

# MJC 2012 CONFERENCE REPORT

*a new international paradigm in Muslim and Jewish relationships*



## ABOUT MJC

The Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC) is a grassroots dialogue and leadership organization that targets future Muslim and Jewish leaders from the academic and political sectors. The annual conference brings together students and young professionals from around the world and invites them to step beyond the boundaries of ignorance and stereotyping in order to build a new global political movement of young Muslim and Jewish leaders, activists and experts who are committed to mutual respect. Conference participants work together to develop and implement projects focused on promoting interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue.

**First Annual MJC:  
August 1 - 6, 2010  
Vienna, Austria**

The first MJC was held in Vienna in 2010, under the official patronage of Austrian President Heinz Fischer. Over five days, 65 participants from around the world worked together in thematic committees and conclusively produced an official declaration addressing two main social issues: combating anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and the roles of education and media in Muslim-Jewish relations.

**Second Annual MJC  
July 3 - 8, 2011  
Kiev, Ukraine**

The second MJC was a "call to action," where the 70 participants developed concrete projects to implement in their home communities. The conference also included visits to houses of worship for both faiths and to Babi Yar. Over the course of the five-day conference, the committees addressed anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, sustainable dialogue, and historical narratives. MJC 2011 came under the official patronage of Russell Simmons and Rabbi Marc Schneier of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, and nine concrete projects were created and are in the stages of implementation.

**Third Annual MJC:  
July 9 - 13, 2012  
Bratislava, Slovakia**

The most recent conference followed the same format as the previous year, where the 100 participants were divided into four different committees and developed more than ten projects which are being implemented around the world. In addition to the working committees, a separate business venture track and an arts track encouraged Muslim and Jewish participants to collaborate on specific projects throughout the week. Site visits to the houses of worship of both faiths in Bratislava were complemented by meetings with politicians in Vienna.

### In the Future

The MJC will continue to bring together important representatives and young leaders of Muslim and Jewish communities, and will remain an annual intercultural and interfaith gathering. The Muslim Jewish Conference aims to grow into the Muslim Jewish Agency (MJA), to strengthen its role as a respected center of expertise, and a main point of contact for Muslim-Jewish international cooperation and conflict resolution, driven by the next generation of leaders, activists and entrepreneurs. The MJA's goal is to organize several conferences and meetings throughout the year for communities, institutions, and academics, and to provide expertise on Muslim-Jewish relations as well as to build a network for other interfaith institutions.

### MJC Official Channels:

Web site: [mjconference.org](http://mjconference.org) - Twitter: [twitter.com/mjconf](https://twitter.com/mjconf) - YouTube: [youtube.com/user/mjconference](https://youtube.com/user/mjconference)

---

## OFFICIAL SUPPORT

### Patronage:

The MJC is honored to have the following as patrons:

#### 2010

**Dr. Heinz Fischer**

President of the Republic of Austria

#### 2011

**Rabbi Marc Schneier**

Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, founder and president of The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

**Russell Simmons**

Chairman of The Foundation For Ethnic Understanding

#### 2012

**Former US President Bill Clinton**

sent Greetings to the 2012 MJC

MJC proudly announces our 2012 official supporters:

**Dr. Mustafa Ceri**, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina

**André Azoulay**, Counselor to His Majesty the King of Morocco

**Rabbi David Rosen**, International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee

**Sally A. Painter**, former senior advisor to U.S. President Bill Clinton

**Rabbi Andrew Baker**, Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism for the OSCE

### Board of Advisers

**Dr. Mustafa Ceri** is the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2003 UNESCO Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize; the International Council of Christians and Jews Annual Sternberg Award; and the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists UK. He is also a 2008 recipient of Eugen Biser Foundation award and 2008 accepted the invitation of Tony Blair to be on the advisory council of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation.

**André Azoulay** is Counselor to His Majesty the King of Morocco. He is a member of the Royal Academy of Morocco and of the Royal Academy of Spain for Economy and Finance. He is also president of the Executive Committee of the Foundation for "The Three Cultures and the Three Religions", based in Seville (Spain), as well as the Founder and the Chairman of "Identity and Dialogue". He is on the board of the Aladdin Project, which promotes cross-cultural relations through translation of books and movies. Mr. Azoulay has received distinctions throughout his career including the conferring of the titles of Commander of the Wissam Al Arch (Kingdom of Morocco) and Commander of the Legion d'Honneur (France).

