

**Ist Annual Edinburgh Festival of
Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace,
Edinburgh, Scotland,**

**Friday 27 February –
Sunday 7 March 2004.**

**Jointly Organised By
Edinburgh International Centre
for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and,
Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL.**



**Joint Festival Co-Ordinators
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**A Report By
Neill Walker**

**(With input from
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and Alice Fateah Saunders)**

Table of Contents

- 0. Welcome by the First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon Jack McConnell, MSP.**
- 1. General Introduction and Background to the Festival.**
- 2. Edinburgh and Scotland as the Host Location for the Festival.**
- 3. Festival Press Release, Festival Welcome Letter, and Festival Web Site.**
- 4. Letters of Support for the Festival.**
- 5. Festival Sponsorship.**
- 6. Spiritual Background to the Festival.**
- 7. Faith Tradition, Spiritual, and Inter-Spiritual Participation in the Festival.**
- 8. Some Other Organisations Represented at the Festival.**
- 9. Approach Taken to Organising the Festival.**
- 10. Approach Taken to Organising the International Conference.**
- 11. Some Events Associated with the Festival.**
- 12. Some Festival Highlights.**
- 13. Principal Themes of the Festival.**
- 14. Promotion of the Festival.**
- 15. Media Coverage of the Festival.**
- 16. Some Festival Feedback.**
- 17. Festival Budget.**
- 18. Evaluation of the Festival:**
 - 18.1. Event and process evaluation**
 - 18.2. Dates and duration of the Festival**
 - 18.3. Edinburgh and Scotland as host locations**
 - 18.4. Festival attendance**
 - 18.5. Diversity of faith and spiritual traditions participating**
 - 18.6. Diversity of nationalities and cultures participating**
 - 18.7. Unity within diversity and inter-spirituality**

- 18.8. Access and inclusion and consultation**
- 18.9. Festival sponsorship and support**
- 18.10. Spiritual approach taken to the Festival**
- 18.11. Manifestion of spiritualities at the Festival**
- 18.12. Nature and range of spiritual practices in the Festival**
- 18.13. Organisational principles adopted by the Festival**
- 18.14. Subject themes and organisational themes adopted by the Festival**
- 18.15. Nature and range of events in the Festival**
- 18.16. Spread and diversity of venues hosting Festival events**
- 18.17. Promotion of the Festival**
- 18.18. Media coverage of the Festival**
- 18.19. Festival feedback**
- 18.20. Festival budget**
- 18.21. New approaches for the Festival.**

- 19. Some Conclusions.**

- 20. Dissemination of Information on the Festival**

- 21. The 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005.**

- 22. Announcement of, and Invitation to Participate in, the 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005.**

- 23. Sponsorship Opportunities Associated with the Festival.**

- 24. The Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS.**

- 25. The Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL.**

- 26. Festival Archive.**

- 27. Appendix:**
 - 27.1. Festival Press Release**
 - 27.2. Festival Welcome Letter**
 - 27.3. Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament**
 - 27.4. Letter of Support from the World Council of Religious Leaders**
 - 27.5. Letter of Support from the World Congress of Faiths**
 - 27.6. Letter of Support from the International Association of Religious Freedom**
 - 27.7. Letter of Support from the Muslim Council of Britain**
 - 27.8. Press Release for the Jewish and Muslim Peacemakers' Visit of 20 March 2003 to Edinburgh, In the Shadow of War: Peacemakers' Visit to Edinburgh Raises Hopes for Peace, which was the precursor to the 2004 Festival.**

- 28. Festival Contacts.**

0.

Welcome by the First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon Jack McConnell, MSP

I would like to welcome everyone to Scotland for the 1st Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace.

In Scotland we strongly encourage respect for diversity; we acknowledge the many differences in practices in religious belief; and accept the many common values we each hold. We should all strive to seek understandings of other traditions and, in Scotland today, we are conscious of the need for dialogue and co-operation between diverse faiths. Increasing awareness of the valuable contribution faith communities can make to wider society will hopefully result in neighbours living peaceably side by side; communities interacting for the greater good of society; and a growing respect between faiths as they each uphold their common values.

I hope all participants enjoy the Festival and gain greater understanding of the faiths of others.

Rt Hon Jack McConnell,
First Minister of Scotland.

1.

General Introduction and Background to the Festival

From Friday 27 February - Sunday 7 March 2004 a series of events were held in Edinburgh, Scotland, on the subject of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace. These events were organized and coordinated by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL, along with other associated organizations who hosted events. The Festival itself was conceived and co-ordinated by Neill Walker and Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz as a forum to explore spiritual and inter-spiritual approaches to peace in general, and with particular reference to the Middle East. The intention, from the outset, was for this to become an annual Festival centred on Edinburgh, connecting Scotland to the international community of faith and spiritual traditions.

This series of events was developed around three major public events on the evenings of Wednesday 3, Thursday 4, and Friday 5, an International Conference on the subject of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace on Thursday 4, a day Workshop on Friday 5, an Interfaith Spiritual Retreat from Friday 5 – Sunday 7, and a Middle Eastern themed One World Peace and Justice Concert on Saturday 6, with the International Conference as the lead event of the Festival.

2.

Edinburgh and Scotland as the Host Location for the Festival

Arguably, both Edinburgh and Scotland are natural locations for initiating and hosting such a Festival, in terms of the existing supportive framework in place in Scotland for inter-spiritual and multi faith activity; with a sense that Scotland is a relatively neutral space for meeting and sharing about the themes of the Festival; and in terms of Edinburgh's already excellent support for Festivals, with the lead summer International Festival having been established in the late 1940s in a spirit of peace and reconciliation following the two world wars in Europe. Hence, in many respects, Edinburgh is a natural home for such a Festival. The Festival has been warmly received and widely supported.

3.

Festival Press Release, Festival Welcome Letter, and Festival Web Site

A Press Release for the Festival, Edinburgh Celebrates Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, is available in Appendix 27.1, as is a Press Release for the Jewish and Muslim Peacemakers' Visit of 20 March 2003 to Edinburgh, In the Shadow of War: Peacemakers' Visit to Edinburgh Raises Hopes for Peace, in Appendix 27.8, and the latter event was a precursor for the development of the Festival.

A Festival Welcome Letter has also been created and is available in Appendix 27.2.

The Festival information is presently hosted on the following web site: www.eial.org
In time we are intending to include many items from the Festival on this web site.

4.

