

Antisemitism and Christ at the Checkpoint 2012



The 2nd annual *Christ at the Checkpoint* conference is scheduled to take place in March 2012, in Bethlehem.

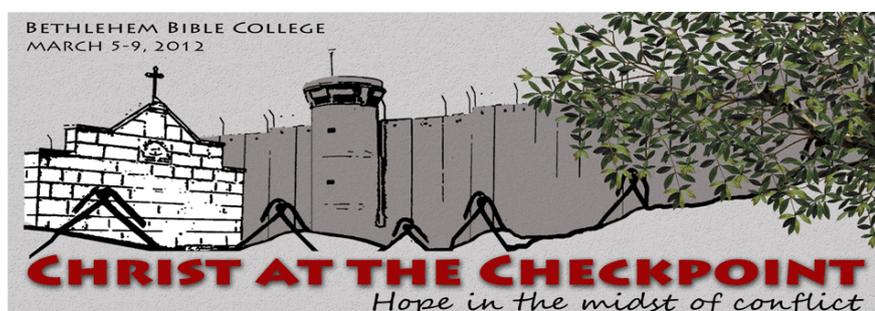
Whilst the organisers and many speakers are claiming they are standing up for non-violence, peace and justice, examining the *Checkpoint* conference closely tells a different story.

By promoting known theological extremists, Checkpoint 2012 will only breed more theological extremism.

In this booklet, I will explain clearly and concisely, why this conference is such a concern for people who are genuinely interested in peace in Israel-Palestine.

Written by

Joseph Weissman



Christ at the Checkpoint 2010: Naim Ateek

The first *Christ at the Checkpoint* (CATC) conference took place in 2010, and no Messianic Jews or leaders of Israeli Messianic congregations were invited.

Instead, the founder of Sabeel, Naim Ateek, played a prominent role in the last conference, giving a speech¹. Ateek has previously stated²:



*"In this season of Lent, it seems to many of us that Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians around him. It only takes people of insight to see the hundreds of thousands of crosses throughout the land, Palestinian men, women, and children being crucified. Palestine has become one huge golgotha. **The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily.** Palestine has become the place of the skull."*

According to Ateek's twisting of Biblical themes, Israel operates a crucifixion system, and the Palestinians become linked with Jesus' death. Such powerful imagery is designed to cast the Palestinians in the minds of Christians as like Jesus without fault, and the Israelis as particularly sinful.

This rhetoric has clear parallels with antisemitic discourse about Jews killing Jesus. Ateek has also stated:

*"At this Christmas time, when we remember the message of peace and love that came down from God to earth in the birth of Jesus Christ, our celebrations are marred by the destructive powers of the **modern day "Herods" who are represented in the Israeli government.** The message of this Christmas is already overshadowed by the sound of war, violence, and state terror. Indeed, violence breeds violence, and innocent people have been killed on both sides. But **the original sin is the violence of the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank [...]**"*

Here he compares Israel's actions with "the original sin"!

Ateek clearly compares Herod and modern-day Israel. So he sees those with political power in Israel as baby-killers who suppress human rights and persecute baby Jesus, which instantly casts the Israeli government as the "baddy" in this story.

Jews who defend Israel's right to exist and her right to defend herself are thus considered part of the Zionist agenda, and 'modern day Herods.' Whilst the old

¹ <http://www.comeandsee.com/view.php?sid=1033>

² <http://web.archive.org/web/20080310035855/http://www.sabeel.org/old/reports/easter01.htm>

theological antisemitism accused the Jews of killing Jesus, the new theological antisemitism subtly accuses the Jewish state of trying to kill baby Jesus.

Naim Ateek has since told *CATC 2012* organiser Stephen Sizer that,

*"today, whether we like it or not, it's Israel that is on top of any country in the world"*³

It is clearly antisemitic, to distort Israel's power in such a way. We should not tolerate this, or promote Naim Ateek's views at all. Naim Ateek was provided a platform by *Christ at the Checkpoint*, and he used this platform to promote his Sabeel theological outfit⁴.