**Rabbi David Rosen** was given the honor of Knight Commander of the Order of Gregory the Great in recognition of his contribution to Jewish-Catholic reconciliation. He is the winner of the Mount Zion Award for Interreligious Understanding and the Raphael Lemkin Human Rights Award and was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2010 New Year Honours. Rabbi Rosen is also the International Director of Interreligious Affairs of AJC and its Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding. He is the Former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and a past Chairman of IJCIC, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. He also serves as a co-president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace and Honorary President of the International Council of Christians and Jews, and serves on the Executive of the World Council of Religious Leaders. READY

**Sally A. Painter** was a senior advisor in the Clinton Administration. She has an extensive track record working with Central Europe on security and policy issues, including successfully representing countries on their NATO and EU bids as well as a Visa Equity Coalition of seven countries where legislation was passed in the U.S. Congress, allowing their citizens to enter the U.S. visa-free. Ms. Painter is on the Board of Directors for the U.S. Committee on NATO, The Truman National Security Project, the Global Fairness Initiative, and Partners for Democratic Change, and is a founding member of the Transatlantic Business Dialogue. She received the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit from the Republic of Hungary and The Minister of Defense's Award for Distinction from the Republic of Latvia.

---

## OFFICIAL SUPPORT

### Honorary Committee

**Mag. Dr. Jameleddine Ben Abdeljelil**, Assistant for Islamic Studies at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna, Editorial Board Member of the Magazine for Intercultural Philosophizing, and Board Member of the WiGiP (Viennese society for intercultural philosophy).

**Rabbi Andrew Baker**, Personal Representative to the OSCE Chairman in Office for Combating anti-Semitism.

**Timna Brauer**, Austrian singer-songwriter with Yemeni roots.

**Eduard Dolinsky**, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee.

**Rafi Elul**, Advisor to the President of Israel for social and welfare matters and former consultant to the Prime Minister of Israel in social and welfare matters.

**Aleksandr Feldman**, Member of the Ukrainian parliament and head of the International Center for Tolerance.

**Dr. Franz Fischler**, President of the Eco-Social Forum, former European Union Commissioner and former Federal Minister for Agriculture and Forestry in Austria

**Prof. Eveline Goodman-Thau**, first Orthodox female Rabbi and Founder of the Hermann Cohen Academy in Buchen (Odenwald).

**Josef Hader**, Austrian comedian and actor.

**André Heller**, Austrian artist, author, singer and actor.

**Dr. Michael Häupl**, Mayor of the City of Vienna.

**Ibrahim Issa**, Co-Director of Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem.

**Patricia Kahane**, President of the 'Karl Kahane Foundation'.

**Abbas Khider**, award winning Iraqi-German writer.

**Sebastian Kurz**, State Secretary for Integration in Austria.

**Dr. Alois Mock**, former Vice-chancellor and Foreign Minister of Austria, former President of the International Democratic Union (IDU) and Founder of the Central European Initiative (CEI).

**Susanne Scholl**, Austrian journalist and writer and former Head of the ORF bureau in Moscow.

**Dr. Zeynep Taluy-Grossruck**, former Director of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), Private Sector Development Branch.

**Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen**, City Councillor of Vienna and former Speaker of the Austrian Green Party.

### The MJC is honoured to have the support of the following esteemed individuals and organizations:

Karl Kahane Foundation  
City of Bratislava  
Vysoka Skola Vytvarnych Umeni (Academy of Fine Arts and Design)  
Bisla Liberal Arts College  
Slovakia Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
United Nations Alliance of Civilisations  
Institute for International Development -University of Vienna  
Institute for African Sciences -University of Vienna

Austrian exchange Service (OEAD)  
Bruno Kreisky Forum  
Hommes de Parole  
Café Hawelka  
Nuovo Capital Singapore  
Joshua Food Art Catering  
Ost Klub  
Sine Lege Film  
The Ukrainian Jewish Committee

---

## OUR TEAM

The MJC organizational team is led by a core team of 10 volunteers.

### **Ilja Sichrovsky, Founder and Secretary General**

Ilja Sichrovsky is the Founder and Secretary General of the Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC). Born in Berlin, he is the son of a German mother and an Austrian father. His father's family has Jewish roots in Vienna dating back centuries, and one of his Jewish ancestors was knighted by Franz Josef. Sichrovsky was a counselor in Vienna's Hashomer Hatzair youth movement and was a founding member of Gesher, the youth party within the Austrian Jewish Community. He represented the University of Vienna three times at international student conferences at Harvard University. On each occasion, he won the Harvard Award for Exemplifying the True Spirit of Diplomacy. Later, he acted as a faculty adviser and coach for the Viennese delegation at several conferences and he chaired the peace-building commission at EURASIAMUN. Sichrovsky wrote a scientific article about being a Jewish student studying at an Austrian University six decades after the Holocaust, which was then published by the University of Vienna and integrated into curriculum.

