



Tanenbaum Peacemakers in Action

Delegation to Nigeria

December 5 – 11, 2010

Summary Report



Conducted in Partnership with the
Interfaith Mediation Center



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Greetings,

It is with great pleasure that Tanenbaum presents the Summary Report of the December 2010 Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action* Delegation to Nigeria. The Delegation is the first event of its kind sponsored by Tanenbaum, and its great success makes us certain that it will not be the last.

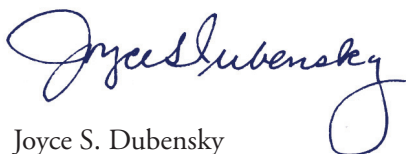
The Delegation consisted of three *Peacemakers* in Action, representing each of the Abrahamic faiths: Friar Ivo Markovic, a Franciscan Catholic from Bosnia, Yehezkel Landau, a Jewish Israeli-American, and Azhar Hussain, a Pakistani-American Muslim. The three Delegates joined Pastor James Movel Wuye and Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa, their *Peacemaker* colleagues, in the Pastor and the Imam's home country of Nigeria. Together, the *Peacemakers* worked for one week in the tense cities of Abuja, Jos, and Kaduna with two goals: first, to prevent anticipated violence in the run-up to the contentious presidential elections; and second, to strengthen the peace movement which Pastor James and Imam Ashafa have been constructing for more than a decade.

This initiative had its roots in Tanenbaum's 2007 *Peacemakers in Action* Working Retreat in Sarajevo, Bosnia, which added prestige and power to the post-conflict peacebuilding work of Friar Ivo, our host. The Delegation represented a focused adaptation of the Working Retreat, which combined a similar purpose with a more agile model. Our Nigerian hosts took on the responsibility of steering the program, using the opportunity and their on-the-ground understanding of the conflict to shape their own agenda and bring in the partners from among their *Peacemaker* colleagues who were best suited to advancing their goals for peace.

And advance those goals they did. In a week of seminars, media appearances, and meetings with key government and religious leaders, the *Peacemakers* solidified new partnerships within Nigeria and across borders, reached new audiences with messages of peace, and shared new ideas on how to address some of Nigeria's greatest challenges. The five *Peacemakers* also had the chance to grow together, not only as colleagues, but as "brothers" with a shared vision. The immediate responses show encouraging signs of a lasting impact, and this Delegation sets a strong precedent for similar *Peacemaker* collaborations in the future.

I want to especially recognize and give heartfelt thanks to our friends, and fellow travelers on the journey toward peace, Pastor James, Imam Ashafa, and the Interfaith Mediation Center, Tanenbaum's partners on the ground in Nigeria. Their ambitious program, vast network, and tireless staff seized the opportunity and maximized the impact of this unique mission. This invaluable experience would not have been possible without their hard work. The magnitude of their passion and commitment inspires hope for the future of Nigeria.

In friendship,



Joyce S. Dubensky
Executive Vice President & CEO

Understanding the Delegation and its Mandate: The Context



Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, in Abuja.

...today, these former enemies are dedicating their lives to bridging the divide among Nigerians of all religious and ethnic groups—together.

Genesis of the Peacemakers in Action Delegation to Nigeria

Conflict in Nigeria is often viewed through a religious lens—as a division between the Muslim North and the Christian South. Along the fault line of religious and ethnic difference (Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Yoruba and Igbo Christians), violent conflict has sporadically erupted for decades. It is from within this reality that Tanenbaum first identified a pair of *Peacemakers* who were unknown at the time: Pastor James Movel Wuye and Imam Nurayn Ashafa.

Originally adversaries from across religious and ethnic divides, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa each headed sectarian militias, and were intent on killing one another in the name of religion. They were brought together by a common contact who urged them to collaborate for peace. They began working together, and each subsequently and separately experienced a powerful religious transformation. The result is that, today, these former enemies are dedicating their lives to bridging the divide among Nigerians of all religious and ethnic groups—together. In 1995, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa formed the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna, Nigeria. Five years later, Tanenbaum awarded them the *Peacemaker in Action* award for their brave and effective work in reconciling adversaries in Kaduna, Nigeria and beyond.

Since then, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa have worked with Tanenbaum to strengthen and grow the network of *Peacemakers in Action* while expanding the breadth of their own work within Nigeria and Africa. At their request, Tanenbaum planned to hold one of its *Peacemakers in Action* Working Retreats in Nigeria in 2010, a convening at which *Peacemakers* recognized by Tanenbaum would come together to learn from each other, build community, and share religious peacebuilding techniques that could contribute to each other's work on the ground. Unfortunately, violence escalated and security worsened in Nigeria, just as the world financial crisis took its toll. The larger working Retreat was cancelled, and Tanenbaum then worked with the Pastor, the Imam, and their staff at the Interfaith Mediation Centre to put together a smaller convening, the Delegation of *Peacemakers*, so that Tanenbaum's *Peacemaker in Action* network could still make a positive impact on their work and in their country.

Imam Ashafa and Pastor James designed a week of activities to push peace to the forefront of the public consciousness and to elevate the goal of religious understanding and coexistence. They carefully selected fellow *Peacemakers* who they had met at previous Tanenbaum Retreats and whose specific expertise, they concluded, would maximize their message: Azhar “Azi” Hussain, a Pakistani-

American Muslim, Yehezkel Landau, an Israeli-American Jew, and Father Ivo Markovic, a Catholic Franciscan Bosnian Croat. Together, these three *Peacemakers* represented the three Abrahamic faiths from very different contexts, but with a shared message of unity and peace.

With contentious elections scheduled early in 2011, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa created a plan that would spread the message of the Delegation to multiple levels and sectors of Nigerian society, calling for a nonviolent election. The shared tenets of the Abrahamic faiths provided the context for mutual recognition, peace, and fellowship, and the *Peacemakers* were the embodiment of those tenets put into action.

