

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program:
Year: 2022

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole report will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as a word document).

Name of the Program: The Municipal Forum for Interfaith Leaders

Year of activity: 2022

Name of the report's writer: Shai Hershkowitz

The function of the report's writer: Beit Morasha CEO and acting director of the program

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The number of active participants in the program:

The total number of participants including active alumni of previous years is 73.

Estimated number of impacted participants:

From discussions with the various faith leaders we have reached the conclusion that each has a minimum constituency of between 300-500 members. We, therefore, conclude that the total number of impacted individuals who are served by the Forum members is in excess of 20,000.

Give the actual state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

In 2022 we set up the newest leadership cohort in Shfar'am, an Arab city in Northern Israel with a population of 43,000 - Sunni Muslim, Christian Arabs, and Druze. Participants chosen included 7 Muslim Imams, 5 Druze Sheikhs, and 5 Christian clergymen. Program themes included: The role of the clergy in strengthening the relationship between religious denominations. Identifying community needs for improvement and preservation. Interfaith trends in Israel and their impact on the local community. Round table discussions with local officials and police commanders of Shfar'am and the neighboring regional council of I'billin. Core values in formal and informal education settings - wisdom, courage, justice, and mercy. Accepting the "other" - meetings with rabbis from the Jewish communities in the region.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

Sadly, we have to open this section of the report with the update that our beloved project director, Netanel Yechielli, passed away unexpectedly in the middle of the year. Beyond

the deep sense of sorrow that we all felt – and shared with Netanel’s family – this also required a major change in the management of the project. Shai Hershkowitz, Beit Morasha CEO, assumed ongoing project management until the appointment of Sheikh Yunes Amasha at mid-year. Sheikh Yunes and Shai are now sharing responsibility with Sheikh Yunes assuming more and more responsibilities and obligations. We anticipate that in 2023, Sheikh Yunes will lead the project with part-time help from Shai.

An additional challenge of the past year was the political uncertainty that affected the ability of government ministries and agencies to undertake new initiatives and commit to new funding. During 2022 we, therefore, focused on 4 key goals: (1) building the new cohort in Shfar’am – as described above, (2) developing the program for 2023 which calls for a major expansion of the leadership seminars in an additional 3 mixed cities – Nof Galil, Jaffa, and Akko, (3) building a social media presence, and (4) running a small but impactful number of public events. In addition, following the national elections at the end of the year, we were able to secure a commitment from the Interior Ministry for modest funding for our expanded 2023 programs.

The following are some of the major 2022 achievements – some of which we reported to the foundation during the course of the year.

*In November, the Forum held a unique conference that coincided with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Conference venue was the Israeli National Library and it was entitled “**Violence – Not in My Religion: The Role of the Religious Leaders in Preventing Violence and Specifically Violence Against Women.**” The conference, held in cooperation with the Religious Sectors Division of the Ministry of the Interior, MATANEL, and the Michal Sela Forum, was reported on in the Jerusalem Post and YNET as well as distributed as a Beit Morasha newsletter. The following are the links to the newsletter and Jerusalem Post article:*

<https://www.jpost.com/special-content/violence-not-in-my-religion-723719>.

https://us15.campaign-archive.com/?e=test_email_&u=f9e8b08fd75efd4b8f4668238&id=dbeb429881

The conference was extremely well attended – nearly 100 participants on a day that was marked by the abduction and murder in Jenin of a young Israeli Druze, and the murder of a young yeshiva student in a bombing attack in Jerusalem. These horrific events threatened to cancel the conference, which was months in the planning, but the interfaith leaders chose to hold the conference and publically acclaim their common commitment to defeating any violence and particularly religious violence.

*In addition to the conference, our Forum was also actively involved in the **12th Annual Conference of the Council of Religious Leaders in Israel, “We Are All One Family”**, hosted at the Baha’i World Centre. Prof. Benjamin Ish-Shalom delivered a keynote address to the 115 participants, including leaders of diverse faith communities, the Minister of the Interior, the Mayor of Haifa, other government officials, and journalists.*

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

We will be able to forward the evaluation report in April once we conclude the process of collecting and evaluating the questionnaires.

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

In addition to the developments reported above, the key program advancement in 2023 will be the planning and implementation of the Training Center for Imams, a joint venture of Beit Morasha and the Muslim Department of the Interior Ministry’s Division of Non-Jewish Affairs. Today, the Interior Ministry oversees and pays the salaries of approximately 200 imams in Israel. Yet, there are no formal Imam training programs. The traditional roles of Imams are to lead prayers, deliver sermons, conduct religious

ceremonies, and provide religious and spiritual guidance. They are influential opinion makers who have a significant impact and outreach to their constituencies. The Imam training program's overarching goal will be to train the Imams to become transformative community leaders who will build bridges of understanding, tolerance, dignity, respect, and solidarity between the faith communities in their cities, in collaboration with their Jewish, Christian, and Druze counterparts. The training modules will comprise (a) religious Islam studies and a basic understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and the religious beliefs of the Druze and Baha'i sects, (b) an understanding of Israeli multi-cultural society including a 4-day educational tour introducing the students to the multi-faceted Israeli society, (c) interface with students in Jewish and Christian academies of study, (d) an introduction to the interaction between government, private sector, and NGOs, and (e) development of leadership skills.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report, and the list of the participants in the program (**as PDF documents**)

We are attaching the financial report and list of participants. We will be able to forward the evaluation report in April once we conclude the process of collecting and evaluating the questionnaires.

Please join photos – as **JPG files** – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seem to you relevant – as a **PDF document**.

Attached are various files of photos, documents, announcements, etc.

Please join a 5 minutes movie that presents your institution and the particular project supported by the Matanel Foundation. The movie should be accessible to the philanthropic world and to other potential donors.

We are preparing the movie that should be completed, together with the evaluation report, in April.