



**FINAL EVALUATION**

**“A Window on Mount Zion”**

From Conflict to Dialogue and Cooperative Action

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Project Background</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Methodology and Limitations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Key Recommendations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Background Information</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Project Overview</b>	<b>10</b>
Project Description	10
Target groups	11
Goal, Objectives, and Theories of Change	12
Activities	12
Implementation adjustments	13
<b>Methodology and Limitations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Findings</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Relevance</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<b>19</b>
Objective 1: Collaboration is enhanced among religious, security, municipal and national government stake-holders to address religious tensions in Jerusalem	19
Objective 2: Coordination is increased to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mt Zion.	21
<b>Impact</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Best Practices and Opportunities</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>35</b>
Search for Common Ground   <a href="#">JERUSALEM</a>	2

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex 1 Interview guide for Volunteers</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex 2 Interview guide for Tenants</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex 3 Police Questionnaire</b>	<b>42</b>

## Abbreviations

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CRLI Council of Religious Leaders in Israel

JFRS Jerusalem Forum on Religious Security

JICC Jerusalem Intercultural Center

JDA Jerusalem Development Authority

USIP United States Institute of Peace

SFCG Search for Common Ground

UN United Nations

## Executive Summary

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### Project Background

The Window on Mount Zion project implemented by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in partnership with the Jerusalem Intercultural Center from 2015 to 2016, with financial support from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), had at its core two main components: 1) Establishment and sustainment of a Jerusalem Forum for Religious Security (JFRS) and 2) Activities on the ground on Mount Zion including a) “Window on Mount Zion” volunteer training and activities; b) Mount Zion residents meetings; and c) police training. The volunteers were trained to regularly monitor holy sites and to maintain a pluralistic presence on the Mount. Tenants meetings were held to promote interaction among the residents on the Mount on issues of common concern. The police training aimed to boost appreciation for diverse religious connections to holy sites, to help them understand how the rules of conduct on these sites were established, and to increase their sensitivity towards religious clergy, worshipers and events taking place at holy sites. The project also supported the maintenance of a Registry of Attacks on Holy Sites.

The **overarching goal** of this project is to prevent violent conflict among the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious communities in Jerusalem. **Specific project objectives** were to 1) enhance collaboration among religious, security, municipal and national government stakeholders to address religious tensions in Jerusalem; and 2) increase coordination to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion.

This project fits into and is an integral part of a larger initiative to safeguard holy sites in the Holy Land based on SFCG’s Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites (hereafter the “Universal Code”). This global initiative is spearheaded by SFCG’s Jerusalem office, led by its Israeli co-director Sharon Rosen as SFCG’s global expert on interreligious issues. The purpose of the Universal Code is both to better safeguard holy sites globally and to support interreligious cooperation. A field project is currently being implemented in Jerusalem among Israelis and Palestinians based on the Universal Code but the Code’s activities extend far beyond the Holy Land. A pilot project with external evaluation was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2011 - 2013, and projects are, or have been implemented in Indonesia, India, Sri-Lanka and Tunisia. Finally, efforts are being made to support the development of a UN resolution in the spirit of the Universal Code.

## **Methodology and Limitations**

The final evaluation of this project was conducted in June and July 2016 using semi-structured interviews with volunteers and residents on the Mount and surveys distributed to the police. Due to the political and religious sensitivities of working in the complex Jerusalem environment, no baseline was conducted. Prior to the project, religious leaders on the Mount did not meet or work together. Relationships on the Mount were tainted with suspicion and prejudice. Therefore SFCG's implementing partner, the Jerusalem Intercultural Center (JICC) which is a resident institution on the Mount, felt that a distribution of a baseline survey would deter potential participants from joining the project. This was a limitation in measuring the change in relationships and feelings of security before and after the project. Another limitation was the inability to interview police officers because of lack of security clearance for this.

## **Key Findings**

Overall the project was effective in enhancing collaboration among religious, security, municipal and national government stakeholders to address interreligious tensions on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, as well as increasing coordination to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on the Mount.

### *Effectiveness*

#### **Objective 1**

In terms of enhanced collaboration among stakeholders to address interreligious tensions on Mount Zion, the beneficiaries expressed how relevant and important this project is, especially for the tenants on Mount Zion. Some of the beneficiaries interviewed said that, prior to this project, they had not even known who their neighbors were, which contributed to the prevailing atmosphere of prejudice and suspicion on the Mount. The project spoke directly to this issue, bringing the residents of the Mount together, opening new channels of communication, including those initiated by the residents themselves, which were outside the channels established by the project's official activities.

#### **Objective 2**

With regards to increasing coordination to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion, the residents feel safer and more secure as a result of the project. Specifically, they have gained a sense of security while performing their religious prayer and celebrations, and events.

Furthermore, while SFCG had planned to provide 20 volunteers to monitor holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion, 180 volunteers were ultimately recruited. Similarly, while SFCG had committed to train 150 police officers, 250 would be trained by the end of 2016. The training itself was also highly successful. Police officers surveyed recommended that the training become a basic college training for police officers working in Jerusalem. According to the survey, participating police officers claimed the training made them more sensitive to the religious tensions on the Mount and enhanced their understanding of the different religious attachments to the site. Finally, the police training was ultimately deemed so important by the Israeli Police Department that they decided that the whole Jerusalem Old City police station (250 officers) should take part and they funded the trainings themselves. Due to police protocol and for reasons of transparency, they could not accept free trainings. They therefore insisted on paying for the workshops from their 2016 budget, thus demonstrating their commitment. The police also expressed a desire to be involved in the curriculum development, signaling ownership of the process as well as helping to ensure the program was highly relevant and applicable to their everyday activities.

Unfortunately, due to the upsurge in violence in Jerusalem at the beginning of implementation, one of the promised outputs was not achieved: the creation of a forum of senior religious leaders and representatives of other relevant authorities (national and local government, police) to collaborate on addressing root causes of religious tension around holy sites (the Jerusalem Forum for Religious Security (JFRS)). Some of the key senior religious leaders refused to participate in a joint Israel-Palestinian gathering. This forum was instead replaced by regular tenants' meetings on Mount Zion of mid-level leaders from these representative authorities.

### *Impact and Sustainability*

The impact of the project is evident in the positive shift in the relationships between the residents and their enhanced sense of safety and security to practice their religious ceremonies without fear of violence. Police officers and volunteers, mostly comprised of students and tour guides, noted that they learned more about interreligious tension on Mount Zion as a result of the program, and both populations are sharing and spreading what they have learned through this project with their clients and colleagues.

In terms of sustainability, SFCG's implementing partner the JICC is committed to continuing the project activities after the end of the project. It will continue the police officers' trainings which is now funded by the police. It is also committed to continue the tenants' meetings because it has become the focal point and location for resident institutions to meet regularly and discuss the common issues they face. It will also continue the volunteer platform and the Window on Mount Zion website after the project ends.

This project has opened a ‘window’ to a more peaceful atmosphere on Mount Zion, which can also be used as a model for other locations in Jerusalem. In the coming years, we anticipate that the changes in perception brought about by the project, and the new avenues for cooperation created, will endure, bringing about lasting change.

### **Key Recommendations**

- **Volunteer Program**
  - o The group of volunteers should be more diverse to include people of different religions and ethnicities. This will give the volunteers’ platform a more neutral presence.
- **Advance Police Training**
  - o The training agenda can be expanded from a one day brief workshop to a more advanced workshop.
- **Tenants’ Meetings**
  - o Increase the frequency of the meetings as needed
  - o The tenants suggested taking the meetings to a higher level to include sharing materials of what is being taught to students of the resident institutions on the Mount about the “other.”
- **Disseminate the project results**
  - o Sharing the work that was done on this project with religious leaders to encourage dialogue.
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## Background Information

### Context

While the root cause of the Arab/Israeli conflict is a territorial one - two nations fighting over the same piece of real-estate – religion is inextricably bound up in this tinderbox of tension and it is no coincidence that the second intifada was also known as Al Aqsa Intifada, named after Islam’s third most holy site on the Haram al Sharif (known to Jews as the Temple Mount). Holy Sites, which lie at the heart of people’s identity and deepest attachments in the region, have always been a lightning rod for conflict. The recent rise in violence, executed mostly by youth, is no exception. A shared holy site is a particularly combustible combination so it is not surprising that there have been regular skirmishes on the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif and continuing heightened

*“I have been verbally abused. I was once followed from the walls of the Old City, when I was on my way back from a reception. A fellow followed me and shouted things about the devil and Satan at me the whole way up here. At some point I just turned around and said, ‘Please, would you just shut up and go away?’ I don't think he was expecting that reaction so he just went away. ... How I deal with it very practically is that if I can avoid it, I do so. Sometimes I can't avoid it, because I have to go to the Protestant church, to the Patriarchy or the Embassy in Tel Aviv. I don't feel so comfortable in the habit anymore, since I am identified immediately and it is an opportunity for people to spit or do something else.” (Christian Resident on Mount Zion)*

tensions at other shared holy places like Mount Zion just outside the walls of Jerusalem’s Old City. Abuses on Mount Zion include taunting and spitting on Christians, attacks on their sacred places, and tombstones defaced in the Muslim cemetery.<sup>1</sup> SFCG is instrumental in documenting these attacks through its unique registry of abuses on holy sites in the Holy Land.

