

## Kosovars, Albanians Hold Ceremony to Honor Ancestors

Sokol Rexhepi  
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Pristina, Kosovo - Kosovars and Albanians held a special ceremony in Pristina on Jan. 13, 2015, to honor their ancestors.

UPF-Kosovo, working together with the Kosovan branch of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), held the meeting at a central hotel in the capital. The event followed similar ceremonies held over the past two months in the Albanian cities of Korçë, Vlorë, Tirana and Shkodër.

“The Albanian people have been invaded most of the time of their existence. This has brought great suffering and pain that we who live today cannot even imagine. That is one of the reasons we are holding this ceremony today,” said Gani Rroshi, FFWPU-Albania president.



After the playing of the Kosovan national anthem, UPF-Kosovo chair Ismail Kurteshi spoke. He said that UPF-Kosovo’s success is the result of close cooperation with UPF-Albania.

H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu, the president of Kosovo from 2006 to 2010, warmly welcomed the delegation of UPF representatives who had come from Albania. As a participant of key UPF international events, he once again highly valued its efforts and especially the ceremony of honoring ancestors. He added that “every

nation has, besides the mission of looking forward and striving for prosperity, the responsibility of expressing gratitude and appreciating the past efforts and sacrifices of its ancestors.”



“History did not begin today but is a result of countless generations and hundreds of centuries. ... Without respecting those who were before us and sacrificed their lives for peace and freedom, it will be difficult for us to move forward and prosper,” Mr. Sejdiu said.

Bajram Ibraj, chair of the UPF-Albania Board of Directors, spoke about Albania’s long history, the great historical figures with Albanian origins and some of the historical injustices that Albanians suffered, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. “In many cases the truth is a bitter medicine which we have to digest, but hiding it would be a great mistake,” he said.

“The Albanians were among the first people in Europe to welcome Christianity, as it is testified by St. Paul’s letters,” said Mr. Ibraj. Albanians can coexist with people of different religions, he said, referring to a quote attributed to Lady Mary Montagu, wife of an 18th-century British ambassador to Turkey, who wrote that Albanians “attend the mosque service on Fridays and the mass on Sundays.”

Mr. Hydajet Hyseni, the first chair of UPF-Kosovo and a member of the Global Peace Council, as well as a former member of Parliament and a former political prisoner, recited “My Grandfather,” a poem that he wrote while imprisoned in Belgrade 25 years ago.



Mr. Adem Demaçi, the winner of the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and a permanent guest speaker at UPF conferences, congratulated UPF for its activities while remembering



the passing of its founder, Dr. Sun Myung Moon. Mr. Demaçi, who is known as the Albanian Nelson Mandela due to his 29 years spent as a political prisoner under the Serbian regime, gave a speech that was related to the motto of the summit, “Love God, Love People, Love the Nation.”



“Leaders who forget about God follow their own egoistic interests and bring their people to suffering and pain,” Mr. Demaçi said. “If we love God, we should unite with God. ... Unfortunately many of those who talk about God and His will and pray to Him commit many sins and tragedies. We should love people, as they are created by God. If we unite with God, we will feel and understand each other better. Then there will be fewer conflicts, wars and evil deeds.”

Gaqo Apostoli, the first chair of UPF-Albania, said that he felt the presence of his and his people’s ancestors. “Today we established a starting point of communication with our ancestors, which should be stable and continuous. Such a ceremony is very important but is not enough. Today we have become more spiritual and should be able to maintain this state continuously.”

Next came the symbolic water ceremony, in which seven participants representing different backgrounds poured seven bowls of water into a common bigger one, symbolizing the unity of different races and religions under one God.



Professor Daut Demaku, founder of Positive Thinking in Kosovo, mentioned in his speech that the greatest respect we can pay to our ancestors is to provide a better future for the young generations. “We should not fight the darkness itself, but find the light and turn it on,” he said.

“Einstein once said that the problem that was caused by a certain mindset cannot be resolved with the same mindset. If you want to achieve something that you never did before, you should act in ways that you never did. We can fight evil if we identify it and name it,” Professor Demaku said.

The chief imam of Mitrovica, the divided city in northern Kosovo, blessed the ceremony with a deep prayer. He quoted verses from the Holy Quran about unity and love between believers of different Abrahamic faiths. “The ones who cannot love the people cannot love God. Those who sacrifice themselves for humanity, for the nation or for their faith will remain eternally in the eyes of God,” said Imam Lushta, a renowned Ambassador for Peace who offered a deep prayer for the sake of Kosovo’s ancestors.



Ali Laçej, co-coordinator of the Albanian Peace Council, said, “I pray that God will lead us to think with our heart; to feel the pain of others as our own. ... [W]e need the truth: the one that will bring back love in our hearts and will bring to an end our evil ways. I pray to God that we can continue the spiritual communication we experienced tonight so that we can feel alive. I hope that soon we’ll be able to fly high,” Mr. Laçej concluded, quoting a sentence that Pope Francis used in his visit to Albania in September 2014.

FFWPU-Kosovo Chair Ejona Icka prayed that God would bless the ancestors and descendants of the Albanian people with His love, light and goodness. She expressed gratitude in her prayer to all the ancestors for their sincere devotion and sacrifices.

After the ceremony the members of Kosovo’s Peace Council met to elect its new chair and assistant chairs. Finally everyone applauded the election of Mrs. Hatixhe Hoxha, one of the first Ambassadors for Peace appointed in Kosovo and a former MP. She will be assisted by Professor Daut Demaku and MP Sanije Aliaj.