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1/4



European Imams, Rabbis in Summit on Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Populism

By David Israel - 16 Elul 5779 - September 16, 2019

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Jewish and Arab youths

Imams and rabbis from across Europe on Sunday began a summit organized by the Muslim Jewish Leadership Council in Matera, southern Italy, to discuss anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and nationalistic populism, Deutsche Welle reported (Muslim, Jewish leaders team up in 'exemplary' European initiative).



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2/4



Matera, southern Italy / Samuele Wikipediano 1348 via Wikimedia

Tarafa Baghajati, a Viennese civil engineer who is also one of Austria's most prominent Muslim leaders, described the summit as "a tender blossom that must be nurtured and that deserves further support."

The Muslim Jewish Leadership Council (MJLC) was established three years ago by 14 European Jewish and Muslim leaders who met in Vienna at the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, known as KAICIID. Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt.





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3/4



Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), was a founding member.

According to Deutsche Welle, KAICIID is respected among experts, despite the fact that it is financed by Saudi Arabia. But in June, the Austrian parliament voted to withdraw from the international group and cancel the authorization of Vienna as KAICIID's headquarters. Austria, Spain, and Saudi Arabia were the group's initial founders.

Nevertheless, the Matera meeting represents a new dimension in the dialogue, as imams and rabbis from Ireland to Romania are in attendance. CER Secretary General Gady Gronich told DW that this newfound unity is further stressed by meeting in Italy, which is currently governed by nationalist populists and is seeking to limit ritual slaughtering of animals and male circumcision.

Gronich said that Muslims and Jews are planning to use the in Matera conference to create a new committee comprised of two Jewish and two Muslim leaders, to publicly address controversial topics and discuss them with European political leaders.

Another topic to be discussed in Matera is the problem of anti-Semitism among refugees and migrants, according to DW.





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4/4



“Instances of anti-Semitism among migrants is troubling,” Gronich said. “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.”

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