



אגודת המפגש הבין דתי (ע"ר) جمعية اللقاء بين الديانات
INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER ASSOCIATION

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

IN 2022, THE INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER ASSOCIATION WAS AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS ISRAEL'S PRESIDENTIAL AWARD FOR VOLUNTEERISM.

The award is given each year to organizations and individuals who excel in their voluntary work. It is a well-deserved recognition of IEA's 20 years of grassroots peacebuilding. Our coordinators and participants are people from so many different religious and political backgrounds. People from the Negev and the Galilee, from Hebron and Otniel, from East and West Jerusalem. Year after year they show their dedication to their groups, perseverance in moments of tension, and incredible will power in the face of their many challenges. By engaging people from all over the political and religious spectra, the IEA builds the infrastructure for peace, encounter by encounter, group by group.





Letter from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

2022 marked getting out of Covid-19 and resuming our pre-pandemic level of activity!

Our immense efforts resulted in 8 groups renewing their activity or starting completely new. Altogether we held 412 encounters during the year and our group roster reached 120. Thousands of participants representing an unparalleled wide range of ages, viewpoints, social status, religions, and cultures joined our bridge-building encounters in 2022, finding mutual understanding and friendship. We are now looking forward to recover the activity of the other groups and continue to grow our activity further.

An especially moving moment was when IEA won the Presidential Award for Volunteerism, the most prestigious acknowledgment for volunteers in Israel, received it from the hands of the President and celebrated with all our coordinators at the President's residence.

The numerous group-encounters and other activities, detailed in this report, only scratch the surface of our determined and tireless work to create a foundation for sustainable peace in the Holy Land. Behind the scenes, there is a lot of planning and paperwork, phone calls and, most importantly, the continued support of caring individuals, families and communities like you.

With your much-appreciated assistance, together we will continue to grow and continue to work towards our goal - a better and more peaceful future for people of all ages, genders, races and faiths. We are convinced that, with the support of our partners, it is all possible.

Our U.S.-based affiliate, Friends of IEA, a tax-exempt charity under section 501(c)3 of the IRS code, saw a change in leadership. Bob Halim

Johnson retired after many, many years of dedicated service as the President of the Friends of IEA and we are most grateful to him for all the devotion, energy and time he invested. Halim was replaced by Rabbi Bruce Aft. We thank him deeply for accepting the challenge and wish him much success!

Consequently, also the address of the Friends of Interfaith Encounter Association changed and it is now: 6949 Conservation Dr.; Springfield, VA 22153; USA

We look forward to maintaining ongoing contact with you as we continue our work in the coming year. You may find our contact information at the end of this report and we welcome all kinds of feedback and ideas.

With inexpressible gratitude,

Dr. Yehuda Stolov,
IEA Executive Director

IEA STAFF

Dr. Yehuda Stolov
Carolina Frimer
Salah Aladdin

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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SUPPORT

\$500-\$1999

The Ploughshares Trust
Rabbi Bruce Aft
John Katonah
Jack Karn

\$2000 and up

Church of Sweden
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How it WORKS

The IEA invites people from different traditional and cultural backgrounds and faiths to join our groups. Within the groups, participants have meaningful encounters which bring them closer to each other.

Each encounter is focused on a religious theme and features a carefully planned program of joint study and dialogue. The group then coalesces into a single community that respects the unique identity of each of its "sub-communities" and participants, which helps create a long-term process of grassroots peace-building. By constructively engaging core religious and cultural values, while initially discouraging political conversations that may close off constructive dialogue, our approach successfully involves social and political groups that may feel very uncomfortable with other approaches.

INTERFAITH ENCOUNTERS

In 2022 we had 39 active groups, who organized a total of 412 encounters during the year.

The Jaffa interfaith group held monthly encounters about topics such as active listening, and the concept of peace in each religion. It is exciting to see how this relatively new group has flourished, and now has about 30 members, many of them coming regularly and building real friendships inside and outside of encounters. Hashfela group held a series of online encounters on the subject of the climate crisis and religion, inviting religious leaders and experts to its panels, and then planning another series of in person action events together with the Jaffa group. Reut-Sadaqa group met in Jerusalem for its 20th consecutive year, discussing topics such as the meaning of dreams and rituals of renewal. Also in Jerusalem, the interfaith band *Wast El Tarik* rehearsed regularly (and performed in many of our events), and Yoga Synagogue also held weekly practices throughout the city.