### **Anna Magnand, Executive Director**

Anna Magnand has studied Comparative Literature, specializing in migration, language and identity, and is currently teaching German in a second chance high school program in Vienna, Austria. She has produced school radio broadcasts and has performed poetry readings in both Arabic and French. Magnand was her high school's student representative and in 2003, she intervened in a students' hearing at the French Senate's commission on the Stasi and religious symbols in schools. She later volunteered to assist refugees in Austria and has engaged in history related projects for minorities. She has been a member of the MJC since 2010.

### **Moussa al Hassan Diaw**

Moussa Al-Hassan Diaw is a university teacher and researcher at the Institute of Islamic Theology of the University Osnabruck, Germany. He is the head of the Division for Interreligious Affairs and Social Cohesion in the Youth Council of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria. He is an expert on migration, intercultural competence and counter-radicalization and has lectured extensively on this subject at the German Police University Muenster, the Austrian Armed Forces and the Federal College of Education. He has vast experience in interfaith dialogue, working with numerous organizations, such as the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding or the "Katholisches Bildungswerk" of the Catholic Church. Diaw is writing his dissertation on Muslim Zealotry and Political Radicalization in the German-Speaking Muslim Community.

### **Maia Blume**

Maia Blume coordinates Middle East, North Africa and European outreach and special projects for a global advocacy organization, and has led workshops and roundtables at conferences in the United States and Abu Dhabi. She previously served as a research editor at Crain's New York Business, a weekly publication covering the New York area economy and business environment, and was an active blogger on international women's rights issues for Change.org. After completing her undergraduate degree in international affairs, with a focus on international development, Blume worked on human rights and economic development issues in Bosnia with Mercy Corps. She has studied in Hungary, Denmark, and the United States. She is a graduate of the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

---

## OUR TEAM

Continued...

### **Varghese Chakkumootil**

Varghese Chakkumootil is the President and Chief Executive Officer for the Daya Center for Peace in Hyderabad, India. He has a Master's Degree in Christian-Muslim Relations and a Master's Degree in Social Justice and Intercultural Relations. Chakkumootil has been working in the field of conflict transformation from 2003 and over the years, he has focused on building relationship between people of different faith, ethnic and social groups. He, along with the team at Daya, have trained more than 4,000 young people, from different parts of India to continue to work for peace in the society. He strives to work with local partners in engaging people in non-violent processes for social change. Chakkumootil is committed to help people strengthen their peace building and leadership skills to address the challenges that are arising out of political, economic, social, economic and ecological injustices. He has the cross-cultural experience of training young people in peace-building coming from countries such as, Iraq, the United States, Serbia, Sweden, Denmark, Turkey, Ireland and England.

### **Gulraiz Khan**

Gulraiz Khan is a journalist and a small business owner. He completed his undergraduate degree in Economics from the Lahore University of Management Sciences in 2010, and has been working for a national English daily newspaper, The Express Tribune, since graduation. He co-owns and manages Samovar, a teahouse at the Karachi Port. During his college years, Khan was actively involved in Model United Nations and represented Pakistan at three Harvard World Model UN Conferences. He received the Outstanding Diplomacy Award for each of his representations. Since college, he has been closely involved with the Muslim Jewish Conference, having chaired committees in 2010 and 2012. Khan plans to pursue his Master's Degree in Interaction Design in the U.S., starting Fall 2013.

### **El Hadi Khelladi**

El Hadi Khelladi is finishing his masters in Middle East studies ,with focus on cultural geography, political science and Islamic law. In addition, he is training to become a religious Islamic teacher. He spearheaded and is now leading the interreligious affairs section of RAMSA - The German Society of Muslim Students and Academics. In this position, he established several dialogue initiatives with local and international Christian and Jewish groups.

### **Dagmar Kusá**

Dagmar Kusá teaches comparative politics and human rights at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA). She has received M.A. in political science from Comenius University in Bratislava and worked at the Slovak Helsinki Committee for Human Rights as a Project Coordinator. She received her Ph.D. in political science from Boston University and worked at the International Center for Conciliation in Boston as the Program Director, where she remains affiliated as a Senior Fellow. Kusá's primary academic interests include the political use of collective memory, ethnic identity, citizenship and minorities, focusing on the concept of collective trauma in historiography and in public discourse. She also serves as the country expert for Slovakia for the European Democracy Observatory projects on citizenship.

### **Benjamin Rosen**

Benjamin Rosen is a psychiatry resident at the University of Toronto. His research is in the field of transcultural psychiatry, with a focus on the impact of religion on mental health. As co-founder of the Tzedaka-Sadaqah Project, a Canadian-based, student-led initiative that facilitates interfaith community service, Rosen has emerged as a young leader amongst the interfaith community in Canada. He has participated in three Muslim Jewish Conferences and has chaired committees on Islamophobia and Antisemitism and Comparative Narratives of Identity.

