# Preparing for Peace

# Review of the Church of Norway's Inter-Religious Dialogue in Israel/Palestine 1995-2017

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# Review of the Church of Norway's Inter-Religious Dialogue in Israel/Palestine - 1995-2017

Scanteam
Analysts and Advisers

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CRIHL | Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MKR | Council on Ecumenical and International Relations (Mellomkirkelig Råd) |
| SfCG | Search for Common Ground |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |

# Executive Summary

Norad has requested a review of the inter-religious dialogue project in Israel/Palestine carried out by the Church of Norway's Council on Ecumenical and International Relations *(Mellomkirkelig Råd*, MKR). The project has been running since 1995, and has received approximately NOK 24 million over this period from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Rev. Dr Trond Bakkevig has from the outset been responsible for facilitating the dialogue, as well as for building and sustaining a network of religious actors and institutions. The project seeks to get religious leaders to contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict by preparing and maintaining a network of religious leaders who can advise on inter-religious matters in negotiations and publicly support a peace agreement.

## *Background*

***The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land*** (CRIHL) was formed in 2005 to be a permanent forum, and a representative body that can be consulted by political leaders on religious issues relevant to a lasting and just peace. CRIHL is MKR's cooperation partner in the project. CRIHL is made up of Jewish, Muslim and Christian institutions: the *Chief Rabbinate* of Israel; the *Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs* and/or the S*upreme Judge of the Sharia Courts* (currently the latter); and the *Heads of the Local Churches of the Holy Land*. A '*core group*' of representatives that does not include the Jewish and Muslim top leaders meets between meetings of the council members. In 2008 the Council decided to establish a *secretariat* in Jerusalem, and entered into cooperation with the Jerusalem branch of the international peace organisation Search for Common Ground (SfCG). SfCG has provided administrative and technical support for CRIHL. MKR has been responsible for the administration of the secretariat, and the Norwegian convener has been its responsible manager. This review focuses on the development, functioning and activities of CRIHL since 2005.

## *Results*

The most significant achievement of MKR's work is the continued formal existence of CRIHL as an institution-based Israeli-Palestinian dialogue for over a decade, despite a stalled peace process, political obstacles and armed violence. Top-level meetings of CRIHL members have been rare, however. Though the "core group" of representatives has continued to meet and to take new initiatives, this is not the same as the continuous dialogue process between all the heads of the member institutions, on which the promise of CRIHL is premised. Since 2008, CRIHL has undertaken various activities to enhance trust between the parties and to follow up relevant concerns raised by CRIHL members. Target groups have included young religious leaders, teachers of religion and journalists. Sub-projects have been undertaken on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with CRIHL's general aims and thematic concerns, but not based on an explicit strategy or an assessment of CRIHL's organisational strengths and weaknesses.

Some of these projects have not realised their goals (such as establishing a network of young religious leaders), while others have delivered important outputs, but

could not be followed up as planned (such as a schoolbook study). Several projects have been terminated before all the planned activities were completed, or have been realised without the participation of all sides, sometimes due to political decisions.

### *Efficiency*

These weaknesses are partly due to the nature of the conflict and to political factors outside the control of CRIHL and MKR, but are also due to a weak organisation structure, lack of a clear strategy, inadequate project planning and risk management, dependence on a single facilitator and long-distance management of local staff. The most important concern over efficiency is wasted effort: the number of projects that have not produced intended results. In this sense, efficiency could have been improved through better planning, an explicit strategy and systematic monitoring/reporting.

### *Relevance*

Stakeholders highlight CRIHL's relevance in the context of a future peace process, based on the importance of religion as a legitimating and mobilizing factor among the populations, and on a critique of the peace process for neglecting this factor. CRIHL is not a relevant actor at present, however, in part because the political situation is too difficult, because the religious leaders involved lack interest, credibility, and initiative or because CRIHL lacks strategy, communication skills, and outreach to important groups. The relevance to the institutions taking part is demonstrated by the fact that they agreed to found CRIHL, despite fears of public reaction, and have maintained it despite numerous setbacks. The CRIHL platform has also given members international exposure. Currently, however, CRIHL is in maintenance mode only; the Chief Rabbis have shown little interest, and the Supreme Judge has on several occasions stopped Muslim Palestinian participation in CRIHL projects. CRIHL remains relevant for Christian religious leaders, who have had the most to gain from such a platform, but the least power to effect change. The project is viewed as relevant for the MFA despite the modest results both because it serves as a source of information on religio-political developments, and because the project is perceived as potentially important in a larger political context. Here CRIHL seems to have gained a certain international recognition, as illustrated by a meeting between CRIHL and US envoy Greenblatt in May 2017.

### *Sustainability*

Key stakeholders underline CRIHL's dependence on the Norwegian convener and Norwegian funds; if Norway and MKR pull out, CRIHL could well fall apart. Despite MKR's formal role as administrative manager of the project, this has always been a one-person project. The Norwegian convener has been the key actor from the outset, both in building and sustaining inter-religious relations and CRIHL's membership and in executing strategic decisions, maintaining contact with the donor, and so forth. A key constraint is the weak transfer of knowledge and information sharing in general between MKR staff and the convener. Weak sustainability and accountability are hence important liabilities that need to be tackled if the project is to be continued.

While other dialogue projects have developed through reviews and learning exercises, this project has not been reviewed before now. This review suggests that learning at an earlier stage could have added essential value and support to enhance the organisational structure, sustainability and accountability of the project.

### *The way forward*

Stakeholders and observers in the field underscored that CRIHL should be continued in some form, mainly due to its possible role in a future process. However, it is difficult to justify continuing support for a project based on a role it *may* play in the future. CRIHL therefore needs to put forward a convincing proposal for how it will contribute to peacebuilding in a next funding period, focused on achieving results rather than preserving potential. To do so, it must tackle questions over its sustainability, the commitment of its members, its purpose during a prolonged hiatus in the peace process, and its influence on the public.

The review therefore recommends that *decisions on future funding should rely on the outcome of a process* where CRIHL members define their purpose and strategy in the continuing absence of a political settlement to support.

### *Recommendations*

To CRIHL

1. Conduct a strategy process with all CRIHL's stakeholders, facilitated by external moderators, to formulate a clear strategy and clarify members' roles and commitments.
2. Ensure sustainability through diversified funding and a planned succession for the convener. The present convener should be encouraged to continue as long as he is able and willing, and to overlap with another facilitator to transfer knowledge and experience.
3. Focus on activities to increase CRIHL's public outreach among the religious communities based on a stakeholder analysis of all relevant actors. Ensure conflict-sensitive and gender-inclusive planning of events.
4. Consider recruiting additional members to CRIHL to enhance representation of relevant actors and constituencies.

To MKR

5. Clarify whether MKR wishes to continue managing possible Norwegian support for the project, and what institutional arrangements would be needed.
6. Ensure institutional grounding. Ensure that future management are organically integrated in the project, to provide genuine support for the Norwegian convener. Ensure professional management.

To the MFA

7. Define the MFA's interest in the project and signal on what grounds continued funding might be expected. Require the project to report in a format that allows the MFA to have a clear overview of project developments and address weaknesses and strengths, as well as results.

8. Make available funding, if requested, to support a strategy process with professional facilitation help over a suitable period.
9. Make further funding contingent on a renewed strategy from CRIHL and a clarification of MKR's role in the project. Continued funding should also be based on, and enable, inclusion of a broader critical mass in decision-making and strategic planning, and the phasing-in of an additional convener and eventual successor.
10. While MFA alone has been responsible for funding of CRIHL, it might consider seeking partnership with other countries that are engaged in developing Israeli-Palestinian relations.

# 1 Introduction and Background

The Church of Norway's ***Council on Ecumenical and International Relations*** *(Mellomkirkelig Råd*, hereafter MKR) has since 1995 facilitated dialogue between religious leaders in Israel/Palestine. Rev. Dr Trond Bakkevig, a pastor of the Church of Norway, has from the outset been responsible for facilitating the dialogue, as well as for building and sustaining the network of religious leaders and institutions. The MKR's work also includes information activities and inter-religious dialogue in Norway about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

***The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land*** (CRIHL) was formed in 2005 and is the MKR's cooperation partner in the project. Members of the Council include representatives of key religious institutions in the region (see below). The projects have been implemented in dialogue with Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Norwegian Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Norwegian Representative Office in Al-Ram. The MKR has also cooperated with the Jerusalem branch of the international peace organisation ***Search for Common Ground*** **(SfCG**), and CRIHL hires offices and administrative support from SfCG in Jerusalem. In total, approximately **NOK 24 million** have been allocated to MKR's religious dialogue project in the Middle East since 1999. The latest agreement between the MFA and MKR covers a two-year period (2015–2016) with just under NOK 3.9 million. (See figure 1 at the end of this chapter with an overview of the organisational structure.)

The **overall objective** of the project is that religious leaders contribute to a peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. The ***concrete objective*** is to cultivate, prepare and maintain a network of religious leaders who can take roles as advisors when required for negotiations related to (inter-)religious matters and who can publicly lend their support to a peace agreement.[1]

The dialogue project[2] has also become involved with several sub-projects, which have been carried out by various partner organisations and with various funding sources. The religious leaders are the primary ***target group***, and constitute the project's stakeholder circle 1. Circle 2 includes participants in CRIHL subprojects that have targeted teachers, journalists and young religious leaders. While one could in principle identify a third circle of beneficiaries from these activities,[3] e.g. pupils of the religious teachers trained in CRIHL's workshops for teachers, the

[1] MKR's application to the MFA (2015).
[2] In project documents, MKR and the MFA define this as a project, though the long duration and the variety of sub-projects/activities it has engaged in, suggest it is less bounded than a project typically is. MKR's engagement started as an informal investigation of opportunities to bring religious leaders together, but has since developed into a broader engagement centred around the Norwegian convener's role as a permanent convener of CRIHL. Regardless, the review will refer to the dialogue efforts as "project", to be consistent with the MKR and MFA terminology.
[3] Stakeholder groups have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a program or project; they include target groups, direct beneficiaries, those responsible for ensuring that the results are produced as planned, and those that are accountable for the resources that they provide to that program or project. Stakeholder circles are a tool to assess the influence of key stakeholders and plan how to engage with them and their contributions/expectations. In this case, the circles were defined according to the following criteria: Circle 1 and 2 are those directly or indirectly involved with the project and circle 3 are those that may be affected by the project's outcome.

readership of journalists that participated in CRIHL's media project etc, these have been brief and recent activities, and any effect would be hard to document.

## 1.1 The CRIHL Members

CRIHL is made up of representatives of Jewish, Muslim and Christian institutions: The Chief Rabbinate of Israel; the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Islamic Waqf and/or the Supreme Judge of the Sharia Courts; and the Heads of the Local Churches of the Holy Land. A "core group" meets between meetings of the principals. Trond Bakkevig acts as convener.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel[4] is a body established by law[5] that addresses questions of religious law (halakhah), issues kosher certificates, and licenses rabbinical-court judges, town rabbis and marriage registrars. It has jurisdiction over such areas as marriage, divorce, burial, conversion, and supervision of holy sites. The Council of the Chief Rabbinate consists of two Chief Rabbis, one Sephardic and one Ashkenazi, together with the town rabbis of Israel and additional elected members. The presidency alternates among the two Chief Rabbis, who are elected for ten-year terms by an assembly consisting of rabbis and public representatives. The then Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron played a part in the 2002 Alexandria meeting and made a noted visit to Hebron to defuse tensions. Founding members of CRIHL Yona Metzger and Shlomo Amar, elected in 2003, also took active part in several CRIHL activities, unlike their successors David Lau and Yitzhak Yosef (from 2013). From the beginning, the Chief Rabbinate has also been represented in CRIHL by its director-general Oded Wiener (now retired) and its advisor rabbi David Rosen, who continue to meet in the core group.

The PA's Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs oversees religious endowments (waqf), mosques and imams, including their Friday sermons. The Sharia Courts have jurisdiction over family law.[6] The Supreme Judge (Qadi al-Quda) of the Palestinian Sharia Courts is appointed by and answers to the Palestinian president.[7] Palestinian Muslims were first represented in CRIHL by shaykh Taysir Tamimi, the then Supreme Judge. After Tamimi's unscheduled speech at the CRIHL's 2009 meeting with the Pope, he was replaced by Mahmoud Habbash. Habbash was minister of religious affairs from 2009 to 2014; he is now Supreme Judge, as well as the personal advisor to Abbas on religious affairs. The present minister of religious affairs, Youssef Ideiss, is not involved with CRIHL.[8] Habbash will not attend CRIHL meetings unless the Chief Rabbis do so. In the core group, the Muslim representative remains Salah Zuhayka, a former deputy minister of religious affairs who now works with a cultural association in East Jerusalem.

The Heads of the Local Churches of the Holy Land represent 13 churches in all. CRIHL lists the Greek Orthodox, Latin, and Armenian Orthodox Patriarchates and the Anglican-

[4] http://www.rabanut.gov.il.
[5] Chief Rabbinate of Israel Law 5740 (1980), English translation at : https://web.archive.org/web/20170217091701/http://www.israellawresourcecenter.org/israellaws/fulltext/chiefrabbinateisrael.htm
[6] The Sharia courts of the PA should not be confused with the Sharia courts of Israel, which come under the Israeli Ministry of Justice, see: http://www.justice.gov.il/En/Units/ShariaCourts/Pages/default.aspx
[7] http://kudah.pna.ps/english.aspx
[8] One Muslim source suggested he would be easier to work with than Habbash.

Episcopal and Lutheran Evangelical Churches as the primary representatives.[9] In practice, the most active participants have been Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah (now retired)[10] and Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan. Younan, who has been a central partner for Bakkevig, continues to meet in the core group.[11] The Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, Pierbattista Pizzaballa, has also participated in recent meetings.

## 1.2 The Role of the Norwegian Convener

In characterizations of third party actors in peace processes, evaluators and scholars often distinguish the role of a facilitator from that of a mediator: A facilitator enables stakeholders to develop their own solutions through various techniques, such as dialogue meetings. The mediator has the different role of assisting parties in reaching a common agreement through pre-negotiations, negotiations and implementation of agreements.[12] In some cases these roles overlap.[13] Neither of these labels seems appropriate to the Norwegian engagement in this project: First, there is no peace process to mediate. Second, Bakkevig's role is to prepare leaders who are not part of any peace negations, but have influence through their mandates as heads of religious institutions. His main focus has been on maintaining relations and the continued existence of CRIHL. Bakkevig's *role in this project* can perhaps best be described with the term CRIHL and Bakkevig themselves have chosen, i.e., the *convener of CRIHL*. As convener, he acts without a specific mandate from the MFA, but he has gained such a degree of trust that he has been able to act freely and to develop various activities more or less as he wished for more than two decades.

## 1.3 Religious Dialogue in Political Context

The project was started due to concerns that the Oslo peace process had not included religious actors or addressed the religious dimensions of the conflict, including difficult issues such as the holy sites in Jerusalem. In a region where religion and politics are closely intertwined, and a conflict where religious history and notions of holy land inform the territorial claims of both sides, a purely "secular" final agreement would lack legitimacy among important segments of the public. These concerns are no less relevant today. Since Oslo, religious identification has become increasingly visible and salient in public life;[14] religious extremism has threatened

[9] For details, see the CRIHL website, https://www.crihl.org/members

[10] The CRIHL website is out of date on this point; after Sabbah's successor Fouad Twal resigned in 2016, the seat has been vacant, with Gianbattista Pizzaballa as Apostolic Administrator.

[11] The public role and legal authority of these institutions is in part a legacy of Ottoman rule, with later adaptations under the British Mandate administration, the state of Israel, Jordan (in the West Bank), Egypt (in Gaza), and the Palestinian Authority. The post of Sephardic Chief Rabbi or Rishon LeZion, for example, was established under the Ottomans, and extended by the British to include an Ashkenazi. Under the Ottoman **millet** system, selected religious communities enjoyed limited legal autonomy under their religious leaders. In particular, religious courts administered their respective family laws, as they continue to do in Israel/Palestine today. The jurisdiction of religious courts over marriage and divorce, with an Orthodox monopoly over Jewish religious law, was retained in the new state of Israel as part of a so-called "status quo" political compromise between secular and religious.

[12] Vicenç Fisas Armengol (2013). The principles of mediation and the role of third parties in peace processes. Noref Briefing paper.

[13] Goodhand, J., B. Klem and G. Sørbø (2011) Pawns of Peace: Evaluation of Norwegian Peace Efforts in Sri Lanka, 1997-2009, commissioned by Norad Evaluation Department, Report 5/2011.

[14] The resurgence of religion in political life is noted even by experts who hold that secularisation is progressing in everyday life; for the case of Israel, see Guy Ben-Porat, Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of

to derail the process, starting with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (1995); the Hamas party has won Palestinian elections (2006) and religious parties have played an important role in Israeli politics; and holy sites have proven flashpoints of several conflicts, notably the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000).

The asymmetric nature of the conflict and the vagaries of the peace process impose constraints on the dialogue project. First, power differences, which raise challenges for any dialogue in any conflict, here play a very important role due to the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territories by the state of Israel and its powerful defence forces. Occupation poses both practical and political obstacles to dialogue. Travel bans and checkpoints make communications difficult. Politically, occupation gives both sides reasons to avoid dialogue, as well as different expectations of what dialogue is to achieve. As one Palestinian interviewee put it, "Israelis want process, Palestinians want product", i.e., Palestinians are concerned with ending the occupation, not making friends with the occupier. Cooperation is limited by social pressures. Palestinians uphold a policy against "normalisation" of the occupation, while Israelis shun those who condone asymmetric tactics like suicide attacks and home-made missiles.

Second, the project's fortunes are closely tied to the political progress of a peace process, which is out of the hands of religious leaders. Dialogue among Israeli and Palestinian religious leaders could potentially be useful in any negotiations, not limited to a specific process, and CRIHL does not tie itself to a specific solution. However, the project was initiated and gained Norwegian support in the specific context of the Oslo Accords, which provided for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, an interim Palestinian Administration (PA) to lay the ground for a two-state solution, and negotiations between Israel and the PLO for a settlement within five years. In 2000 negotiations failed, and the second Intifada broke out; in 2002 the Israeli military reoccupied the West Bank and destroyed PA facilities. The initiatives that led to CRIHL took place amid attempts to revive the peace process with a Roadmap for Peace envisaging the negotiation of a Final Status Agreement and recognition of a Palestinian state. Over a decade later, none of this has come to pass. Instead, in the West Bank, the once-interim PA led by PLO/Fatah under President Abbas has gained permanence, but lost much legitimacy due to corruption, authoritarianism, and perceptions that it is only "administrating the occupation";[15] in Gaza, Palestinians live under Hamas rule and a debilitating blockade; and meanwhile Israeli settlements, the security wall, and infrastructure continue to change the map, threatening the viability of a Palestinian state. In recent years, the failed Kerry peace initiative (2014) as well as a Trump envoy (2017) have met with CRIHL to get their endorsement, rather than to bring them into a process and consult with them. This raises the question what role CRIHL can play over a prolonged period with no peace process to support. The Norwegian government continues to support peace efforts based on the establishment of a Palestinian state after a negotiated settlement.[16] Norway has particularly supported

Contemporary Israel, Cambridge Middle East Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[15] For a more detailed discussion, see Petter Skjæveland and Petter Bauck, "Assessment of Norwegian Support to Democratization and Strengthened Political Legitimacy in Palestine," Discussion paper, Norad Report (Norad, November 2015).

[16] Innst. 273 S (2014–2015).

Palestinian institution-building, democratisation and human rights, both as a major donor of development aid itself, and as coordinator for other donor countries. Norwegian support for inter-religious dialogue through a trusted negotiator representing a Church body exemplifies a "Norwegian model" of international peace work in concert with civil-society actors.[17] As discussed below, the MFA has primarily seen the project as a source of information, and in the long term as an asset Norway can bring to the table of a peace agreement, an asset whose value depends on recognition by the parties and the major international actors, rather than on producing visible results in the interim.

The project's Norwegian connection is potentially sensitive, as both the Norwegian government and the MKR's positions may be perceived on the Israeli right as pro-Palestinian. The project has managed these sensitivities partly thanks to its low profile, and partly by not involving the MKR in CRIHL strategy, an approach that respects local ownership. but makes it difficult for MKR to discharge its responsibilities for managing the project.

## 1.4 Objectives of the review

The objective of the review is defined in the ToR (see Annex A). It includes:

- Map and document project activities and objectives.
- Assess and document achievements of the projects.
- Assess the relevance of the project and approaches used. Is the project working on the right issues and with the right networks and individuals?
- Assess the efficiency of the project and the approaches chosen. Efficiency measures the outputs, qualitative and quantitative, in relation to the inputs.
- Assess sustainability, i.e. the probability of continued beneficial long-term effects.
- Discuss unintended consequences of the effort – positive as well as negative.
- Provide recommendations where relevant, based on findings and conclusions, in particular with regard to improving reporting on results.

Additionally, several questions have been addressed by the review, e.g:

- Which Theory of Change (ToC) has evolved during the project period? Here the analysis has been framed by assessment/reflection on the role that religion plays in the Israel/Palestine conflict and thus the significance of inter-religious dialogue as a tool for peace. What does research and experience show about how religion and religious leaders promote or hinder peaceful political solutions, and how inter-religious dialogue can influence the behaviour of actors in a peace process?

