

THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING

www.ffeu.org

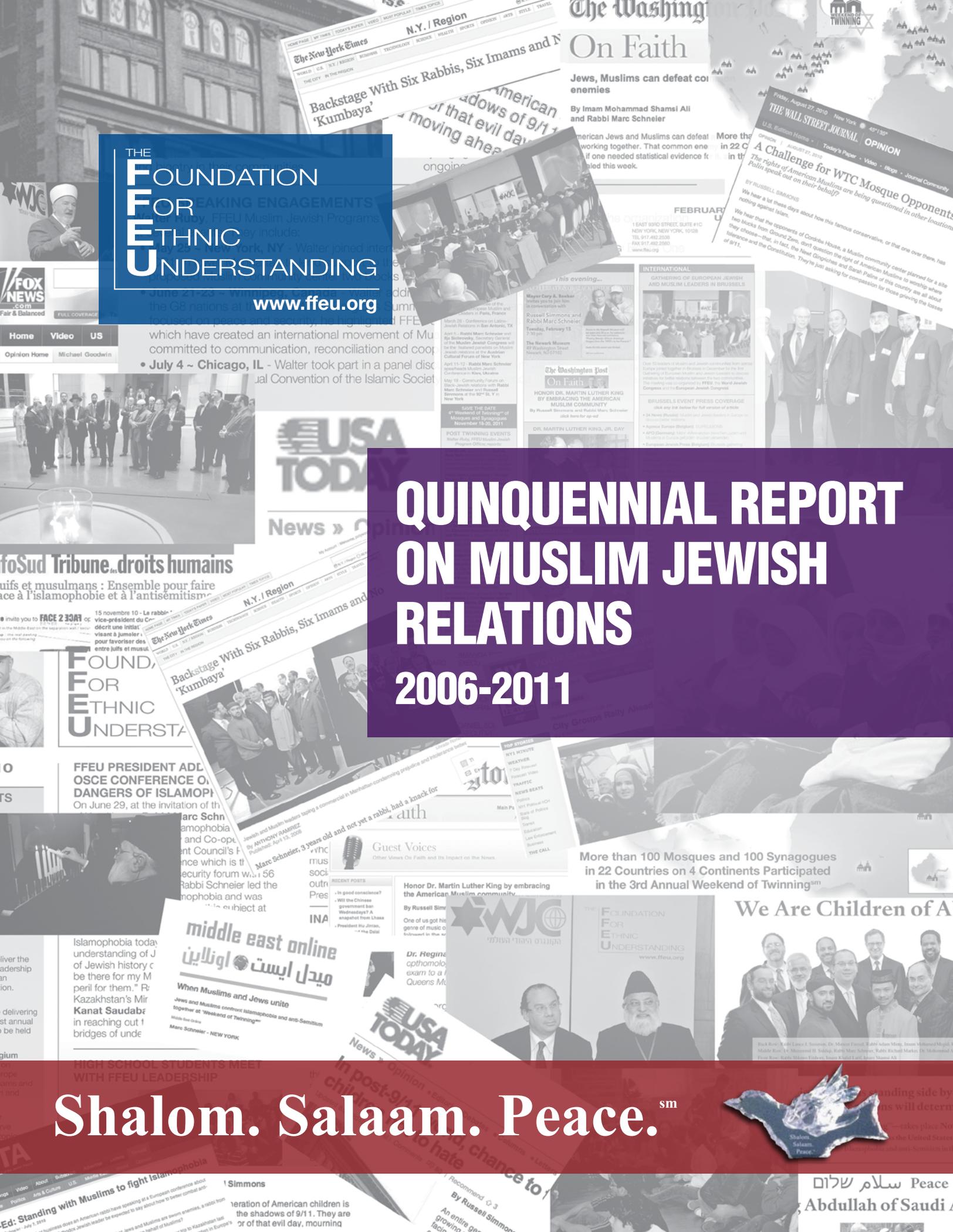
which have created an international movement of Muslims committed to communication, reconciliation and cooperation. • July 4 ~ Chicago, IL - Walter took part in a panel discussion at the National Convention of the Islamic Society of North America.

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT ON MUSLIM JEWISH RELATIONS 2006-2011

More than 100 Mosques and 100 Synagogues in 22 Countries on 4 Continents Participated in the 3rd Annual Weekend of Twinning™

We Are Children of A

Shalom. Salaam. Peace.™



**Rabbi Marc Schneier**  
President

March 29, 2011

**Russell Simmons**  
Chairman

Dear Friends,

**Ken Sunshine**  
Secretary

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU) is proud to introduce our first report on our pioneering work in Muslim Jewish relations. Since our first modest initiative in this field five years ago with a visit to a Muslim high school in New York, FFEU's groundbreaking Muslim Jewish programming has expanded around the world; bringing together tens of thousands of Jews and Muslims on five continents to engage with each other and to build ties of growing friendship and trust.

**Michael Heningburg, Jr.**  
Treasurer

**David Renzer**  
Member of the Board

FFEU connects Muslims and Jews both on the grass-roots and leadership levels. Our Weekend of Twinning<sup>SM</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues is an annual event based on synagogues and mosques—as well as Muslim and Jewish student and young leadership groups—forming one-on-one partnerships and holding joint programs together. The largest gathering of Muslims and Jews anywhere in the world, the Weekend of Twinning<sup>SM</sup> has grown from 50 mosques and 50 synagogues across North America in November, 2008 to more than 130 twinings in 22 countries this past November. Twinning participants focus their programs on examining and celebrating commonalities in our two faith traditions, as well as undertaking joint social action projects such as visiting homeless shelters and cleaning up public parks.