Sabeel claims to be a Palestinian liberation theology movement, advocating this worldview. Yet Sabeel also view Hamas as a liberation theology movement.⁵ Sabeel supports boycotts against Israel, as has been evident since before *CATC 2010* when Ateek spoke.⁶ Sabeel have since declared,

*"We see boycott and divestment as non-violent tools for justice, peace and security for all."*⁷

Sabeel's website appears to boast that its "holy boycotts" have influenced Christian politics around the globe⁸. Surely we must limit Sabeel's influence, not encourage it. A Sabeel prayer letter from 2010 stated:

*"As Bethlehem Bible College begins its "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference, we give thanks for all those who will speak and participate - as well as those who are organizing it. We pray that hearts and minds will be moved, that new advocates will be born to speak out around the world in the cause of justice and peace for this land and its peoples."*⁹



³ <http://vimeo.com/10128398>

⁴ http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/lectures/Naim_Ateek.pdf

⁵ <http://blog.z-word.com/2008/10/sabeel-endorses-hamas/>

⁶ <http://seismic-shock.com/2009/08/25/does-sabeel-support-boycott-campaign-against-israel/>

⁷ <http://www.sabeel.org/events.php?eventid=183>

⁸ <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/24-matti-divest.pdf>

⁹ http://beyondbethlehem.blogspot.com/2010/03/sabeel-wave-of-prayer_11.html

Christ at the Checkpoint 2010: Mitri Raheb

At CATC 2010, Palestinian Lutheran priest Mitri Raheb told those present,

*"Actually, Israel represents Rome of the Bible, not the people of the land. And this is not only because I'm a Palestinian. I'm sure if we were to do a DNA test between David, who was a Bethlehemite, and Jesus, born in Bethlehem, and Mitri, born just across the street from where Jesus was born, I'm sure the DNA will show that there is a trace. While, if you put King David, Jesus and Netanyahu, you will get nothing, because **Netanyahu comes from an East European tribe who converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages.**"¹⁰*



Raheb suggests here, that Jews like Netanyahu have no true Jewish blood, and begins talking about DNA traces. However, it is a myth that Jews aren't really Jews by blood, and it is absurd to suggest Palestinian Arabs have more common DNA with the Biblical Israelites than Israeli Jews today do.

Christ at the Checkpoint 2010: Colin Chapman

At CATC 2010, British antizionist theologian Colin Chapman told those present,

*"For centuries Jews and Christians lived relatively peacefully under Islamic rule throughout the Middle East and North Africa as dhimmis. But what seems to have happened is that the bad experience of Palestinian Muslims with Zionist immigrants after 1880 has reminded them of Muhammad's bad experience with the Jews of Medina, encouraging them to apply the harsh verses about Jews in the Qur'an to Israeli Jews today. **It must seem to Palestinian Muslims as if Jews of the modern period were simply repeating the hostile behaviour of Jews many centuries earlier towards the Prophet.**"¹¹*



This was said quite shamelessly, and Chapman offered no counter-argument to this narrative that he perceives, which clearly casts the Jews as cosmic enemies of Muslims. No-one at CATC 2010 publicly challenged this argument either.

¹⁰ http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/lectures/Mitri_Raheb.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/lectures/Colin-Chapman.pdf>

Christ at the Checkpoint 2012: Speakers

Ben White¹² has shared a political platform with Azzam Tamimi at SOAS University¹³. At the event, Tamimi asked, "What's so terrorist about Hamas?"¹⁴ Azzam Tamimi is a man who has previously endorsed suicide bombing¹⁵. Ben White also praises Palestinian Christians who engage in violent "resistance" against Israel¹⁶. Ben White wrote in the *Al Aqsa Journal*:



*'From the Arab Revolt in 1936, to the flourishing of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the mid-1960s, **Christian Palestinians played a significant role in the resistance to Israel.**'¹⁷*

