

70th Anniversary of Syria's Independence Day celebrated in Argentina

Miguel Werner
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Buenos Aires, Argentina -- The 70th anniversary of Syria's Independence Day was observed on April 18, 2016 with an olive tree planting ceremony. At the beginning of the intercultural and interfaith event, which was held at Plaza Rodríguez Peña in Buenos Aires city, the Ambassador of Syria to Argentina, Mr. Hamzeh Dawalibi, expressed his commitment to "life and peace" as did the senior member of the Diplomatic Corps and the Apostolic Nuncio of the Vatican in Argentina, Monsignor Emil Tscherrig. Also different faith representatives shared their reflections on and offered prayers for peace.

The ceremony, which was emceed by Mr. Miguel Werner, secretary general of UPF-Argentina, began with remarks, given by Mr. Horacio Daboul, president of the Association Cultural and Social Arab League, which co-organized the event with UPF-Argentina and the Community Center N° 2 – Recoleta, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

Then representatives of government and civil society—and from the organizations who supported the event, placed one shovel of dirt around the tree; among them were ambassadors and public servants of Buenos Aires city's government, including Ms. Pamela Malewicz, undersecretary of Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism, and Mr. Adrián Varela, chief executive of Collectivities.

Before the watering of the olive tree, prayers were offered by Father Emilio Andrada, friar of the Saint Francis of Assisi Monastery (Catholicism); Enrique Saguier, a priest from the Nikolaos of Myra Parish (Catholicism); pastor David Calvo, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church (evangelical Christianity); sheikh Abdelnabi Elhefnawy, from the Al-Ahmad mosque and the Islamic Center in Argentina (Islam); Senpo Oshiro, a Buddhist monk and director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Association (Buddhism); and Fanendra Goura Das, a Hindu priest at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hinduism).

The final part of the program was a reading of the poem, "Tengo un hermano" ("I have a brother"), by announcer and Ambassador for Peace, Ms. Graciela Almada. "Para mi hermano, solo tengo un poema / de paz para su guerra, / y un cielo que es de lluvia / y unas manos que rezan," are the last verses of the poem that highlight heart and conscience.

This event was a way to express faith and hope, at a time when millions of people have become refugees. We ask for everyone's commitment to life and peace—in Syria and in our country, in the Middle East and in the world.