**Alexander Machkevitch**  
Member of the Board

**Ali Naqvi**  
Member of the Board

On the leadership level, FFEU has undertaken many initiatives from bringing together leading rabbis and imams in the United States producing a public service announcement denouncing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism to orchestrating the first annual gathering of European Muslim and Jewish Leaders in Brussels. These same European leaders are now undertaking a series of actions to oppose the rise of far-right xenophobic parties in countries across Europe that threaten the well being of both communities and the future of democracy and pluralism in many countries.

**Robert J. Cyruli**  
Counsel

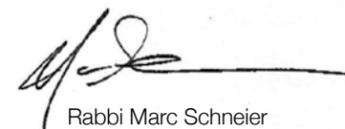
**Amanda Ritz**  
Executive Director

Working in concert with partners in the Muslim community like Imam Shamsi Ali of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, Imam Feisal Rauf of the Cordoba Initiative, and Dr. Sayyid Syeed of the Islamic Society of North America, FFEU headlined the 'Today, I Am A Muslim Too' rally in early March 2011 and added our voice in protest to Congressional hearings led by House Homeland Security Committee chairman Congressman Peter King.

**Walter Ruby**  
Muslim Jewish Relations  
Program Officer

As amazing has been the growth of the Muslim Jewish network brought into being by FFEU, what has been accomplished is only the beginning of a sustained multi-year effort. What we are aiming for is nothing less than the building of an international movement of Muslims and Jews committed to communication, reconciliation and cooperation.

Very truly yours,



Rabbi Marc Schneier  
President



Russell Simmons  
Chairman

# The Daniel Pearl Dialogue for Muslim Jewish Understanding

New York



**October 30, 2005**—Rabbi Marc Schneier and Russell Simmons announced the launch of a “Muslim Jewish Dialogue Initiative” dedicated to building ties between the two communities, The Daniel Pearl Dialogue for Muslim Jewish Understanding. This event took place at The Museum of Jewish Heritage and was co-sponsored by FFEU and The Tribeca Film Institute. The program featured a dialogue between Dr. Akhbar Ahmad, the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University in

Washington, D.C. and Dr. Judea Pearl, the father of Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter murdered by Islamic extremists in Pakistan.

# Razi School

New York



**November 16, 2006**—Rabbi Marc Schneier received a warm welcome at the largest Muslim day school in New York, the Razi School. Rabbi Schneier spoke on the similarities and differences between Islam and Judaism to an audience of 200 students in grades 8 through 12. Students asked questions and took the opportunity to quiz the Rabbi on topics as diverse as modesty and dress for women to co-habitation before marriage and the nature of Jewish prayer. Other distinguished guests included Sayu Bhojwani, the



Mayor’s Deputy Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs and Razi School principal Dr. Ghassan El-Cheikhali, who greeted the audience with a message of optimism and reciprocity, “*The best way to increase tolerance is to listen to each other’s stories and build relationships.*” *New York Newsday* and the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* both covered this historic event.

# First dialogue with Imam Abu-Namous

New York



**November 4, 2006**—Rabbi Marc Schneier invited Imam Omar Abu-Namous, spiritual leader of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, the largest mosque in New York City, to The New York Synagogue for a public dialogue. The dialogue had some difficult moments during a discussion between the Rabbi and the Palestinian-born imam concerning Israel and Palestine. Despite calls by some in the Jewish community to end the dialogue, Rabbi Schneier accepted an invitation from Imam Abu-Namous to continue the dialogue at the Islamic Cultural Center, forty blocks north of the synagogue.

# Martin Luther King Day Dialogue

New York



**January 15, 2007**—On Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Rabbi Marc Schneier and Imam Abu-Namous held a public dialogue with Martin Luther King III and Russell Simmons. Rabbi Schneier and Imam Abu-Namous publicly advocated that Jewish and Muslim Americans set aside discussion of their disagreements on the Middle East issue and develop a joint strategy for Jewish and

Muslim Americans to work together towards improving relations between their communities across the United States.

# Building Muslim Jewish relations

New York



**October 22, 2007**—FFEU collaborated with the students at New York University to bring about an unusual meeting of the minds. Rabbi Marc Schneier and Russell Simmons were joined by Imam Muhammed Shamsi Ali, the new spiritual leader of the Islamic Center of New York and NYU clerics Imam Khalid Latif and Rabbi Yehuda Sarna for a discussion which stressed common problems facing American minority clergy. The panel candidly discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with building Muslim Jewish relations and focused on the challenges and complexities of the issues including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The discussion forum was sponsored by The Hillel Foundation, The Islamic Center, The Bronfman Center and the Middle East Dialogue Group.