The *Al Aqsa Journal* is owned by Ismail Patel – an antisemitic conspiracy theorist and Hamas supporter.¹⁸ It speaks volumes that White should write for this outfit. In his book about "Israeli apartheid", White cites the writings of Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy, as a source that is useful¹⁹. Ben White has also written:

"I do not consider myself an anti-Semite, yet I can also understand why some are."²⁰

When federal authorities in the USA arrested a terror cell plotting to blow up a synagogue in New York, White complained that the arrests were a "fully blown threat to our freedoms."²¹ White has also tried to argue that Israeli telecommunications companies must be boycotted from international business deals²². White supports "violent resistance" against Israel, writing that:

*"**Popular struggle, like violent resistance, is not an end in and of itself; it is a method, a strategy.** It is the end goal, decolonization and liberation from occupation and Zionist apartheid, that is ferociously opposed by the self-declared international guardians of the "peace process" and their friends in the Palestinian elite. The rest is just smoke and mirrors."²³*

¹² <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/25-ben-white>

¹³ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/27106/calls-destruction-israel-soas-lecture>

¹⁴ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/27106/calls-destruction-israel-soas-lecture>

¹⁵ <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23363996-radical-muslim-addresses-convention.do>

¹⁶ <http://roshpinaproject.com/2011/08/19/christ-at-the-checkpoint-2012-and-palestinian-christians/>

¹⁷ http://www.aqsa.org.uk/Portals/0/Journals/issue10_vol02_4web.pdf

¹⁸ <http://hurryupharry.org/2009/02/24/ismail-patel-extremist/>

¹⁹ <http://seismicshock.wordpress.com/2009/07/17/ben-white-recommends-roger-garaudy-essay-in-%e2%80%98israeli-apartheid-guide%e2%80%99/>

²⁰ <http://www.counterpunch.org/white0617.html>

²¹ <http://www.benwhite.org.uk/blog/?p=976>

²² <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/11/23/its-not-good-to-talk/>

²³ <http://electronicintifada.net/content/nonviolent-resistance-means-not-end/7171#.TqbopN6Im0s>

Stephen Sizer²⁴ is vicar of Christ Church Virginia Water. He is a main organiser of the *CATC 2012* conference.²⁵ Sizer has recommended the writings of Holocaust deniers²⁶, quoted from Holocaust deniers in his book and on Iranian TV²⁷, and he has frequently linked to antisemitic websites^{28 29}. In response to Helen Thomas' call for Jews to "get the hell out of Palestine"³⁰, Sizer enthused "**bring it on**"³¹. On this topic, Sizer has even linked approvingly to an interview with Helen Thomas in *Playboy* magazine!³²



Sizer has joined hands with the Iranian regime to denounce Israel³³, despite the fact that Iran's Khomeinist regime has persecuted Christians since 1979³⁴. Shockingly, Ayatollah Khomeini's daughter invited Sizer to Iran, promising to translate his writings into Farsi.³⁵



Sizer met with Khomeini's daughter, Zahra Mostafavi, and the two exchanged gifts (see above right). Mostafavi has previously urged children to become suicide bombers.³⁶



Sizer has met with the leader of Hezbollah's armed forces, Nabil Kaouk (left), in Southern Lebanon.³⁷ Kaouk has previously celebrated the release of child-murderer Samir Kuntar, in a Hezbollah-Israel prisoner exchange.³⁸ Kuntar murdered an Israeli father in front of his two children, before murdering the man's 4-year old daughter³⁹.

²⁴ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/8-stephen-sizer>

²⁵ <http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2011/10/messianic-believers-are-brothers.html>

²⁶ <http://seismic-shock.com/2009/03/08/yes-stephen-sizer-didforwards-emails-written-by-9-11-conspiracy-theorists-and-holocaust-deniers/>

²⁷ <http://hurryupharry.org/2009/01/31/stephen-sizer-cites-another-holocaust-denier/>

²⁸ <http://seismic-shock.com/2010/10/20/stephen-sizer-posts-link-to-far-right-blog-promoting-holocaust-deniers/>

²⁹ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/10/13/stephen-sizer%E2%80%99s-reading-habits/>

