

## TANSANIA

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# Faith is the Fountain of Peace, Love and Understanding

THIRD DIALOGUE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN TANSANIA

**On November 14th, 2013 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Tanzania Country Office, together with the Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania (IRCPT) hosted a one-day workshop for religious leaders that brought together leaders from mainland Tanzania and those from the Joint Committee of Religious Leaders for Harmony, Peace and Tranquility (JCRLPTZ) in Zanzibar. Also present were representatives from Zanzibar Interfaith Centre (ZIC) and the National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide.**

The main theme of the workshop held at Accomondia Hotel in Dar es Salaam, was to share experiences on peace building and current challenges in the work of the inter-religious organizations and to chart out a common road-map for future co-operation.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Stefan Reith, KAS Resident Representative underscored the importance of collective efforts in peace building, saying that this was the main reason for mounting the idea of a joint meeting between the IRCPT and the JCRLPTZ. He said KAS had been working with IRCPT for the past four years and that he was happy that to have been given the opportunity this year following an invitation by the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre (ZIC) to join them for a conference in Stonetown. During the event the idea of organizing a workshop together was born. He said the motivation behind the workshop was to share ideas, challenges and exchange experiences.

The IRCPT Board Chairman, Justice (rtd.) Raymond Mwaikasu apart from briefing

workshop participants on the history of IRCPT underlined the importance of collective efforts in peace building. He lauded KAS for mooted the idea of bringing together IRCPT, ZIC and the JCRLPTZ saying the move was a step forward towards peace building and improvement of people's welfare in Tanzania.



*Raymond Mwaikasu outlines the history of IRCPT*

The Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania (IRCPT) is a forum for inter-religious dialogue and action. As its main task Mwaikasu mentioned the facilitation of discernments of commitments to comprehensive peace which are broadly shared and deeply held by the country's religious communities. It further builds the capacity of the religious communities to translate those commitments for the purpose of overcoming poverty, ignorance and marginalization so that people can participate fully in the decisions which affect their lives.

Historically, IRCPT was established in 1996 as World Conference on Religion and Peace Tanzania (WCRPT) and officially registered in year 2000 as an affiliate of World Confer-

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ence on Religion and Peace International (WCRP International). It changed the name to Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania (IRCPT) in January 2010 and became a member-based organization. The members are institutionalized and registered religious communities of Tanzania, which are in agreement with the purpose and principles of IRCPT.

On his part, Mr. Haji Musa, the representative of the Muftis Office in Zanzibar to the Joint Committee of Religious Leaders for Peace and Tranquillity in Zanzibar (JCRLPTZ Chairman), thanked KAS and IRCPT for involving ZIC and the JCRLPTZ in the workshop saying peace building in Tanzania had a lot of challenges that required them to work very closely.

He spoke very loudly against religious leaders who are used by politicians to meet their political agenda warning them that if they don't resist from being used they will find themselves in serious trouble.

Daniel Madsen, Coordinator of ZIC briefly outlined the history of the centre and what it stands for; saying its vision is to see a society in which people live together in peace and cooperation regardless of religion, nationality, age and gender differences.



*Daniel Madsen, Coordinator of the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre*

According to Mr. Madsen, the work of the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre started in 2009. It is a collaborative effort between the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania and DanMission, a Danish Mission and Development Organization, contributing to the existing interfaith activities in Zanzibar.

He informed workshop participants that the support centre has since then developed three areas of focus namely: to support and strengthen interfaith relations between religious leaders, to mobilize youth to work for peace and to provide a space for people to study.

He said at ZIC they offer computer and English courses for the youth. They were currently establishing a diploma course in Intercultural Relations in cooperation with Tumaini University in Dar es Salaam saying through the course they hope to be able to build the capacity of the interfaith practitioners in Zanzibar and beyond. Further they have already set up a small library which is currently used by students at all levels, from Tanzania and abroad.

Mr. Madsen thanked the various organizations who support them notably DanMission, United Evangelical Mission (UEM), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) together with the Danish and Norwegian Embassies in Tanzania.

With regard to the Joint Committee of Religious Leaders in Zanzibar, workshop participants were informed that it was officially established in August 2005. It consists of seven partners: The Mufti's office, the Qadi's Court, WAKF& Trust Commission, the Muslim Academy, the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the Lutheran Church. The Zanzibar Interfaith Centre supports the joint committee in efforts to promote peace during elections; establishing and developing 300 local peace committees; mediating interfaith conflicts when they occur and making joint statements in the media to address pertinent issues.

**Main issues raised and recommendations**

The opening session was followed by two presentations on Perspectives from both Zanzibar and Mainland Tanzania.

In his presentation Father Emmanuel Masoud, Vice Secretary of the JCRLPTZ took workshop participants through the history of Zanzibar starting from the slave trade days.

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According to him, the history of Zanzibar shows that even though over 95 per cent of the population is Moslem, it was the Sultan (himself a Moslem) who availed a plot to Christians to build a Church. Likewise, it was from Zanzibar that Christianity spread to the Mainland and beyond East Africa. Similarly, the history of Zanzibar is characterized by tranquillity and peaceful co-existence across race, religious, ethnicity or tribe.