Letters of Support for the Festival

Letters of support for the Festival came in from The World Council of Religious Leaders, The World Congress of Faiths, The International Association of Religious Freedom, The Muslim Council of Britain, and the First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon Jack McConnell, MSP. The Festival organisers would like to extend our appreciation for these generous letters of support.

5.

Festival Sponsorship

The Festival received generous financial sponsorship from the Oneness Project and the International Network for the Dances of Universal Peace, with the EICWS and the EIAL as the two principal in kind sponsors of the Festival. A wide range of organisations and individuals supported the Festival, including through in kind hosting of Festival events. The Festival organisers would like to extend our appreciation for this generous support.

6.

Spiritual Background to the Festival

There is increasing awareness of the potential contribution of the world's spiritual and faith traditions to wider society, and the need for dialogue, shared understanding, and co-operation between these traditions. Scotland has a distinctive role in meeting this global challenge. Hence, it is planned to develop this as an annual Festival in Scotland, focussed on Edinburgh.

This will not only lead to new spiritual understandings across traditions and the sharing of musical and devotional spiritual practices, but it will also lead to further contacts being established between Scotland and the spiritual communities of the Middle East, and to those who share an interest in such spiritual work. As is confirmed in section 7 of this Report, a wide range of faith and spiritual traditions were brought together inspired by the theme of the Festival. This diversity contributed significantly to the success of the Festival, and was greatly appreciated by the Festival participants.

The Festival aimed to manifest the spiritualities under consideration to direct experience, as well as having informed discussions about the Spiritual Traditions of the Middle East.

A further background to this Festival is the recent development of the Alexandrian Declaration for supporting peace processes in the Holy Land.

7.

Faith Tradition, Spiritual, and Inter-Spiritual Participation in the Festival

This year's Festival included participation from Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, several Buddhist traditions, most of the Christian denominations in Scotland, Druze, Hindu, Sunni and Shia Islam, Ismaili, Orthodox and Reform Judaism, Sikhism, several traditions of Sufism, and Zoroastrianism, as well as representatives of interfaith organisations and of further spiritual movements, such as the Dances of Universal Peace, Whirling Dervishes from Turkey, Mevlevi Tariqat, the World Peace Prayer Society, Living Values: an Education Programme, Subud, Sahaj Marg, Anthroposophy, Shamanism, Goddess Spirituality, Amma Spirituality, Radhasoami/Universal, Esoteric Christian, Christian Healing, Sanatana Dharma, FFWPU, among others.

Further, some participants identified themselves as having an inter-spiritual spiritual identity, drawing upon more than one spiritual tradition for inspiration. Some participated in the Festival at an educational level rather than from a faith or spiritual perspective.

There was also a wide range of nationalities and cultures represented among participants.

The Festival was a wonderful celebration of diversity and of unity in diversity and has left us with many inspiring memories of our time together.

8.

Some Other Organisations Represented at the Festival

Among the other organisations represented at the Festival included the Milltown Institute Department of Spirituality, the Interfaith Seminary, the Centre for Nonviolent Communication, the Dolphinton Dialogue Centre, the London Academy of Iranian Studies, Medical Aid for Palestinians, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, Hadeel, the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, the National Library of Scotland, the Filmhouse Cinema, the Salisbury Centre, the Cornerstone Bookshop, the Scientific and Medical Network, Wiston Lodge, the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity, the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, the Scottish Civic Forum, King Alfred's College, Winchester, the Beshara School, the Edinburgh Steiner School, the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Dance Base – Scotland's National Dance Centre, churches, cathedrals, mosques, the Edinburgh Synagogue, Edinburgh Churches Together, the World Council of Churches, the City of Edinburgh Council Department of Education and participating schools, the City of Edinburgh Library Services, the Sanctuary at the new Royal Infirmary, the St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, The Ministry for Peace initiative, the Alternative Defence Forum, the Adult Learning Project, MultiCulti, BBC Radio Scotland, SCOPE Productions, the Elements, the Muslim Council of Britain, and the Festival of Muslim Cultures: UK 2006, among others.

9.

Approach Taken to Organising the Festival

There were some thirty events in the Festival. Spiritual practice was woven into many Festival events to allow the spiritualities under consideration to be present to direct experience. The Conference and Festival themselves took no fixed position on any political or cultural question. The intention was to create a forum in which we can listen to one other more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart.

The lead event of the Festival was the International Conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, with some 100 people in attendance, and the two principal guests from the Middle East were Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, with Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean giving the Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament during the Festival.

10.

Approach Taken to Organising the International Conference

This year's inaugural Conference brought together at least three different kinds of presentations. First, we learned from each other about our shared traditions, as well as those that form the unique voice of any one of us. Second, we heard from those who have been active in peacemaking on a spiritual basis on the ground in the Middle East. Third, we shared in the musical and devotional spiritual practice presented, in order to gain an experiential view of the traditions that we discussed.

11.

Some Events Associated with the Festival

Among the exhibitions and displays associated with the Festival included:

St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral hosted the World Council of Churches display 'Overcoming Violence Against Women: a Middle East Initiative'; the City of Edinburgh Council initiated an education process through schools in Edinburgh leading to an exhibition at Dance Base, Scotland's National Dance Centre (the first such exhibition that Dance Base have hosted); the City of Edinburgh Library Services hosted an exhibition and a display (including Middle Eastern calligraphy); the multifaith Sanctuary at the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh hosted a selection of children's art from the International Children's Peace Pals Art Exhibition, which was organised by the World Peace Prayer Society in Scotland; the Quaker Meeting House hosted a display of publications by the London Academy of Iranian Studies; the Augustine United Reformed Church hosted a display based upon the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, and a display organised by the World Peace Prayer Society in Scotland; St George's West Church hosted a display based upon the work of Living Values Education in the Middle East; the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre hosted a display on Interfaith Dialogue: an International Perspective; the National Library of Scotland hosted an exhibition titled Cradles of Belief from their collections;

Among the other events associated with the Festival included:

