

Religious leaders of different faiths unite in outcries against murders of Jewish worshippers



(©LaPresse) *Jerusalem at night*

Their voices call out from the Holy Land and from a Vatican colloquium

LISA PALMIERI-BILLIG, VATICAN INSIDER, 20 NOVEMBER 2014

Immediately following news of the barbaric killings, by two Palestinians, of Jewish Israelis gathered for morning prayers in a Jerusalem synagogue, leaders of different religions including the three monotheistic faiths began to make themselves heard.

The Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land - the highest body representing Israeli and Palestinian Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders - - expressed “shock and horror over the horrendous murders and wounding of worshippers at prayer in the synagogue in Har Nof” in Jerusalem.

Speaking in the name of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the Heads of the Local Churches of the Holy Land and the Courts of Sharia Law in the Palestinian Authority and including the local Patriarchates and Bishoprics, stated that “a religious war will be disastrous for all”. They added that “such murderous deeds especially in a house of worship are the ultimate abuse of religion. We call on all religious political and civic leaders to do their utmost to prevent local political conflict from being turned into a religious war the consequences of which will be disastrous for all.”

The council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land was established in 2005. It is the first ever consultative body representing the highest official religious authorities in the Holy Land encompassing two peoples and three religions.

Simultaneously, as news of the tragic event broke, several hundred religious leaders of Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Sikh and Jewish faiths attending an international, interreligious colloquium on the family at the Vatican’s Synod Hall, interrupted the proceedings to mourn and pay homage to the victims.

It was the morning of the second day of a Vatican conference on “The Complementarity of Men and Women”. Cardinal Jean Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for

Interreligious Dialogue, who was presiding over the opening session, made the sad announcement and quickly determined that he did not want to start an interreligious meeting without remembering the victims. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the UK's former Chief Rabbi, who had delivered a keynote address the day before, was just entering the Synod Hall, Cardinal Tauran asked Rabbi Sacks to open the day with a prayer. He spoke from the heart, in Hebrew and English, Hebrew, while all the delegates stood in a moment of silence.

A strong Muslim voice was also heard. Dr. Wael Farouq, President of the Tawasul Cultural Center in Cairo, also delivered a spontaneous and very emotional speech, expressing his deep chagrin and condemnation of this and all other violence currently being perpetrated in the name of religion. He said he felt certain in affirming that the overwhelming majority of the world's Muslims would join him in deploring these despicable acts.