³⁰ <http://wwedletter.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/helen-thomas-1.png>

³¹ <http://wwedletter.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/helen-thomas-2.png>

³² <http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2011/04/helen-thomas-playboys-april-interview.html>

³³ <http://www.sizers.org/Persia.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.spittoon.org/archives/10054>

³⁵ <http://dioceseofiran.org/?p=35>

³⁶ <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/islamic-leaders-urge-children-to-be-bombers/38023/>

³⁷ <http://seismicshock.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/the-evangelical-intifada.pdf>

³⁸ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3568651,00.html>

³⁹ <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terror+Groups/Samir%20Kuntar>

Stephen Sizer has also befriended the antisemitic cleric Raed Salah (right), who thinks that Jews did not turn up for work on 9/11⁴⁰. Salah also thinks that Jews baked matzah bread with the blood of Christian children, during the Middle Ages⁴¹.



Sizer and White have joined hands with Salah in a political project, backing Raed Salah as a man who knows how to "save Jerusalem"⁴². As such, these two CATC 2012 speakers sanitise his racist ideas. And so, they allow antisemitism to creep back into political and religious "Christian" discourse about the Jews and Israel. Indeed, one of Sizer's congregants, Tony Gratrex, who helps to run the Reading Palestine Solidarity Campaign, also thinks that the Jews control the media⁴³.

Despite all this, *Christ at the Checkpoint* are happy to let Sizer organise their conference. Sizer caused controversy for this statement earlier this year, appearing to decry Jewish Israeli believers in Jesus as heretics, for their Zionism. He told members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign:

*"There are certainly **churches** in Israel/Palestine that side with the occupation, **that side with Zionism**. One of my burdens is to challenge them theologically and show that **they've repudiated Jesus**, they've repudiated the Bible, and **they are an abomination**."⁴⁴*

He later had to retract this statement, after fellow speakers at *Christ at the Checkpoint* asked him to. Yet in his apology, Sizer blamed the bloggers who highlighted this quote, for doing so⁴⁵, and claimed he was under duress because of pressure from Zionists on that night⁴⁶. Furthermore, Sizer considers the Jewish covenant with God to be "rubbish"⁴⁷. Sizer has expressed support for the terror-linked flotilla to Gaza⁴⁸, telling a Malaysian audience,

Getting behind the flotilla is a fantastic way [that] people here in Malaysia can help. Getting relief supplies into Gaza, breaking the siege. [...] We saw what happened to the Turkish flotilla. Coming up very soon there'll be a larger flotilla [...] so we're really excited about what we can do together."⁴⁹

⁴⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opLWGJ0lo3c>

⁴¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13969105>

⁴² <http://seismic-shock.com/2011/07/01/stephen-sizer-and-ben-white-want-anti-semite-to-help-save-jerusalem/>

⁴³ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/06/23/reading-psc-christ-church-virginia-water-stephen-sizer-and-tony-gratrex/>

⁴⁴ <http://roshpinaproject.com/2011/10/14/british-vicar-calls-israeli-messianic-jews-an-abomination/>

⁴⁵ <http://roshpinaproject.com/2011/10/17/british-vicar-who-called-israeli-messianic-jews-an-abomination-issues-a-non-apology-apology/>

⁴⁶ <http://roshpinaproject.com/2011/10/17/a-follow-up-on-the-christ-at-the-checkpoint-abomination-scandal/>

⁴⁷ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4137444,00.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/terror-finance-flotilla>

⁴⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zrwEsxd2r8>

Sami Awad⁵⁰ is the director of the Holy Land Trust, which is a Palestinian NGO⁵¹. Awad has also endorsed antisemitic Islamist cleric Raed Salah⁵², despite Salah's racist conspiracy theories.



Although Awad frequently speaks about "non-violent resistance"⁵³, he has written:

"Our goal is to involve all people in the popular resistance. I call for every person to ask themselves each day when they wake up what they can do that day to resist the occupation, whether it is coming up with a new slogan or music, writing something, it doesn't matter what. What does matter, what is crucially important, is that all people are engaged in this popular struggle.