The review team has also carried out the following tasks:

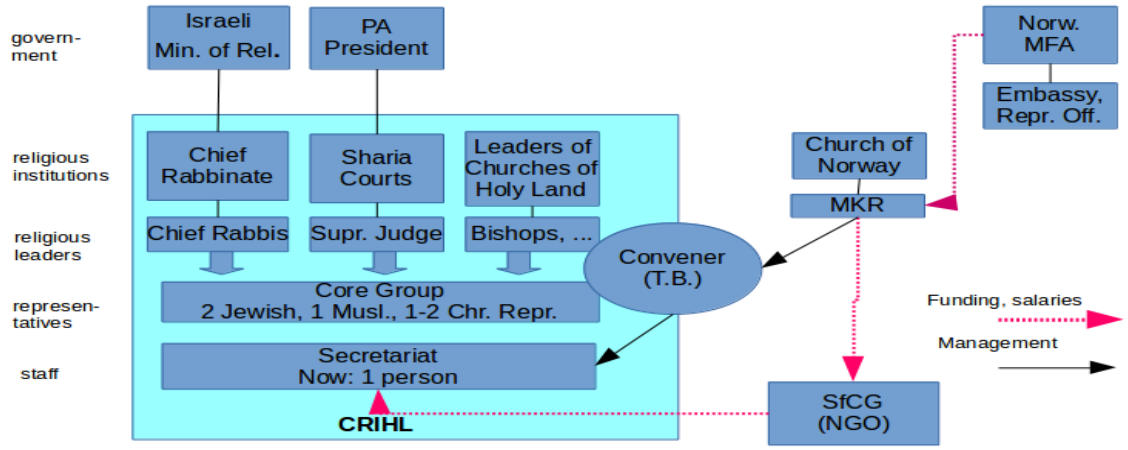
- Assessed the quality of reporting of the project and provided advice about how the project can improve its reporting to capture intended, unintended, tangible and intangible effects.
- Assessed how the project has understood and been informed by the political context.

[17] See Annex D for brief discussion and reference. Though we use the term "civil society", it should be kept in mind that up until the present year, the Church of Norway has been a state church, and its priests have been government employees.

- Assessed risk management of the project and how it affects cross-cutting issues.[18]
- Reviewed the approaches and methods used to facilitate dialogue, and discussed the suitability of these in terms of achieving planned objectives.
- Assessed the organisational setup/institutional arrangements of the project

See also Annex A, ToR for the list of review questions and tasks.

**Figure 1:** Overview of CRIHL




[18] The cross-cutting issues referred to are: human rights, anti-corruption, women's rights and gender equality, and climate and environment.

# 2 Methodology and Data Collection

Scanteam has based its work on a simple Theory of Change (ToC) approach to understanding the evolution of the project and its results over time, and then developed the evidentiary basis for the findings and conclusions through (i) a document and literature Review (see Annex C for Documents Consulted), (ii) key informant interviews (see Annex B for Persons Interviewed), (iii) media analysis and survey, and (iv) interactions with a reference group.
The ToC was developed to clarify how planned activities were expected to contribute to desired results. A particular concern was to identify the underlying assumptions – explicit or implicit – that needed to be fulfilled for these expectations to be realistic.

There was no explicit ToC in place that guided the management of this dialogue project. ToCs can, however, be (re-)constructed, hence the team has identified a theory of change based on stated and implied objectives. The ToC analysis has been helpful in clarifying review questions such as the role of religious leaders in peace and conflict, their potential to effect positive change, and their potential roles as obstacles.

Regarding the time period for assessing project developments and results, the team decided to focus on the period from the establishment of CRIHL to the present (2005-2017). The team has therefore mapped CRIHL and its secretariat's activities and projects to get an overview of their frequency, outcomes and added value in the context of religio-political developments in the region. The aim was to uncover how the dialogue has managed or failed to respond to ongoing challenges in line with the stated aims of the project. This involves a counterfactual analysis: a comparison between what actually happened, and what likely would have happened without the dialogue taking place – in other words, trying to identify changes that with some degree of probability can be attributed to the project.

## 2.1 Document and Literature Review

The team has read all relevant project documents made available from MKR and MFA. Additionally, the Norwegian convener has shared his personal notes and draft manuscripts in Norwegian (now published as a book)[19] and English, describing his engagement throughout the project period (1995-2017). The team has also carried out a desk study of relevant research on religious peacebuilding. The literature review focused on lessons deemed salient for analysis of the project under review (see Annex D: Inter-religious dialogue in research and experience).

## 2.2 Reviewing effectiveness, relevance and efficiency

The assessment of effectiveness, efficiency and relevance has been carried out in several stages, based on the desk review and interviews with stakeholders, case handlers and other relevant informants. In line with the review questions in ToR, the assessment is focused on issues of relevance and efficiency in the period from the establishment of CRIHL until today

[19] Trond Bakkevig, Dagbøker fra Jerusalem: 20 år som brobygger mellom religion og politikk (Kagge Forlag, 2017).

(2005 and onward). The review does not assess activities and achievements from the preceding period.

Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders, including MFA staff, to get an overview of the organisation, and the nature of the relation between the funder and project implementer. Through this process, the team developed a first list of preliminary findings. These were brought to the field and tested in interviews with stakeholders as well as external observers, supporters as well as critical voices, and former and current staff. This allowed us to test, contrast and compare observations and possible conclusions.

A main challenge was simply to get an overview over such a long-lasting project. Adding to this challenge, the project documentation consists of applications and reports that for the most part lack explicit outlines of strategies and means.

## 2.3 Key informant interviews

The review team interviewed people from the following stakeholder groups/categories of informants:

- Implementing partners; MKR, CRIHL members and former/current staff, Search for Common Ground's staff in Jerusalem, external project partners.
- Participants in CRIHL activities.
- MFA and Norad staff.
- Representatives from other inter-religious initiatives in the region.
- Outside observers (analysts, experts from civil society, academia and think tanks).

The selection of interviewees was made in cooperation with MKR and with input from MFA, CRIHL members and informants in the field, as well as through "snowball sampling" to recruit additional informants through referrals from people on the initial list. There was a large overlap in the questions asked to the different stakeholder groups. Hence a general interview guide was prepared, structured around the review questions/criteria, and adapted for each of the stakeholder groups. The interviews were semi-structured; that is, the team referred to the interview guide for comparability between interviews, but used them flexibly to be able to pursue new issues as they came up.

The team initially envisaged developing a quantitative tool to survey current and past participants of CRIHL projects (circle 2, including future religious leaders, teachers and journalists), as well as others benefiting from or affected by the project (circle 3), about relevance, outcomes and sustainability. Due to the limited outreach of the dialogue project beyond a handful of project activities that involved external participants, we have not been able to identify a circle 3. Given the limited number of sub-projects, and the small number of people involved, as well as the sensitivity of the matters involved, the team decided to conduct qualitative interviews with circle 2 participants who were willing and available during the review period. Lists of participants were provided by SfCG/CRIHL staff. Accordingly, all interviews were held individually. Some people who were not available for physical meetings at the time the evaluation team visited the country were interviewed through

telephone/Skype. This was also the case with other international partners located in the US and UK, respectively (see Annex E for the interview guides).

## 2.4 Media analysis and survey

The team surveyed and analysed the media coverage of CRIHL and its activities over the past decade to assess its outreach to the Israeli public, which is both a stated aim in itself[20] and a precondition for other aims. Assessing outreach to the Palestinian public was not part of the task; due to political sensitivities, some members prefer CRIHL not to seek too much visibility on the Palestinian side. Since outreach and information activities in Norway also form part of the project, according to the ToR, we also carried out a similar but simpler survey of Norwegian media. Both surveys focused on print media. The method and sources used are described in detail along with the findings in **section 5.10**.

## 2.5 Reference group

The team has engaged a research group at the University of Oslo /University of Agder, comprising internationally recognised experts on religion and international affairs, as a reference group to discuss findings, assessments and recommendations in the light of relevant research on religion, politics and peacebuilding. The team conducted one group session in addition to individual meetings. The more general discussions focused on perceptions of religion, religious leadership and religious institutions in different contexts, i.e. in Norway versus the Middle East, and on assumptions relating to the role of religious leadership in peace-making.

## 2.6 "Do no harm" and triangulation

"Do no harm" principles have been a prime concern during the entire process, from the way we have approached informants and conducted interviews and meetings, to the handling of information and reporting.[21] To ensure the confidence and safety of informants, the team guaranteed full anonymity to all informants with no personal quotes or references to names in the report. In references to interviews, the informants are therefore described in broad terms, to preclude identification of individuals. The team is aware of the downside of this approach for transparency and for the reader's ability to contextualise the information. Sources can be identified by community affiliation, or by position in CRIHL, but rarely by both without risking identification.

Interviews have however been conducted in a systematic manner with as wide a variety of sources as possible. The same questions have been asked to different groups of informants, allowing the team to compare and contrast the different points of view (triangulation).
The team has chosen not to elaborate on an ongoing process in relation to holy sites in Jerusalem, to avoid interfering in CRIHL's messaging.

[20] CRIHL/MKR have stated increased public visibility in Israel as an objective in project documents, such as the funding application dated 19 June 2015.
[21] Mary B. Anderson, Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

# 3 Historical overview of the project 1995-2017

The following is an overview of the development of the inter-religious dialogue process in Israel and Palestine from 1995 until 2017. The dialogues and networking activities in the field have been carried out by Trond Bakkevig on behalf of the Church of Norway's Council on Foreign Relations (MKR). His work is funded by the Norwegian MFA and is one of several contributions within the broader Norwegian support for peace in Israel and Palestine since 1995.

## 3.1 Phase I: Preparatory, 1995-97

In November 1994, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Rabin, Arafat and Peres, a seminar with religious leaders from Israel/Palestine was held in Oslo. The host was the Church of Norway's MKR and the Christian Council of Norway. The aim was to assert the importance of engaging religious communities and leadership in the peace process, based on the view that such perspectives were missing from the processes that led to the Oslo Accord. As a follow-up, MKR invited Trond Bakkevig to investigate the possibilities for developing a dialogue between religious leaders in Israel/ Palestine,[22] and the MFA decided to make funds available.

MKR's strategic reasoning went as follows:

- The religious dimension had not been included in the peace process, yet there were religious issues present that should be taken into account in peace negotiations.
- Despite the many grassroots initiatives, no top-level inter-religious dialogue had so far been developed. There was hence a potentially important niche to fill.
- An inter-religious top-level dialogue should focus on religious issues that could potentially become obstacles to the peace process, i.e. access to and ownership of holy sites.

Bakkevig began exploring prospects for a dialogue process in January 1996.[23] It would take a year of religious diplomacy before he could organise a first preparatory meeting in Jerusalem, attended by two Jewish, two Christian and two Muslim leaders.[24] The aim was to settle the pre-conditions for a larger dialogue meeting/process. The following was agreed: the dialogue

[22]As former head of the MKR, Bakkevig was engaged in anti-Apartheid activities in the 1980s in close dialogue with the MFA, South African religious leaders and civil-society actors in Norway. From 1987-1988 he served as political advisor in the MFA. He had also travelled in the Middle East and was familiar with the area. He was hence seen as a relevant and skilled candidate for the task with experience in both political and inter-religious affairs. Interviews with former MKR staff; interview with Bakkevig; Bakkevig's reports/personal notes; Bakkevig's book Dagbøker fra Jerusalem (2017).

[23] The first preparatory meetings took place in Damascus, where Trond Bakkevig met with Palestinian exiles representing Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, and continued in Jerusalem with Jews, Muslims and Christian in Jerusalem and Gaza. Bakkevig followed up with visits to Hamas representatives in Palestine. They declined, however, to take part in a dialogue in which Israeli Jews were included. Bakkevig's notes (1998); Bakkevig's book manuscript (2017); MKR report (2003).

[24] The meeting was held on 6 March 1997 at American Colony. Two Jews and two Christians attended, including Rabbi Michael Melchior and Mahdi Abdel Hadi, a Palestinian intellectual and political activist and founder of the Palestinian think tank PASSIA (Palestinian Institute for the Study of International Affairs). Bakkevig travel report 1998/1999

should not be regarded as negotiations in a political process, but rather as academic conversations on religious issues such as the Holy Land and shared sacred places, with special attention to Jerusalem. The meetings should be held informally and without public attention. The shared Abrahamic tradition would form common ground. The delegates represented in the preparatory meeting were to constitute a steering group for a larger dialogue process.

## 3.2 Phase II: The First Dialogue Process, 1998-2002

With the support of Jewish, Muslim and Christian religio-political actors, Bakkevig was now able to convene three inter-religious dialogue meetings from November 1997 to February 1998. Christians, Jewish and Muslim representatives took part.[25] A range of issues were discussed, such as the Holy Land, holy sites, the holy city of Jerusalem, and the political situation on the ground.

### *Collapse - and investigation of new possibilities*

A fourth meeting planned for April 1998 was cancelled by the Muslim representatives. Political uncertainty, Muslim concerns over how their participation would be perceived among their own constituencies, and increased inter-Palestinian tensions made dialogue difficult and put the process temporarily on hold. It was thus decided to continue the dialogue with a limited group rather than pursuing new meetings of the wider dialogue forum, at least for the time being.[26]

In July 2000, Israeli and Palestinian delegations convened at Camp David for the final status settlement of the Oslo process. The summit ended without agreement. Control of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were among the most contested issues.[27] In September the same year, a Knesset delegation headed by the then opposition leader Ariel Sharon, visited the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. Fighting broke out between Palestinians protesters and Israeli security forces, leaving several people dead. The incident led to the second Intifada, also called the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Despite bleak prospects for getting the dialogue process back on track in a political climate marked by increased conflict and violence, Bakkevig continued his travels throughout 2001. During this period Bakkevig raised the idea of engaging with MKR's former partners in South Africa to draw on their experience in peace-making and reconciliation after the end of Apartheid. He had meetings in Cape Town with South African leaders, but the idea stranded on Israeli dismissal of the relevance of the South African experience.

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[25] Jewish representatives were appointed by the then Chief Rabbi Bakshi-Doron. Additionally, rabbi Michael Melchior was included as a key resource person on the Jewish side. The Muslim representatives were appointed in consultation with the late Feysal Husseini, a key figure in Palestinian political life who also held the Jerusalem portfolio in the PA at the time. Muslim representation was also coordinated by the PASSIA head Mahdi Abdel-Hadi. Christian representatives were appointed in consultation with Michel Sabbah, the then Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem. Bakkevig was also in regular contact with the bishop of the Lutheran Church, Munib Younan, who would also become a key actor in CRIHL. After the death of Feysal Husseini in 2001, a central dialogue partner for Bakkevig was Dr Riyad al-Maliki, the later foreign minister of the PA. Bakkevig's notes (27 September 1998).

[26] Bakkevig's notes (1999/9), travel reports (2003).

[27] Key issues that remained unsettled related to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount/Haram Sharif, refugees and Palestinian return, security matters and the settlements.

## 3.3 Phase III: The Alexandria Process, 2002-05

In 2002, the Norwegians learned that there was in fact another inter-religious process in the making under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury, coordinated by Canon Andrew White. Rabbi Michael Melchior, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in a newly formed Israeli national unity government, asked Bakkevig for financial support to fly an inter-religious delegation to Egypt. MKR agreed to cover the costs on the condition that Bakkevig be included. In January 2002, 15 leaders from Israel and Palestine met in Alexandria. The meeting was initiated by George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and hosted by Shaykh Tantawi, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. [28]

The meeting resulted in the Alexandria Declaration, a joint call for ending violence and promoting respect for "the integrity of each other's historical and religious inheritance" in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.[29] The declaration addressed both the religious communities and the political leaderships. This was the first high-level meeting of religious leaders in Israel and Palestine, and it has become an important point of reference.[30]

The plan was to follow up with continued meetings.[31] However, the process gradually lost momentum, partly due to tensions between some of the Christian participants and the way the process was managed from the UK. Furthermore, there were questions over the long-term sustainability of the Alexandria process, since it was based on the personal commitment of individual leaders. The wish for inter-religious cooperation had been established through the Alexandria process, but some of the participants were now looking for alternative platforms to continue. Bakkevig was central in the discussions that followed.

## 3.4 Phase IV: Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, 2005-17

The idea for a different inter-religious platform was brought to the table by Christian and Jewish participants. They wanted to include religious institutions in the cooperation to ensure stability, institutional buy-in, and legitimacy vis-à-vis Israeli and Palestinian state structures.[32]

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[28] The Jewish delegation included Chief Rabbi Bakshi-Doron, and the rabbis Menachem Froman, Yitzak Ralbag, David Brodman, David Rosen and Michael Melchior. The Christian delegation included Patriarch Michel Sabbah (Latin), Archbishop Aristarchos (Greek Orthodox), Archbishop Aris Shirvanian (Armenian), Archbishop Boutros Mu'allem (Melkite) and Bishop Riah Abu-l-Asal (Anglican). The Muslim delegation included Sheikh Talal Sider, Sheikh Taysir Tamimi, Sheikh Abdel Salam and Sheikh Mustafa Tawil.

[29] https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/263272_56561c640bfb4d9abc1dfca3d108c97c.pdf, https://www.usip.org/programs/alexandria-declaration

[30] Bakkevigs draft book manuscript, interviews with CRIHL stakeholders, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/events/alexandria-process-interfaith-summit

[31] The meetings were held by a Permanent Committee on the Implementation of the Alexandria Declaration (PCIAD), which included Taysir Tamimi, Talal Sider, David Rosen, Michael Melchior, and Munib Younan. The process was managed by the International Centre for Reconciliation (ICR) at Coventry Cathedral. Funding proposal from the ICR (4 June 2003).

[32] Interviews with stakeholders. MKR project report (2004).

The head of the Muslim representatives in the Alexandria process (the leader of the Supreme Sharia Court in the PA) was hesitant, but eventually agreed to take part in the Council as long as it stayed out of the public eye. Bakkevig held meetings with political leaders in Israel and Palestine and was able to garner support for the founding of a Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.[33]

CRIHL was constituted in 2005, however the first joint gathering took place only two years later due to travel restrictions blocking the participation of the Muslim leader.[34] The Jews were represented by the Chief Rabbinate, the Christians by the Meeting of the Heads of Local Churches in Jerusalem, and the Muslims by the head of the Supreme Sharia Court in the PA. The purpose of the Council was defined as follows: a) To be a permanent forum for meetings between religious leaders of the Holy Land, providing a framework for contact and consultation. b) To provide a vision for living together as people of different faiths in the Holy Land. c) To be a representative body which could be consulted by political leaders in cases where religious issues could hinder or promote a lasting and just peace, particularly in the case of Jerusalem.[35]

## 3.5 Organisation of CRIHL

The members wanted CRIHL to consist of at least five persons from each of the three religions, appointed by the member institutions. Meetings were to take place twice a year or more if needed. An executive committee or core group, with two representatives elected from each of the three religions, was to hold meetings every second month. The council also decided to set up a permanent secretariat located in a "denominationally neutral place". The position as moderator of Council for a one-year term was to rotate among the representatives of the three religions. Latin Patriarch Sabah took on the role of moderator during the first year, but due to internal tensions, Bakkevig was eventually mandated to be permanent "convener" of the Council.[36]

From the outset, it proved difficult to implement dialogue activities as planned. Political developments and incidents, as well as practical obstacles such as travel restrictions on the Muslim representatives, led to several cancelations. Until 2007, the dialogues were held without the presence of Muslim representatives. Hence, CRIHL decided to change the venue from Jerusalem to Beit Jala, in a C-area on the West Bank, where the Israeli Jews were allowed to travel. For a while, the frequency of meetings increased, and the conditions for dialogue improved. [37]

Relations among the members of the Council, however, were still fragile. It was therefore viewed as a breakthrough when CRIHL was invited to participate in a global international inter-religious gathering in Kyoto in Japan in 2006, and the group decided to make a joint appearance. Instead, the meeting almost led to the collapse of the dialogue when the Jewish

[33] Bakkevig, travel report (2005).
[34] CRIHL is labelled a consultative body and is not a legally registered organisation.
[35] MKR project reports (2005).
[36] MKR application dokuments (2005), Bakkevig's notes (2005).
[37] Bakkevig's notes (2005), Bakkevig's book (2017).

and Muslim leaders provoked each other with inflammatory speeches. The episode threatened to jeopardize the council's existence. With the help of external advice and co-facilitation, the convener was able to resolve the crisis by having members sign up to a Code of Conduct for CRIHL, which also included paragraphs on how to address "the other" in public.[38]

## 3.6 International attention

Despite the rough start, CRIHL received attention in diplomatic circles and among international actors in the Middle East. During the first years of its existence, CRIHL members were invited to meet with several high-level international representatives, such as former Prime Minister Tony Blair (special representative for the Quartet[39] until 2015), US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives. These meetings were one-offs.