# National Summit of Imams and Rabbis

## United States



**November 7, 2007**—Rabbi Marc Schneier, Russell Simmons and Imam Abu Namous hosted the first National Summit of Imams and Rabbis in New York City. Participating in the event were imams and rabbis from 11 cities around the United States including Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Dearborn, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia and an imam and rabbi from Toronto. Other participants in the day-long discussion included experts in the field of Muslim Jewish relations from

the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, the Muslim Consultative Network, the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty and the Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life. In his opening statement, Rabbi Schneier commented, *“Whether Jewish or Muslim, we are all American. There is a value system and culture that we share which must be embraced and nurtured. We must stop being distracted by political hot button issues that divide us in the Middle East and learn instead to relate to each other within the context of being Americans.”* Abu-Namous agreed saying, *“Now is the time to move forward and look beyond our differences. Both Islam and Judaism are deeply rooted in peace. Inshallah, we shall live to see the day.”*

The day-long series of workshops focused on the importance of identifying social issues such as combating poverty, spousal abuse, and hate crimes on which the communities can work together. The rabbis and imams agreed to maintain ties on the local level and involve their congregations in twinning efforts. The summit ended with the symbolic gesture of Jewish and Muslim leaders breaking bread at a dinner and listening to guest speakers Ambassador Ronald S. Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, Secretary General of the Islamic Society of North America, and Ambassador Abdul Wahab, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations.



Photos by David Karp

# Rabbi Schneier receives Interfaith Award

## New York



**November 25, 2007**—Rabbi Marc Schneier was the recipient of the interfaith award at the Islamic Center of Long Island’s Annual Gala for his outstanding work and leadership during FFEU’s First National Summit of Imams and Rabbis. The interethnic conference, which brought Muslim and Jewish clergy together from across the nation, focused on creating healthy and accepting environments for their congregations and bonding over beliefs shared by the two cultures. By combating anti-Semitism and Islamophobia together, these clerical leaders hope to strengthen their communities from within.

# Appointment of Muslim Jewish Relations Officer

## New York



**March 1, 2008**—Walter Ruby, a veteran reporter for Jewish newspapers and long time participant in grassroots projects to build ties between Israelis and Palestinians, was appointed Muslim Jewish Relations Program Officer at FFEU. Walter’s appointment was a concrete expression of the FFEU’s ongoing commitment to building enduring ties between rabbis and imams and their congregations as well as Muslim and Jewish organizational leaders.

# National dinner of the Muslim Public Affairs Council

## New York



**March 9, 2008**—Rabbi Marc Schneier was the first Jewish leader chosen to be one of the keynote speakers at the national dinner of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), one of the most influential Muslim American organizations. Sharing the stage with Dr. Muhammed Yunus, 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rabbi Schneier applauded the recent landmark statement by leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals in Britain entitled, *“A Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding between Muslims and Jews”* and urged Jewish and Muslim Americans to seize the opportunity to forge alliances of tolerance and understanding. He challenged Jews and Muslims to accept, *“each and every person who has needs, fears and hopes just as we do as a child of God and entitled to be treated with the same dignity we claim for ourselves.”*

# First Dialogue with Imam Shamsi Ali

## New York



**March 15, 2008**—Rabbi Marc Schneier invited Imam Shamsi Ali of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York to join him in dialogue at The New York Synagogue. During the event, Imam Ali spoke of the inadmissibility of calls by some in the Muslim world for the destruction of Israel. He also denounced Holocaust denial and stressed that suicide bombing is forbidden by the tenets of Islam. Imam Ali acknowledged that there are passages in the Quran that cast Jews in a negative light, but said that they need to be read in context and do not apply to present day efforts to strengthen Jewish-Muslim relations, which he strongly supports. Rabbi Schneier responded that it is incorrect for modern-day Jews to associate any nation existing today with Amalek, (a biblical tribe that God commanded the Jews to destroy), but argued instead that Jews and other people of good will should oppose “Amalek-like behavior” wherever it appears. Rabbi Schneier praised Imam Shamsi Ali for his courage in confronting Islamic extremism and said he was encouraged “by the emergence of moderate centrist clerical voice in Islam” over the past several years.

# CNN Public Service Announcement and New York Times Ad

## United States

**April 10, 2008**—Six rabbis and six imams from across the United States gathered in an HBO recording studio in New York City to film a precedent-setting public service announcement (PSA) denouncing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism as “unacceptable and intolerable”. The imams and rabbis urged Muslims, Jews and all Americans to unite to “speak out against the hatred and to spread peace.”

The 30 second PSA was the brainchild of Russell Simmons, coming on the heels of FFEU’s previous PSAs featuring Jay-Z, which denounced anti-Semitism. The new PSA aired on CNN and other stations in the Fall of 2008, prior to the 1st annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>SM</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues. A print ad which supplemented the PSA appeared in *The New York Times*. The Islamic Society of North America and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee were co-sponsors of both the PSA and the print ad.

As Rabbi Marc Schneier noted, “We are proud that FFEU facilitated the filming of this PSA, which marks the first time that American rabbis and imams have stood together to denounce bigotry against Jews and Muslims. The commercial makes clear that we are truly our brother’s keeper, and that an attack on either Jews or Muslims is an attack on all of us.”



# World Conference on Dialogue Among Religions

## Madrid



**July 15-18, 2008**—Rabbi Marc Schneier was invited by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to attend the World Conference on Dialogue Among Religions in Madrid, Spain. Rabbi Schneier was one of 35 Jewish leaders from around the world in attendance. The conference marked the first time that both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Muslim World League, a co-sponsor, had invited Jews to an interfaith dialogue conference.

