



# THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

DECEMBER 2008

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## A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR DARFUR: NO TIME TO LOSE

*The Mosaic Institute worked in association with Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) to present a conference in Cairo, Egypt from November 20 to 23, 2008 that was designed to establish a grassroots development strategy for Darfur, Sudan.*

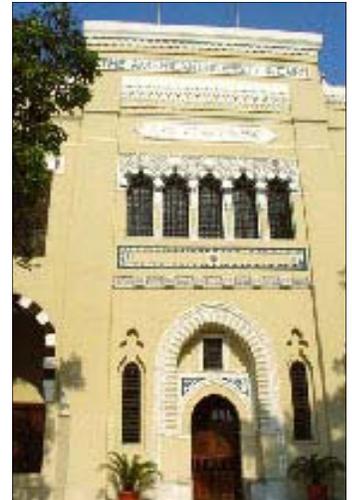
At the American University of Cairo in late November, the Mosaic Institute and the CSHR joined with a diverse range of international participants to host a conference on Darfur's ongoing conflict and the urgent development needs of the region. The conference - held in Egypt rather than Sudan due to ongoing security challenges - focused on finding lasting solutions to Darfur's development issues and putting in place a Darfuri-led mechanism for their implementation.

The guiding principle of the conference was that the need for development in Darfur is too pressing to wait for the cessation of hostilities. As Mosaic Institute Chairman Vahan Kololian stated, "we cannot wait for total peace and security in order to undertake some important development in Darfur." Omer Ismail, of Washington DC's Enough Project, echoed these sentiments, noting the

conference was "an opportunity to start planning the recovery for Darfur while the conflict is still going on. By the time the conflict ends, it will be too late to plan a recovery."

This was also the key recommendation of the *Darfur Early Recovery and Development Initiative* dossier prepared by Columbia University with the financial support of the Mosaic Institute and presented to Canadian government officials in July 2008. Mosaic invited its New York-based partners to Ottawa for meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). These meetings advanced the recommendations of the Dossier and created enthusiasm for convening an international conference of Darfuri leaders from academe and the general community to collectively address Darfur's ongoing development challenges.

Mosaic established a working relationship with leaders from Toronto's 500-strong Darfuri diaspora at the start of its Darfur-focused work and relied on these leaders' advice and guidance in the (cont. page 2)



American University in Cairo (old campus), downtown Cairo.

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## Mosaic Institute: What We Do

The Mosaic Institute is a "think and do" tank that harnesses Canada's diversity by bringing together ethnic communities whose homelands are in conflict to seek new ideas that will enhance Canada's foreign policy and promote international peace and development.

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR DARFUR (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

weeks and months leading up to Cairo. Mosaic also secured the agreement of DFAIT to issue “travel letters” to facilitate the travel of members of the Canadian Darfuri community to the conference, although scheduling conflicts ultimately made their attendance impossible. Instead, Mosaic retained Silvia Gonzalez, a veteran international development consultant recently returned from almost a year in Nyala, Darfur, as its Special Advisor for Sudan, who did attend in Cairo.

Overall, Canada was well represented at the conference. Mosaic’s Chairman, Vahan Kololian, brought opening remarks, while Silvia Gonzalez moderated the session on agriculture. In addition, Laurent Charette, the Director of CIDA’s Sudan Programme, attended as an

observer, as did Nadia Stuewer, DFAIT’s advisor on the Darfur Peace Process. Canada’s Ambassador to Egypt, H.E. Ferry de Kerckhove, generously opened his official residence to host a reception for all participants.

The conference provided a unique opportunity for Darfuri community leaders to exchange ideas and best practices with each other and representatives of international organizations concerning the creation and implementation of a comprehensive development strategy.

**One concrete outcome** of the conference was the establishment of a Darfuri-led *Darfur Reconstruction and Development Committee* to serve as a key coordinator of a grassroots development plan for Darfur as well as a point of interface with both the international donor com-

munity and the Government of Sudan. This committee will also provide oversight to a number of task forces that were struck to address each of the thematic areas discussed during the course of the conference, including water, agriculture, pastoralism, energy, health, education, land and gender issues.

Despite the challenges for a recovery effort in Darfur, this gathering provided hope. Dr. Dirk Salomons, Director of Columbia University’s Humanitarian Affairs Program stated: “There is nothing wrong, first of all, with harbouring a dream, living with a vision of a world where the wounds have healed, where former enemies work together to give their children a better life, of facing violence and deep disruptions with a large amount of hope and imagination.”

## MOSAIC ATTENDS CONFERENCE ON IRANIAN JEWRY

In November the Mosaic Institute’s Senior Fellow, Alidad Mafinezam, participated in the University of Maryland’s groundbreaking conference on a hitherto under explored subject, *Iranian Jewry: Past and Present*. Mafinezam noted that “it comes as a surprise to many that Iran, even under the Islamic Republic, is home to the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world.” The conference featured leading aca-

demics from the U.S. and Israel, and key members of the Iranian-American and Jewish American communities.

The event focused on the rich history of Iranian-Jewish interaction over the millennia, with one panel addressing current tensions between Iran and Israel. The panel agreed that Israel should encourage a diplomatic opening between the U.S. and

Iran, and use such an opening to improve its own relations within the region.

“This conference was a major first step on an important topic,” said Mafinezam, “I was pleased to provide a Canadian perspective.”

In 2009, the Mosaic Institute plans further research on the role of Canada’s Iranian and Jewish diaspora communities in promoting peace in the Middle East.