Drawn from the accounts of the participating *Peacemakers*, this report describes the Nigerian context in which the Delegation operated, the activities undertaken by the *Peacemakers* to interrupt cycles of violence, and the outcomes of their intervention.

Conditions on the Ground

Overview of the April 2011 Election:

Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for April 2011, amid predictions that the presidential election will be particularly contentious. Since 1998, the Nigerian presidency has alternated between Northern/Muslim and Southern/Christian leaders in an unwritten power-sharing arrangement known as “zoning.” It is alleged that this has been achieved by rigging elections, which has alienated many voters.

Muslim President Umaru Yar’Adua died in May 2010 before the end of his term, complicating this power sharing agreement. Christian Vice President Goodluck Jonathan became president and is running for reelection in 2011, thereby upsetting the “zoning” arrangement. Several Northern Muslims are running against Jonathan, dividing political power brokers and presenting a real choice to Nigerian voters.

In the past, politicians and religious leaders have exploited religious and ethnic tensions to attract voters. In this large African nation, religion and ethnicity tend to be more salient identities than the Nigerian national identity, and many have predicted that there will be violent outbreaks during the election season. Additionally, the government and the election commission are under pressure to hold elections that are seen as “free and fair” in 2011; an election perceived as rigged or stolen could trigger violent conflict.

Overview of Religious Conflict:

Religion and politics are hard to parse in Nigeria. Statistics show that Nigeria comprises 50 percent Muslims, 40 percent Christians, and 10 percent indigenous believers, though many Christians believe that Muslim and Christian populations are close to equally balanced. Geographically, religious conflicts occur in Nigeria's "Middle Belt", where Northern Muslim and Southern Christian populations meet and mix.

Most "religious" conflicts are in fact manifestations of long-standing political or economic conflicts. Disputes over land and water are particularly intense where herding tribes from the north meet farming tribes from the south. In some states, conflicts have sprung up between "indigenes," the original inhabitants of the area, and "settlers," who are either southerners seeking economic opportunities or nomadic northerners driving their herds. Contested elections, land claims, and other questions of power and resources have triggered violent outbreaks of one group against another, which often bring, in turn, reprisals from Christian and Muslim militias.

The state of Plateau is particularly volatile; several thousand Nigerians have died over the last decade in clashes that have pitted Muslim and Christian groups against each other. For instance, in 2004, small clashes over a land claim escalated into a confrontation in which as many as 600 died during an attack by a Christian militia in the village of Yelwa. This prompted reprisals against Christians in Kano. The city of Jos has been another hotspot for crises, experiencing bloody riots every few years for the last two decades.

The question of Islamic law has also triggered violent confrontations. Since 1999, twelve northern states have adopted Sharia law as their judicial system. Many of these states have significant Christian minorities, and although the Islamic courts are meant to apply only to Muslims, some states have enforced rules, such as the prohibition of alcohol, regardless of religious identification. Violence erupted in Kaduna state when Sharia was adopted in 2000, resulting in hundreds of deaths. Most other states that adopted Sharia (many of which have more uniformly Muslim populations) have not experienced violence over this issue.

One militant group, Boko Haram, believes that Sharia is not being implemented strictly enough, however, and has carried out violent attacks in the north in order to impose its perspective. In the local Hausa language, the group's name means "Western education is forbidden;" as such, Boko Haram says it opposes

all aspects of Western culture and targets politicians, police, and even moderate Muslim clerics. An uprising by the sect and the subsequent government crack-down in July 2009 left as many as 800 dead in Maiduguri, and a bold jail-break in September 2010 freed 700 prisoners in the city of Bauchi. Boko Haram, identifying itself as a religious movement, has channeled frustration and resentment over inequalities against the government and remains a force for instability.

...some experts estimate spills are equal to the Exxon Valdez disaster each year for the last 50 years.

Overview of Resource-Based Conflict:

To the south of the tumultuous Middle Belt lies the Niger River Delta, a region that has also experienced destabilizing violence. The delta region does not have a deep religious divide, but it does have large oil reserves, which have contributed to conflicts over the distribution of wealth and environmental concerns. As Africa's biggest oil exporter, the Nigerian government receives substantial revenues from oil companies, most of which are large multinational corporations. The government is supposed to distribute this income to Nigeria's states, but according to reports, much of these revenues are stolen or squandered due to corruption before they can benefit the people.¹ Additionally, the delta environment has been devastated by decades of oil exploitation (some experts estimate spills are equal to the Exxon Valdez disaster each year for the last 50 years). Many environmentalists blame oil companies for negligence in maintaining their equipment, while oil companies frequently point to sabotage and theft. In either case, resentment among Delta locals has swelled as many who depended on the Delta's formerly rich ecology, such as fishermen, have lost their livelihoods.

A rebel militia called MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) has been protesting this situation. It first emerged in 2006, when it claimed responsibility for capturing four foreign oil workers. More recently, in October 2010, MEND declared itself responsible for car bombs detonated during a celebration of Nigeria's independence in Abuja, the country's capital. Although the militia has been active in the delta area for many years, this was the first time it struck the capital. In its years of operation, MEND has attacked oil pipelines and committed more kidnappings. Some estimate that these disruptions have reduced oil output by as much as one third. Despite the waste and corruption rampant in the system, oil revenues are the cornerstone of Nigeria's economy. If MEND continues to disrupt oil production, it could have an appreciable negative effect on Nigeria's economic future.

¹Various reports document rampant corruption in Nigeria's oil sector, including:

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/nigeria>

Transparency International: <http://www.transparency.org/content/download/1685/8494/file/nigeria.pdf>

The Economist (multiple times, but most recently here): http://www.economist.com/node/17963295?story_id=17963295

Understanding the Delegation and its Mandate: The Work



Top, left to right: The Delegation meets with interfaith youth soccer players; Students from the University of Jos attend a Peacemaker seminar; A government official receives the Statement of Solidarity.

The main events during the week of the Delegation's visit involved four types of initiatives: seminars, presentations of the *Peacemakers in Action Statement of Solidarity*, media appearances, and advocacy meetings to influence the country's religious, political and community leaders.