The Edinburgh Baha'i Centre hosted a talk by Dr John Parris on 'To the World's Religious Leaders'; the Filmhouse Cinema hosted some eight Middle Eastern films as part of the Festival; the Nicolson Square Methodist Church hosted a discussion between Rev Prof Frank Whaling and Rev Paul King; the Salisbury Centre hosted a Heart Rhythm Meditation event; the Quaker Meeting House and St George's West Church hosted Dances of Universal Peace events led by Alice Fateah Saunders; the Annandale Street Mosque and the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre hosted a talk by Prof Aziz Sheikh on Islam and Medicine; the Cornerstone Bookshop hosted a book launch for Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz's new book, *Genesis Meditations: a Shared Practice of Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims*; the Scientific and Medical Network hosted a talk by Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz on *Creation: Old Story, New Story*; the Quaker Meeting House hosted an event with Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz, and the Green Sheikh – Sheikh Abu'l Qasim - on *Spiritual Approaches to Middle East Peace*; the Quaker Meeting House hosted the International Conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace with Chair, Rev Prof Frank Whaling, Speakers, Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz, The Very Reverend Dr Finlay Macdonald, Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, the Green Sheikh – Sheikh Abu'l Qasim, Rabbi Nancy Morris, Dr Moojan Momen, Malcolm Deboo, Dr Arzina Lalani, Prof Samy

Swayd (talk read by Prof Whaling), and Dr Seyed G. Safavi and with prayers for peace said on behalf of many of the participating traditions; St George's West Church hosted a Multi Faith Forum on the Spiritual Foundations for Peace with eight faith tradition representatives participating with Chair, Rev Fiona Bennett, Speakers, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, Margaret Clark, Malcolm Deboo, Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz, Dr Arzina Lalani, Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, Dr Moojan Momen, and Rabbi David Rose; Wiston Lodge hosted a three day Interfaith Spiritual Retreat led by Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz and Kamae Amrapali; St George's West Church hosted a day Workshop facilitated by Lee Gershuny of the Elements on 'Where's the Power!'; the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity hosted an event on Science and Spirituality: A Crisis in Faith in Science and the Need for a New Enlightenment?, involving Prof David Fergusson, Prof Aziz Sheikh, and Prof Wilson Poon and chaired by Rev Dr Andrew Morton; the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Creative Space at St George's West Church hosted a Storytelling Workshop: Wise Fools and Spiritual Quests in Middle Eastern Stories, led by Angela Knowles and Dr Donald Smith; the EICWS, the UNA Edinburgh and St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral hosted the Middle Eastern themed One World Peace and Justice Concert with Medieval Christian Spiritual Music with Canty, a dance/drama with original music by The Elements, 'The Beauty of Islam' with Hassen Rasool and Ajmal Masroor, Egyptian Dance and Music with Hilary Thacker and Middle Eastern percussion with Javier Villar Morales and Nafee Mohammed on oud/vocals, Jewish song with Rebekah Gronowski, African Music and Dance with Waa Sylla, Jewish and Sufi chants led by Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, and a closing circle ceremony involving all of those who were there; cathedrals and churches across Edinburgh linked services to the Festival theme; Women in Black hosted a silent vigil; the Edinburgh Synagogue hosted a service linked to the Festival and also warmly welcomed both Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari; the Edinburgh Steiner School hosted an event with staff and students with Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, and Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz; the Edinburgh Central Mosque hosted Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari; the Scottish Parliament hosted Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean to give the Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament; the University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy hosted a Labyrinth Peace Walk; BBC Radio Scotland made a radio program with Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean about his life and work and which was broadcast nationally on Sunday 4 April 2004; and SCOPE Productions are making a TV Program linked to the Festival.

Many organisations and individuals also helped with promoting the Festival through Newsletters, on web sites, through email, and through distributing the Festival brochure. Many more organisations were contacted and met as part of the process of planning the Festival. These contacts will be further developed in future.

There were also two Festival pre events with Diana Basterfield talking on the Ministry of Peace Initiative at the Quaker Meeting House, and to a small gathering at the Scottish Parliament facilitated by Chris Ballance MSP, and the Queen's Hall hosted an event organised by MultiCulti and advertised in association with the Festival on Whirling Dervishes from Turkey with the Suleyman Erguner Ensemble and also involving a talk on the Spiritual Side of Sufism by Suleyman Erguner.

12.

Some Festival Highlights

There were numerous highlights in the Festival, though just one perspective will be mentioned here to give a flavour of the Festival:

Each person who attended the Festival, or who participated in a Festival event, will have their own personal highlights to share. For me, personally, the highlight was not any single event, but was the vital contribution made to the Festival by the spiritualities themselves, to the process of coming together, meeting, sharing, and moving on energised, inspired, and enriched.

If you participated in the Festival, then please send us your own personal Festival highlights.

13.

Principal Themes of the Festival

Two principal subject themes of the Festival this year were ‘Spiritual Approaches to Middle East Peace’ and ‘Spiritual Foundations for Peace’.

Two principal organisational themes of the Festival were in relation to the crucial role of manifesting the spiritualities under consideration to direct experience, and, in relation to weaving and inter-weaving three different kinds of presentations within the same event: first, we learned from each other about our shared traditions, as well as those that form the unique voice of any one of us; second, we heard from those who have been active in peacemaking on a spiritual basis on the ground in the Middle East; and third, we shared in the musical and devotional spiritual practice presented, in order to gain an experiential view of the traditions that we discussed. Some other themes are mentioned in section 18 of this Report.

14.

Promotion of the Festival

To promote the Festival some 6,000 Festival brochures were produced and distributed, 1,000s e-mail notices went out world-wide, including to the principal inter-religious organisations in the world, notices on the Festival were posted in newsletters of organisations (e.g., the CPWR put a notice on the Festival in their email Newsletter), some sixty organisations posted information on the Festival on their web sites, and a website (www.eial.org) was set up under the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning (EIAL) to list the Festival events and latest news.

The Festival Press Release was also sent out very widely.

Enquiries about the Festival came in from America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Visitors arrived from throughout the UK and Ireland, and a representative of the Subud Peace Forum came to attend the Festival from Vienna.

15.

Media Coverage of the Festival

Media interest in the Festival was high. BBC Radio Scotland has produced a 30-minute programme, based upon an interview with Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, and this was broadcast nationally on Sunday 4 April 2004, and a 30-minute TV programme is in process of being made using interviews with Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz, Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean, and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari and concert footage and interviews with concert performers.

The Edinburgh Evening News wrote two articles on the Festival, and The List, which covers Edinburgh and Glasgow, did an article. The Festival has been mentioned in the newsletters of many organisations, and covered on more than 60 web sites. Some people who participated in the Festival have written articles for newsletters and web sites based upon their experience of participating in the Festival.

The Festival organisers would like to encourage people receiving this Report to draw upon it, with acknowledgement, for writing articles associated with the Festival. Please send copies of any articles written for our archives.

16.

