

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace Global Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL



Dear Esteemed Colleague:

When I was in West Africa working with religious leaders, I found myself in a bare field as the brutal war in Liberia was winding down.

It was just an empty field-no buildings, no facilities-yet there were several thousand persons encamped there.

People greeted me as I entered the camp, took me by hand to a large rectangle fashioned with sticks laid out flat on the ground. "Here," they said, "here is our mosque." And then, I was taken further into the camp to

another rectangle of sticks lying flat on the ground, and invited in. "Here," the people said, "is our church." They had lost everything. But, they had their mosque and church.

- I experienced there as I have so many places around the world recently that religious communities have a living link with the Transcendent Mystery that grounds, strengthens and ennobles their lives, even in the hardest of times.

In this edition of the Newsletter, you are invited to see how your *Religions for Peace* colleagues around the world are marshalling their spiritualities, moralities, and the living networks of their faith communities in concrete peacemaking roles to help internally displaced persons, eliminate extreme poverty and protect the earth and support youth with healthy alternatives to the false promises of violent groups. These, and the other fine examples in this issue, point to the very particular motivations and strengths that religious people bring to peacebuilding.

My heart is full of joyful admiration for the remarkable religious believers who make up our ever-growing family of inter-religious councils and youth and women of faith networks. Respectful of religious differences, these remarkable people have found out for themselves that being faithful to their own religion strengthens the building of bonds of solidarity in the hard but profound service to Peace. This solidarity-of care rooted in each religion in its own way reflects a light that refuses to be dimmed.

As religious people, you know from your own faith that Peace is a gift as much as it is task. Let us then each continue this great work, drawing comfort and quiet strength as we do so.

In partnership,



Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General

IN THE NETWORK

NIGERIA: INVESTING IN YOUTH TO ADDRESS VIOLENT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM



Youth Leaders assisting in distributing medicines and aid at an Internally Displaced Persons' camp

"I did not see Muslims or Christians, but I saw human beings who were living in hard conditions due to no fault of their own. They were there merely because of the decisions of a few to pursue war instead of peace," said **Mr. Sam Ukey [Member of the Abuja Interfaith Youth Network-Religions for Peace]** at an Internally Displaced Persons' camp in Durumi, Abuja, Nigeria.

Nigeria today is faced with urgent and decisive threats to peace.

Boko Haram's campaign of terror in northeast Nigeria has triggered internal displacement that has left more than 2.1 million Nigerians in dire need of assistance.

While ISIS terrorist attacks command the global media headlines, terrorist group Boko Haram is not making the front pages despite having overtaken ISIS as the world's deadliest terrorist organization, according to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index released by **Mr. Steve Killelea**, Founder and Executive Chairman, Institute for Economics and Peace **[International Trustee and Treasurer of RfP]**.



Youth Leaders at the Training in Abuja

In response, members of the **Abuja Interfaith Youth Network-RfP** provided multi-religious training on Countering Violent Religious Extremism in Abuja, Nigeria for religious leaders and scholars from across thirty-six Nigerian states.

A highlight of the three-day training was a solidarity visit to an Internally Displaced Persons' camp. There, youth leaders assisted in distributing medicines and aid to help ease burdens.



Youth Leaders meeting with H.E. Onaiyekan in Abuja

Youth leaders also paid a visit to the Abuja National Mosque and the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, where they were warmly met by **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan [Co-Moderator of RfP]**.

His Eminence commended the members of the **Abuja Interfaith Youth Network-RfP** on organizing the training that brought together different stake-holders to address a complex reality that concerns all.

"We cannot be tired until there is peace and harmony in our world," **H.E. Onaiyekan** told the youth leaders.



Mr. Steve Killelea

RfP congratulates **Mr. Steve Killelea**, Founder and Executive Chairman of the Institute for Economics and Peace **[International Treasurer and Trustee of RfP]** on the 10th anniversary of the Global Peace Index.

Mr. Killelea founded the Global Peace Index that ranks 162 countries on their peacefulness using

23 different indicators.

To mark the milestone anniversary, **Mr. Killelea** convened global experts and scholars, including **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**, for the Future Peace Summit in Washington, D.C., USA, 15 June 2016. Speakers at the summit examined the main challenges and opportunities for peace over the next decade. Watch video highlights of the event [here](#).

They also developed a road map for the kinds of investments proven to build peace, including control of corruption, improved rule of law and the establishment of a sound business environment that creates sustainable peace in society.

You may download the 2016 Global Peace Index [here](#).

The 2016 Index study found that, while 81 countries improved, the deterioration in another 79 outweighed these gains, meaning that peace declined at a faster rate than in the previous year.



GLOBAL: STANDING IN SUPPORT OF THE [#WITHREFUGEES](#) CAMPAIGN



Refugees fleeing war and escaping poverty

Fleeing conflict, persecution and chronic natural disasters, more than 65 million people (half of whom are children) remain displaced. Against this backdrop, too many are confronted with growing xenophobia, divisive political rhetoric on asylum and migration issues and challenges to their safety and security.

RfP has partnered with the United Nations Refugee Agency to expand the [#WithRefugees](#) campaign.

The campaign seeks to promote understanding, compassion and political will to ensure that refugees and migrants have protection, shelter and the chance to live better and more sustainable lives.