This is not a substitute for the armed struggle. This is not a method for normalization with the occupation. Our goal is to revive the popular resistance until every person is involved in dismantling the occupation.⁵⁴

In a project for the Holy Land Trust in July 2011, Awad teamed up with the disgraced Greek Orthodox cleric Atallah Hanna (left)⁵⁵. Hanna was removed from his post by the Greek Orthodox Church, shortly after praising suicide bombs against Israeli civilians⁵⁶. Yet Sami Awad continues to work with Hanna.



Regarding the Gaza flotilla sent in May 2010 by the Turkish Islamists IHH⁵⁷, Awad wrote,

"The world woke up Monday morning to a shocking and tragic scene, as Israeli commandos launched an unprovoked raid on a flotilla carrying nonviolent activists attempting to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza."⁵⁸

It is important to bear in mind, that the IHH is very pro-Hamas. Indeed, the IHH is one of the world's biggest and most keen material and political supporters of Hamas⁵⁹. The IHH are funders and lovers of jihad, with links to global terror networks⁶⁰. IHH flotilla participants carried weapons on the flotilla ship Mavi

⁵⁰ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/24-sami-awad>

⁵¹ http://www.holylandtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=191&Itemid=144

⁵² <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/07/21/sami-awad-on-nutty-priests-and-swastika-lovers/>

⁵³ <http://samiawad.wordpress.com/>

⁵⁴ http://english.pnn.ps/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1375

⁵⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150231365650248.317712.44639120247&type=1>

⁵⁶ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/juneweb-only/6-17-51.0.html>

⁵⁷ <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/06/15/ihh-and-cockroaches/>

⁵⁸ http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/01/nonviolence_from_the_bottom_up

⁵⁹ <http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/terror-finance-flotilla>

⁶⁰ http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/gj_e007.htm

Marmara⁶¹. Flotilla participants also chanted songs, calling for the murder of Jews⁶². Here are some of the weapons found aboard the Mavi Marmara⁶³:



And yet, Checkpoint speakers like Sami Awad, Ben White⁶⁴ and Stephen Sizer⁶⁵ support the IHH flotilla. Here we see *CATC* 2012 speakers, arguing that violent racists are actually non-violent and non-racist.

As well as supporting the IHH-backed **flotilla** in 2010, Awad was a spokesperson for the **flytilla** in 2011, which was outlawed by Israel.⁶⁶ The flytilla was an attempt to put pressure on Israel, following the failure of the 2011 flotilla, also backed by IHH⁶⁷. Awad has also used Twitter⁶⁸ to promote an article, in which an Israeli journalist wrote:

*"[...] the idea that we are members of the chosen people is planted far deeper [...] If you scratch beneath the skin of almost any Israeli, you'll discover that he really is convinced of that: We're the best; the "Jewish genius" is the most successful; the Israel Defense Forces is the most moral. Nobody will tell them different, we're simply the best in the world. This is not only **unnecessary and groundless arrogance**, it's also an extremely dangerous idea that enables Israel to behave as it does, with blatant disregard of the world's feelings. Nor does it lack benighted ultra-nationalist and **racist foundations**."*

This is a clear misunderstanding, about what it means to be "chosen", as Harry's Place has discussed, in a similar context⁶⁹. Sami Awad is also on the *CATC* 2012 organising committee⁷⁰.

⁶¹ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/israel-mfa/sets/72157624179998488/>

⁶² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3L7OV414Kk&feature=player_embedded

⁶³ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/israel-mfa/sets/72157624179998488/>

⁶⁴ http://www.palestinecampaign.org/index9b.asp?m_id=1&l1_id=4&l2_id=99&Content_ID=1878

⁶⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zrwEsxd2r8&feature=player_embedded

⁶⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14084547>

⁶⁷ http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ipc_e194.htm

⁶⁸ http://twitter.com/#!/Sami_Awad/status/122991987887587328

⁶⁹ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/10/20/deborah-orr-on-jewish-chosenness/>

⁷⁰ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/about-us/conference-committee>

Alex Awad⁷¹ is a lecturer at the Bethlehem Bible College, which is hosting *CATC* 2012. Like Sizer, Alex Awad is on the organising committee of *CATC* 2012⁷².