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Christian leaders at the SFCG conferences on October 30, 2013 and May 20, 2014. Attacks on holy sites on Mt Zion recorded in SFCG’s Attacks Registry, available at this link <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1moThDJIyFzPHOZqFoEXKv2NEFYT7VRp0EQFSiN-3r840/edit#gid=425299107>

## Project Overview

### Project Description

This project focuses on protecting Israel's religious minorities in Jerusalem, particularly its marginalized Christian community which numbers approximately 12,000.<sup>2</sup> Their numbers are greatly increased by thousands of foreign workers and the annual influx of Christian pilgrims that in 2013 comprised over half the tourists to Israel, many of whom interact with local Christians.<sup>3</sup> Most members of the Christian community are permanent residents of Jerusalem but are without Israeli citizenship so do not have democratic representation in Israel's Knesset. This is either because they are part of the post-1967 Palestinian community or because they are foreign citizens drawn to Jerusalem from other countries for extended periods of time for religious or employment reasons. This lack of democratic representation as well as religious prejudice makes the Christian community particularly vulnerable to victimization.

Palestinian Muslims residents, who comprise 35% of Jerusalem's population,<sup>4</sup> are similarly vulnerable to religious abuse and particularly prone because of the adverse effects of the Arab-Israel conflict on Israeli Jewish attitudes towards Muslims. The Jerusalem Forum discussions and the sensitivity training workshops for the security sector therefore included issues relating to Islam as well as Christianity with the aim of contributing to the reduction of interreligious tension regarding the two largest religious minorities in Jerusalem. However, as the project activities mostly took place on Mount Zion – a site particularly holy to Christians and Jews – more focus was placed on the Christian minority.

Attitudes relating to holy sites are hardening. Religious and political leaders with exclusivist positions who deny the attachment of other religions to shared holy places are quick to exploit young people who become central actors, often “leading the charge” in defense of real and imagined attacks on their faith. Police officers, who find themselves at the heart of these tensions, are also central players whose actions can both calm or exacerbate the fear and anger. There is an enormous need to improve protection of holy sites and their visitors, and to facilitate dialogue among religious leaders, the security sector, government ministries and the municipality to reduce tensions.

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://allaboutjerusalem.com/article/christians-and-christianity-jerusalem>. The article's author, Dr. Ramon is an advisor to this project.

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Pages/Christian-tourism-to-Israel-2013.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> See: [http://www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2012n/11\\_12\\_126e.pdf](http://www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2012n/11_12_126e.pdf)

## Target groups

### **Residents and visitors on Mount Zion**

There are several private dwellings and institutions, and sacred places on Mount Zion which are inhabited by residents who account for approximately 200 people on the Mount every day. Institutions include the Benedictine Dormition Abbey; the Franciscan Ad Ceanacullum Convent; the Diaspora Yeshiva, the American University College and the JICC. Shared holy sites include King David's Tomb, the Room of the Last Supper and the Nebi Daoud Mosque. The Diaspora Yeshiva rents out rooms to Jewish religious youth, some with radical ideologies who have been barred from the West Bank settlements, where they came from, because of previous violent behavior. There are also hundreds of thousands of Christians, Jews and some Muslims who visit Mount Zion annually.

The needs and interests of the residents and visitors are diverse. Christians and Muslims want security and acknowledgement of their right to live in peace and visit their holy sites without abuse. The extremist Jewish youth would like Mount Zion to be exclusively Jewish. Thousands of ultra-orthodox Jews from nearby suburbs visit regularly, particularly on Saturday nights, and insist on proprietary rights of ownership and access for Jews to the shared holy sites, but generally do not seek physical violence. Tensions often run high between the various religious adherents, which constrain peaceful relations on the Mount.

### **Law enforcement sector participating in educational programs**

This target included 10 groups (150 total) of Jerusalem police officers interacting with religious minority communities. Police officers who deal directly with minorities are central players whose actions can both calm or exacerbate tensions.

### **Religious leaders, local and national governmental stakeholders**

Religious leaders have a particular need to protect their communities and enable free access to holy sites. This is what encouraged the Council of Religious Leaders in Israel (CRLI), comprising leaders of six faiths in Israel (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Druze, Ahmedis and Bah'ai) to cooperate on this project. However, they are constrained in that other stakeholders sometimes do not see them as intrinsically necessary to decision-making regarding these matters. These other stakeholders include leading representatives of the Jerusalem Municipality, the Police, and the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Jerusalem.

### **Final beneficiaries**

Final beneficiaries of this project are Christian and Muslim minorities in both West and East Jerusalem. These communities are mostly constrained by prejudiced attitudes towards them by the Jewish majority that adversely affect their day to day living in Jerusalem as part of the social

fabric of the city. While the activities that specifically focus on reducing tensions on Mount Zion have particular relevance to the communities in Jerusalem. Increasing the sensitivity training for the law enforcement groups are expected to improve the situation of religious minorities further afield.

### Goal, Objectives, and Theories of Change

The **overarching goal** of this project is to prevent violent conflict among the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious communities in Jerusalem. The following **two complimentary objectives** will contribute towards this goal:

- **Objective 1:** Collaboration is enhanced among religious, security, municipal and national government stakeholders to address religious tensions in Jerusalem.
- **Objective 2:** Coordination is increased to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion.

The core approach to this project is to facilitate regular collaboration among key stakeholders to address and reduce interreligious tensions and to provide a model for practical implementation at a specific location that reinforces the broader aims of stakeholder cooperation.

This project relies on two related theories of change:

1. **If** key religious, law enforcement and government stakeholders, at the local and national levels work collaboratively to develop strategies to address root causes of religious tension around holy sites and implement joint decisions and
2. **If** there is greater protection of holy sites that are sacred to the Abrahamic religions and the people who frequent them;

**Then** there will be a decrease in interreligious conflict.

### Activities

- SFCG team opened channels of communication and builds relationships with a religiously diverse group of senior religious leaders and other relevant authorities (Jerusalem Municipality; representatives of Religious and Interior Ministries; Security Forces) to address interreligious tensions in Jerusalem and advance security particularly at the Mount Zion shared holy site.

- SFCG and JICC conduct trainings for 180 volunteers so that they are more aware of the history and religious sensitivities on Mount Zion so that they can monitor the Mount knowledgably and can assist with keeping the calm around religious festivities.
- SFCG and JICC coordinated quarterly meetings for the resident institutions of Mount Zion including the JICC itself, Yeshiva of the Diaspora, Dormition Abbey, Sephardi World Synagogue, Franciscan Seminary, Greek Orthodox school Proprietors of Cemeteries, together with representatives from the Jerusalem Municipality, the Police, and Government ministries (religion and interior) in order to discuss issues of common concern.
- JICC trained 250 police officers from the Jerusalem Old City police station who police in areas with shared holy sites such as Mount Zion. The police training aimed to boost appreciation for diverse religious connections to holy sites, to help them understand how the rules of conduct on these sites were established, and to increase their sensitivity towards religious clergy, worshipers and events taking place at holy sites.
- Created and updated a Registry of Attacks on holy sites – including Mount Zion – for public information and use. Requests for the Registry have been received from the Diplomatic Corps and journalists. It is regularly mentioned in the US's International Religious Freedom annual report.<sup>5</sup>

### Implementation adjustments

The project implementation was impeded by growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians with an eruption of violence, triggered by Muslim fears that Israel was planning to change the status quo regarding rights to prayer services and access to the Haram Al Sharif/ Temple Mount in Jerusalem, from October 1, 2015 onwards.

The political and security situation resulted in a mixed response from senior religious leaders on participation in the JFRS. Despite SFCG's efforts to engage religious leaders, it was impossible to engage any Jerusalem Muslim religious leaders in the JFRS because of the increased violence, and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and the head of the Lutheran Church would not be part of an official forum that did not include Muslim leaders and/or discussed issues beyond the Green Line. As a result, SFCG decided to focus on stakeholder coordination and communication relating to Mount Zion alone, which is adjacent to Jerusalem's Old City but within the Green Line.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

## A Window on Mount Zion: From Conflict to Dialogue and Cooperative Action

We found it was possible to engage mid-level Christian and Jewish religious leaders and government institutions on issues of common concern regarding Mount Zion and these leaders were given informal encouragement by their senior leaders to participate regularly in the meetings. In effect, the tenants' meetings on Mount Zion turned into a form of JFRS without an official launch with senior leaders. The original intention of the JFRS was to only engage the senior leaders at the first and last meetings but then to have their representatives taking part in regular meetings during the year. The drawback though to only focusing on Mount Zion was that the tenants' meetings did not address other interreligious problems in Jerusalem as a whole. Not did it include Muslim religious representatives.

