



THE MOSAIC DISPATCH

FALL/WINTER 2009-2010

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ENLISTING CANADA'S YOUTH AS PEACE-BUILDERS: THE "U OF MOSAIC" INITIATIVE

In March 2009, several university campuses across Canada exploded with ethnic and religious tensions relating to the student-led and provocatively-named event known as "Israel Apartheid Week". Students belonging to or supporting ethnocultural groups connected to all sides of the Middle East conflict clashed, at times violently. On some campuses, police were called in to separate the groups. Hate crimes were alleged. Classes were disrupted.

These events seem particularly startling and tragic because they are taking place at institutions of higher learning, where, as most Canadians would likely agree, the pursuit of knowledge and the exchange of ideas should be leading young Canadians towards new levels of mutual understanding and constructive pursuits that will ultimately strengthen - rather than unravel - Canada's national fabric.

The Mosaic Institute believes that Canada's increasingly diverse educational campuses possess significant potential not only to promote tolerance and to forge a sense of Canadian community that will enrich the lives of future generations, but also to harness the creativity, the passion, and the thirst for knowledge of Canada's university students in such a way that Canada's contribution to global peacebuilding can be dramatically enhanced.

To this end, the Mosaic Institute has developed an innovative, campus-

based program - the "UofMosaic" Initiative - to confront ethnocultural unrest on Canadian university campuses, encourage a common appreciation of shared Canadian values, and foster a greater sense of global citizenship on the part of young Canadians.

By September 2010, the Institute hopes to have at least four (4) chapters in operation, with more to follow in 2011. These chapters will convene speakers' series and moderated dialogues to foster collaboration and encourage a commitment to peacebuilding on the part of students from ethnocultural communities involved in longstanding conflicts with one another.

In September 2010, the first "test" chapter of the "UofMosaic" Initiative was established at the University of Toronto, and had more than 150 members by the end of its first month of operation. Its student coordinators are Mike Morden, former intern at the Mosaic Institute, and Lauren Ray. So far, the chapter has drafted rules of governance, established an Executive Committee, reached out to other campus groups, convened a roundtable on the use of "citizen diplomacy" in the Middle East featuring Syrian-Canadian "citizen diplomat" Hind Kabawat, and hosted a forum on the rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey. A large-scale event entitled "Peace and How to Build It: A Canadian Conversation" is being planned for February 2010, as are a



From left to right: "UofMosaic" student coordinators at the UofT, Mike Morden and Lauren Ray, accompanied by special guest Hind Kabawat.

number of other public sessions and a follow-up dialogue focused on Armenian and Turkish issues. Explained Mosaic Institute Executive Director John Monahan, "It would be a shame for the passion and enthusiasm of young Canadians to be wasted on re-living old conflicts when we can use them instead to jointly identify made-in-Canada solutions to some of the globe's most intractable problems." The "UofMosaic" initiative hopes to be a small step in that direction.

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Mosaic Institute: What We Do

The Mosaic Institute is an action-oriented think tank that harnesses the connections, knowledge and resources of Canada's ethnocultural communities to advance Canadian solutions and promote peace and development in conflict-ridden or under-developed parts of the world.

A VISIT WITH... YUEN PAU WOO

MEMBER OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTE'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

What led to your involvement with the Mosaic Institute?

I was introduced to Mosaic by one of the founders, Alidad Mafinezam. Shortly after, I met (Mosaic Chairman and co-founder) Vahan Kolian and was impressed by his vision and passion for this work. It connects in many ways with my interest in a global citizenry.

Why do you think the work of the Mosaic Institute is important?

The work of Mosaic recognizes that immigrants to Canada can contribute not only to their adopted country, but also to the cause of peace and development around the world.

Yann Martel has said that Canada is a hotel and that immigrants to Canada bring their baggage to this hotel. He uses "baggage" in a derogatory sense, but I think immigrants can also bring positive baggage - including the skills, knowledge, and goodwill to promote peace and development in their native countries. Mosaic is bringing out the best baggage of Canada's immigrant communities.

