



SeeJordan.Org

E-Newsletter

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Jordan Now!

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KING ABDULLAH II TO SPEAK FEB. 2 AT EVANGELICAL LUNCH FOLLOWING NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST IN WASHINGTON

His Majesty King Abdullah II has accepted an invitation to be the keynote speaker at an evangelical lunch gathering following the National Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 2.

The breakfast, luncheon and related events are organized by the Fellowship Foundation, a low-profile evangelical Christian group. In recent years, both Republican and Democratic presidents have attended the breakfast at the Hilton Hotel Washington and President Bush is expected to make an appearance again this year. Rock star Bono has agreed to be the breakfast's keynote speaker.

Some are viewing the invitation of Abdullah, a Muslim head of state, as a small sign of cooperation in the often tense relationship between evangelical Christians and Muslims.

"It's in the best interest of evangelicals and Muslims to engage in dialogue and get to know one another better. All too often, we view each other through stereotypes that are unfair," said Richard Cizik, vice president of government affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington. "If the king is looking for an opportunity to address evangelicals, this is it."

Some 51 percent of American evangelicals say Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, compared with 44 percent of Americans overall, according to a 2003 poll by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

But many evangelicals want good relations with Muslims, said Dr. Corwin Smidt, executive director of the Henry Institute for the study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. For them, the Jordanian monarch "is an entry point into trying to understand Middle East politics and the grievances many Muslims have against the West, presented from a perspective that isn't seen as pure hostility."

Asma Afsaruddin, an Islamic Studies professor at the University of Notre Dame agreed, saying "there are people within these (evangelical) organizations that want to reach out to Muslims." Merissa Khurma, a Jordanian Embassy spokeswoman in Washington, said interfaith relations are an "essential theme" for the king.

Other Muslim leaders have attended the breakfast in past years, including Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia and Yasser Arafat. But in 2003, several Muslims invited from Indonesia turned down an invitation to protest America's imminent invasion of Iraq.

SECOND WORLD CONGRESS FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES (WOCMES-2) SET FOR JUNE 2006 IN AMMAN

The Second World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES-2) will be held in Amman, Jordan from June 11-16, 2006. WOCMES-2 is a forum aimed at academics, scholars, media commentators and students from all disciplines who share an interest in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Muslim states of Central Asia.

WOCMES-2 follows in the tradition of the first World Congress which was held in Germany in 2002. Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan, an internationally-recognized expert on the Middle East, is President of the Congress. The Amman-based Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS) will coordinate the event.

Online registration is now open for WOCMES-2 at www.wocmes2.org. Registrants may submit proposals for presentation at one of over sixty seminars and roundtables that will be held during the congress.

Congress themes include:

- Ancient Middle East
- Christian and Biblical Studies
- Economics of the Middle East
- Historical Approaches
- Islam Past and Present
- Linguistics and Literature
- Media and Cultural Studies
- Migration Studies
- Nationality, Identity and Ethnicity
- Normative Phenomena and Legal Research
- Politics of the Middle East
- Urban Studies and Space
- Water and the Environment
- Women's and Gender Studies

In addition to a rewarding academic program, participants in WOCMES-2 will enjoy a taste of the dynamic city of Amman and the renowned hospitality that Jordan has to offer. The five-day congress will include a full program of cultural and artistic events including a film festival, an international book fair and exhibitions by artists from the region.

WOCMES-2 is the first major academic conference of Middle Eastern Studies to be held in the Middle East. A significant number of scholarly participants will be drawn from Muslim countries and from throughout Asia and Africa.

Visit www.wocmes2.org for complete details, or contact RIIFS at registration@wocmes2.org.

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