

For Immediate Release:

The Mosaic Institute Presents "Where Are We Now? The Status of Peacebuilding in the Middle East," Fourth Event in the *Building Bridges in Canada Series*

Toronto – September 17, 2009. Last evening, the Mosaic Institute was proud to bring together a panel of leading Canadian and international scholars in a panel discussion and dialogue session on current challenges- political, economic, and diplomatic- to healthy relations between communities and nations of the Middle East. The event was held at the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for International Studies.

The discussion was moderated expertly by Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan, Warden of St. Anthony's College at Oxford University and author of the award-winning *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. Professor MacMillan is also a Member of the Advisory Council to the Mosaic Institute. She was joined on stage by three accomplished and much-admired experts on the Middle East:

- Fawaz Gerges, Chair of Middle Eastern Politics and International Relations at the London School of Economics, has extensive experience in Middle East affairs and has interviewed hundreds of civil society leaders, activists, and both moderate and radical Muslims from communities in the Middle East, Europe and North America. He is the author of two recently acclaimed books: *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* and *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. Professor Gerges is now working on a volume tentatively titled *Understanding Muslim Politics: From Nasser to Bin Laden*.
- Marc Gopin, James H. Laue Professor of Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, and Director of the Center on Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Virginia, has engaged in back channel diplomacy with religious, political, and military figures on both sides of conflicts, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. He has also trained thousands of people worldwide in peacemaking strategies for complex conflicts in which religion and culture play a role. His published works include *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* and *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*. His latest book is *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps to Making Peace*

with Yourself and Others.

- Bessma Momani, Associate Professor and Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance and Innovation at the University of Waterloo, has participated in several projects that have examined Middle East economic integration, intraregional investments, US plans for a Middle East free trade area, and IMF-Middle East relations. She has authored a monograph entitled *IMF-Egyptian Negotiations*, co-authored *Twentieth Century World History*, and co-edited *Canada and the Middle East* with Paul Heinbecker, Canada's former Ambassador to the United Nations.

The panellists discussed the importance of moderate voices speaking far more loudly than they currently do in both public debates and private discussions about the Middle East, and they both encouraged and challenged members of the Jewish and Arab diasporas in the audience to take a more active role in working to connect people from their respective communities and at all levels of society to promote an end to the conflict. They also challenged audience members to examine how, as Canadians, they can have an impact on the peace process by encouraging Canada's government to assume a more active role in promoting peace throughout the Middle East, and in building economic and social ties with people in the region.

Approximately 110 invited guests from Canada's Arab and Jewish communities participated actively in Wednesday evening's session.

Building Bridges in Canada: New Perspectives on People and Peace is a multi-part Speakers' Series that runs from March to November 2009. It is bringing together leaders of those ethnocultural and faith-based communities in Canada that have strong historical and personal connections to the Middle East, with an eye to increasing mutual understanding, identifying common ground and eventually committing to collaborative peacebuilding activities. It is being presented by the Mosaic Institute in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity.

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