What skills, knowledge and experience do you bring to Mosaic's Advisory Council?

As CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, I am deeply involved in research and policy on Canada's relations with Asia. People-to-people connections are among the most important of our links to Asia, and I hope to offer Mosaic my modest knowledge about these connections.

What do you consider the most pressing foreign policy challenges and opportunities facing Canada right now?

The biggest challenge is the absence of foreign policy writ large and the unwillingness of Canada to be an active player on the world stage, commensurate with our size and capabilities. On the other hand, Canada's wealth and political/economic stability, combined with an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan population, are foreign policy assets that are the envy of

What possible role do you see for the Mosaic Institute in crafting appropriate responses to those challenges and opportunities?

Harnessing the talents, networks, and aspirations of global Canadians, including the immigrant community.

Where would you like to see the Mosaic Institute in five years?

As a self-sustaining, catalytic organization, working very closely with the frontline communities, student groups and other partners across the country.

"A Visit With..."

Is a recurring feature of the Mosaic Dispatch in which members and friends of the Mosaic Institute discuss their perspectives on Mosaic's vision and work.



Yuen Pau Woo, Member of the Mosaic Institute's Advisory Council, and President and CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

Opportunities with the Mosaic Institute

Mosaic is currently welcoming internship applications by current postsecondary students and recent graduates.

In addition, Mosaic offers many volunteer opportunities for people of all ages.

For more information on becoming a Mosaic intern or volunteer, please write to:

info@mosaicinstitute.ca

MOSAIC WELCOMES TRUDEAU CENTRE INTERNS

This past summer, the Mosaic Institute welcomed its first two interns—Mike Morden, currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto, and Maya Fernandez, a second-year student at Guelph University—to its head office. Having found the summer internship program to be an unequivocal success, the Mosaic Institute has now partnered with the Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies to create an internship program for University of Toronto students throughout the academic year.

The Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is part of the Munk Centre for International Relations at the University of Toronto. The Trudeau Centre offers a unique program in Peace and Conflict studies for a select group of undergraduate students.

By partnering with the Mosaic Institute, students have the opportunity to complement their academic program by experiencing the world of public policy first-hand. Since September 2009, the Mosaic Institute has welcomed several Trudeau Centre students to help develop and participate in a spectrum of Mosaic's projects and events. They are: Robin Lennox; Jennifer Boyczuk; Sean Verigin; Roxanne de Souza; and Jothi Shanmugam. Andrew Sharpe joins the group in January 2010.

Professor Ron Levi, Director of the Trudeau Centre, admires the work of the Mosaic Institute, which, he notes, "has quickly established itself as a leading Canadian NGO focusing on inter-group dialogue, conflict-resolution, and peacebuilding." He values the practical work opportunities that the Mosaic Institute offers his Centre's students. He feels that the Institute "(provides) them with a practical venue for building peace and advancing justice. I know that our students have found their projects with the Institute to be inspirational, and they have carried these experiences and lessons learned back into the classroom."

Mosaic Institute Executive Director John Monahan is similarly enthusiastic about the contributions that the Trudeau Centre interns have made and will continue to make to the Institute. He states: "We're beyond excited to have such amazing students from the Trudeau Centre intern with us. Each student has contributed something unique to our work. Our work on Sudan, our contribution to the 2010 World Interfaith Leaders' Conference, and our plans for a Sri Lankan peace dialogue, among other projects, have all benefited from the work of the Trudeau interns. Mosaic is enriched by our student interns and their unique backgrounds and interests. We couldn't do it without them."