## OUR TEAM

The 2012 conference was organized by the following volunteers from more than 15 countries.



Ilija Sichrovsky – Founder & Secretary General (Austria)  
Asad Farooq – Executive Director (Pakistan)  
Arthur Resetschnig – MJC Controlling Board (Austria)  
Daniel Gallner- Head of Finances (Austria)  
Moussa al Hassan Diaw – Head of Muslim Affairs (Austria)  
Dagmar Kusa – Head of Content and Team Bratislava (Slovakia)  
Varghese Chakkumootil – Head of Chairs (India)  
Anna Magnand – Head of Registration (France)  
Lara Weisz – Head of Logistics (Germany)  
Georgi Vogel Rosen – Head of Public Relations (USA)  
Ben Rosen – Chair (Canda)  
Lamees Hafeez – Chair (UK)  
Mustafa Jalil Qureshi- Chair (Pakistan)  
Gulraiz Khan- Chair (Pakistan)  
Jane Braden-Golay – Chair (Switzerland)  
Maia Blume – Chair (USA)  
Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed – Chair (Pakistan)  
Daniel Klein – Chair (USA)

Oliver Braunschweig – Chair (Switzerland)  
Daniel Pincus – Committees and Content (USA)  
Yvonne Feiger – Committees & Content (Austria)  
Jacob Foreman – Committees & Content (Poland)  
Odai Zkelat – Committees & Content (Jordan)  
Eva Bögelein – Registration and Logistics (Germany)  
Nura Siddgi – Logistics (Austria)  
El Hadi Khelladi – Logistics (Germany)  
Gabor Solt – Logistics (Hungary)  
Valerie Prassl – Public Relations (Austria)  
Eric Johnson – Public Relations (USA)  
Symi Rom-Rymer – Public Relations (USA)  
David Abitbol- Online Media (Israel, Canada)  
Daniel Shaked – Photography (Austria)  
Azim Farhadi – Logistics, MJC Film crew (Afghanistan)  
AbdulKareem Niazi – International Support (Saudi Arabia)  
Rida Al Masri – International Support (Lebanon)  
Magdalena Kloss – International Support (Austria)

---

## COMMITTEES 2012

The conference is structured around a series of committees through which the participants respectfully engage, focusing on subjects including: women in religion, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and sustained community dialogue. Each committee is charged with conceiving projects to address these issues. The MJC committees and the conference itself have grown into a project incubator, acting not only as a place for dialogue, but also as a source for new interfaith ideas and cooperation. More than ten project ideas were created at the MJC 2012.



### 1. Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

This committee aimed at providing the historical foundations of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. It also addressed their evolution and implications in modern society, while providing participants with a safe and open platform to discuss and break down stereotypes. Its goal was to enable collaboration on sustainable projects to combat these phenomena in our local communities, while evaluating the effect of the MJC on participants' attitudes towards each other's religious group. During the MJC, attendees of this committee participated in an extended breaking down stereotypes workshop. They were also introduced to the academic discussion: "The origins of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia", "The role of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in the media" and "Contemporary anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and their impact on our societies."

### 2. Faithful Citizens and Positive Narratives

This committee encouraged participants to take a critical approach to concepts such as citizenship, religion, faith, fundamentalism and identity, and to highlight positive interactions between Muslims and Jews, and look at our shared history from a different angle. During MJC, participants shared personal stories and narratives, but also engaged in the discussion of academic texts relating to narratives and identity. They participated in exercises focused on breaking down stereotypes and on realizing common aspects of their identities, practices and life patterns, as well as in activities that promoted understanding of one's home community in light of opportunities and obstacles regarding interfaith dialogue. They also had the opportunity to lead sessions, e.g. "Faith, citizenship and social action" (Lotifa, UK) and "Interfaith dialogue and freedom of speech in Jewish thought" (Tsurie, Israel). Furthermore, they received guidance in project setup, fundraising, and developing sustainable frameworks and networks.

### 3. Sustained Community Dialogue

This committee focused on devising a plan for community participatory action programs and sustained dialogue; creating a network of trained facilitators; and introducing participants to trainings in sustained dialogue on identity related issues while supporting them in formulating a project proposals. During the week, chairs used a mixture of training techniques (small and large group discussions, simulations, case studies, and team projects) designed to inform, demonstrate, and enhance learning. The chairs used both experiential and didactic methods with an increasing emphasis on participant involvement. Committee members participated in a series of didactic modules ("The Alphabet of the Sustained Dialogue", "Community Analysis", "Cycle of Revenge/Cycle of Transformation" and "Strategic Peacebuilding"), as well as practical modules in which participants applied learned models to their communities and in small groups worked on the development of project proposals for implementation between the annual conferences.