## Methodology and Limitations

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The final evaluation for the project was conducted in June and July 2016. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 residents of Mount Zion who attended the tenant meetings and 12 volunteers who had participated in the project. The people interviewed were chosen based on availability. All the volunteers participating in the project and the residents who attend Mount Zion tenant meetings were contacted. However, because of the summer holiday period many people were unavailable. Whoever expressed willingness to participate was interviewed. The tenants interviewed were a mix of Jewish and Christian faiths and they were all males. As for the volunteers interviewed, all were Jewish except for one Muslim volunteer. Seven were female and five were male.

83 surveys were also distributed to police officers who had participated in the police training. A desk review of project documents was also conducted.

### **Data Limitation**

The implementing partner, JICC, which was working on organizing the tenants' meetings was concerned about collecting data from the participants prior to commencing the project. Therefore they chose not to implement a baseline for the evaluation of the project and said that it would be best to talk to the project beneficiaries after its implementation. They feared that questions asked before the tenants' meetings might affect people's interest in joining. Therefore SFCG could not collect baseline data for the project.

Other limitations included not being able to interview the police because of lack of security clearance. However, the survey that was distributed after the training provided the evaluation with rich data.

## Findings

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### Relevance

This project proved to be relevant to the beneficiaries. In terms of the work with the tenants they expressed how important it was for them to meet and open channels of dialogue. Prior to this project the tenants on the Mount never sat together, let alone share a vision and work in collaboration with the Municipality and the police. According to the tenants interviewed, the atmosphere on the Mount prior to these meetings was of prejudice and suspicion. There was no coordination with the police and they hardly communicated with one another. As for the police, this project opened channels of dialogue between them and the residents which made it easier to organize with the residents when ceremonies take place. The police were also equipped with the knowledge and tools on how to address interreligious tensions and to be more sensitive towards religious people and their ceremonies on the Mount. Since most of the volunteers are tour guides and students, this project was useful for them too, as student volunteers could implement community work and tour guides gained knowledge and access to the different sites on the Mount which made them better equipped to perform their jobs.

### Tenant Meetings

Interviews with the Mount's residents reveal that the idea of the tenants sitting together, let alone coming out with joint decisions, was unheard of a year ago. As Hagai Agmon-Snir, director of JICC, said *"It was probably the first time in 1,500 years of interreligious strife that all of the people on the mountain actually sat down together"* An interviewed tenant also said that this is the first time he sat with his neighbors in forty years *"What is good is that never on Mount Zion has it happened that people sit together, this is new."*

These meetings have created a safe and peaceful space for them to learn about each other, reduce the atmosphere of suspicion and prejudice and create open channels for them to cooperate and collaborate. In terms of relevance, all seven residents interviewed expressed a belief that the meetings are important in allowing them to get to know their neighbors and start working with them on common issues.

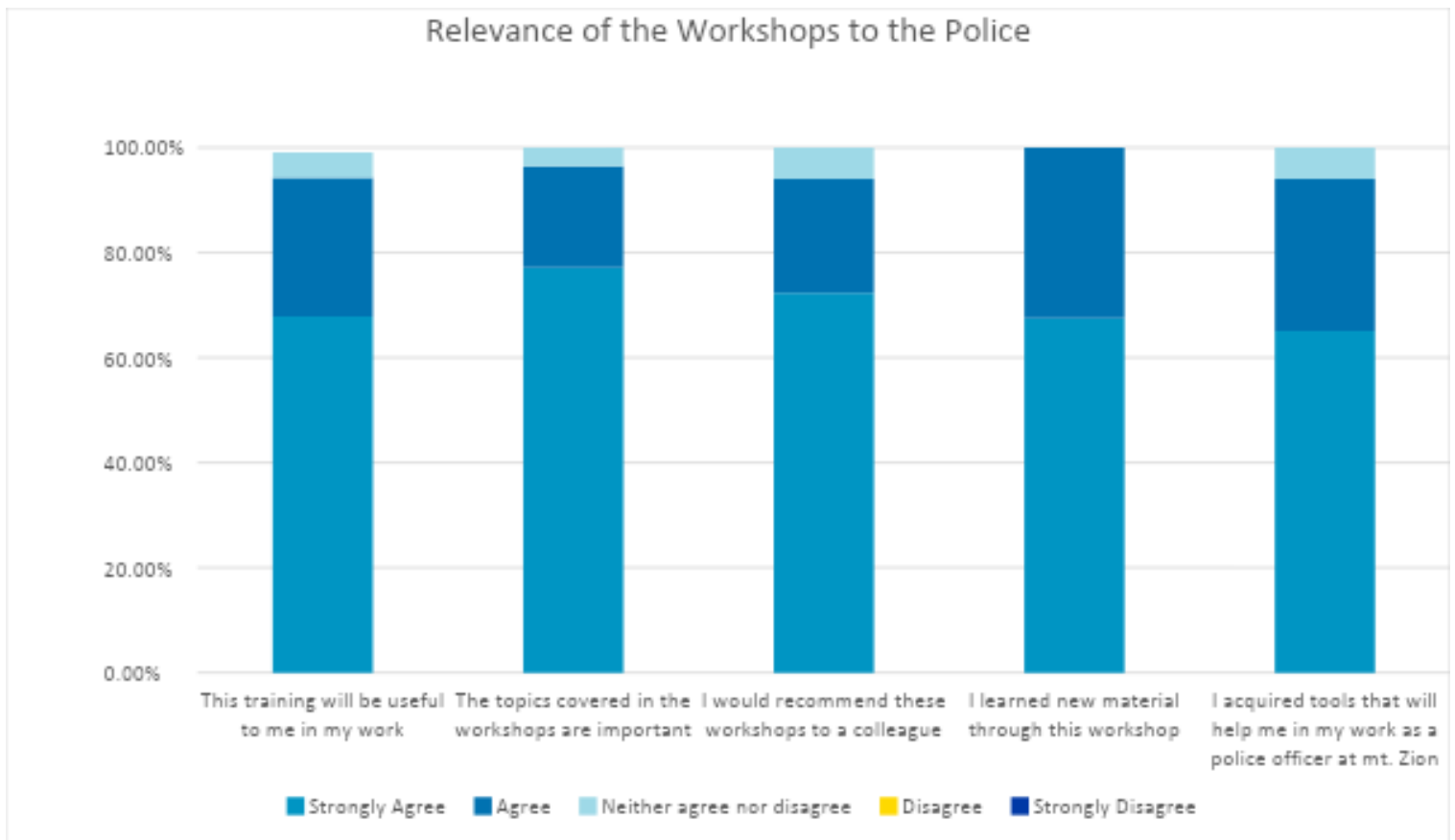
One of the residents said that prior to these meetings their relationship with their neighbor was broken. *"These meetings give us the opportunity to meet people here, our neighbors, and they give us a chance to talk and to reach solutions hopefully. I can tell you already that a line between our yeshiva and one of our neighbors has been open because of this project, before this project it was broken. I mean face to face these meetings help us to do progress together."*

Prior to this project there was no sense of community and relationships did not exist as one of the tenants interviewed said *"I think the meetings are good, to know who is around you and to have*

*a sense of community. This community is separated by walls and prejudice. These are human beings around you. A sense of community is an essence of being here and it should be done everywhere (creating a sense of community) especially in this country.”*

In terms of the support that the tenants received during their ceremonies, Christian tenants interviewed said that prior to the project they suffered a lot of abuse and confusion during their ceremonies at the Mount. Now as a result of their coordination with the police which stemmed from this project, and the presence of volunteers who support them at ceremonies, they feel that the events go smoothly. As one of the tenants interviewed explained *“One year ago we had to take care of this security by ourselves. We accepted the insults and the provocations.”* This shows how relevant the work with the volunteers and the police is for the tenants on the Mount.

### Police Training



In relation to police trainings 67.5% strongly agreed that they learned new material through this workshop and 32.5% agreed. 68.7% of the surveyed police officers said that they strongly agree that these trainings were useful for them in their work, with 26.5% agreeing and 4.8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. 77.1% of the police officers said that they strongly agree that the topics covered in the workshops are important, and 19.3% agreed and 3.6% neither agreed nor disagreed. Police officers attending these workshops said that they acquired tools that will help them in their work as a police officer at Mt. Zion as a result of this workshop with 65.1% strongly agreeing and 28.9% agreeing. The relevance of these workshops to police officers can be reflected in the large numbers of them recommending this workshop to a colleague with 72.3% strongly agreeing to recommend it and 21.7% agreeing and 6% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

One of the tenants interviewed said that prior to this project they felt that the police did not know what was expected of them or how to handle the tension *“There were police officers but they didn’t know what to do and they didn’t know what to say to people and there was a lot of confusion”*. This reflects how much a training of this kind is useful to the police officers and needed to enable them to perform their work better during religious events.

The police officers have also expressed how relevant this training is to their work by writing in the comments section *“This training should be included in police colleges for the basic training of policemen who work in the old city. It is very good and helpful”* and another policeman said *“It is important to dedicate more time for this workshop and even to teach these kinds of issues in the courses at college (for policemen)”*.

