

U.K. Summit brings Diaspora Israelis from across the globe under one roof

UJA of Greater Toronto volunteer Ran Mesterman one of the organizers

By Daniel Horowitz--In late March, 2014, a historic conference will bring together Diaspora Israelis from across the globe under one roof to examine a number of key issues and challenges they face on a daily basis.

Dubbed the Global Israeli Leadership Summit, this unprecedented initiative, the brainchild of four Israeli leaders from three continents, including Toronto's Ran Mesterman, will take place in London, England from March 28th to 30th, 2014, and will benefit from the insights of several other Israeli activists who will be on hand.

The summit, which will be conducted entirely in Hebrew, will concentrate on four key areas: the relationship amongst the various Israelis around the world; their connection to Jewish communities; their association with the state of Israel, and their relationship with the country in which they live.

Organizers hope that this will create a forum for collaboration and networking in the fields of advocacy, business, culture, Israeli Identity, the next generation, and more.

According to estimates from various institutions that deal with Israeli communities in the Diaspora, there are nearly one-million Israeli citizens that live outside of Israel, or approximately 20 percent of Israel's population.

Despite the numbers however, it's only been recent that an understanding has developed between the state of Israel and Israelis who live abroad; a growing recognition that they are a part of the Jewish people and an important asset to the state of Israel. In light of these changes in attitude there is a growing need for global cooperation between the various communities and the Israeli community leaders around the world in numerous fields such as advocacy, culture, education, business networking, and Israeli identity.

Of the four Israelis who are behind the Leadership Summit, one is Toronto's Ran Mesterman, who since arriving in the Great White North nine years ago, has been a valuable community leader and volunteer through UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

"UJA Federation of Toronto has been at the forefront of a new International effort to engage Israelis living abroad into the leadership of Diaspora communities and tapping into the great energy they can provide those Jewish communities," said Ted Sokolsky, President & CEO, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

Mesterman, a 51-year-old Tel Aviv native and father of three who established UJA's Israeli fundraising campaign and led the organization's Developing Communities Committee, also served as a Director on its Board of Directors for five years. In 2011, Mesterman helped lead the organization of an International Israeli conference in Toronto on behalf of UJA Federation, for activists in the Diaspora. Currently Ran is working on creating worldwide Israeli leadership and initiating projects in education, culture, leadership and Israeli identity among second-generation Israelis.

“The State of Israel must accept the Israeli communities in the Diaspora as an integral part of the Jewish people,” insists Mesterman. “There is an immediate need for global collaboration of all Israeli communities abroad, particularly in the areas of leadership, education, culture, Israeli and Jewish identity, and the growing integration of second and third generation Israelis in these activities within the local Jewish community. The Israeli leadership, the Israeli communities and the Israeli government must handle the challenges of building Jewish and Israeli identities among second and third generations living outside Israel and must work together to outline plans to implement programs that combine Judaism and being an Israeli.”