## COMMITTEES 2012

Continued...

### 4. Women in Religion

This committee sought to promote the understanding of the role of women in Islam and Judaism; to find a means of empowerment and education; to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about the way women are treated in our religions; and to enhance the presence and voice of women in our religions and communities. The committee format was based around open discussions hinged on some core questions, within an open and honest space that would allow all opinions to be heard and respected. The committee also had the opportunity to Skype with a leading female activist for women's rights in the Arab world. The discussion served to reinforce the thoughts of our participants that cultural traditions and patriarchal systems and interpretations within faith traditions are what hold women back, not our religious doctrines. The committee inspired the participants to action and to see women as agents of change, and themselves as leaders that could promote these changes in their own communities. As such, the committee produced a number of project ideas. Members of this committee were both male and female and learned from each other about the way those around them see issues of gender.



### 5. Muslim-Jewish Business Venture

The Business Venture Committee aimed to bring together young, aspiring entrepreneurs and their ideas at the MJC 2012, provide them incubation space, and help them realize their potential through unique exchanges. Except, the committee outputs changed from what had been expected. Rather than running with a strictly business focus, the committee shifted to a business and social venture focus with ideas from across the entrepreneurial spectrum. Participants of this committee teamed up among themselves, and with participants from other committees, to conceive and designed projects that embodied the spirit of mutual cooperation. For example, one group comprising a male Hindu from UK, a female Muslim from U.S., and a Jewish female from Israel laid the foundation for a UK-based global non-profit. The most fluid committee at the conference, the BVC acted simply as an incubation space where chairs held one-on-one session with each project team, and provided them constant feedback to percolate and distill their ideas. The committee, as a whole, also critiqued ideas and helped hone each project. At least three projects have already been launched in the months since the conference, and have helped carried the MJC spirit from the conference hotel in Bratislava, to the world beyond.



### 6. Muslim-Jewish Arts Track

For the first time in its history, MJC hosted an arts program that included a juried exhibition on view for the week of the conference as well as a residency program. This track brought together a group of six Muslim and Jewish artists from around the world to collaborate on a traveling exhibition which has now been showcased in Slovakia and Austria.

This approach to Muslim-Jewish dialogue through art was two-tiered, in that as residents, we observed and analyzed the work of others, while collaborating towards the creation of new works of our own. The group of artists participated in conference-wide activities and developed close friendships with other attendees and team members. The dynamic between the residents and the other committees, while could be in the future even more collaborative, enriched the MJC experience for the artists and for everyone at the conference who interacted with art via the artists, the exhibition, or both.



---

# PROJECTS AND CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

## Participating Countries and Organizations 2010 - 2012

3 Faiths Forum (United Kingdom)  
Arab World Center for Democratic Development (UNIHRD)  
American Jewish Committee (AJC / Access)  
Austrian Union of Muslim Students  
Bar Ilan University (Israel)  
Budapest-Tel Aviv-Beirut Photo Project  
COREIS Italian Muslim Youth  
Council of Muslim Students and Academics in Germany  
Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land  
Czech Union of Jewish Students  
European Union of Jewish Students  
Interfaith Encounter Association  
Jewlicious  
Jewrnalism  
Lahore University of Management and Science (Pakistan)  
MePeace (Israel/Palestine)  
Muslim Students Association South Africa  
The Tzedaka-Sadaqah Project (Canada)  
Ukrainian Union of Jewish Students  
Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths, University of Cambridge  
World Union of Jewish Students  
World Jewish Diplomatic Chor  
Young Leadership Council (youth branch of the International Council for Christians and Jews (ICCJ))

Afghanistan	Libya
Austria	Mexico
Bosnia Herzegovina	Morocco
Bulgaria	Pakistan
Canada	Palestine
China	Poland
Czech Republic	Portugal
Egypt	Romania
France	Saudi Arabia
Germany	Scotland
Hungary	Slovakia
India	South Africa
Indonesia	Spain
Iran	Switzerland
Israel	Turkey
Italy	Ukraine
Jordan	United Kingdom
Lebanon	United States of America

## Project Implementation

In order to ensure the successful development and implementation of the projects that have been conceived at MJC, a geographically diverse project implementation team will work closely with participants to ensure they have the necessary support in order to proceed with the development of their ideas. The team will help participants refine their project proposals, network with community leaders and organizations, and assist with securing resources and funding to implement these projects. Sustained local outreach is an integral aspect of MJC's vision going forward, and we will continue to expand this team as needed to ensure we can offer sufficient support.