### **The Volunteers Platform**

The volunteers interviewed said that this project has given them a platform to express their solidarity with Christian minorities and it also gave them the chance to take a stand against violence. As one of the volunteers interviewed explains:

*“(I participated) after the damage of the graves in the Protestant cemetery. It made me ashamed that there are people like that who do things like that. You can’t be like the ape you don’t see you don’t hear you don’t talk you have to do something. I’m with those who want the place to be peaceful for everyone.”*

Another student volunteer said that they are required by their colleges to do community work and this project is relevant as it has allowed them to do work that they are passionate about in a place which is interesting to them. As one of the volunteers explains:

*“It is interesting for me and I’m happy to deepen my knowledge in such an important place and I feel that extremists are functioning here and making too much damage and if I can take a part in reducing this damage I want to do it.”*

As for the tour guide volunteers, all those interviewed said that this project has deepened their knowledge about the place and about interreligious tension. As one of the volunteers explains

*“The project has changed my understanding, not in the historic sense, but about how things are now and about the Jewish people today and what they are doing today. I wouldn’t have known if I didn’t join.”*

Increasing knowledge and sensitivity towards other religions is very beneficial at a time when there is religious polarization and extremism. As one volunteer puts it

*“This project has an impact on all those volunteers that are tour guides. I can say that there are more and more tour guides who are right wing and they need to come and take tours here and see the sensitivities and the importance of this place to other religions.”*

### **Effectiveness**

The project was effective in enhancing collaboration among religious, security, municipal and national government stakeholders to address religious tensions in Jerusalem as well as increasing coordination to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion. The project was effective in increasing coordination to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion. The tenants feel safer and more secure as a result of the project. Specifically, they have gained a sense of security while performing their religious prayer, celebrations, and events.

Furthermore, while SFCG had planned to provide 20 volunteers to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mount Zion, 180 volunteers were ultimately recruited. Similarly, while SFCG had committed to train 150 police officers, 250 were trained by the end of the project. The training itself was also successful.

However, due to the escalating tensions in Jerusalem at the beginning of implementation, one of the promised outputs was not achieved: the creation of a forum of senior religious leaders to collaborate to address root causes of religious tension around holy sites (the Jerusalem Forum for Religious Security (JFRS)). This forum was instead replaced by regular meetings of the tenants of Mount Zion.

### **Objective 1: Collaboration is enhanced among religious, security, municipal and national government stake-holders to address religious tensions in Jerusalem**

#### **Indicator 1.1: Number of stakeholders from different sectors participating in Jerusalem Forum for Religious Security (JFRS)**

SFCG convened a series of meetings with religious figures and the authorities to create channels of cooperation and to form a joint body that works on addressing religious issues in Jerusalem. These meetings included meetings with the Head of Department of Minorities; the Ministry of Interior; Islamic and Christian communities; a senior advisor on interfaith relations; the Chief Rabbinate of Israel; the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos; Archbishop Aristarchos, Custos of the Holy Land; Chief Superintendent Avi Biton and officers; Merchav David Police Station; Dean St George's Church Bishop; the Lutheran Church Archbishop, the Anglican Church, the Dormition Abbey; Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rabbi Stern; Israeli Staff of President Reuven Rivlin to check the possibility of a launch of the JFRS at the President's Residence.

Despite SFCG's efforts to engage religious leaders, it was impossible to engage Muslim religious leaders in Jerusalem in the JFRS because of the increased violence and due to anti-normalization pressure (pressures to stop any activities between Israelis and Palestinians). However, the meetings that SFCG conducted made it possible to create another type of forum. The JFRS was therefore transformed into tenants' meetings including the following institutions: The Diaspora Yeshiva on Mount Zion, The Armenian Patriarchate, Armenian Cemetery on Mount Zion, World Benei-Akiva on Mount Zion, The Christian Department, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Room of the Last Supper on Mount Zion, Arik Pelzig – Harp of David on Mount Zion, The Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion, Dr. Zigmond Zigler Cohen, Mount Zion resident, The Jerusalem University College on Mount Zion, Custodia Terra Sancta, Ed-Cenaculum Franciscan Monastery on Mount Zion, The Jerusalem Municipality, and representatives from the police.

The number of attendees varied depending on the meeting. Four meetings took place in total and fluctuations in attendance depended on the availability of the people invited and how many representatives were sent from each institution (1 or 2). All in all 22 participants attended the first meeting on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 where the discussion centered around a presentation by the Police concerning security issues on the Mount; 25 participants attended the second meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2016 where the discussion centered around a presentation by the Jerusalem Development Authority concerning building issues on the Mount; 18 participants attended the third meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2016 which focused on a facilitated exercise and discussion around a common vision for Mount Zion and 20 participants attended the fourth meeting on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 which was dedicated to a tour of the archeological excavations on the Eastern side of Mount Zion followed by a social dinner in the garden of the JICC.

### **Indicator 1.2: Number of stakeholders who say they have improved connections to other stakeholders**

All seven tenants interviewed said that they have felt an improvement in connections to other tenants of the Mount and they have improved their connection with the municipality and the police as a result of these meetings. The tenants interviewed said that this was the first time for them to meet their neighbors and discuss issues of common interest. Tenants interviewed said

that the tenants meetings have established mutual respect among them *“We have a respect for each other now and I sense it when we meet here and I think that whatever is going on here will be a good example for other communities.”* And as another tenant puts it *“There is a line that was broken (with their neighbors) and it has been fixed as a result of this project and the general feeling among the neighbors have become more respectful. It’s a considerable change and it has a meaning.”*

Tenants interviewed also said that these meetings have established communication channels. *“The good thing is that we sit together we speak we don’t agree but we talk but maybe in the future something will come out of this. It’s good to know the people and what places belong to who.”*

### **Indicator 1.3: Number of joint decisions made to prevent religious violence in Jerusalem in the JFRS**

As a result of the tenant meetings, relationships were not only improved between the tenants, but they also began working together to address problems they all face on the Mount. Four joint actions were implemented as a result of this project.

1. The residents drafted a letter to the Jerusalem authorities voicing their willingness to cooperate and take ownership over the development of Mount Zion.
2. Following an anti-Christian hate crime on January 17 at the Dormition Abbey and another Christian site, religious institutions on the Mount issued a joint interreligious condemnation that was organized by SFCG and JICC representatives. The statement was issued within 24 hours of the attack and published in social and print media. Joint condemnation [resonated throughout social networks](#). Also see: <http://jicc.org.il/window-on-mountain-zion-solidarity-in-the-face-of-adversity/>.
3. Later, a meeting between project coordinators and architects from the Jerusalem municipality concerning safety hazards led to a joint letter. JICC made several calls to the Jerusalem municipality requesting the removal of stickers covering directions to holy sites and hateful spray paintings that were later successfully removed by volunteers and the Jerusalem municipality.
4. After the meeting with a representative from the Jerusalem municipality, residents, together with the JICC, sent another letter on March 14 addressing safety hazards.

### **Objective 2: Coordination is increased to protect holy sites and the people visiting them on Mt Zion.**

#### **Indicator 2.1: Number of attacks on Holy Sites on Mount Zion have been reported during life of project**

Only one attack on a Holy Site on Mount Zion took place during the project. On January 17, anti-Christian slogans and threats were spray painted on several Christian structures. This incident was monitored and reported in the SFCG attacks registry. To counter these attacks SFCG, in cooperation with JICC, organized watch shifts for the project volunteers where they walked around and reported any incidents they saw. One of the volunteers interviewed said that she had spotted the graffiti during one of her shifts and she immediately reported it, which resulted in its removal by the authorities: *“When I told her (the project manager) about the graffiti, the same day she called the municipality and we made sure they clean it and fix it”*. The volunteers have played a positive role on Mount Zion, whether by observing violations and reporting them or cleaning around the Muslim cemetery or attending ceremonies held on the Mount to prevent abuse and attack on Christian pilgrims.

### **Indicator 2.2: Percentage change in reported feelings of security by residents of different faiths on Mount Zion**

The interviews with the residents reveal three aspects that contributed to their enhanced sense of security. First, the constant presence of the police (new police station); second, the tenant meetings, which enables the residents to know each other and feel a sense of community and; third, the presence of the volunteers who create a peaceful presence and a buffer during tense religious ceremonies.

