

UPF Meeting

“How can Religions contribute to Peace?”

Copenhagen, Denmark, 29. February 2016



The two speakers together with the organizers from both UPF and the local Lutheran “Meeting Place Amager” intercultural dialog-initiative.

The topic of this meeting was “How can religions contribute to peace?” It was organized in connection with and in support of UN’s 5th “World Interfaith Harmony Week” and was held in the local public house “Kvarterhuset”.

There were two guests speakers presenting their views on the topic: Mr. Murtaza Al Shawi, spokesman for the Imam Ali Mosque and Pastor Andreas Rasmussen from the Apostel Church. Both speakers were stressing the importance of practical projects on the local level to realize peaceful coexistence of people of different faiths. They shared about their initiatives of **having “open house” each Sunday** in the mosque and Christian congregations visiting neighboring mosques. These initiatives were very much helping to open up for dialog and breaking down prejudices. Also the point was raised how the public perception of religion has changed the last decade, as just being a private matter of each believer, to realizing that religion must be brought in on the public stage by politicians and plays an

active role for peaceful coexistence among cultures and faiths.



The two speakers Mr. Murtaza Al Shawi and pastor Andreas Rasmussen

Around 40 guests attended the meeting which in two ways was different from previous ones. First it was arranged **jointly by UPF and “Meeting Place Amager”**, which is an interreligious and intercultural dialog-initiative by the local Danish Lutheran church. Secondly the form of the meeting was different since after the two **presentations, there was a “discussions at the tables”** arranged, followed by each table presenting the views and ideas discussed on the topic. The discussions became very lively and

fruitful and in this way the two speakers and all participants could get feedback and new ideas. It became clearer for everyone that religion and people of faith do play a crucial role in contributing to peace on all levels.



Discussions at the tables

Between each part of the program there was a musical performance, among which a video was shown with the song “The Gift of Love” by Sami Yusuf, the World’s first Interfaith Anthem that was presented in connection with the UN’s 5th “World Interfaith Harmony Week”. An example of how music and art can play important role in building bridges of peace.