Some Festival Feedback

The feedback on the Festival has been excellent, almost all of it very positive and appreciative, and with some very helpful practical suggestions for small refinements to our process. A few examples of typical feedback are given here for illustration.

1. Thank you so much for the allowing me privilege of taking part in the Peace and Justice Concert, I really enjoyed it. I thought it was a wonderful event and I think, for me, the most memorable item was the Jewish and Islamic Chant. I'm sure that everyone present felt the real healing power of that moment - there was a tremendous feeling of spirituality flowing through the circles.

2. *I was lucky enough to be at the one world peace and justice concert at Palmerston Place a few weeks back! What a wonderfully positive night it was and one that I will remember for a long time.*

3. *Just wanted to say what a wonderful evening it was. Thank you again.*

4. *We had a great time, the energy was very nice to be around, all very nice people. I think you guys are doing a great job.*

5. *Thank you again for all your hard work to make the very special conference happen, and for inviting and welcoming Sheikh Bukhari and I to Edinburgh.*

6. *It was nice meeting you and thank you for everything you have done to make the festival great.*

7. *I was most impressed with your and Dr Douglas-Klotz's organisation, coordination and facilitation of the innumerable events over the whole week. It goes without saying that in contributing to your stimulating conference, I have not only learnt a lot from you all but have met and formed friendships beyond the frontiers of religion, race, gender, class or colour. Your calm demeanour and energy were reflected in your humility and I have much to learn from you both.*

Once again, well-done for a brilliant conference and in fact the whole festival. You should be positively proud of your achievements. It is no small feat to organise and coordinate so many events simultaneously and to lead many of them yourselves.

8. *All of us who participated owe you a great debt of gratitude to you for all the efforts in making the Festival such a success.*

9. *It was a pleasure to witness the fruits of your efforts! Thank you.*

10. *But as I said before, I enjoyed that day very much and I loved to meet all these wonderful people whom I don't really know but for some reason felt very close to.*

Thank you for organising this event and thank God for Edinburgh - a unique city with a very special atmosphere and people.

11. *Rather belatedly, I would like to thank you both for the wonderful conference and festival that you laid on.*

However, allow me to say that I found the whole event was most inspiring and extremely helpful and I feel that peacemaking has taken a great leap forward, thanks to your very imaginative event and the wonderful contributions. The features that I would like to pick out as particularly helpful were – the fact that the spiritual practices and the talks were interwoven, the choice of the subjects, that there was such a variety of excellent contributors, including women spiritual leaders, and that the events were so varied and spread across a wide variety of venues.

I was most impressed with the openness and good humour of Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari and their extraordinary courage, and they made me feel that I was there with them in the Holy Land.

12. Absolutely amazing and staggering work so thank you for allowing me to be part of it - I shall cherish the memories and hope one day I will be able to reciprocate in some ways inshallah!

13. It was a very good conference and seemed to be enjoyed by all concerned. Thank you for your hard work.

14. Fascinating group of speakers and look forward to following up some of them. Many thanks for the organisation and the opportunity.

15. Conference very good indeed. For me, the Sufis and Eliyahu McLean were the high-lights.

16. Gaining knowledge, and understanding – and my concentration being challenged! Appreciate the broad horizon of beliefs.

17. This was for the ‘inclusives’. Tolerance means the tolerance of the intolerant too. What can we do for the ‘exclusives’ – those who are afraid, who recoil from inclusion, who wish to keep the purity of their tradition? But I myself found it infinitely worthwhile. I have learned. I have been moved. I have been inspired.

18. An excellent opportunity to get a feel for the ‘peacemakers’.

19. A wonderful mix of people attending and speakers.

20. A very full but enlightening, moving, and inspiring day.

21. Overall very good, some very touching moments, I especially liked having prayers interspersed with talks.

22. An absolutely brilliant initiative. I hope that this immensely noble gesture will grow from strength to strength and one day this small step that we have taken will become a giant leap for mankind. Well done and congratulations. You have managed to do something I was only dreaming and wishing! Once again you all should be positively proud of this excellent excellent work.

23. Very worthwhile endeavour, particularly in stimulating tolerance and appreciation of others’ different views.

24. *I found the events I attended excellent – Islam and Medicine in the Mosque, the Conference in the Quaker Meeting House, and the discussion on Science and Religion in the Martin Hall. Many thanks!*

25. *The Festival was vibrant, varied, spiritual, and educational, involving people of many spiritual traditions.*

The International Conference on 4th March was the centre piece for me, and was amazing, not just because the speakers were extremely articulate and knowledgeable, but because they believed in everything they said and spoke with such passion about peace in the Middle East.

17.

Festival Budget

The Festival was successfully developed and implemented within budget.

18.

Evaluation of the Festival

18.1. Event and process evaluation

A distinction might be made between evaluating an event of the Festival, as distinct from seeing the Festival as a process, and further, seeing each Festival as part of a wider process. For some events it may be helpful to evaluate them as part of the entire Festival, rather than in isolation. Each such approach, among others, has a validity and can offer perspectives complementary to the others. To take an example, metaphorically, for some, the Festival has sown seeds which require grounds out with the Festival for their growth.

18.2. Dates and duration of the Festival

In any 10 day period there is likely to be a degree of overlap with some religious Festival or some significant event in civic society or national life. The dates chosen for the Festival, in Edinburgh, take into account the Edinburgh Festival season, to avoid clashes with existing Festivals. Ten to eleven days, allowing the use of two full weekends, seems a good duration of time for running the Festival. It is manageable for the Festival organisers.

18.3. Edinburgh and Scotland as host locations

Edinburgh, and Scotland, are, without doubt, very suitable locations for this Festival. From the existing unique Festival culture and infrastructure, to the perceived relative neutrality of Scotland in relation to many of the associated political concerns of the Middle East, to Scotland being a relatively safe location in which to host such an event, to the highly developed infrastructure in place in Edinburgh for spiritual and inter-spiritual work of this kind, among many other considerations which could be mentioned.

18.4. Festival attendance

The attendance at the Festival was very good, with the conference full, and with an inspiring and enriching diversity among the participants and speakers.

18.5. Diversity of faith and spiritual traditions participating

As is reported elsewhere in this Report, there was a very impressive diversity of faith and spiritual traditions among the speakers and participants at the Festival. This was a specific aspiration of the organisers, and specific approaches were taken to achieve this outcome.