Specifically, the campaign has at its core a petition calling on world leaders to ensure that:

- Every refugee child has an education.
- Every refugee family has somewhere safe to live.
- Every refugee can work or learn skills to make a positive contribution to their community.

Signed petitions from around the world will be collected and delivered to the United Nations prior to their 19 September 2016 High-level Plenary on addressing mass movements of refugees and migrants.

Your help is needed.



Refugee fleeing war and escaping poverty

Add your name [here](#) to the **#WithRefugees** petition and send a clear message to world leaders that they must act with solidarity and shared responsibility for refugees.

KENYA: WOMEN OF FAITH COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Members of the Isiolo Women of Faith Network-RfP

Hundreds of youth in Isiolo County, north Kenya are missing.

While their whereabouts remain unknown, these young girls and boys are believed to have been kidnapped from their schools for radicalization by Somali militant Al-Shabab, which has intensified its recruitment of Kenyan youth.

The **Isiolo Women of Faith Network-RfP (WoFN-RfP)** and the **Interreligious Council of Kenya-RfP (IRCK-RfP)** are stepping up efforts in response to acts of violent extremism in Kenya. Religious institutions, shopping centers and schools have been targets for such terrorist acts. Extremist propaganda is fueling these deadly attacks which in turn has sown growing distrust among religious communities and ethnic groups.

To help mitigate tensions, the **IRCK-RfP** and its **WoFN-RfP** hosted a community forum on countering radicalization.

During the forum, mothers of the disappeared expressed their key concern: difficulty in working with the security forces to locate and return their children.



Community Meeting, Photo by FCA

The **IRCK-RfP** and the **WoFN-RfP** plan to host more forums on this issue and to serve as bridges between the security forces and the mothers of the missing youth.

GLOBAL: GETTING INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE



Left to Right: Women of Faith in Liberia at Peace Rally & Monks marching for Peace in Cambodia

On 21 September, people in villages, towns and cities around the world will engage in peace-related activities in observance of the International Day of Peace (Peace Day).

35 years ago, the United Nations declared 21 September as Peace Day to strengthen the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples. For 2016, The Day's theme is "The Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace."

This year, to help generate 24 hours of peace around the world, **RfP** has partnered with the United Nations Special Envoy Office; U.S. Institute of Peace; and change.org.

An irreplaceable component of this effort to generate peace will be the engagement of **RfP**

religious believers—from the most senior leaders to the grassroots—across the **RfP** global network who are already working hard to bring sustainable peace to their communities.

Please join us in commemorating the International Day of Peace by engaging in an activity related to peace, in accordance with your religious tradition. (Suggested activities can include: prayer and meditation; service to others; vigils; marches and parades; and multi religious workshops on building peace.)

Achieving a more peaceful world is a shared responsibility and it is through our collective efforts, actions large and small, that a safe, sustainable and just world will be built.

"When we all work together, we can make peace possible, starting with 24 hours of peace on 21 September" -- these are the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and a conviction **RfP** hopes you will join in turning into a reality this International Day of Peace 2016. **#PeaceDay**



With your support, **RfP** is committed to transforming the International Day of Peace from a single moment of action into a movement of non-violence that will continue to build beyond the day. [Click to Read the Joint Letter](#)

JAPAN: HELPING DROUGHT-AFFLICTED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Students at local school in Malawi

Climate change is wreaking havoc on the world's most vulnerable populations.

Millions of families in southern and eastern Africa are in the grips of a massive drought, exacerbated by climate change and El Niño-related weather patterns that have caused successive seasons of failed rains.

Despite being the worst human-aided natural disaster to hit the region in 60 years, this escalating crisis has not seized media headlines.

Nonetheless, leaders in **RfP** are not remaining silent as approximately 50 million people in south and east Africa countries are suffering from food and water shortages, malnutrition, livestock deaths, diseases and internal displacement.

They are taking action.

Under the leadership of President-Designate **Rev. Kosho Niwano**

[International Co-

President of RfP], Rissho Kosei-kai has allocated millions of Japanese yen to humanitarian partners in Malawi and Mozambique.

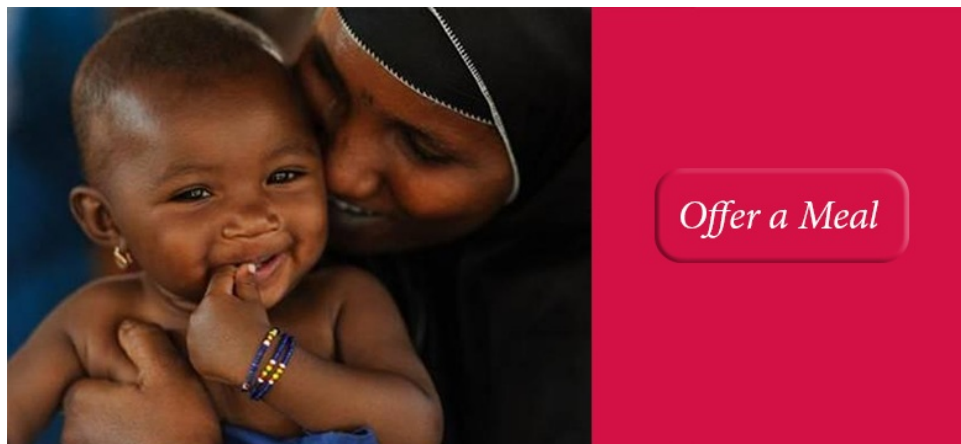


Students at local school in Mozambique

In the Chikwawa District of Malawi and the Gaza Province of Mozambique families and children are receiving free school lunches, hygiene educational programmes, and seeds for planting drought-resistant crops in school gardens.

