

IARF e-Newsletter

May 2010

News in a nutshell...

To

IARF Council; Member organisations & Chapters;
Interested organisations.



In this Bulletin:

- **Congress 2010** – latest news
- **Recent SACC events:**
 - [State-Level Young Adult Conference on Human Rights](#) — Idhaya Jothy, Caussanel Puram, Tirunelveli, TamilNadu, March 5th—7th 2010
 - [Human Rights Education \(HRE\) program](#) — Mysore, Karnataka, March 5th—6th 2010
 - [India Chapter 13th National Conference](#) — Jagadguru Sri Veerasimhasana Mahasamasthana Math Suttur Sri Kshetra, Mysore Dist., 21st - 22nd December 2009
- **HRE Philippines Update** — 2010 progress report

Congress news update



Just over 100 days remain till we meet in the capital of Kerala state, Kochi.

You can **register** for our **33rd World Congress** from our website's homepage, www.iarf.net. An online registration form allows you to book and, after we have received your application automatically, pay using your credit card.

If you do not have web access, please email us at hq@iarf.net, with the Subject line "Congress booking" and your postal details, and we will post you the form to complete.

Early Bird registration ends on **31st May**.

The pre-Congress tour from Chennai to Kochi, "Temples & Treasures of South India", is almost full. Details & booking contacts can be found on this page:

<http://iarf2010.blog126.fc2.com/blog-category-18.html>

Speakers at our 33rd Congress in Kochi (4th to 7th September 2010)

<http://www.iarf.net/2008site/Congress/2010/index2010.htm>



Swami Jitatmananda-ji Maharaj

Head of *Rama Krishna Mission*

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-122475750078572705#>

Dr. Karan Singh

President of the *Temple of Understanding*

<http://www.karansingh.com/>



Asma Jahangir

United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWQyg4ayWUM&feature=related>
United Nations, New York, 27 October 2009



Dr. Steven Leeper

Chair of the Board of Directors of the *Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rvi26UQAjeg>

Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* performed by Steven Leeper at 6th International Conference of Museums for Peace October 10, 2008 Hiroshima, Japan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YggmvdWOios>

06 May 2009 — Members of the Mayors for Peace and the governments of Mexico, Cameroon, Iraq and Japan came together at United Nations headquarters



Prof. Neelakanta Radhakrishnan

Chairman of the *Indian Council of Gandhian Studies*, New Delhi

<http://drnradhakrishnan.com/>

Rev. Peter Morales

President of the *Unitarian Universalist Association*



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNENOiJOFJM>



Dr. Ninan Koshy

Trivandrum-based political commentator, author on development issues, religion, global economy & terrorism, and a regular analyst for *Foreign Policy in Focus*. Formerly Foreign Affairs Director of the World Council of Churches and Visiting Fellow, Law School, Harvard University.

Dr. Sheikh Ali

Noted historian and former Vice-chancellor of *Mangalore & Goa Universities*

http://www.twocircles.net/2008aug17/tipu_had_him_italian_renaissance_german_reformation_french_revolution_dr_b_shaikh_ali

Dr. Sukumar Azhikode

Noted Gandhian and philosopher

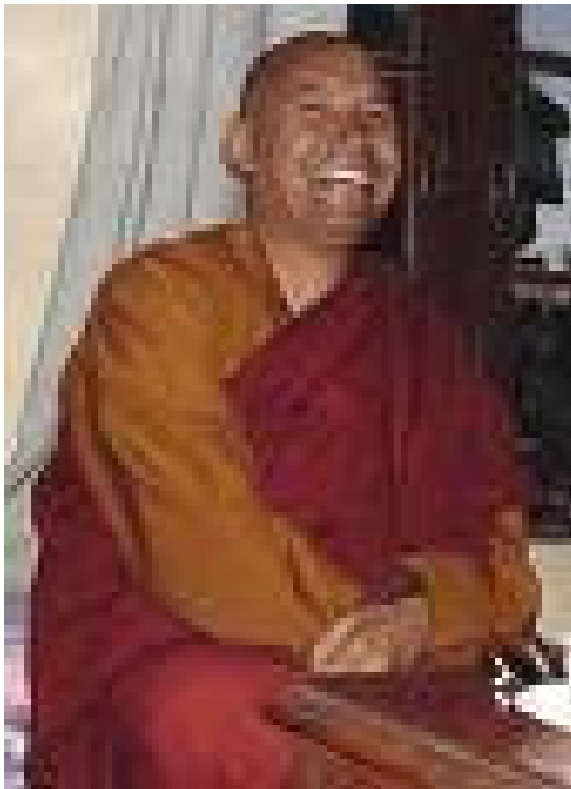


Ven. Bhikku Sanghasena

Founder-President, *Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre (MIMC)*,
Leh-Ladakh, India