18.6. Diversity of nationalities and cultures participating

As is reported elsewhere in this Report, there was a very impressive diversity of nationalities and cultures among the speakers and participants at the Festival. This was a specific aspiration of the organisers, and specific approaches were taken to achieve this outcome, and these approaches will be further developed in future. It was left to the discretion of speakers to decide on the appropriate use of linguistic diversity during Festival events.

18.7. Unity within diversity and inter-spirituality

Diversity, unity within diversity, and inter-spirituality are three important principles for this Festival. These are three principles which the Festival will continue to explore and be enriched by.

While diversity within itself is admirable, for the success of a Festival such as this a deeper level of unity and inter-spirituality has to be reached for there to be awakenings and deepenings and transformations of spiritualities for peace. The weaving and inter-weaving of spiritual practices contributed significantly in this respect, and for some the experience was one of unity and of inter-spirituality.

18.8. Access and inclusion and consultation

Access and inclusion and consultation are three important principles for this Festival. These are three principles which the Festival will continue to explore and be enriched by.

On the one hand the events of the Festival should be accessible – physical, financial, visual, and auditory, among many others – they should be readily understood and accessible to an audience of diverse participants, while maintaining an authenticity and accuracy of fact and detail.

Further, the events of the Festival should be inclusive – socially, ethnically, culturally, in terms of national identity, in terms of faith or spiritual identity, in terms of gender, among many others – while taking into account sensitivities among participants.

Further, the Festival organisers should consult and seek considered feedback to refine the process for the comfort and benefit of all participants.

18.9. Festival sponsorship and support

Since we were able to prepare a quite detailed and accurate budget in advance of the Festival, this allowed us to negotiate sponsorship to cover the Festival costs. The Festival received generous financial sponsorship from the Oneness Project and the International Network for the Dances of Universal Peace, with the EICWS and the EIAL as the two principal in kind sponsors of the Festival. A wide range of organisations and individuals supported the Festival, including through in kind hosting of Festival events. The Festival organisers would like to extend our appreciation for this generous support.

18.10. Spiritual approach taken to the Festival

As has been articulated elsewhere in this Report, a number of spiritual values and principles were adopted to support the visioning, design, development, and implementation processes of the Festival.

18.11. Manifestation of spiritualities at the Festival

As can be seen from the reported Festival feedback, many Festival participants did experience the manifestation of spiritualities to their direct experience during the Festival, and further, this very significantly enhanced their all-round experience of the Festival.

18.12. Nature and range of spiritual practices in the Festival

Initially, the Festival has introduced some spiritual practices associated with the Middle Eastern spiritual traditions. The Festival organisers will be carefully considering the nature and range of spiritual practices to be included in the Festival in future.

18.13. Organisational principles adopted by the Festival

The organisational themes of this year's Festival worked well and will continue to be adopted. The intention was to create a forum in which we can listen to one another more deeply, to learn with a more open mind and heart, to weave and inter-weave spiritual practice to manifest the spiritualities under consideration, and to create opportunities for direct experiences of diversity, of unity within diversity, and of inter-spirituality for there to be awakenings and deepenings and transformations of spiritualities for peace.

18.14. Subject themes and organisational themes adopted by the Festival

The subject themes of the Festival will vary each year, and the Festival organisers will be giving careful consideration to the choice of themes for next year's Festival.

The organisational themes of this year's Festival worked well and will continue to be adopted. In particular, the Festival will take up no fixed position on any political or cultural question, e.g., associated with the Middle East.

18.15. Nature and range of events in the Festival

There was an impressive spread and diversity of Festival events from conferences, workshops, talks, exhibitions, displays, education processes through schools, talks in schools, theatre, dance, music, storytelling, visual arts, poetry, sacred dance, a film festival, dialogues, meditations, spiritual practices, a book launch, a multi faith forum,

an interfaith spiritual retreat, services, a vigil, media interviews, etc. We anticipate that this level of diversity of events will be typical of the Festival.

18.16. Spread and diversity of venues hosting Festival events

There was an impressive spread and diversity of venues across Edinburgh hosting Festival events. This spread and diversity needs to be balanced by considerations of practicality, access, and inclusion for speakers, organisers, and participants.

18.17. Promotion of the Festival

The Festival was successfully promoted within our budget. For next year's Festival it would be better to increase the number of Festival brochures from 6,000 to 10,000. Further, the principal Festival events will be given greater prominence in the Festival brochure, and the entries in the brochure will have a standard format, developed to take into account the findings of this Report.

18.18. Media coverage of the Festival

A visionary and spiritual Festival such as this is difficult for the media to come to terms with. This is inevitable, since in so many ways the workings of the media are symptomatic of many of the tendencies which arguably need to be transformed for peace to become a lived reality. However, despite these reservations, there was some accurate and reliable reporting of the Festival in the media.

Perhaps more realistic is an aspiration for there to be more in depth coverage of the Festival among faith and spiritual traditions, and an awareness within those traditions of the potential of inter-spiritual spirituality.

18.19. Festival feedback

As can be seen from the reported Festival feedback, the reception of the Festival has been excellent. Further, some very helpful practical suggestions have been received which will be incorporated into our process.

18.20. Festival budget

The Festival was successfully managed within budget, and we now have a very accurate sense of the budget categories for this Festival, and the likely costs associated with each budget category.

18.21. New approaches for the Festival

Morning observances; intra-spiritual and inter-spiritual sharing; community building; creative engagement; deepening of spirituality; open space approaches; from hosting events to deep engagement; among others.

19.

Some Conclusions

Very briefly, the Festival organisers are very satisfied by what has been achieved in this Festival. There were many wonderful and memorable moments during the Festival, and we feel inspired to further develop this Festival for the benefit of everyone who feels inspired to be involved. Your support for this Festival would be most welcome.

20.

Dissemination of Information on the Festival

It is intended, in time, to bring together information from the Festival events on the web site, and also produce a CD summarising the Festival findings. In the meantime, this Report, among others, will give some of the background information on the Festival.

21.

The 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005

We intend to expand the program next year, and we have set the dates for next year's Conference as Friday 4 - Saturday 5 March 2005. This conference will be held at St George's West Church, Edinburgh, with capacity for some 200 delegates, and it will have scope for 4 workshop events happening at once. The eleven-day Festival will run from Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005. If you have a desire to participate in either the Conference or Festival in 2005, then contact Neill Walker: 0131 331 4469, njwalk1300@hotmail.com

22.