Rissho Kosei-kai's donation came from its Donate-a-Meal for Peace programme, which is similar to **RfP International's** Offer-a-Meal Movement.

Under both initiatives, participants forgo a meal and the value of any meals skipped is then donated to help mitigate human suffering. Donation is an important part of Buddhist practice, and is considered a bodhisattva practice-a practice of those aspiring to Buddhahood.



To Donate-a-Meal for Peace click [here](#)

To Donate to Offer-a-Meal Movement click [here](#)

100% of contributions to Offer-a-Meal for Movement will be used to reach those in need through the **RfP** interreligious councils in Africa's drought-ridden countries.

GLOBAL: PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



Religions for Peace

Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation

A GUIDE TO ACTION
FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS
AND COMMUNITIES



Rapidly developing information communication technologies have given advent to new forms of sexual exploitation of children through online mechanisms. Religious leaders and communities are particularly well placed to protect children from sexual exploitation online, to offer care and support to those who suffer such violence, and to work with parents, teachers and the larger community, as well as with law enforcement, to prevent this crime.

RfP and ECPAT International have recently released the [Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation: A Guide to Action for Religious Leaders and Communities](#) to help religious communities harness their strengths to prevent, respond and end online sexual exploitation of children.

This guide provides some basic tools to equip religious leaders and communities to act, advocate, educate, and collaborate both among themselves and with broader initiatives so that each and every child can live without fear, develop their true potential and enjoy the inviolable gift of their human dignity.

ITALY: OPENING DOORS TO WELCOME REFUGEES



Members of the ECRL-RfP

The **European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP**-comprised of eminent Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian leaders-are putting their beliefs into action to address challenges facing Europe, including mass migration, escalating unemployment, violent religious extremism and socio-economic and political exclusion.

In **ECRL-RfP** member countries, the leaders have opened their churches, mosques, temples and gurdwaras to welcome refugees and migrants and provide them with practical support, from food to temporary shelter to facilitating their social inclusion in their new country.

It came as no surprise that the crisis of migrants and refugees topped the agenda of the

recent **ECRL-RfP** meeting in Brixen, Italy, hosted by **H.E. Luigi Bressan**, Archbishop Emeritus of Trento **[Co-President of RfP]**.



H.E. Archbishop Luigi Bressan (L) with Revd. Thomas Wipf (C) with leaders at the ECRL Meeting

"Religious communities have huge resources and potential to help migrants, as well as the capacity to allay fears and anxieties of host communities", said newly-appointed **[Deputy Secretary General of the ECRL-RfP, Dr. Mark Owen]** at the meeting.

In opening remarks, **ECRL-RfP Moderator Revd Dr. Thomas Wipf** stated, "The refugees and migrants have needs aside from basic survival, they also have religious needs and family needs." In his own congregation, **Revd. Wipf**, President of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, holds joint worship services." The goal is for the people coming from abroad to lead their own services," he explained.

"To close the internal frontiers of the European Union is to step backwards in building solidarity", said **H.E. Luigi Bressan**. At the same time "the generosity of our people is admirable: we don't stop working because of the criticism by some political parties."

The next **ECRL-RfP** Council meeting will be held from 16-18 May 2017 in Turku, Finland.

JAPAN: ADVANCING PARTNERSHIPS FOR NUCLEAR ABOLITION



Ms. Aika Tokuhisa, 16-year-old high school student, addressing the **RfP** Special Session on Disarmament and Security

"After hearing the statements given by the victims of the nuclear bombs and about the many terrible consequences of nuclear war, I strongly feel that my generation has a responsibility to strive for a world where people do not live in fear of nuclear weapons," said 16-year old

The session brought together religious leaders, parliamentarians, diplomats, civil society leaders from 11 countries, as well as "Hibakusha" (survivors of nuclear bombing) and high school students to advance multi-religious, multi-stakeholder and inter-generational partnership for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The Special Session was held under the leadership of **Ven. Gijun Sugitani [Chair of the RfP International Standing Commission on Disarmament and Security]**. It was designed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that declared "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law." It also coincided with the commencement of the final round of deliberations at the United Nations to advance a global treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Judge Christopher Weeramantry, former Vice President of ICJ, noted that "One of our greatest duties is the duty we owe to our children and relatives of our children's children who are unable to speak for themselves. Every religion stresses this and the nuclear weapon contradicts this in shattering terms."

Honorable Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and **RfP International Co-President**, said "when Gandhi-ji called for Satyagraha, he said that he was not calling for docile peace, but he was calling for an active resistance to evil wherever we see it. Gandhi-ji said that to accept injustice is to condone it."

Mr. Terumi Tanaka, a "Hibakusha" (survivor of atomic bombs), said that "it is our strong desire to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world in our lifetime, so that succeeding generations of people will not see hell on earth ever again."

