Damelin and Mazen Faraj, of the Bereaved Families Forum: Parents' Circle speaks about the practicalities of working with 'the other side'. Sharing their personal stories, both Robi and Mazen were emphatic that the pain such memories held was necessary as a path to peaceful coexistence.



In December, Mike Prashker of Merchavim, which works for shared citizenship programmes in Israel, addressed the Reform Club in Piccadilly. This was kindly hosted by Mr Paul Winner.

Professor Lord Harries of Pentregarth hosted a briefing event for inter faith activists at the House of Lords in January. Washington political advisor Dr Robert Malley spoke about what one might expect from the new American administration under President Obama regarding the Israel and the Palestinian territories. His succinct and challenging analysis was heard by a varied audience, including those working in various areas of inter faith relations in the UK.

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### **Theology Working Group**

- sponsored by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust

The Christian theology group comprises academics from a range of disciplines including leading systematic theologians, philosophers and Biblical scholars. Its members work on the process involved in making moral and ethical choices regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.



### **Communication**

The website, emailing and regular newsletters have all been established this year, with the help of a dedicated webmaster and designer. These have enabled the building of a supporter base which is diverse and focused.

In addition, FODIP commissioned original articles and reviews providing a range of perspectives on inter religious dialogue on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict for publication via the internet. FODIP volunteers have also contributed to international TV and local radio programmes on issues relating to inter faith concerns and the Middle East.

### **2009/10**

Aims for the forthcoming twelve months are:

- To take the first of our Study Tours to the region (December/January)
- To expand and develop the 'Tough Option' programme at local level to 3 more locations, including facilitation training
- To run 6 more briefing sessions
- To publish the Theological Working Group papers
- To produce resource packs to accompany the programmes
- To establish a secure financial base
- To achieve charitable status

FODIP has relied totally on charitable and private donations over its first 12 months. Your support is vital for its continuing and expanding work.

*"May you and all your colleagues and partners have all the resources you need to continue and pursue this vitally important work."*

*(Fodip supporter)*

**The Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine**  
Annual Accounts

**Income &  
Expenditure Account**

**For the year to 30th  
June 2009**

Charitable grants	3300.00	
Donations	9541.00	
Payments for services	1300.22	
Total Income	<hr/>	14141.22
Less Expenditure		
Administration and office costs	3720.76	
Web Design/maintenance	1433.55	
Seminars	7893.77	
Project travel expenses	181.92	
Booklets & Materials	627.00	
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		13857.74

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