At a festive opening ceremony hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos of Spain, Rabbi Schneier and Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, president of the Fiqh Council of North America presented the Saudi King with a copy of the print ad with the imams and rabbis denouncing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

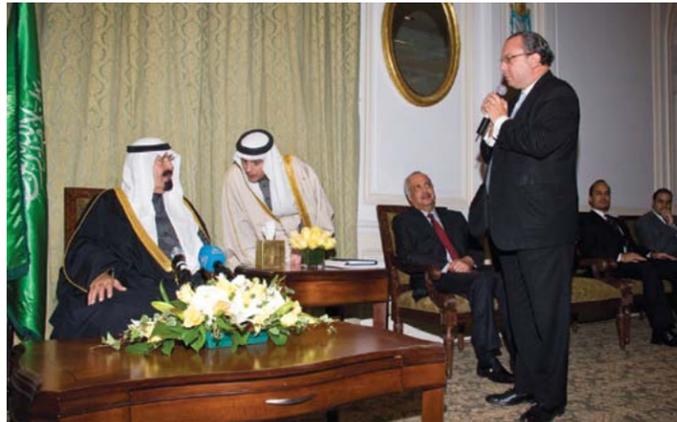
During the opening ceremony, King Abdullah said he had come to Madrid to proclaim a message that “Islam is a religion of moderation and tolerance; a message that calls for constructive dialogue among followers of religions; a message that promises to open a new page for humanity in which – God willing – concord will replace conflict.” This statement was a stark contrast to that of Dr. Ezzeddin Ibrahim, religious adviser to the Emir of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed, and a top official in the Muslim World League who asserted from the podium that, “There is no dialogue between Jews and Muslims.” Rabbi Schneier and Dr. Siddiqi responded by pointing with pride to the work that they and other Jewish and Muslim groups had been doing in recent months to strengthen Jewish-Muslim relations in the U.S. and Canada. Dr. Ibrahim acknowledged that he had misspoken, and promised that Jews would be represented on a committee to be set up by the Muslim World League in order to recommend steps to follow up the Madrid Conference.

Photo by Walter Ruby

# P

## private reception with King Abdullah

New York



**November 12, 2008**—Rabbi Marc Schneier addressed King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia at a private reception given by King Abdullah for interfaith leaders representing the metropolitan New York community at the New York Palace Hotel. At the reception, Rabbi Schneier joined Saudi Foreign Minister HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Ambassador Adel Al-Jubeir and Ambassador Ronald Lauder,

WJC President. The Saudi contingent applauded FFEU's historic twinning of 100 mosques and synagogues scheduled for the following weekend of November 21-23 and the New York Times ad that appeared the previous day. They were also greatly encouraged by and expressed tremendous support to the World Jewish Congress for their participation in the New York Times ad and the twinning program.

In his remarks, Rabbi Schneier told King Abdullah that his presence in New York following the Madrid Conference initiated by the King in July, was a reaffirmation of his commitment to strengthening the voice of religious moderation and his conviction that religion is a positive force for peace and reconciliation.

The reception followed Rabbi Schneier's participation in the special UN session convened on interfaith dialogue which took place earlier in the day.



Photos by Fran Marie Metzler for Reflections Photo, Inc.

# F

## irst Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>

United States and Canada

**November 21-23, 2008**—It was an event of truly historic proportions; the largest-ever organized linking up of mosques and synagogues in North America or anywhere else in the world.

On the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues Across North America, there were over 50 twinings between Muslim and Jewish institutions across the United States and Canada. The great majority were one-on-one encounters between mosques and synagogues, together with a handful of meetings between Jewish and Muslim student groups on university campuses. There were twinings in 20 U.S. states and the Canadian province of Ontario.

The 1st Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> had the endorsement of the World Jewish Congress, Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim Public Affairs Council and the Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims. The theme of the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> was confronting 'Islamophobia and anti-Semitism Together'. While most congregations discussed how they can work together to deal with anti-Jewish and Muslim manifestations in their communities, they discussed many other issues as well. What came through more than anything else during the weekend was the joy of mutual discovery.

Until the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>, many of our Muslim participants had never before been to a synagogue and many Jewish participants had never visited a mosque. What so many expressed after taking part in Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> events and often having the chance to witness the religious services of the other was a sense of amazement at the similarities between the two traditions, by the sense of common themes, customs and beliefs.



# Rabbi Marc Schneier and Imam Shamsi Ali on the road

New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Palm Beach

**2008-2009**—Rabbi Marc Schneier and Imam Shamsi Ali facilitated dialogues across the United States on the struggle for interfaith tolerance between Muslims and Jews. They addressed community leaders and performed community service, including rebuilding a home destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.



THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES • LECTURE SERIES • SPRING 2009

## Shared Traditions, Common Chords, and Food for Thought

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 6 PM | LeFrak Concert Hall  
Buffet dinner of Kosher and Halal food to follow.

An evening of interfaith dialogue, music, and food with **Rabbi Marc Schneier**, chairman of the World Jewish Congress United States, and **Imam Shamsi Ali**, spiritual director of the Islamic Cultural Center and 96th Street Mosque in Manhattan. They will engage in a dialogue on the struggle for interfaith tolerance between Muslims and Jews in the United States. The two will tackle both domestic and international issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The clerical dialogue will be complemented by a joint performance by Pakistani Muslim rock star **Salman Ahmad** and renowned klezmer musician **Yale Strom**. A sumptuous buffet of Halal and Kosher food will conclude this special program.

