

Interfaith Prayers for Peace between Israel and Gaza

Hod Ben-Zvi
July 30, 2014



God, please let us not forget that all human beings were born equal before you, and that their lives are equally holy.

God, Please don't let us forget that we are siblings; as brothers and sisters our bonds are stronger than any differences of religion, race, nationality, perception, likes and dislikes.

God, please strengthen our empathy to feel and understand what the person on the other side feels, so that we may be able to see things as he sees them.



This prayer was sent by Prof. Yoram Hirschfeld of Tel Aviv University to the Interfaith Prayer for Peace that took place in the Druze village of Daliat-El-Carmel on July 30, 2014.

As the war between Israel and Hamas continued to claim victims, and cause suffer and misery in both Israel and Gaza, two prayer meetings took place to offer interfaith prayers for peace during the day in Daliat El-Carmel and Nazareth.

The first prayer-for-peace of the Jerusalem Interfaith Forum for Cooperation among religions gathered in the morning to pray for peace in Daliat El-Carmel, at the home of the forum's president, Sheik Ali Birani. In the afternoon of the same day, with the initiation of the forum member Rabbi Edgar Nof, the forum

members were hosted by the Centre International de Marie in Nazareth, and together with 70 people of the local community held an interfaith prayer for peace.

Daliat El-Carmel



During the morning, 22 participants from Druze, Muslim, Christian and Jewish faiths gathered in Daliat El-Carmel for several hours to pray for peace. Notable among the group were two Catholic priests, two Muslim sheiks, two Druze sheiks and two rabbis. Having so many clergy present from the various faiths gave a lot of hope and strength to each of the participants attending the prayer meeting. Those attending the prayer session were each reminded of the Holy Scriptures of their own faiths calling them to love one another and to strive for peace. Each person could see the realistic possibility of achieving peace and friendship by sharing the practice of interfaith cooperation in their daily lives.

After the prayers and discussion, the members of the forum gathered under a grape arbor and ate lunch. Only the fig was missing to complete the feeling from the prophecy of Micah: "...they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Micah 4:4).



As a senior Ambassador for Peace, Sheik Samich Natur welcomed the guests, and his words were followed by welcoming remarks from the host, Sheik Ali Birani. Dr. Nurit Hirschfeld, the director of the forum and UPF-Israel secretary general, spoke about the profound role of religious leaders in the peacebuilding process. Due to their commitment to God and to higher moral values, they have the ability to go beyond their own interests and to understand the lives, needs and suffering of others.

Sheik Samir Aasi, the imam of El-Jazar Mosque in Acre, arrived at the meeting amidst the Muslim holy day “Id El Fitter,” demonstrating his commitment to the call for peace. Sheik Aasi said that for him, the interfaith meetings are like fuel for the car--they fill him with hope. He said they show him that his ongoing efforts for peaceful and friendly relationships among religions are worthwhile, and that he is not alone.



Rabbi Nof offered prayers through songs and guitar playing. He noted that people might say that we are hallucinatory, but actually war is the real hallucinatory reality. Conservative Rabbi Annie Lewis from Philadelphia in the US recited the verse from Leviticus 9:19 to “love thy neighbor,” while Fr. Dimitri Mussa and Fr. Abu Akel from villages in Northern Israel expressed their hopes for peace and friendly relations. Fr. Abu-Akel tearfully asked the participants to also pray for his brother Christians who are being brutally slaughtered in Syria and Iraq.

Mrs. Boni Bar-Am, a tour guide from “Bridges for Hope,” read a prayer for peace which was translated into Arabic by her husband, Prof. Amatsia Bar-Am, a world-renowned expert on Iraq. Her effort to speak Arabic—despite a limited ability to speak the language—touched the hearts of the attending Arabic-speaking leaders.

Dr. Yossi Hatab, a psychiatrist from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, encouraged the leaders to bring this peaceful spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood to their communities, and expressed his wish for more people to join in. Mr. Yaron Sadot, the director of the “Neighbors” Association (for Jewish and Arab villages in Northern Israel), and Mrs. Osnat Lazar, an NLP teacher, both said that since the general atmosphere throughout the nation is currently so sad and depressing, this gathering brings a spotlight of hope to the heart.

INTERFAITH PRAYER FOR PEACE
PRIERE INTERRELIGIEUSE POUR LA PAIX

A Nazareth
Chapelle de l'Unité
Mercredi 30 Juillet
à 16h30

In Nazareth
Chapel of Unity
Wednesday July 30th
4:30 pm

Communauté du Chemin Neuf
 www.cimdn.org

Bridges for Hope
 http://bridgesforhope.net

Centre International Marie de Nazareth
 25A Gusu Nawi Street, POB 50199, 16161 Nazareth • tel : 972/4 646 12 66 • nazareth@chemin-neuf.org

Centre International de Marie in Nazareth

Following the successful prayer assembly in Daliat El-Carmel, the forum members traveled to Nazareth, where the members of Centre International de Marie opened the gates of their beautiful church and warmly welcomed the members of Rabbi Nof's "Bridge for Peace" community along with participants from the Jerusalem Interfaith Forum.



Through late afternoon and into the evening, a thoughtful event of interfaith prayer took place, as the church members and leaders of the Centre International de Marie were beautifully and warm-heartedly moderated the event of 70 participants.



List of participants

Sheik Ali Birani – President, Jerusalem Interfaith Forum

Mr. Rafic Halabi – Mayor, Daliat El-Carmel

Sheik Samich Natur – Editor of First Druze Encyclopedia, Daliat El-Carmel

Sheik Ali Naseradin – Daliat El-Carmel

Sheik Samir Aasi- Imam, Al-Jazar Mosque

Fr. Dmitry Mussa - Responsible for the Christian Denominations in the Northern Part of Israel, Ministry of Interior



Fr. Abu-Aakel – Northern Israel

Rabbi Edgar Nof - Natan-Ya Reform Community

Dr. Yossi Hatab – Psychiatrist, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Mr. Yaron Sadot – Director, "Neighbors" Association (for Jewish and Arab villages in Northern Israel)

Prof. Yoram Hirschfeld – Tel-Aviv University

Mrs. Osnat Lazar - NLP teacher

Mrs. Boni Bar-Am - Bridges for Peace, Haifa

Mrs. Vered Ivtsan – Cantor, soloist - Bridges for Peace, Haifa

Rabbi Annie Lewis – Philadelphia

Mr. Fatin Birani – Education Ministry

Mr. Fuad Birani – Daliat El-Carmel

Mr. Naim Birani – Daliat El-Carmel

Fr. Masoud Abu Hatoum - Wedding Church, Nazareth

Dan Goldsmith – Brotherhood President, Netan Community

Mr. Luc and Mrs. Marie Christine Lagabrielle - Centre International de Marie, Nazareth

Mr. Takahiro Morita- Photographer, Yafia

Mrs. Adi Sasaki – Director, Jerusalem Peace and Security Forum

Dr. Nurit Hirschfeld – Director, Jerusalem Interfaith Forum