Seminars

In each locale that the *Peacemakers* visited, they held a substantive seminar on peacebuilding for targeted audiences in the community. Their audiences engaged a wide spectrum from within the society, encompassing youth, university students, religious leaders, and government policy makers. The visiting *Peacemakers* shared how they had each contributed to establishing more peaceful communities and about their specific fields of expertise. Local stakeholders learned about tactical approaches to peacemaking that have worked in other contexts and exchanged ideas with the Delegation on how these strategies could be adapted for Nigeria.

The seminars opened with ceremonial and introductory remarks from the host venues or organizations. Then, each of the three visiting *Peacemakers* gave a presentation on his work, touching on its implications for the Nigerian context. The presentations were entitled:

- Prof. Yehezkel Landau, "The Abrahamic Traditions and Peacebuilding"
- Friar Ivo Markovic, "Reconciliation: The Bosnia-Herzegovina Experience"
- Azhar Hussain, "Religious Education and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Pakistan/ Afghanistan Grassroots Experience"

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa followed the presentations with their own remarks, and then opened the seminars to questions. Imam Ashafa noted that these interactive sessions were "very powerful tools." The Q&A allowed for a rich dialogue between the *Peacemakers* and the seminar participants, planting the seeds of inspiration for future projects.

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Peacemakers in Action Statement of Solidarity²

At the end of each seminar, the *Peacemakers* presented the *Peacemakers in Action Statement of Solidarity Delivered to the Nigerian People*. The *Statement of Solidarity* is a declaration of support for the people of Nigeria, written and signed by members of the *Peacemakers in Action* global network. As such, it represents a group of religiously motivated peace activists from different faiths and countries across the globe, who publicly identify peace as a common value and encourage Nigerians of different faiths to come together under their common beliefs.

The *Statement* calls upon youth, women, religious and political leaders, business owners, and all Nigerian citizens to live peacefully in their everyday lives, “with the goal of building a more powerful nation, where every man, woman, and child has the opportunity to live a full and abundant life free from persecution and fear, regardless of religious persuasion.”

It also specifically addresses the presidential and parliamentary elections, which many fear will be accompanied by violence, but frames them rather as an “opportunity for vigorous, respectful discourse and dialogue among Nigeria’s men and women, and requires a shared commitment to accepting the results and moving forward together to build a thriving society.”

The *Statement of Solidarity* was enthusiastically received and has continued to gain momentum even after the Delegation’s departure. The Cultural Affairs unit at the U.S. Embassy has signed on, and is contributing to the translation of the document into three local Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba). It is also being reproduced as a poster and displayed in public places in Kaduna. Imam Ashafa said it is a “household name” in Nigeria right now, and that “any time any other person needs us anywhere, we must write a similar message for their community.”

In addition to presenting the *Statement*, the Delegation wore wristbands in the colors of Nigeria (green and white). While the *Statement* is a symbol of global support for a peaceful Nigeria, the wristbands are a simple but eloquent visual symbol for Nigerians to show their commitment to peaceful elections in their own communities. The *Peacemakers* wore the wristbands in all their public appearances, and encouraged their audiences to do the same. Imam Ashafa and Pastor James are continuing to promote the wristbands as a physical reminder of the movement for peace and peaceful elections. As the elections draw near, the *Peacemakers* hope the bands will appear on more and more wrists throughout Nigeria, inspiring a calm and nonviolent election season.



Above: Pastor James and Imam Ashafa present the *Statement of Solidarity* to the Canadian Ambassador.

“...any time any other person needs us anywhere, we must write a similar message for their community.”
 – Imam Muhammad Ashafa

² See Appendix A for the full text of the Peacemakers in Action Statement of Solidarity

Media Appearances

The *Peacemakers'* schedule included appearances for local and national media outlets—part of a strategy to amplify the impact of the Delegation's visit beyond the in-person audience. In Abuja, they met with the Nigerian Television Authority, the largest TV network in all of Africa, and appeared on a live morning program that reaches 70-80 million people each day. In Kaduna, they also made appearances on Desmims Independent Television (DITV), the first independent TV network in Nigeria, as well as the Kaduna state television network. In all instances, the appearances allowed the *Peacemakers* to take their message directly into the homes of Nigerians around the country.

Advocacy Meetings

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa also arranged meetings with key leaders in the government, religious bodies, traditional structures, and civil society organizations. These meetings created connections through which the Imam and the Pastor can continue to advance their work in Nigeria, and also broadened the networks of the Delegates, who made connections that may result in international collaborations. Already, many of the Delegation's Nigerian contacts have followed up on their new relationships. Religious leaders in Jos are interested in studying in Yehezkel's Abrahamic Partnerships program at Hartford Seminary, and officials from the Kaduna state government have proposed sending a delegation of Nigerians to Bosnia to learn lessons from that conflict that may be applicable at home.

**“Show me your
friend and I will say
who you are.”**

– African Proverb

According to the Imam and the Pastor, these meetings further legitimized their work, allowing them to present themselves as members of an international network of religious peace activists who have broad contacts and a great depth of experiences. As Imam Ashafa told us, there is an African proverb states “Show me your friend and I will say who you are.” These meetings offered an opportunity for Pastor James and Imam Ashafa to present their friends, helping important contacts to see them as they really are.

Day by Day:
The Delegation
on the Ground
in Nigeria

The Delegation worked indefatigably, night and day, to create the greatest impact possible in their one week of activities. Imam Ashafa was inspired by Friar Ivo's spirit of tirelessness. He continued, "We overworked them, they were tired, they ate late, but Ivo never complained." Below is an account of the agenda the Delegation undertook, along with brief descriptions of the activities.

