

UPS Oslo, Norway: Perspectives on Peace program - International Day of Peace

Steinar Murud
September 19, 2019



Oslo, Norway -- In a program titled "Perspectives on Peace," faith leaders offered their views on the way to attain peace.

UPF-Norway organized the commemoration of the UN International Day of Peace in partnership with the Central Jamaat E-Ahle Sunnat mosque on September 19, 2019.

Over the years UPF-Norway has developed a good relationship with this community. The mosque secretary gave a very good testimony about UPF's work in front of a delegation of police who visited the mosque the same evening. He said, "UPF is doing very good work to bring people from different religions together and creating harmony among them. We are very happy about our cooperation."

The imam of the (Sunni) mosque opened the evening with a recitation from the Quran, followed by welcoming words to the audience.

Our first speaker was the head monk from the Sri Lanka Buddhist temple in Oslo. He spoke of the importance of balance between the spiritual and physical dimensions. He also emphasized how to create inner peace, elaborating on the Eightfold Path, which is a rather universal teaching with appeal not only to Buddhists but to all people.

The next speaker was a former editor of Norway's main Christian newspaper. In addition to being an editor, he has authored many books and is a tour guide in the Middle East. He spoke of his positive experiences with "walks and pilgrimages for peace." From his experience, he said, people can learn many things, build trust and overcome cultural barriers by walking and spending time together. He told a personal story of how he as a Christian could develop a close friendship with a Muslim.

The third speaker, a Shia imam, spoke of common values in the religious traditions. Everybody is aware of the tension between Shia and Sunnis in our world, he said. However, he pointed out verses in the

Quran that speak of unity and friendship.



A Kurdish participant in the audience, a refugee from Iraq, said he was very encouraged to see the two imams at the same table talking about peace. He kept repeating that we need more of such dialogue.

The final speaker was the UPF leader, who spoke of religion and peace. When conflicts arise, he said, people usually call for the politicians. This might be both necessary and important. But the cornerstone of peace is the family. This is the root. When things break down on this level it has social consequences. Similarly, when things are fine, societies blossom. The cradle of peace is in the family, and our sacred texts give much good guidance.

In conclusion, the mosque offered a generous dinner to all the participants.

Photographs by Ole Toresen