

World Interfaith Harmony Week

Presentation by Dr. Saidi

Stuttgart, Germany, 3. February 2015



As a contribution to the World Interfaith Harmony Week, Dr. Qais Saidi, representative of the Mandaean Community in Germany, gave a presentation on 03. February at the invitation of the Stuttgart Interreligious Round Table.

Hubert Arnoldi, UPF-Stuttgart representative, opened the event with welcoming remarks and a prayer, before the fourteen participants representing various religious groups, enjoyed snacks and drinks.

Then Dr. Saidi was called upon to report about a UPF conference which he had attended. He had the opportunity to be one of the few Europeans who participated in a UPF conference in Jerusalem entitled 'Jerusalem and the Holy Sites: A Call for Peace at a Time of Crisis'

As a Mandaean, this visit to Israel was of special significance: their greatest teacher and prophet is John the Baptist who lived and worked 2000 years ago, at the time of Jesus, in Palestine. Most Madaeans, including Dr. Saidi and his family, lived (until the Iraq War) in Iraq, from where travel to Israel was forbidden. (Now Dr. Saidi and his family live in Germany and are German citizens.)

Participants in the conference in Jerusalem represented various religions – Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze and one Mandaean. As specialists with expert knowledge in the fields of politics, academics and religion, they were able to contribute to an inspiring exchange of information and lively discussions. There was a prevailing spirit of harmony and peace and because of the small number of participants, it was possible to establish friendly

relationships even in the short time of the conference. How can this peace be expanded and multiplied?

A central theme of the conference was the question of the origin of the Middle-east conflict. Is it to be found in religion or politics or is there a social or psychological origin? Religions themselves should not be the problem, when seen from their principles, but only when the wants of one conflict with the wants of the other. There are ongoing peace initiatives and conferences in the Middle East. The conflict can be resolved....then again perhaps not; the wish is for a resolution..but then again, perhaps not....

In the Koran, four religions are recognised: Islam, Judaism, Christianity and the Sabaeans (Mandaism). They share the following points: belief in God and in a spiritual world and the encouragement to do good deeds. However, what exactly is a good deed?- This is a point of contention. Thus there are various laws. Religions desire peace and happiness for mankind. Jerusalem, the cradle of all the world religions, should really be a model of a peaceful state!

But on the contrary, Jerusalem is a model of conflict.

The problems have a political aspect, and religion is used as an instrument of politics leading to prejudice and social and psychological problems.

It helps little to speak about peace and conflict resolution; action must result! What contributes to peace? Why is there no 'Ministry for Peace?' A 'Peace Television Channel' would be helpful. Sport and music could contribute to peace! The media must give neutral reports and education for peace must be

offered at all levels - starting from kindergarten and school - and the good points and similarities in all religions must be communicated in lessons, books and the media. The young people are the future, and they need to learn to know, understand and respect the different religions.

Dr. Saidi stimulated interest in his fellow conference participants in the religion of the Mandeans, their history and their distinctiveness. He was able to communicate in Arabic with those who spoke that language, and the old Mandaean language impressed the Jews who are familiar with that ancient language from the Talmud.

Dr. Saidi presented UPF Israel with a calligraphy which

he had made himself using a quotation from Rev Moon, the founder of UPF „Peace is the Task of all Religions“.

We were then able to view some of Dr. Saidi's photos from the conference and from his stay in Israel; for example from the birth church of John the Baptists, the temple rock and the wailing wall.

The participants at the Interreligious Round Table were very impressed by Dr. Saidi's presentation, and there was time for questions at the end.

A successful evening was brought to a close by announcements and wishes for a safe homewards journey from Hubert Arnoldi.