Fr. Michael Czerny, representing the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace at the Vatican quoted Pope Francis: "Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. The security of our own future depends on guaranteeing the peaceful security of others, for if peace, security and stability are not established globally, they will not be enjoyed at all" [Message of Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference of Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons].

Mr. Jonathan Frerichs, Senior Representative of the World Council of Churches and Pax Christi, said "Our hope is a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. Many states want negotiations to begin in 2017. We must advocate with them. We must not fail to invite the 31 nuclear-umbrella states to join this common path towards greater equal security for all."

Dr. William F. Vendley [Secretary General of RfP International] said that "nuclear weapons-as indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction-are intrinsically evil. Thus, even the development and possession of nuclear weapons is morally disordered. The moral imperatives against the use or possession of nuclear weapons arise from the depths of human conscience, which is itself more primordial than the technical debates over the legality of nuclear weapons."

[The Final Statement](#) committed participants to further raising awareness of disarmament issues, supporting coordinated advocacy efforts, and engaging and empowering religious leaders and communities to more effectively partner with other civil society, governmental and inter-governmental actors in actions to abolish nuclear weapons.

Resources:

1. [Standing Commission Meeting Program](#)
2. [Statement in English](#)
3. [Statement in Japanese](#)
4. [Recorded Speeches](#)
5. [Photos](#)
6. Sign the [international petition campaign](#) on nuclear abolition recently launched by Hibakusya

GLOBAL: MARKING THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL, LAUDATO SI'



Top L-R: Rabbi Rick Jacobs and H.E. Dr. Din Syamsuddin
Bottom L-R: Dr. William Vendley and Rev. Kyoichi Sugino

To mark the one-year anniversary of Pope Francis's landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, **RfP** joined forces with Global Catholic Climate Movement to put together an interfaith panel entitled "*Ecological Education and Spirituality*."

The session reflected on the duty to care for our common home among the world's major religions.

Leaders from **RfP** shared experiences and insights on the perspective of their faith traditions about ecological education and multi-religious cooperation to protect our shared planet. "Laudato Si' has beautiful words of wisdom, in harmony with core teachings of Buddhism" said **Rev. Sugino** during the session. **Dr. Vendley** talked about "conversion - the central

dynamic of all religious traditions" and its relation to ecology. **Dr. Syamsuddin** shared the Islamic theological perspective on the issue "climate change, global warming and ecological collapse is a moral problem. As stated in the Holy Koran, corruption has appeared in the land and sea because of the mischief of human being." **Rabbi Jacobs** described Pope Francis' leadership on care for the poor and the earth "extraordinary" and "transformative." He believes that living in harmony with the earth is the fundamental pillar of religious life.

Other panelists included Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of Green Faith and Ms. Jacqui Remond, Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia as the panel moderator. For more information about the panel, please watch the live video [here](#).

GLOBAL: CLEANING, PRAYING AND COLLABORATING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION



Youth Leaders cleaning the famous Buddhist temple, Shwedagon Pagoda, in Yangon, Myanmar

Across five continents, thousands of young religious leaders in the **RfP Global Interfaith Youth Network (GIYN)** celebrated 2016 World Environment Day by cleaning, praying and collaborating.

These events took place as part of the **RfP GIYN** Welcoming the Other: Clean, Pray, Collaborate multi religious campaign - a one-day global environmental awareness-raising initiative designed to harness the energy and commitment of religious youth leaders to provided needed assistance in each other's places of worship and promote learning of different faiths.

Some examples of their work include:

RfP GIYN Leaders - Indonesia

solutions.

In Indonesia, the **RfP GIYN** leaders tidied mosques, churches and temples and identified wasteful behavior and practices that could be eliminated and replaced with eco-friendly and sustainable

Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Leader of Muhammadiyah [**Co-President of RfP**] had high praise for these youth leaders in his country, whom he commended for their initiative and

commitment to make places of worship in Indonesia more environmentally friendly.



RfP GIYN Leaders - United Kingdom



In Maidenhead, United Kingdom, young Buddhists and Muslims leaders joined together to clean a local mosque and its grounds.

While in Leicester, United Kingdom, youth leaders cleaned a local Hindu temple, Sanatan Mandir, and served meals to congregants.

RfP GIYN Leaders - Brazil



In Rio de Janeiro, youth leaders organized the Faiths on Climate - Our Sacred Earth gathering to build multi religious advocacy support for a 100% renewable energy by 2050.

In addition, youth leaders took significant steps towards building a local Brazilian Interfaith Youth Network, affiliated with the **RfP GIYN**.



In Chicago, Illinois, youth leaders from various faith backgrounds commemorated World Environmental Day by volunteering at a local Gurdwara.

There, they set up a table to raise-awareness and answer questions about **RfP's** multi-religious efforts to preserve the environment.

The youth were invited to be part of the service and address the congregation.

After the service, they went into the Langar, where they assisted in serving meals to congregants and recycling and composting food waste.

CAMBODIA: NEW SECRETARY GENERAL ELECTED



Ven. Dr. Yon Seng Yeath

RfP congratulates Ven. Dr. Yon Seng Yeath on his newly-elected position of Secretary General of the **Cambodian Inter-religious Council-RfP**.

Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant and Cham Islamic leaders unanimously elected **Ven. Yeath** as their Secretary

General during their 2016 annual meeting.

