

International Day of Human Rights 2013 in the Czech Republic

Prague, Czech Republic, 10. December 2013



The Czech UPF chapter celebrated the Human Rights Day in Prague on the 10th December 2013 by convening a conference followed by a panel discussion. The conference took place in the American Centre in Prague and was organized together with the Civic Institute as a partner organization. 30 people participated in a beautiful conference hall of the American Centre.

We had 3 panels with 2 speakers in each.



In the first panel the topic was „Human rights – their origin and value.“ **Dr. Juraj Lajda**, UPF secretary general in Czech Republic outlined the basic ideas and conclusions of the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan accepted 20 years ago in 1993. This document played a

significant role in the new history of the world, especially after the end of the cold war. As for the origin of human rights the speaker pointed out on a very simple fact that it is the family where we have the first and primary environment where we can learn about the human rights. It is the family where we can learn the respect towards others as well as

sympathy and solidarity with our neighbors. This point is very important for the parents to understand.



The second speaker **Professor Harald Scheu** from the Faculty of Law of the Charles University in Prague spoke about the „Faith in Universal Declaration of Human Rights after 65 years“. He said that the education and faith in human rights are closely interconnected.

Various thought systems and philosophies should be projected into human rights. He also mentioned that in the American constitution searching for happiness is considered as an inalienable right.



The second panel focused on „Human Rights in the politics and economy“. **Dr. Roman Joch**, director of the Civic Institute, in his speech under the title „What Are Human Rights and How Can We

Recognize Them“ said that everybody can agree that

human rights are good. Does it mean, however that the more human rights we have the better for the society? Undoubtedly not. We have to recognize the quality of human rights. Human rights are given by our nature. We have natural rights and social rights which are based on a common consensus in the society. There is a difference between them.



Next speaker **Dr. Karel Šimka**, judge from the Supreme Executive Court spoke about the „Regulation of Economics as the Sneaking Danger for the Human Rights.“ As a judge he introduced many examples from

the practice how the court has to decide in concrete cases. Often it is not easy because there are many opinions and ideologies behind. According to him the concept of human rights is a Western concept, maybe 250 years old. We pretend that human rights are universal and beyond cultures. Human being is the only being reflecting his/her own existence and is the subject of the rights not the object.



„Human Rights in the Social Context“ was the theme of the last panel. **Mr. Mark Martin**, director of the Amnesty International in the Czech Republic showed in his presentation the most distinct cases of the violation of human

rights worldwide. Even though we have the High Commissioner for Human rights and many human rights NGOs still there are many human rights violations in the world and we have still a lot of work to do.



The final speaker **Dr. Jan Kust**, writer of a book „The Supreme Court in the USA“, spoke about the history of slavery in the USA. He explained in detail historical process which ensured in the abolition of slavery. Many participants appreciated his speech

because it was very clear and consequent and inspiring.

Several participants expressed the opinion that this was the best UPF conference in this year. The presentations were of a high quality, had deep content, each speaker was an expert in his field and all of them were able to communicate valuable information and opinions. Each speaker represented some opinion stream in the society.

In the end some speakers themselves expressed their gratitude that they could participate and speak in this conference organized by UPF in cooperation with the Civic Institute. To the success of this conference contributed a very dignified environment of the American Centre and good cooperation and support of their staff.

Juraj Lajda