Alex Awad likes to use the Bible as a weapon against Israel, arguing that the evil Pharaoh of the Bible is welcomed by Israel as their messiah. Awad says of Israelis,

*"I knock at the doors of God's mercy and pray because **Pharaoh, the messiah of modern Israel**, is hardening his heart and the leaders of the Western world are clasping their hands in his bloody hands."*⁷³

Alex's brother **Bishara**⁷⁴ is the President of the college, and also a speaker at *CATC* 2012.

Alex Awad has a track record of preaching anti-Zionism around the world. Most notoriously, in May 2008, Awad attended the Voice of Palestine 60th Nakba Conference hosted in Jakarta, Indonesia, alongside representatives from Hamas and Hezbollah. Here is a picture of Awad (far-right) with Holocaust denier Fred Tobin (second-from-left):



Despite Awad's dislike of Christian Zionist prophecy, an Islamic scholar at the Jakarta event predicted that Israel would be destroyed by 2022⁷⁵!

Assorted terrorists, Islamists and Holocaust deniers⁷⁶ were invited to the conference. You can read conference-attendee and Holocaust-denier Fred Tobin's account of events in Jakarta on his website⁷⁷. You can see the aims of the Voice Of Palestine conference on the *Muhsinlabib* blog⁷⁸. According to Tobin's report⁷⁹, Awad advocated a one-state solution, as did others in Jakarta.

⁷¹ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/22-alex-awad>

⁷² <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/about-us/conference-committee>

⁷³ <http://www.al-bushra.org/hedchrch/april17.htm>

⁷⁴ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/59-bishara-awad>

⁷⁵ <http://hurryupharry.org/2009/03/11/fundamentalists-and-crazy-end-times-prophecies/>

⁷⁶ <http://www.hurryupharry.org/2009/03/25/some-awkward-questions-for-john-hubers/>

⁷⁷ <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/n392.htm>

⁷⁸ <http://muhsinlabib.wordpress.com/2008/05/03/segera-konferensi-internasional-palestina-di-jakarta/>

Also in attendance was Ayatollah Khomeini's daughter, the aforementioned Zahra Mostafavi from Iran.

According to the Voice of Palestine website⁸⁰, Awad was representing the **Bethlehem Bible College** at this event. **Alex and Bishara Awad** have previously argued that,

"Palestinian Christians view Israel, and not Arafat, as the problem."⁸¹

It is worth noting that Alex Awad appears to blame "the Jew" for Islamist suicide bombings, writing:

*"When we fight for a piece of land, we use religion to rally people, to excite people to build zeal among the people so they will help accomplish a goal. Religion is used in the conflict, but **it's about land. The Muslim is fighting the Jew because of what the Jew took by force.**"⁸²*

Alex Awad's open antisemitism, and his allying with terrorists and Holocaust deniers⁸³, goes unchecked by **Bishara Awad**⁸⁴, who does not appear to mind that his brother uses the Bethlehem Bible College name, in such a way.



Bishara Awad is also on the *CATC* 2012 organising committee⁸⁵, and he has written letters inviting Christians around the world to participate in this conference⁸⁶.



⁷⁹ <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/n392.htm>

⁸⁰ http://www.voiceofpalestine.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=38

⁸¹ <http://www.keshertalk.com/archives/2006/06/conflicttourism.php>

⁸² <http://www.flumc.org/comline/revarchive/2002/041202s2.htm>

⁸³ <http://www.hurryupharry.org/2009/03/25/some-awkward-questions-for-john-hubers/>

⁸⁴ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/speakers/59-bishara-awad>

⁸⁵ <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com/index.php/about-us/conference-committee>

⁸⁶ <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/news/article.htm?id=3566&cat=main>