Announcement and Invitation to Participate in the 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005

The 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace will take place from Thursday 24 February – Sunday 6 March 2005, at venues across Edinburgh. Further, the second Annual Conference will take place from Friday 4 - Saturday 5 March 2005. This conference will be held at St George's West Church, Edinburgh, with capacity for some 200 delegates, and it will have scope for 4 workshop events happening at once.

We would like to invite everyone who receives this Report to consider participating in next year's Festival and Conference in Edinburgh. We look forward to meeting you!

23.

Sponsorship Opportunities Associated with the Festival

Individuals and organisations who would like to consider sponsoring the Festival are very welcome to contact the Festival organisers to discuss possibilities. Please contact: Neill Walker: 0131 331 4469, njwalk1300@hotmail.com

24.

The Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS

The EICWS is a Scottish charity that works with the world's spiritual and faith traditions, both in Scotland and internationally, seeking understandings of the nature of spirituality in its diversity. The activities of the EICWS are educational in nature, ranging from conferences, workshops, talks, retreats, festivals, exhibitions, arts and cultural events, and concerts to larger scale national level visits of religious and spiritual leaders to Scotland.

There is increasing awareness of the potential contribution of the world's spiritual traditions to wider society, and the need for dialogue, shared understanding, and cooperation between these traditions. Scotland has a distinctive role in meeting this global challenge.

The EICWS is developing a conference series on the spiritual traditions which aspires to make a contribution towards these efforts. Previous conferences in this series have included Baha'i Spirituality, Hindu Spirituality, Sikh Spirituality, and Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, and conferences on Buddhist Spirituality, Islamic Spirituality, Jewish Spirituality, and Christian Ecumenical Spirituality are planned for the future, among others. These conferences are set in a multi-faith and multi-cultural Scotland where spirituality and interfaith are ever more widely recognised and celebrated. A parallel themed conference series is also planned.

The EICWS also participates in Scottish Government consultations. The EICWS supports the organisation of other events in Scotland such as the Edinburgh One World Festival, the One World Film Festival, Refugee Week, One World Week, among others.

The EICWS has established good contacts with all of the principal faith and spiritual traditions across Scotland, the UK, and with many of the key inter religious and spiritual organisations globally, as well as with religious and spiritual leaders who work on a global scale.

The EICWS had representatives at the Millennium Peace Summit, August 28-31, 2000, at the United Nations, New York, and, the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders, October 6-9, 2002, at the United Nations, Geneva, and the India Pre Parliament Gathering - December 7-10, 2003, in Delhi.

The EICWS was one of the lead organisations involved in Scotland's bid to host the 2005 Parliament of the World's Religions Meeting, and the Scotland bid was one of the two finalists with Barcelona – out of fourteen interested groups around the world.

The EICWS is willing to explore synergy and collaboration with individuals and organisations who share our aims and objectives.

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25.

The Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL

The Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning (EIAL), begun by Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz and Kamae Miller, aims at providing an alternative to traditional institutions of "higher" or lifelong learning. The need for EIAL, and other projects like it, arises within the context of early 21st century education, which in most of its institutional forms has become increasingly utilitarian and oriented toward training for occupations in the industries of production and consumption. The "liberal arts" of the past are increasingly under threat, which means that students at all levels receive less support for learning that educates about the nature of the self. In this sense, opportunities for those who are not performance orientated to use music, dance, literature and the arts to grow as human beings are increasingly labeled irrelevant to the post-modern educational enterprise. These trends toward production, performance and "end-gaining" have created a spiritual vacuum in Western culture. EIAL's website can be found at www.eial.org.

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Edinburgh EH9 3EL, Scotland, UK.
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26.

Festival Archive

We are maintaining an archival record of the Festival. If any Festival participants took any photos or video or audio recordings at any Festival event, then we would appreciate receiving a copy. Please also send us a record of your experiences of the Festival. We would welcome Festival feedback, and suggestions for future Festivals.

27.

Appendix

27.1.

Festival Press Release

Edinburgh Celebrates Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace

A wide range of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic representatives will join in a conference, workshops, and arts and cultural events during a week long Festival centred on the theme of spiritual approaches to peace.

From Friday 27 February – Sunday 7 March, the 1st Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace will bring together artists and speakers from the Sufi, Druze, Baha'i, Ismaili, Zoroastrian and other lesser known traditions, in addition to representatives of more mainstream Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Among the highlights of the Festival will include: a two day International Conference at the Quaker Meeting House (March 3-4), a public evening Multi Faith Forum at St. George's West Church on the Spiritual Foundations for Peace, an evening colloquium on Science and Spirituality (5), an Interfaith Meditation Retreat at Wiston Lodge near Biggar (5-7), and a Middle Eastern themed One World Peace and Justice Concert at St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral (6), among a wide range of education, film, theatre, music, dance, storytelling, and exhibition events and workshops, as well as services linked to the theme of the Festival.

The Festival has been jointly organized by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL, with the support of many other organizations.

'Spiritual approaches to peace - ones that use art, music, and processes of listening and forgiveness - have an important role to play in the peace process,' said Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz, one of the event organizers. 'We're bringing together people who are already active in these approaches on the ground in the Middle East, or who have new

and creative ideas about how to proceed in an area from which we are used to hearing mainly bad news.'

According to Neill Walker of the EICWS, 'Scotland has a distinctive role to play in meeting the global challenge of multifaith and cultural diversity, dialogue, and shared understanding leading to mutual spiritual enrichment. We feel that this conference and Festival will not only lead to new spiritual understandings across traditions, but it will also further contacts, understandings, and learnings between Scotland and the spiritual communities of the Middle East.'

Full information about the Festival can be obtained from these contacts below, and Festival brochures will be out around the end of January 2004. Nearer the Festival dates the Festival information will be hosted on the following website: www.eial.org

27.2.

Festival Welcome Letter

Edinburgh Conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace

3 March 2004

Dear Friends,

Greetings of peace, and welcome to the First Edinburgh Conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace!

We hope that you will join us in affirming the diversity contained in the religious and spiritual traditions of the Middle East, as well as those here in Scotland. While most reports from the Middle East may lead us think that all religious and political positions are fixed and monolithic, we believe that this Conference proves otherwise. The representatives who have agreed to share the podium represent, for the most part, unheard voices in the quest for peace and understanding. We hope to discover, over successive Conferences, that we have much more in common than what divides us when we view our traditions from the standpoint of spirituality and spiritual experience, rather than fixed custom or belief.

The Conference and Festival themselves take no fixed position on any political or cultural question. We intend rather to create a forum in which we can listen to each other more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart.