Since there was no baseline study to calculate the change in reported feelings of security, the residents were asked to compare this year to last year in terms of their feelings of security. Five of the residents interviewed said that they feel more secure. The Christian tenants in particular felt this change in security. The two tenants who did not report increased feelings of security are Jewish leaders on Mount Zion, who did not suffer previous abuse. Therefore, they felt that their level of security had remained at the same level. One explained, *“I can’t say that I didn’t feel safe before, but I do feel more comfortable now that I know who my neighbors are and who I’m dealing with”*

#### **Police Station**

Much of the tenants’ increased feeling of security is a result of the police presence which is an external factor that contributed positively to this project. The placement of a 24-hour police station on the Mount coincided with the timing of the project and enhanced the tenants’ sense of security. As one of the tenants interviewed explains here that he feels more secure partly because of the police presence on the Mount. *“Yes first of all because there is a police station for 24 hours so each corner is provided with supervision.”* And as another tenant puts it *“I feel safe all the time because there is a police station.”*

## Tenant Meetings

Other tenants said that the sense of security was enhanced by the tenant meetings, because people now know their neighbors. For example, one tenant said that:

*“...there is [now] some kind of discipline in the community. Before that, everyone was separated and you saw the others as the enemy... once you have a community, then you have mutual respect. The good thing about these meetings is that when you have Haggai, Merav, Eran, (the project implementers) they create an atmosphere of respect within each one. What’s going on here makes it safer”*

## Volunteer Presence

The presence of the volunteers was stated as another reason for the feelings of increased security, especially during religious ceremonies, on Mount Zion. As one resident explained:

*“Yes, now we have more security. ... Now we have the volunteers helping us and explaining to people after the event what to do and where to go so it’s much better and we enjoy our celebrations more now”*

The volunteers interviewed said that they had two main tasks in their roles as volunteers on the Mount: first, they were tasked with observing activities on the Mount and informing the authorities of any unusual activities; second, they were tasked with joining in religious ceremonies and events that occur on the Mount to ensure they were peaceful and less tense. As one of the volunteers explains:

*“We just had to be there and to see what’s going on and if we needed help we called someone from the center or a police officer. I didn’t do it myself others did it. In the last supper room, at the end of the ceremony, a Jewish rabbi came and she started to shout and said you don’t have permission to sing here, even though they are allowed to, and the police came and took her out, but still it was unpleasant.”*

*On Pentecost what we did was bring some kind of a neutral presence between the Catholics, the police and a small group of Jewish men and women who were opposing the ceremony. So we were wearing yellow vests, not to be seen as regular residents and also to have some authority and for the police to know who we are. My job was to be observant if there is something unusual and if anyone seemed to be doing any kind of violence or interruption. We also took photos of the event to have documentation of this and as the ceremony ended some of us were standing between the police and the group of protesters and the people coming out of the ceremony and we told them to move along, once the prayer was over because there were protests. We also explained the situation for the people who*

The volunteers played a crucial role in increasing the security during Christian ceremonies on the Mount. Both Christian tenants and police have noted a difference between the ceremonies held this year during the project and those

held last year prior to the project. As one of the Christian tenants explains:

*“For our celebrations it’s very nice. In the beginning I had to explain that we will have volunteers that will be with us so people were suspicious and were asking who they are and saying they are not from our sects, who organized them and then I explained and we saw the results. One year ago we had to take care of this security by ourselves. We accepted the insults and the provocations.”*

The police have also expressed appreciation for the work of the volunteers *“Merav thanks to all the guys [i.e. the volunteers]. Wisam [senior officer] is sending you all his personal appreciation.”* Police thank you note – a text message sent by commander of the Mount Zion Police Station to Merav Stein – Coordinator of Window on Mount Zion at the JICC following activity at the ecumenical prayer service on the 28 January 2016.

However, the security on the Mount still needs to be improved. Extremist still function on the Mount causing unrest. A guard from the Greek Church has reported that their premises are still targeted with vandalism to the plants in the garden and littering. He said that he does feel more secure as a result of the police presence, but that the vandalism still continues. *“The vandalism still goes on. They uproot my trees they throw rubbish. I can show you lots of pictures of vandalism. They burned the gate last week.”*

### **Indicator 2.3: Percentage change in reported quality of relationships between representatives of resident institutions of different faiths on Mount Zion**

Since there was no baseline study to calculate the change in reported quality of relationships, the residents were asked to compare this year to last year in terms of their relationships with the other resident institutions on the Mount.

Representatives of resident institutions of different faiths on Mount Zion had never met prior to this project. Through this project, the tenants on Mount Zion were able to meet for the first time, so those who attended noted a marked improvement in the quality of their relationships with their neighbors. Residents of different faiths on the Mount interviewed said that a considerable change in their relationship has taken place as a result of this project. As one of the residents explains *“Considerable changes in relationships in knowing each other and in finding solutions to the problems. Now we don’t wait for a meeting, when something is going wrong we call each other and contact directly when something happens.”* Another says *“It’s a dramatic change I think”*.

While two of the residents interviewed asserted that relationships had not yet improved, their other feedback painted a slightly different picture. One said, *“The meetings help me to understand the people around because I never talk with them. First they were our enemies and*

*now they are our friendly enemy” and the second tenant said “I go to meet people but I don’t have any relationships with anyone only Merav (project manager) ...I didn’t say hello to people but now we say that to each other there is some kind of respect now”*

**Indicator 2.4: Percentage change in knowledge and awareness of diverse religious attachments to shared holy sites**

The change in knowledge and awareness was observed at several levels. However, because SFCCG could not conduct a baseline for this project it is difficult to assess the percentage change of people’s knowledge and attitudes. But, a change has been noted from the interviews and surveys conducted at the end of the project. Change in knowledge and awareness of diverse religions was observed in several beneficiary categories: 1) The tenants of Mount Zion who attended the tenant meetings; 2) the police officers that attended the workshop; and 3) the volunteers that participated in the project.

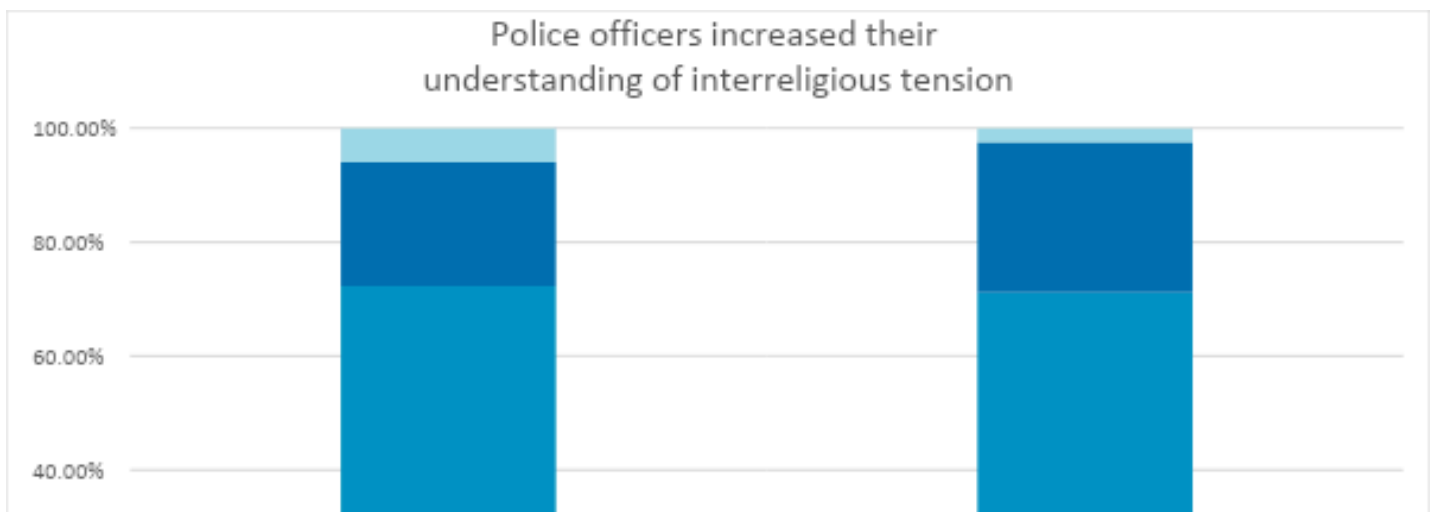
**Mount Zion Tenants**

The tenants have become more aware of the other tenants’ religious beliefs and attachments to the Mount. In the meetings they hear why Mount Zion is important to the other and this has reduced prejudice, as one of the tenants explains:

*“I had a chance to listen to their story and why this place is important to Jews, to see the history of the importance of this place for them. How it was very important and then diminished in importance after 67 when they could reach the western wall, and then back again gain importance. So also for me this was a way to understand slowly about the history of the place and the reality of what’s going on.” (Alberto, Franciscan)*

**Police Officers**

72.3% said that they strongly agree that they have greater understanding of the attachments people of different religions have to their holy sites, as a result of this workshop while 21.7% agree. 71.1% strongly agree that they have a greater understanding of the inter-religious tensions occurring on Mount Zion as a result of this workshop, while 26.5% agree.