An important milestone was CRIHL's joint trip to Washington, D.C. in 2007 to meet with Congress, the State Department, and religious leaders. The delegation included both Chief Rabbis, four Christian bishops and patriarchs, the Supreme Judge of the Sharia Courts, and the minister for religious affairs of the PA. The religious leaders were able to agree on a communique that, inter alia, acknowledged both the Palestinian yearning for an end to occupation and the Israeli longing for security, and set out a list of tasks they would work on, including monitoring and responding to derogatory representations of any religion, seeking a common vision for Jerusalem, and promoting education for mutual respect. At moments, it seemed relations among the members had improved to the point where they might transcend their religious differences and offer leadership, as a Chief Rabbi put it.[40]

## 3.7 Establishment of a Secretariat, Development of Projects

Despite the Muslim representative's reservations against public visibility, the Council decided to establish a secretariat in Jerusalem, as well as a website. CRIHL decided to enter into formal cooperation with the international NGO Search for Common Ground (SfCG) in 2008. Located in East Jerusalem, SfCG was engaged in inter-religious dialogue programs, and thus had knowledge, networks and technical support to offer CRIHL. Staff from SfCG were hired to work on CRIHL activities. There was also a personal connection between CRIHL and SfCG, as Rabbi David Rosen, a keen participant in inter-religious dialogue who played an important informal role in CRIHL, was married to Sharon Rosen, the co-director of SfCG's Jerusalem office. A secretariat was set up with two young SfCG staffers, one Jewish and one Muslim, hired to work half time on CRIHL activities. CRIHL could now engage in concrete projects. The ones that CRIHL has been engaged with since 2008 are described in Chapter 5.

## 3.8 Whither CRIHL?

[38] Interviews with stakeholders; Bakkevig's book (2017).
[39] The quartet comprises the United Nations, the USA, the European Union and Russia. The group was established in Madrid in 2002 with the mandate to help mediate peace negotiations in the Middle East and to support Palestinian development. http://www.quartetoffice.org/category.php?id=a374y41844Ya374
[40] Communiqué from CRIHL visit to Washington, D.C. (November 2007).

The political situation has continued to limit the frequency of CRIHL meetings to a minimum. In recent years, moreover, the Chief Rabbis and the head of the Sharia Court have not participated themselves. Based on interviews, our understanding is that the current Chief Rabbis take less of a personal interest in public and inter-religious affairs than their predecessors, and are content to leave CRIHL to their representatives. The head of the Sharia Court, Mahmood al-Habbash[41] in turn, will not take part in meetings without Jewish leaders on his own level. In the absence of regular CRIHL gatherings, the so-called core group has continued to meet on a regular basis. As noted in section 1.1, it comprises the Norwegian convener Trond Bakkevig, Chief Rabbinate advisers Oded Wiener and David Rosen, former PA Deputy Minister Salah Zuhayka, Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan, and recently also Latin Apostolic Administrator Pierbattista Pizzaballa. Thus, it is only Christians that have continued to take regular part on the leadership level in recent years.

For the first time in several years, the CRIHL convened for a special occasion in May 2017, when the US special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt, invited the council to a meeting during his visit to the region.[42] The meeting featured all CRIHL members, and was covered in national and international media.

With the escalation of violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinians around the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa Mosque during July 2017, attempts were made by the Norwegian convener to have the Council's members issue a shared statement condemning the violence. The effort did not succeed, however. This underscores the sensitivity of religio-political affairs in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and unwillingness or inability of CRIHL members to challenge their respective constituencies or political authorities on this issue.[43]

[41] See chapter 1.1 for a description of CRIHL institutions and members.
[42] https://il.usembassy.gov/special-representative-international-negotiations-greenblatt-meets-council-religious-institutions-holy-land/
[43] Interview with Bakkevig (14 August 2017).

# 4 Theory of Change

This chapter identifies a Theory of Change for the MKR's inter-religious dialogue efforts in Israel and Palestine, discusses the project's underlying assumptions, and considers its relevance in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This discussion provides a framework for the discussion of results in chapter 5.

A Theory of Change is *a description of what the project does, and how and why this could bring about the desired outcomes*. Formulating such theory is a process that helps people think through the logic of what they are doing, and enables them to better plan, monitor and evaluate their projects. To be functional it must explicitly address the political realities and power relations in the given context, i.e. the disproportionateness of power in Israeli-Palestinian relations. It directs attention to the underlying assumptions that must be true for an action to be effective. While MKR has defined goals, it has not described *how it foresees that the various activities would lead to the desired change*. The team assesses that the project would benefit from a stronger attention to how the dialogue process is expected to work, and a thorough reflection on the project's underlying assumptions. This is a common deficiency in religious peacebuilding. Peace practitioner and researcher Neufeldt shows how outcomes of inter-religious dialogues are weakened by the lack of attention to how change occurs, and thus project-management tools such as Theory of Change.[44]

A relevant point of departure for this discussion is Neufeldt's description of three different approaches to inter-religious dialogue and their implicit theories of change, with particular attention to the *transfer* of impacts beyond the immediate circle of participants.[45]

1. In the **theological** approach, dialogue is primarily an exchange between religious people on religious issues, aimed at mutual understanding and respect, and sometimes at theological change. The encounter itself is thought to effect personal and relational change among the participants. The weakest link in this theory is transfer, which is often simply assumed to somehow take place when participants share their experience with persons in their own communities.
2. In the **political** approach, religious leaders are enlisted to support a political process on a public stage, with aims such as educating the other, legitimising a peace process, delegitimising violence, or expanding the political options by including religious leaders or solutions in negotiations. Religious leaders are assumed to represent their communities and to exert top-down influence on them by virtue of their positions, credibility, moral authority and religious knowledge. Media outreach plays a key role in transfer.
3. The **peacebuilding** approach seeks to alter perceptions of the other, draw on people's deep spiritual motivations, broaden the participation in peace-building, and develop a joint platform or "base network" for addressing the root causes of conflict. Diverse kinds of participants are chosen for their roles in the conflict and in their communities,

[44] Reina C. Neufeldt, "Interfaith dialogue: Assessing theories of change", Peace & Change 36, no. 3 (2011), 344-372. See discussion in Annex D for more detail.
[45] Neufeldt, "Interfaith Dialogue", see Annex D.

and are trained in peacebuilding skills. Activities are fostered on multiple levels, not only among the elite; address systemic/structural issues; and include various forms of direct action, including interfaith grassroots-development projects. This approach involves a risk of projects becoming over-extended by taking on too many different activities.

The project under review gathers politically connected leaders of religious institutions for the purpose of contributing to, and endorsing, a peace process led by political actors. In the interim, they make statements and undertake joint initiatives to improve public trust and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. Their implicit Theory of Change can thus be categorized as mainly **political** in Neufeldt's typology. Unlike the typical political approach described by Neufeldt, however, the CRIHL is not convened by political actors, and it does little media outreach. Especially in the early years of the dialogue efforts, elements of a **theological** approach were used (e.g. studying what Jerusalem means to all three faiths), and some anecdotes of personal change observed in core group members were cited in our interviews. Elements of a **peacebuilding** approach have also featured e.g. in the CRIHL's projects bringing together young religious leaders and media professionals.

## 4.1 Formulating the project's theory of change

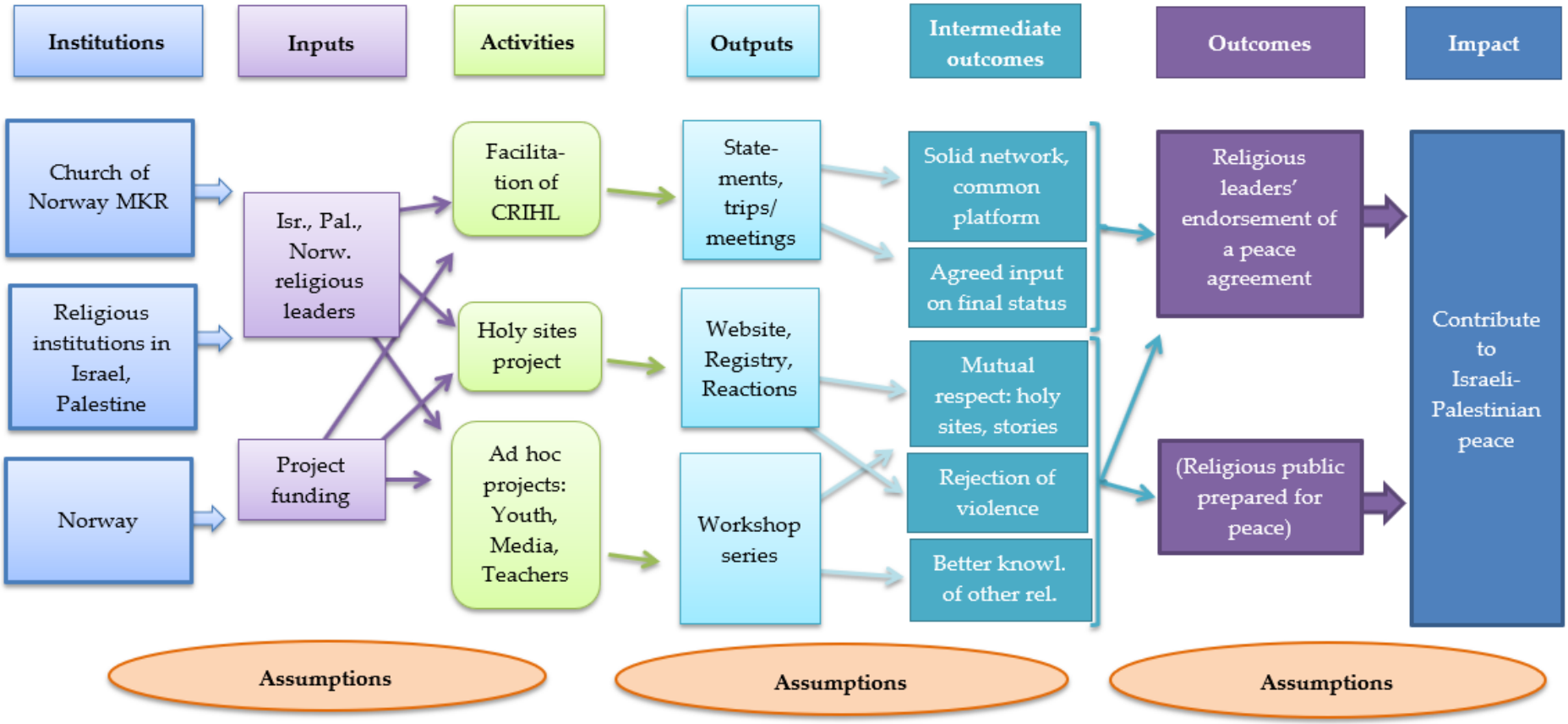
This project has not used Theory of Change as a formal tool[46], but a basic theory can be formulated from the document review and interviews with stakeholders: If there is an ongoing dialogue process among religious leaders on both sides, it will enable these leaders to inform and endorse a peace agreement together, because dialogue enhances personal relations and mutual trust, and cultivates attitudes that support peacemaking. If the dialogue is constructed as a council of religious institutions, it will be more viable, because institutional commitment and ownership ensures and sustains continuity, and makes the dialogue relevant to public policy on religious affairs in Israel and Palestine. If it is facilitated by a foreign (Norwegian) religious leader, it will be more viable, because the convener is seen as impartial, but trusted as a fellow man of faith. If religious leaders are heard in the peace process, it will lead to a more viable peace agreement, because religious leaders are competent to deal with the complex and contested religious concerns over holy sites that are at stake. If prominent religious leaders endorse a peace agreement, it will gain broader public support, because the religious leaders influence the religious public. In short, if a peace agreement takes religion into account, it will stand a greater chance of succeeding, because religion plays an important public role in the region.

Since the peace process has faltered, and no final status agreement has been negotiated, this strategy has not yet been put to the ultimate test, though the project has continued to prepare for it through meetings with relevant diplomats and politicians. In the absence of political results, the project has developed various activities focused on denouncing violence and incitement to violence, defusing Israeli-Palestinian public tensions in specific areas (education,

[46] Trond Bakkevig has made the following comment:"This project was initiated in a time when ToC was not mainstreamed in peace building efforts. We realize that including a TOC could be useful. But, we find the report lacking in its understanding of what it means to run a project in an asymmetric conflict and the challenges that this entail for the dialogue effort."

holy sites, archaeology); training future religious leaders and teachers; and informing journalists. The ToC must also account for how these activities support the overall aim of the project, and what assumptions they, in turn, are based on. (A schematic of the reconstructed Theory of Change is shown in Figure 2 below.)

## Figure 2: Reconstructed Theory of Change




- Leaders/institutions are representative, influential
- Institutional commitment secures continuity, relevance
- Impartial outside trusted facilitation needed

- Religious leaders competent on religious issues in conflict (holy sites)
- Dialogue builds trust and will to promote peace
- Sensitivity to asymmetric conflict
- Visibility/outreach

- Religion is important to public life and to the conflict
- Religious leaders influence public

## 4.2 Theories of Change in Relation to Stated Objectives

In recent years, the MKR has stated a hierarchy of goals in its funding applications. The intended outcome is that *religious leaders are able to recommend a negotiated peace agreement*, with the intended impact of *contributing to Israeli-Palestinian peace.* A set of intermediate outcomes can also be identified[47] and fitted into a logical framework. These include *a solid network of religious leaders* supporting *a common platform for contributing to the peace process* (i.e. CRIHL), which can formulate *agreed contributions to a final status agreement*. They further include the interlinked outcomes of *improved knowledge of the other's religion*, *rejection of religious violence*, and *mutual respect for the holy sites and narratives of the other*. The target group is not clearly stated. Presumably it is primarily the religious leaders themselves who are expected to benefit from the dialogue by enhancing their mutual knowledge, respect, and stance against violence, and the theory is that this will help them to formulate agreed contributions to a final status agreement, and to jointly endorse it afterwards. However, the project clearly also aims to bring about such outcomes among the public, which raises the question of how the changes among religious leaders are expected to *transfer* into change on the ground.

## 4.3 Assumptions and Relevance

The Theory of Change is built on several underlying assumptions. Religion is assumed to play an important role in public life and in the conflict. Top religious leaders and institutions are assumed to represent and influence larger segments of society, i.e. constituencies that need to be on board to ensure a sustainable peace. They are also assumed to be competent to deal with religious issues in the conflict, such as contested holy sites. Dialogue is assumed to contribute to trust and willingness to promote peace together, despite the inhibiting effects of occupation and violence. Impartial facilitation is assumed to be important and to require the involvement of an outside religious leader. Institutional commitment is assumed to secure that the dialogue lasts and remains politically relevant. What follows is a critical discussion of to what extent experience shows these assumptions to hold, either in general or in the particular case under review.

## 4.4 Relevance to the Conflict

When the team raised the proposed Theory of Change and its underlying assumptions in the field, informants underlined the necessity of including religious issues in a future peace-making process. This consensus is based on the importance of religion as a legitimizing and mobilizing factor for the Israeli and Palestinian publics, and on a critique of the peace process to date for neglecting this factor.[48] This analysis, which has motivated the project since the Oslo Agreement, is no less relevant today; religion, religious parties, and conflicts over religious sites have only become more central to politics. This religious dialogue project operates in a deeply divided context where the very concept of dialogue is fiercely contested

[47] The intermediate outcomes listed here are adapted from the "intermediate aims" and "outputs" listed in the MKR's grant application dated 19 June 2015. The present assessment uses "outputs" more narrowly, to refer to published reports, published statements, agreed documents, completed meeting/workshop cycles, etc.

[48] This understanding was generally shared by both religious and secular analysts we spoke with, with one major exception: One secular analyst argued that involving religious leaders would only reinforce a perception of the conflict as religious, which would in turn strengthen the hand of religious extremists.

on both sides, and religious issues and sentiments are exploited both by religious extremists and secular political leaderships.

All this suggests a role for religious peacebuilding, but one should be careful not to expect too much. The evidence for the success of religious peacebuilding elsewhere is often anecdotal and prone to confirmation basis. That evidence also includes a number of political conflicts where the divides are not religious, and one cannot necessarily generalize from these cases to Israel/Palestine, where religion is implicated in the conflict. While such context gives religious leaders a role to play, it is an ambiguous role fraught with dilemmas; they may act, or be perceived, as part of the conflict rather than above it, which might make it harder, rather than easier, for religious peacebuilding to work. (See Annex D for discussion and references).

Nevertheless, stakeholders and analysts interviewed generally agree that CRIHL may be a relevant platform in the context of a future peace process. CRIHL is not, however, seen as very relevant to date. Some interviewees, including one core-group member, even suggested that they would **only** be relevant in a new peace initiative. This is variously blamed on external and internal factors. External factors include a violent and deteriorating political situation and a media bias against reporting on inter-religious activities. As internal factors, it is variously claimed that the religious leaders involved are not very interested, that they lack credibility, that CRIHL is inactive and unable to undertake bold initiatives, that CRIHL lacks communication skills and strategy, or that CRIHL lacks outreach to strategically important groups. On the question of outreach, views differ between those who favour top-down, bottom-up, or widening strategies. Top-downers think CRIHL includes the right selection of religious leaders, and its proper tasks are to interact with high-level political leaders and negotiators and to communicate with the public through the media. Bottom-uppers think CRIHL will only be relevant and effective if it works with communities to develop inter-religious understanding on the middle or grass-roots levels. Among both groups, some interviewees think its relevance will depend on widening the dialogue to include or reach out to religious leaders with more extreme views and popular followings (see further discussion below).

## 4.5 International relevance

The Norwegian convener has invested in international and diplomatic relations with actors that are likely to play a crucial role in a peace process, in order to raise awareness of CRIHL and advocate for its relevance. CRIHL has in fact gained more international than local recognition, and is viewed by some international actors as a relevant and high-level inter-religious institutional platform in Israel and Palestine, as shown by the several meetings between such actors and CRIHL. The most recent example was a meeting with the U.S. Special Representative for International Negotiations, Jason D. Greenblatt, who invited CRIHL to conduct talks on Jerusalem. However, this recognition should not be overstated, as some CRIHL members complained that such meetings have rarely been followed up.

On a similar note, the review team received a generally positive assessment of the inter-religious dialogue from the responsible department in the Norwegian MFA and other MFA staff, despite the project's lack of documented results and its relatively weak institutional grounding in Norway as well as in Israel/Palestine. This is in part because the project is

perceived to be relevant and important in a larger political context, including CRIHL's apparent standing among international partners, as illustrated by the CRIHL-Greenblatt meeting. Additionally, the Norwegian convener serves as an adviser to the MFA and the embassy on religious affairs in the Middle East, and is viewed as an asset in a thematic area where MFA traditionally has little institutional knowledge. Bakkevig seems to have had significant, long-term input as an advisor. The project thus serves purposes of interest to Norway beyond its ability to produce the stated results outlined in applications and reports.

## 4.6 Representativeness and influence

A key assumption is that the religious leaders and institutions in CRIHL are representative of, and have influence on, a religious population. The first question is whether CRIHL, which does not represent all possible religious leaders and institutions in Israel/Palestine, represents and includes the most relevant ones for its purpose. The CRIHL membership, with its three-way balance between Israeli Jews, Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians, reflects a historical heritage, the political realities of the present conflict, and the negotiations before and after the Alexandria meeting. The Jewish and Muslim representation is linked to Israeli and Palestinian public authority, which could make them particularly relevant to a political peace process. Christians are very well represented compared to their share of population and political power in the region. CRIHL includes key religious institutions with interest and influence in negotiations over holy sites, but it does not include all of them (e.g., the Kingdom of Jordan and the Jerusalem Waqf in the case of the Haram al-Sharif).

Another question concerns the members' ability to influence hearts and minds and deliver the support of their communities for a peace agreement. In principle, the religious leadership and institutions represented in CRIHL should be highly relevant, but several interviewees described them as out of touch with the base, or doubted that the Chief Rabbinate or Supreme Judge had the necessary credibility or scholarly credentials. Though some of our interviews suggest that personalities are part of the problem, there is also little public trust in the institutions.[49] The Chief Rabbinate is involved in controversies over the discriminatory effects of Orthodox religious law on secular and non-Orthodox Jews,[50] and there have been high-profile corruption cases. The role of the Sharia courts has likewise been controversial with Palestinian secularists and women's groups, and Palestinian disaffection with the Fatah-dominated PA extends to its religious departments. How much this matters depends on exactly what the leaders are expected to do. An interviewee closely involved in CRIHL agreed that "they're not going to **deliver** people" to support a peace agreement, but argued that "their support makes for a psychological openness." Another informant described the importance of CRIHL in terms of the "public symbolic value" of the leaders as official representatives of religion.

[49] Less than a third of the Israeli Jewish public said they trusted the Chief Rabbinate, which was less trusted than the Knesset, though slightly more than the media, according to the **Israeli Democracy Index 2014**, the most recent such survey to report figures for religious institutions (Israel Democracy Institute/Guttman Center for surveys, https://en.idi.org.il/media/3666/democracy_index_2014_eng.pdf). We have not found comparable data for Palestinian religious institutions.

