

John Hagee: CUFI Doesn't Take Sides in Israel Peace Process

Behind me, in the reporter's "pit," two Israeli journalists spoke to each other in Hebrew. Two seconds before, Irving Roth, addressing the jammed ballroom, shared his chilling story as a **Holocaust** survivor. A mere three years after American entered his building at Buchenwald, Roth recalled, "The Jews had a home."

It is all a miracle.

This year's Christians United for Israel Washington Summit is buzzing with excitement at the Washington Convention Center. The Summit wraps up Wednesday when attendees fan out all over Capitol Hill, to discuss their support for Israel with their elected officials. The largest **pro-Israel** organization in the world, CUFI is the brainchild of Pastor **John Hagee**, who has emerged as the most prominent Christian spokesman for the Jewish state.

Hagee addressed the plenary session on Monday, then turned the podium to Roth, director of the Holocaust Resource Center at Temple Judea in Manhasset, N.Y. In a remarkable snapshot that has come to be a hallmark of a renewed Jewish-Christian relationship, Roth said with emotion:

"God has sent CUFI to the Jewish people."

Thunderous and sustained applause.

David Brog, CUFI's executive director, is pleased with the growth the group has seen in the last year.

"Since our last Summit, CUFI has had enormous success," he said. "In March we welcomed our millionth member, and throughout the year we have held an average of 40 pro-Israel

events each month in cities and towns across the country.”

The group has ambitious goals as well in the coming year, including “CUFI on Campus” initiative. The effort is especially timely, given the waves of anti-Semitism now being seen on American college campuses.

One room at the convention center houses the campus exhibit; visitors are greeted at the outset by a scale-model of the so-called “Apartheid Walls,” which are popping up on campuses. These models are filled with pro-Palestinian graffiti. The intent is to promote Palestinian propaganda (such as the allegation that Israel’s security fence encircles Bethlehem; it doesn’t).

Elsewhere, there are TV monitors that present both pro-Palestinian activists and pro-Israel activists. CUFI’s efforts are focused on the mushrooming campus chapters.

Tres Wittum, from the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, is just one of the passionate students impacted by CUFI’s efforts:

“CUFI on Campus gave me not only a passion for the political world, but a mission as well. The D.C. Summit opened my eyes to the fight that’s going on for our generation and for support of Israel, a fight I believe is only going to get harder in the years to come.”

CUFI, as with any large organization, deals with controversy that comes its way. Among the myths surrounding the group is that this grass-roots campaign opposes a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In fact, CUFI doesn’t have a position on this issue.

“From our founding [in 2006],” Hagge said, “we decided that CUFI would never presume to tell Jerusalem how to conduct its foreign or domestic affairs.” In short, CUFI doesn’t take sides in the peace process.

Present at the event were a wide range of pro-Israel activists, from CUFI's Eastern Regional Coordinator Victor Styrsk, to William Harter, a member of the executive committee for the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel (NCLCI). Harter, a Presbyterian, is active in opposing the BDS Movement (boycott/divestment/sanctions), which seeks to marginalize Israel.

"What is going on here is critical, and we have no time to waste," Harter said. Milling all around him are CUFI members, who have come from coast-to-coast to voice support for Jews.

On Monday night, a new documentary was screened for the audience. *Follow Me*, which details the life of Israeli commando Jonathan Netanyahu (oldest brother of Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu), was shown on site.