## Volunteers

The volunteers saw their work as a learning experience, and even though most are tour guides, all the volunteers interviewed said that they learned a lot through this project and they are passing their knowledge on to their colleagues, clients, students, family and friends and raising awareness of the place. The project has increased people's awareness of the place and its complexities. The volunteers have expressed that participating in the project deepened their understanding of the interreligious tensions on the Mount and the forces that drive these tensions. As one of the tour guide volunteer explains his experience with the project:

*“I learned a lot about the history of the place that I didn't know. Through this project I entered areas which I never entered before, like the churches and the kiosks and the different spaces on Mount Zion. I never went to the holocaust museum here, I didn't know we had access. I learned that all the problems were not caused by people who live here. I got to know the police on the Mount who helped me. I learned to open an eye to all that.”*

Through this project tour guide volunteers were also granted access to the different areas of Mount Zion which were not known to them, which enhanced their knowledge of the place and its complexities. As one of the volunteers explains:

*“I was very impressed I must say, because I went with Merav (Project Manager) and she tells everything and she tells us about the Armenian cemetery and David tomb and the synagogue and they were very nice and they let us in and they taught us things. Even there, the men learning in the synagogue allowed us to come in and learn and listen. I just saw good will everywhere, in the Dormition also.”*(Nurit, Tour Guide, Volunteer)

Apart from the religious and historic knowledge, the volunteers have learned about the tensions and the conflict on Mount Zion. Many said that they heard about the violence in the news but did not understand the drivers of this conflict on the Mount prior to participating in the project. As one of the volunteers explains:

*“First of all I didn't know that there were demonstrations against the prayers taking place. I knew that there were confrontations between groups on Mount Zion but I didn't know that this is how it is and how it looks. I saw a small group of people demonstrating but of course a small number can do a lot of problems. I learned about*

*police guidance in these situations. I knew before about the crosses that were broken and the graffiti and I knew that from the press. But I didn't know about the Pentecost and the protests.”*

Another student volunteer explains this:

*“First of all I think I never knew how many different sects and religions have interest in this Mount and how each had their little compound and its really interesting how they all developed and how they coexist and how the whole Christian world of Jerusalem is hidden in Jerusalem and now I see it when walking around here. I met all the priests and they lead their lives here and it's interesting for me.”*

## Impact

This project had a significant impact on the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of direct beneficiaries, as well as their communities. While these impacts are observable only in the present, they show signs of sustainability, creating a lasting effect on the diverse people and relationships on Mount Zion (to be discussed later in the section on “Sustainability”). The observed results of this project go far beyond the indicators discussed above.

### **Change in Attitudes**

The change in attitudes of the police officers extends beyond Mount Zion, as they also work in the Old City of Jerusalem on different sites. They have become acquainted with basic principles in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the different customs mainly within the local Jerusalem context (pilgrimages, pilgrims' behavior etc.) Their sensitivities were also increased towards religious clergy, worshipers and events taking place at holy sites and they also acquired tools from the field of cultural competency, to be applied when addressing events of a religious nature or within holy sites. They are more open to working with volunteers and have even come to expect them to be present at religious ceremonies. This can be extended to sites beyond Mount Zion.

### **Transformation in Relationships**

The transformation of relationships was witnessed on different levels. Channels of dialogue were opened between the tenants and new found respect and a sense of community was created. The

relationship between the residents and the municipality and the police was also transformed as a result of this project as the tenants who were interviewed explain:

*“[The police] phone us to have more information and so in this level we are really friendly. They call like a friend. They ask about the time of the prayers. Before they couldn't have these details because we never shared them. We just gave dates with the wrong hours usually. Now we give the details to the police and the volunteers to get a nice celebration with a nice atmosphere.”*

The tenants interviewed talked about the transformation in their relationship with the police.

*“Through the meetings (tenant meetings) I understand that the police come here not in the way the police come to catch the bad guys and punish them but they are here so everyone knows the rules and the borders and also to bring balance here. This is what happened through those meetings - now I understand the attitude of the police. ...After that we keep an open mind between us and they speak with us when they have concerns and we speak with them.”*

As for the tenants relations as discussed earlier a great transformation has happened in their relationships. The meeting between Rabbi Pappenheim (one of the leaders of the Eda Haredit Ultra Orthodox community) and Abbot Gregory in particular was a milestone for Jewish-Christian relations on Mount Zion. As a response to the anti-Christian hate crime that had happened on January 2016 on Mount Zion, this meeting had a reconciliatory atmosphere and indicated a possibility for friendly relations between Jewish and Christian religious leaders. Also The Yeshiva's letter of apology to the Custos of the Holy Land sent an important message of wanting to maintain good relations with their Christian counterparts. As one of the tenants interviewed explains:

*“Yes, we didn't arrive to a practical conclusion (solution) yet, but relationships are better. For example, after one of our processions there were disturbances and the day after the people responsible of the yeshiva sent us a letter to apologize and say they are not responsible for the disturbance... This was a good example that they are trying to contact us. ...The police also call me now to get information on our ceremonies and it's very friendly and they ask and they know us and they need to help us so it (this project) has created a good atmosphere.”*

As a result of this project the tenants and the police now work in coordination to make sure Mount Zion is safer for the tenants and the visitors. As one of the tenants explains:

*“We talk to each other about our plans and things that we do. Before these meetings I did what I want without telling anyone, even the police every time we do something*

*we inform them now. Through those meeting I understood that this is expected. There are different channels to improve the good environment here.”*

## **Conflict and Violence Prevention**

While trainings did not specifically aim to prepare the volunteers, youth or police to play an immediate conflict or violence prevention role (but rather contribute to security on a more structural level), the volunteers became agents of conflict and violence prevention, helping to make Mount Zion a more peaceful and secure place. One of the volunteers explains their role on the Mount and the purpose of their presence there:

*“My role is to be a buffer, to have a presence that is different. Here, there is a Jewish extremist presence, police and Christians, so our task is to have a civilian presence of tolerance and to show that it’s possible to live with mutual respect even with extremists. We don’t come in conflict with them. We show them that you can speak without shouting and without disturbance. The presence of people like us we hope relaxes the atmosphere a little bit.”*

This impact was largely tied to the volunteers’ participation as ushers in religious events<sup>6</sup>, which was not originally envisaged in the model. For example, during the popular mass held every Christmas Eve at the Dormition Abbey, which is attended by hundreds of Israeli Jewish visitors, volunteers acted as ushers, wore Window on Mount Zion badges, mediated between the German monks and the Israeli public, and helped to guide the public and maintain order.

Similarly, volunteers were present when Greek Orthodox worshipers were harassed by Jewish demonstrators while holding an annual Pentecost observance at the presumed site of the Room of the Last Supper, and the presumed Tomb of King David in June 2016. They were integral to

<sup>6</sup> This initiative links directly to Article 3 holy sites as well as Article 4, which seek manage “Sites Sacred to More Than One R

Another large-scale event volunteers participated in was the ecumenical prayer service for the unity of the churches, which takes place on the last Thursday of January (January 28, 2015). 11 volunteers, together with SFCG and JICC’s staff, identified with badges on the upper level (of the Room of the Last Supper), and unidentified on the lower level (King David’s Tomb) in order not to draw unwanted attention, were spread throughout the compound to serve as both ushers and a “soft” buffer between the Jewish worshipers at King David’s Tomb and the worshipers from the different Christians denominations in the Room of the Last Supper on the upper level.

Some trouble had been anticipated ahead of the event, since the Jewish festival of Purim was on the same day and certain Jewish extremists had announced demonstrations. Before the event, the volunteers were trained by the police and SFCG staff on the sensitivity of the situation. Towards the end of the event, a well-known Jewish fundamentalist was identified by the volunteers inside the Room of the Last Supper. Volunteers took preventive action by notifying the police force on the spot and documenting the event. This was a successful example of volunteers preventing a possible interreligious confrontation.

maintaining peace and calm that day:

Police acknowledged that the volunteers, who tried to engage the protestors in discussion and explain the commotion to foreigners, played a crucial role in maintaining the relative calm.<sup>7</sup>

The presence of civilians rather than police also creates a friendlier atmosphere. Also since many of those civilians are also tour guides they have the languages to communicate with the tourists praying at the site. As one of the interviewed volunteers explains *“The fact that there are tour guides volunteering, that speak different languages, helping the police by translating to the tourists, I think it’s very important.”* And another volunteer says *“Explaining to tourists, who pass by, what is happening... maybe our presence is important otherwise they don’t get what’s going on.”* And another volunteer says *“I felt useful standing outside when the prayer finished, and they (people who have come to pray) were heading out and it was good to be there, and to be between the protesters and the people coming out of the ceremony, and it felt that a citizen is better than a policeman to tell people to keep moving.”*

However, the root cause of violence on the Mount are extremist groups that have been approached through this project but without success. As one of the volunteers explains it *“However, with facing the orthodox extremist I don’t see any success except for reducing the conflict but not getting to the source of it.”* There are still elements of extremism functioning on the Mount. One of the volunteers shares his experience with it:

*“The hardest event (I witnessed) was a lecture or a lesson when the ultra-orthodox came from Geula in the evening before the beginning of the month and it is called Small Yom Kippur and on this date every month there’s a bigger assembly. One time there was here a community of 40 to 50 men and their leader gave a lecture. It was very bold and he said very hard things about Christians, Israeli politicians and Jewish rabbis that they are hiding the fact that the Christians are trying to take over David tomb. It was a tough and interesting experience.”*

## Sustainability

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While there has been encouraging impacts over the last year, the most indelible impacts of this project are yet to be fully realized. In the coming years, we anticipate that changes in

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.726345>

perception brought about, and new avenues for cooperation created, will endure, building lasting change on the Mount, and possibly in locations beyond.