Abuja

Sunday, December 5 – Tuesday, December 7

Mass at a Nigerian Catholic Church

Friar Ivo Markovic was the first *Peacemaker in Action* to arrive in Abuja on Saturday evening. The next morning, Pastor James arranged for Friar Ivo to attend mass at a Catholic Church in a suburb of Abuja, where the congregation was celebrating Harvest Day. In Ivo's own words, "The liturgy was vivid, joyful, dancing, bursting into singing, applause, smiles, but also in tears of joy—shocking for one reticent, cool European." A sharp contrast to Friar Ivo's own Franciscan monastery, the mass provided a wonderful introduction to the practice of Christianity in the Nigerian context.

Right: The Peacemakers in Action Delegation arrives in Abuja. From left to right: Imam Muhammad Ashafa, Azhar "Azi" Hussain, Friar Ivo Markovic, Pastor James Wuye, and Yehezkel Landau.



Yehezkel Landau and Azhar "Azi" Hussain arrived Sunday evening, completing the Delegation of Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers in Action*.

AM Express on NTA Network

The work of the Delegation began bright and early on Monday morning, with a live television appearance on the program AM Express. The program is broadcast by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) network, the largest television network in Africa. AM Express is one of its most-watched shows, reaching an estimated 70-80 million people each day.



Above: Yehezkel with the shofar.

Yehezkel blew the shofar on national television, to celebrate Nigeria's 50th year of independence, called the "jubilee" in the Jewish tradition.

The *Peacemakers* were interviewed by the program host for about 10 minutes, sharing their greetings, expressing their solidarity with the Nigerian people, and appealing for peaceful elections. Though their comments were short, Yehezkel noted the medium was the message, and that the group, representing three related faith traditions, demonstrated a common message to a wide audience.

Yehezkel also had the opportunity to share a unique aspect of his culture on the program. The Israel/Palestine conflict is a deeply polarizing issue in Nigeria; many Christians strongly support Israel, and many Muslims feel just as strongly in support of the Palestinians. However, most Nigerians, of either religion, have never met an Israeli Jew before. Imam Ashafa called it a "fulfilling experience for many Nigerians," to hear a Jewish perspective committed to peace. Yehezkel had brought his shofar with him, a ram's horn blown on certain important Jewish holy days. In a gesture of support for the Nigerian people, Yehezkel blew the shofar on national television, to celebrate Nigeria's 50th year of independence, called the "jubilee" in the Jewish tradition.

Seminar at Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution

After their television appearance, the *Peacemakers* headed to the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) to deliver a seminar on their work. IPCR is a government think-tank for peace policy, much like the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington, DC. The audience was made up of the directors, research fellows, and policy-makers who work at or with IPCR, as well as some members of the diplomatic community (including two representatives from the U.S. Embassy). About 150 people were in attendance.

The seminar opened with remarks from the Acting Director General of IPCR, prayers, and introduction of the Delegation by Pastor James and Imam Ashafa. Each of the three *Peacemakers* then presented their individual peace work. Imam Ashafa and Pastor James responded with their comments, and then invited questions from the audience. The Q&A session was a vibrant discussion, with in-depth questions about each *Peacemaker's* work and their applications to the Nigerian context. For example, one audience member asked Yehezkel for further analysis of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and several others asked Azi for more details about his work in madrasas. Another participant extended the conversation to Cote D'Ivoire, suggesting that religious peacemaking methods can be used to address the conflict there as well.

At the end of the seminar, the Delegation presented the Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action Statement of Solidarity*, a document declaring the support of the Tanenbaum *Peacemakers* Network for the Nigerian people and their right to peace and stability. The Statement was very well received. The seminar wrapped up with a press conference, where the *Peacemakers* were interviewed by journalists from local Abuja newspapers as well as the BBC World Service.

Reflecting later, the *Peacemakers* described the seminar at IPCR as one of the most fruitful experiences of the Delegation's visit. After the seminar, IPCR made a new commitment, one that will help Tanenbaum's Nigerian *Peacemakers* in their work. The Institute agreed to help Pastor James, Imam Asahfa and IMC in their plans to create the visionary Interfaith Peace Institute. Imam Ashafa describes this Peace Institute as the first of its kind in Africa, where they will be able to teach and test models of interfaith conflict resolution and learn about better practices for achieving peace in a multi-ethnic and multifaith society. The partnership with IPCR was an unexpected outcome of the *Peacemakers'* visit, and gave an important boost to Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's vision for peace.



Above: The Delegation met with top-ranking diplomats from around the world.

Meetings with Politicians, Diplomats, and International Institutions

The *Peacemakers* had hoped to meet Nigeria's president, Goodluck Jonathan, but he had been pulled into meetings with the leaders of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa) to address the crisis in Cote D'Ivoire and was unable to meet with them.

They were able to meet with representatives of the diplomatic community from the French Embassy and the Canadian High Commission. The Canadian High Commissioner is new in Nigeria, and at the meeting he assured Pastor James and Imam Ashafa that the High Commission will continue to support the work of IMC. He also said that he would be willing to engage in other initiatives with IMC, creating the opportunity for future partnerships.

The Delegation also met with the International Republican Institute, an organization with which Pastor James and Imam Ashafa have worked in the past. The Institute had agreed to help fund the original plan for a full *Peacemaker in Action* Working Retreat. Pastor James called the meeting "a good outing for both us and them," and helped to maintain this relationship for future projects.

Their headquarters—a beautiful gilded mosque and a stately cathedral—are situated directly across from each other in the same plaza in Abuja, a physical symbol of the importance of both religions to Nigeria’s national character.

Left to right:
Posing outside the National Christian Center with CAN; meeting with the leadership of NSCIA.