DIASPORA DIGEST: UPDATE ON “BUILDING BRIDGES IN CANADA: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PEOPLE AND PEACE”



Participants in the September 16th session of the “Building Bridges in Canada” speakers’ series, entitled “Where Are We Now?”. Left to right: Professor Marc Gopin; Professor Bessma Momani; Vahan Kololian, the Mosaic Institute; Professor Fawaz Gerges; Professor Margaret MacMillan; Amanda Sherrington, Canadian Centre for Diversity.

The final two sessions of the Mosaic Institute’s multiple-part speakers’ series and “peace dialogue” on the Middle East, entitled “Building Bridges in Canada: New Perspectives on People and Peace”, were held at the University of Toronto’s Munk Centre on September 16 and November 4, respectively. As described in Issue No. 3 of *The Mosaic Dispatch* (“Mosaic Institute Launches Building Bridges Speakers’ Series to Promote Middle East Peace”), this series was produced and presented by the Mosaic Institute and the Canadian Centre for Diversity to foster dialogue between the leaders of those ethnocultural and faith-based communities with a special relationship to the Middle East.

The panel discussion held on September 16 was entitled, “Where Are We Now?: The Status of Peacebuilding in the Middle East.” It gathered together leading Canadian and international scholars on the Middle East to assess, from a highly-informed, academic perspective, the *status quo* of the conflicts in that region, and the prospects for a fair and lasting peace to be established. The panel was expertly moderated by Canadian historian Margaret

MacMillan, Warden of St. Antony’s College at Oxford University and a Member of the Advisory Council of the Mosaic Institute.

The panel was comprised of three highly regarded experts on the Middle East. Fawaz Gerges is the Chair of Middle Eastern Politics and International Relations at the London School of Economics; Marc Gopin is the James H. Laue Professor of Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, and Director of the Center on Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Virginia; and Bessma Momani is Associate Professor and Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance and Innovation at the University of Waterloo.

The panelists discussed the importance of strengthening moderate voices in both public debates and private discussions about peacebuilding in the Middle East. They also challenged the audience – approximately 110 guests representing Canada’s Arab and Jewish communities – to take a more active role in fostering connections between their respective communities, as well as encouraging the Canadian government to take a more active role in promot-

ing peace in the Middle East.

The final public session of the “Building Bridges” series was held on November 4. Where the September session had offered an academic perspective on the conflict in the Middle East, the final session looked at the prospects for peace from a diplomatic perspective.

Entitled “Where Do We Go From Here?”, the discussion centred on the need for a concerted international effort to place pressure on governments of the Middle East to arrive at a fair and comprehensive settlement. It was moderated expertly by veteran broadcaster Ralph Benmergui, who was joined by three retired senior diplomats.

The Canadian representative was Michael Bell, twice Canada’s Ambassador to Israel, and onetime Ambassador to both Egypt and Jordan. Mr. Bell is currently the Paul Martin (Sr.) Senior Scholar in International Relations at the University of Windsor and Director of the Jerusalem Old City Initiative. Providing an Arab perspective was Mokhtar Lamani, whose past roles have included serving as Special Representative of the Arab League to Iraq, and Ambassador of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations. Dr. Lamani is currently a Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, Ontario. Dr. Alon Liel, a former Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and former Foreign Affairs advisor to Ehud Barak, Chairman of the Israeli Labour Party, brought an Israeli perspective. He is currently a lecturer in International Relations at both Hebrew University and at Tel Aviv University, and is also the Chairman of the Israel-Syria Peace Society.

While all speakers agreed that NGOs and civil society play an integral part in improving the livelihood of those living in war-torn regions, and in encouraging valu-

able two-way dialogue in the Middle East in particular, they nevertheless cautioned that grassroots efforts alone would never be able to bring about substantive and lasting peace. Peace in the Middle East will require commitment and political will at the highest levels. The panelists challenged members of the Jewish and Arab diaspora communities in Canada and elsewhere to engage with and lobby their governments to take a more active role in urging a solution to the seemingly intractable conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Despite the enduring and historical antagonisms in the region, all of the panelists remained cautiously optimistic about the prospects for peace.