This evening is supported by **Arthur and Carole Anderson**, the **Michael Harrington Center**, and the **Office of the President of Queens College**.

ALL LECTURES ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.  
No Advance Registration or Tickets Are Required. Open Seating.  
Free parking in Lot #15 on Rensselaer Avenue (behind the Music Building), with elevator access from the ground floor to Larkin Concert Hall. For additional information, call the Center for Jewish Studies Office, 718-981-5738.

www.qc.cuny.edu/Jewish\_Studies

nola.com

Home > Metro New Orleans Religion and Faith > Real Time News

### Jews and Muslims build grassroots ties in a time of polarizing differences

Published: Thursday, November 19, 2009, 8:11 PM Updated: Thursday, November 19, 2009, 8:41 PM

Ted Jackson/The Times-Picayune

Rabbi Uri Teitelbaum, left, leads members of Congregation Beth Israel and Masjid Abu Bakr al Siddiq on a tour of the ruined and empty building in Lakeview that Beth Israel used to occupy.

For a while in New Orleans Thursday, disparate Jewish and Muslim worlds with little prior contact met and introduced themselves to each other, chatted amiably, even shared a little humor.



Photos by Studio Palm Beach

# Standing together to condemn U.S. terrorist plot

New York

**May 21, 2009**—Joining together for a press conference after the completion of a prayer service at the Islamic Cultural Center, Rabbi Marc Schneier and Shamsi both strongly condemned the alleged plot by four men arrested after planting what they thought were explosives near two New York City synagogues. In addition, Rabbi Schneier presented letters denounc-



ing the alleged plot he had just received from Dr. Sayyid Syeed, National Director of the Islamic Society of North America and Salam Al-Maryati, Executive Director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council. In his letter Dr. Syeed noted pointedly, *"The Quran commands Muslims to respect and protect all places of worship including mosques, churches, synagogues and temples, as well as the worshippers within."* Mr. Al-Maryati stated, *"On behalf of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, I want to demonstrate solidarity with you and all Jewish Americans against any attack motivated by anti-Semitism."*



AP Photo/Richard Drew

# Annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America

Washington, DC



**July 4, 2009**—Rabbi Marc Schneier addressed the annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) as keynote speaker. He stressed the critical importance of building ties and friendship and trust between Jews and Muslims and praised ISNA for its “*sincere effort*” to reach out to American Jews. Citing the famous quote of Edmund Burke, ‘*All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing,*’ Rabbi Schneier told the estimated 1,000 people at the gathering that faith leaders have the “*responsibility*” to continue to speak out against “*religious extremism,*” and praised Dr. Ingrid Mattson and Dr. Sayyid Syeed, president and national director of ISNA, respectively, for their denunciation of the foiled attacks on Jewish institutions in Riverdale in May.

# Follow-up meeting to the 2008 World Conference on Dialogue

Vienna

**July 14, 2009**—Rabbi Marc Schneier joined 50 Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders who gathered in Vienna for a follow-up meeting to the 2008 World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid hosted by the Muslim World League under the auspices of the government of Saudi Arabia. Rabbi Schneier noted, “*It is very significant that we are here... and is recognition on the part of the Saudis of the importance of the Jewish community being present in the process*”. He said that the meeting was a reaffirmation of Saudi King Abdullah’s commitment to spurring inter-faith dialogue, including with the Jews.

# Mission of European Imams and Rabbis to the U.S.

New York and Washington, DC



**July 16-19, 2009**—FFEU took its first major step to turn its Muslim Jewish initiative from a North American movement to a world-wide one, when it hosted a delegation of over two dozen European imams and rabbis in a memorable four-day mission.



The imams and rabbis from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom attended meetings in New York and Washington, D.C. They visited the United Nations, Ellis Island, Ground Zero and the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and met with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, top officials of the Obama Administration at the White House, and Jewish and Muslim congressmen on Capitol Hill. They even had the chance to cheer on the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium. Throughout the mission, the imams and rabbis were introduced to successful US-based interfaith initiatives that could also be implemented in their own countries in order to facilitate and encourage a dialogue.

At the end of the mission, the participating imams and rabbis issued a declaration promising to take part in the 2nd Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>SM</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues in November, 2009. “*Bringing together Muslims and Jews is among the greatest challenges facing our communities today,*” said Rabbi Schneier. “*By expanding to Europe what has already been a successful and groundbreaking twinning initiative in North America, we will together combat Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, promote mutual understanding and productive cooperation through dialogue.*”



Photos by David Karp and Ron Sachs

# Second Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>

## United States, Canada and Europe



**November 13-15, 2009**—The 2nd Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> more than doubled in size from the 2008 event and jumped the Atlantic Ocean, as thousands of Muslims and Jews from across North America and Europe came together to break bread, pray, perform community service and pledge to nurture ties of friendship and trust between their communities in the world's largest gathering of Muslims and Jews.

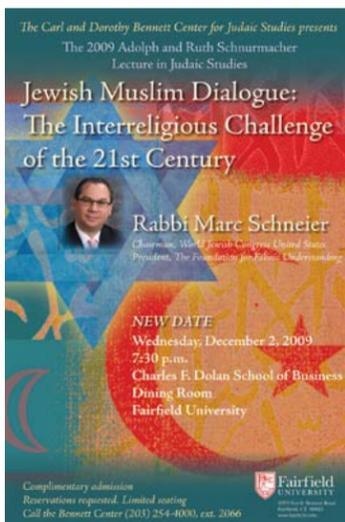
After a kickoff event in Chicago, more than 100 mosques and 100 synagogues held one-on-one programs across the United States, Canada and seven countries in Europe, including Britain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Netherlands. In France, where Muslim Jewish tensions have been especially high, 20 mosques and 20 synagogues twinned with each other, offering a powerful refutation to the idea that reconciliation between the two faith communities is impossible.