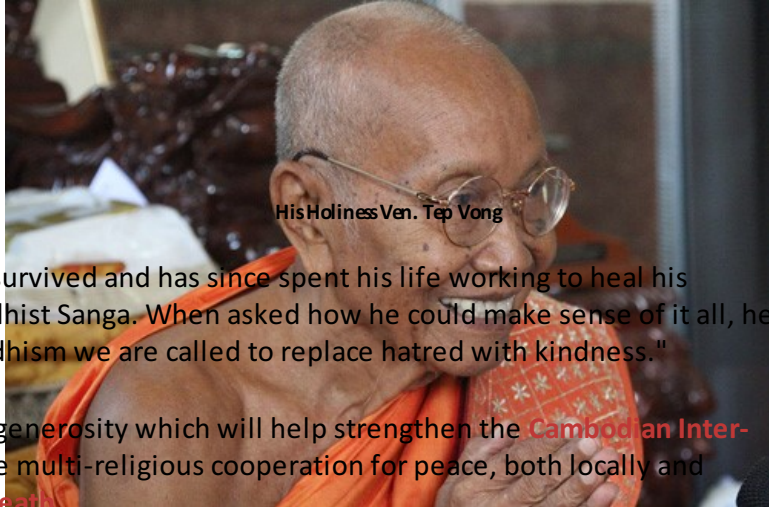
"I am very happy to be part of **RfP** family," said Ven. Yeath during a recent interview. "Mutual understanding among the different religious practitioners is the root cause of happiness taught in all religions" he added. "Based on the principle of mutual understanding, the **Cambodian Inter-religious Council-RfP** will undertake various charity works in our local communities here to promote awareness about the importance of understanding each other's faith tradition," he stated.

His Holiness Ven. Tep Vong, the Great Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia, [**Co-President of RfP**], has stepped up with technical and financial support to help the **Cambodian Inter-religious Council-RfP** relocate its

headquarters to Watt Unalom, the centre of Cambodian Buddhism, from Chamkarmorn.

During the Pol Pot Regime, **His Holiness** was executed and left for dead in a ditch. He survived and has since spent his life working to heal his country by re-building the Buddhist Sanga. When asked how he could make sense of it all, he responded: "It's simple. In Buddhism we are called to replace hatred with kindness."

"We thank His Holiness' for his generosity which will help strengthen the **Cambodian Inter-religious Council-RfP** to advance multi-religious cooperation for peace, both locally and nationally," commented **Ven. Yeath**.



NOTABLE VISIT TO THE RfP INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT



Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP] welcomed **Mr. Jeff Yussuf Ayami, Executive Secretary of Zambia Interfaith Networking Group-RfP** to the International Secretariat on 9 June.

Mr. Ayami met with **Dr. William Vendley** and **Ms. Deepika Singh [Director of Programmes of RfP]**. He also greeted members of the International Secretariat.

Mr. Ayami highlighted the work of the **Zambia Interfaith Networking Group-RfP** to improve people's lives, including mobilizing financial and human resources for communities to respond to the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS; the sewing and tailoring programme in which women make goods and sell at local markets; the women's self-help group and

youth sports programme.

Dr. Vendley asked **Mr. Ayami** to convey to the members of the **Zambia Interfaith Networking Group-RfP** his heartfelt congratulations, on behalf of the **RfP** Network, for their sustained interreligious work for peace in Zambia.

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Judith Hertz



RfP received news of the passing of **Mrs. Judith Hertz** on Tuesday 31 May.

Judy was a beloved friend, a devout member of the Reform Judaism denomination and a distinguished public servant.

Her deep fidelity to her faith and heritage inspired her commitment to Shalom for all and took her around the world on missions to promote multi religious dialogue for the wellbeing of the entire human family.

In **RfP**, Judy provided leadership with great distinction, serving for a period as a **Co-President**, an **Honorary President**, a member of the **Global Women of Faith Network**.

Judy also served a Co-President of **RfP USA**. Her husband Martin, who preceded her in death, drafted the legal and foundational documents for **RfP USA**. Her close mentor, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, was a co-founder of **RfP** in 1970.

In addition to her roles with **RfP**, Judy held leadership positions with the Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism; International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations; National Council of Synagogues; Auburn Seminary Women's Committee; Women of Reform Judaism; and Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism.

A delightfully gentle and refreshing sense of humor was a signature of her endeavors. "We are most thankful for **Judy's** many years of generosity, wisdom, and faithful service to **RfP**. She will be long remembered as a strong advocate for our common humanity and defender of those oppressed and persecuted," said **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**.

Dr. John Brademas



beloved friend **Dr. John Brademas** passed at the age of 89 in New York City on 11 July.

A master fundraiser, he used his prominence to provide outstanding leadership as chair of the **RfP** Trustee nominating committee where he bolstered philanthropic support.

A statesman of the highest caliber, **John** was the third highest ranking member of the United States House of Representatives. He served in Congress for 22 years, establishing a reputation as "Mr. Education and Mr. Arts" for sponsoring legislation that expanded federal funding for education and the arts.

After leaving Congress, he continued his distinguished career by pursuing his passion for education, serving for more than a decade as President of New York University. His leadership of the university remains one of the great success stories in higher education. Under John's presidency, the nation's largest private university was transformed from a commuter school to its present status as one of the world's premier residential research and teaching institutions.