The Mosaic Institute is proud that the “Building Bridges in Canada” series brought together more than 100 business and community leaders from Canada’s Arab and Jewish communities to meet one another, to learn about the prospects for peace in the Middle East, and to be challenged to consider their own role in its achievement. A survey of attendees by The Strategic Counsel found that, over the course of the series, the degree of trust generated between the two communities increased significantly, as did people’s optimism at the prospect of divisions between them being reduced.

The Mosaic Institute is currently working with a number of outside organizations - including the Portland Trust, the Environics Institute, and CISEPO - to identify “legacy” peacebuilding projects in the Middle East that might be supported by series participants. It is also developing a video compilation of the series to be shared with relevant government officials and with other interested parties. The series may be over, but the “bridge building” continues.

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**THE
MOSAIC
INSTITUTE**

**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
A B R O A D**

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Small Steps, Large Hopes

In 2007, in the very early days of the Mosaic Institute, we brought together members of the Canadian Armenian and Turkish communities in Toronto, along with the senior diplomatic representatives of their countries of origin. While Armenia and Turkey did not have a formal diplomatic relationship at the time, the fact that their official representatives were willing to attend a cultural and social evening featuring a presentation by Kaan Soyak, the Co-Chair of the Turkish Armenian Business Council (TABC), augured well for a positive evening of dialogue.

Mr. Soyak gave a compelling presentation. He spoke passionately about the need for the two countries to open their border to each other and promote trade and cultural relations. A consensus emerged that evening: while there remained serious issues to be resolved between Armenia and Turkey—including Turkey's refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and its current support of Azerbaijan in the latter's territorial dispute with Armenia—such issues should not preclude the opening of the border between the two countries. Many other international examples were cited where, in spite of longstanding disputes and entrenched positions, countries were able to enjoy healthy commercial relations with one another. The hope was raised that, by encouraging trade and travel, the chances of resolving the historical conflict between Armenia and

Turkey would improve considerably. Mr. Soyak's message appeared to resonate with all those assembled. When the two diplomats reported on the evening to their respective "head offices", they would have had to convey a sense of the hopefulness shared by all who were present.

Fast forward to September 2008, and the start of a process of "football diplomacy". It began when the new President of Armenia, Serge Sargsyan invited the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gul, to attend a World Cup 2010 qualifying match in Yerevan. The Turkish President then reciprocated with an invitation for his Armenian counterpart to join him at a soccer game in Turkey.

These gestures led to an opportunity which was seized by the Swiss Government. Starting in early 2009, the Swiss convened and mediated at formal meetings between Armenia and Turkey, with an eye to establishing a set of Protocols to normalize relations between them. Between August 31 when the Protocols were released and October 10, when they were signed, the 95-word statement attracted both a great deal of attention and a great deal of criticism. In particular, many in the Armenian diaspora communities saw the Statement as a cynical attempt to abandon a century-long attempt to persuade Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

In September, President Sargsyan conducted an international tour, visiting Armenian diaspora communities in Europe and America. I was very pleased to be invited to a gathering of 50 delegates to a meeting in New York City. Notwithstanding many concerns raised that the Protocols represented an abandonment of Armenia's long held positions, particularly on genocide recognition, the President made a very impressive pitch, stating that he recognized the potential downside of the Protocols and would remain vigilant, but that it was important to take measured risks in order to try and forge a new path for Armenia-Turkey relations.

Almost as if the Armenian and Turkish governments had been in the room to hear Kaan Soyak's 2007 presentation in Toronto, the Protocols set out a rigorous timeline for the opening of the border, to be followed by other initiatives. Such an opening will be a very significant step forward in the effort to repair the broken relations between these two countries who have no choice but to be neighbours. In the meantime, they are reminding the rest of us that it is never too late to seek peace.

Vahan Kololian

Chairman

The Mosaic Institute