**In 2007, 1.4% of permanent residents arriving in Canada were from Sudan, while 22.8% were from Africa and the Middle East.**

**In the 2006 Census, 12,600 Canadians identified their ethnic origin as Sudanese while overall, 421,185 Canadians listed their ethnic origin as African.**

*(Sources: Citizenship and Immigration Canada & Statistics Canada)*

**Iran is home to a Jewish community of over 25,000 people, the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world.**

*- Iranian Jewry: Past and Present Conference*

## DIASPORA DIGEST: ARMENIA AND TURKEY UPDATE

Since its inception in 2007, the Mosaic Institute has focused on promoting better relations between Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. In February 2007, the Mosaic Institute was a sponsor of a major conference on Turkey at York University's Glendon College, and later that year hosted Armenian and Turkish diplomats at the inaugural gala event of the Canadian International Council.

In May 2008, the Institute hosted a reception attended by officials from the embassies of Turkey and Armenia, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), and members of the Turkish and Armenian diaspora communities. They gathered for a presentation by Kaan Soyak, the Co-Chair of the Turkish Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC), dedicated to improving relations between Armenia and Turkey. As there are no formal diplomatic relations between Tur-

key and Armenia, this gathering provided a rare opportunity for dialogue.

Afterwards members of the Armenian and Turkish diaspora communities in Canada began discussions with the DFAIT about the organization of a trade mission that would involve taking Armenian and Turkish Canadians to West Asia. Discussions were also initiated regarding the possibility of establishing direct flights between Canada and Istanbul and then on to Yerevan, Armenia. These discussions, while ongoing, have not yet yielded results.

These Canadian steps towards peaceful coexistence mirror promising developments in West Asia. In September, President Abdullah Gul of Turkey became the first Turkish head of state to visit Armenia when he accepted the invitation of Armenian President Serge Sarkisyan to join him at a soccer match between the two countries.

"This match is important beyond being the first match between the Turkish and Armenian national teams," Sarkisyan told a news conference. "It has a significance that will present important opportunities." Turkey's President Gul hoped the match would "contribute to removing barriers to the rapprochement of two peoples with a common history, and contribute to regional peace and stability."

Following on the heels of Gul's trip to Armenia, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia met informally in late September at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Encouraged by these developments, and committed to building on past successes, the Mosaic Institute is developing new programs to harness the power of Canada's ethnic diversity to further promote peace between Turkey and Armenia.

### DIASPORA DIGEST

The Mosaic Institute works to bring together Canadian diaspora communities whose countries of origin have conflict. Each edition of The Mosaic Dispatch will focus on one of the dialogues in which the Mosaic Institute has been active.

## MOSAIC APPOINTS AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

John Monahan joined the Mosaic Institute in September as its first Executive Director.

Prior to his appointment John was the Director of International Representation & Research for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Government of Ontario. He was responsible for

the expansion, strategic direction and oversight of the Province's network of representation offices in key world markets.

A lawyer by profession, John practised in the Toronto offices of Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP before working for Ontario.

Vahan Kololian, Chairman of the Mosaic Institute said, "John brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in both the private and public sectors and has a high appreciation for Canada's growing role in world affairs. We are delighted to have John join us as our Executive Director."



John Monahan joined the Mosaic Institute as Executive Director in September 2008

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## THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

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## H A R N E S S I N G C A N A D A ' S D I V E R S I T Y F O R P E A C E A N D D E V E L O P M E N T

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

#### *Mosaic Institute, Almost Two Years Old!*

The Mosaic Institute is nearing its second birthday. We hit the ground running in early 2007 and have been going hard ever since. We have accomplished much, both in setting up the Institute's operations as well as engaging with the community on peace and diversity issues.

We have several accomplishments to celebrate. The Institute has held dialogue sessions on different cross border conflicts including: Darfur, Turkey and Armenia; India and Pakistan; and China and Tibet. Our most extensive work to date has centred on the crisis in Darfur. In 2007 the Institute undertook public opinion polling on Darfur through Pollara Research to better understand Canadians' per-

spectives on the crisis. We then partnered with Columbia University to support their Darfur Development Initiative, and then co-sponsored a conference on this initiative in Cairo in November (See page 1 article).

The Institute derives its legitimacy from connecting with moderate voices and committed peacebuilders from within Canada's ethnic communities whose homelands have conflict. We take the ideas gained through these dialogues and develop recommendations for the federal government to act on through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) or the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We also encourage the leadership of the diaspora commu-

nities with whom we work to pursue practical peacebuilding initiatives at a community level: such initiatives can often be powerful and inspiring in ways that state-led actions are not.

Canada's position as an unaligned non-expansionist country is virtually without equal in the world. We seek to improve the "return on investment" of Canada's diplomatic capital on the world scene, using policy recommendations from Mosaic, obtained from diaspora communities' knowledge of regional international issues.

We have hit three important milestones in the development of the Institute. We convened a superb Advisory Council (see membership list on page one) and then obtained charitable status for



Vahan Kololian  
**Chairman**  
*Mosaic Institute*

tax purposes. Most recently, John Monahan joined us as the first Mosaic Institute Executive Director.

We are grateful to our growing list of funding partners who have assisted us in carrying out our mandate. These partners are: RBC Financial Group; ONEX Corporation; the Chadha Family Foundation; the Asper Foundation; and the Kololian family.

We are energized as we are about to begin a new year of activities, and we look forward to keeping you informed through this quarterly newsletter.

Thanks go to our friends and supporters who have joined us so far. Stay tuned. We've only just begun!