*"The overwhelming success of the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> makes clear that Muslims and Jews across North America and Europe are avid to connect with each other and to build a movement dedicated to nurturing ties of communication, reconciliation and cooperation between our two communities,"* said Rabbi Marc Schneier.

*Photos by Enid Bloch*

# Muslim Jewish Dialogue at Fairfield University

## Fairfield



**December 2, 2009**—Rabbi Marc Schneier was the keynote speaker for the 2009 Adolph and Ruth Schnurmacher Lecture in Judaic Studies at the Charles F. Dolan School of Business at Fairfield University in Connecticut. Rabbi Schneier addressed over 300 students and professionals on the topic, *"Jewish Muslim Dialogue: The Interreligious Challenge of the 21st Century."*

# Amitie Judeo-Musulmane de France

## Paris



**December 8, 2009**—Rabbi Marc Schneier was keynote speaker at the dinner gala of the Amitie Judeo-Musulmane de France (Muslim Jewish Friendship Society of France). Speaking before an audience of rabbis, imams and Muslim and Jewish leaders from across Europe who gathered at the glittering City Hall of the 16th Arrondissement, Rabbi Schneier praised the pioneering work of Rabbi Michel Serfaty of the AJMF. Rabbi Serfaty brought together 20 mosques and 20 synagogues in France to take part in the FFEU-sponsored 2nd Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>.



Rabbi Schneier said, *"At a time when the conventional wisdom says that our two peoples must live in perpetual conflict, Rabbi Serfaty and the AJMF are showing that there is a much better way. We are gratified that this is happening not only in France, where conflict between Muslims and Jews has been especially intense, but across Europe as well."*



The gala was co-sponsored by the CRIF (the umbrella body of French Jewry), the Great Mosque of Paris, the Consistoire (Rabbinat) of Greater Paris and the European Jewish Fund. The event was both a celebration of what FFEU and its European partners have accomplished together during the past year and an opportunity to chart future FFEU work with Jewish and Muslim leaders in the years ahead.

# Survey: Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> a Success

## Los Angeles

**January, 2010**—A Topline Survey Analysis of the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> carried out by the Los Angeles-based Center for Muslim Jewish Engagement showed overwhelming satisfaction with the event by Muslim and Jewish participants. One hundred percent of the 54 total respondents to the survey (23 Muslim, 29 Jewish and two identified as 'other', indicated that they would be interested in participating in a future Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> event. Many participants indicated success in relationship building and/or in participants' enthusiasm to engage in similar future programs. Indeed, 80% of respondents identified "building personal relationship between members of Muslim and Jewish communities" as one of their objectives in participating in the 2nd Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>. According to the survey, *"Based on narrative feedback, the program was quite successful in meeting these relational objectives."*

## Meeting with the G8 nations Winnipeg

**June 21-23, 2010**—Walter Ruby addressed interfaith leaders from the G8 nations at the 2010 World Religions Summit. Serving on a panel focused on peace and security, he highlighted FFEU's ongoing efforts which have created an international movement of Muslims and Jews committed to communication, reconciliation and cooperation.

## Muslim Jewish Health Fair New York



**June 6, 2010**—More than 100 Queens residents, many of them without health insurance, turned out at the Jamaica Muslim Center for an afternoon of free blood tests, eye exams and other procedures offered by a dozen Muslim and Jewish doctors and dentists who volunteered their services for the day.



The Bukharian Jewish community in Queens and the Jamaica Muslim Center developed close ties by holding Weekend of Twinning<sup>SM</sup> events together in 2008 and 2009.

The health fair drew a coterie of elected officials, including Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Brooklyn /Queens), New York City Comptroller John Liu, and state Assembly members David Weprin and Rory Lancman, both Democrats of Queens, all of whom spoke about the effort in glowing terms. Weiner said news of the event should be on the "front page" of local

newspapers, illustrating that people of different backgrounds can and do come together, while Weprin said the fair illustrates the need for more such forums in the future.

Doctors who participated felt that serving the community was gratifying, especially if it was an underserved one. As one doctor noted, "Our duty is to help humanity — not any particular segment of it."

## Europe's Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

### Astana

**June 29, 2010**—At the invitation of the Government of Kazakhstan, Rabbi Marc Schneier presented a keynote address on Islamophobia at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Permanent Council's Plenary in Astana. At the conference which is the world's largest regional security forum with 56 participating members, Rabbi Schneier led the panel discussion on Islamophobia and was the first rabbi to ever address this subject at this prestigious forum. In his remarks Rabbi Schneier stated, "I am taking this stand against Islamophobia today exactly because my understanding of Jewish ethics and the lessons of Jewish history dictates to me that I should be there for my Muslim friends at a time of peril for them." Rabbi Schneier also met with Kazakhstan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kanat Saudabayez who praised FFEU's work in reaching out to the Muslim world.

## SNA Convention Chicago



**July 4, 2010**—Walter Ruby took part in a panel discussion on Muslim Jewish Relations at the Annual Convention of the Islamic Society of North America.

