Revival Springs from Arab Winter

Is the sun really setting on Christianity in the Middle East?

It has now been a year since the Arab Spring began shaking the Middle East. From Morocco to Bahrain, the “Arab street” has seen unprecedented political upheavals. So far the long-standing rulers of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been toppled, while the leaders of Syria and Yemen are close behind.

The Arab uprisings came unexpectedly and were launched by a surprising source – the ‘Facebook generation’ of young Arab students and intellectuals longing for the better life of the West. Thus many Western observers saw hope in the Arab Spring. Yet this quickly changed. At first the radical Muslim Brotherhood stayed away from the demonstrations, but then realized they were missing a golden opportunity. The Brotherhood has since used its highly organized networks to win elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. The Arab Spring has turned into an Arab Winter.

The End of Arab Christianity?

In Egypt, Christians and Jews have been the early targets of the newly empowered Islamists. The mounting exodus of Christians from the entire region even prompted the leading Israeli news portal Ynet to recently declare the “End of Arab Christianity”.

The truth is the region is changing for the worse and there are many reasons to be pessimistic. Yet there are other developments which give us hope and these are namely signs of revival in the Arab world.

Revival Fires in Iran

Today, a unique move of God is underway in the Muslim world. The book “Iran: Desperate for God”, published recently by Voice of the Martyrs, states that “the fastest growing movement in the entire Muslim world today are Muslims in Iran converting to Christianity”. The book claims that after 30 years of suppression by the ayatollahs, most Iranians “grew weary of the grim, slavish, loveless loyalty to Allah, demanded by their state”.

According to native Iranian pastors, the Evangelical church in Iran before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 numbered a mere few hundred believers. Today, the Evangelical following is estimated at over 1 million strong.

“God is doing a hidden work in the Arab world. While the days ahead may bring huge challenges for the region...we should also expect to see God moving powerfully among those He is calling.”

Dr. Juergen Buehler
ICEJ executive director

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The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ’s United States Branch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We are a non-denominational faith ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends.

We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response card to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

Please mail all donations to:
PO Box 440276
Nashville, TN 37244

Or make your tax-deductible gift online:
www.icejusa.org

Missions Trip to Poland & Israel
May 26th - June 7th, 2012 (All Welcome)

Our Poland/Israel spring study trip has been expanded to include 12-days of learning, touring and practical ministry. We’ll visit the sites of the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz death camp, visit local Synagogues and serve local Polish believers before embarking on a unique tour of Israel hosted by ICEJ AID. Possible service projects include assisting Holocaust survivors, disadvantaged Israeli youth, new immigrants and Arab Christians.

Cost $3,618 (Includes flights, hotels)
www.icejusa.org/tours

Grafted Summer ‘Hands On’ Tour
June 28th - July 8th, 2012 (Ages 18-35)

A life-changing opportunity for young adults to gain a biblical perspective on the Mid East and participate in ‘hands on’ service projects.

Cost $1,080 (Excluding flights, tips)
www.grafted.org

Feast of Tabernacles Tour
Sept. 22 - Oct. 6 • 2012

Learn More Today • Call: 1-866-393-5890 • www.icejusa.org/tours
The prophet Jeremiah declares: “Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’” (Jeremiah 31:10)

This is one of the core callings of the Christian Embassy, to proclaim the hope for all people which flows from the restoration of Israel. It is an especially important prophetic message for the Church, as it speaks of God’s faithfulness to His promises and also of the soon return of His son, Jesus. For more than 30 years now, the Lord has helped us to deliver this message of hope around the world.

Over the past year, the Lord has placed a special burden on our hearts to spread this message to even more nations worldwide. A scripture which God has impressed on our hearts is Matthew 5:15-16: “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men…”

This means we must employ new methods of communication. In particular, we have sensed a strong leading to move more into television and video broadcasting.

By faith, we started to launch this initiative last year by designing plans for a TV studio in our Jerusalem headquarters. Our initial goal was to broadcast via the Internet, and to eventually believe for an opening into Christian television networks. But just a few short weeks ago, we were invited by a long-standing Israeli friend of the ICEJ to consider becoming a partner in his new show “Israel Now News”, a half-hour news program which is airing twice every Sunday on the Daystar television channel. This show was launched to bring truth and reliable news coverage from Israel to Christians around the world. In less than two months, it has quickly become the second most watched program on Daystar, with millions of viewers tuning in from around the world.