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziYVOTsWdNo&feature=Playlist&p=34626BBFEF619B8%20A&playnext_from=PL&playnext=1&index=17

<http://www.buddha.sg/htm/people/sanghasena.htm>



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziYVOTsWdNo&feature=Playlist&p=34626BBFEF619B8%20A&playnext_from=PL&playnext=1&index=17

SACC Events

State-Level Young Adult Conference on Human Rights

Idhaya Jothy, Caussanel Puram, Tirunelveli, TamilNadu, India

March 5th–7th 2010

A three-day intensive training for young adults about Human Rights & Religious Freedom.

The participants – 46 in total – were selected from colleges in TamilNadu with whose principals our HRE (Human Rights Education) Facilitator had contact. He got a very good response. Ten colleges sent students:

Colleges

1. St. Jude's College, Thoothoor, Kanyakumari - 8 Students
2. Holy Cross College, Nagarcovil, Kanyakumari - 3 Students
3. F. X College, Vannarpettai, Tirunelveli 5 Students
4. Sadhakapdhulah Appa College, Tirunelveli 3 Students
5. A.P.C Mahalakxmi College, Tuticorin 3 Students
6. American College, Madurai 4 Students
7. Govt College, Paramakudi, Ramnad 6 Students
8. Caussanel College, Periyapattinam, Ramnad 3 Students
9. St. Loyola College, Chennai 8 Students
10. Ethiraj College, Chennai 3 Students



Inauguration by the State Minister of TamilNadu state

Gender	Male 31	Female 15
Religion	Christian 22	Hindu 17
	Muslim 7	

Most sessions were made interesting by participants' active interaction, bringing many accounts & questions of their own concerning religious freedom & human rights.

Day One

The Inaugural Function at Francis Xavier Engineering College featured Hon. Maideen Khan, State Sports & Environment Minister (TamilNadu), and was attended by IARF President Thomas Mathew and Provincial Superior of Caussanel Province the Rev. Bro. M. Sengole, SHJ .

Rev. Fr. Anbu ran the introductory session 'Sharing Expectation & Goals' very creatively, then Thomas Mathew handled the session on "Young Adults and the 33rd IARF World Congress", sharing about preparations the invited dignitaries — especially Dalai Lama.

Dr. Wilfred, former principal of St. Jude's college, Thoothoor, ran the session on "The Challenges of Young Adult Leaders". Back at Causanel Puram our three training videos were shown, with discussion run by HRE facilitator Bro. Albert Xaviour. Many said this was a first for them to learn about human rights, especially the UDHR.



Day Two

Prayer & worship according to participants' religious traditions began the second day, followed by visits to **Lord Shiva Temple at Pabanasam**, 78km from the program venue. The history of the temple and its important celebrations were explained, after which participants visited the ashram for a session on "Hindu Spirituality & Human Rights". Rev. Bro. M. Sengole, the provincial superior of Caussanel Province was introduced by Bro. J. Casmir and requested to present an interactive session on 'Causes of Social Evils'.

After a lunch sponsored by Rev. Bro. Joe Antony at St. Mary's Hostel, participants went to **St. Francis Assisi** church and had a session on "Youth Ministry in Christianity".

Around 3.30pm participants came to **Melapalayam Islam Arabic College** (*right*) and had a chance to observe Muslim prayer, with female participants admitted to the mosque. A small sharing session about "The role of the Islamic faith in world peace" was arranged by Mr. Noor Ahmad, the principal of Muslim Higher Secondary School, Melepalayam.

Interaction with Tirunelveli IARF branch members

At St. Thomas High School Melepalayam, participants had interaction with Tirunelveli IARF members. Many IARF members took part in the session including SACC board member Mr. Subramaniam.

Participants asked questions about Tirunelveli IARF branch and their services in & around Tirunelveli.

1. What are you expecting from us in future?
2. You who are so many years in IARF, what are the challenges you come across in IARF?
3. What kind of people are you targeting to do IARF service?
4. So many people are having a very good opinion about IARF, how did you work hard to bring this about?
5. Which is your best IARF activity in the past years?
6. When was IARF started in Tirunelveli?

The evening session back at Caussanel was about the UDHR, with participants divided into groups & given the preamble & articles for discussion. All groups were very active in discussion, and gave very good after-dinner presentations. The session lasted till 11pm.