However, the 1964 bloody revolution and its aftermath were the harbinger of suspicion and counter-succession between the revolutionaries and reactionaries. According to Masoud, matters came to fever pitch with the dawn of liberal political economy when the old political wounds sprouted in the political parties Civic United Front (CUF) and Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM). In essence therefore, the conflicts in Zanzibar were not religious but rather political and hence must seek answers from political situations. The coming together of CUF and CCM through the Government of National Unity (GNU) is a step towards peaceful co-existence.

With regard to what the Joint Committee of Religious Leaders in Zanzibar was doing, Father Masoud enumerated several activities they were undertaking in order to promote peace building and the interfaith dialogue. These include the establishment of 300 local peace committees; mediating interfaith conflicts when they occur; issuing statements on specific developments relating to conflict and peace building; the production of a booklet titled: Mizozo na Namna ya Kuitambua, Kuikinga na Kuitatua. Copies have been distributed to various actors including Members of the House of Representatives and preparation is under way to avail copies to MPs on Mainland Tanzania.

With regard to challenges in the work of the JCRLPTZ, he listed the following:

Recent developments, in which religious leaders, police, government officials and even visitors have had to endure acid attacks, been hacked with machetes, being shot at and even killed. The worse part of the story is that state organs claim to have

no working gear to contain such waves of lawlessness and murder;

There is an inbuilt perception that the Committee was used by a certain political party for a political cause;

The Committee has equally been accused of intending to form a new religion in the country; and

The Committee is dependent on external donors for the Committee's operations which complicates its work.

Father Masoud ended his presentation by expressing the Committee's appreciation to various institutions that support them. These include Caritas Tanzania, Norwegian Church Aid, DanMission and KAS Tanzania.

The other presentation was done by Ms Juliana Laurent from the National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide. According to Ms Laurent the Committee is an outcome of the 2012 Great Lakes Declaration also known as "The Dar es Salaam Declaration against Genocide". It is one of the 10 Protocols adopted in the Dar es Salaam Declaration in an effort to preserve peace and tranquility in the Great Lakes member states.

The Committee, which operates from the offices of the Commission of Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRGG), is mandated to collect and analyze data related to genocide and report it to government for action. With regard to the Committee's organizational structure, she informed workshop participants that the Chairperson of the Committee comes from the parent ministry – the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, while the Vice-Chairperson comes from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution. The Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation provides the Secretary while committee members are drawn from various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Ms Laurent reported that her Committee has been working very closely with IRCPT saying so far they have been able to conduct awareness building seminars in four regions namely Dar es Salaam, Mwanza,

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Mbeya and Zanzibar. In such seminars, she said the message is on peaceful co-existence among the various communities regardless of their social differences. The Committee was also providing public education through TV and Radio Programs. She appreciated the role played by IRCPT through its Executive Secretary Father Cannon Godda saying he was engaged by her Committee as facilitator in all their awareness seminars.

With regard to challenges of the work of the Committee she listed the following:

Awareness building workshops still focusing on those at the top - there is need to go down to the grassroots communities including those in rural areas;

The Committee needs to bring together religious and government leaders together at various levels of hierarchy;

Even with the presence of IRCPT there are some religious groupings which still work on their own, in fact some are trouble shooters themselves instead of preaching peace and harmony;

There is still no feedback to communities what is being done at the top; and

There is a tendency of passing-on-the buck or passing on blames to others instead of working together.

Ms Juliana Laurent ended her presentation with thanks to IRCPT for involving the National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide in many of her activities.



*About 30 participants convened for the meeting in Dar es Salaam*

**Recommendations**

The presentations were followed by lively discussions during which a number of issues were brought out and the following recommendations were made:

I. Religious leaders should refrain from being used by politicians to achieve their political goals;

II. IRCPT and ZIC should forge even a stronger alliance in their endeavor to instill a culture of peace and harmony in the communities across religious differences;

III. The Joint Committee for Religious Leaders for Peace and Tranquility in Zanzibar should bring government representatives on board; this way the Committee could even access government funding;

IV. Poverty and economic disparities are the root cause of social tensions in the communities, as such it is important to address these factors collectively;

V. Unemployment and reeking poverty were breeding ground for frustration among the youth and source of other social evils, there is a need to take necessary efforts to solve the problem of unemployment;

VI. State organs should stand up and be held accountable given the escalation of lawlessness in the communities;

VII. Social injustices in the communities is driving people to take law in their own hands, hence it is important that state organs take up the challenge to ensure justice is done in a very transparent manner and seems to be done;

VIII. Unless socio-economic factors that trigger tensions and violence in the communities were tackled head-on, the long cherished peace in Tanzania is dangerously on the wane;

IX. Religious leaders should work hard and collectively to revive the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding which are disappearing in the communities;

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In line with the title of the event faith was identified as a fountain of peace, love and understanding. At the end of the day participants were certain: The now started co-operation of the inter-religious organizations IRCPT, ZIC and JCRLPTZ should be followed up and intensively promoted and encouraged.

Organizers and participants moved to a positive conclusion of the workshop, because besides reaching the initial aim of getting to know each other and share experiences, an intense networking between key stakeholders in the field of interreligious dialogue in Zanzibar and Tanzania Mainland took place. These contacts shall be further developed and deepened in the future so that despite all cultural differences between and within the communities, synergies in the work of the respective organizations can arise.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Tanzania will continue to support the efforts of the inter-religious organizations and hence contribute to the preservation of peace, freedom and religious tolerance in her partner country Tanzania. In so doing it can also be assured that these experiences find their way into the debate on integration and inter-religious co-existence in Germany.



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**Impressum**

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