Thus we are excited to announce that we have concluded a very reasonable deal with “Israel Now News” to become a weekly contributor on this exceptional new program. Our role will be to bring a Christian outlook to the news broadcasts, and we will be able to freely share from the Word of God about His promises for Israel. This is an incredible opportunity to expand the reach of the ICEJ’s ministry to millions of new people in every corner of the globe.

To accomplish this, we urgently need to complete our television studio here at our Embassy building. Thankfully, we already have in place qualified staff to handle all the production efforts, but we must now acquire an array of new equipment, such as state-of-the-art TV cameras and video editing tools.

A total sum of $US 250,000 is needed to equip our studio and to produce 52 shows for the first year of broadcasting. We want to invite you to partner with us in this vital undertaking for our ministry. We firmly believe this seed money will reap a harvest in the crucial days ahead. You can make your online donation to this project at: www.icejusa.org/daystar.

Please stand with us as we fulfill together our great calling to send forth the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem to the ends of the world.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Juergen Buehler
ICEJ Executive Director

Watch us on “Israel Now News” from Feb. 5th at 7.00am (EST) and 3.00pm (EST) on Daystar
In 2006, even Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad angrily decried the rate of Muslim conversions to Christianity in his country. Iran’s underground churches are currently experiencing an annual growth of 20% - the highest rate worldwide (followed by Afghanistan at 16%).

**Glowing Reports from the Region**

A look at Algeria is also encouraging. An Algerian pastor who visited Jerusalem last autumn during the Feast of Tabernacles told us that a decade ago the churches there had only a few hundred members. Yet even as persecution from Islamic militants has intensified, this pastor reports that today the Evangelical churches in his country can claim more than 200,000 members. The revival started among the Berber tribes but is spreading now to other sectors and new fellowships are cropping up everywhere. But what is equally exciting is that these new Christian believers share a passionate love for Israel. The pastor asked me: “Our brothers back home love what you are doing for Israel. Can we open a branch of the International Christian Embassy in Algeria?”

Libya also holds surprises. For decades under the dictatorial rule of Muammar Ghadaffi, it was one of the hardest countries to reach with the Gospel. But the missions guide “Operation World” reports in its latest 2010 edition that:

> “the spiritual climate in Libya has changed significantly… There is notable spiritual hunger among Libyans, but not enough Bibles for those seeking them…”

Concerning Morocco, the same source writes:

> “A Moroccan Church is emerging and accelerating in growth and maturity.”

The report on Tunisia reads:

> “New believers have increased and new church groups have come into being over the past few years.”

Meanwhile for Jordan, Operation World reports:

> “The evangelical Church is experiencing encouraging growth, doubling from 1995 to 2010.”

Similar reports are emerging from Syria and Lebanon. And in Iraq, although traditional Assyrian Christians are fleeing in droves, the number of Evangelicals has climbed to more than 50,000 in a few short years.

In recent years, multiple testimonies also have surfaced from the Arab Peninsula of Muslims having dreams and visions of the resurrected Jewish Messiah.

Back in Egypt, outdoor worship gatherings last autumn drew tens of thousands of Christians from Coptic, Catholic and Evangelical backgrounds to pray together for unity and revival in their country.

Here in Jerusalem, we also are hearing wonderful testimonies from Arab Christians of a fresh move of God among their communities in Israel and the Palestinian areas. Just recently we received a report of a new Bible study group established in Jenin, once the suicide bomber capital of the West Bank. In the very first meeting 18 people professed faith in Jesus.

All this indicates that amid the great political upheavals in the Arab world, there is also a spiritual revolution taking place. What we see today is not the end of the Arab church but just the beginning of what may be an historic revival. Though they are starting from low raw numbers, the average rate of growth for churches in the Arab/Muslim world is between 5% and 10%, which is higher than in any Western country today. In fact, one of the most sustained revivals is taking place in Indonesia, which has the world’s largest Muslim population but is now around 30% Christian.