During the 1970s and 80s, some of us were involved in the citizen diplomacy movement that sought to bring citizens of the UK and USA into contact with citizens of the USSR. As we discovered then, what we don't yet know about each other may be much more important than what we do know, or think we know. Citizen diplomacy created the context for later political change. This diplomacy began when those who engaged in it were willing to really meet the "enemy", deliberately laying aside the preconceived ideas that they held of each other.

This year's inaugural Conference brings together at least three different kinds of presentations. First, we hope to learn from each other about our shared traditions, as well as those that form the unique voice of any one of us. Second, we will hear from those who have been active in peacemaking on a spiritual basis on the ground in the Middle East. Third, we invite you to share in the musical and devotional spiritual practice presented, in order to gain an experiential view of the traditions we discuss. Simply knowing facts (or presumed facts) about another does not become real meeting without such an experience.

The response to our call to present at this year's Conference was overwhelming. Our only apology is that the time available to each speaker is more limited than we would like. We intend to expand the program next year, and we have set the dates for next year's Conference as Friday 4 - Saturday 5 March 2005. The eleven-day Festival will run from Thursday 24 February - Sunday 6 March 2005. If you have a desire to participate in either the Conference or Festival in 2005, then please do contact the co-organizers.

Yours in peace,

Neill Walker, Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities,
njwalk1300@hotmail.com

Neil Douglas-Klotz, Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, ndk@eial.org
Co-organizers, Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace.

27.3.

Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament

**Time for Reflection Address By
Rodef Shalom Eliyahu McLean
Wednesday 3 March 2004 at the Scottish Parliament**

Shalom, Salaam,

My name is Eliyahu McLean. I am visiting Scotland from the Holy Land together with a Muslim Sufi Sheikh named Abdul Aziz Bukhari. We have come to be part of the First Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace in Edinburgh. Though I am Jewish, born of a Jewish mother, I also have roots on my father's side that go back to Scotland, so I'm a proud McLean as well.

Sheikh Abdul Aziz and I have come from the city of Jerusalem to show how a religious Jew and a religious Muslim can work together for peace.

We help bring together Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders who seek to bring spiritually based solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We hold regular prayer-for-peace gatherings with people of all faiths in the home of Sheikh Bukhari in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City.

We seek to reclaim the indigenous Middle Eastern peace wisdom. In Arab culture there is a ritual called 'Sulha', which brings warring tribes together for reconciliation. This is related to the Hebrew word Slicha, forgiveness. So, in the spirit of Sulha, 3 years ago we held a Hannukah-Christmas-Ramadan celebration in the Galilee. Last summer the annual Sulha gathering attracted 1500 people.

We are two deeply wounded people who are blessed and destined to share the same land together, the Land of the Prophets. Though it is called by different names, Israel and Palestine, we believe that the path of spirituality can serve as a bridge for people on all sides.

People ask us, with all the bad news, how you can work for peace. My Rebbe, Shlomo Carlebach, taught me a key principle which I hold onto. It is called 'holy hutzpah'. We have to have the 'hutzpah', the 'audacity', to believe that peace is possible.

Sheikh Bukhari often says that Jerusalem is the heart of the world, and that by healing Jerusalem we will heal the world. Jerusalem has several meanings, in Hebrew: yerushalayim, 'you shall see peace' and in Arabic, or-shaleem, 'the light of peace'. So we hope to return Jerusalem to its true purpose, to be the peace capital for the whole world.

So we invite you, the Scottish people, to join us in this endeavour. Join us in this sacred work - come to visit us in Jerusalem, or send us your prayers, or build bridges of understanding, here in Scotland.

27.4.

Letter of Support from the World Council of Religious Leaders

4/2/2004.

Dear Neill

I wish you the very best again on your initiative as you begin the Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Culture.

This is indeed a very timely project and I pray for its success and may your goals for this conference be realized.

Best Wishes,

Bawa Jain,
Secretary General,
Executive Office,
World Council of Religious Leaders.

27.5.

Letter of Support from the World Congress of Faiths

4/2/2004.

We at the World Congress of Faiths, one of the oldest of the Interfaith organisations in this country, are delighted to send you warmest greetings for the success of your conference. Our founder, Sir Francis Younghusband, used to talk about the need for the growth of 'fellowship' in this world. By this he meant more than friendship. He was referring to his wish that there should be the growth of a deep understanding that can come about between peoples of different faith only if they accept the full spiritual implications of a world that is created by the one God who has created all its inhabitants with their different beliefs and cultures. May this fellowship develop between those who come to deliberate at your conference. May it increase the cause of peace in this world. We wish you all the best for a good and fulfilling conference.

Rabbi Jackie Tabick,

Chair, World Congress of Faiths.

27.6.

Letter of Support from the International Association of Religious Freedom

Greetings from the International Association for Religious Freedom to the First Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace.

The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) greets this timely initiative to examine the contribution of all religions and beliefs in the Middle East to build peace with justice. The IARF is a 100 year old fellowship across all religions and all regions of the world made up of people who believe that the fundamental human right of freedom of religion or belief must be upheld if peace is to be realized. The conditions for peace comprise, among other factors, respect for human rights, the sharing of resources, including spirituality, and the mutual encouragement of open and, where necessary, self-critical dialogue.

Since peace seems so elusive, whether in Israel/Palestine or Iraq or in the many situations of social and economic injustice across the region, it is not surprising that the Abrahamic heritage is perceived, whether on other continents or in secular society, as something to breed fratricidal strife and jealousy rather than unconditional faith in God's saving grace. When laws of vengeance are invoked without taking into account the spirit of mercy which should undergird all human activities, when one is conscious more of one's own sufferings than of those of one's neighbour, then the power of reconciliation which religion could offer is lost.

Spirituality is not a private exercise of self-fulfilment but an energy which should motivate friends and enemies, family members and strangers, to struggle together - not against each other - for building peace with justice, which can be the condition for finding peace with God. The experience of an inter-religious organization like IARF is that it is not enough to have goodwill or to assume the wisdom and peaceful power of our respective religions, but that we must be alert to all misuse of religion, not only blaming politicians or outsiders for this, but recognizing that we may ourselves be lax or culpable.