John was deeply interested in Spanish history and culture, and he was the force behind the creation of the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at NYU, which promotes research and scholarship on Spain and the Spanish-speaking world.

Dr. Vendley said, "John served **RfP** with distinction. He was a well-respected academic, political and business leader, whose wisdom and generosity of spirit are evidenced in his many works and commitment to service."

IN THE NEWS

*Articles in this section are taken from independent news sources. The content and opinions expressed do not represent the views of **RfP**.*

A CONVERSATION WITH THE SULTAN OF SOKOTO: PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, CHALLENGES, AND POTENTIAL PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA

Woodrow Wilson Website
26 July 2016



The Wilson Center Africa Program, in partnership with the International Interfaith Peace Corps and the U.S. Agency for International Development, was honored to host **His Royal Eminence Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III**, the 20th Sultan of Sokoto [**Co-President of RfP**].

The Sultan - the spiritual leader of the Muslim community in Nigeria (and millions more in the sub-region), a revered leader in Northern Nigeria, and a highly regarded figure in the country - reflected on key issues affecting Nigeria including Nigeria's place in the Muslim world, religious tolerance and Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, his work and advocacy for the empowerment girls and women in Muslim-majority Northern Nigeria, the fight against Boko Haram, and his views on the prospects for Nigeria's future.

The conversation with **His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto** offered a special opportunity to hear from one of Africa's leaders on peace, development, religion, and interfaith tolerance in a time of raging and often polarizing debate about such issues and the interface between Islam and terrorism. His Eminence began with a discussion of Nigeria's place in the Muslim world. As the most populous black nation in the world and one of the most populous Muslim countries (with 85-90 million Muslims), the religious leadership of Nigeria commands an important role in the greater Muslim world.

Moving the discussion toward religious intolerance, **His Eminence** posed several questions: Why is there such severe religious intolerance? Why is there so much violence around the world in the name of religion? How do we defeat the few among us who decide to take people's lives in the name of religion, be it Christianity or Islam? [Listen More](#)

CHIEF RABBI DAVID ROSEN ACCOMPANIES POPE FRANCIS TO AUSCHWITZ DEATH CAMP

Joanna Berendt
New York Time
29 July 2016

Pope Francis walked in the footsteps of his two predecessors on Friday as he visited the former extermination camp at Auschwitz, where he paid



silent homage to the more than one million victims, mostly Jews, who perished there during the Holocaust.

"This site bore witness to the most systematic, industrialized atrocity in the history of humanity," said [Rabbi David Rosen](#), International Director of

International Religious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee **[International Co-President of RfP]**. **Rabbi Rosen** accompanied the Pope on his trip to Auschwitz. He said in a phone interview, "In such a place, words are inadequate, and its silence that becomes the ultimate expression of solidarity with the victims."

Rabbi Rosen credited the Pope's predecessors for paving the path to reconciliation, saying that Francis had become "the embodiment and epitome of overcoming differences between Jews and Christians." [Read More](#)

RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF TURKEY CONDEMN TERROR AND VIOLENCE

La Stampa
Pablo Lombó

Listen to the Interview [Here](#) (In French)



Representatives of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities sign a joint declaration: "May God protect our country and all humanity." From the mosques, between the prayers, the imams invited everyone to show their support to the government; the Ecumenical Patriarchate also offers precautionary measures for the faithful.

"Terror and violence wherever and whoever they come from can never be defended and regarded as legitimate. Killing one person is like killing all humanity and is absolutely not accepted by believers." These are the words of the joint statement, signed this July 15, by different religious leaders of Turkey: Director of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) **Mehmet Görmez [Co-President of RfP]**, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew, **Chief Turkish Rabbi Rav Izak Haleva [Co-Moderator, Middle East/North Africa Council-RfP]**, the Patriarch of Turkish Armenians Aram Atesyan, the Assyrian Catholic Community leader Yusuf Çetin and Assyrian-Catholic Patriarch Yusuf Sağ.

"We as the religious representatives of Jewish, Christian and Muslim citizens, together with our communities," continues the statement, "are in a deep state of sorrow because of the terror incidents that have disrupted peace in our beautiful country and the world and that have caused unbearable pain by taking the lives of many loved ones of our citizens."

Moreover, say the Turkish religious leaders, "We are ready to do whatever we can to absolutely prevent terror and violence and to make love and justice dominant in our country and the entire world. May God protect our country and all humanity." [Read More](#)

GLOBAL SISTERS GROUP THANKS FRANCIS FOR CREATING COMMISSION ON WOMEN DEACONS

Joshua McElwee
National Catholic Reporter
3 August 2016

The main umbrella group of Catholic women religious around the world is expressing gratitude to Pope Francis for creating a commission to study the possibility of allowing women to serve as deacons in the church, thanking him for responding to their call for the creation of such a group.



The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) had asked the Pontiff to create a commission to study women deacons in a meeting in May.

Sr. Carmen Sammut, the President of the group **[Co-President of RfP]** told NCR that she wanted to thank the Pope on its behalf. "In the name of the International Union of Superiors General I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Pope Francis for having given this follow-up to our request in May," said **Sammut**.

"I understand this commission will provide the background information necessary for a discernment leading to a decision as to whether to open the diaconate to women in the Catholic Church," she said.