Meeting at the Norwegian Embassy

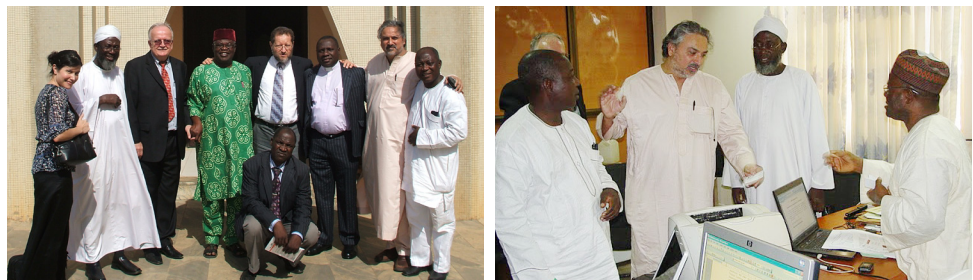
Yehezkel accompanied Pastor James and Imam Ashafa to one more diplomatic visit at the Norwegian Embassy. The Ambassador remarked on the relevance of the *Peacemakers’* work toward mutual understanding, noting that challenges to coexistence arise even in his own country as a result of immigration. The Embassy reaffirmed its commitment to IMC’s activities, notably a project they are working on in Jos to try to stop the violence: the Jos Alternative Peace Road Map.

Panorama on NTA Network

While Yehezkel went with Pastor James and Imam Ashafa to the Norwegian Embassy, Azi and Friar Ivo had a second media appearance with NTA where they appeared on another television program called Panorama. Panorama is a news program, and another one of NTA’s most popular shows. They reiterated their message to the public that religious groups can interact amicably and prosperously, and called for peace during the elections.

Meetings with Religious Leaders

The *Peacemakers* met with top leaders from the Muslim and the Christian communities. At the National Christian Center, the Delegation met with the Vice President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), a Catholic Archbishop. They also met with the top leadership of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) at the Abuja National Mosque. Both of these organizations have worked together to denounce the use of religions to incite violence and



to promote understanding between their two communities; in fact, the President of CAN and the Sultan of Sokoto (the head of NSCIA) were traveling internationally together at the time of the Delegation’s visit. Their headquarters—a beautiful gilded mosque and a stately cathedral—are situated directly across from each other in the same plaza in Abuja, a physical symbol of the importance of both religions to Nigeria’s national character.

The Vice President of CAN described his organization’s efforts to promote grassroots peace efforts and promised to present the *Peacemakers in Action*

Statement of Solidarity at the Council's next meeting in January 2011. The Secretary from NSCIA reflected on the challenges to interreligious cooperation in Nigeria, specifically the gap of understanding of each other's beliefs. Both leaders said that they would pass on the message of the Delegation to the leaders of their organizations and expressed their interest in education and training programs to promote greater understanding between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.



Above:
Yehezkel greets Senator Makarfi.

Below, left to right:
Outside the headquarters of
CAN in Jos; Pastor James
presents the *Statement of
Solidarity* to CAN.

Meeting with Senator Ahmed M. Makarfi

The Delegation was able to meet with Senator Ahmed M. Makarfi at his home in Abuja. Senator Makarfi is the former governor of Kaduna State and has been familiar with and supportive of Pastor James and Imam Ashafa for many years. He is also recognized as a trusted mediator in his own right, and had been asked only days before to resolve a dispute between two Christian groups in his constituency. He was pleased to meet the Delegation, and acknowledged that “global networking helps” when it comes to conflict resolution in Nigeria. As a Senator, Makarfi is well-positioned to advocate on behalf of Pastor James, Imam Ashafa, and IMC within Nigeria's central government, and to be a voice for peaceful campaigns among his colleagues in Parliament.

Jos Wednesday, December 8 – Thursday, December 9

On Wednesday, the *Peacemakers* traveled to the volatile Plateau State; specifically, the city of Jos. Jos has been a violent flashpoint between Muslims and Christians in recent years, lending a particular urgency to the *Peacemakers'* work in this region.

Meeting with Christian Association of Nigeria State Secretariat

The *Peacemakers* met with members of the secretariat of the Plateau State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), including Chairman



Rev. Philip Dafes, Treasurer Rev. Noel Bature, Acting Secretary Canon Friday Tanko, and Public Relations Officer Elder Tunde Oyagbola. Yehezkel noted that Christians seem to have more power than Muslims in the area, and that inspiring a conciliatory attitude among Christian leaders is an important step in bringing peace.

The CAN Secretariat used the meeting with the interfaith group as an opportunity to raise a divisive question troubling their community, that of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians. The secretariat noted that the Muslim community allows Christian women to marry Muslim men, but will not allow Muslim women to marry Christian men, a practice which Christians see as discriminatory. Azi explained that according to Muslim law, a Muslim man with a Christian wife cannot force her to change her faith and must allow her to freely practice her traditions. This same dynamic is not well-defined within Christianity, and many Muslim women marrying Christians feel compelled to give up Islam.

The CAN leaders were surprised to learn about this aspect of Muslim law and noted that ignorance of each other's religions on both sides of the religious divide is among the root causes of the crises that have erupted in the area. The Acting Secretary of CAN acknowledged that Muslims were not being treated well, and expressed interest in mediated conversations with Muslim leaders. He also promised to hold a conference with Christian leaders to discuss a law of reciprocity with regard to marriage with Muslims, allowing Muslims who marry Christians to continue practicing their religion.

“When I met the Muslims...in Jos, I think it was very clear how the religion can be a powerful tool for communication, contact, positive development, and relations among groups. It is possible.”

– Friar Ivo Markovic

Right:
The *Peacemakers* with
members of JNI.

Meeting with the Jama'atu Nasril Islam State Secretariat

The *Peacemakers* met with the state secretariat of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), an umbrella organization of Nigerian Muslims. This meeting made an impression on Yehezkel, who said it became clear to him how much needs to be done to



improve communication between the leadership of the two religious communities in Jos. The leaders expressed many grievances, and the need for reconciliation was apparent. Friar Ivo was hopeful, however, saying, “When I met the Muslims... in Jos, I think it was very clear how the religion can be a powerful tool for communication, contact, positive development, and relations among groups. It is possible.”



Above, left & right:
Participants in the seminar at the University of Jos listened to *Peacemaker* presentations and asked questions.



