

## UPF Amsterdam, Netherlands Observes the 74th Human Rights Day

Willem Koetsier  
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**Amsterdam, Netherlands** -- Threats to human rights and especially religious freedom were highlighted in a UPF commemoration of the 74th anniversary of Human Rights Day.

The event was held on December 10, 2022, in the Amsterdam headquarters of the Church of Scientology, which was the co-sponsor.

**Gerbig van Deinum**, an official of the Church of Scientology dealing with public relations, opened the meeting with a word of welcome and introduced the singer **Gerard Alserda**, who performed the song "Human Rights," written by himself.

A video about the history of human rights was shown, which depicted the Cyrus Cylinder (539 B.C.) in Persia; the Magna Carta (1215) and the Petition of Right (1628) in England; the Constitution of the United States (1789); the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) in France; and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

The video ended with the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, the U.S. first lady (1933 to 1945), who contributed a lot to the preparation of the UDHR, explaining that human rights start with each of us, in our homes and neighborhoods.

Next **Willem Koetsier**, the secretary general of UPF-Netherlands, gave some reflections on the topic:

Already at the beginning of World War II, he said, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke about the four freedoms as the foundation for world peace: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from

want, and freedom from fear.

Roosevelt spoke not only about the values and security of the United States but also about the need to protect other democracies. All of this led to the search for a universal foundation for a peaceful world under the rule of law with clearly defined human rights. His wife, Eleanor, was a driving force behind the realization of the UDHR in 1948. At that time about 50 countries supported this declaration, and gradually this became a majority of the UN members.



After World War II there was a strong desire to have no more such devastating wars. People had experienced one of the worst evils. They were grateful to God and were willing to apply the Words of Christ at an international level. There was a spirit of forgiveness and cooperation, including the countries that were defeated.

In Europe former enemies began to cooperate, finally leading to the establishment of the European Union. Important resources like coal and steel were used for prosperity for all citizens in Europe and not for war. The hope was that the EU would become a model for other nations to form a peaceful union based on the rule of law.

However, the more the EU developed, the more it focused on politics and economy. The religious

inspiration and the connection with God at the beginning disappeared to the background. The original intentions became overgrown by economic interests and excessive regulation. The focus on human rights and the neglect of how to back up these rights have created dissatisfaction to many people in need. In modern cities a homeless dog is more likely to get help than a homeless asylum seeker who has exhausted all legal remedies.

The Creator and His guidance have faded into the background. In order for human rights to be properly implemented, people need to develop not only materially but also spiritually. In recent years human rights have become increasingly ignored. Two powerful members of the UN Security Council proclaim themselves as the alternative to democratic countries and are not ashamed to use violence to dominate the world. They believe that the end justifies any means and that human rights are only for certain people.

For human rights to be honored, people need to be spiritually mature. People who take the core religious values seriously and have a living relationship with the Creator must cooperate. Long ago, the Creator gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Christ summarized these into two instructions: Love God and love your neighbor. This is the way for humanity to become One Family under God. Universal values from God and human rights are the backbone.

In the coming year, leading to the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, the United Nations is asking for a greater focus on human rights. Let us give our support and offer our insights!

The next part of the program was a musical interlude, in which music from *West Side Story* was performed by pianist **Hans Campman**.

**Hans Noot**, an activist and expert on human rights, gave the keynote speech.

Human rights belong to human beings. Every person has dignity and human rights, especially since human beings have a conscience. People have freedom, responsibilities, rights and a conscience. These are connected to each other. Conscience needs to be developed.

In Europe there is an organization called FECRIS, which fights against certain religious movements, which they call "cults." FECRIS is supported with money from the French parliament, and its president comes from Russia. Gradually FECRIS seems to be moving in the direction that everything that is not Russian Orthodox is considered a cult. Here we see an attack on religious freedom and an important element used to justify Russia's war against Ukraine.



Mr. Noot gave an overview of countries where human rights are violated. Tibet is being completely taken over by the Han Chinese people under the Chinese Communist Party. In the area of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, human rights are violated (especially concerning women) and for 20 years there have been refugee camps of Polisario from the Western Sahara, where people are stateless.

Pakistan does not allow real religious freedom, likewise Iran. In Myanmar the predominantly Muslim Rohingya people are chased out of the country with the support of Buddhist groups. In China, 1 million Uighurs are in concentration camps, where people are tortured. In China there is the terrible practice of harvesting organs from prisoners.

Everywhere there are violations: in Africa, South America and even in the Western world.

To support human rights, one can become a member of or donate to a human rights organization, share one's concerns with other people, investigate violations and share links, write letters to prisoners (involvement with Amnesty International, for example), etc.

It is important to be respectful to others and learn from them, Mr. Noot said. To overcome hatred, efforts are important to bring enemies together. We have to realize that our point of view is not the only one. We have to take into account differences in culture and be careful about imposing our idea of human rights. Consider other points of view and try to understand other cultures. People with whom we disagree have rights. To live together with people who have different viewpoints is a way to better understand different cultures and overcome prejudices.

After some time for questions and answers, the conference came to the final moment, when the participants expressed their appreciation for the informative meeting.