## Dialogue Institute at Temple University and the U.S. Department of State New York

**July 26, 2010**—Rabbi Marc Schneier, Russell Simmons and Imam Shamsi Ali hosted a visiting delegation of 20 student leaders from universities in Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon and the Islamic Cultural Center of New York. The students were participants in a joint program sponsored by the Dialogue Institute at Temple University and the U.S. Department of State to explore U.S. history, society, and institutions with a special focus on religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue.

## Muslim Jewish Conference Vienna

**August 3, 2010**—Walter Ruby delivered the keynote address at the first annual Muslim Jewish Conference, held at the University of Vienna in Austria. The brainchild of Ilja Sichrovsky, an Austrian Jew in his late 20's, the MJC brought together 50 Muslim and Jewish students and young professionals from Indonesia, Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel and many countries across Europe, who had met at 'model United Nations' and other international conclaves for youth and had maintained their connections by communicating through the Internet.

# Response to New York City Mosque Controversy

New York



**August, 2010**—Rabbi Marc Schneier and Russell Simmons played leading roles in lowering tensions over the proposed Ground Zero Mosque. Russell Simmons authored two op-eds in the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* and used the windows of his apartment to support a call for coexistence and loving one’s neighbors. He reminded us that, *“It’s our responsibility, as we raise a generation of post-9/11 Americans, to teach our children the mutual tolerance and respect that informs our founding documents, and that inspired past generations to*

*extend and expand the rights available to all Americans. As we are taught from Proverbs 22:6, we should ‘train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.’ We should also remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi, ‘If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.’”*

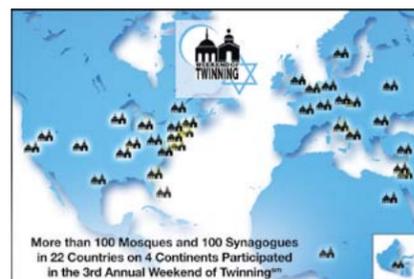
Rabbi Schneier and Imam Shamsi Ali joined together before Rosh Hashanah and during Ramadan to write an op-ed piece for Washington Post On Faith and noted, *“As American Muslims observe the last days of Ramadan and American Jews prepare to begin their observance of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, members of both faiths—and all Americans—are being confronted with a responsibility to speak out in defense of the values of religious liberty and mutual understanding upon which this country was founded.”* They contended that the upsurge in opposition across America *“are the evil fruits of a situation in which the vilification of an American religion—in this case Islam—has been allowed to become mainstream discourse.”*



Photo by AP/Mary Altaffer

# Third annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>

22 Countries, 4 Continents



**November 5-7, 2010**—The 3rd annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> became a world-wide phenomenon as tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews in more than 120 synagogues and 120 mosques in 22 countries on four continents—including the State of Israel—attended events bringing together members of the two communities to celebrate commonalities in the two faith traditions and to work together for their joint benefit.



The 3rd Annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> kicked off with a ‘Virtual Twinning’ on October 31, an on-line worldwide town hall bringing together youthful participants of the Muslim Jewish Conference including Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel, Morocco, Nigeria, Morocco, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Sweden, France, Britain, and Canada. The young adults logged in to hear reports of

twinning events around the world and to discuss how to use the Internet to spread Jewish-Muslim dialogue globally, including to Muslim countries where there are few or no Jews.

The Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> was held after a tumultuous summer that resulted in an increase in anti-Muslim sentiments across the U.S. relating to the plans to build an Islamic community center near the former site of the World Trade Center in N.Y. *“The targeting this summer of Muslim communities in New York, Tennessee and elsewhere demonstrate that we as a country have a long way to go until all men and women are accepted as equals,”* said Rabbi Marc Schneier. *“I am proud to see so many join in on the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup>. Rather than joining in the chorus of non-acceptance, they are choosing instead to confront Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and bigotry head-on. The Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> has time and time again shown us that Jews and Muslims can not only live together peacefully as neighbors, but also partner together to build a better community at-large.”*



# Speaking out in Qatar

Doha



**October 19-21, 2010**—Rabbi Marc Schneier served as a keynote speaker on the topic, *“The Family: the Heart of Raising and Sustaining the New Generation”* at the Eighth Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue. Rabbi Schneier

also defended the State of Israel against a diatribe delivered by the chief Islamic judge of the Palestinian Authority, Sheikh Taysir al-Tamimi who told participants that Israel was *“illegally occupying”* and *“Judaizing”* the holy city of Jerusalem. Rabbi Schneier responded that *“Jerusalem represents Jewish hopes and dreams. For millennia, we have prayed towards Jerusalem. At the same time, we respect that Jerusalem is a holy place for Christians and Muslims as well. We know that the status of Jerusalem is at the forefront of peace talks – but denying the other side’s right to be there is wrong, and counter productive.”*

# House of Lords

London

**November 23, 2010**—Scholars from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the oldest Islamic university in the world issued a proclamation that lifted an ancient ban on dialogue with Jews. The statement drafted by Sheikh Fawzi al-Zifzaf, chairman of the permanent committee for dialogue at Al-Azhar, was read during a gathering of senior faith and political leaders at the House of Lords in London. Rabbi Marc Schneier served as keynote speaker at the event, which was hosted by the Children of Abraham charity and Al-Azhar Institute for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions.