Seminar at the American Corner

The *Peacemakers* had a second seminar planned at the American Corner, a neighborhood information center operated by the American Diplomatic Mission. Although the *Peacemakers* were running late from their meeting with JNI, a large crowd of 150 people waited for them to conduct the seminar. The group comprised mostly youth, including students and members of IMC’s Early Warning, Early Response and Alternative Peace Road Map Committees. The Delegates again presented on their diverse efforts for peace in their different conflict zones and answered questions from the audience.

Meeting with Youth Soccer Players

In the morning before their third seminar, the *Peacemakers* met with members of an organization called Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Inter-faith Foundation. The organization, led by Dr. Yakubu Pam, an evangelical minister, has been sponsoring interfaith soccer games as a way to promote positive relationships between youth from different religions. The *Peacemakers* met them on their soccer field, each giving a brief speech through a megaphone. They enjoyed the opportunity to meet with participants in such a unique and proactive organization. Yehezkel again took the opportunity for a celebratory blast on the shofar.

IMC staff recorded the appearance on film, and it was broadcast on a local Plateau State TV station after the Delegation left Nigeria.

Right:
The *Peacemakers* addressed the Young Ambassadors, a group of interfaith youth promoting understanding and acceptance through sports.

Bottom:
Students and faculty gather at the University of Jos to listen to presentations from the Delegates.



Seminar at University of Jos

The *Peacemakers* conducted a second seminar in Jos, following the same format as the previous seminars. Held at the University of Jos, the audience of about 200 people was largely drawn from university students and faculty from the Department of



Religious Studies, though some IMC-trained Peace Ambassadors and prominent political and religious leaders were present as well. The seminar was again very well-received. Pastor James later shared that although some meetings with the Plateau State media houses fell through, the enthusiasm of the students they met at the university more than compensated for any disappointments.



Above:
Yehezkel presents the University faculty with some of the materials he uses in his own classes on comparing Abrahamic texts.

Bottom:
The Delegation discusses the prospects for peace with the Catholic Archbishop of the Plateau Archdiocese.

Here again, the *Peacemakers* contributed to a developing partnership between the University and the Delegation's Nigerian hosts. Imam Ashafa and Pastor James are working with the head of the Department of Religion, who invited the *Peacemakers* to his home for drinks and cookies after the seminar, to create a training program on interfaith communication. The course will teach methods for addressing religiously-sensitive communities. They are currently putting together a proposal and looking for funding for the project.

Meeting with the Catholic Archbishop

The Delegation met with the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Plateau State. The *Peacemakers* presented him with the Statement of Solidarity and spoke about their work, building another ally for Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's work in the area. In addition to important discussions about peace and reconciliation, the meeting produced an unexpected treat: Friar Ivo had the chance to meet a fellow Franciscan, a Nigerian nun, and Pastor James said they had "a great conversation."



Kaduna

Friday, December 10 – Saturday, December 11

On Friday, the *Peacemakers* arrived in Kaduna, the last city on their week-long campaign for peace.

Meetings with Political Leaders

The *Peacemakers* had planned to meet with the current governor of Kaduna state, but, as Pastor James joked, the vice president “stole our show!” With the vice president of Nigeria in town, many of the top officials were unable to meet with the *Peacemakers*. The Delegation was, however, able to meet with Timothy Gandu, Principal Private Secretary to the Governor of Kaduna State. Mr. Gandu

Right, left to right:
Yehezkel presents the *Statement of Solidarity* to Timothy Gandu; A group photo with the Governor’s staff.

Bottom:
The Delegation poses outside DITV’s colorful broadcasting studio with Hakeem Baba-Ahmed and some of the DITV staff.



is a dynamic leader, a supportive partner for Pastor James and Imam Ashafa’s work, and a good contact who can facilitate access to new resources. He encouraged IMC to submit proposals for project funding, and Yehezkel called him one of the most impressive people on the whole trip.

Meeting with Desmims Independent Television (DITV)

The *Peacemakers* had a productive meeting with Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, the Executive Chairman of Desmims Independent Television; the first independently-owned



television station in Nigeria. The *Peacemakers* recorded another TV program, and Mr. Baba-Ahmed was so impressed with them that he donated six more time-slots to Pastor James and Imam Ashafa to use for the promotion of peace in the run-up to the elections.

Friday Prayers at Imam Ashafa's Mosque

The Delegation was invited into Imam Ashafa's mosque for Friday prayers. Ashafa delivered the khutbah (sermon), and the *Peacemakers* had the chance to meet with children and worshippers at the mosque. Unfortunately, Yehezkel



Above:
A group of children at the local mosque.

Right:
Azi joins the congregation at the mosque on Friday to listen to Imam Ashafa's khutbah.



was unable to attend. Ashafa noted the earnest curiosity of the children, who were eager to meet a Jewish person for the first time. "They were asking for him and wanted to know when he was coming back so they could meet him."

Seminar at State House Kawo Kaduna

The *Peacemakers* held their final seminar in Kaduna. About 150 people attended, comprising mostly youth from the IMC peace network and some religious, political and traditional leaders. The Head of the Bureau of Religious Affairs attended this workshop and had a chance to speak with the Delegates. He pledged the continuing support of his Bureau for the activities of IMC.

“It’s encouraging to know that the peace movement in Nigeria is more than just two charismatic leaders; it’s really a vast network.”

– Yehezkel Landau

Meeting with Dr. Danjuma Barde, Sa Gbagyi

The *Peacemakers* made a courtesy call to the Sa Gbagyi, the traditional ruler of the Gbagyi people of the Kaduna area, Pastor James’ community. The Delegates shared optimistic messages of peace and entreated the Sa Gbagyi to help IMC however he can. The Sa Gbagyi responded that because of IMC, Kaduna is now a more peaceful place, and that the presence of the Delegation was a blessing to the chieftdom.

Meetings with Community and Civil Society Leaders

Azi, Yehezkel, and Friar Ivo also visited the offices of Pastor James and Imam Ashafa at the Interfaith Mediation Center. The meeting helped the Delegates to better understand the work of their hosts (“It’s encouraging to know that the peace movement in Nigeria is more than just two charismatic leaders; it’s really a vast network” - Yehezkel), and allowed the staff at IMC to learn about their international colleagues (“It was good for our staff to understand our place in the international Tanenbaum network” – Pastor James).

