

THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT ON HOLY SITES

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND, JERUSALEM

SFCG Jerusalem office activities:

The activities were implemented on a part-time basis by Sharon Rosen, Co-Director of Search for Common Ground's (SFCG) Jerusalem office and SFCG's global expert on issues of interfaith, with part-time assistance from two staff members, Eran Tzidkiyahu, program coordinator, (December 2014 – December 2015) and Natalie Raidl, intern (September – December 2015)

Main activities during the grant year (December 4th 2014 - December 3rd 2015):

1. Implementing the third year of the Holy Land Pilot of the Universal Code
2. Assisting in launching Universal Code projects in other countries
3. Publicizing and promoting the Universal Code
4. Building and sustaining partnerships for the Universal Code
5. Participating in working group meetings

1. **Implementing the third year of the Holy Land Pilot of the Universal Code**

• **Window on Mt Zion Initiative**

With funding from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and the Robert Bosch Foundation we have developed a wide-ranging initiative on Mt. Zion to build 'community' among the religious institutions on the mount; to engage volunteers in monitoring the area and providing an inclusive, pluralistic presence; and to provide trainings about shared holy sites to build knowledge and awareness of different religions to the 250 officers at the Merchav David police station of the Old City Jerusalem as well as to 500 pre-army youth. We have created a coalition of stakeholders that includes representatives from local and national government, security sector, religious leaders and NGOs to protect the shared holy site on Mt Zion and have engaged scores of grass roots volunteers to create positive changes on the ground. Outcomes so far are as follows:

- 1) Our mid-term evaluation of trainings for 235 pre-army youth who have taken part in workshops and site visits to Mt Zion's shared holy sites, indicates a highly successful response. 94% were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the program.
- 2) 130 Volunteers on Mt Zion received training to expand knowledge and sensitivities about the shared holy site
- 3) 21 Mt. Zion 'tenants' from various religious institutions have built relationships through our facilitation and have carried out joint actions together
- 4) A Window on Mt. Zion website and Facebook have been created with regular posts that are discussed on social and broadcast media. There are 500 followers on the Facebook with a weekly post reach on the facebook page of 7,020 - 559%. Weekly post engagement is 3,974 – 889%
- 5) The police educational department has co-created the cultural competence and religious sensitivity program for the Old City Police Force. Trainings will begin in May 2016.

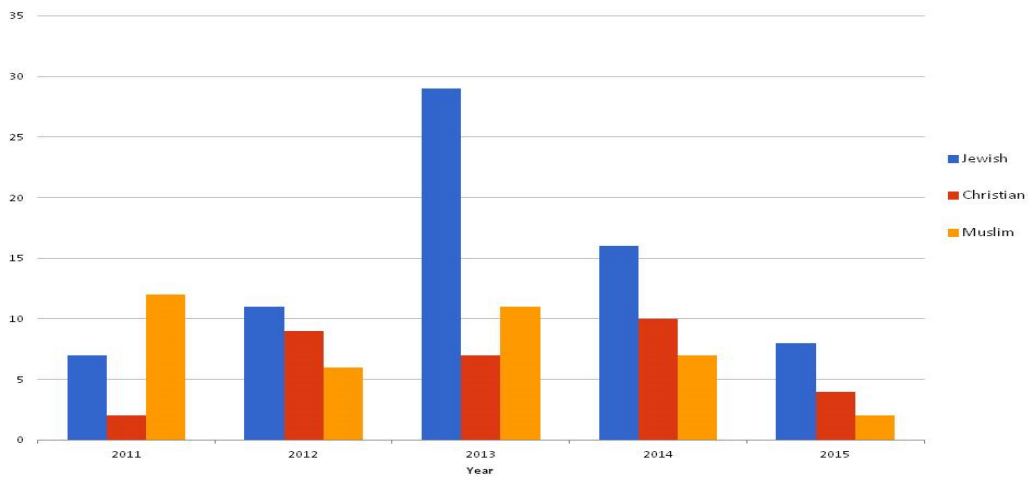
• **Coordinating with our local partner, the Council of Religious Leaders in the Holy Land (CRIHL) to implement aspects of the Holy Land pilot. Activities included:**

a. **Coordinating information on attacks on Holy Sites**

Updating and publicizing the **Registry of Attacks on Holy Sites** in the Holy Land, a unique record of all reported attacks against holy sites in Israel and the Palestinian Territory from January 2011 to the present. This Registry was established during the first year of the pilot. The data in the Registry is drawn from media reports published about holy site attacks. During the period of this report, the Registry recorded 14 (32) attacks on holy sites attacks against holy sites: 4 (10) Christian sites, 2 (7) Muslim sites, and 8 (15) Jewish sites (bracketed numbers are for 2014) – a clear decline in overall numbers. There was a serious arson attack on June 18th at the Church of the Multiplication at Tabha – Sea of Galilee - that reverberated globally and was strongly condemned by Israel. The steady fall in attacks, continuing the trend of 2014, seems to be linked in the main to a decision by the Israeli government

to root out Jewish terrorist activity after the Tabha attack and the deadly attack against the Dawabsheh family in Duma village in July 2015. In addition, greater political and religious tensions regarding the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount with an upsurge of violence from October 1st, may have diverted attention from other holy sites and resulted in a greater intolerance by the police for any activity that could spark interreligious violence. An article on the Attacks Registry was published. On September 16th an article in the Times of Israel was published focusing on the Attacks Registry. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/in-israel-more-jewish-holy-sites-desecrated-than-christian-muslim-ones-combined/>