Day Three

After silent meditation led by Bro. Abraham, HRE facilitator Dr. Rajaram handled the session "Caste System & Human Rights". Then the North Indian Young adult leaders were introduced and requested to share their experiences in IARF and their future plans. Indore Branch Vice-President Ms. Janhvi Gupte shared about her one and half years experience and how she arranged an HRE program with other young adults in Indore. Then Mr. Vyas Yumnu (IFRY Leader, Manipur) shared about his two years experiences in Manipur with a short video about the situation there. Through IARF he has planned to give at least a little awareness to young people in Manipur.

Ms. Upasana (Secretary, Indore Branch) said that she has planned to organize one HRE program in Baroda, Gujarat. Ms. Alpa (Young adult leader, Gujarat) shared about the problems in Gujarat. Finally Fr. Abraham (Young Adult Leader, Chatisgard) share about the plans he has for Chatisgard.

Report by **Bro. Albert Xaviour**,
IARF-SACC Coordinator, Indore.

Planning & Goal Setting

The participants were divided into groups and asked to formulate their plans and to set goals for the Human Rights Education and RFYN activities. The following were proposed ...

- Spreading awareness about IARF and HRE among young adults.
- Selecting young adults from various college departments and forming a club.
- Conducting weekly club meeting and contacting IARF members for any help relating doubts and resource materials.
- Forming HRE project groups with members from various colleges in Kanyakumari district, with this team leading programs in local places.
- Once a month, field work at our convenience. We will show video clips.
- Loyalties and Ethorajians plan to conduct two-hour programs in their own and other colleges together according to convenience. Discussion will be based on the articles of the UDHR. Students of other streams are not informed about their rights, hence we are planning to target these students and present an interesting program about UDHR.

The Chennai group has planned to conduct two programs before the end of this academic year, at the following institutions: Dr. M.G.R university; Madras University; S.R.M Uuniversity; Madras Christian College. Our resource person has already arranged permission to conduct programs in these colleges. After the future plan presentation the participants were asked to select a leader and secretary in their areas **Madurai Chennai Kanyakumari Ramnad Tuticorin Tirunelveli** to continue RFYN works in future.

Human Rights Education (HRE) program Mysore, Karnataka State

March 5th—6th 2010



Part of the South Asia region's ongoing HRE trainings across several regions, this program stands alongside the TamilNadu gathering reported above as the first to be largely self-funded — 75% by local resources raised by the India Chapter and Member groups, with the estimated cost in cash and kind being over \$10,000.

Originally planned for 25-30 University postgraduate students, after the publicity went out the HRE Facilitator Adv. Mohammad Shabeer found he had to accede to 172 students, from nine countries: India, Iran, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Maldives, Tibet, Sudan & Sri Lanka.





Report of 13th National IARF Conference,

20th & 21st Dec 2009

Jagadguru Sri Veerasimhasana Mahasamasthana Math Suttur Sri Kshetra,
Suttur, Mysore District



**Theme: INTERFAITH DIALOGUE –
THE WAY TO RECONCILIATION**

350 delegates attended, from IARF plus local, foreign, Indian young adults, and NGO personnel. They received executive bags & mementos, and Rang Rao & Sons (Mysore) & also Suttur Math distributed complimentary items such as incense & calendars to delegates. Mementos, sandal garlands, woolen shawls, and fruit

bowls were also presented to all the dignitaries on both days.

Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Shivaratri Deshikendra Mahaswamigalu provided free accommodation and their international Conference venue on both the days to all delegates – the auditorium with all facilities, and staff to assist the IARF personnel on both days. His Holiness also provided transportation for picking up & dropping delegates to & from the railway & bus station & to Suttur Math. Mr. Thriuprathaka, Coordinator of Suttur Educational Institutions, was overall in charge on both days.

Since Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Shivaratri Deshikendra Mahaswamigalu was to attend some urgent meeting in Bangalore with the Government, he was not in a position to inaugurate. Instead he came to the Guest House and IARF leaders & Delegates. He had interactions with Dr Thomas Mathew, Dr. Homi B Dhalla,



Mr. V Rengapashyam, Mr. Md Shabeer Ahmed & Mrs. M A Hemalatha, about IARF's Motto, Aims & Objects, Statement of Purpose, Interfaith activities & Human Rights Education Workshops. He was very happy to hear about IARF activities, and assured all kind of support from his organization to IARF programs. The delegates were very happy to meet Swamiji, and Dr Homi B Dhalla read his message after the inauguration. Dr. Dhalla's personal relationship with the Swamiji and Math helped us to receive all this support from them.

