

Christian Arabs Thank Israeli Mall for Christmas Tree

By: Christian Newswire

ASHDOD, Israel, Dec. 24, 2018 /Christian Newswire/ -- Fifty Christian Arabs living in the Holy Land joined the staff of Ohr Torah Stone's Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC) to visit the holiday tree at Ashdod's Big Fashion Mall to express their appreciation to the management for not removing it from their premises despite pressure from City Hall. "While the Christmas tree is not worshipped in Christianity nor used

in any Christian sacred ritual, it has become the identifiable symbol of the holiday," remarked Pastor Steven Khoury, head of Holy Land Missions and the leader who mobilized the group's visit. He added, that "Christians represent 2% of Israel's population and are committed citizens of the country; it is important that our holiday symbols and concerns are represented in Israel's and requested the management to remove the "disgrace" from the mall's greater society." Two



weeks ago, Big Fashion Mall erected the holiday tree and it caused a political uproar where Ashdod's Deputy Mayor Avi Amsalem called it an offense to Judaism premises. As an Orthodox Jewish organization that advances Jewish-Christian relations in Israel and around the world, CJCUC condemned the Deputy Mayor's remarks. According to CJCUC's Executive Direc-

tor, David Nekrutman, the remarks of Amsalem hit a raw nerve to the Christian community living in Israel and a more active response was needed that would represent unity and not divisiveness. With the help of Pastor Steven Khoury, a decision was made to bring Jews and Christians, a day before Christmas, to visit the mall as a symbol of unity and peace. "The State of Israel is a democ-

racy and champions religious freedom," commented Nekrutman, "we should embrace our Christian brothers and sisters and make them feel welcome in our country." In responding to those who find the Christmas holiday symbol an affront to Judaism, Rabbi Pesach Wolicki, CJCUC's Associate Director said, "a tree does nothing to undermine Judaism. In a Jewish

state, we should be mindful of those who are not Jewish and respect their traditions." Both Nekrutman and Wolicki observed that in the Diaspora, Jews are very appreciative when Jewish symbols, such as the Chanukah menorah, are displayed in the public places. It demonstrates that the governments and communities accept the Jewish people.

Female backpackers beheaded in Morocco by ISIS

By Mark Ellis

Two Scandinavian women tourists found dead in Morocco were attacked by terrorists linked to ISIS, authorities are now saying. The bodies of Louisa Jespersen, 24, from Norway, and Maren Ueland, 28, from Denmark were found near the foot of North Africa's highest peak, Mount Toubkal, according to the BBC. The area is popular with hikers and climbers from Scandinavia. A video spread across social media apparently shows the killing of one of the students. The grisly footage reveals a woman yelling while the terrorist decapitates her with a knife, according to

Deutsche Welle. Authorities in Norway have concluded the video is authentic. Four men from Marrakech have been detained in Morocco and authorities consider the killings a terrorist act. Moroccan authorities said the four men pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. Initially, detectives investigating the crime believed it may have been sexually motivated because none of the victims' belongings were missing. But after a video of the attack appeared on social media everything changed. Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg called the

murders a "brutal and meaningless attack on innocents". Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen said the slayings were "politically motivated and thus an act of terror." Louisa traveled to Morocco against her family's wishes. In an interview with Danish news sources, Jespersen's mother said that they pleaded with her to avoid Morocco "because of the chaotic situation." The U.S. State Department issued a travel advisory for Morocco December 13th, four days before the mur-

ders, stating: "During the holiday travel season, transnational terrorist organizations and individuals inspired by extremist ideology pose an ongoing threat throughout the region. Extremists may focus on tourist locations such as resorts, public markets, shopping malls, airports, clubs, restaurants, places

of worship, transportation hubs, schools, and government facilities." Police identified the suspects through surveillance cameras placed in local shops in the village of Imlil, near where they camped. Sadly, unsuspecting tourists in the area came upon the bodies of the murder

victims. "A local guide met the tourists crying and they told him what they saw." The guide called authorities to report the crime, according to Morocco World News. Morocco is 99.6% Muslim and only 0.2% Christian, according to Joshua Project. www.blog.godreports.com



Louisa Jespersen

Maren Ueland

Join us to bring hope for underprivileged kids in India

Joel Children's Home in India, has brought light to many underprivileged, abandoned and orphaned kids with God's love.

So far it has been run in a rented building. The children have been praying for a permanent place for more than 10 years. God has heard their prayers.

They now have a piece of land in Rajapalayam, Tamil Nadu State, India, and by faith they have started to build their living facility there. A place where those underprivileged children can comfortably rest, study and glorify God.

This would be their house on this earth. It is a house for the children who wandered in the roadside without a place to lay down.

Now the building has reached up to roof level. Still it needs twenty thousand US dollars to complete the house. They are appealing for a generous donation from kind hearted people. Your small contribution will do big changes in their lives.

Donations and correspondence can be made through Faith International Christian Center PO Box 14931 Bradenton, FL 34280 USA.