### *JICC*

Perhaps the most promising impacts in terms of sustainability were those observed on the JICC itself. The JICC has become the collective voice of Mount Zion's residents. But, it has also grown to be a new space for dialogue on the Mount, which will continue to reap benefits, into the future. The possible future benefits of this are difficult to overestimate: dialogues, mediation/negotiations, conflict resolution inter-cultural and interreligious activities, exchanges and events, etc. While the JICC of course existed prior to the project activities, its new and growing status in the community as a neutral space and symbol of community solidarity indicates expanded future possibilities for impact. As one of the volunteers explains *"I think it's a good project (Windows on Mount Zion) it's just a beginning I'm sure if it will last more it will be richer. They (JICC) do lectures and music performances making the place alive it's going in a good direction."*

The JICC plans to continue with the different project components. It is committed to continuing the tenants' meetings as it is a resident on Mount Zion and sees this as crucial for the community as a whole. It will also continue the police trainings, especially as they are now funded by the police themselves. And it will continue the volunteers' platform. Overall, this means the core project activities will continue after the end of this project. In addition, SFCG is actively pursuing funding opportunities to expand the project.

### *Tenant Meetings*

Regular tenant meetings have become more formalized and regularized, implying the likelihood of longevity. For example, the representatives of the Yeshiva of the Diaspora and the Dormition Abbey exchanged mobile phone numbers in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts relating to noise levels at outside events that the Yeshiva hosts from time to time. The creation of these simple, but crucial, communication channels will facilitate continued cooperation. Also JICC's commitment to continue to bring the tenants together stems from the fact that it itself is a resident institution on the Mount and want to maintain the sense of community in the neighborhood. It is therefore in its interest to sustain the meetings which are beneficial for all those residents on the Mount.

When it comes to joint action taken by the tenants to date, tenant participation in the drafting of letters and initiation of phone calls demonstrates that they have begun to take ownership over protecting and maintaining Mount Zion together, and that they are willing to cooperate to solve common problems. Additionally, over the course of the tenants' meetings held thus far, sentiments of stakeholders towards each other have shifted. When common visions were discussed during the third meeting, it was clear that relationships between stakeholders had

transformed from mistrust and distance to dialogue-oriented cooperation. This common approach and agreement to cooperate will continue to impact future decision-making, on how future incidents of desecration or hate are responded to, and how future conflicts are resolved.

### *Police*

The police have taken ownership of the training component of the project and they are funding it which increases the likelihood of its continuation after the end of the project. Also evaluations demonstrate highly positive feedback from the police officers to their police station which will encourage a continuation. If this happens then SFCG will have succeeded in adding to the police training an element of respect towards the “other” and more sensitivity to religious pluralism.

The police also expressed a desire to be involved in the curriculum development, signaling ownership of the process as well as helping to ensure the program was highly relevant and applicable to their everyday activities. From the very beginning, the police were fully engaged in the trainings and welcomed them. This indicates a strong likelihood that the impact of the trainings is sustainable: they took ownership and were even willing to pay for this kind of training.

Despite the police’s initial skepticism towards the volunteers, excellent cooperation was established between the volunteers and the police station on Mount Zion. This led to the police welcoming and even expecting volunteers to be part of public events occurring on the Mount. This relationship has functioned well and the police have expressed their gratitude for the presence of the volunteers. Overall, the police embraced and took an active role in the trainings conducted, as well as innovated their partnership with trained volunteers suggesting whatsapp groups so that the police and the volunteers could be in contact in real time in the event of conflict. This initiative suggests that their efforts to strengthen respect for religious pluralism on the Mount are likely to continue into the future.

### *Volunteers*

The volunteers interviewed varied in their participation levels. Some came only twice while others did weekly tours for a several months. However, they all expressed a wish to keep participating when they had the time and for as long as they could. If the JICC dedicates more time and effort to the volunteers it will be able to retain their services as some of them were very eager to continue the work.

However, the sustainability of the volunteer program relies not only on existing volunteers continuing to come back, but also on more “built-in” recruitment mechanisms. For example, a lecturer at the Hebrew university who is volunteering in the project brings her students in to volunteer. In addition, some colleges in Israel require their students to volunteer and Mount Zion

is one of the potential sites. Partnerships like this institutionalize recruitment, ensuring a steady stream of volunteers.

## Best Practices and Opportunities

This section presents best practices, especially as they pertain to conflict sensitivity, identified in this project. It also discusses the opportunities for applying this successful project model in other areas in Jerusalem, or further afield.

*Go big, but be prepared to go small*

### Scope

During September 2015, tension grew in Jerusalem and in October there was an increase in violence – especially in East Jerusalem. Due to this change in conflict dynamics and context, the scope of the activities had to be adjusted. The original intention was that the JFRS would focus more widely on interreligious tensions in Jerusalem and its Old City. But, with the renewed tension, it was only feasible to focus on interreligious issues in Jerusalem that related to areas inside Israel’s 1948 boundaries – such as Mt Zion. Thus, the scope of the JFRS was restricted to Mount Zion to ensure it remained conflict sensitive, as well as feasible. This provides an example of a flexible and conflict sensitive programming approach, which allowed for the project to go ahead without added risk, as the conflict evolved. Furthermore, this approach implies the possibility of further expansion, when the time is right, and with careful consideration of each local context.

### Composition

In addition to the scope, the emerging conflict dynamics affected the composition of the JFRS as well. While some high level religious leaders (Catholics, Anglicans, Armenians, Jews) were eager to participate, despite concerted efforts made by staff, it was not possible to engage Muslim religious leaders in Jerusalem in the JFRS because of the increased violence. Consequently, the leading senior Greek Orthodox and Lutheran leaders refused to be part of an official forum that did not include Muslim leaders and/or discuss issues beyond the Green Line. Therefore, the decision was made to engage mid-level religious leaders instead.

As part of this shift in strategy, it was also decided to avoid a formal, public launch of the JFRS with senior leaders. Rather, the engagement would begin and revolve around the Mount Zion tenants’ meetings. The number of participants in the tenants’ meetings was increased and this was transformed into the JFRS platform.

The solution provides a good example for how to approach these kinds of activities in other contexts. It is not necessary to engage the top-level religious leaders to have an impact and foster

religious pluralism. In fact, this approach provides a counter-example, where effective engagement with religious leaders at the mid-level can be highly effective. It also suggests the possibility of employing this same model in other areas in Jerusalem. However, the fact that Muslim leaders were still not engaged remains a challenge and represents an important opportunity for future similar programming in Jerusalem.

*Start small, but be prepared to go big*

### **Conflict Prevention and Resolution**

As noted previously, 180 volunteers were recruited when only 20 had been originally planned. Furthermore, while volunteers were originally only intended to conduct patrols (originally called the “Mount Zion Watch”) their role expanded to attending and providing support to the police at special religious events on the Mount. These developments are unequivocal successes for the project. They also offer additional opportunities for impact.

While volunteers received training from the police prior to supporting public events, additional trainings could have been provided to prepare them to help mediate conflicts non-violently and/or on how to react if and when violence erupts. As an increasingly recognizable presence on the Mount, with an affiliation with a body with growing influence and neutral reputation (JICC), these volunteers are well placed to intervene in and mediate small-scale inter-religious conflicts before they turn violent. Additionally, their strong relationship with the police makes this a potentially interesting role for them to play. While the police have the ultimate responsibility to ensure security, in this context the volunteers could perhaps play an expanded role in not only conflict and violence prevention, but also de-escalation and even mediation.<sup>8</sup> A similar point could be made with regards to the JICC and tenants’ meetings. Considering their perception in the community and the fact that they have already been requested to mediate conflicts, it would seem pertinent to consider formalizing this role of the JICC and perhaps the involvement of the tenants in this.

Overall, this case provides a lesson on how to react to emergent opportunities, to build peace and resolve conflict when conducting programming in this realm. When adopting a similar project model, plans should be made to capitalize on these kinds of opportunities, if and when they arise.

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<sup>8</sup> This would also allow for the project to further link to Article 5 of the Universal Code, which states, “A forum comprising religious authorities and other relevant bodies shall be established to ensure regular communication and coordination. All conflicts or threats relating to holy sites shall be immediately referred to this forum for handling.”

## Conclusions

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Overall, the evaluation has found that this project was effective in enhancing collaboration among religious, security, municipal and national government stakeholders in addressing religious tensions on Mount Zion. The project has also increased the coordination of the protection of holy sites and the people visiting them on the Mount. However, as a result of external factors related to the escalation in tension and violence in Jerusalem in October 2015, SFCG was not able to fulfill its goal of creating a broader forum that included high ranking religious leaders, and it was not able to engage Muslim leaders.