Spiritual energy is needed in all situations of fatalistic acceptance of an unjust status quo and in all situations of self-righteous certainty that one is oneself right while others are wrong. A spirituality which can struggle against such acquiescence or hypocrisy is at the heart of the Prophetic messages which have stemmed from the Middle East. Instead of pointing fingers of judgement and attributing insults such as "axes of evil", we should be rediscovering principles of active tolerance, generous reparation and heartfelt reconciliation. The inter-religious dialogue which persisted in the region right through the nightmares of the civil war in Lebanon, and which still unites some visionary Israelis and Palestinians, is needed throughout the region and throughout the world.

If Jerusalem is to be a symbol of peace for all nations, if the region is to recover its true character of shared societies with freedom for all minorities to express themselves, then it will not be enough to celebrate the peaceful teachings of the religions of the region. It will be necessary to build on universal legal and constitutional principles of freedom of religion or belief and to implement these principles by imbuing them with the spirit of true love of neighbour which is the Golden Rule taught by all religions of the region, and of the world.

It is the hope of well-wishers in IARF that the Festival will not be satisfied with self-congratulation, and that it will not deteriorate into breast-beating, but that it will highlight the practical ways that spirituality can heal wounds and rebuild broken societies. We must learn together how better to implement justice and contribute to peace with all our neighbours and to peace with God.

Dr John Taylor,

Representative of IARF to the United Nations (Geneva).

27.7.

Letter of Support from the Muslim Council of Britain

February 2004

Ist Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace,
Edinburgh, Scotland, Friday 27 February - Sunday 7 March 2004

The Muslim Council of Britain is delighted to be involved in the Ist Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace. We wholeheartedly support this refreshing and innovative venture and hope that it will prove to be an overwhelming success. The Muslim Council of Britain is a national umbrella organisation representing a network of over 400 mosques, community and professional organisations throughout Britain. Our primary objective is to promote greater consultation, co-operation and co-ordination on Muslim affairs in Britain and to work together with all sectors of society to promote 'the common good'. More details about our work and ways of getting involved can be found from our website www.mcb.org.uk or by contacting MCBDirect, our community information service: mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk so please do feel free to get in touch.

Our increasingly fractured world is crying out for peace and it is our belief at the MCB that this peace will only really result from a genuinely spiritual enlightenment. We sincerely hope that this landmark Festival helps to breathe a higher sense of purpose into those of you fortunate enough to be attending and also those who will no-doubt hear about this event in the months and years to come. We have enormous pleasure in welcoming you to this important event and wish to put on record our sincere appreciation to the Festival organisers.

Prof Aziz Sheikh,
Chair, Research and Documentation Committee,
The Muslim Council of Britain.

27.8.

In the Shadow of War:

Peacemakers' Visit to Edinburgh Raises Hopes for Peace

on behalf of

**The Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS,
and, The Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL.**

The packed audience that attended the two Israeli peacemakers' talk at the Friends Meeting House in Edinburgh on March 20 heard of a number of surprising initiatives for peace in that troubled land, including a Hamas Muslim sheikh who is working with a rabbi from the West Bank Settlements.

The visit of Eliyahu McLean, a Jew of Scottish-American ancestry, and Ibrahim Abu El-Hawa was sponsored by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL.

McLean said that his work was based on a twenty-year process of reconciliation with his Jewish heritage during which time he worked with both orthodox and liberal representatives of the tradition in Israel, many of whom he has introduced to Muslim sheikhs and imams. He has travelled extensively representing interfaith efforts in Israel and abroad at conferences sponsored by UNESCO and other groups. He reported that the spiritual basis of the work of his “peacemaker community” in Israel was “not-knowing—that is, giving up any fixed idea of how reality should be”, “bearing witness”, and “loving action, or, healing ourselves and others”.

“One of the problems in the Middle East,” he said, “is that everybody knows how things should be, to the extent that no one is willing to listen to anyone else and their truth. Rabbi David Harman has called Israel ‘a tyranny of certitudes’, but that could apply to the whole world.”

McLean met Abu El-Hawa during the start of the latest uprising, the *intifada*, two years ago. El-Hawa is an orthodox Muslim in his 60's whose family has lived on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem for more than 1400 years. He has been active in peacemaking between Jews, Christians, and Muslims for most of his life.

“I was looking for someone to work with,” he said, “to represent the cause of peace in our country, and I met Eliyahu. Since that time we are brothers—or father and son. We are all seeds of Adam and Eve, and we are all first cousins, the seeds of Abraham. God chose us to be in this land, and we have to be here. We don't have a choice: we have to live together. ”

Neither McLean nor El-Hawa glossed over the pain each side has suffered or the difficulties they face. Each has lost friends or relatives due to either terrorist bombings in Israel or Israeli army action in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Yet both believed that actual reconciliation and healing was possible.

As an example of this McLean mentioned the example of a key leader and sheikh in the militant Islamic Hamas movement who has been working behind the scenes with a rabbi from the heavily armed West Bank settlements. They believe that through ancient processes like *hudna* (ceasefire) and *sulha* (reconciliation), which have been respected in both communities for generations, a common ground for peace can be found. Such a process, says McLean, would be similar to the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in South Africa that followed Nelson Mandela's election as president. He showed a video of such reconciliation gatherings between Muslims and Jews that have been held over the past two years in Israel. The largest conference to date is scheduled for the end of June 2003.

“People ask me,” said McLean, “‘Are you right wing or left wing?’ I reply, ‘It takes two wings to fly.’ We have got to find underlying unity between people on all different sides. Many Palestinians and Israelis I have talked to have a deep sense of mourning, because there was seemingly such hope two years ago. This beautiful, sacred land has become in the eyes of the world *ard il hurub* , or in Hebrew *eretz ha-milchamot* , the land of war.”

“People who have never been here,” said El-Hawa, “think there is a wall between the Arabs and the Jews, and that we are both dangerous people. To the world we have a special word: ‘Leave us alone!’ We are both really good people, if the world will leave us alone and stop selling us guns. The same guns are in both hands, Palestinian and Jew.”

“To carry the word of truth,” he said, “you have to live with people, not just pick it up from TV, radio, and newspapers. When you know the way of life of the people you are talking about, you will talk from your heart not from your mouth. People need to visit and live with people, eat their food, and drink their water, and smell the same air. Then you will bless the ground, Mother Earth, and the pain of the other, with love.”

In their one-day visit to Edinburgh, approximately 160 people heard the two speak. Their tour so far has taken in England, Scotland, and will proceed to Ireland before they return to Israel.

The two sponsoring organizations plan a future conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, in Edinburgh, Scotland, to include representatives from both the Middle East and the UK.

28.

Festival Contacts

Joint Festival Co-ordinators

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