

UPF Oslo, Norway's program commemorates UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

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Oslo, Norway -- UPF commemorated UN World Interfaith Harmony Week with a program titled "World Peace through Interfaith Harmony – Cooperation on Common Values."

The program was held on February 20, 2020, in partnership with the network My Neighbor, which is an initiative started by the local minister in the Church of Norway. In addition, the Central Jamaat-e Ahl-e Sunnat mosque (Norway's largest mosque) was both a partner and the venue.



The welcome address was given by the son of the imam, who also spoke at our event as a teenager nine years ago.

The first speaker in the panel was a former minister in the government of Afghanistan during the presidency of Burhanuddin Rabbani in the early 1990s. He escaped to Norway when the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan and is now well integrated in Norway. His main topic was our common brotherhood as children of the same parents, Adam and Eve.

The second speaker was a Jewish filmmaker who has won several prizes for his productions over 30 years. At present he is thinking of a film project that can illustrate the connection between all the Abrahamic faiths.

The third speaker was the head monk from the Sri Lanka Buddhist temple in Oslo. He elaborated on the

principle of how inner peace affects all our surroundings. He specified the importance of our motivation and intention, saying this is where goodness begins.

The fourth speaker was the minister in the local Church of Norway. She spoke of the importance of meetings between people of different religious backgrounds. However, she pointed out that the purpose is to gain understanding, not necessarily to agree. Religions have their differences, and we have to live with that, she said.



The fifth speaker was the leader of UPF, who introduced the book *World Scripture* and spoke of the history, background and purpose behind this significant book. He said that parallel societies with little contact between them can become a problem. One should try always to find common values and cooperate based on them, he said.

A ceremony of lighting candles was performed. Each representative lit a candle. Finally the imam insisted on lighting his candle together with the UPF leader, and so they did.

The formal program closed with a roundtable talk centered on questions that had been prepared by the moderator.

Refreshments and socializing closed the evening. The event was covered by a local Oslo newspaper.

Photographs by Ole Toresen