SFCG and JICC successfully transformed the atmosphere on Mount Zion from one of suspicion and prejudice to a friendlier, open space. They gathered the resident institutions for open dialogue that helped to change attitudes towards the “other.” This transformation has improved the sense of security and safety on the Mount as people who were interviewed expressed an enhanced sense of security. The project has also influenced the Police Authority based in the Old City of Jerusalem by training their officers on interreligious tensions and the Abrahamic faiths and what is sacred to them. Through the police training, and by including the police in the tenants’ meetings, it has transformed the relationship between the police and the resident institutions from one that is of suspicion to a friendly relationship built on respect. According to the tenants interviewed after the project, their relationship with the police has been transformed as a result of this project to the extent that they phone each other to exchange information about ceremonies taking place on the Mount and to coordinate. This change in attitude by the police extends beyond Mount Zion, as they also work in the Old City of Jerusalem on different sites. They have become acquainted with basic principles in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the different customs mainly within the local Jerusalem context (pilgrimages, pilgrims’ behavior etc.). Their sensitivities were also increased towards religious clergy, worshipers and events taking place at holy sites and they also acquired tools from the field of cultural competency, to be applied when addressing events of a religious nature or within holy sites.

The volunteers recruited for this project have also helped improve the atmosphere on Mount Zion by creating a peaceful presence and in helping, at Christian ceremonies, to protect the worshipers. This model proved to be very successful as the numbers of volunteers continue to grow. This kind of model can be replicated in other areas of religious tension.

The project is directly relevant to the beneficiaries, and has produced tangible results for them. As a result, the work creating a pluralistic, accepting atmosphere on Mount Zion will continue through the JICC, police training, and volunteer work.

## Recommendations

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### Empowering the Volunteers

The volunteers are skeptical about the impact of their work even though almost all of them cited success stories from their work. They are not very informed about other aspects of the project so they cannot see the bigger picture. They need to be empowered. Not all of them have spoken to the priests who expressed gratitude at their presence or heard the police say that their presence makes the events go smoothly. Quote 1 (*“I felt a bit passive, impotent and this is what one feels a lot in Jerusalem. Even if one takes a stand it doesn’t change much.”*) Quote 2 (*“I’m also hesitant that if I give my time to keep the situation as it is, to let it seem that it is less problematic in the structure. I want a major change in the structure and we are wasting time sometimes with work like this because we want to feel good and we do little changes.”*) Quote 3 (*“I don’t know where we are going with this. What we are doing at the moment is good but there is no clear idea of what we want to achieve in the future. It’s ok but we need to have a clear vision of where we are heading because if it’s not clear we might miss it.”*) Quote 4 (*“To be honest I don’t feel that when we are there we are doing something but Merav says we are.”*) Quote 5 (*“I say to myself I’m doing these tours and I’m writing about them and I’m taking pictures but how much impact do I have - I don’t know.”*)

More work needs to be done in explaining the importance of this work by providing evidence to the volunteers.

### Creating a Sustainable Volunteers Platform

The volunteers come to the events whenever they have free time but if a volunteer stops attending events s/he gets disconnected. One of the volunteers expressed that he feels they are not getting enough attention or support and the attention has shifted to the residents. Quote 1 (*“There was a shift from the attention from the volunteers to the residents and if they want to keep the work of the volunteers going then they should prioritize it as well.”*) It could be helpful to produce a newsletter or some kind of briefing about the work the volunteers have done to keep the ones who missed out on events informed and to make the work the volunteers do more visible and more appreciated.

### **Diversify the Volunteers**

The volunteers should be diversified to include Christian and Muslim volunteers. This can be accomplished by targeting Palestinian and Arab Israeli colleges to participate. At present, the volunteers are mostly Israeli Jewish tour guides and Israeli Jewish students. If broadened it will give the volunteers an interesting diversity and the volunteer platform could function elsewhere in the country. It needs to be also acknowledged that it is a challenge for Palestinians to participate in such a project. *“Everyone is weary and suspicious of everyone. Even inside the groups there are question marks. People ask what is this other person doing and what is the perspective why is he here. There’s something more than the religious conflict there’s the political aspect. The police see me and think what is he doing here.”*

In terms of what narratives were given to the volunteers they seem to have more awareness of the Christian and the Jewish attachments to the holy site and less of the Muslim attachment. The project manager does give the narratives of the three religions but the Islamic aspect seemed less clear to the volunteers. Maybe the reason behind this is that most of the volunteers are Israeli Jews with one Arab Muslim participating. They all seemed clear on the importance of the place for the Jewish and Christian religions, but they were less clear on the importance for Muslims. They understood that the tomb is sacred for Muslims, but the participants mostly stated historical facts regarding the Dajani family’s ownership of land, rather than religious attachments. However this is likely the result of the lack of Muslim presence on the Mount and the fact that no mosque is active on the Mount since 1948. Practically speaking few Muslims actually visit Mount Zion despite its rich Muslim cultural and religious heritage. *“They are fighting about the same place. The Christians say it’s ours and the Jews say it’s ours and the only family who owns the place - the Muslim Dajani is not there anymore. Thank God they are not, otherwise the fight will include Muslims as well.”* And another volunteer said *“It’s mostly Jewish and Christian, it’s nothing else. There’s a Muslim cemetery but it’s more of a Jewish-Christian confrontation.”*

### **Advance Police Training**

The police officers suggested adding more days to the training *“It is important to dedicate more time for this workshop and even to teach these kinds of issues in the courses at college (for policemen).”* *“To extend the length of the workshop because it is important to learn about more subjects.”* They also suggested adding more sites in the Old City. *“Should add a guided tour of the church of the Holy Sepulcher, to know it better.”*

### **Broaden the topics discussed at the tenants’ meetings**

One of the tenants suggested taking the meeting to a higher level to include sharing materials of what is being taught to students of the resident institutions on the Mount on the “other.” *“For example we need to discuss: what do you teach your students about Christians and about this place? What would happen in a day when your students are alone, will they behave? Until now when something happens they (the Yeshiva) apologize. How about we teach our students and we start working on something deeper rather than just react when something bad happens.”*

### **Disseminate the project results**

Another recommendation included sharing the work that was done on this project with people at a higher level to encourage dialogue *“I have one important recommendation for you. The dialogue between the Vatican and Israel is blocked now. So as an organization like you maybe you can have a special meeting to explain what you are doing to the government here and in Rome. This project is working well and it’s giving results so they should know in Rome that this is happening and it’s helping us.”*

## Appendices

### Annex 1 Interview guide for Volunteers

1. What is your role as a volunteer on Mt. Zion?
2. What did you learn as a result of participating in this project? Can you provide examples?
3. Can you explain why and how Mt. Zion is important to different religions?
4. Did the project change your understanding or perception of the different religious attachments to the holy sites on Mt. Zion?
5. Why is there religious tension on Mt. Zion? Please explain?
6. Do you feel that you were equipped with the skills and the knowledge you needed to cope with religious tensions on Mt. Zion? Did you receive enough support?
7. What challenges did you face during the project?
8. Why did/do you participate in the project on Mt. Zion?
9. Can you tell a success story of your work on Mt. Zion?
10. Have you or do you plan to share your experience and work on Mt. Zion with other people? If so, how?
11. Do you plan to continue as a volunteer after the closure of the project? For how long do you intend to stay as a volunteer?
12. Can this model of project and volunteering be expanded to other sites that have inter-religious conflict? Where?
13. Do you feel the project has had an impact outside of Mt. Zion/ Mt. Zion residents? If so, how?

### Annex 2 Interview guide for Tenants

1. Why do you come to the JICC tenants' meetings? What do you think of them?
2. Have your relationships with other representatives of resident institutions of different faiths on Mt. Zion improved in the last 8 months?

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3. If yes, how have they changed? Would you describe the change in relations as minor, considerable or dramatic?
4. Have you collaborated with other residents on the mountain in the past 8 months? If yes, how?
1. If you compare this June to the previous June, do you feel more secure? If yes, why do you think that is the case?
2. Do you feel that police are more accessible now than they were this time last year? If so, please explain why you feel this and/or give an example.
3. Do you feel that the police take your complaints more seriously? Please give an example as to why you think they do or do not.
4. How do you feel about the presence of the volunteers on the mountain?
5. What has been the impact of the volunteers on the mountain? Please give
6. Was there a difference between the prayer event this year and that of the previous year(s) in terms of security? (each stakeholder will be asked about their major prayers)
7. Compared to this time last year, do you feel more comfortable, less comfortable or equally comfortable displaying your religious affiliation in public?
8. Did the project change your understanding or perception of the different religious attachments to the holy sites on Mt. Zion?
9. Can you explain why and how Mt. Zion is important to different religions?

### Annex 3 Police Questionnaire

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. I learned new material through this workshop					
2. The trainer was knowledgeable about the training topic					
3. The time allotted for the training was sufficient					
4. This training will be useful to me in my work					
5. I found the topics covered in this workshop important					
6. I would recommend this workshop to a colleague					
7. I have a greater understanding of the attachments people of different religions have to their holy sites, as a result of this workshop.					
8. I have a greater understanding of the inter-religious tensions occurring on Mt. Zion as a result of this workshop					
9. I acquired tools that will help me in my work as a police officer at mt. Zion					

A Window on Mount Zion: From Conflict to Dialogue and Cooperative Action

10. In general I'm satisfied with the workshop					
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