

## Taiwan Celebrates World Interfaith Harmony Week

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Taipei, Taiwan—UPF-Taiwan celebrated World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016 by co-organizing a seminar on “Extremism from the Islamic Viewpoint,” with the Formosa Institute, a Taiwanese NGO.

Turkey is a nation that spans Europe and Eurasia, and is bordered by three Middle Eastern countries: Syria, Iran and Iraq. It plays a pivotal role in regional affairs and has the second largest standing army in NATO. Turkey has a population of nearly 78 million, of which 98 percent are Muslim.

Following a suicide bomb attack in Turkey’s capital, Istanbul, on January 12, 2016, UPF-Taiwan decided to organize a seminar on Islam’s view on extremism.

The president of the Formosa Institute, Dr. Osman Cubuk, gave a presentation on “Islam Against Terrorism.” He read verses from the Qur’an on this topic and explained that the holy text prohibits extremism. He also spoke about the spiritual meaning of Jihad (an Islamic term referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain the religion) and the law and its respect for pluralism and the sanctity of life. Furthermore, he said religion isn’t the cause of terrorism, but is misused as tool by militants or terrorists to achieve their political means. He concluded by quoting the famous Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen: “A Muslim cannot be a terrorist; a terrorist cannot be a real Muslim.”

Mr. Burhan Cikili, vice president of the Institute, then spoke on the topic, “Combating Extremism and the Role of Turkey.” He said there are many peace loving Muslim organizations in Turkey. He pointed out that extremism is a problem throughout the world—in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, and that ISIS has killed more Muslims than any other religious group. From this fact alone, we should be able to distinguish terrorism and religion, he said. He added that terrorists like ISIS might not attack Taiwan; however, extremism can be a problem in the future in Taiwan and in other countries, and could lead to terrorism. He emphasized the importance of people from all cultures and faiths getting to know and respecting one another.

