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SAUDI ORGANIZATION FUNDS JEWISH-MUSLIM GATHERING IN ITALY

Antisemitism among immigrants and refugees from Muslim countries is among the issues that the conference is bound to discuss.

BY ROSSELLA TERCATIN / SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 17:39

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General view of Matera's Sassi limestone cave dwellings in southern Italy.. (photo credit: REUTERS/TONY GENTILE)





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Jewish and Muslim leaders from 15 countries have gathered in southern [Italy](#) to attend an event focusing on the dialogue and the partnership between the two communities, the German newspaper DW reported on Saturday.

The Jewish European Islamic Summit was scheduled to kick off on Sunday in Matera, which was selected as one of Europe's 2019 cultural capitals.

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The event is organized by the Muslim Jewish Leadership Council (MJLC). The Council describes itself as an organization whose prime mission is "to renew in Europe a culture of respect and appreciation of religious identities, specifically Judaism and Islam."

The group was established in 2015. Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), has been a member since its beginnings. The CER is currently one of the organizations in MJLC's network.

A notable aspect of MJLC is that it receives substantial financial support from [Saudi Arabia](#), through the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) – another organization in MJLC's network. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz ruled Saudi Arabia between 2005 and 2015.

The Center was established by Saudi Arabia, Austria and Spain by international treaty in 2011.

However, earlier this year the Austrian parliament voted the withdrawal from the treaty and according to DW, the future of KAICIID is at risk.





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"While the KAICIID is financed by Saudi Arabia, it is respected among experts," DM pointed out.

"Imams and rabbis are coming together on their own, without third-party mediation – here in Europe, outside the Middle East. And that they're saying, we don't want anyone to tell us how relations between Jews and Muslims have to be," Tarafa Baghajati, a prominent Austrian imam, told DW ahead of the summit in Matera.

Attempts to limit religious rights such as ritual slaughter in Europe is one of the main concerns of the event's organizers.

Antisemitism among immigrants and refugees from Muslim countries is also an issue that the conference is bound to discuss.

"Instances of antisemitism among migrants is troubling," CER Secretary General Gady Gronich told DW.

"Unfortunately, we're hearing of such cases more frequently, on a weekly basis. Nevertheless, the Jewish community has many Muslim partners and friends across Europe who stand with us in opposition to it."

"We cannot forget that there are a number of groups on the Muslim side that do not want to talk to us. It's not all rosy, and not everyone is willing to engage in dialogue. But we want to exchange ideas with those who are willing to talk, so that we can build a future together," Gronich added.

<https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Saudi-organization-funds-Jewish-Muslim-gathering-in-Italy-601884>