The MJC also aims to create a database of past, present, and future project ideas to ensure that the concepts generated through the creative bubble that exists at the MJC are not lost, and can still be taken advantage of, and worked on, by others in the future. This will also allow participants who come up with ideas similar to those suggested in the past to contact others who share a mutual interest and hopefully take these ideas forward with a renewed enthusiasm

## Evaluation

The MJC is committed to continually improving our methods for conference evaluation. This year, we surveyed participants at various intervals; before, during and after the conference, to evaluate the effect of the MJC on attitudes towards the other religious group. The surveys included questions that quantitatively analyzed the outputs of MJC. We also conducted individual interviews with participants during the conference and asked them questions surrounding previous misconceptions and the impact of face-to-face interaction on their beliefs and attitudes about the other religious group. The data collected will be analyzed to look for changes in participants levels of tolerance and cultural competence. The MJC also currently uses the committee structure of the conference to encourage participants to share their feedback on their general MJC experience, their committee experience and any suggestions they might have for future. We hope to formalise this in coming years either through a structured feedback questionnaire as mentioned above or other means of monitoring and evaluation. We feel that this is important in order to ensure the best participant experience and improve the structure and quality of the conference for future years.

---

## PROJECTS AND CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

Continued...

### **MJC 2010**

#### **Declaration**

The conference participants collaborated for a whole week on a declaration which outlined recommendations on how to constructively bring Muslim and Jewish communities together and deal with key issues affecting both communities, such as, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, the role of the media in promoting hate, and the importance of educating our youth.  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/36185413/Muslim-Jewish-Conference-2010-Official-Conference-Declaration>

### **MJC 2011**

#### **MJC 2011 promotional video**

In 2011 the MJC was keen to build on the declaration of the year before and create a visual platform which would allow others to engage with the ideas and vision of the MJC. As a result a video for the conference was created:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctYCI5kbLHg>

#### **MJC Participants Blog**

Created together with participants at the MJC 2011 and ongoing since then, the Participants Blog features thoughts and reflections written by alumni and participants about their experiences during and after the conference.  
<http://mjconference.wordpress.com/>

#### **What's the Big Deal?**

Outside of the committee structure some participants also used their free time for creative projects which focused on what they had learned about each other and the commonalities between their faiths and their practice. These were then edited and released on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FObu-zHeBHc>

#### **Global Muslim Jewish Friendship Forum**

A Facebook group which was created by participants as a platform to share articles, stories and ideas, to ask questions, and to promote dialogue. Currently, the group has more than 650 members from all seven continents. Its success has led to the creation of a number of spin-off groups, such as Jewish and Muslim Women, which focuses on gender issues in the context of religion.

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/179800982079692/>

<http://www.gmjff.org/>

#### **JAM Group Therapy**

A YouTube channel and blog page where Muslim and Jewish participants share personal narratives relating to their faith, both good and bad. The goal is to humanize the two faith groups, in order to counter growing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia around the world. The videos have been watched by hundreds of viewers around the world.

<http://jamgrouptherapy.wordpress.com/author/jamgrouptherapy/>

---

## PROJECTS AND CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

Continued...

### MJC 2012

#### **Official MJC Project: International Rapid Response Alliance (IRRA)**

**Disparate communities are moving closer together as globalization continues to spread and touch all corners of the world.** While this creates numerous opportunities for positive interaction and learning, it also increases the potential for friction and intolerance. Hate crimes, in Europe and around the world, are becoming increasingly common as different communities start to interact. The objective of the International Rapid Response Alliance is to create an alliance of faith-based or faith-linked organizations that unequivocally and unapologetically condemn hate crimes. The planned implementation mechanisms are: joint press releases and letters to local and national politicians; the development of a website for the alliance, where statistics, maps, anecdotes, and other information about hate crimes are available. Organizations that are already jointly supporting this MJC initiative are: RAMSA ( Council of German Muslim Students and Academics) in Germany; Global Muslim Jewish Friendship Forum (GMJFF), an international online platform; DSSU (German Pupils and Students Union Osnabrück), in Germany; 3FF (Three Faiths Forum) in the United Kingdom.

#### **For Her Future, Chaya (Israel) and Subha (UK):**

For Her Future is a global not-for-profit organization which aims at developing future female leaders. The organization will empower young women who have already demonstrated leadership capabilities in their respective fields, and will provide educational and skills development opportunities for young girls from around the world. The organization will further aim to break down the barriers between young women from different backgrounds, by providing the skills and experience to allow each of them to pursue their own chosen career path. For Her Future will look to create a global network of established leaders across all areas of work, religions, races, genders, sexual and political orientations, and geographical locations.