[50] These views are mirrored in the extensive public debates and media articles on this topic in the Israeli public as well as in academic discourse. See e.g. https://en.idi.org.il/search?q=Chief%20Rabbinate

A related question concerns the ability of CRIHL leaders to rein in extremists and prevent "spoilers". Both Jewish and Muslim militants have their own religious leaders to turn to for guidance. Some interviewees suggested the important issue was to somehow bring on board the rabbis and shaykhs of settlers, Temple activists and Hamas. Others, however, pointed out that this would be very difficult for these official bodies to do openly. Both former staff and external observers brought up the possibility of including other actors to build a stronger, more influential body.

The different suggestions made were:

- Maintain the current membership, but ensure better coordination with other inter-religious initiatives.
- Include spoilers and religious extremists in the dialogue.
- Keep the current membership, but add an advisory board of elder religious leaders who have strong public standing as moral leaders.
- Exchange the current members with what some informants called "real" leaders from prominent Jewish and Muslim religious communities.

We note these suggestions without endorsing any of them, except the call for better coordination with other initiatives. On the one hand, CRIHL could become more representative and influential with the inclusion of additional institutions and leaders; on the other, their inclusion would require much time, effort and discussion, and could lead to new tension. Other institutions and informal leaders may also not be interested in joining CRIHL.[51] To change the current structure is not without risks given the sensitivity of the issues at stake and the fragile state of the Council. A feasible approach could be to bring together religious leaders on the ground and activists of other inter-religious initiatives to elicit their views and expectations of a structure such as CRIHL. The inclusion of other relevant actors' perspectives could be a step towards an explicit and grounded strategy for the future work of CRIHL.

## 4.7 The role of dialogue and facilitation

The literature raises some pertinent points about dialogues of religious leaders (for the following, see Annex D for details and references). First, the political approach relies on the motivation, legitimacy, moral authority, and symbolic value of religious leaders. If they lack credibility, they may fail to transfer the expected effect to the public. By entering into dialogue, religious leaders may be compromised in the eyes of their followers. That may be less of a problem in the present case, where Jewish and Muslim members of CRIHL are already public officials, but their concerns about being compromised have proved an obstacle to outreach and to the implementation of some projects, notably due to the Palestinian policy against "normalization" of relations with the occupier.

Second, it matters whether inter-religious dialogue enables moderate religious leaders to use their improved understanding of the "enemy" to counter extremists in their own community.

[51] The Norwegian convener's network includes representatives from other institutions. In an interview with one such actor, the team asked if he would be interested in collaboration with, or participation in, CRIHL. His dismissive answer underscores the political sensitivity of the landscape CRIHL operates in and the personal burden participation in a Jewish-Muslim dialogue may entail.

Particularly in conflicts where religion is part of the problem, religious leaders may need to be transformed themselves before they can transform the conflict. However, "political" dialogue among leaders tends to be constrained by organisation culture, institutional agendas, constituencies, and protocol, and facilitators may focus on producing consensus statements rather than challenging them. Leaders may have modest expectations of realistic outcomes, and may not trust dialogue partners to transfer results to their own institutional and communal settings.[52]

Research has also revealed other pitfalls in peace dialogues: They can e.g. be too elitist, or engage only a few people, affecting the potential for wider outcomes. In Jewish-Palestinian dialogue, research has emphasized the danger of downplaying political issues and asymmetric power relations by prioritizing the interpersonal. Regardless, research provides strong arguments for why dialogue projects make sense in contexts such as Israel/Palestine, if done right. For example, a conceptual framework developed by Feller and Ryan centres on how the structure of conflict and segregation allows false accusations to exist because they are never confronted with opposing views. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is an ongoing production and reproduction of parallel stories. Dialogue, according to the researchers, can potentially challenge this structure.

The dialogue project under review meets some of the criteria for meaningful dialogue suggested by this research. It clearly addresses the political conflict, and does not subordinate frank discussion to interpersonal relations (the young leaders' project was more problematic in this regard). Most of the activities undertaken have been directed at countering parallel narratives and false accusations. In several ways, the project could be said to give particular room to the narratives and concerns of the weaker side. CRIHL, two thirds of whose members are Palestinian (Muslims and Christians), has had to deal on a practical level with the difficulties of life under occupation to be able to meet at all. The schoolbook project addressed an important political accusation against Palestinians. CRIHL's work on Jerusalem and other holy sites supports status quo arrangements and respect for the narratives of all sides, which in effect aligns the Council with civil-society resistance to Israeli appropriation of historical, archaeological and spiritual heritage, an issue of great concern.

In contact with political authorities on both sides, the Norwegian convener has also devoted particular attention to relations with the PA. This has not always paid off; for example, it did not help ease restrictions on Muslim participation in the 2017 media workshop. A downside includes risks from paying too little attention to signals from Israeli authorities, and in one case, from a lack of communication between Jewish CRIHL members and a CRIHL staffer with good personal connections to the Palestinian Authorities. Indeed, neither Bakkevig himself, the Church/MKR or Norway are perceived as neutral. These considerations suggest that strict impartiality has not been practised in this dialogue project, but also that this is not necessarily a flaw, since a meaningful dialogue depends also on addressing relations of dominance. Some Jewish informants have commented, however, that it may constitute a potential liability. In this complex balancing act, Bakkevig has managed to retain the trust of all participants.

[52] Interview with a Norwegian expert on dialogue facilitation in conflict areas.

## 4.8 Institutional commitment and political relevance

A dilemma in many religious peace projects is that they require religious leaders that can place themselves above national politics, but they also require leaders with access to political authorities. Only rarely do these criteria coincide, since religious leaders with official positions are also subject to political influence or tied to political interests. One close observer of CRIHL suggested that it was reasonable to expect these leaders, with their common "obligation to a higher authority", to be able to rise above the considerations of their own communities and political authorities, but concluded that this had not turned out to be the case. Another politically experienced informant suggested that CRIHL members would anyway do as they were told if political leaders requested their support for a peace process or solution, and thus suggested that the added value of the dialogue was limited.

The project's relevance to the religious leaders is demonstrated by the fact that they agreed to set up CRIHL, despite fears of public reaction, and that they have maintained it until now, despite setbacks and a deteriorating climate for dialogue. The CRIHL platform has given members an international high-level exposure they likely would not have had separately. A few anecdotal reports also suggest that the relations built have benefited the members by making it easier to cooperate ad hoc on solving specific problems. CRIHL remains particularly relevant for Christian religious leaders, who have the most to gain from their formally equal membership in this platform despite their unequal share in population and power. Despite all this, perhaps the greatest question concerns the members' commitment to succeeding: The current Chief Rabbis have shown little interest, and the current Supreme Judge, following the anti-normalisation line, has suppressed Palestinian participation in CRIHL projects. The lack of willingness to meet, and the fact that the ongoing work in CRIHL on both the Jewish and Muslim side has been outsourced to appointed representatives who do not hold positions in the respective institutions,[53] suggests that these institutions are currently less invested in CRIHL than they used to be. Since institutional buy-in was central in the rationale for CRIHL, this is a cause for concern.

These critical questions do not mean that CRIHL should be dissolved or even that it should necessarily be restructured with a different membership, but they do suggest a need to develop a realistic strategy that addresses these challenges.

[53] It may be argued that these institutions do in fact show commitment by leaving the dialogue to their most experienced participants. However, this makes the dialogue more dependent on individuals, a weakness CRIHL was originally designed to address, and the institutions would arguably show greater commitment by maintaining in-house experience in inter-religious dialogue.

# 5 Results

This section gives an overview and assessment of MKR and CRIHL's activities and achievements since its founding in 2005. It also includes assessments of 'sub-projects'/or activities implemented by the secretariat, on its own or in partnership with other actors. The review assesses outputs as well as outcomes.[54] The logic of the result chain is understood as follows: In order to achieve desired long-term changes, there may be many steps between an organisation's activities and the desired outcome. The results chain attempts to categorise these steps by breaking them down into manageable stages: activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. Outputs are defined as the product that is produced by the activities, outcomes are defined as "the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs."

The chapter is structured in the following manner: an overview of the project's defined outputs in relation to its stated outcomes, followed by a review of activities with assessment of outputs included under each activity. The section on outputs ends with an assessment of achievements and shortcomings on output level. The chapter goes on to present and discuss of outcomes of the project since 2005 until today, and also includes a brief counterfactual analysis.

## 5.1 Outputs

In funding applications for CRIHL from 2008 onward, the defined outputs (before 2014 defined in applications as intermediate goals) have been quite consistent, and include:[55]

1. A solid network of religious leaders.
2. Condemnation of religiously motivated violence.
3. Expressions of mutual respect for each other's holy places.
4. Respect for each other's narratives on Jerusalem.
5. Improved knowledge of each other's religion.
6. A network of young religious leaders.

Two outputs (1 and 6) and are directed towards the achievement of the outcome that CRIHL should "become part of a mutually committed interreligious network as a platform supporting solutions to peace": *Output 1* is the development of a solid network of religious leaders, and *output 6* "a network of young religious leaders" providing support to CRIHL and thereby strengthening its outreach and legitimacy. Remaining outputs relate to outcomes addressing pre-conditions for peace, i.e. access to holy sites for all communities, mutual respect and knowledge of the others' religious narratives and holy sites (outputs 2–5).

[54] Outputs are the immediate product or service that is produced by programme activities. They denote the volume of work accomplished by a programme and are usually expressed in a quantity, e.g. a series of workshops/trainings for target groups, conferences, or studies prepared (see also OECD/DAC Glossary of Evaluation Terms: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2754804.pdf).

[55] Additionally, MKR includes goal indicators that are relevant for the discussions of outputs (in applications to the MFA in 2013 and 2015), such as public statements on attacks on holy sites and statements to enhance mutual respect for each other's holy sites.

CRIHL has only to a limited extent been able to pursue these goals in a sustained or systematic fashion. For example, CRIHL's project with SfCG to bring young religious leaders together (output 6) was suspended in 2013. Instead of pursuing its stated output with attempts to establish new rounds of activities with young religious leaders, priority was given to other sub-projects.

MKR and CRIHL have also taken on extra activities (labelled by some as 'ad hoc projects') which can be seen as attempts to follow up on concrete issues and concerns addressed by CRIHL members during the dialogue gatherings, e.g. inspection of archaeological excavations. Taking on these challenging projects with the limited capacity of the convener and staff may have affected the project's ability to complete planned projects.
Though such projects can easily be related to stated outcomes, the ad-hoc mode of operation makes it difficult to place them within an overall progress plan. Instead, the review will present the various sub-projects and activities in a chronological order, and assess the outputs of these in connection to the stated outcomes.

## 5.2 The Excavation Project, 2009–10

During a Council meeting in 2008, Palestinian members raised the issue of Israeli archaeological excavations under the Old Town in Jerusalem, which the Palestinians suspected were tunnelling under the Al-Aqsa mosque on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. In 2009, therefore, CRIHL launched plans for an international independent inspection of the archaeological excavations. The purpose was to get an overview of the extent of the excavations and to ascertain whether or not they were conducted under the Al-Aqsa. The Norwegian convener mobilized technical experts on tunnels from Norway, coordinated with the Israeli Antiquities Authority and with the Jordanese crown prince responsible for Jerusalem affairs, and got the UN's High Representative for The Alliance of Civilization, José Sampaio, to agree lead the inspection. However, the project was blocked by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign affairs in 2010. CRIHL continued to advocate for the project, but eventually it was suspended before completion.[56]

**Assessment:** The issue addressed by the project is highly relevant for a body like CRIHL, and CRIHL was able to lend it the prestige and legitimacy to get high-level internationals involved. However, an important lesson from this project is that careful risk assessment and contingency planning is needed to avoid wasted efforts when operating in this politically sensitive landscape.

## 5.3 The Schoolbook Project, 2009-2013

Among other tasks, CRIHL committed in its 2007 communique to promoting education for mutual respect. They agreed to ask professor Bruce Wexler, an American advisor to the group, to carry out a study about the portrayal of the other in textbooks. This was a topic of heated debate, with Israeli politicians referring to studies that accused Palestinian textbooks of incitement to hatred and violence. Seeking to set new standards for such studies, Wexler

[56] The activities included a desk study with historical overview of constructions and demolitions around the Haram al-Sharif, written by Norwegian consultant Dr Jan Bergh-Christensen (memo, 9 September 2010).

obtained funding from the U.S. State Department and recruited an Israeli and a Palestinian professor to lead the study, advised by an international expert panel and aided by research assistants bilingual in Hebrew and Arabic. They rated hundreds of PA textbooks and textbooks for Israeli secular, religious and Ultra-Orthodox education, through a remote data-entry system specially developed for this project at Yale. CRIHL informed the respective ministries of education and invited their input. The Palestinians were interested, but the Israeli ministry had reservations about the idea of a comparative study.

By 2012, the researchers were able to conclude that outright dehumanization or demonization of the other was rare, but that problems with textbooks on both sides included unilateral and exclusive national narratives, negative portrayals of the other, and absence of information about the other (including on maps). Palestinian textbooks scored significantly worse than Israeli ones (except ultra-Orthodox textbooks). When the Israeli government learned of the findings, CRIHL faced pressures to postpone the publication and change the team. The Chief Rabbinate could not agree to CRIHL publishing the report, as intended. As a compromise, the report was published in February 2013 in the researchers' name, but the release made clear that it was initiated by CRIHL. The report was well received by the then PA Prime Minister. The Israeli government, on the other hand, denounced the research as "biased, unprofessional, and significantly lacking in objectivity" in the press in the days before publication, and the Israeli researcher in particular felt targeted by a hostile media campaign.

Outputs:

- The study "Victims of Our Own Narratives" of the portrayal of the other in Israeli and Palestinian schoolbooks (published in 2013), also made available in Hebrew and Arabic translation.
- Presentations to the diplomatic corps in Israel/Palestine, as well as at influential academic and press venues in the U.S.[57]

**Assessment**: The study was widely publicised. The findings are cited by other studies, and have also since been published in a peer-reviewed journal.[58] It is noteworthy that even Chief Rabbinate representatives involved in the conflict over its publication, highlight the study as one of CRIHL's best and most meaningful projects, and regret that the project failed to secure the necessary political buy-in from the outset.

The team found no information to confirm that it eventually influenced textbook revisions on either side.[59] Nor did CRIHL use it to make recommendations or take further action to lobby for revisions, since it could not agree to endorse it. Several sources, however, argued that the policy relevance and success of the project lay in refuting Israeli claims that Palestinian

[57] These materials remain available at http://israelipalestinianschoolbooks.blogspot.com/, accessed 13 August 2017.

[58] Sami Adwan, Daniel Bar-Tal, and Bruce E. Wexler, "Portrayal of the Other in Palestinian and Israeli Schoolbooks: A Comparative Study," Political Psychology 37, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 201–17, doi:10.1111/pops.12227.

[59] Before publication, foreign donors to Palestinian schools expressed interest in using the report to press for reforms. The PA Prime Minister's office supposedly instructed the education ministry to take note of the study, but we are not aware of further effects. New Palestinian textbooks have been issued since, however, and some researchers involved are currently in discussions about a follow-up project to examine the newer textbooks.

textbooks were uniquely filled with incitement to hostility. By providing foreign donors with a rebuttal to this argument, the project helped them resist political pressure to cut support for Palestinian education. The same perception that the project debunked an Israeli propaganda claim may account for the strong opposition it faced from the Israeli government.

## 5.4 Code on Holy Sites, 2011-

The Code on Holy Sites project is run by SfCG and international partners.[60] The Code is a document setting out a practical code of conduct to secure and safeguard holy sites world-wide, and the project seeks international recognition and endorsement by religious leaders. The Code was endorsed by the CRIHL in 2010, and a pilot project was developed to follow up. A Registry of Attacks on Holy Sites in the Holy Land was launched in 2011, in cooperation with SfCG. It contains a list of attacks ranging from symbolic desecrations and graffiti to burglary and arson at holy sites in Israel and Palestine. Moreover, the pilot also included a response mechanism, where CRIHL published statements by its members condemning such attacks. The statements were published on CRIHL's website and in some cases followed up with press releases. Updates ceased in 2016.

Outputs:

- CRIHL's endorsement of the Universal Code on holy Sites.
- Drafting and publishing statements to condemn attacks on holy sites (2012-2016)
- Establishing and updating a register of attacks (April 2011-December 2016)

**Assessment**: These achievements are directed towards CRIHL's defined goals of condemning religiously motivated violence, and promoting mutual respect for each other's holy places. The project represents perhaps the most consistent effort by CRIHL to address concerns over holy sites. Initially, the updates were drafted by the staff with input from CRIHL members, but by 2013 or so, staff were publishing the statements on their own in a rather mechanical fashion, and the subsequent work likely contributed little to developing the dialogue inside CRIHL.[61] The condemnations on the website make an important statement to those interested in looking up what the religious leaders say, but without significant outreach efforts, the actual effect of these outputs on the wider public is likely very limited. See also under the discussion on Outreach below.

## 5.5 Young Religious Leaders Project, 2013-2015

In cooperation with SfCG, CRIHL was engaged in a dialogue program targeting young religious leaders. Participants from all three religions were recruited to participate in an outdoors expedition in Croatia, and later in an inter-religious dialogue workshop on Cyprus.

[60] The Code was developed in a partnership between four non-governmental organisations: Search for Common Ground, the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, One World in Dialogue, and Religions for Peace in 2009. Two members of the present evaluation team, Vik and Moe, were involved in this process; however, neither played any role in relation to the involvement of CRIHL.

[61] Interviews with CRIHL staff from different periods.

Attempts to conduct follow-up activities were made, but many of the Palestinian participants ceased to take part for political reasons. The project was controversial among Palestinian participants as well as CRIHL members, chiefly because Jewish participants from settlements were included in the trip to Croatia, but also due to other problems with the project's approach.[62] To participate in a dialogue with Israeli Jews was in itself deeply controversial among Palestinians, and could be seen as a violation of the official line of anti-normalisation. To meet and travel with Jewish settlers was even more problematic, and could potentially create difficulties for Palestinians in their own community. A new round of meetings was planned, but they were stopped due to opposition from the Muslim member, and have not resumed.

Activities implemented:

- Two seminars with religious leaders held abroad (2013-2015)
- A limited number of follow-up activities.

**Assessment:** Interviews showed that the trip, controversial and traumatic as some experienced it, succeeded in creating experiences of deep intimacy across the religious and political divides. This could not however create sustainable change given the political context, though a few individual relations lasted for a while.[63] From the start, CRIHL had identified young religious leaders as an important target group for its activities. A key objective for MKR and CRIHL was to build a network of future religious leaders with respect and knowledge about the "other", and thereby also to secure continuity for CRIHL and its vision. The goal has remained a priority for CRIHL according to MKR's applications to the MFA, however, they have not been able to pursue this goal with further gatherings. Prominent reasons are linked to obvious external factors, but perhaps also to limited organisational resources on the part of CRIHL and its secretariat.

## 5.6 Teaching about religion 2014

A follow-up of the schoolbook study was developed with a project on teaching about Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The aim was to improve the teaching of religious education and knowledge of the "other" in Palestinian and Israeli schools by bringing Jewish, Muslim and Christian teachers together. MKR hired a Norwegian teacher with specific competences in comparative religion to facilitate workshops with local teachers. Two workshop series were conducted with teachers in Ramallah and Bethlehem, with about 30 participants in each group. Participants included Christian and Muslim teachers from private and public schools. The project was terminated after two rounds of workshops during 2014.

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[62] The Croatia trip involved roughing it together in the mountains, an approach SfCG had used with other groups of young leaders. Several participants claimed they had not been properly prepared for it, practically or mentally. Beside the issue of settler participation, several Palestinian Muslim participants also did not speak English, had not been adequately prepared for the rough outdoors experience, and were terrified when the organisers took their passports and phones away. Both Christian and Muslim participants commented on the organisers' lack of sensitivity to the specific needs of the Palestinian delegation. However, all interviewees also underscored the uniqueness of the experience, and how it pushed participants into mutual encounters and interaction. Follow-up meeting in Cypros was organised in an ordinary conference format.

[63] We spoke with one participant who had gone on to participate in another project and identified with CRIHL's mission, and learned that one Jewish-Muslim personal relationship had lasted for a while after the Croatia trip.

Implemented activities:

- Two series of workshops for teachers in Bethlehem and Ramallah on teaching about the religion of the other.

**Assessment:** This activity was clearly relevant to CRIHL's goal of increasing knowledge about and respect for the other's religion, and to CRIHL members' declared interest in education. It meets a need for more learning about the other. Unlike other CRIHL projects, which have involved both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, this one was limited to Palestinian teachers on the West Bank, and focused mostly on Muslim–Christian relations. While relevant, it is not clear that the project played to CRIHL's strengths, or that a CRIHL framework added value.

## 5.7 Religious Leaders and Journalists, 2016-17

CRIHL members view the media's lack of knowledge and interest in religious life, religious peacebuilding and inter-religious efforts in Israel and Palestine as an obstacle to CRIHL's outreach and wider impact. A project was therefore developed to bridge the gap and increase mutual knowledge between media professionals and religious leadership, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians, by bringing religious leaders and journalists together. An expert on religion and media, professor Jolyon Mitchell from the University of Edinburgh, was engaged to facilitate a workshop for Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious leaders and reporters. It was held in Amsterdam in the spring of 2017, although without the Muslim religious representatives. Their participation was cancelled at the last minute by the CRIHL's Muslim member, who said it was too "sensitive".[64] The project was funded by the Netherlands. MKR took on administrative responsibility for the project, but have stated that they will not continue to do so, as the handling of additional donors put too much strain on their capacities and resources. The project is to be finalised with another event during fall 2017.
Implemented activities:

- Preparation meeting with participants and one implemented seminar/workshop in Amsterdam (2017).