"I noticed with joy that together with the chair person, the commission is made up of 6 men and 6 women scholars, lay and religious, coming from various parts of the world," **Sammut** continued. "I see this as one of the ways Pope Francis renders concrete his constant desire that women play a more incisive role in the Church." [Read More](#)

RFP FRANCE'S GHALEB BENCHEIKH CALLS ON FRENCH MUSLIMS TO UNITE AGAINST DAESH

France Info
4 August 2016



Ghaleb Bencheikh [President of *RfP France*] published an opinion piece in French Newspaper *Le Monde* calling French Muslims to come forward and express their rejection of Daesh.

"Do not let other dramas crack the unity of the nation," he

warned, believing that with the murder of Father Hamel in a place of worship, "a red line has been crossed."

However, **Bencheikh** fears an "emotional overreaction" and hopes that a universal rejection of Daesh across religions, including Islam, can provide a common basis for harmonious coexistence.

Regarding the presence of Muslims at masses in memory of father Hamel, the **President of *RfP France*** explains, "Our nation was afflicted for 18 months, but hopefully we can squash these tragedies for decades to come. This recognition is late but positive."

As for the reinvigoration of a peaceful Islam, **Bencheikh** prefers that this movement comes from "dignitaries, Muslim theologians and philosophers rather than the state." Recognizing the reconciliation of secular values with traditional customs, he noted that "religious practice in our country must be combined with humanistic notions of progress and civilization." [Read More](#)

MYANMAR CENSUS DATA UNDERCUTS BUDDHIST HARDLINER CLAIMS

Channel NewsAsia
21 July 2016



Islamophobia has rippled across Myanmar in recent years, with Buddhist nationalists sending alarmist messages about the growth of the Muslim population.

But new data affirms that Buddhists make up 90 per cent of the population of 51.48 million. They are followed in number by Christians (6.3 per cent) and Muslims (2.3 per cent or over 1.1 million people).

However, the survey does not include the one-million strong stateless Rohingya Muslim minority, who were banned from self-identifying during the census taking. Added together, their number doubles the country's share of Muslims to around four per cent - an estimate that has been in circulation since the last census in 1983.

Some believe the figures may have been reduced to prevent reprisals against Muslims.

"It's a big joke ... We would be not less than eight to 10 per cent," **Al-Haj Aye Lwin**, chief convener of the Islamic Centre of Myanmar, **[Co-Founder of RfP Myanmar]** told Channel NewsAsia.

"From the darker side, that will prove that the image of Myanmar society as a pluralistic, multi-racial, multi-religious society will be diminished." [Read More](#)

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

Newsletter

Chief Rabbi David Rosen's



"The first ever World Humanitarian Summit, convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon took place in Istanbul May 23/24 and invitations were extended to a number of religious leaders and representatives of which I was one.

A special session on the role on Religious

Engagement - The Contributions of Faith Communities to Our Shared Humanity was opened by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Among the religious representatives present at the summit were the Secretary General of KAICIID, Faisal Al Muammar of Saudi Arabia; **Dr. Mohammad Sammak** of Lebanon [**Co-President of RfP**] and **Metropolitan Emmanuel of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate** [**Co-President of RfP**]. We were invited and hosted by Patriarch Bartholomew at the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

[Read More](#)

[Read the Newsletter](#)



STRANGERS OF DIFFERING FAITHS TAKE A SEAT AT THE TABLE AND LEAVE AS FRIENDS

Lesli Bales-Sherrod
Knoxville NewsSentinel
22 July 2016

With plates piled high with falafel, hummus and baba ghanoush, the strangers made their way into a sparsely decorated sitting room.

Still others stood around, dinner in hand, and the conversation continued; soon after, people who had met each other only a few hours earlier were leaving the evening as friends.



This is A Seat at the Table, an informal interfaith conversation at which participants share with others to learn about neighbors of differing faiths.

"I expected that people would eat throughout the house, but everyone packed into the smallest, most dimly lit room," said Emily Baird-Chrisohon, of the dinner held June 9 at a

home in West Knoxville. Baird-Chrisohon is regional organizer for **Religions for Peace USA**. "I loved that. I could hear the conversation throughout the house."

Knoxville is the second Tennessee city to start A Seat at the Table, Baird-Chrisohon said. The program, part of **Religions for Peace USA**'s Our Muslim Neighbor Initiative, began in Nashville three years ago after the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Center for American Progress identified Middle Tennessee as one of the most Islamophobic places in the United States, she explained.

What makes Knoxville different, Baird-Chrisohon noted, is that community members reached out to **Religions for Peace USA** wanting to start A Seat at the Table locally. [Read More](#)

EMIR ABD EL-KADER, A MUSLIM HERO FOR OUR TIME, ONLINE COURSE LAUNCHED

Islamic Networks Group Website



Islamic Networks Group in California just released a new online curriculum titled [Emir Abd el-Kader: A Muslim Hero for our Time](#).

This timely curriculum is about a Muslim leader (Elkader, Iowa's namesake) who became a great reconciler of the 19th century.

Abdelkader's moral courage, character and ethical behavior on and off the battlefield was rooted in a faith that bears no resemblance to the deformed face of Islam seen today in the media.