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

#### **Muslim/Jewish Cookbook - Jasmina, Austria; Elmira, Ukraine; Emma, UK**

The goal of this project is to create a cookbook with traditional Muslim and Jewish recipes and to highlight traditional cooking and ingredients in the two religions. In addition, the cookbook will provide basic facts on Islam and Judaism and will include personal stories and recipes from the countries of the MJC attendees. Participants of the MJC 2012 joined alumni from 2010 and 2011 to partner in the realization of this project - which is now being developed.

#### **Local-Global - Simon, Czech Republic Adnan, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The goal of this project is to increase cooperation between Muslim and Jewish communities locally, by highlighting this cause in the media. The news media tends to focus its attention on political and global issues, dedicating little space to problems within communities, or cooperation and positive interaction between different religious and minority groups. To improve Muslim-Jewish cooperation, it is important that the media highlight these stories. The project "Local-Global" plans to visit several cities around the world and offer residents the opportunity to show positive examples of interfaith cooperation. They will also aim to tackle issues that the community faces together, whether it is about access to education and healthcare; underdeveloped civil society and government institutions, or insufficient infrastructure. The project will also serve as a database with information about the shared history and commonalities between Muslim and Jewish diaspora communities around the world.

#### **Stories of Faith - Lotifa, UK**

The projects aim is to share stories in order to bring people together and help increase understanding between different faith groups. The plan is to start a creative website where school children can share their stories, using video diaries to help transmit history, culture and identity of individuals of faith. An important element will be creative visuals to form a teaching resource this way, in light of the fact that formal education often does not encourage open mindedness.

---

## PROJECTS AND CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

Continued...

### **Visual Dialogue Project - Shana, USA; Said, Morocco; Ezequiel, Mexico ; Esther, Switzerland; Wasel, Lybia**

This project is planned to be an art exhibition by Muslim and Jewish artists from different backgrounds and ages. Expressive pieces that articulate the artists' vision of peace and coexistence are to be selected and presented in the exhibition. Full names will not be shown below the images, but instead just the first names, age and religion. The goal of the project is to demonstrate that regardless of our religion, we share the same vision of peace.

### **MJ Couch-surfing - Andrea, France**

The informed citizen is a jet-setting, back-packing citizen. And to facilitate this process, MJC wants to set up a couch-surfing platform for its participants and alumni. All MJC alumni wishing to enroll into the programme will sign up for an online platform on the MJC website. They can offer a couch to a guest, or just company over a cup of coffee. The MJ couch-surfing community would be closely-knit, and safe. Only participants who have attended an MJC conference, can access the resource.



---

## FUTURE PROJECTS

Currently, the MJC must find new funding annually which requires time and research, limiting tremendously the teams ability to expand and harness the potential they see and the project ideas present. This year a project implementation team was formed with the goal of supporting alumni in project realization, and creating an ideas bank, therefore increasing the impact of projects and the networking between MJC alumni. Facing a grass roots reality, the MJC's resources match in no way, its potential and possible further impact.

Based on the demand and creativity of international youth, the MJC would be able to produce projects and instances of joint cooperation which can truly change the world. The ability to establish a consulting department alongside to further assist grassroots startup interfaith projects on their way would be a great addition. The volunteer based project implementation department, already run by the MJC could be professionalized and could amplify solutions and simplify the creation of a movement that reaches into every corner of this world.

### **Inter-cultural tourism - Viktoria, Ukraine**

There's no better way of breaking stereotypes than facing them up front. The inter-cultural tourism project takes you to the heart of each community to watch, absorb, learn and experience. The pilot project in Ukraine, for instance, will not only plan tailored trips to cultural and religious heritage sites in Judaism, but take you inside Jewish homes for Sabbath meals and make you part of the festivities of a Jewish wedding or Bar Mitzvah. This interaction will not only help the guest break down their stereotypes of the host, but also give them an opportunity to break any stereotypes prevalent in host families.

### **Reaching the unreachable - Osama (Pakistan), Andrea (Switzerland):**

Tackling the issue of reaching out to people who don't want to listen, Osama and Andrea focused on the potential of reaching people emotionally rather than with facts only. They have started a project aiming at researching, translating and sharing stories of people who stood up for each other throughout History. Its goal is to deradicalize people by exposure to the Holocaust and Genocide. Showing the empathic knowledge of the history of both communities during genocide; e.g. stories of Muslims, hiding Jews during the Shoah, and stories of Jews, protecting Muslims in the Balkan wars. A first step of this project is using the already existing archives, e.g. in Ukraine, and translating existing testimonies for use in documentary movies, online media, etc.