The following dignitaries were present on 20th Dec 2009:

- Dr Thomas Mathew, Int'l President IARF
- Dr. Homi Dhalla, Int'l Council Member
- Mr. V Rengapashyam, Nat'l President IARF India
- Mr. H Vishwanath Hon. Member of Parliament of India
- B K Chandrasekhar Ex .Chairman Legislative & Ex .Education Minister, Govt. of Karnataka
- Hon. Justice Bhakthavasthsala High Court Karnataka
- Rev. Thomas A. Vazhapilly ,Catholic Bishop of Mysore
- Alijanab Moulana Usman Shariff Sahib Sir Khazi of Mysore
- Mr. M Subramaniam Patron IARF India Chapter & Member SACC
- Mr. Dakshinamurthy, ex-Mayor & President Basava Balage Mysore
- Mr. Md Shabeer Ahmed, Nat'l Secretary IARF India
- Mrs. M A Hemalatha, Nat'l Treasurer & Coordinator 13th IARF Nat'l conference



Orphans of Suttur Math joined for prayer



Md. Shabeer Ahmed welcomed the gathering.

The conference was inaugurated by Hon. Justice K. Bhakthavasthsala lighting the lamp & putting the conference in order. In his inaugural address he spoke on "*Machinery for Enforcement of Human Right in India & Interfaith Dialogue*".

Mr. Rengapashyam, Nat'l president IARF, presiding, reminded all that in Andhra Pradesh there is a tomb of Muslim saints where Hindus, Muslims & Christians come to pray.

Mr. H Vishwanth, B K Chandrasekhar, Rev. Thomas A. Vazhapilly, and Alijanab Moulana Usman Shariff Sahib Sir Khazi of Mysore all spoke on interfaith dialogue – mentioning that achieving independence for India brought some Hindus & Muslims together. Nazi atrocities in Europe were greatly responsible for the post-war generation changing the traditional Christian stance towards Judaism. Regional wars in Lebanon & former Yugoslavia have encouraged those societies to defuse religious hatred.

Dr. Homi Dhalla spoke on “*Interfaith Movement & on Dialogue*”, reminding that there have been instances of dialogue among the adherents of Islam, Judaism & Christianity after conflicts – for example in medieval Islamic Spain & Southern Italy, and at different times in Central Asia, Delhi, Baghdad, Cairo & the Ottoman Empire..

Dr. Dhalla also ran the **first session** on 20th after the inaugural programme, on “*Many Faces of Peace*”. The **second session** was run by Mr. T. Ramakrishna, Professor of Law & Intellectual Property Rights, Nat’l Law School of India, University of Bangalore, spoke on “*High Level Consultation on Conflicts, Violence & Peace*”. The **third session** was held by staff of Suttur Math, presenting on the Math’s activities, followed by cultural program organized by the students of JSS Math, Moulana Azad B.Ed College, Teresian College & Animators of an NGO DOrganization for The Development of People (all from Mysore city & Mysore Dist).

During the **General Meeting of the Chapter**, the participants shared their view on religious freedom and stronger activities from IARF. They focused on present religious situation in India and the role of IARF on those issues. Members happily shared that HRE was one of the positive steps towards that role of IARF. Closer relationships and programs like HRE are the need of the hour. The members wholeheartedly expressed their full support for the Congress, and resolved to raise fund for the young Adults registration if there is difficulty for them. Many Cultural programs presented by the participants and Suttur Math were one of the attractions of the program.

Mrs. M A Hemalatha proposed vote of thanks.

SECOND DAY:

Meditation and yoga (*below*) was organized by Naganandini, Art of Living, LIC Devpt officer Mysore at 6am & 7.30am.



Breakfast followed at 8am, then organizers arranged a tour to various religious sites, and the Math’s social service programs. The Conference resumed at 9.45a.m.

Session 1

Dr Thomas Mathew made power point presentation on “Revitalizing of IARF Activities” & discussions on the 33rd International IARF Congress. He explained the activities being carried out by different member groups & IARF branches in the country, and presented photographs of interfaith activities, religious festivals — Human Rights Education workshops, the International Day of Peace, Non-violence Day, Hiroshima & Nagasaki day, IARF Day & Comparison Day — all being

implemented successfully in India.

Session 2: Mrs. M A Hemalatha, Nat'l Treasurer, spoke in detail about IALRW and their 100-year celebration prior to the 33rd World Congress of IARF.