Capital TV Television Appearance

The *Peacemakers*’ fourth and final media appearance was on Capital TV, a network operated by Kaduna State. Pastor James and Imam Ashafa host a weekly for a call-in program on this station. For this week’s show, Friar Ivo, Azi, and Yehezkel appeared as their guests. Many callers rang in with questions for the Delegation and messages of support for their work. This appearance gave Yehezkel the opportunity to share his shofar with the people of Kaduna yet again, as he did in Abuja and Jos.

Return to Abuja and Departure

The Delegation finished their work in Kaduna and headed back to Abuja. On the way, they stopped at a plot of land that IMC has purchased – the site where they are planning to build the Interfaith Peace Institute. The five *Peacemakers* prayed together and gave a blessing over the land, that it may be dedicated to bringing peace to Nigeria and beyond. Then they continued on their way so that Azi, Friar Ivo, and Yehezkel could catch their flights home after a busy and fulfilling week!

Presentation of Results

To assess the results of the Delegation to Nigeria, Tanenbaum held a debrief conference call with the Delegates, and then conducted focused interviews with four of the five participants individually. In these conversations, each of the *Peacemakers* shared their view that the week was a success. Specifically, these conversations illuminated seven key results that establish the effectiveness and the value of the intervention:

“We want to use Azi’s model so that people can see that there is hope in the future for them without demonizing the other.”

– Imam Muhammad Ashafa

1. Sharing Skills and Techniques

In their work together, the Delegation shared skills and techniques that may bear fruit in the future. For example, Azi shared his model for intervening in the madrasa education system with his colleagues. His model encourages madrasa leadership to reflect and to develop pedagogies that include human rights, religious inclusiveness, and critical thinking. Imam Ashafa was particularly appreciative of this technique, noting, “Azi’s approach to madrasas will help us, because most children are outside the secular school environment. Those madrasa children are like a ticking time bomb... We want to use Azi’s model so that people can see that there is hope in the future for them without demonizing the other.”

2. Discovering New Models for Understanding Diverse Conflicts

The week-long collaboration of the Delegation provided the *Peacemakers* with new models for analyzing their own conflicts. Friar Ivo noted that the situation in Jos, Plateau State is very similar to the situation that existed in Kosovo. In both circumstances, the Christian minority perceives peace and democracy as a threat, because they will “lose.” They fear that the Muslim majority will not make allowances for their interests. In Ivo’s words, “I think it is fearfulness of negotiating, and we as peacemakers must find the possibilities.” He believes there may be opportunities for Bosnia and Nigeria to learn from each other’s experiences through a comparative analysis.

“IPCR said we can use their space for the Interfaith Institute of Peace, when we want to start... This was a big promotion, an elevation for us.”

– Pastor James Wuye

3. Improving Access to Influential Institutions

The work of the Delegation also improved Pastor James and Imam Ashafa’s access to key institutions in Nigeria. Both of Tanenbaum’s Nigerian *Peacemakers* talked about the high-profile status of the Delegation as a factor in propelling them to higher levels of access in Nigeria. Specifically, Pastor James pointed to the meetings and the seminar the Delegation held with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR). “IPCR said we can use their space for the Interfaith Institute of Peace, when we want to start. They said they are happy to collaborate. IPCR is the equivalent of USIP in Nigeria, a very big space, the think-tank for the Nigerian government on the role of Africans in peace and conflict resolution.

This was a big promotion, an elevation for us.”

4. Presenting New Messages—and Lived Realities—of Inclusion

The thoughtful selection of the Delegates by Imam Ashafa and Pastor James also played an important role in promoting a sensitization to differences that would not have been possible otherwise. Yehezkel, Ivo, and Azi, as outsiders who come from different religions and different conflicts but who came together as one Delegation, were a tangible vision of an inclusive world. Each observed his own tradition, but they talked as friends and colleagues who agreed on the basic tenets of coexistence. Further, as many of the *Peacemakers* noted, Yehezkel was likely the first Israeli Jew that many of the Nigerians had ever met. His willingness to share his traditions, such as blowing his shofar, made an impression on many of the individuals with whom the Delegation met. As Imam Ashafa stated, it was a “fulfilling moment” for Nigerians to meet an Israeli Jew who spoke critically and thoughtfully about the situation in the Middle East and supported a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. Yehezkel’s message to the Nigerians was not to favor Israelis or Palestinians over the other, but to embrace an inclusive vision of peace.

“The visit gave us courage, a sense of belonging, and created a wall of protection for us.”

– Pastor James Wuye

5. Providing Cover in Hostile Environments

Pastor James also noted how the work of the Delegation will provide cover for IMC in hostile environments, protecting them from potential attackers. “The visit gave us courage, a sense of belonging, and created a wall of protection for us, because now people know that we are well-connected globally and you can’t just mess around with these people. It intimidated possible antagonists.” The Delegation demonstrated that the Imam and the Pastor have an international network of supports, and that any harm that might befall them would resonate beyond Nigeria’s borders.

6. Germinating Innovative New Approaches

During the trip, the *Peacemakers* lived and worked in close proximity, allowing the visit to double as a week-long brainstorming session. This fertile environment for new ideas enabled a germination of innovative approaches to Nigeria’s challenges and beyond. For example, when Azi shared his work with madrasas, it was easy to envision its application in the Nigerian context. However, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa are now discussing the possibility of taking this work a step further: bringing it to the Christian educational institutions as well. “We hope to use it [the technique] both for those who teach Christian religious knowledge as

“I was with them as with my own brothers. I had a feeling we knew each other for years.”

– Friar Ivo Markovic

well as in Muslim madrasas to bring about unity, further understanding on issues of religiously-motivated violence.”

