

WFWP Birmingham, UK's Interfaith Gathering to Remember the Anti-Muslim Terrorist Attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand and Sri Lanka

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Following the terrible atrocities earlier this year in Christchurch, New Zealand, and in Sri Lanka, we decided to come together as people of faith in Birmingham, both to remember those who lost their lives and their families, and also to promote a positive vision of peace for our city, particularly between our different faith communities.

Around 180 people gathered in the beautiful Prayer Hall of the Al-Mahdi Institute, who very kindly hosted this meaningful event. We were faith leaders, City Councillors and a former Lord Mayor, a Member of the Birmingham Council of Faiths, a Member of the European Parliament, and representatives of the Indian, Pakistani, Somali, Sudanese and Rwandan communities. We were also delighted to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification European Regional Chair couple, Dr. and Mrs. Balcomb with us for the occasion.

Immediately after the attacks in Sri Lanka, members of the Al-Mahdi Institute reached out to offer their sympathies to the nearest local Christian church, a United Reformed Church. Fittingly, then, we began with an invocation from the church's minister, Rev. Leonora, followed by a brief introduction to the work

of the Institute by Sheikh Mahmood Dhalla.

Dr. David Earle and Sheikh Nuru Mohammed both gave brief remarks, suggesting how we can continue to inspire one another, and especially our young people, to work towards the vision of Birmingham as a 'City of Peace'. Anthea McIntyre, MEP, then described the work of West Midlands Together during the last 2 years, in trying to prevent 'Hate Crime', which increased after the 2016 Referendum on leaving the European Union. Reflections were offered by Dr. Peter Rookes on Christchurch, New Zealand, and by Nithiya Sockalingam from Sri Lanka. We then had a few quiet moments to think about those who lost their lives, and their loved ones.



Interfaith readings and prayers were given from the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Jewish and Sikh traditions, and concluding remarks were made by Dr. Michael Balcomb and then Kuldip Singh Ubhi, UK General Secretary of the Namdhari Sikh community.

Our final hour together was spent enjoying refreshments in the newly-refurbished dining area, making new friends, and with the feeling that we had made another significant step towards the shared vision of peace, harmony and mutual prosperity in our city.

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