Session 3: Bro. Albert Xaviour briefed about young adult program activities in India, especially involvement with the HRE programs. Due to HRE, young adults have been able to start a branch of IARF in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Many youths expressed their interest to attend the Congress, and some offered voluntary service during the event.

Session 4: Mr. T K Joytiraj organized group discussions on the topic "What are the religious issues in your area, & what is the principle cause of each of them". This session was very lively, with many experiences shared by the members from their daily life. Poor people may be instigated by fanatics who mislead their sincerity about their religion into extremism.

Session 5: Mr. C T Shivappa, Principal (retd) University College of Fine Arts, & former NSS Liaison Officer, spoke on "Harmony & Mutual Understanding".

Session 6: Mr. K R Shivshankar, Advocate, former Professor VVLC, spoke on Tolerance & Harmony between religious communities.



RFYN mime:
"Fanaticism among the youth"

The Valedictory function commenced at 4 pm & concluded at 6 pm, in the presence of the following dignitaries:

- Dr C K N Raja, former Head of the Department of Law, University of Mysore
- Rev Father J B Xaviour, Director of ODP
- Sri Sri Sri Swami Veereshanandaji, Editor Vivekprabhha & Ramakrishna Ashram, Mysore
- C. M Jagadesh, Advocate & Member Bar Council of India

CONCLUSION

The total cost provided by Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamigalu amounted to US\$8,000—\$10,000. The IARF is most grateful to Swamiji for all his help. The India Chapter spent about IR1,00,000 (US\$2,500), received as grant-in-aid from SACC, donations & registration fees from delegates.

Report by **Md. Shabeer Ahmed**, Nat'l Secretary IARF INDIA CHAPTER



HRE Philippines Update: Report from The Philippines for the year 2009 to date

Our four-region Human Rights Education (HRE) project in the Philippines — The Interfaith Village Project — has emerged as a model of efficient practice, as it is utilising funding received for the year 2008-2009 (for set-up purchase of livestock, Kalinga & Nueva Viscaya regions received P60,000 each (\$1,350), and the Visayas & Mindanao P100,000 each (\$2,250).

In **the Visayas** the Interfaith Village project has become one of the community extension projects of the Volunteerism Program of Silliman University. The volunteer coordinators of Luzon, Visayas & Mindanao have reported stability in the operation in their areas. The project can sustain itself without further funds at this time, however travel funds will be needed by the national coordinator for at least one visit within a year in the areas of **Luzon and Mindanao**.

The Interfaith Village Project is more than a straightforward didactic human rights education project — it is a community organizing project to alleviate poverty as the basis for promoting awareness of religious freedom through education. Trained individuals, having been nurtured in the principles of co-operative living, require further training, because so far, government agencies have not been fully maximized. Someone has to spearhead the formation and organization of groups.

Although IARF is already recognized by the national Securities & Exchange Commission, there is a need to achieve local recognition which will allow these groups to benefit from the services that local governments are providing.

The retirement of the Project Supervisor from academe in July is positive in that it will allow her to focus on IARF work, such as area visits and unlimited time for documentation and other matters.



TRAININGS COMPLETED IN 2009

DATE	PLACE	PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	PARTNERS
February 7, 2009	Kalinga	25 Mixed	
February 21, 2009	Kalinga	18 Youth	
September 12, 2009	Kalinga	53 Paroled Inmates	Kalinga Parole & Probation Office
October 10, 2009	Kalinga	97 Mixed Indigenous	Department of Social Welfare & Development
October 17, 2009	Nueva Viscaya	10 Cell Leaders	
May 6, 2009	Visayas	21 Mixed	
June 27	Visayas	25 Mixed	
September 21	Visayas	18 Mixed	
March 20, 2009	Mindanao	10 Mixed	
October 17, 2009	Mindanao	50 Mixed	Municipal Local Government
October 30, 2009	Mindanao	20 Mixed	Municipal Local Government
	Total Trained	347	

Report by **Angie C. Grapa**, Project Supervisor & Council Member for the Philippines

US Chapter conference

Reconciliation with the Earth, Each Other and the Stranger **Clearwater Unitarian Universalist Church** **January 14-17th**

For this report, and other news from the US Chapter, please link to their Winter 2010 newsletter here:

<http://www.iarf.net/2009site/IARF%20US%20Chapter%20newsletter%20Autumn%202009,%20vol%2010.3.pdf>

Forthcoming

- **September 4th – 7th 2010**

33rd World Congress - Kochi, Kerala, India

"Beyond Conflict to Reconciliation: The Challenge of the 21st Century"

For registration, please link at: <http://iarf2010.blog126.fc2.com/>