**Assessment:** The project received positive reviews from participants, who underscored the importance of enhancing knowledge about the other religions. Interviews with project staff as well as participants underscored that the project has potential, but a successful continuation would rely on a properly organised and thematically relevant local partner to secure administration, logistics and proper follow-up.

## 5.8 Jerusalem Talks, 2014-

Talks on Jerusalem's holy sites have been a key issue in CRIHL's meetings since the beginning. A long-standing goal has been to develop a statement on Jerusalem, signed by all the religious leaders of Jerusalem. It is envisaged that such a document could be part of the follow-up of a prayer-for-peace at the Vatican in 2013 in which CRIHL members participated, and where

[64] Cited in Bakkevig's book.

talks were held on Jerusalem and its holy sites. The core group has worked on a draft, and they and their partners have been in contact with the Vatican and with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian authorities to get support for an event and further process.

No time line for this process is outlined in project documents, but the 'mission' entails various kinds of activities, such as core group meetings and meetings with representatives of relevant religious institutions in and outside the region. If accomplished, such a shared document on the holy sites of Jerusalem, endorsed by CRIHL members, would be an important output. Analysis of the inter-religious dialogue within the frame of the CRIHL-platform will be further discussed under 5.10 Outcomes as well as in chapter 4: Theory of Change.

## 5.9 Assessment of outputs

Some of the project's activities directly aim to enhance mutual knowledge and respect among selected professionals (young religious leaders, teachers, reporters) who in turn, if succeeded could have reach many others, or to influence officials who do so (e.g. education authorities). Other project activities, such as publishing statements condemning violence, only make sense if they reach the public directly through the CRIHL website or other media. In line with the assessments of outcomes below, *visibility of the project* is therefore a condition for realising results from some activities.

A serious constraint concerns the limited number of activities as a minimum precondition for achieving stated outputs, is to ensure that planned activities are completed. In practice, most sub-projects have been implemented as a one-off (or two-off) activity, despite plans to complete them with further activities over a longer period of time. Consequently, such sub-projects have not yielded the intended results and progress. E.g. the first round of the project targeting young religious leaders included some follow-up activities, but Muslim participants withdrew, and a planned second round was cancelled due to opposition from the Muslim CRIHL leader. Hence a stated aim of a network of young religious leaders backing up CRIHL and its mandate has not been realised. Another example is the program for teachers of religious education; the program reportedly yielded positive feedback from participants, yet it ended after two workshop sequences held in 2015 and 2016. (The Norwegian convener hopes to be able to continue the project.)

Part of the challenge appears to be a lack of a clear progress plan which would systematically identify, select and schedule activities geared towards the stated outcomes. There are several reasons for this. One is the project manager's choice of a flexible approach that allows the project to follow up ideas and seize opportunities as they arise in a dynamic political situation. Another is the fact that these political developments have only made it more challenging to implement any projects. But there are also organisational factors that explain the recurrent problem of activities that are not implemented according to stated project plans: Lack of clear strategies, adequate project planning, adequate monitoring of staff performance and unclear leadership.

Hence, a general assessment is that CRIHL and MKR would benefit from developing a more professional and structured secretariat with a more clearly defined mandate. Yet, as discussed below (chapter 6, Performance: Efficiency and Sustainability), stakeholders held that

MKR/CRIHL also need to assess their role as project implementers and give priority to activities that CRIHL is uniquely placed to take on, and leave other projects to organisations with relevant competence, mandate and resources.

## 5.10 Outcomes

This chapter assesses outcomes from MKR's inter-religious dialogue efforts in Israel and Palestine, focusing on the period since the founding of CRIHL in 2005.

To document results in a project where the overall aims are tied to a future political process is a complicated matter. In the following we present intended and unintended consequences as well as reflections on how the project could improve its effectiveness. MKR has defined as the overall outcome of the dialogue project "that religious leaders contribute to a peaceful solution of the Middle East Conflict". The concrete objective is "to cultivate, prepare and maintain a network of religious leaders who can take roles as advisors when required for negotiations related to (inter) religious matters and who can publicly lend their support to a peace agreement." Achievement of the overall goal depends on political solutions that have so far proven elusive. This presentation will therefore focus on outcomes relating to the establishment and functioning of CRIHL as an inter-religious network and platform.

The project's stated specific objectives (outcomes) are for CRIHL and the religious leaders to (i) become part of a mutually committed interreligious network, (ii) deplore the use of religiously based violence, (iii) contribute to the legitimacy of each other's existence in the area, (iv) establish a common platform for contributing to political processes that promote peace, (v) respect each other's holy sites, (vi) legitimize each other's rights and access to holy sites, (vii) contribute to agreements about state sovereignty securing faith communities their integrity and autonomy, (viii) maintain programmes for developing young religious leaders with the same goals, and (ix) promote measures that support education about each other's religions. A further stated aim is to increase CRIHL's visibility among the Israeli public (see below for a separate assessment of this outcome).

### *Presentation and assessments of achievements and shortcomings*

The most significant result of MKR's work is the continued existence of CRIHL itself, and the fact that it has continued to function and that its members have continued to communicate in some form for over a decade, despite political obstacles and armed violence. Its potential is emphasised by members, staff and other stakeholders, as well as by external observers, including those who otherwise expressed critical views on CRIHL's actual performance over the past decade. Yet, the platform is not as strong as to conclude that a solid network of religious leaders is established. Still, members and staff point to important internal developments in CRIHL:

- Personal relations and mutual trust have been developed and cultivated.
- Discussions have served to resolve misunderstandings.
- They learned to manage the problem that in early joint appearances, members sent conflicting messages.

- The CRIHL serves as a channel of communication between religious leaders and political authorities on both sides. Limits include some parties' opposition to being drawn into unsanctioned negotiations.

A serious constraint in achieving key objectives is CRIHL's lack of outreach. Deploring the use of religiously based violence, contributing to the legitimacy of each other's existence in the area, and establishing a common platform for contributing to political processes that promote peace (outcomes ii-iv above) are all goals that require CRIHL to be able to communicate its messages in some form outside the privacy of the meeting-room. This challenge is also addressed by CRIHL and MKR, since they have defined increased outreach to the Israeli public as a significant goal.

CRIHL as a platform is still too weak to produce additional external outcomes, as demonstrated during the turmoil around the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem in July/August this year. Despite several attempts, MKR was not able to get the leaders to sign a joint declaration on an issue that lies at the heart of the council's mandate and thematic focus. Again, this does not necessarily imply that CRIHL is the wrong instrument, but it underscores the need for CRIHL to strengthen its potential to create positive outcomes, e.g by developing a more comprehensive strategy that addresses the current situation, actors and context. This could also include a more thorough review of current and potential stakeholders in a peace process. MKR has not so far employed a systematic stakeholder analysis, which could contribute to the identification of valuable resource people, networks and partners for CRIHL and MKR, and possibly also additional CRIHL members.[65] Formal or informal collaboration and strategic partnership with actors engaged in inter-religious dialogues in Israel and Palestine were also stressed by several observers outside CRIHL as requirements for further success.

Since the outset, a serious challenge for CRIHL has been the recurring issue of meeting cancellations, largely due to the political developments, armed conflicts and travel restrictions on the Muslim participants, and hence disruptions to the dialogue process. The frequency of meetings has varied from several meetings a year to zero over longer periods. In the absence of full council gatherings, the "core group" have met on a regular basis. These efforts notwithstanding, the situation seriously hampers the council's ability to produce its stated outcomes (see also under´ Efficiency for further elaborations on results).

### *Visibility and outreach*[66]

The team was tasked with reviewing CRIHL's stated outcome of increasing its outreach to the Israeli public. No similar goal has been defined in the Palestinian context due to the political sensitivity of the inter-religious dialogue.[67]

[65] See chapter 4, Theory of Change, for further discussion.
[66] CRIHL/MKR have stated visibility in Israel as an objective. Information activities has also been held in Norway, hence the analysis includes an assessment of the project's visibility in Norway.
[67] This refers to Palestinian (Muslim) participants' wish to keep a low profile due to political reasons (the policy against normalization of relations with the occupier).

A media analysis covering the seven most popular Israeli newspapers and news websites was carried out, covering 2007 to 2017.[68] Only ten relevant news articles were found. Of these, seven dealt with the schoolbook project, and three with U.S. envoy Greenblatt's visit. This shows that CRIHL is a platform with very limited media coverage in Israel. Some further publications regarding CRIHL were found in blogs and small-scale newspapers that fell outside the scope of this analysis because of their small readership. For comparison, a small Israeli NGO dealing with support for refugees and asylum seekers – a controversial topic which does not receive much media attention in Israel - was mentioned in more than a hundred Hebrew news items in the same newspapers during 2016 alone.[69] The low exposure of CRIHL in media sources is in line with the qualitative information received from interviews. Several interviewees described CRIHL's PR efforts almost non-existent, and stated that it would therefore not be realistic to expect high media coverage. CRIHL is therefore largely unknown to the general public as well as to media actors, a point that was confirmed by a senior journalist with a specific focus on holy sites and the conflict.[70]

There are several reasons. CRIHL members have at times wished to avoid publicity for political reasons. The secretariat has had limited human resources of the secretariat and has lacked a communications strategy. Some interviewees both outside and inside CRIHL also blame the media's alleged disinterest in inter-religious dialogue. However, there clearly are ways for CRIHL to gain visibility. When professional PR efforts were made to promote a newsworthy output, the study of school books, the project received coverage world-wide, including in the world's leading newspapers. This was the effort of a professional PR consultancy, hired as part of the U.S.-funded schoolbook project.[71] As this was an American consultancy, it naturally focused on media platforms outside Israel.

To assess the impact among the Norwegian public, we also did a simpler but comparable survey of the seven largest Norwegian newspapers over the decade from mid-2007 to mid-2017.[72] This resulted in 15 hits, ten of which were brief, incidental mentions, three were op-eds by Bakkevig, and only two stories were news reports, both about the choice of a Norwegian (Bakkevig) to address the Pope on behalf of Middle Eastern religious leaders. Descriptions are positive (or neutral), and Bakkevig is cited as a trusted source on the conflict and the religious background. The same search parameters, however, gave more hits when we looked at newspapers with a specifically Christian profile, (23 hits in Vårt Land, eight in Dagen). These included several news reports describing the CRIHL and its Norwegian support in detail, and

[68] The newspapers analyzed are: YNET & Yediot Aharonot, Walla! News, Haaretz, Makko News/Channel 2, MAARIV and Israel Hayom. In these newspapers, all published daily in Israel, the evaluators searched for any reference to CRIHL or to any of its activities and projects. To do so, the analysis examined all articles about interfaith dialogue, incitement, activities of the Chief rabbinate and other institutions, meetings of religious officials, etc. Articles were coded as negative or positive.

[69] K. Varga and Y. Ofek, Respecting Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' Socio-economic Rights (ASSAF: Tel Aviv, 2017).

[70] Interviews with a former staff member, confirmed by two media workers in significant newspapers with a specific focus on conflict issues and Jerusalem.

[71] Information and documentation of results from several resource persons involved in the schoolbook project.

[72] Methodology: Newspapers were selected based on readership of the print edition in 2016 according to Gallup.no. We searched the Atekst Retriever database for the combination ("Trond Bakkevig") AND ("religiøse ledere" OR religionsdialog OR "religiøse institusjoner") AND (Israel OR Palestina OR Midtøsten)**.** Variations on the search terms did not result in additional hits; leaving out Bakkevig's name resulted in many irrelevant hits.

covered both the ups and downs of the work (e.g., the debacle when another CRIHL member seized the microphone after Bakkevig addressed the Pope). Some materials in these papers also related it e.g. to critiques of Christian Zionism. In short, it seems that the project is about as (in)visible in large print media in Norway as in Israel, whereas a Christian media readership in Norway can potentially keep informed. Bakkevig has also appeared on national radio and TV to talk about this dialogue. The role of key religious leaders as government officials on both sides, and some members' wish for the politically sensitive dialogue to keep a low profile, places narrow constraints on what the CRIHL can say and do in public. At the same time most informants, including key stakeholders, address its weak outreach as a challenge.

It is difficult to see how CRIHL can achieve its stated objectives without any form of external communication. Experiences with the school book project where CRIHL experienced wide media coverage, however, illustrate the added value of including professional support and competence in such matters. It also underscores the need for CRIHL and its Norwegian partner to develop and implement a communication strategy, and ideally to draw upon professional expertise to develop such a strategy while respecting conflict sensitivity and the member's different challenges in relation to publicity.

## 5.11 A Counterfactual Account

The review should not only consider the effect of these results, but also on the extent to which they can be attributed to the Norwegian-funded intervention. Since this is a historical case with no comparable "control group", no-one can say with certainty what would have happened if the MKR's initiative had not existed. Such counterfactual thinking, though speculative, is useful to the extent that it is based on reasoned arguments from the available facts. Here we focus on facts about the motivations, capabilities and limitations of the various actors.

In a context of increased international attention to the role of religion in conflict, creating a platform for dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian religious leaders was an obvious idea. The MKR's Bakkevig was not the only player in this field. The 2002 Alexandria meeting was a watershed event that publicly brought religious leaders together on a common platform. Alexandria did not stem from the MKR's initiative: key players behind it included the Archbishop of Canterbury, an Israeli deputy minister and his Palestinian counterpart, and Egyptian religious authorities. MKR only learned about the event shortly before it took place, when asked if the Norwegians could help with funds for the plane ride. By doing so, Norway helped the organisers overcome one obstacle. It may also be argued that Bakkevig, by networking with some of the people involved and floating ideas for cooperation, had contributed to preparing the ground for such an event; indeed, Bakkevig recalls being told so by the then Chief Rabbi Bakshi-Doron.[73] Considering the influential actors behind the actual planning of the event, however, it seems very likely that Alexandria would have happened in any case.

[73] The statement is cited in Bakkevig's book, and was pointed out in the review process for this report.

Over the next few years, some religious leaders became dissatisfied with the way the Alexandria platform was managed by the Anglican envoy, and concerned over its sustainability beyond the original participants' term of office.[74] The dialogue might have ground to a halt. Instead, these leaders moved to set up the CRIHL as a council based on institutional membership. From description of the process by interviewees and in documents, it cannot be ruled out that the local religious leaders would have reached a solution along similar lines without Norwegian involvement. However, Bakkevig was part of these discussions. When disagreement arose over the chairing of this initiative, Bakkevig's presence provided a neutral solution, and he came to play a central role as convener of the CRIHL.
The continuous functioning of the CRIHL (at some level) since 2005 can also be attributed partly to Bakkevig's persistence, patience and diplomatic skills as convener, and partly to Norway's readiness to provide operational funding, though CRIHL has been able to get some projects funded by other donors.[75] On the whole, then, CRIHL's existence can with some confidence be counted as a result of the Norwegian dialogue efforts under review.

Over this period, the CRIHL and its convener have undertaken various activities and projects to enhance trust and understanding between the parties, with outputs such as reports, statements, and seminars. Some of these activities would likely have happened without CRIHL, while others would not. The Croatia trip for young religious leaders was part of a SfCG programme, which could have taken place without CRIHL's co-funding and help with recruitment. The media project would not have taken place if CRIHL had not initiated it, though it could be continued without CRIHL's active involvement.[76] Generally, though, there are other and more experienced actors, both local and international, that organise Palestinian-Israeli encounters. The SfCG would also have run part of the pilot project on holy sites (the registry of attacks) in any case, but CRIHL added important value by endorsing the code and organizing statements by religious leaders condemning such attacks. The planned inspection of excavations in Jerusalem did not take place, but CRIHL was uniquely positioned to undertake it. Conversely, although a textbook study was not an obvious task for CRIHL, CRIHL did initiate and find partners to carry out a particularly careful and significant review that might not otherwise have taken place.

[74] Interviews with stakeholders participating in the Alexandria process.
[75] The schoolbook project was funded by the U.S. government, and the media project by the Dutch.
[76] Interviews with project partners underscore that any future continuation of the media project would require a stronger technical and logistical backing on the ground than the CRIHL secretariat has been able to provide. Yet, CRIHL's endorsement of the project is seen as highly valuable, e.g. in recruitments of participants.

# 6 Performance: Efficiency and Sustainability

This chapter examines efficiency and sustainability of the project, including the organisational structure and division of labour among the partners, how project resources have been spent, and project reporting, and ultimately how these factors have impacted the achievement of results. Efficiency is assessed in relation to cost input and labour input, followed by a discussion of issues affecting sustainability.

## 6.1 Cost Efficiency

In total, approximately **NOK 24 million** have been allocated to MKR's religious dialogue project in the Middle East since 1999.[77] The latest agreement between the MFA and MKR covers a two-year period (2015–2016) with just under NOK 3.9 million. The project budget and accounting statements are not structured in manner that allows for a thorough cost analysis. Some of the sub-projects of CRIHL and MKR have, as mentioned above, been financed through other funding mechanisms.

The large bulk of MFA funds have been spent on travel arrangements and salaries for the Norwegian convener and a local secretariat of varying size over time (the latter since 2009). Additionally, MFA has provided funds to cover various sub-project activities and travels abroad for CRIHL members to Washington and Norway. The team has not found any indications that the wage level has been too high, whether locally or in Norway. A large share of the annual budget covers travel costs to the region.[78] It is hard to assess how much travel it takes to maintain networks and keep relations warm, but it seems likely that some money could be saved on travel and accommodation without compromising results. There are also strategic reasons to do so, as the current practice could magnify local perceptions of the project as expensive and detached from the general public.[79] Travel and subsistence claim forms for MKR staff have been approved by the MFA/MKR. In line with the ToR and preparatory meetings with the client, they have not been considered in this review.

While spending has been modest relative to the intended results, the more important concern over efficiency is wasted effort: the number of sub-projects that have not produced intended results (see Chapter 5, Results). In this sense, efficiency could have been improved through better planning, an explicit strategy including risk management, and systematic monitoring/reporting. In interviews with project staff and core group members, issues relating to weak risk management are highlighted in connection to political sensitivities (e.g. the schoolbook project with regard to the selection of researchers) and internal competences and capacities as well as on sound judgement of what is possible for such actors to take on or not. One conclusion is that the organisation of MKR and CRIHL with its secretariat is not large enough to deal with project implementation in sensitive contexts. A way forward could be to seek relevant partnerships, as was done in the schoolbook project (see above). CRIHL could

[77] Financial documentation (budgets and budget reports) has been provided by the MFA.
[78] An overview of the annual budget from 2012-2015 shows that travel costs for the Norwegian convener range between 13 and 25 percent of the total project budget.
[79] This point was made by former staff and participants in the field.

seek out project partners with different capabilities and organisational set-ups, freeing CRIHL and the Norwegian convener to concentrate on what they can contribute in terms of religious personnel, religio-political insight and official recognition.

## 6.2 Efficiency of Organization

MKR and Bakkevig have since 1995 been responsible for facilitating and leading the dialogue processes, as well as for building and sustaining a network of religious leaders and institutions. CRIHL has been MKR's cooperation partner in the project since 2005. MKR has since 2009 cooperated with the Jerusalem branch of SfCG. MKR hires offices and administrative support for CRIHL from SfCG in Jerusalem. SfCG's technical and administrative assistance includes administration of the Norwegian financial support, by paying salaries of CRIHL staff, etc. This staff has served as a secretariat to CRIHL and Bakkevig. The staff has been religiously/ethnically diverse, as well as gender-mixed. The number of staff have varied from two at the beginning, to three at the most and one at the least, mostly in part-time positions. Currently, staff is limited to a single person in a 20-percent position that expires in October 2017, plus some administrative support to maintain the website. This marks at least a temporary phasing-out of the current secretariat, as the development of future plans and recruitment of new staff will depend on continuous support from MFA and/or other funding sources.

MKR has been responsible for the supervision and management of the secretariat. The direct supervision of staff has been the responsibility of Bakkevig, but different MKR case handlers have also been engaged in administrative support, first and foremost from Oslo, but also through annual meetings in Jerusalem. As applications and project reports are written in Norwegian, these formal planning processes have likely not involved local staff and CRIHL directly. Conversely, Bakkevig has not involved MKR closely in the substantive planning of CRIHL's work, partly to maintain local ownership of the project and partly to avoid complications over MKR's other work on the issue. The secretariat's role has been to support CRIHL and the Norwegian convener logistically and otherwise and to coordinate sub-project activities.

MKR is the responsible administrative unit towards the MFA. It is responsible for funds and their administration (applications and reports). The formal (mostly annual) project reports are brief and descriptive. In addition to these, the Norwegian convener shares travel reports with the MFA and MKR. The travel reports are easy-to-read and often quite informative, with references to meetings with religious and political actors. The annual reports refer readers to these for details. However, being travel reports, they are not systematic and thematically coherent. This is an unorthodox practice that should be improved in a possible future agreement. In addition to the travel reports, more detailed, uniform and aggregated project reports would allow MKR and MFA the overview they need to grasp project developments, strengths and weaknesses. Only in 2014 did the MFA introduce standard results-based management framework application forms as a basis for MKR's applications, in line with normal procedures for MFA grants.