In January of last year, our first weekly staff prayer meeting in Jerusalem focused on praying for every single Arab country, both for revival and for an Arab church to emerge which would love Israel. We then felt led to launch a month-long prayer campaign, and understood why as the month drew to a close with the region suddenly in turmoil. It seems our prayers were being heard before we even started to pray.
In the months since, we have realized God is doing a hidden work in the Arab world. While the days ahead may bring huge challenges for the region, and in particular for the nation of Israel, we should also expect to see God moving powerfully among those He is calling.

‘The Giant is Falling’

All this holds great relevance for those of us focused on Israel. For even within Arab countries which are outwardly hostile to the Jewish state, there is a growing remnant which loves Israel.

I will never forget the appeal of a well-known Israeli rabbi who once urged us: “Please send more Christian missionaries into the Arab world! If our neighbours believe what you believe, then we will have peace in the Middle East.”

A few weeks ago, I asked the same rabbi for his take on the Arab Spring-turned-Winter. He replied: “Jürgen, I am very optimistic. I believe what we see today is the last roar of the Islamic giant. But we will see him falling and the glory of God will shine over the region.”

So please join our Isaiah 62 Prayer Campaign as we continue to seek the Lord for Israel and the region. There was never a time when our prayers were more needed than today. Let us indeed expect God’s glory to shine over this region. Learn more at: www.icejusa.org/isaiah62

Please also consider making a generous gift towards the Arab outreach projects of our ICEJ AID department. Given the doors that are opening in the Arab sector in Israel and the Palestinian areas, we will be expanding this outreach in the months ahead in close partnership with evangelical Arab pastors and ministries in the land. You can read more about this in this magazine.

Steven Khoury is the Pastor of Calvary Jerusalem Ministries in the neighborhood of Beit Haninah, just outside the Old City walls. It is the first evangelical church in this predominantly Muslim part of northern Jerusalem and an extention of the 30-year witness of the Bethlehem church founded by Steven’s father, Dr. Naim Khoury.

No stranger to persecution, Steven grew up in Bethlehem seeing church members being attacked, discriminated against, and even killed for their faith in Jesus. The church in Bethlehem has been firebombed multiple times, his father has been shot at, and two young women from the church were murdered for inviting non-Christian children to attend a Vacation Bible School.

Pastor Steven attended Bible College in Springfield MO, and has served in ministry in both the United States and Israel. He is the youngest locally-ordained Arab pastor in the region and writes articles for Al-Quds, the largest Arabic newspaper in the Holy Land. He is the author of the book Diplomatic Christianity: Standing in the Shadow of Tomorrow’s Persecution, and also speaks for Voice of the Martyrs on the suffering of Arab Palestinian believers.

We are delighted that Steven Khoury has made himself available to speak on behalf of the ICEJ to churches who are interested in learning about the struggles facing the Palestinian Christian community in order to capture God’s heart for both Jews and Arabs alike.

Dr. Juergen Buehler serves as ICEJ Executive Director in Jerusalem. To support the ongoing work of ICEJ AID to improve the lives of Arab communities in Israel please go to: www.icejusa.org/aid

“Invite Steven to your church!”
Call Teresa on: (615) 895-9830
www.icejusa.org/speakers
One of the areas of pressing need within Israel which the ICEJ is seeking to address is that of disadvantaged members of the minority Arab community, and particularly Arab Christian families. Some 20% of our AID budget is used to assist the Arab, Druze and Bedouin communities, including enrichment programs for children and youth-at-risk, medical and financial assistance to the elderly, holiday gift packages to poor families, and so much more.

Following are examples of specific projects which we are currently sponsoring in the Arab sector:

**Elderly Christians in the Old City**

For many years now, the Christian Embassy has sponsored projects in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City in cooperation with Raja Salameh, director of the Good Samaritan Center. Currently, we are launching an initiative to build bathrooms and undertake other renovations in homes owned by elderly Arab Christians in the Old City.

Many of these dear saints are poor, suffer from illness, and live in small apartments where they must share bathrooms with neighbors. Some actually have to venture outside their homes to use communal bathrooms located nearby. But they are reluctant to do so because they are weak and can barely walk or climb stairs. They also are fearful to go outside, especially at night, due to the serious problems of crime and drug use among local youths.

“Some of the elderly will not leave their room if they hear voices outside”, explained Raja. “Many drug addicts in the area would take any opportunity to steal from the defenseless.”

