

[2015 Stott-Bediako Forum: Gospel and the World Today](#)

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The annual Stott-Bediako Forum is jointly organised by the International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation (INFEMIT) and Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), United Kingdom. The 2015 Forum took place from the 8th to the 10th of July, 2015 in Sweimeh and Amman, Jordan, under the theme, 'Religious Extremism and Christian Responses'. Dr. Munther Isaac of Bethlehem Bible College graciously served as the local host.



The presenters represented various parts of the region, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. They were joined by various participants from Pakistan, Iran, and United States of America.

The gathering provided a space for the participants of the Forum, both from the INFEMIT network and from the region, to interact with, learn from, and pray with one another. The impact of this Forum can be summarized as following:

1. We learned anew that the God of the Bible is a God who calls us out of cities and into the wilderness. It is in the wilderness and in weakness that he meets us and speaks to us. God's people were supposed to live a life that is opposite to the Empires in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Old Testament in general is anti-monarchical. In the New Testament, Jesus won the ultimate battle through his weakness – the cross.
2. We learned about the different strands of religious extremism in the Middle East and the socio-political context that feeds these ideologies. We also recognize the diversity within Islam and acknowledge the need to avoid stigmatizing Islam.
We learned about forms of religious extremism in Palestine and Israel. We also heard from Palestinian Christians on how the theology of Christian Zionism often harms the mission of the church, and how that theology in some of its forms shows signs of extremism and exclusivity.
We grieve and lament the hurt and sufferings of Christians and other religious minorities in parts of the Middle East, Northern Africa and East Asia because of religious extremism. We also grieve the lack of understanding of some Christians in the world with regards to the complexity of situation in the Middle East.

3. We grieve and lament that there are expressions in each religion – including Christianity in the past and today – that rely on power and invoking God onto their side and into holy war. We acknowledge and lament that our response as Christians to extremism holds signs of bitterness and resentment, and this might create extremism within us. We celebrate the sacrificial and Christ-like response of persecuted Christians who choose forgiveness rather than bitterness, love rather than hatred. We celebrate that in each religion there are groups who share our values of peace and coexistence. As much as we can, we should partner and form coalitions with these groups, working in advocacy together against religious extremism.
4. We commit ourselves to pray for the continuing reign of God in this troubled region and for the faithful and courageous witness of our sisters and brothers. We also commit ourselves to take practical steps toward a strong solidarity with the churches in the region, and toward continuing interactions and exchange with theological institutions and theologians, especially for the building of God's shalom on earth.

Selected presentations of the 2015 Forum will be published through Transformation journal. The 2016 Forum will take place on 13-14, June in Oxford.

The annual Stott-Bediako Forums have been organized by Dr. Corneliu Constantineanu of INFEMIT and Dr. Wonsuk Ma of OCMS.