The team's view is that the MFA also ought to have had a clearer focus on results. One question from several stakeholders is why the project has not undergone external review until

now.[80] Internal MFA documents show that questions related to efficiency and results have been raised on several occasions during this period, and an earlier review might have allowed MKR to deal with some of these issues.

Bakkevig has implemented the project on behalf of MKR, and has only to a limited extent engaged MKR in strategic or other substantive decisions related to project development and plans. Several informants stress a lack of transparency in planning, reporting, and communication and information sharing in general. This reflects the project's weak institutional base, and dependence on one person. Bakkevig serves as the Convener of CRIHL, chairing council and core-group meetings. He is responsible for promoting CRIHL in the region as well as internationally and in the diplomatic community in Israel/Palestine. Through his frequent travels to the region, he maintains a network of religious and political contacts. The vast majority of present and former staff and partners highlight Bakkevig's significant role in the project, his diplomatic skills, and his staying power. All the staff also describe Bakkevig as a fine employer, especially in terms of personal relations, though at the same time some expressed frustration with a lack of goal-oriented management. Former staff and partners also underscore the need to include more human resources with additional/complementary capacities to enhance the efficiency of the work, and thereby CRIHL's level of activity and potential for progress.

In connection to these points, a constraint raised by several staff and partners is that facilitation of the dialogue falls on one person with a considerable but one-sided skill set and approach. The convener's role has largely focused on preserving the unity and fragile existence of CRIHL through sensitivity to members' boundaries. This has been crucial to keep CRIHL members in the fold and has in long periods taken all the time and resources of the convener.[81] A more dynamic dialogue process could help CRIHL members' commitment, and encourage them to test their boundaries and develop a common agenda further. This requires, however, an additional style of dialogue facilitation. There is a precedent: After the breakdown at the Kyoto meeting, MKR and CRIHL successfully drew on the help of an external facilitator to restore trust in the dialogue.

The efficiency of the secretariat has varied according to the staff's different competences, resources and network, which has depended on the available pool of recruits from SfCG. This structure is sufficient to support council meetings, Bakkevig's work and a website. A key question, however, is whether it is adequate for project implementation. Several staff and key actors in CRIHL believe that MKR and CRIHL need to critically assess their role as project implementers and give priority to activities that CRIHL is uniquely placed to take on, and leave other projects to organisations with relevant competence, mandate and resources. Former staff and other stakeholders point to the absence of concrete job descriptions, action plans, and strategies with clear objectives as organisational weaknesses. They also point to inherent problems with the organisational structure of CRIHL and its secretariat: the MKR is

[80] The issue of having external evaluations of the project has from time to time been raised by case handlers in the Middle East Section, according to MFA staff (interviews). MKR, too, has on different occasions called for independent evaluation of the project.
[81] As outlined in detail in travel reports and Bakkevig's book manuscript.

a body within the Church of Norway, not an NGO with experience in field operations; long-distance mentoring and leadership is challenging; there is no career path for experienced staff to stay on; and CRIHL has not registered as an organisation (to avoid contentious symbolic decisions over where and under what law to register), so it cannot itself hire staff, manage funds or sign contracts. But even given these constraints, there is scope for improvement. Most former employees thought their work would have yielded better results with a tighter mentorship and a clear work plan.

These comments are supported by the review of project documents. Little attention to these matters, as well as the limitation of long-distance management, have inhibited the building of a sustainable, professional structure. A more solid organisation around CRIHL might have strengthened its ability to implement its activities as planned, which is a minimal condition for achieving stated goals. A more effective apparatus around CRIHL, with local staff providing constant support for a more active partnership and participation on the part of each CRIHL member might also have contributed to a greater commitment.

Finally, it is important to note that long-term strategic thinking should not be seen as straitjackets: planning and organisation should also include provisions for creatively adapting and changing plans as the situation requires.

## 6.3 Sustainability

### *CRIHL and the secretariat*

CRIHL was founded in response to local religious leaders' wish to develop a new platform for inter-religious cooperation after the Alexandria process. Local ownership is therefore ingrained in CRIHL's mandate and vision. CRIHL is recognised and accepted by Israeli and Palestinian political authorities. CRIHL exists and operates in a highly complex context, however, which places serious constraints on its members' ability and willingness to engage. Stakeholders and CRIHL members also stress its dependence on continuous external facilitation as well as funding. Several stated that if Norway and MKR pulled out today, CRIHL might well fall apart. In this sense, the Council and its inter-religious dialogue is not very sustainable.

Administratively, CRIHL relies on MKR and the secretariat with support from SfCG. Currently, the size of the secretariat is one person in a 20 percent position until October 2017, in addition to limited website support. This is in part because the project has put off hiring further staff pending the outcome of the present review. Looking beyond the present situation, the dilemma is that CRIHL is unlikely to move forward without the support of a strengthened secretariat, but establishing a more efficient structure than the current one requires additional funding, not to mention the human resources and competence to secure adequate follow-up. MKR does not run overseas operations like a development NGO, and is not set up to handle the project apparatus that is needed to build and sustain a local organisation in Jerusalem. It is also not clear that the MFA is willing to make new funds available for such investments at this point. While MFA staff in Oslo and Israel/Palestine emphasise the Ministry's commitment to CRIHL as a platform, they also suggested that future Norwegian contributions would not be likely to include additional investments in new sub-

projects and rebuilding of organisational structures. Consequently, if CRIHL wants to continue to have a secretariat, questions of funding and organisational partnership need to be solved.

### *MKR and the Norwegian convener*

An obvious and widely recognised sustainability issue relates to the fact that regardless of MKR's administrative role, this has always been very much a "one-person project". The Norwegian convener has been the essential actor from the outset, not only in building and sustaining inter-religious relations and CRIHL's membership, for executing all strategic decisions, maintaining contact with the donor, etc. For many years he has sustained a network of religio-political actors, but these contacts were in most cases not introduced to potential successors or colleagues. If, for any reason, he becomes unable to continue his work, there is no-one ready to take over, and the project can easily fall apart. An urgent concern for MKR and CRIHL, if this project is continued, is thus to identify a successor and a strategy for transfer of knowledge and contacts.

Another aspect relates to the future role of MKR. If the sustainability of CRIHL depends on a more comprehensive institutional engagement, is MKR the right channel? While Bakkevig has earned the trust and confidence of CRIHL's members, this does not necessarily reflect CRIHL members' views on MKR/Church of Norway.[82] At the same time, MKR is involved in a range of international activities, including advocacy and solidarity campaigns relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that could be seen as incompatible with a stronger engagement with CRIHL.

The future role of MKR thus also depends on what CRIHL members decide should be the future role and organisation of CRIHL and what organisational structure is needed. CRIHL will need to clarify what they need from Norway, and what they themselves are prepared to provide, to improve CRIHL's functioning as an inter-religious platform. To strengthen the organisation, CRIHL and MKR would need to consider where they can seek additional/complementary support in terms of funding, partnerships and networks.

## 6.4 Cross-cutting issues

Here, we briefly discuss overarching and cross-cutting issues that have not been an integral part of this project but that require attention in Norwegian-funded projects.

### *Gender equality and human rights*

A general limitation in formal dialogues between religious institutions is a consistent gender disparity among the participants. Religious communities' official leaderships consist primarily of men. Women may hold unofficial leadership positions, yet these forms of leaderships are rarely included in high-level dialogues. CRIHL leaders are certainly all male, and the informal core group that is currently able to meet, also comprises men only. The secretariat has during several periods included female staff, however. MKR underscores in

[82] E.g. according to MKR staff, and confirmed by our interviews in Israel, the Chief Rabbinate was initially negative to taking part in the Media and Religion project because it was formally led by MKR/The Church of Norway, in whose name the funding application to Dutch authorities was made.

applications/reports that it continues to raise gender equality matters whenever possible, and that gender balance has been a key concern in recruitment of staff and participants.

The review team recognises that top level religious leaders in the Middle East comprise men only, and that this is a constraint within which MKR/Bakkevig have to work. However, several informants, of both genders and including former staff as well as project participants, noted the potential of including a stronger gender perspective. These interviews suggest that CRIHL too easily takes it as a given that the target group is male, or that other challenges must take priority over gender sensitivity/mainstreaming. These informants did not doubt that recruiting women to CRIHL projects such as that for young religious leaders was feasible, though CRIHL would need to pay more attention to gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive planning, and that the project misses possible added value by excluding or limiting representation of women in their activities. One possibility is to draw on experiences and lessons learned from practitioners/ experts on the Women, Peace and Security framework[83],with experiences from working with religious leaders in various conflict settings.

Integral to the dialogue project's objectives are essential human rights aspects. These include not only freedom of religion, an obvious concern for CRIHL, or the right to education for peace and understanding, which has been the subject of several of its projects, but also all the human rights that are infringed as a consequence of armed conflict and occupation. A comprehensive rights-based approach has not been pursued by the project. MKR has sought to act in line with 'do no harm' principles, however not in a systematic and planned manner.

### *Corruption*

MKR has been administratively responsible for handling MFA grants. The large bulk of funds has been spent on administrative costs, travel expenses, and some project activities. Funds to cover costs in the field have been transferred monthly to SfCG, which has since 2008 provided MKR and the CRIHL secretariat with the necessary local administrative support. Both MKR and SFCG have audited their accounts according to regular standards and procedures. Given the scope of the task and the nature of the project spending, the team has not conducted a thorough analysis of use of funds, but considers the likelihood of corruption to be minimal.

[83] There are eight UN resolutions providing a framework for implementing and monitoring the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The first 1325 resolution was endorsed in 2000, the last in 2015. See also: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml

# 7 Summing Up and Looking Ahead

This review traces the historical development and assesses the results of MKR's more than twenty-year-long effort to bring Israeli and Palestinian religious leaders together in a dialogue process for peace.

### *Results*

The most significant achievement of MKR's work is the continued functioning of CRIHL as an institution-based Israeli-Palestinian dialogue for over a decade, despite a stalled peace process, political obstacles and armed violence. Top-level meetings of CRIHL members have been rare, however. Though a "core group" of representatives has continued to meet regularly and to take new initiatives, this is not the same as the continuous dialogue process, between all the heads of the member institutions, on which the promise of CRIHL is premised.

As the peace process is stalled, CRIHL has not had the opportunity to contribute to or endorse a peace agreement. It has continued to prepare for such a role by maintaining contacts with relevant international political actors and developing common messages about holy sites. To build momentum and relations in the interim, the convener and local staff have engaged in several ad hoc projects or activities addressing the concerns of CRIHL members about misunderstandings and parallel hostile narratives between the two sides. While relevant to the conflict, several of these activities have been terminated before their planned completion, and have consequently not realised their intended goals, though some have delivered important outputs. CRIHL is still too weak to produce additional outcomes beyond maintaining itself.

### *Efficiency issues*

Limited results can be explained by external factors related to the nature of the conflict and to political factors outside the control of CRIHL or MKR, but can also be traced back to weak organisation structure, lack of a clear strategy, inadequate project planning and risk management, dependence on a single facilitator, and long-distance management of local staff. One conclusion is that the organisational setup is not fit to deal with project implementation in such a complex and sensitive context. A more solid organisation around CRIHL could have strengthened both its ability to produce results and the commitment of its members. Although it might seem natural to suggest that MKR should be more closely involved in running the project, this is not a feasible solution. MKR is not administratively equipped to run long-term operations of this sort. Moreover, MKR is engaged in advocacy efforts in the Middle East that are not necessary compatible with a more visible role in relation to CRIHL. MKR and the Norwegian convener therefore need to clarify MKR's formal and practical role in a possible future arrangement before organisational solutions for CRIHL can be developed.

The project is fairly small-scale, with budgets mostly covering core funding such as salaries, administrative costs and travels of the Norwegian convener, MKR and the local secretariat. While spending has been modest relative to the intended results, there is a concern over efficiency related to unproductive efforts, i.e. the efforts invested in activities that could not be completed according to plan. Efficiency could have been improved through better

planning, including the development of an explicit strategy, risk management, and systematic monitoring/reporting.

### *Sustainability*

A key challenge relates to CRIHL's reliance on Bakkevig and Norwegian funds. The Norwegian convener has been the key actor from the outset, both in building and sustaining inter-religious relations and CRIHL's membership and in executing strategic decisions, maintaining contact with the donor, and so forth. If Norway pulls out today, CRIHL could fall apart. Twenty years after the project started, weak sustainability is therefore an urgent challenge.

### *Relevance*

Despite these shortcomings, CRIHL is largely viewed by stakeholders and analysts as a relevant platform with the potential to play a positive role in a future peace process. The conclusion is based on the importance of religion as a mobilizing and legitimizing factor in the Israeli and Palestinian publics, of religious sites as stakes in the conflict, and of religious extremists as potential "spoilers". This gives religious leaders a role to play, however ambiguous and fraught with dilemmas. CRIHL's relevance to the member institutions themselves is demonstrated by the fact that they have founded it and have maintained it over time.

In the current situation, however, CRIHL's relevance is not evident, due to political developments, the perceived lack of interest and initiative on the part of the religious leaders, and the lack of an explicit and clear strategy, communication skills, and outreach to important groups.

Political constraints and opportunities change. During the writing of this report, the Trump administration has explored the ground for brokering a peace agreement, and the embargo of Qatar and the new Fatah-Hamas talks have affected Palestinian politics; over the next few years, political changes may take place due to Israeli elections or president Abbas' advanced age. There is little ground for optimism that the peace process will suddenly pick up, however, and if CRIHL is to continue, it needs to plan a role for itself over the long haul.

The MFA has found the project relevant, despite the modest results, for two reasons. First, it is perceived as an asset in a larger political context where CRIHL seems to have gained a certain international recognition, as illustrated by meetings with high-level international actors. CRIHL's relevance in international and diplomatic circles should not be overstated, however, as such meetings have not led to follow-up or new initiatives. Second, based on his inter-religious network, Bakkevig in practice serves as an adviser on religious affairs to the MFA and the embassy in a thematic area where MFA traditionally has little institutional knowledge. The MFA should clarify its expectations of the project and on what grounds it might expect continued funding.

Norway enjoys recognition for its international involvement in peace and reconciliation processes. In-built in this policy is a positive will to take risks and test new forms and channels of cooperation. This project can be seen in the light of such a policy. However, other dialogue projects have also been developed and re-shaped through reviews and learning exercises. Best

practices suggest that stop points for learning add important value that could also have helped this dialogue project to tighten its strategy and restructure its organisational set up at a much earlier stage.

### *The way ahead*

Finally, it is worth noting that despite its shortcomings, nearly every observer and stakeholder interviewed platform thought the CRIHL should continue. Several interviewees also claimed that if it were discontinued, it would not be easy to re-establish it if or when needed. However, it is difficult to justify continuing support for a project based on a role it may play in the future. CRIHL therefore needs to put forward a convincing proposal for how it will contribute to peacebuilding in a next funding period, focused on achieving results rather than preserving potential. To do so, it must tackle questions over its sustainability, the commitment of its members, its purpose during a prolonged hiatus in the peace process, and its influence on the public and policy-makers. The recommendations below suggest concrete steps ahead with the dual aim of clarifying CRIHL members' commitment and interests, and identifying feasible practical solutions.

Clarity and agreement over the role of CRIHL is needed for any strategy to enhance CRIHL's currently limited public visibility, relevance and connection to communities and other peacebuilding initiatives. Broadly speaking, stakeholders had two views on the role CRIHL should play. One was that it should focus on core activities that capitalise on its strengths as a group of institutional leaders ("political" dialogue, in Neufeldt's typology). One CRIHL insider proposed a focus on three tasks: keeping open communications among themselves, publicly condemning violence and hatred, and supporting political initiatives to end the conflict. An opposing view, however, is that CRIHL needs to undertake more projects in the communities to create concrete change ("peacebuilding" dialogue), and to be seen doing so to enhance its image.[84] These are strategic choices that also depend on prospects for future funding, as CRIHL would need a stronger structure to take on more project management. However, CRIHL could remain an elite platform and engage with community religious leaders but also co-sponsor activities (meetings, forums, conferences, trainings, studies) in partnership with other organisations. An essential starting point for such a strategy would be to carry out a stakeholder analysis mapping relevant religious actors, networks and other inter-religious initiatives.

## 7.1 Recommendations

The team suggests that CRIHL should enter into a formal strategy process with all its stakeholders, and the MFA should provide funds for such a process for a defined period. The present convener should take part, but it should also be facilitated by external moderators, bringing in a fresh perspective as well as complementary expertise in fields such as organisation development, strategic planning, and communications strategy. The religious

[84] This view was supported inter alia by some former staff and not least by some second-circle project participants. Though CRIHL was from the outset intended to be an elite forum, by taking on some public-facing projects it has created expectations that it would take on more of this role. These interviewees thought it might be counterproductive for religious leaders to come together if they failed to generate cooperation and dialogue visible to the public.

leaders and their institutions should take part in the process, and as a first step, they should clarify and re-commit to their future participation in CRIHL.

The process should lead to the formulation of a strategy with achievable short- and medium-term goals, defined benchmarks relative to those goals, and clarified contributions from the members/institutions involved. CRIHL and its facilitators should choose their own tools, but the strategy should build on an explicit Theory of Change and contain a monitoring and evaluation component. The recently published handbook *Faith Matters* can be a useful aid.[85] The results of this process would inform the dialogue between the MFA and MKR/CRIHL on future cooperation and support.

As a point of departure, the CRIHL members and key stakeholders should clarify the present and future purpose and role of CRIHL. In the process, they should also review their membership and consider whether further important constituencies or influential institutions could be brought in.

CRIHL should ensure conflict-sensitive planning to mitigate power asymmetries and obstacles to diverse participation from all sides, activities should as a rule be gender-inclusive, and women should be actively recruited to participate.

Public visibility, while not an aim in itself, is a requirement for the effectiveness of any CRIHL activities that seek to build mutual trust among the communities, even if it is decided to limit them to statements condemning incitement. The fact that some members prefer CRIHL to keep a low profile only underscores the need to think through a communications strategy that balances these concerns, and get skilled help to carry it out.

To ensure financial sustainability, CRIHL should clarify what support/structure they need to take on a more active role, what they need from Norway, what they themselves can provide, and where additional resources could be sought. The strategy process should also be designed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the present convener to colleagues and potential successors.

In practical terms, this entails the following recommendations to the stakeholders:

Recommendations to CRIHL

1. Conduct a strategy process with all CRIHL's stakeholders, facilitated by external moderators, to formulate a clear strategy and clarify members' roles and commitments.
2. Ensure sustainability through diversified funding and a planned succession for the convener. The present convener should be encouraged to continue as long as he is able

[85] Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley, and Michelle Garred, Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-Religious Action for Peacebuilding (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2017), http://cdacollaborative.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Faith-Matters-A-guide.pdf.

and willing, and to overlap with another facilitator to transfer knowledge and experience.

3. Focus on activities to increase CRIHL's public outreach among the religious communities based on a stakeholder analysis of all relevant actors. Ensure conflict-sensitive and gender-inclusive planning of events.
4. Consider recruiting additional members to CRIHL to enhance representation of relevant actors and constituencies.

Recommendations to MKR

5. Clarify whether MKR wishes to continue managing possible Norwegian support for the project, and what institutional arrangements would be needed.
6. Ensure institutional grounding. Ensure that future management are organically integrated in the project, to provide genuine support for the Norwegian convener. Ensure professional management.

Recommendations to the MFA

7. Define the MFA's interest in the project and signal on what grounds continued funding might be expected. Require the project to report in a format that allows the MFA to have a clear overview of project developments and address weakness and strengths, as well as results.
8. Make available funding, if requested, to support a strategy process with professional facilitation help over a suitable period.
9. Make further funding contingent on a renewed strategy from CRIHL and a clarification of MKR's role in the project. Continued funding should also be based on, and enable, inclusion of a broader critical mass in decision making and strategy planning, and the phasing-in of an additional convener and eventual successor.
10. While MFA alone has been responsible for funding of CRIHL, it might consider seeking partnership with other countries that are engaged in developing Israeli-Palestinian relations.

# Annex A: Terms of Reference

**1.0 Background**

Church of Norway - Council on Ecumenical and International Relations (Mellomkirkelig Råd/MKR) has since the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, facilitated dialogue between religious leaders in Palestine, Israel and to some extent Jordan. With the religious dimensions of the conflict in the Middle East, political leaders in Norway as well as leaders within the Church of Norway has seen enhancing dialogue between the different religious groups and their leaders as an important element in pursuing a peaceful solution to the conflict

**1.1 The Religious Dialogue project**

In total approximately 23,4 million NOK have been allocated to MKR's religious dialogue project in the Middle East since 1999. 86 The most recent agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and MKR (of a series of consecutive projects agreements between MFA and MKR about support to inter-religious dialogue) covered the years 2015 and 2016. The amount allocated for these two years was NOK 3 859 000.

