



**AJC** Project Interchange

CONNECTING LEADERS  
WORLDWIDE WITH ISRAEL

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# Alumni of AJC Project Interchange

**2020  
YEAR IN  
REVIEW**

# Letter from the National Chair

**2020 STANDS OUT** as a truly unforgettable year, one which shattered norms and ways of life everywhere. Full of contrasts, it was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, incredible diplomatic breakthroughs in the Middle East, increasing antisemitism in the U.S. and worldwide, and growing divisions within American society. In response to those challenges, AJC Project Interchange (PI) pivoted to develop new materials, resources, and virtual programs to educate, inspire, and galvanize prospective participants and alumni in support of Israel and the Jewish people. And what a response we saw.

Throughout the year, PI alumni stood up and spoke out for Israel in numbers and ways that demonstrate the unique, powerful, and long-term impact of the Project Interchange experience. They did so in numbers that exceeded previous records, despite the pandemic. Inspired by this amazing network of global leaders, we've designed this year's annual report to highlight our alumni. Looking ahead, we are planning for the resumption of our delegation programs in Israel, including new delegations from the Persian Gulf, for U.S. elected leaders, and much more.

As a philanthropic partner of Project Interchange, your gift sustains our work and engagement with a global network of alumni. For nearly four decades, Project Interchange has helped transform attitudes and policies towards Israel--one participant and one delegation at a time. We hope you take pride in the tremendous impact realized by this cohort of 6,000 alumni from over 115 countries. We couldn't have done it without you.

With best wishes for a healthy, safe, and fulfilling 2021,

**Debbie Saidoff**

National Chair, AJC Project Interchange

# A Year with Project Interchange



## JANUARY

Indonesian alumni **Trinirmalaningrum** (2016) and **Singgih Nugroho** (2016) joined a small working group of Indonesians working to build support for the Jewish people, Israel, and interfaith dialogue in Indonesia. PI and AJC's Asia Pacific Institute are focusing their efforts on Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country of 270 million without formal diplomatic ties with Israel.

## FEBRUARY

Kenyan business leader **Robert Mbugua** (2019) introduced senior Kenyan business leaders to the Israeli ambassador in Kenya. African business alumni are making key connections between Israel and Africa, and are forging new relationships between the Israeli and African business communities.



Left: Trinirmalaningrum  
Right: Robert Mbugua



# MARCH

A Sudanese PI alumnus (2020) from our groundbreaking Arab Civil Leaders delegation wrote an Arab-language article on his experience in Israel, which was then featured in 30 additional news outlets. He has since given numerous interviews and written additional articles advocating for greater relations between Sudan and Israel, and has become a leading advocate for normalized relations with Israel.

**Luis Lacalle Pou** (2018) became President of Uruguay, with **Alvaro Delgado** (2016) as his Chief of Staff and **Pablo Mieres** (2016) as Labor and Social Security Minister. Uruguay was the first country in South America to officially recognize Israel in 1948, and welcomed the first Israeli Embassy in Latin America.







## APRIL

**Felix Klein** (2016) successfully advocated for a German government ban on Hezbollah activity in Germany. A long-time friend of AJC, Dr. Klein is Germany's first Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Antisemitism.



Felix Klein



# MAY

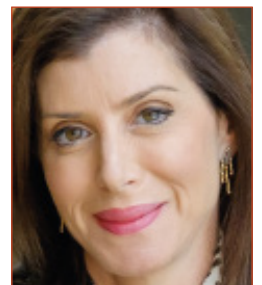


Indian alumni journalists joined a private briefing with the Israeli ambassador to India, arranged by AJC's Asia Pacific Institute, on Israel's fight against COVID-19, its efforts to find a vaccine, and India-Israel collaborations in this field. As a result, several articles in prominent Indian newspapers were published, reaching over three million readers.



# JUNE

Twenty alumni spanning three decades signed onto AJC's Transatlantic Institute's campaign: "Transatlantic Declaration: The EU Must Ban Hezbollah." Five PI alumni spearheaded this campaign as core leaders of AJC's Transatlantic Friends of Israel, an inter-parliamentary group that promotes transatlantic security and cooperation.



Left: Neena Gopal  
Right: Anna Michelle Asimakopoulou

# JULY



Christine Johnson

Philadelphia-based alumni **Tarik Khan** (2019), **Majid Alsayegh** (2018), **Mohamed Bakry** (2017), and **Imam Salaam Muhsin** (2019) spoke out in a public statement from AJC Philadelphia's Muslim Jewish Circle of Friends in response to an antisemitic meme shared by the Philadelphia NAACP's president.



# AUGUST

Miami-entrepreneurial alumni from three delegations (2015-2019) attended a PI virtual meet-up with Elie Wurtman, co-Founder and Partner of Israeli venture capital firm, PICO Partners. This program, which focused on Israel's response to COVID-19, was the second in an ongoing series of Miami entrepreneur-focused educational and networking events.



# SEPTEMBER

Alumni **Adnan Ansari** (2016, 2019) and **Humera Khan** (2018) are co-Founders of Muflehun, an NGO that promotes civic engagement and counters domestic terrorism. Together with AJC, they are developing an “Upstander Training” program that gives community leaders the tools and skills needed to prevent hate and extremism, and enhance community resilience to terrorism. Muflehun received a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to support this important work.



Adnan Ansari

# OCTOBER

AJC Project Interchange created a Muslim-Jewish dialogue series to connect alumni with AJC and Project Interchange lay leaders. PI alumni are uniquely positioned to bridge the divide between U.S. Muslim and Jewish communities on difficult topics.



# NOVEMBER

Five Project Interchange alumni—**Raul Moas** (2018), **Romi Bhatia** (2018), **Saif Ishaof** (2019), **Leigh-Ann Buchanan** (2016), and **Anabel Perez** (2019)—became founding members of AJC Miami’s Community of Conscience, which brings together leaders from diverse backgrounds to address and repair divisions within American society.





## DECEMBER



Pete Buttigieg

Former South Bend, Indiana Mayor **Pete Buttigieg** (2018) was nominated as incoming U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Project Interchange mayoral delegations are the centerpiece of AJC's ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Participants are rising stars in their regions and political parties, and play a key role in U.S.-Israel relationship building. They are central in the fight against antisemitism, rising hate crimes, and other pressing issues.

# The AJC Project Interchange Alumni Network



Government Officials  
and Diplomats



University Presidents,  
Provosts and Deans



Journalists and Media  
Personalities



Civic and  
Religious Leaders

## Project Interchange 2020 Impact

Alumni took over 1,000 actions by:



Building  
bridges



Leading advocacy  
coalitions



Promoting  
Israel



Publishing articles  
combatting antisemitism

***2020 saw more alumni actions than ever before.***

## Project Interchange Programs Fostered:

- ✓ Connections among intergroup and interreligious leaders
- ✓ Broader professional linkages across our network of 6,000 alumni
- ✓ Collaboration with Israeli experts and innovators
- ✓ Deeper ties between Israel and world leaders



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