While the proclamation did not mention Judaism by name, it spoke of outreach to the other Abrahamic faiths, it was clear to all concerned that, since there already exists an ongoing dialogue between Al-Azhar and various Christian churches, the initiative was clearly aimed at the Jews. According to Rabbi Schneier, *“This is a landmark decision, and Al-Azhar deserves praise for it. Coming from the leading center of Islamic thinking in the world, it will be enormously helpful for all moderate forces within Islam.”* He added, *“This declaration rightly emphasizes the importance of interfaith relations. Leaders from both sides should now seize the opportunity and take Jewish Muslim relations to the next level. Both communities have a lot more in common, and more to give to the other side, than many people think.”*

# Gathering of European Jewish and Muslim Leaders

Brussels



**December 6, 2010**—Leaders of Muslim and Jewish communities from across Europe came together in Brussels for a historic conference focused on how the two communities can work together on a continent-wide basis. Muslim and Jewish leaders from France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Bosnia-Herzegovina discussed the common stake for the two communities in developing Europe-based principles of democracy and pluralism. They promised to work together to oppose Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other expressions of bigotry and xenophobia.

At the opening session of the Gathering, Iman Dr. Abduljalil Sajid from Britain recited prayers for the victims of the recent Carmel forest fire in Israel as well as the floods in Pakistan. A delegation from the Gathering met with the president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, who expressed strong support for the group’s efforts. At the close of the meeting, the European Jewish and Muslim leaders issued a declaration calling for closer cooperation between the two communities in Europe and urging steps *“to ensure that Jews and Muslims are able to practice our respective faiths fully and unimpeded by intrusive, discriminatory and unfair governmental regulations.”*

Rabbi Schneier remarked, *“Today, we have hopefully kick-started a movement that will spread across Europe. The recipe really is quite simple: our two communities must focus more on what unites us than what separates us. We also must restrain the radicals within our own ranks and make sure they don’t gain the upper hand.”* Dr. Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, declared: *“I think it is very important that Jews and Muslims start talking more with each other, and less about the other. Pointing the finger at the other side and accuse it of being the root cause of all evil on this planet may be easy and convenient, but most of the time it is wrong - and counter-productive.”*

The gathering was co-organized with the World Jewish Congress and the European Jewish Fund.



Photos by Serge Weinber/WJC



# Muslim Jewish Young Leadership Forum on Immigration

New York

**February 28, 2011**—Rabbi Marc Schneier and Imam Shamsi Ali hosted more than 50 members of Muslim and Jewish young leadership groups at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York for a forum entitled “Building Interfaith Coalitions for Interfaith Advocacy. The event, co-sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council-New York City Chapter (MPAC-NYC), was the largest gathering of members of Muslim and Jewish young leadership organizations as part of FFEU’s ongoing effort to strengthen communication and cooperation between Muslims and Jews in their 20’s and 30’s.

Rabbi Marc Schneier and Imam Shamsi Ali were joined by Gideon Aronoff, President and CEO of HIAS and Naveen Bhora, an immigration and board member of MPAC-NYC, to discuss America’s failure to pass immigration reform.



# Combating Holocaust Denial

New York

**March 2, 2011**—Rabbi Marc Schneier received a letter from Dr. Sayyid Syeed, National Director of ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, in response to Hamas’ statement that it will stop the United Nations from teaching Palestinian children in Gaza about the Holocaust. In his letter, Dr. Syeed emphasized the moral imperative of teaching the Holocaust to people of all backgrounds and faiths to ensure that nothing like it ever happens again.

Dr. Syeed reflected that, “Every day when I come to my office, I pass by the Holocaust Museum and see thousands of American young people coming from different parts of the country to visit the museum. This sight gives me a good feeling because it assures me that these people will be educated about the most tragic event of human history that was the result of hate and bigotry. It is only when we fully understand this tragedy that we can work to prevent any possibility that human beings could again degrade themselves by committing such heinous acts.” Dr. Syeed closed his letter by stating, “We at ISNA reiterate our position denouncing Holocaust denial and we support any efforts toward teaching students the horrific consequences of this great human tragedy. To that end, we believe that teaching Palestinian students about the Holocaust is important to ease tension between the two communities, and we commend UNRWA for its decision to do so.”

# Coordinating Committee meeting of European Muslim and Jewish Leaders

Paris



**March 8, 2011**—FFEU and the World Jewish Congress joined forces again in Europe for the first coordinating committee meeting of European Muslim and Jewish leaders. These same leaders who gathered at the meeting in Brussels in December joined together to express their common will to stand up to rising ultra-right political parties in Europe. At the meeting, they adopted a declaration in which they say it is unacceptable to trivialize these racist and xenophobic parties and warn against the growing danger they pose to ethnic and religious minorities on the continent.

The coordinating council of Islamic and Jewish leaders from Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United States and other countries also announced it will launch a series of public events in European capitals on May 9 in honor of Europe Day.



# C

## oming Soon...

### **Mission of Latin American Imams and Rabbis to the United States**

#### **Publication of a New Book**

Rabbi Marc Schneier is co-authoring a book with Imam Shamsi Ali which will analyze difficult and controversial passages from the Torah and the Quran. The much anticipated publication will present the voice of moderation in reviewing these sacred texts, making this book an invaluable resource in advancing Muslim Jewish relations to communities worldwide.



Photo by Gideon Lewin

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