7. Reinforcing and Motivating Leaders for Peace

Finally, by working together, this diverse group of *Peacemakers* invigorated each other, stimulating motivation to continue their respective efforts. Yehezkel referred to this as the “hidden curriculum” of the trip: the opportunity to know his “spiritual brothers.” The *Peacemakers* all valued the opportunity to bond and reinforce their common vision. As Friar Ivo said, “I was with them as with my own brothers. I had a feeling we knew each other for years.”

“The impact cannot be measured now, but it has planted a seed that will grow to become a forest.”

– Pastor James Wuye

While it is too early yet to talk about the impact of the Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action* Delegation to Nigeria, these results suggest that the activity will continue to pay dividends. Pastor James, Imam Ashafa, and all of their colleagues at IMC will be able to take full advantage of the benefits this intervention will create. In the words of Pastor James, “The impact cannot be measured now, but it has planted a seed that will grow to become a forest.”

Right:
The *Peacemakers* share a meal together with some of their new contacts.



PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION

Statement of Solidarity

Delivered To the Nigerian People
December 2010

- ☼ **TODAY, IN YOUR 50TH YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE**, we come to Nigeria to stand in solidarity with the Nigerian people as a delegation of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding's Peacemakers in Action global network.
- ☼ **AS TANENBAUM PEACEMAKERS**, we represent men and women from across the globe whose diverse religious beliefs drive them to stop violent conflicts, and move them to create stability and peace. We stand before you as representatives of these dedicated individuals – men and women who risk their lives daily for peace in the Middle East, Latin America, Southeast Asia, across Africa, in the Balkans and Northern Ireland.
- ☼ **AS A DELEGATION OF TANENBAUM'S PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION**, we stand with our fellow Peacemakers, Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movel Wuye, in support and solidarity with their lifelong endeavor to realize peaceful coexistence among people from all religious traditions in Nigeria and beyond.
- ☼ **WE ARE HERE TO BEAR WITNESS TO YOUR STRUGGLE** in this great country of Nigeria to live in peace, with mutual respect and religious pluralism. We stand with you in the effort to realize that vision.
- ☼ **WE AFFIRM THE SACREDNESS OF ALL LIFE**, the spirit of good neighborliness among all peoples and the protection of human dignity across Abrahamic traditions.
- ☼ **SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER, WE STAND HERE TODAY** representing the three great Abrahamic Traditions. We carry with us the collective activism of Peacemaker-Practitioners from around the world, unified in our conviction that:
 - a. Respect for human life and dignity is a central tenet of all religions – it is our shared duty and obligation to respect each life, which is sacred to us all. We are all one family in this universe.
 - b. The election now on the horizon provides an opportunity for vigorous, respectful discourse and dialogue among Nigeria's men and women, and requires a shared commitment to accepting the results and moving forward together to build a thriving society.
- ☼ **WE EXPRESS OUR HOPE FOR THE RE-AWAKENING** of the silent majority of Nigerians, whose good virtues urge them to speak out the Abrahamic message of inclusiveness, in which diversity is a strength.
- ☼ **WE CALL ON OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS**, the people of Nigeria. Join us by pursuing peace in your daily lives – with the goal of building a more powerful nation, where every man, woman and child has the opportunity to live a full and abundant life free from persecution and fear, regardless of religious persuasion.
- ☼ **WE CONDEMN THE MISUSE AND ABUSE OF RELIGION** by political and religious leaders in the promotion of violence of any course.
- ☼ **WE INVITE THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THIS HONORABLE NATION**, in the cities and villages of both the North and the South, to share in this vision and to vigorously pursue elections free from violence, and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria.
- ☼ **WE APPEAL TO NIGERIAN POLITICAL LEADERS**, as well as to all public and private stakeholders, to play politics without bitterness. We urge you to shun commerce without compassion, politics without principles, professionalism without ethics, and living life without forgiveness in your daily endeavors.
- ☼ **WE PETITION NIGERIAN POLITICAL AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS** to declare this a day of forgiveness and reconciliation, to serve as an annual day of reflection on the past and present, to enhance our shared work for a better future.
- ☼ **THE TANENBAUM PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION ENCOURAGE** the business community – individuals, groups, and multinational organizations – to invest in peace projects and youth empowerment across the Nigerian nation to enhance and protect the sustainability of their economic investment in Nigeria.
- ☼ **WE ENTREAT THE WOMEN OF NIGERIA** to take their rightful place as leaders of the procession toward national harmony and unity, and to invigorate the growing movement for lasting peace with their powerful voices and vision.
- ☼ **WE BECKON TO THE NIGERIAN YOUTH**, who are the future generation: Your own destinies and the destiny of this nation are in your hands. We implore you to shun violence, extremism, militancy, religious and political manipulation, and exploitation by conflict entrepreneurs. We counsel you to develop a clear vision of your positive role in the history of your nation and the human family, and to become peace-ambassadors in the various fields of human endeavor.
- ☼ **AS TANENBAUM'S PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION**, we and our colleagues invite all Nigerians to join us in recognizing the value of our neighbors across the road, in the next region, in the next country and across the globe, no matter our differences. Let the best of our diverse religious traditions, beliefs and cultures heal our community. Let strength in diversity bring us together in a common vision, as desired by the nation's founding mothers and fathers, for a peaceful and prosperous Nigeria. Let Nigeria be a role model among nations worldwide.

DELEGATES OF THE TANENBAUM PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION NETWORK

Azhar Hussain

Friar Ivo Markovic

Pastor James Movel Wuye

Imam Muhammad
Nurayn Ashafa

Yehezkeil Landau

TANENBAUM PEACEMAKERS IN ACTION

Alimamy Koroma
Hind Kabawat
Reverend Canon
Andrew P.B. White
Betty Bigombe

Jamila Afghani
Reverend Dr. William Lowrey
Bishop Ntambo
Nkulu Ntanda
José "Chencho" Alas

Dr. Ephraim Isaac
Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge
Sakena Yacoobi
Najeeba Sirhan

