

Our next meeting will be on 19 May 2021, at 18:00, when we will be very pleased to host

**Dr. David Rutstein**

**Secretary-General**

**Bahá'í International Community**

Link to register:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5983960503170173196>

David will speak about:

**From Displacement to Distinction: How the Bahá'í Faith came to have its world headquarters in Israel**

Opening words: Professor Stephen Hardy, PhD, LLB, SFHEA, MCI Arb, FRSA, Dean of the Faculty of Business, Law and Politics

### **Abstract**

In 1868, a small contingent of Persian religious exiles arrived as prisoners to 'Akko, which was the harshest of penal colonies in the vast Ottoman Empire. Destitute and highly vulnerable - having already endured years of imprisonment, torture and banishment - the group comprising men, women and children, was led by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of an emerging religion whose followers would become known as Bahá'ís. Now, 153 years later, 'Akko and the city of Haifa, a short distance around the bay, are the two cities that comprise the permanent spiritual and administrative center of the Bahá'í Faith, a world-wide independent religion with over 8 million adherents in over 200 countries, the central tenants of which are unity, peace and justice. The Bahá'í Shrines in 'Akko and Haifa, nominated by the State of Israel and declared UNESCO World Heritage sites, and the spectacular gardens surrounding them, are made available to the public for free, and have attracted millions of domestic and international visitors. This lecture delineates the circumstances that resulted in the exile and eventual arrival of that small band of Bahá'ís in the Holy Land, their impact on the diverse elements assembling in Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine, and the establishment, by their descendants and co-religionists, of the Bahá'í World Centre in what became the State of Israel.

### **Biography**

David Rutstein has taken up the responsibilities of Secretary-General of the Bahá'í International Community in October 2019. The Secretary-General is the senior officer acting on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Bahá'í community, in the conduct of its external affairs.

Dr. Rutstein is a senior health executive, public health expert and clinician. In the course of a 36-year career, he created and led innovative clinical, administrative, management, emergency response and executive level teams and organizations. Most recently, he founded SolHEALTH, a non-profit organization working to promote health and prevent disease in diverse populations globally. Prior to SolHEALTH, Dr. Rutstein was the Vice-President for Medical Affairs for United Family Healthcare in China. A retired Rear Admiral in the United States Public Health Service, he served as the Deputy Surgeon General of the United States until 2011.

He holds a Medical Degree from Brown University and a Master of Public Health degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. He completed his Family Medicine residency at Natividad Medical Center in Salinas, California and is certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. He maintains current medical licenses in California, Maine and Beijing and is the recipient of numerous honors and awards from both the public and private sectors.

A citizen of the United States, Dr. Rutstein has lived and worked in the United States, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Peoples' Republic of China. He has been a member of various Bahá'í communities and served on different local and national Bahá'í institutions. He speaks English, Spanish, Pohnpeian, Mandarin, and is learning Hebrew.

**Date:           Wednesday 19 May 2021, 6.00pm – 8.00pm**

Please register directly with the online platform:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5983960503170173196>

All are welcome to attend

With my very best wishes

Rafi

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