



**World Council
of Churches**



**International Jewish Committee
for Interreligious Consultations**

**A Meeting of the
World Council of Churches [WCC]
and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations [IJCIC]**

“The normalization of hatred: challenges for Jews and Christians today”

25-27 June, 2019 Paris, France

Communiqué

Both the WCC and IJCIC are representative bodies of their respective religious communities. After a two-decade hiatus, the two groups have chosen to restore formal relations. The meeting was convened by Rabbi Daniel Polish, Chair of IJCIC, and Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the WCC; it was jointly chaired by Rabbi Noam Marans, Vice Chair of IJCIC, and H.E. Archbishop Dr. Vicken Aykazian, WCC executive committee member and a legate of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

This meeting, under the theme “The normalization of hatred: challenges for Jews and Christians today,” took place at a time of challenges both to religious life in general and to each of our communities in their various contexts. Among the issues that informed this gathering were: the rise of xenophobic nationalist movements in much of the world; suspicion of the agendas of religious communities and institutions, especially in Europe; the resurgence of overt antisemitism; the prevalence of Islamophobia; newly emerging anti-Christian attitudes; the continuing non-resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; worldwide hostility to vulnerable minorities; and the shocking erosion of civil society in many places and ways. We are particularly horrified by the recent increase in murderous attacks on places of worship in different parts of the world.

The decision was made to hold this meeting in France, since it faces many of the aforementioned challenges. While none of these challenges are unique to France, as religious leaders we felt that it was important to stand in solidarity with communities under pressure and to affirm our mutual religious commitment to democratic and pluralistic civil society. We are grateful for the hospitality and assistance offered to us by the Jewish and Christian communities of Paris.

The delegates began their deliberations with a context-setting overview of the conference theme presented by Gilles Clavreul, the former French Interministerial Delegate for the Fight against Racism and Antisemitism.

Subsequent presentations went into depth on the situation in France and the USA, and then elsewhere. In discussions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it was recognized that there have sometimes been very real tensions between the positions of the WCC and IJCIC. This meeting took place with acknowledgment of the development in both more constructive communications and the way that differences are conveyed publicly. These discussions in Paris were characterized by openness, honesty, and an attempt to fully empathize with how profoundly important these issues are to Jews and Christians alike.

The remaining sessions focused on our shared challenge to address injustice in the world. Our religious traditions mandate that we honour the integrity and humanity of all, welcome and care for the stranger, and resist evil. We are living at a time when this demands our courageous attention.

The WCC and IJCIC explored ways in which, working together, our advocacy and interventions may be forces for good in the world. We are committed to addressing and opposing all forms of normalization of hatred, including antisemitism and attacks on religious communities. Areas of possible collaboration included: mutual education; environmental concerns; and gender justice.

This historic meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continue to communicate openly and regularly, to facilitate the joint efforts to affect change identified by the meeting, and to reconvene at regular intervals so that we can advance our respective and mutual responsibilities to our own communities and the world at large.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a worldwide fellowship of 350 member churches which represents more than half a billion Christians around the world. The WCC calls its member churches to seek unity, a common public witness and service to others in a world where hope and solidarity are the seeds for justice and peace. The WCC works with people of all faiths seeking reconciliation with the goal of justice, peace and a more equitable world.

www.oikoumene.org

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) serves on behalf of, and as an instrument of, its constituent member organizations to maintain and develop relations with the Vatican's Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the World Council of Churches, and other international religious bodies. IJCIC's members are: American Jewish Committee (AJC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), B'nai B'rith International (BBI), Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), Israel Jewish Council on Interreligious Relations (IJCIR), Rabbinical Assembly (RA), Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU), United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), and World Jewish Congress (WJC).

www.ijcic.org