### **Awareness Campaign - Taimoor Pakistan, Chaim Israel**

This project aims to combat stereotypes by using T-shirts, bumper stickers and other paraphernalia that promote a message of peace and coexistence. The designated slogans will form a campaign against baseless hatred and aims to elicit thoughtful discussions in each community. In addition, it is intended to use the any income from this campaign a an alternative way of fund-raising for MJC.

### **Local and Virtual - Zain, Pakistan**

The Project wishes to tackle indoctrination and militant ideologies in Pakistan. It aims to translate the vision of breaking down stereotypes and countering indoctrination into reality by creating a virtual platform for Muslim and Jewish children to interact with each other. Zain stated, he was deeply inspired by how personal interaction had changed perceptions so radically at MJC, and he hopes to enable many more people to have a similar experience.

### **Feeding forward- Komal, USA**

Komal has started a campaign aiming to eradicate hunger through the reallocation of resources. At MJC, she developed an innovative idea centered around an app for smart phones that would help in reallocating excess food that would otherwise go to waste. In light of Muslim-Jewish dialog, the concepts of fasting and Tzdekkah/Saddaqa provided new approaches in relation to food wastage.

---

## FUTURE PROJECTS

Continued...

### **Mentoring - Rasheed, South Africa**

Rasheed proposes a way to tackle the lack of “good” role models and the overload of biased information - by providing positive role models for young students, neutral people able to mentor them and support them in questions relating to religion, career and personal development and life choices. Role models would be young people themselves, aged 21-35, active in positive ways in their communities, in interfaith or intercultural work for example. At the same time, this would provide a platform for multicultural dialogue, opening up to different narratives, crowd sourcing, as well as building a platform of effective people. This would also help restore the image of parents as role models. Different tools can be used - stories, art, mentoring, social media, groups, networking. As different successful projects and institutions work on a similar model, developing local initiatives and networking is a must here to develop all this project idea’s potential.

### **Summer school for low income youth in Pakistan - Adnan (Pakistan):**

Adnan created a pilot project and created a summer school for over 50 children, engaging also parents and teachers. The program focuses on critical thinking and liberal arts education and aims at broadening the horizons and imparting civil values to low income children. Adnan is hence developing a model that will be replicable and sustainable.

### **Website dispelling stereotypes - Sergei (Ukraine):**

This project is aiming at tackling the roots of misconceptions. Sergei proposes working through a list of the most common misconceptions on Islam and Judaism to build a website where this information would be accessible, in a format resembling Wikipedia.

### **Spreading MJC values worldwide - Kerstin (Germany), Maia (Usa), Ruaa (Germany):**

At the MJC ‘11, participants brain stormed different strategies to spread the MJC’s values, many of which we are currently implementing or wishing to be able to pursue. Including: - Developing MJC national chapters - Further grounding the MJC through grassroots organizations and networking, connecting activists on the ground - Providing a framework for local chapters, create tools for MJC chapters - Finding partners, connections - Supporting activities in between the annual conference and project implementation - Mapping the relations between Muslim and Jewish communities in different countries: engaging future participants in research ahead of the conference

### **Building together - from France to Israel and Palestine - Ruth (France), Samia (France):**

Ruth and Samia’s project “Construire Ensemble” aims at laying the foundations for better understanding between Muslim and Jewish communities in France and in Israel through sustained dialogue, which includes long term dialogue revolving around identities, complemented by experimental learning, e.g. through common cultural programs, the sharing of symbolic events and holidays, and many more. The project also notably includes organizing joint travels through Israel and Palestine; bringing in stakeholders from Israel and Palestine and achieving a higher level of sensibility among the participating youth.

---

## CONCLUSION

The MJC's diverse participant base and organizing team makes it unique in its ability to see different points of view and pull from different experiences and skill sets in order to achieve its goal of getting Muslims and Jews to talk *to* each other, instead of *about* each other. The MJC team uses an innovative approach inspired by informal education methods to help the participants engage with critical debates and issues in an open and honest fashion at the conference itself and also throughout the year. Our interconnected world eliminates all borders. Unlike other one-off interfaith events, the length and closed nature of the conference offers an intensity of participation which not only increases tolerance for the views of others but encourages in depth understanding and respect, and the beginning of new friendships. The grassroots element, and MJC's strict policy of independence from the established institutions in both the Muslim and Jewish world, are the main reasons that it is able to draw the next generation out and into meaningful, trustworthy and self-sustained dialogue. In doing so the MJC has managed to create a new international paradigm in Muslim and Jewish relationships.

The MJC network includes organizations and activists on every continent and actively empowers young entrepreneurs, visionaries and leaders to unify approaches, amplify impact and simplify cooperation in order to transform the realm of possibility into the reality of the future.