Attacks on Holy Sites



b. Sharing information and resources with CRIHL

In partnership with CRIHL, an SFCG Palestinian staff member met with high schools in East Jerusalem about introducing programs for Muslim and Christian teachers to learn about one another’s religions and to take their pupils on site visits to a shared holy site (Nebi Samuel). Plans were set for the program to begin in September 2015 but due to the rising tensions and subsequent violent attacks in Jerusalem, it was postponed.

- c. **Organizing a full day conference** on November 18th 2015 at the Konrad Adenauer Center, Jerusalem entitled *Addressing Interreligious Tensions: Holy Sites in the Holy Land*. The conference was held in partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) foundation and drew 100 participants including senior religious leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, and journalists. There was simultaneous translation in three languages, Arab/English/Hebrew. All direct costs including hall rental, refreshments, filming, photography and simultaneous translation were covered by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The Norwegian Ambassador to Israel,



From left to right: Rabbi Menachem, Sheikh Assi, Rabba Elad Appelbaum, Father Neuhaus

Jon Hanssen-Bauer made opening comments. We took the opportunity of focusing on Mt Zion and our Holy Land project there. Feedback from both lecturers and audience was extremely positive. One Israeli audience member, a past president of the International Council of Christians and Jews, said that it was the best conference she has been to in many years. She said “I learnt a great deal and it was very practical” (See Appendix 1.1 for the invitation and a full report of the conference.)

2. **Assisting in launching Universal Code projects in other countries**

Sharon Rosen worked to launch additional projects in other countries. These included:

- a. Collaborating with Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati, deputy head of the Parmarth Niketan in Rishikesh <http://www.parmarth.com/>. A project in India was launched in early 2015 which combines an environmental clean-up of holy sites in Lucknow jointly by Muslim and Hindu schools together with messages of mutual interreligious respect. Funding was assured by Parmarth Niketan and a small amount of extra start-up funding was provided through this project.
- b. Supporting the Tunisian office of SFCG to build a concept note for a Universal Code project in Tunis to engage jointly Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders to discuss the safeguarding of Holy Sites in Tunisia and to publicize joint views in the media. Funding was subsequently raised from the Canadian Government for the project which began in January 2016
- c. Discussing with the Sri Lanka office of SFCG to start a project there in collaboration with the Religions for Peace Council in the country. A project was subsequently implemented in Sri Lanka through Religions for Peace but further funding has not yet been raised to continue the project

3. **Publicizing and promoting the Universal Code**

- In addition to the Jerusalem conference on Holy Sites mentioned above, from 3-5 May 2015, Sharon Rosen participated in a private meeting of international diplomats, academics and NGO leaders held in Florence by the European University Institute entitled, **International Politics, Diplomacy and Religion**. During this meeting, Sharon presented the UC initiative focusing on lessons learned and the UC as a tool for countering violent extremism.
- The SFCG Jerusalem office managed the Universal Code Facebook in 2015, uploading articles and reports from the various projects around the world every few days and expanding the number of likes to 700. However the effort to continually find articles for the page was not commensurate with the anticipated impact so we decided to create a new website for the Universal Code (www.codeonholysites.org) which was uploaded in January 2016.
- Bilateral diplomatic meetings were held in the region to update on the Universal Code with the following people:
 1. Norwegian, Italian ambassadors to Israel
 2. Spanish Consul General in Jerusalem
 3. US Ambassador for Religious Freedom – David Sapterstein
 4. US Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs, Office of Secretary of State Kerry, Shaun Casey
 5. Deputy Director EEAS in Jerusalem David Geer
 6. Director of Department for World Religions, Israeli Foreign Ministry
 7. Political officers - German Embassy, US Consulate
 8. USIP President Nancy Lindborg

4. Building and sustaining partnerships for the Universal Code

Partnerships in the Holy Land have been maintained in 2015 with the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL), the Council of Religious Leaders in Israel (CRLI), the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the Jerusalem Center for Jewish Christian Relations. In addition a new working partnership have been developed with the Jerusalem Intercultural Center, located on Mt Zion.

5. Participating in Working Group meetings

Search for Common Ground Jerusalem hosted a face to face 2 day working group meeting in November 2015 immediately prior to the Holy Land conference. In addition she participated in regular 1 - 1.5 hour meetings on Skype every 4-6 weeks.

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APPENDIX - ATTACHMENTS

Conference : Addressing Interreligious Tensions – Holy Sites in the Holy Land

- a. Invitation**
- b. Report**