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# EUROPEAN PUBLIC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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## **Ukrainian religious leaders address the press**

Religious leaders from the Ukraine held a national press conference on the current religious situation in the country and around the globe.

Almost 50 journalists from different media attended the event at the Ukrainian press centre in Kiev on 17 January 2003, held to mark World Religion Day. They heard presentations by the Roman Catholic Bishop Stanislav Shirokoradyuk, Chief Rabbi Yacob Dov Blaich, and a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly, as well as officials such as the head of the State committee on religious affairs of Ukraine, the pro-rector of a Christian university and the deputy director of the G. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Science of Ukraine.

The religious leaders discussed the state of religion worldwide, as well as inter-religious dialogue and spiritual education of children.

The conference was supported by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Science of Ukraine, and Bahá'ís had encouraged professors of religious studies and leading scientists A.M. Kolodniy and L.A. Philipovich to hold the event and invite religious leaders from the Ukraine.

A Bahá'í press kit was given out, along with a message from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ukraine, the message of the Universal House of Justice to the religious leaders of the World in English and Ukrainian and books on the Bahá'í Faith.

The press conference was aired on the radio and on a television news programme.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of the Ukraine)

## **Public conference at Bahá'í centre in Nice**

Bahá'ís in Nice, France, held a public meeting on globalisation at their local centre, covered in the regional French newspaper *Nice Matin*, December 2002. The story begins by referring to a photo and reads, "The Bahá'í centre in Nice, as an objective towards promotion of social and world peace, works against prejudices, fanaticism, religious and ethnic segregation..." The article continues by informing about the latest of a series of regularly held public conferences, where Professor Charvain, from the Faculty of Law and Economics in Nice, addressed a filled Bahá'í centre on the positive and negative impacts of globalisation. The article notes that without neglecting the positive effects of globalisation in regards to communications and cultural exchanges, the speaker regretted that the main actors in the

globalisation process were not focussing enough on the eradication of poverty in the world.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of France)

## **Religion Day includes interview on Portuguese television**

As part of World Religion Day, a television programme on religion in Portugal interviewed a Bahá'í and a Catholic priest. The half-hour interview was organised by a Catholic priest and shown on 30 January 2003. It was aired on the national broadcasting television channel TVI, reaching a potential audience of hundreds of thousands of viewers. (For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Portugal)

## **Spanish photo exhibit dedicated to the women of the world attracts media attention**

The inauguration of the exhibition "Women of the World: Reflections of the Spirit", prepared by the Bahá'í photographer Francisco González took place on 11 February.

The exhibition, displayed in the Radio and Television Andaluza (RTVA) headquarters on the island Cartuja, was dedicated to the women of the world. The photos in the exhibit were accompanied by selected Bahá'í texts on gender equality.

The launch of the exhibition was attended by the director general of RTVA, Don Rafael Camacho, and the Director of Information Services of Canal Sur TV, Don Francisco Luís Córdoba, as well as the provincial director of the Andalusian Women's Institute, journalists, the general public and friends of the Bahá'í community.

An afternoon broadcast by Canal Sur TV covered the opening. Canal Sur Radio interviewed Francisco González and aired an interview on their Sunday programme "Reporteros Solidarios". Three regional newspapers and public radio also covered the event. The RTVA sent out a press release about the show that was given to all communication media and was posted with photos of the exhibition on its Web page.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain)

## **French Web site updated**

A French Web site, Les Nouvelles Baha'ies Internationales (<http://nbi9.free.fr>), has been updated with news and photos. The site provides news in French about activities of the Bahá'í International Community. The site's organisers are currently looking for individuals

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with knowledge of PHP or MySQL, who could assist in setting up a search engine for browsing the news.  
(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of France)

### **Promoting Positive Messages through theatre in Bosnian schools**

BIC-OPI Paris facilitated a training on 21–24 January 2003 for teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to use theatre in schools for conflict resolution.

Teachers from the Tuzla region attended a five-day seminar on “Promoting Positive Messages through the Media: The Happy Hippo Show”, organised by two participants who had attended similar programmes in the past. The participants from the Tuzla Pedagogical Institute provided the training, adapting it to the needs of their culture and nation. Renowned actor and theatre director Vlado Kerošević attended two days of training to assist primary and secondary teachers better understand the function of child psychology and theatre. The attendants discussed, in depth, the roots of conflict and said the newly gained knowledge in dealing with conflict would help them and their students build a better future, one where fear would fade and hope could flourish. At the end of the five days, the ten teachers and two facilitators returned to their region to immediately begin projects in their communities. Sketches will be presented in the five schools, which will be evaluated by the facilitators. The two best plays will be selected and performed in front of an audience of teachers, students, and the general public at the Tuzla Theatre Kerošević. For this final stage, press, radio, and television are also invited. Presentations on the show are also being planned for the press and on radio and television programmes, and information about the seminar and the project will be sent to newspapers and radio stations for possible interviews and recordings of the final play.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI, Paris)

### **Panel on Women and their Faith in Germany**

In December 2002, a panel of Bahá'í, Jewish, and Muslim women in Saarbrücken, Germany, took part in a lively public discussion on their relationship to their religious communities.

The event was the first of a series of panel discussions of “What They Have to Say: World Religions in Discourse”, a project launched by the German Federal Office for Political Education, the Intercultural Council of Germany, and the Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance.

The discussion on “Women in Islam, Judaism, and the Bahá'í Faith” was moderated by Mr. Peter Schneider from the Bonn-based newspaper *Generalanzeiger*. He

asked each of the three speakers to relate their experiences.

Mrs. Petra Kunik, a journalist representing the Jewish community, said modern Jewish women were increasingly dissatisfied with the orthodox view of a women's domain being in the house. There were signs that a more liberal attitude was gaining ground.

Mrs. Iyman Salwa Alzayed, an Islamic theologian who spoke on behalf of Muslim women, said many of the restrictions inflicted on women in Muslim countries are cultural peculiarities of the regions and not the result of Islam.

Speaking as a Bahá'í, Mrs. Christine Mazurkiewicz talked about the organisation of the community, its finance and worship practices, and other issues.

The series “What They Have to Say: World Religions in Discourse” was launched in October 2002 to bring together representatives from six world religions in a common project and to express their views on current political and social issues.

The panel discussions can be held for trade unions, schools, clubs or at adult evening classes and the topics range from violence and extremism to basic social values.  
(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany)

### **Bahá'ís contribute to a Turkish conference on peace**

Bahá'ís gave three presentations at the Third Generations Towards Peace event, which took place in Turkey in December 2002. The event was organized by the Santa Claus Foundation, a Turkish NGO and church that organises activities every year in Antalya, close to the former home of the saint. The NGO is open to politicians, academic staff, religious leaders, and other prominent people from Turkey and diverse countries that are interested. The conferences attract people from around the world. In recent years, representatives of thirteen religions from seventy-four countries have participated at this programme.

In addition to the Bahá'í presentations, the *Sound of Unity Dance Group* performed three times for the event. Bahá'ís have collaborated with the organisation since 1996, and about 13 Bahá'ís attended the latest event. The Bahá'í presentations and youth dance groups regularly attract attention and admiration at the events.

A prayer by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was read during a devotional meeting for peace with representatives of four religions. The Bahá'í prayer attracted great attention from the audience, and many people asked for more information about the Faith.

(For further information please the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey)

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*The EPIB reports on recent Public Information activities in Europe. Please send all news concerning Public Information to be published directly to BIC-OPI, Paris no later than the 25th of each month (25 March for the next issue) to the attention of Jessica Dacey. The Office of Public Information may edit articles received, and decide on the publication of all submitted material.*

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