

UPF International: Toward a Culture of Respect and Interfaith Solidarity

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A United Nations observance on 15 March 2026 and a call to combat Islamophobia through interfaith responsibility

On 15 March 2026, the [United Nations International Day to Combat Islamophobia](#), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in [resolution A/RES/76/254](#), calls the international community to reject religious hatred and to protect the dignity and rights of Muslims in every region of the world.

In his [2026 message for this observance](#), United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated that Muslims often face institutional discrimination, socio-economic exclusion, biased immigration policies, and unwarranted surveillance and profiling. He warned that these trends are fueled by anti-Muslim rhetoric and outright hate, which can lead to harassment and violence against individuals and places of worship. He also recalled his appointment in May 2025 of [Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé as the United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia](#) to strengthen the collective response of the United Nations system. At a time when the Secretary-General warns of continuing anti-Muslim prejudice, this observance carries particular urgency for practical steps that give effect to resolutions A/RES/76/254 and A/RES/78/264.

For the [Universal Peace Federation](#), this day raises concern and calls for responsibility. Islamophobia is not an abstract problem. It appears in prejudice, exclusion, profiling, vandalism, online abuse, and violence against individuals and places of worship. It weakens trust between communities and violates the principles affirmed in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), including the protection of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in Article 18. In harmony with [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#), which calls for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, no person should face hostility because of faith. This is consistent with [General Assembly resolution A/RES/78/264 on measures to combat Islamophobia](#). The United Nations has likewise stressed that terrorism and violent extremism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group.

This commitment has deep roots in UPF's own history and in the work of its predecessor, the [Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace](#) (IIFWP). The work of our founders, [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and [late Dr. Sun Myung Moon](#), included dialogue with Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, the Grand Mufti of Syria, in 1989 and again in 1990. The peace efforts of UPF's founders in the 1990s also included a series of extended Muslim leadership seminars in New York involving participants from Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Sudan. One such program was the 40-day Inter-Religious Youth Leadership Conference held in New York in April and May 1990 under the leadership of Yemen's Grand Mufti Sheikh Ahmed Zabarah and with 40 participants from Yemen.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, IIFWP convened Assembly 2001 in New York under the theme "[Global Violence: Crisis and Hope](#)." Later that year, the Jakarta conference on "Islam and the Future of World Peace" brought Muslim leaders together in Indonesia, with the participation of former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid. In August 2002, a second major gathering in London addressed "The State of the Muslim World Today." These meetings created serious space for moral reflection, public responsibility, and respectful engagement with Islam at a time when fear and suspicion were rising.

In later years, this work expanded into sustained regional initiatives. In 2003, the [Middle East Peace Initiative](#) was launched to bring Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders, scholars, women, youth, and civil society representatives into sustained encounter, dialogue, fact-finding visits, and practical cooperation. By 2012, MEPI had already convened numerous programs, including a Jerusalem seminar that brought together Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Druze religious leaders and scholars. In 2013, UPF convened an interfaith consultation in [Amman](#) on dialogue and reconciliation in Syria, gathering participants from the Middle East, Europe, and North America. In 2016, UPF marked [World Interfaith Harmony Week](#) in Vienna with Islamic, Jewish, and Christian speakers from the Middle East and Europe to reflect on peace and reconciliation in Syria and the wider region.

In more recent years, UPF has continued this work across regions. In June 2023, [UPF-Lebanon brought Christian and Muslim leaders together in Sidon](#) for dialogue rooted in scripture, harmony, and social cooperation. In July 2023, [UPF-Düsseldorf hosted an interreligious circle on Eid al-Adha](#), opening space for reflection on devotion, gratitude, solidarity, and generosity within Islamic tradition. In December 2023, [UPF-Argentina convened a virtual dialogue for peace bringing together a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam](#) to reflect on reconciliation and fraternity in a time of war. In May 2024, [Africa Spiritual Day at the African Union in Addis Ababa](#) included prayers for peace in the Middle East offered by Jewish and Muslim leaders. In August 2025, [UPF-Burkina Faso held a large public program at the Fatawa Islamic El Hairia Center](#), linking environmental and social responsibility with interfaith partnership. In December 2025, [UPF-Zambia convened an interfaith dialogue in Lusaka under the theme "Unity in Diversity"](#), bringing together Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish leaders in a shared call for peaceful coexistence. In March 2026, [UPF-USA hosted an interfaith iftar in Washington, D.C.](#), in cooperation with partner organizations, affirming Ramadan as a time of fasting and prayer, neighborly understanding, and shared public responsibility. Through the [Interreligious Association for Peace and Development](#), UPF continues this work in new partnerships, in a spirit consistent with [Sustainable Development Goal 17](#).

Such examples matter because Islamophobia does not recede through sentiment alone. It recedes through serious encounter, honest listening, the mutual defense of dignity, and habits of cooperation in public life, strengthened by deeper religious literacy, by the refusal of media and digital platforms to normalize dehumanizing language, and by the real protection of freedom of religion or belief by public institutions in practice rather than only in principle. This approach resonates with the [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#), launched in 2019, and with the [#NoToHate campaign](#), both of which emphasize countering online hatred and building cultures of tolerance. UPF recognizes the long contribution of Muslim scholars, imams, community leaders, women leaders, educators, parliamentarians, and young people who have worked across decades to reject extremism, defend the innocent, and strengthen social trust.

As UPF gives special attention this [March](#) to the strengthening of partnerships, this observance offers a timely opportunity to deepen cooperation with Muslim organizations, leaders, and communities in ways that protect dignity and strengthen interreligious trust.

On this international day, governments, educators, media professionals, faith communities, youth organizations, and civic institutions have an opportunity to deepen dialogue and shared civic action that protect the dignity of Muslims and strengthen interreligious trust in daily life. This approach is consistent with the [Principles of Interdependence](#) that have long informed UPF's peacebuilding vision. Universal Peace Federation remains committed to that work. We believe that peace grows when people encounter one another not as categories, but as neighbors, partners, and members of [one family under God](#).