

Israeli Government Hosts First-Ever Christian Media Summit

The Israeli government hosted a “first of its kind” conference for Christian media professionals in Jerusalem, Oct. 15-18, featuring high-ranking government officials—including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin—with the goal of achieving greater accuracy in reporting on Israel.

“Israel has no better friends—I mean that—no better friends in the world than the Christian communities around the world,” Netanyahu told about 130 participants from 35 nations on the first evening of the Christian Media Summit.

Held during the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, the Summit’s objective was to strengthen cooperation with Christians around the world, especially via media serving those communities.

“Our hope is that by gathering so many media professionals together for the next few days, they won’t just talk shop, but reinforce our ties—culturally, professionally and morally—between Israel and the Christian community worldwide,” Nitzan Chen, Director of the Government Press Office (GPO) told the group. In addition to GPO, the government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage sponsored the Summit.

Netanyahu praised President Donald J. Trump’s “courageous speech outlining a new course against Iran, the enemy of our free civilization,” noting the President’s “resoluteness” has made a “big impression” on many nations, including Iran.

He also decried Iran for “brutally” persecuting Christians, adding, “I think that how a country treats religious

minorities is a very good indicator of how it will treat its other citizens and its neighbors.” Netanyahu urged the journalists to highlight the “plight of countless Christians suffering under Iran.”

Responding to a question from CBN News Israel Bureau Chief Chris Mitchell, Netanyahu said Israel sends humanitarian relief teams around the world because it fulfills “our deepest values. Israel is a light unto the nations,” calling the work a fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

The prime minister concluded with gratitude for the Christian journalists: “Thank you for standing with Israel. We are all deeply grateful.”

With Netanyahu beginning the Summit and Rivlin hosting the group at the president’s residence on the final day, the Summit included addresses by senior government leaders, including several Cabinet ministers, members of the Knesset and Israel-based journalists and experts on Israel.

Yuval Rotem, director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, praised the professionalism of Christian journalists while noting they undertake their work understanding the “universal significance” of Israel’s story.

“I believe that when Israel is covered unfairly and unduly criticized, it is not bad only for Israel; it’s bad for everyone,” Rotem noted. “And we are not interested in being given defense. Israel wants to receive fair coverage and nothing more.”

On October 16, Ze’ev Elkin, Minister of Jerusalem and Heritage, said hosting the Summit in Jerusalem was especially important in light of actions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to “erase” the Jewish history of the biblically significant city. In Oct. 2016, UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee approved a resolution that denied Jewish historical ties to the Temple

Mount in Jerusalem.

“I call on you to use your influence—and we know that it’s not small—to bring the word of the holy city of Jerusalem and its truths about the present and the past to the billions of believers in the Christian faith around the world,” Elkin said.

Coupled with addresses by government officials, the Summit included panel discussions covering topics such as Islamic terrorism, media bias, Palestinian human rights and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement, as well as tours in and around Jerusalem focusing on Israel’s security, the settlements debate, biblical archeology and Israel’s high-tech economy and entrepreneurship.

In addition to CBN News’ Mitchell, National Religious Broadcasters’ members who spoke at the Summit included Christian Broadcasting Network CEO Gordon Robertson. At the invitation of the government, NRB made recommendations for prospective invitees to the Summit, although government officials were responsible for making the invitations and planning the Summit. {eo}

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