



# Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

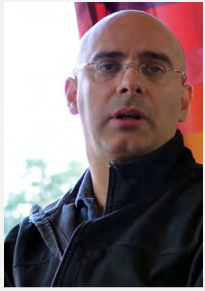
## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

March 2013

### Word on the Middle East Conference 2013

By Martin Accad | Director of The Institute of Middle East Studies



The mandate of the Institute of Middle East Studies is “to bring about positive transformation in thinking and practice between

Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and beyond.” In continuation with last year, the annual Middle East Conference organizing team this year felt it needed to keep tackling some important human rights issues that are pressing in today’s Arab World, but which also have significant echoes outside our region. Last year we tackled the very pressing issue of Palestinian refugees, primarily in Lebanon, but also in other neighboring countries. Significant historical, political and theological background was also offered to frame the issue appropriately from a Kingdom of God perspective.

The Palestinian refugee crisis may well represent the most serious instance of human rights abuse of our times, which the international community, as well as regional governments, need to own up to. It certainly deserved its own dedicated Middle East Conference. This year we will be dealing with more human rights issues: conversion out of Islam and the resulting consequences for converts due to the so-called “apostasy law”; the existing tension between a western understanding of freedom of speech and the responsibility that many feel in the

Muslim world to defend God and other religious symbols from unrestrained offense and provocation;



the widespread problem of human trafficking in the region that takes the form of domestic labor and sex workers, which verges in many respects on a contemporary form of slavery; and finally the internal trafficking of children and child labor.

These problems will be approached through multiple lenses. Professor Habib Malik, son of late Lebanese statesman Charles Malik, who was a key contributor to the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, will share about his father’s role and help us consider our topic from a historical and global perspective. Veteran Baptist theologian and Oxford Professor Paul Fiddes will help us acquire a biblical and theological perspective on human rights, as well as share from his vast experience in dialogue with the Catholic Church and more recently with Islam. Turkish activist and scholar Ziya Meral will help us understand the dynamics of interreligious conversion with some of its sociological and political ramifications. World Vision Australia’s director, Tim Costello, will offer us his deep insights into issues of human trafficking from his extensive

The Middle East Conference 2013 is titled “Your Rights & My Responsibilities: Biblical & Islamic Perspectives on Human Rights”. It will be held June 17-21 at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), Lebanon. For additional information, conference logistics, or early registration (\$190) [please visit our page](#) to submit an application no later than May 31st. After May 31st, registration is \$210.

Some of the previous Middle East Conferences were:

**MEC 2012:** Love Your Neighbor as Yourself: The Church and the Palestinian in Light of God’s Command for Justice and Compassion (June 18-22)

**MEC 2011:** The Church & Islam in Africa (June 13-17)

**MEC 2010:** Muslim and Christian Youth as the Present Future: Seeking Understanding, Sharing our Faith (June 14-18)

**MEC 2009:** Moving Beyond Stereotypes: Muslim Women at the Intersection of Faith & Culture (June 15-19)

**MEC 2008:** Islam, Its Message & Law, and the Future of Our Societies (June 16-20)

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experience as activist and leader who has led the church in Australia in responding significantly to this global problem. Dr. Danut Monasterianu, World Vision's regional director for faith and development, will be sharing every morning with a spiritual reflection to help us frame our thinking in the Bible, supplementing these with his experience of living under former Communist Romania.

This year, as each year, we will not only be listening to Christian speakers on Islam. Several Muslim guests will be presenting us with Muslim perspectives on our topics. Have you considered, for instance, what a Muslim cleric or theologian might have to say on the perceived contradiction between the Qur'an's teaching on religious freedom and Islamic Law's almost unanimous call for the punishment of a convert? This year's conference will offer precisely such an opportunity. Or how about the street reaction



of Muslim masses to the burning of a Qur'an or the caricatured drawing of their prophet? You will hear that such issues are more complex than they might seem to us on first exposure. Muslim speakers will also help us see the Qur'an's and Islam's view of human rights. Is the issue as we have become familiar with as "universal" as we have come to view it? Or are there other valid perspectives on the complex dynamics between our rights and responsibilities towards God and one another?

As usual, this year's conference will go beyond the theoretical. Conference participants will take part in small group discussions with Muslim students, activists and leaders. We will hear personal testimonials of activists and have the opportunity to



engage, ask questions and learn from some of their amazing initiatives. We will also learn about the systemic dimensions of such problems as we acquire insight into the Lebanese government and legal role in increasing or decreasing such problems.

Please join us this year as we listen, learn and respond to God's compassionate heart for justice.

#### Briefs and Photos from our Facebook page

ABTS hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> prayer meeting in a series of monthly meetings under the theme "Our eyes are upon you" (2 Chronicles 20:12) that aim to bring together believers from the many Evangelical churches. [Story and photo album.](#)

On Saturday March 2nd, 2013, a group of ABTS students, faculty and staff went to the Bekaa to minister to Syrian refugee children. [Story and photo album.](#)

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## ABTS Students Learn on “Children, Church, and Mission”



Dan Brewster, Director for International Holistic Child Development Ministries within [Compassion International](#), just finished teaching a course at ABTS that explores the relationships between the child, the church and mission.

Students discussed with Dan the significance of the child in the biblical narrative, and the child as God’s frequent instrument in the revealing and outworking of His purpose. The course looked at the role of the church in caring for children inside and outside the church, and the faith development of the child.

“I very much enjoyed teaching the class. I was very pleased with the interaction in the class, the responsiveness and openness to the subject matter, and the great applications of the course material to their own situations. With some audiences, (especially South East Asian contexts), there is a reticence to engage, to ask questions, to discuss issues arising. That is certainly not the case with ABTS students! That made my time in the classroom very enjoyable,” said Dan in a brief commentary.

When asked about the course, several students underscored the significant role of children across the Bible. In one such case in 2 Kings 5, we read of the captive young girl who was from the land of Israel. In verse 3 we read: *Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”* Naaman complied. And the result was great blessing as Naaman, after being cured, said: *“Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.”* (Verse 15)

Dan’s book, ‘Child, Church and Mission’, was very recently published in Arabic jointly by Grain de Blé [Grain of Wheat], Compassion International, and ABTS’ Educational Ministries Resource Centre. It will be available in bookshops in the coming weeks. Proceedings from the book will support ABTS’ mission.

In addition to ‘Child, Church and Mission’, ABTS and Grain de Blé have also published ‘Children and Childhood in the Bible’ which is a study/workbook to help students and practitioners engage with what the scriptures say about children and childhood, in order to further support our ministry today. ‘Children and Childhood in the Bible’ in Arabic will be made available as a free downloadable e-book soon.

Follow our [Facebook page](#) for up-to-date information and the relevant links.

You can download the English version of his book on the [following link](#).



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# MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE 2013

## YOUR RIGHTS & MY RESPONSIBILITIES

Biblical & Islamic Perspectives on Human Rights

## حقوقك ومسؤولياتي

وجهات نظر بيبليية ونظيراتها الاسلامية لحقوق الإنسان



Human Rights

**17th - 21st June 2013**

Beirut, Lebanon

**١٧ - ٢١ حزيران، ٢٠١٣**

بيروت، لبنان

للحصول على المزيد من المعلومات وللاشتراك

For more information and to register

write to us at: [IMES@abtslebanon.org](mailto:IMES@abtslebanon.org)

or call us on: Tel: +961 4 400 250 ext. 287

please visit our website

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