This curriculum offers an important resource for educators in middle and high school as well as college to introduce a powerful narrative of Islam to help students understand it has many

faces, as does Christianity. The interactive curriculum includes a digital presentation accompanied by scripts and discussion questions, video links, and educator resources.

The curriculum is based on **John W. Kiser's [International Trustee of RfP]** biography, [Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader](#). [Read More](#)

PATRIARCH FOUAD TWAL HANDS OVER POWERS TO APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR FR. PIERBATTISTA PIZZABALLA

Latin Patriarchate Website
15 July 2016



STATEMENT



In presence of **His Beatitude Patriarch Fouad Twal**, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem [**Honorary President of RfP**] Archbishop-designate Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Patriarchal Vicars, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem, and several clergy, the Latin Patriarchate Advisory Board met at the Patriarchate on Friday, July 15, 2016. During the meeting the text of the decree of nomination, issued by His Holiness Pope Francis, was read. All necessary credentials were signed for the purpose of handing over powers by His Beatitude to the new Apostolic

Administrator.

The Latin Patriarchate, including Vicars, clergy and faithful, would like to thank **His Beatitude Fouad Twal** and to wish the Apostolic Administrator full success in his new mission, offering prayers for both of them.

RFP NETHERLANDS WITE CARP RECEIVES ROYAL DECORATION

2 August 2016



Mr. Wite Carp [President Emeritus of RfP Netherlands] recently received the Royal decoration of Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau. **Mr. Carp** earned this honored distinction for his 50 years of activities both at the national and international levels to advance Peace.

The Order of Orange-Nassau is a civil and military Dutch order of chivalry.

Mr. Carp served as the leader of the Sufi movement in The Hague.



Mr. Edward Ablang is an intern in **RfP's** Women's Programme Department, researching the role of women in conflict. After living abroad as a missionary cleric based in Florence, Italy, Edward left ministry to pursue graduate studies in international relations. He concentrated on religion in security and foreign policy; his thesis focused on religious engagement and U.S. national security. Moreover, Edward has interned for the World Youth Alliance, UNESCO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, to engage his interests in religion and global affairs. A recent graduate of New York University, Edward also holds a Certificate in Philosophical and Theological Studies from St. John's University - in addition to his seminary studies - and a Bachelor of Arts in Classics and Music from the University of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Jaiwon Lee is an Intern in **RfP's** Youth Programme Department. Originally from Korea, Jaiwon holds a B.A. degree in Mathematics from New York University, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude. He also holds M.A. degree in Economics from the same university. During his internship period at **RfP**, he wants to learn about activities of the world religious groups and how youth religious group leaders in the world cooperate to coexist in harmony and make the world a better place. Especially influenced by Buddhist teachings, he pays special attention to **RfP's** effort to protect the Earth.



Mr. Michael Rosin is an intern in **RfP's** Communications Department. He currently pursuing a B.A. in International Studies from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD, USA. Michael has extensive experience working to advance interfaith dialogue through tangible action. He previously participated in Kivunim: New Directions, a program that works to advocate for progression of genuine peace and harmonious coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. Michael strongly believes in **RfP's** mission and hopes to affect positive change through his work here. Michael is originally from New York, NY.

UPCOMING EVENTS

22 August-1 September 2016 - RfP International and RfP Asia Delegation Visit to *Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan*

1 September 2016 - RfP Latin America and the Caribbean Meeting: Religious communities, host communities, *Buenos Aires, Argentina*

12 September 2016 - RfP Regional Secretaries General Online Meeting, *Global*

13-19 September 2016 - United Nations General Assembly 71st Session, *New York, USA*

14-17 September 2016 - RfP Latin America and the Caribbean Roundtable on Inter-religious Networking for Defending Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Displaced persons, at the Latin American Seminar on Migration, Refugee and Human Trafficking, *Valle de Angeles, Honduras*

15 September 2016 - #WithRefugee: Mobilizing Religious Communities to Act with Solidarity and Shared Responsibility for the Wellbeing of Refugees symposium, organized by **RfP** in partnership with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *New York, USA*

15 September 2016 - Positive Peace Symposium, organized by **RfP** in partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, *New York, USA*

18-19 September 2016 - United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network Leadership Council Meeting, *New York, USA*

21-22 September 2016 - Fourth International Conference on Sustainable Development: Implementing the SDGs: Getting Started, *New York, USA*

17-18 October 2016 - RfP European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP Meeting, in *Ljubljana, Slovenia*

18-20 October 2016 - RfP International Executive Committee Meeting, *Abuja, Nigeria*; **RfP International Trustees'** Meeting, *Abuja, Nigeria*; **African Council of Religious Leaders-RfP** Meeting, *Abuja, Nigeria*; Faith Works: Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Africa, *Abuja, Nigeria*

24-28 October 2016 - Asia Conference of RfP 40th Anniversary Event, *Tokyo, Japan*

16-18 May 2017 - European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP Council Meeting, *Turku, Finland*

REQUEST FOR STORIES

Would you like to share an article or information about an upcoming event for consideration in the next **RfP** Global Newsletter.

If so, click [here](#).

We have made it easy for you to submit stories, videos, images and other information [here](#). Send your stories with us. We enjoy sharing about the work of the **RfP** Movement around the

world to advance Peace.

For Information, kindly contact:

Ms. Valerie Nash

Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary General

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