

Christians Mark 'Succot' in Israel

The Feast of Tabernacles events are expected to pour \$18 million into the local economy.



[] More than 7,000 Christians are expected to descend on Jerusalem this week for the 29th annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ). The gathering, which began Monday and runs through Sunday, is considered the largest annual tourism event in Israel and is expected to pour \$18 million to \$20 million into the local economy.

“Our Christian pilgrims are coming up to Jerusalem once more to join the Jewish people in marking this traditional feast of joy,” said the Rev. Malcolm Hedding, ICEJ executive director. “But their presence here at this particular time also constitutes a major statement of solidarity with Israel as it confronts the growing threat of a nuclear Iran, while also bringing a major financial injection into the local economy at a very critical moment.”

Although most feast events will take place at the International Convention Center Jerusalem, the annual Jerusalem March will take participants into the streets Wednesday, where they will wave colorful flags and publicly acknowledge their solidarity with Israel.

The Succot celebration, the Jewish name for the feast, comes at a time when Israel faces an alarming threat from Iran, whose president has called for the annihilation of the Jewish nation. At a press conference Thursday, ICEJ leaders will announce the uniting of top Christian and Jewish leaders and organizations behind a global campaign launched by ICEJ last month to indict Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide against Israel.

Some 60,000 Christians from 128 nations signed petitions that the ICEJ presented to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon days before Ahmadinejad was to address the U.N. on Sept. 23.

"Christians today [sense] an inescapable moral duty to earnestly speak out whenever another genocidal campaign threatens the Jewish people," Hedding said in September. "We are concerned that just such a genocidal campaign is taking shape in the form of Iran's repeated threats to eliminate the Jewish state and its quest for the nuclear means to carry out these threats."

On Sunday, feast participants will visit the Sderot area, which has been an ongoing target of Qassam rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip, to dedicate portable bomb shelters, or the city of Efrat to participate in interfaith dialogue at the new Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation, founded by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. In tandem with the ICEJ event, Messianic leaders Barry and Batya Segal, founders of Vision for Israel, will mark the Feast of

Tabernacles by hosting the Succot Celebration this week. In addition to the Segals, speakers include Bible teacher Lance Lambert, 24/7 prayer leader Tom Hess, Messianic pastor Zvi Randelman and revivalist David Herzog.

Comment