We continued to grow our presence in universities with our Herzliya group of Reichman University students, in addition to our groups of Nursing Students in the Hebrew University Ein Karem Campus and the Interreligious Dialogue course and two alumni groups at Bar Ilan University.

The Young Adults of Jerusalem group met in several places throughout the city, including an Armenian ceramic workshop, watching the fireworks during the beginning of Eid El Fitr next to Damascus Gate, and visiting the YMCA Christmas Fair. Debate of Peace group gathered Jewish and Arab high school students for Model UN simulations and one trip to Austria and Italy to participate in international Model UN conferences.



Many of our Israeli-Palestinian dialogue groups continued to meet this year- including Jerusalem-Yata, Jerusalem and Surroundings, and Hebron, as well as Bearer of Peace, who brought services and equipment to isolated villages in South Mount Hebron.

LIFE group (of Maale Adumim - El Azaria and surroundings) met several times, including going out together to a café, and the Nablus region group held an exciting and touching olive-picking activity in which Jewish settlers helped Palestinian farmers. Two new cross-border groups started this year: the Fananin group of young adults, who organize workshops in topics such as drama, sound healing, and movement; and the Northern Jordan Valley women's group.

4 groups of religious leaders met in 2022, including the Galilee religious leaders Beit Midrash, the Tower of David Forum for Senior Religious Leaders, as well as the groups from the Center and Gush Etzion - Bethlehem area. The Women's group of Haifa and the Midwives for Peace remained very active throughout the year. The Arad-Tel Arad Neighboring Women held a series of workshops on health-related topics, as well as leadership development talks, and visits to each other's houses.

On the online realm, our groups 929 and the New Testament Study (which also has an in-person component in Jerusalem) made interfaith dialogue available from every living room, while 2 of our groups brought the IEA taste to the U.S.: Teaneck, NJ and D.C. and beyond (which met both online and offline).



Get INVOLVED

There are many ways to be part of our movement for peace:

- Join one of our groups or help us form a new group in your area/university
- Join our listserv and invite others to join
- Be active on our social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube)
- Partner your institution with us
- Make your Amazon shopping through our link
- Make a tax-deductible donation online or via mail, to our U.S.-based affiliate, Friends of IEA, a tax-exempt charity under section 501(c)3 of the IRS code. Mail-in donations may be sent at any time to: "Friends of Interfaith Encounter Association - 832 Lathrop Ave., Forest Park, IL 60130-2039"

You are also more than welcome to join us at any of the many fun and engaging fundraising events which we will hold this year, as a donor and/or a volunteer. For more information concerning these events, please contact Bruce Aft at rabbibruce@gmail.com.

PROJECTS AND EVENTS

This year the IEA held three events that brought together people from many different groups, coming from all over the Holy Land. In May we held our annual Iftar dinner, with 70 people participating. We joined in the Praying Together in Jerusalem session, and then shared a delicious meal of traditional Maklube and stuffed vegetables. In August, we celebrated the Interfaith Encounter Day, holding conversation circles and sharing together a light dinner. Finally, in November, we held our Interfaith Singing Evening with our Wast El Tarik Band, in partnership with Felm Center. This year, the Singing Evening was coupled with Anna Lindh Foundation's project "Celebrating the Mediterranean", making our event part of a series of 36 performances, across Europe and the south Mediterranean, celebrating diversity and multiculturalism.

The IEA Coordinators Community also continued to meet throughout the year. They received trainings in Appreciative Inquiry and the Interfaith Photovoice techniques, held the bi-annual elections for IEA's Board of Directors, and of course were present in the Presidential Award Ceremony. Upon receiving the 2022 Presidential Award for Volunteerism, IEA's Executive Director Dr. Yehuda Stolov was invited for a personal meeting with the President Isaac Herzog, in which the President expressed his support to IEA's grassroots peacebuilding. On his recommendation, Dr. Stolov held a series of meetings with Embassies, which enhanced IEA's network in the diplomatic community and widened our horizons for prospective cooperation.



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