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Orthodox Christian Studies Center to Host Webinar “The Plight of Gaza’s Christians: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives”



On September 29, 2024, Fordham University’s Orthodox Christian Studies Center will host a webinar discussing the plight of Christians in the Holy Land, especially in Gaza. Prior to the current war, Gaza’s Christians numbered roughly 1000 out of 2.1 million people in Gaza, the vast majority Orthodox Christians. Since the Israeli bombardment began in October 2023, most of Gaza’s Christians have been sheltering at St. Porphyrios Orthodox Church and Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City.

The Orthodox Church has had a venerable presence in the Holy Land since the beginning. The webinar will explore three primary aspects of this presence: 1) the history of Orthodox Christianity in Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza) and Israel, from the ancient to the modern periods; 2) current issues in “church-state” relations amid the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, other local Christian traditions, and the local governments, and 3) the recent history of Christians in Gaza, especially at the Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrios.

The webinar’s speakers will include:

- Dr. Yousef AlKhouri, assistant professor in Biblical Studies at Bethlehem Bible

College (Bethlehem, Palestine). Dr. AlKhouri was born in Gaza to a Christian family that has a long heritage of serving in the priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church. His family has been sheltering these last few months at the Orthodox church in Gaza.

- Hana Bendcowsky serves as the Program Director of the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR) at the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue. Additionally, Hana is a seasoned tour educator in Jerusalem, leading study tours in the Christian Quarter, with a specialized focus on Christian Communities in Israel and Jewish-Christian Relations within the Israeli context.
- Dr. Samuel Noble holds a PhD from KU Leuven, an MPhil from Yale University and an MA from the American University of Beirut. His research focuses on the social and intellectual history of Arabic-speaking Christians and the interactions between Levantine Christians and Eastern Europe. He is most recently co-editor of the books Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe (Brill, 2021) and Arabic-Type Books Printed in Istanbul, Wallachia and Beyond (De Gruyter, 2024).

Moderating the webinar will be Rev. Dr. Michael G. Azar, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University Scranton. His current book project (tentatively titled, The Table and the Empty Seat: Orthodox Christianity and Jewish-Christian Relations) focuses on ancient and modern Christian-Jewish interaction, particularly in light of Orthodox Christian hermeneutics and historic presence in the Holy Land.

Register for the webinar here.

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