The project 2015-2016 had as its overarching objective that religious leaders contribute to a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East. This must take place in the framework of a broader peace process.87 The project has as its concrete objective to develop and maintain a network of religious leaders who can be available as advisors when required for negotiations on issues related to religion, and who can publicly recommend a peace agreement. The target group for the project are current and future Israeli and Palestinian religious leaders. As part of the work of MKR are also information activities and interreligious dialogue conducted in Norway about the situation in the Middle East.

The political situation is often shifting, assumed to affect the project's performance.

Central themes for the consecutive religious dialogue projects have been the discussions about Jerusalem and in particular the question about access to and use of the religious sites. Part of the longer-term dialogue project effort has also been the establishment of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) in 2005.

**1.2 The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land**

The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land is the cooperation partner for the project. It comprises representatives of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, the Sharia court of Palestinian authorities, the Ministry of Religion, patriarchs and bishops and has as its intent to mobilise broad networks for peace when required.88 According to project reports, the CRIHL is the

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[86] Based on Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' project database, which is available only from 1999. List of agreements identified will be provided to the winning tenderer.

[87] Page 5, the project document to the MFA for 2015 and 2016 regarding support to CRIHL, dated 27.10.2015

[88] According to the project document the Council's activities have included:

- increasing the spectre of attitudes and views the religious leaders are exposed to.
- courses for future religious leaders with the view to expose these for other religious perspectives and to tear down existing barriers between groups.

only arena for cooperation between the religious leadership in Israel and Palestine. The CRIHL's establishment has been part of a strategy to enhance common projects and increased collaboration cutting across the different religions.89 Increased visibility of the Council in the Israeli public sphere is an aim for the project.90

The project has since its start up with CRIHL had the following targets for the religious leaders[91]:

- That they become part of a mutual committing interreligious network,
- deplore the use of religiously based violence,
- contribute to the legitimacy of each other's' existence in the area,
- establish a common platform for contributing to political processes that promote peace,
- respect for each other's holy sites
- legitimizes each other's rights and access to holy sites,92
- contribute to agreements about state sovereignty securing faith communities their integrity and autonomy,
- maintain programmes for developing young religious leaders' according to targets above, and
- promote measures that supports education about each other's religions.

**1.3. The organisation of the project**

MKR has received financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and has implemented the projects93, in close cooperation with the MFA, the Norwegian Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Norwegian Representative Office in Al-Ram. The MKR has since 1995 cooperated with religious leaders in Israel and Palestine. The Provost in the Church of Norway, Trond Bakkevig has coordinated the work. For several years MKR has cooperated with Search for a Common Ground to implement the project. The Council hires offices and administrative support through Search for Common Ground. [94]

**1.4 MKR**

The MKR is responsible on behalf of the Church of Norway for international and interreligious cooperation, and has 40 years of experience regarding cooperation with different religious and civil organisations in multiple countries. MKR is securing finances, budgetary

- Studying school curricula in Palestinian and Israeli schools, with the view to increase knowledge about other religions in a more balanced way.
- Courses for teachers and work on teaching plans
- Work to reduce tensions related to the archaeological excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque
- A dialogue-forum about Jerusalem

[89] Project document page 4.
[90] Project document page 6.
[91] Ibid. page 5.
[92] For more, see page 5.
[93] Provost Trond Bakkevig in the Church of Norway has been the key facilitator of the religious dialogue and in building and maintaining networks since the project's start-up.
[94] The Council is not registered as an organisation neither in Israel nor in Palestine. The reason for not registering is not only that it is complicated, but primarily because the Council is composed of semi-official partners from two nations.

management and management of the CRIHL. CRIHL provides a network in Israel and Palestine for MKR and the Church of Norway.

**2.0 Purpose and objectives of the review**

**2.1. Purpose and intended use**

The purpose of the review is obtain an overview of the religious dialogue efforts since its start in 1995, including regarding effectiveness (documentation of results) and relevance. The findings of the review will be used to 1) inform future activities of religious dialogue in the Middle East, 2) to inform decisions regarding future funding of religious dialogue in the Middle East and 3) to learn about religious dialogue as a tool for peace.

**2.2. Objectives of the review**

- Map and document project activities and objectives.
- Assess and document achievements of the projects.
- Assess the relevance of the project and approaches used. Is the project working on the right issues and with the right networks and individuals?
- Assess efficiency of the project and the approaches chosen. Efficiency measures the outputs, qualitative and quantitative, in relation to the inputs.95
- Assess sustainability, i.e. the probability of continued long-term effects.
- Discuss unintended consequences of the effort – positive as well as negative.
- Provide recommendations where relevant, based on findings and conclusions, in particular with regard to improving reporting on results.

**3.0 Scope and other review tasks**

The review of the Religious Dialogue in Palestine should include the activities implemented since 1995, in Palestine, Israel and Norway.

Part of the review will be to try to capture results achieved (or not) during the years of implementation. The review team should also identify and discuss which theory(ies) of change has evolved during the project period. A discussion of the role that religion plays in the conflict in the Middle East and thereby the significance of inter-religious dialogue as a tool for peace will frame the analysis.

Another part of the project is to examine what are the key constituents of inter-religious dialogue and inter-religious cooperation for peace. Moreover, how does religious dialogue and cooperation between religious leaders work as a tool for peacebuilding? Which experiences exist generally and specifically in this field? How can religion and religious leaders act as blockage for peaceful political solutions to a conflict, but also as motivators?
A third part of the review and linked to the above is to include a discussion of research about how norms and /or behaviours of actors in a peace process actually can be influenced through

[95] It is not expected that an assessment of efficiency is undertaken for the entire period of funding, but rather for the last project period, to be used as an indication. Comparison between several alternatives is not required, but a discussion of the relationship between inputs and outputs in light of what can be expected in such a context. The team can in addition also choose an approach whereby they assess how present the efficiency concept is in the project documentation, interviews and reporting, The team shall identify and cite assessments of efficiency if they exist.

for instance dialogue, and how can such influence be traced/measured? How can this apply to the religious dialogue project?

The review will cover the entire time-period 1995- 2016 and provide an overview of different projects and project activities, including in Norway. The overall period can be divided into several phases depending upon quality and availability of documentation and the analytical approach to be applied by the review team.

The review team shall also carry out following review tasks:

- Assess the quality of reporting of the project - and provide advice about how the project can improve its reporting in a way that captures intangible effects, and at the same time respect sensitivities associated with project achievements.
- Assess how the project has understood and been informed by the political context. Discuss how the political climate affects the project and how the project has adopted to a changing context.
- Assess risk management of the project. How are risks analysed in terms of how they negatively affect cross cutting issues? [96]
- Look at the approaches and methods used to facilitate dialogue, and discuss the suitability of these in terms of achieving planned objectives.
- Assess the organisational set up/institutional arrangements of the project. Does the project today through the existing organisation have access to the resources it needs for attaining its objectives? (ex. knowledge, influence, human resources and networks, and/or other). Moreover, is the internal-set up of the project (management, relations between institutions, reporting, internal control, quality assurance and M&E) well-functioning?
- Assess how the project relates to or incorporate considerations related to gender, human rights and anti-corruption in its activities.

**4.0 Methods/approach**

It is up to the consultant to apply an appropriate approach, but since the projects have been running for such a long period of time, a historical approach should be considered for the earliest project periods. This could entail understanding actions, statements and policy goals in their historical context in line with established perceptions of reality, of the time, as well as how the MKR and involved parties have been able to learn and adapt to shifting realities over time.

The assessment of results is expected to cover only the latter half of the funding period. Outcomes shall be seen as direct results of outputs. The review team must trace the resources invested in the process at different stages and discuss linkages between inputs, outputs and outcomes. One of several relevant questions to ask in this connection is whether there are visible effects on congregations , networks and institutions from working with individual religious leaders? The review should also include in-depth interviews with a selection of involved religious leaders to trace how the religious dialogue project and its and interaction

[96] The cross cutting issues referred to are: human rights, anti-corruption, women's rights and gender equality and climate and environment.

has shaped or reshaped their views, rhetoric and narrative about the other group. Furthermore, the review team should then try to establish how this reshaping has translated into action e.g. is visible in the communication with the respective audiences/ congregations – especially in periods of heightened tension. The review team shall refer to relevant research in its discussion of how influence is exerted on norms and attitudes of groups and under what circumstances such an effect can translate to changes in group-behaviour. The review shall discuss absence of results where results could be expected.

An indicator of the effectiveness of the project[97] can be the number of public employees and official persons who take into account the Council's recommendations. Another indicator of the degree of the Council's influence is statements and goals for relevant institutions. The review can consider to use these indicators and/or suggest additional /other indicators in the assessment.

An overriding consideration in the conduct of the review is the principle of Do No Harm. This entails that the review should not be conducted in a way that jeopardize the (potential) achievements (to be) made or harm individuals involved in the peace efforts of the project. Other considerations will always have to be secondary.

**5.0 Data collection:**
Data collection strategies can include surveys and primary analysis of statements/text as well as in depth qualitative interviews, in addition to secondary literature.
Relevant data sources:

- Documents related to the peace process and the project: decision documents, political reports, project documents, reviews, appraisals, assessments and strategy documents.
- Interviews with decision makers and programme officers in the MFA and the embassy/representational office, in the Council, in the MKR, relevant politicians in Israel, Palestine and Norway, third party independent observers (media, academia), in relevant local institutions, other donors, civil society.
- Minutes of meetings
- Travel reports, field visit reports, project reports. Newspaper articles in Norway, Israel and Palestine.

**6.0 Quality standards**
The consultant shall refer to the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards for guidance. http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf. In particular the consultant shall, if possible, triangulate information, and always assess and describe data quality in a transparent manner (assess strengths and weaknesses of sources and information). The review team shall moreover describe and explain method and process used, and acknowledge constraints encountered and their impact on the review. Regarding ethics, the review process shall show sensitivity and respect to all stakeholders. The review shall ensure inclusiveness of views. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants shall be protected. The review shall include an introductory statement in the report that explain measures taken to ensure that the principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity were

[97] According to the decision document, dated 07.12.15

followed. The review shall be conducted in an impartial manner, meaning absence of bias in all parts of the review process. The analysis shall be structured with a logical flow. Findings and conclusions shall flow logically from the analysis of the data and information. Recommendations shall follow from findings and conclusions.

**7.0 Implementation of the review**

The review will be managed by the Section for Human rights, Governance and Fragility, in the Department for Economic Development, Gender and Governance, Norad. An independent team of consultants will carry out the review. The team will conduct workshops with MKR (and Search for a Common Ground if relevant) at the start up and during the review. This to ensure common understanding of the review objectives, relevance and conflict sensitivity. The review will be conducted in close consultation with Norad, also during the field visit.

Field visits to Palestine and Israel shall be conducted as part of the review. Field visits shall include interviews with main stakeholders from all three main confessions, in both countries, including in Jerusalem, international donors, as well as the Norwegian Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Representative Office of Norway to Palestinian Authorities in Al Ram. Key players within civil society in Israel and Palestine shall be identified and interviewed. An overview of informants should be developed in consultation with the MFA, MKR, the Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Representative Office in Al Ram.
Start up meetings will be held with Norad, MFA and MKR upon contract signature.
The team will be responsible for its own logistics.

**8.0 Reporting**

The following reports shall be submitted to Norad:

- Inception report
- Draft report
- Final report

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority, the Norwegian Embassy to Israel and MKR will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft report. Norad will compile comments and convey these to the review team. The review team shall communicate in writing how they deal with the comments. Where there are disagreements between the stakeholders and the review team, this shall be reflected in footnotes where relevant in the final report.

The Final report shall be no more than 30 pages and contain an executive summary of maximum three pages. The reports shall be written in English. The report(s) shall convey insights in an informative, clear and concise manner, to the extent possible in a form that is understandable even for readers not familiar with the field. Language shall be concise, and the use of abbreviations and acronyms, footnotes and professional terminology limited to a minimum.

The reports should be submitted electronically to Norad, and the final report should be of publishing quality. Decision regarding publishing shall be taken by Norad after consultation with the MFA.

# Annex B: Persons Interviewed

Members of CRIHL, core group or staff
Bishop Dr. Younan Munib, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land and Jordan, member of CRIHL and the core group
Salah Zuhayka, Former deputy Minister of Waqf and religious affairs, member of core group.
Oded Wiener, Retired Director General of the Chief Rabbinate, member of core group
Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee, member of core group
Fadi Rabieh, Former SfCG-staff/secretariat
Keren Hendin; Former SfCG-staff/secretariat
Emma Rosen, Former SfCG-staff/secretariat
Eran Tzidkayahu , Former SfCG-staff/secretariat
Imad Haddad, SfCG-staff/secretariat
Daoud Abu Libdeh, SfCG-staff/secretariat
Sharon Rosen, former co-director SfCG
Rami Assali, Financial manager of SfCG

Analysis, political actors and outside observers
Rabbi Michael Melchior, Former Minister of Social and Diaspora Affairs, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Knesset member, organiser of various civil-society initiatives and inter-religious dialogues
Alick Isaacs, Researcher at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, analyst, religious peace activist
Shivi Froman, Inter-religious dialogue activist based in Tekoa settlement
Gilead Sher, Institute for National Security Studies
Hunaida Ghanem, Director General of MADAR (The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies)
Daniel Seidemann, Attorney, director of the NGO Terrestrial Jerusalem, expert on religious sites in Jerusalem
Salam Fayyad, Former Prime Minister of the PA
Shaikh Yousef Dais, Palestinian Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs
Vera Banoun, Former Mayor of Bethlehem
Mustafa Abu Sway, Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies at Al-Quds University
Yonathan Mizrahi, Archaeologist with Emek Shaveh (archaeological NGO)
Yair Hirshfe, ECF (Economic Cooperation Fund), former negotiator in the Oslo process

Participants in projects
Yael Fridson, Journalist for Yedioth Ahronoth and Ynet (journalist project)
Pastor Imad Haddad, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ramallah
Avi Rosenblum, (Croatia seminar)
Rabbi Eran Singer, (journalist project)
Baruch Kra, Journalist for Channel 10, formerly for HaAretz (Journalist project)
Yoni Lavi, (Journalist project)
Raed Omar, (Seminar in Croatia)
Barakat Fawzi Hasan, Professor of Islamic Religion at Bethlehem University (Croatia Seminar)
Shaul David Judelman, Environmental and inter-religious activist, Tekoa settlement (Croatia seminar)
Maher Assaf, Educator at the Lutheran School Beit Sahour in Bethlehem (Croatia seminar)

Other partners
Bruce Wexler, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Yale University, founder and president of A Different Future (Schoolbook project)
Jolyon Michell, Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion at Edinburgh University, director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues (Journalist project)
Daniel Bar-Tal, Professor Emeritus of Research in Child Development and Education, Tel Aviv University, researcher on the political psychology of conflict (Schoolbook project)

MFA
Hilde Haraldstad, representative, Norwegian Representative Office, Al Ram
Thomas Berdal, embassy counsellor, Norwegian Representative Office, Al Ram
Jon Hanssen-Bauer, ambassador, Norwegian Embassy, Tel Aviv
Simon Ekblom, embassy secretary, Norwegian Embassy, Tel Aviv
Thor Wennesland, Special Adviser to the Minister, Middle East Affairs
Hans Jakob Frydelund, MFA

Former MFA political actors
Raymond Johannesen, Former Deputy Minister (Labour Party)
Knut Vollebæk, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (Christian Democrats), former ambassador
Kjell Magne Bondevik, former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Norad
Stein Erik Horjen

MKR
Trond Bakkevig, Convener of the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land
Berit Agøy, Secretary General, MKR
Steinar Ims, Case handler, MKR
Sven Tore Kloster, Former case handler, MKR
Kristine Nordengen, Teacher (religious-education teachers project)

Former Secretary Generals of MKR
Atle Sommerfeldt
Stig Utnem
Olav Fykse Tveit

Other resource people
Gudrun Bertinussen, Norwegian Church Aid (former head of NCA's representative office in Israel/Palestine)
Steinar Bryn, Special Advisor at the Nansen Center for Peace, Lillehammer
Erik Cleven, Associated professor, Departement of Politics, Saint Anselm College, USA

Hanne Eggen Røyslien, Researcher, Norwegian Armed Forces Cyber Defence.

Key reference group (Value Politics)

Professor Anne Stensvold (University of Oslo)
Vebjørn Horsfjord (University of Oslo)
Tale Steen-Johnsen

Additional reference group meeting (Value Politics)
Oliver Roy (European University Institute in Florence)
Ragnhild H. Zorgati (UiO)
Gina Lende (Norwegian School of Theology)
Anne Stensvold (UiO)
Hanne Amanda Trangerud (UiO)
Jenny Holmsen (European University Institute in Florence)

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Document List
The team has also reviewed the document list provided for the project, totalling 553 items.

# Annex D: Inter-Religious Dialogue and Peacebuilding.

**Research and Experience**

What does scholarly research and practical field experience tell us about how religious dialogue and cooperation between religious leaders can work as a tool for peacebuilding? How can dialogue influence attitudes, and how can the impact be understood and measured? As a major recent review of the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding shows, these terms can be loaded and slippery; religion is a fluid and contingent entity; actors, contexts, methods, and outcomes vary widely; and few general conclusions can be drawn, beyond the need to conduct more research, identify a broader range of relevant religious actors, and avoid giving undue prominence to religion in all instances.[98] We therefore approach these questions by reviewing the literature with particular attention to lessons that are salient in our analysis of the project under review.

Summing up what had been learned in the 2000s, Haynes concluded, first, that outcomes are variable. Faith-based peace efforts usually "see partial success – or, put another way, partial failure." Second, however, "through the development of more effective peacemaking strategies, conflict resolution and peacemaking skills of faith-based organisations and religious individuals can be encouraged to develop further over time." And third, successful developments were more likely when the actors were "seen as reflective of a high moral standing, crucially retaining credibility."[99] We take as our starting point this realization that religious peacebuilding often fails, in part because religious actors do not always conform to ideal expectations, and contend that development of strategies and skills is as important in achieving realistic outcomes in religious peacebuilding as it is in secular efforts. The demand for rigorous analysis, planning and evaluation has increased as the field of religious diplomacy and peacebuilding has developed since the project under review was started.

Just before the turn of the millennium, religion received renewed attention in the scholarship and practice of international politics. Political Islam had defied predictions of ever greater secularization, and outbreaks of ethno-religious conflict in the Balkans and Caucasus had shown that the end of the Cold War was not the end of history. Some scholars were arguing that future conflict lines would run between "civilizations" defined by religion,[100] whereas others highlighted the positive role played by "public religions" both in national democratization processes[101] and as the "missing dimension of statecraft" in non-violent conflict resolution.[102]

From the mid-1990s, there were several examples of states involving themselves in what might be called 'religious diplomacy'. Norway is a notable example. Norway's involvement

98 Sara Silvestri and James Mayall, *The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding* (British Academy, 2015), https://www.britac.ac.uk/news/role-religion-conflict-and-peacebuilding.

99 Jeffrey Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 22, doi:10.1080/14662040802659033.

100 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (July 1, 1993): 22–49, doi:10.2307/20045621.

101 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

102 Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1994).

in peace efforts (in Israel/Palestine, Guatemala, Mali and elsewhere) has featured what one scholar calls the 'Norwegian Model' of diplomacy, built on interactions between three sets of actors: government, civil society and research institutions, in pursuit of benign outcomes in specific foreign policy efforts.[103] Though the MFA as an institution "doesn't do God", staff and politicians taking a personal interest have worked with religious actors in Norwegian civil society and the Church of Norway.[104]

Over the last two decades, much of the scholarly literature on religion, peace and conflict has been concerned with asserting the relevance of religious peace-making and seeking to rebut a perceived secularist bias in policy circles.[105] The literature cites examples of successful outcomes of religious dialogue or successful interventions by religious actors. The evidence of success is however often anecdotal and prone to confirmation basis. The evidence also includes a number of political conflicts where the lines of division do not coincide with religious divides, allowing religious leaders can make effective moral appeals to both sides, play a bridging role, or act as impartial mediators. One cannot necessarily generalize from these cases to "conflict societies where religion is itself the problem – and religious peacemakers find it difficult to be perceived as neutral".[106] Powers has even suggested that the chance of religious peacebuilding bearing fruit might be inversely proportional to the centrality of religion to the conflict.[107]

A recent desk survey of relevant literature about effective religious peace-making programs identified various theories of how they would work, concluding overall that:

> Those theories with the strongest evidence (…) focus primarily on individual-level change but do not address how a broader societal level transformation will emerge from them, and thus require complementary approaches to translate the individual changes to the socio-political level. The Pressure for Change and Legitimate Intermediary theories of change rely on case study evidence and would benefit from meta-analysis to draw broader lessons. Other theories have gaps in evidence. Inter-religious peacebuilding has focused relatively little on institution building, a pattern that deserves exploration. Another area for investigation is understanding in what ways and in what circumstances religious leaders are willing and able to

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103 Pisarska, Katarzyna. "Peace Diplomacy and the Domestic Dimension of Norwegian Foreign Policy: The Insider's Accounts," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2015): 198–215. doi:10.1111/1467-9477.12042.