Raja has been working with elderly Arab Christians in the Old City for the past decade. Many belong to traditional churches who have welcomed the assistance from evangelical Christians to their neediest parishioners, as they struggle just to meet daily needs and have no way of affording home renovations. In fact, many have turned over their home ownership papers to unscrupulous men who promise to remodel their homes and then do not deliver.

“Many of the elderly are preyed upon. They do not have children or other family members to turn to for help, and sometimes it’s the neighbours that pose difficulties”, explained Raja.

One elderly Christian Arab is Nasmah, a widow who lives alone. Her daughter resides in a Palestinian village and her son has been put in prison for violence. She handed over title to two rooms in her family home to a local clergyman who promised to help and protect her.

Yet sadly, the rooms have now been rented out to foreign workers and Nasmah has to share the bathroom with ten strangers. She has to climb steep stairs to get to a tiny bathroom that nobody cares to clean.

The ICEJ has decided to step in and assist Nasmah by installing a private bathroom next to her bedroom and kitchen. She will not have to climb stairs or fear for her safety at night. Her worried face lit upon hearing the good news.
Youth in the Galilee

In recent years, ICEJ AID has supported youth-at-risk in Arrabe, a mostly Muslim town in the Lower Galilee, in cooperation with the city council and local coordinator Madi Madi. This outreach has included a range of projects aimed at both physical and mental improvement and assisting children from disadvantaged families.

For instance, the local council has set up after-school clubs where youngsters can receive proper meals, get help with their homework, and enjoy sports. The ICEJ has provided these clubs with kitchen equipment, school books, and sports equipment. We have also donated basketballs, ping pong tables, and other new equipment to a local elementary school with some 250 students from low-income families.

Many young people in Arrabe join sports leagues that bring Arab and Jewish youths together for positive interaction. Without such outlets, the students often fall to the edge of society and end up in crime and violence, explained Madi. But these after-school programs give them better options and thus are “the place to be,” he said. “To take part in a league for ping pong, chess or basketball is like a dream for these kids.”

Madi noted that he can sense how some children are suffering from bad situations at home and struggle with behavioral problems, malnutrition or lack of basic clothing.

One example is Muhammad, who comes from a Muslim family of eight. Since his father is unemployed, Muhammad refused to go to school because the family was unable to buy school books or shoes. But once he received help from ICEJ AID, Muhammad returned to school. Armed with new confidence, his grades jumped from an average of 60% to the top of his class at 96%.

“Thanks to the ICEJ, over 60 families have been touched,” said Madi. “Your organization has had a great impact on Arrabe. In the name of all these families, we thank you for your help.”

Christian Families in Nazareth

Just down the road in Nazareth, ICEJ AID assisted twenty families over Christmas by providing food packages for festive holiday meals. This was done in coordination with Pastor Afif Saba of the Good Shepherd Baptist Church. Afif explained that these gifts went to widows, single-parent families and elderly citizens who did not expect the help and were highly appreciative.

“One behalf of our church and all these families, I want to thank the ICEJ’s donors for your love and concern,” said Pastor Afif. “Your gifts brought much joy and happiness this Christmas.”

Estera Wieja and Emanuel Mfoukou both serve as staff writers on the ICEJ Media Team in Jerusalem

Please help us to better the lives of members of the Arab Community in Israel! Support the work of ICEJ AID today at: www.icejusa.org/aid
The SPIRIT of GRACE and SUPPLICATION

SEPTEMBER 30 to OCTOBER 4, 2012

Event Schedule

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
- OUTDOOR DESERT CELEBRATION // 18:30-21:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1
- COMMUNION SERVICE - ENGLISH // 10:00-12:00
- THE GARDEN TOMB
- COMMUNION SERVICE - ENGLISH/PORTUGUESE // 13:00-15:00
- THE GARDEN TOMB
- EVENING CELEBRATION // 19:30-21:30
- INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER JERUSALEM

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2
- MORNING SESSIONS // 8:00-13:00
- EVENING CELEBRATION // 19:30-21:30

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3
- MORNING SESSIONS // 8:00-13:00
- EVENING CELEBRATION // 19:30-21:30

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4
- MORNING SESSIONS // 8:00-13:00
- GRAND FINALE EVENING CELEBRATION // 19:30-21:30

Please Note: Events, times, locations, & speakers are subject to change

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