Dear supporters of the ISA section on “Religion and International Relations” (REL):

I am pleased to share the following updates regarding our section:

1. Section membership and communications
2. Panels at the ISA Annual Convention in Toronto, March 2014
3. Business meeting and reception in Toronto
4. Running for office
5. Best graduate student paper award
6. Suggestions for our advisory board
7. Our new website

1. Section Membership and Communications

As promised, this will be the last email to go out to a broad list of scholars interested in religion and international relations. From now on, correspondence regarding the Religion and International Relations section will only go out to section members. If you are not already a member, please join the section. You can do so from the REL website (http://www.isanet.org/ISA/Sections/REL.aspx) using the “add REL today” icon on the bottom right of the page.

Our section membership is growing rapidly: though REL is only eight months old, we already exceed four other sections in size. Nonetheless, our ambitious goal is to grow our membership from its current size (139 members) to a target size of 200 members by ISA 2015.

Section membership allows us to provide services such as networking, awards, and panel opportunities. It allows members to vote, run for office, compete for awards and organize religion-themed panels and roundtables. The greater our membership, the greater the number of panels we will be allotted in years to come.

2. Panels at the ISA Annual Convention in Toronto, March 2014

The forthcoming ISA annual convention in Toronto in March 2014 is our first such convention as a fully formed section. For the first time, we are hosting an exciting range of panels on religion and IR. Thanks to the skills of our program chair, Isak Svensson,
we are able to sponsor and co-sponsor a total of eight panels on religion and IR, including panels on religious freedom, religion and armed conflict, empirical studies of religion and conflict, religion and democratization, sectarianism, religion and feminist approaches, etc.

Please be sure to attend as many of these panels as possible. This is crucial not only for purposes of learning and networking but also because the number of individuals in the room during our panels influences panel allocations in future years. If we do well in terms of panel attendance, we ought to be able to sponsor ten panels or more next year.

3. Business meeting and reception in Toronto

Our section’s business meeting is scheduled for 12:30 on Friday (March 28) in the Kent Room at the Sheraton Toronto. Our reception is scheduled for 6:45 that same day in the City Hall Room at the Sheraton.

Like last year’s reception, which was attended by well over 100 people, you can look forward to food and drink in the company of colleagues and friends. The REL reception in 2014 will be sponsored by the Religion, Politics and Globalization Program (U.C. Berkeley) and by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University).

4. Running for Office

As you will recall, current members of the REL executive committee were not elected into office but volunteered their services when the section was founded last April. Our charter stipulates that we have to elect a full executive committee at the end of our first full year as a section. This will occur at the business meeting in Toronto.

Our executive committee consists of seven positions. At the business meeting, I will propose combining two of these positions, the vice chair and the program chair, to bring our section into conformity with other sections. This leaves six vacant positions. Several of the current committee members, myself included, have expressed an interest in continuing to serve in their current positions. Should others wish to run for that position, we will hold a vote at the business meeting.

The six positions are:

1. Chair: I am interested in continuing to serve in that capacity but we welcome additional candidates.
2. Vice-Chair/Program Chair: Nukhet Sandal is interested in serving in that capacity.
3. Secretary: Vacant. Please let us know if you would like to run for this office.
4. Communications Chair: Turan Kayaoglu is interested in continuing to serve in that capacity.
5. Treasurer: Sara Silvestri is interested in continuing to serve in that capacity.
6. Awards Chair: Jocelyne Cesari is interested in continuing to serve in that capacity.

Please email me (hassner@berkeley.edu) if you would like to nominate yourself, or someone else, for any one of these positions.

5. Best Graduate Student Paper Award

Jocelyne Cesari, the executive committee officer in charge of awards, has successfully submitted the official request to have ISA recognize two awards that our section will be handing out in future years. The best paper award recognizes an outstanding graduate student paper presented at the preceding year’s ISA. The best book award recognizes an outstanding book published within the two-year period preceding the year of the competition. Both awards consist of a modest cash prize and one year section membership.

We will begin considering graduate student papers starting with this ISA annual conference. Eligible papers will have to have been presented in Toronto in March 2014 and will have to be submitted to the awards committee by September 2014.

We will start considering books for the book award in 2015. We will not be offering a cash prize for either award in the initial years of our section’s existence. Please send questions about awards to Jocelyne Cesari at jcesari@fas.harvard.edu

6. Suggestions for Our Advisory Board

Our charter stipulates that the executive committee will be advised by a board consisting of no more than 15 senior scholars in the area of religion and IR. To allow room for this advisory board to grow gradually in the coming years, I have proposed to the executive committee that we select a small number of scholars this year. We are proposing Scott Thomas, Jonathan Fox and Peter Katzenstein for our advisory board and will put these names up for public approval at the business meeting in Toronto.

If you would like to suggest additional names for our advisory board, please email those to Nukhet at ahusandal@gmail.com.

7. Our New Website

Turan Kayaoglu, our communications officer, has worked closely with ISA to expand our presence on-line (see http://www.isanet.org/ISA/Sections/REL.aspx). Based on feedback collected at the last business meeting, we have added information about awards, annual reports, minutes of meetings and past newsletters.
In the near future, we intend to add information about employment and fellowship opportunities, brief bios of our members and their details about their research interests, as well as announcements about workshops, conferences, and publications of interests to scholars of religion and IR.

We look forward to seeing you in Toronto and thank you all for your support!

On behalf of the entire executive committee,

Ron Hassner

(hassner@berkeley.edu)