104 Vik, Ingrid, and Cecilie Endresen. "Norway, Religion and the United Nations," in *Religion, State and the United Nations: Value Politics*, ed. Anne Stensvold, 170–84, at 173, 176, Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

105 See, for example, R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation,* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); David Little and the Tanenbaum Center, eds., *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Douglas Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); id., *Religion, Terror and Error: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Challenge of Spiritual Engagement* (New York: Praeger, 2011); Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding,* Oxford Handbooks (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

106 Cf. John D Brewer, Gareth I Higgins, and Francis Teeney, "Religion and Peacemaking: A Conceptualization," *Sociology* 44, no. 6 (December 1, 2010), 1019-1037 at 1021, doi:10.1177/0038038510381608.

107 Gerard F. Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, ed. Gerard F. Powers and Philpott, Daniel, Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 317–52.

> effect different changes, especially across faiths. Overall, there is relatively little research specific to inter-religious peacebuilding theories of change, but even less on the evaluation of inter-religious action. Documents do not reference the particular challenges of engagement or content involved in evaluating inter-religious action.[108]

The literature often lists resources and virtues with potential to effect beneficial changes that are assumed to be specific to religious actors (and particularly religious leaders), such as: deep spiritual motivation, moral leadership, prosocial norms and values, credibility and mass influence, horizontal and vertical social connections, "religious literacy", knowledge of local tradition, etc. Experience suggests, however, that religious leaders cannot simply be assumed to possess these attributes by virtue of their office.[109] It may nevertheless be argued that public respect for religion in general allows religious leaders to benefit from a "credit of trust".[110] In any case, religious peacebuilding projects should not rely on such assumptions, but examine whether they hold in any particular case, and consider whether the project might need to effect change in the leaders themselves before they could contribute to wider societal change.

Reliance on religious leaders in often patriarchal institutions also excludes women, deprivileges women's religious experience, and fails to tap the potential of women in peacebuilding.[111] Experience suggests that gender bias can nevertheless be partly mitigated by consciously recruiting women religious leaders in a broader sense into project activities (including academics, community activists, religious leaders' wives, etc.).[112]

The success or failure of religious peace-making does not depend only on the good will and abilities of religious actors, but also on their interplay with other social and political actors, among other factors. Bakkevig, drawing on talks in Israel/Palestine, is careful to present religious dialogue as first and foremost a contribution to political negotiations: by opening contentious religious issues for discussion and creating a space for constructive solutions respecting the dignity of all, "religious dialogue can clear the way for political decisions."[113] Brewer and colleagues, drawing especially on the Northern Ireland experience, stress how relations between religion, state and civil society shape the role of religion negatively or positively. They argue that the "social capital" of religion has more typically served to "bond" the in-group than to "bridge" divides between groups. Religious contributions to positive

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108 Stephanie L. Schmidt, "Literature Review: Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding Program" (Alliance for Peacebuilding; CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Search for Common Ground, 2016), http://cdacollaborative.org/publication/literature-review-effective-inter-religious-action-peacebuilding-program/.
109 For example, some religious leaders may play a polarizing role, be compromised by support for hatred, violence and oppression, or lack the civil courage to stand up for peace, as discussed for the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo by Ingrid Vik. "Dialogue in the Name of God: Religious Actors in the Making of War and Peace," in *Western Balkans: The Religious Dimension*, ed. Anne Stensvold, 19–49. Oslo: Sypress Forlag, 2009. Compare Ina Merdjanova and Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans,* Continuum Advances in Religious Studies (London; New York: Continuum, 2009).
110 Research by M. A. Weingardt, summarised in Silvestri and Mayall, *Role of Religion*, 38.
111 Silvestri and Mayall, *Role of Religion*, 51, 71, 74; on women in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ibid., 55-6.
112 Interviews with participants in CRIHL projects; team members' experience from comparable settings.
113 Trond Bakkevig, "Religious Dialogue as a Contribution to Political Negotiations: A Practitioner's Report," in *Negotiating in Times of Conflict*, edited by Gilead Sher and Anat Kurz, 95–106 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2015).

peace, they suggest, depend on how religious actors occupy "strategic social spaces" with intellectual ideas, institutional practices, market resources, and political engagement in alliance with other civil-society actors. Their ability to do so in turn depends on their status as minority or majority, official or unofficial. Minority groups may lack resources and influence, but have less to lose from peacemaking than majority groups that may be embroiled with nationalism or state power, and the most to gain.[114] Building on Breweræs framework in the case of Ethiopia, for example, Steen-Johnsen has recently called attention to the major role that state political power can play in directly and indirectly constraining and shaping inter-religious dialogue.[115]

The broader point to take away from this is that religious peacemaking should not be treated as a **sui generis** phenomenon, at least not where its ability to effect change in this world is concerned. While it certainly does have specific aspects that need to be taken into account, it also involves similar strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, constraints and risks as the work of other (secular) civil-society actors. Accordingly, it can benefit from similar attention to strategic planning, project management, monitoring and evaluation, organisational development and communications strategy. Existing models and tools for these purposes can be adapted to religious peacemaking.

A 2004 USIP special report highlighted the importance of evaluating inter-religious dialogue programs, and of building ongoing monitoring and evaluation into program designs.[116] Today, several organisations are running a programme on Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding, which has inter alia conducted a meta-review of evaluations of such programs.[117] However, evaluations remain rare, as noted in the meta-review, which spent months obtaining a sample.

One useful planning tool is 'Theory of Change'.[118] Neufeldt very helpfully distinguishes three broad approaches to inter-religious dialogue and formulates their implicit theories of change, as well as crucial underlying assumptions and dilemmas, with particular attention to the *transfer* of impacts beyond the immediate circle of participants.[119]

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114 Brewer, Higgins, and Teeney, "Religion and Peacemaking."

115 Tale Steen-Johnsen, *State and Politics in Religious Peacebuilding*, Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), doi:10.1057/978-1-137-59390-0.

116 Renee Garfinkel, "What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs," Special Report (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, July 2004), https://www.usip.org/publications/2004/07/what-works-evaluating-interfaith-dialogue-programs.

117 Jenny Vader, "Meta-Review of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding Program Evaluations" (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, June 2015), http://cdacollaborative.org/publication/meta-review-of-inter-religious-peacebuilding-program-evaluations/.

118 Carol Weiss, ''Nothing as Practical as a Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families,'' in *New Approaches in Evaluating Community Initiatives*, eds. James P. Connell, et al. (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 1995); Peter Woodrow and Nick Oatley, "Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programmes. Part I: What They Are, Different Types, How to Develop and Use Them" (DFID, 2013); Vanessa Corlazzoli and Jonathan White. "Practical Approaches (…) Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation" (DFID, 2013), available from http://issat.dcaf.ch/.

119 Reina C. Neufeldt, "Interfaith Dialogue: Assessing Theories of Change," *Peace & Change* 36, no. 3 (July 1, 2011): 344–72, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0130.2011.00702.x.

4. In the **theological** approach, dialogue is primarily an exchange between religious people on religious issues, aimed at mutual understanding and respect, and sometimes at theological change. The encounter itself is thought to effect personal and relational change among the participants. The weakest link in this theory is transfer, assumed to somehow take place when participants share their experience with persons in their own communities.
5. In the **political** approach, religious leaders are enlisted to support a political process on a public stage, with aims such as educating the other, legitimizing a peace process and delegitimizing violence, and sometimes, expanding the political options by including religious leaders or solutions in negotiations. Religious leaders are assumed to represent their communities and to exert top-down influence on them by virtue of their positions, credibility, moral authority and religious knowledge. Media outreach plays a key role in transfer.
6. The **peacebuilding** approach seeks to alter perceptions of the other, draw on people's deep spiritual motivations, broaden the participation in peace-building, and develop a joint platform or "base network" for addressing the root causes of conflict. Diverse kinds of participants are chosen for their roles in the conflict and in their communities, and are trained in peacebuilding skills. Activities are fostered at multiple levels, not only among the elite; address systemic/structural issues; and include various forms of direct action, including interfaith grassroots development projects. This approach involves a risk of projects becoming over-extended by taking on too many different activities.

Neufeldt recommends that interreligious dialogue initiatives develop their own explicit theories of change and use them to monitor their effectiveness over time. A recent handbook, *Faith Matters*, offers advice on how inter-religious peacebuilding projects can do so.[120] Neufeldt suggests it may be a problem that projects taking the political approach pay too little attention to personal transformation of the participating religious leaders. Particularly in conflicts where religion is part of the problem, it might be argued, religious leaders may need to be transformed before they can be part of the solution. Realistically, however, the scope for such transformation is limited. Among other things, organisational culture tends to constrain the form of "political" dialogue among leaders. Leaders do not participate as persons and believers only, but as representatives of their institutions and constituencies. When leaders invest their limited time, they typically expect protocol, deference, and speaking time for each to present pre-determined institutional positions and agendas, while facilitators of such dialogues may focus on producing consensus statements by understanding the leaders' limits, rather than challenging them.[121] Participants, being experienced leaders, may have modest expectations of realistic outcomes, recognising that the friendly relations and attitude changes that may take place during the talks will not necessarily dispose the dialogue partners to act differently in their own institutional and communal settings. Powers notes that "a major test

[120] Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley, and Michelle Garred, *Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-Religious Action for Peacebuilding* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2017).
[121] Interview with a Norwegian expert on dialogue facilitation in conflict areas.

for inter-religious dialogue" is whether it enables moderate religious leaders to use their improved understanding of the "enemy" to counter extremists in their own community.[122] The political approach relies on the motivation, legitimacy, moral authority, and symbolic value of religious leaders. If they lack credibility, they may fail to transfer the expected effect to the public. One possible risk of such dialogue, Neufeldt points out, is that participation in a political process may compromise religious leaders in the eyes of their followers.

Research has revealed several possible pitfalls in peace dialogues: They may e.g. be too elitist; engage only a few people, affecting the potential for wider outcomes;[123] or increase awareness of ethnicity and discrimination.[124] In Jewish-Palestinian dialogue, research has pointed particularly to the danger of downplaying political issues and asymmetric relations by prioritizing the interpersonal.[125] Scholar-practitioners who have both researched and conducted inter-religious dialogue for peace in the Middle East, such as Gopin[126] and Abu-Nimer,[127] emphasize the importance of paying attention to issues of justice and to power asymmetries in dialogue. Wang surveys these and other authors' diverse approaches to inter-religious dialogue, including discourse ethics and liberation theology, in the context of CRIHL and related initiatives in Israel/Palestine; planners of future dialogue efforts may find some theoretical resources here.[128] Abu-Nimer's book-length critique of Arab-Jewish "encounter programmes" questions the purpose of programs that aim to cultivate understanding and friendship between individuals on a seemingly equal basis, but fail to mitigate social inequalities, address the political conflict, or offer prospects for changing the status quo.[129]

Regardless, research provides strong arguments for dialogue projects in contexts such as Israel and Palestine.[130] Feller and Ryan developed a conceptual framework built on research and

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[122] Gerard F. Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, ed. Gerard F. Powers and Daniel Philpott, Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 317–52.

[123] J. E. Nyang'oro, "A Middle-Level Dialogue in Burundi: An Assessment of Effective Practices" (USAID, March 2001).

[124] I. Svensson and K. Brounéus, "Dialogue and Interethnic Trust: A randomized field trial of 'Sustained Dialogue' in Ethiopia", *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 5 (2013), 563-575.

[125] I. Maoz, D. Bar-On, Z. Bekerman and S. Jaber-Massarwa, "Learning about 'good enough'through 'bad enough': A story of a planned dialogue between Israeli Jews and Palestinians", *Human Relations* 57, no. 9 (2004), 1075-1101.

[126] Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2002); id., "Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution," *Peace & Change* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 1–31 (doi:10.1111/0149-0508.00035).

[127] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury, and Emily Welty, *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6 (November 1, 2001): 685–704 (doi:10.1177/0022343301038006003); id., "Religion, Dialogue, and Non-Violent Actions in Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17, no. 3 (March 1, 2004): 491–511 (doi:10.1023/B:IJPS.0000019615.61483.c7)

[128] Yvonne Margaretha Wang, "How Can Religion Contribute to Peace in the Holy Land? A Study of Religious Peacework in Jerusalem," PhD dissertation, University of Oslo, 2011. Despite the title, this should not be taken as an empirically based critical evaluation of CRIHL's and other groups' ability to effect social change.

[129] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel*, SUNY Series in Israeli Studies (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1999).

[130] Cleven argues that this makes dialogue more attractive to several participants "because they do not feel threatened by it but see dialogue as a way to establish more constructive interactions across boundaries of definite difference. (…A)t the same time, the increased clarity and willingness to consider the perspective of others that

experiences from practical cases that emphasize transforming conflicting relationships. However, the work of changing dysfunctional institutions often follows from the changed relationships between people.[131] In the concept described by Feller and Ryan, the dialogue processes can be described as organic and spontaneous, as opposed to a meeting with fixed speaking list and time slots according to rank and protocol. It may follow a certain structure without losing the thematic flow that follows from the participants' interventions. The argument is that a pre-defined speaking list tends to produce inputs as in e.g. a panel debate, and does not allow participants to pose questions and get immediate comments, and spontaneity is key to a successful dialogue process.

Central to this concept is a description of the features of conflict and segregation: the structure of segregation allows false accusations to exist because they are never confronted with opposing views. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is an ongoing production and reproduction of parallel stories, and opposing perceptions of the same social reality coexist, which create an ideological basis for the respective communities. The opposing narratives flourish on both sides, and the enemy images are often transferred to the generation coming of age through the soft institutions of the homes and the schools. Dialogue, according to the researchers, can potentially challenge this structure.

To summarise, this brief review points to the following lessons:

- Religious peacebuilding often fails, in part because religious actors do not always conform to ideal expectations. Success or failure also depends on the interplay between religion, state and civil society, and the constraints imposed by state power.
- Development of strategies and skills is as important in achieving realistic outcomes in religious peacebuilding as it is in secular civil-society efforts. Attention should be paid to strategic planning, project management, monitoring and evaluation, organisational development and communications strategy. Existing models and tools can be adopted.
- Only limited progress has been made in evaluating what works in inter-religious dialogue programs.
- Theories of change in inter-religious peacebuilding can be broadly classed as political, theological, and peacebuilding approaches. A key question is how impacts will be transferred from the dialogue to the wider religious community and society. Other issues include the risk that participants will be compromised, limited institution-building, and questions over the willingness of leaders to effect change.
- Inter-religious dialogue efforts in political conflict need to pay attention to how power asymmetries condition dialogue and participants' expectations.

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are hallmarks of this process may sometimes lead to participants finding common ground." Cleven, Eric (forthcoming 2018) in *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, US.

[131] Amanda E. Feller and Kelly R. Ryan. "Definition, Necessity, and Nansen: Efficacy of Dialogue in Peacebuilding", in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Summer 2012), 351-380, DOI: 10.1002/crq.21049. See also H. Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue To Transform Racial And Ethnic Conflicts* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997).

# Annex E: Conversation Guide

A. First and last name
B. Gender
C. Religious affiliation

Stakeholders and participants in the dialogue project

- Please tell me about yourself (where do you live, work, studied, etc)
- Have you ever been involved in similar initiatives (peace building or interfaith dialogue projects)?
- Why did you decide to join this project?
- In how many meetings have you participated during the project
- In how many meetings have you participated so far?

Expectations and focus:

- How do you see the goal of this project?
- What are your realistic expectations from this project? What do you expect to gain from it and what can it actually contribute [*Interviewer, approach the complexity of the conflict here*]?
- What is the place of peace building in the group – do you discuss it and how?
- What is role the Two State Solution in the group – do you discuss it and how?

Additional questions for participants (circle 2)@

- When did you take part in the joint activity organised by the project?
- Has the project since followed you up/been in contact with you?
- Are you still in contact with participants from other religions? How often/when did you last communicate?
- What has changed in your (leadership/teaching/reporting) practice as a result of this experience?

Relevance:

- How was the project and CRIHL established?
- Apart from the individuals directly engaged in the project, are other actors and institutions interested in the project? If so, in what way?
- Has the institution that has been involved been supportive of this project? In what ways have they shown support? (*on the role of MKR with CRHIL members, and about CRHIL with 2nd circle*)
- Have political actors shown interest and expressed positive or negative views on the inter-religious dialogue?
- Are there other donors funding projects in the same field? Who? How does the CRIHL and the dialogue conducted on their part fit into this larger project folio?
- In what ways does this project address relevant needs?
- What are the arguments for funding this project compared with other projects in this field?
- How is this project different from similar projects done in Israel and Palestine by NGOs?
- How representative is the CRIHL? Do the members actually represent their communities, and do they enjoy public trust and influence? Do they represent all communities that need to be involved in such an effort? How does the issue of representation affect CRIHL's relevance (as well as its actions and their outcomes)?

Would the CRIHL's support for a future peace agreement be an important influence on public opinion?

Results Achieved:

- What are the most meaningful experiences or insights you have gained from the meetings?
- What are others saying about the project?
    a) In your group of participants
    b) In your community
- What are the key outcomes produced by the project?
    a) How do they compare with the original plans?
    b) What do you see as the main causes for the positive results?
    c) Have you experienced outcomes (positive and negative) that were not expected?
- Are there important shortcomings compared with the original plan of the project?
    a) If so, what caused them?
- Have any of the results come about because of cooperation with other actors or funders? If so, which ones, and how did the cooperation contribute?
- Do you believe that in a year from now, the group members can produce a joint message about peace that will be agreed by the CRIHL's members?
- In general, what is your ability to agree on core issues as a group?
- Did the participation in the CRIHL help you to establish good connections with other religious leaders? If yes, with whom and how would you describe these relations?
- Did the participation in the CRIHL change your perception about the role of a religious leader in the conflict?
- All in all, do you believe that the CRIHL has provided you with important knowledge and tools to promote ideas related to peace in your community?
- What is the status of of producing a joint statement about Jerusalem?

Efficiency:

- Have relations with your cooperation partner been predictable, transparent? (MKR or CRIHL respectively)
- Have you been able to access the resources promised in a time-efficient and cost-efficient manner? If not, what have been the hurdles?
- Could the project have been implemented with fewer resources without reducing the quality of outcomes? Could more results have been produced with the same resources?
- Have the reporting requirements been reasonable, given the size of the project?
- Has the Norwegian partner contributed to the quality of the project? In what ways?
- Has the overall management of the project been good, transparent, efficient? If there have been issues in this field, what were they?

Sustainability:

- Are the parties in Israel and Palestine as well as Norway interested in continuing the collaboration even if this project funding ends? In what ways is this likely to happen?
- Is the project in line with local religious institutions' and actors' priorities and needs? Is the dialogue project supported by local institutions and leaders?
- What is the role of MKR and the Norwegian facilitator? To what extent will the dialogue and the project continue without the close engagement of the facilitator?

- How will you describe the current arrangement with administration by the MKR and the Norwegian convener? What is the local capacity if the current arrangement came to an end?
- If Norway ceases to fund CRIHL and the dialogue, will this be funded by other sources? External or local?

Cross cutting issues

- Does the project relate to, address or incorporate the following considerations:
    a) Gender equality matters
    b) Human rights
    c) Corruption
- How are risks analysed with regard to how they negatively affect cross cutting issues?

Improvement

- If you are asked to evaluate this initiative, what would you say about it?

a) What are the things that you think should continue in this project?
b) What are the main weakness of the project?
c) What are the things that you think should stop?
d) What are the things that should be improved

- From your experience so far, what incentives can make others in the Palestinian/Israeli community join such projects?

First conversations MKR staff

- Why was your institution selected as coordinator?
- What has the management of the project been ;ole in terms of (i) relations with the MFA, (ii) relations with Trond Bakkevig, (iii) relations with partners in the field and key stakeholders?
- What do you see as the main achievements in the project (specific projects, increased collaboration)? What have been the greatest positive surprises (different from the first question, since here it may be unexpected interest, collaboration outside the scope of the project, etc)?
- What have been the greatest disappointments, obstacles, challenges? Could anything have been done differently to address these?
- Which project achievements do you believe have the greatest chances of sustainability, and why?

MFA staff

Project specific matters

- What were the arguments for starting and continuing the dialogue program?
- What were the reasons for choosing to engage with religious leaders?
- What is the assessment of the development of the project?
- What is the value to the MFA of a network of religious actors in the region?
- What is the value of having a resource person with specific knowledge, networks and insights on religio-political situations? To what extent does Bakkevig provide advice on religious affairs that lies outside the immediate scope of this project?
- What has the management of the programme been like in terms of (i) relations with the facilitator (Bakkevig), (ii) relations to MKR?
- What do you see as the main achievements of the project? What have been the greatest positive surprises (different from the first question, since here it may be unexpected interest, collaborations outside the project)?

- What have been the greatest disappointments, obstacles, challenges? Could anything have been done differently to address these?

The role of Norway

- What is Norway's role in the Israel/Palestine conflict? What is your assessment on how Israelis and Palestinians view the Norwegian engagement?
- What has been the Norwegian contribution, compared to other countries?
- How do MFA communicate this project and the engagement of religious leaders/institutions in the political public of Norway?
- What is your assessment of the religious leaders' and religious institutions' clout and representativeness among the Israeli and Palestinian public/peoples? If you see it as limited, what is the potential of CRIHL and its contributions in an eventual peace dialogue?
- How does this project support a future two-state solution?