

## UPF Middle East: Ambassadors for Peace and Peacemakers Values Forum

David Fraser-Harris  
July 16, 2020



Istanbul, Turkey -- Ambassadors for Peace and other peacemakers took part in a Peace Values Forum organized by UPF of the Middle East.

The interactive online discussion on July 16, 2020, featured speakers from Morocco, Syria, Turkey, Israel and Japan; and was supplemented by a video contribution from Lebanon. The open format opened the way to comments from within and beyond the region, before concluding with the online appointment of two Ambassadors for Peace.

Speaking from Istanbul, Yoshihiro Yamazaki, who represents UPF in Turkey, illustrated the relevance of UPF's Peace Values -- interdependence, co-prosperity and universally shared values -- to the strengths and needs of Middle Eastern societies. He pointed to missed opportunities on a global scale and to a consistency of approach that underlies UPF's programs both historically and across the globe. Mr. Yamazaki is also the coordinator for Europe and the Middle East of the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAE), a UPF project, and the liaison for Europe and the Middle East of the Institute for Peace Policies, located in Japan. ([For Mr. Yamazaki's full speech, click here.](#))

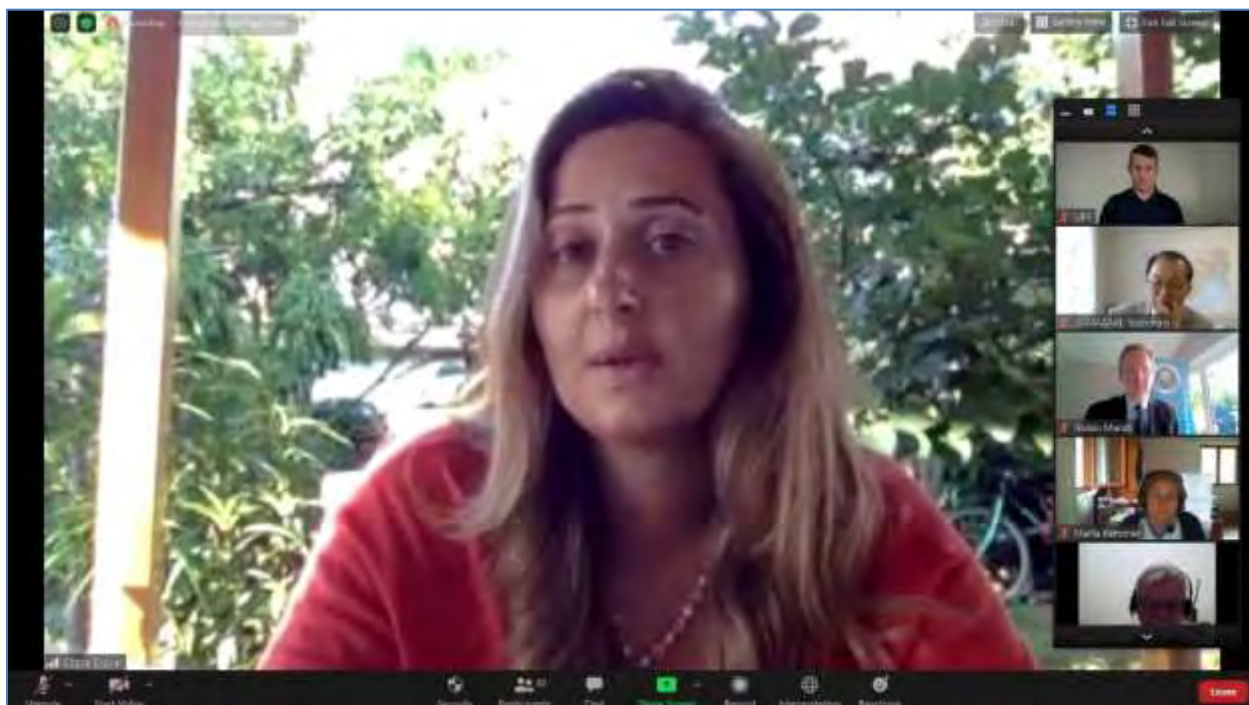
Sheikh Abou Zeid, a professor of comparative religion, law and contemporary Islamic thought, could not join us for the discussion but through his video message provided a real and heartfelt insight into the plight of Lebanon's people in this most difficult of times.

Dr. Hajiba Ayoubi, a medical doctor who works in health management with the Moroccan Ministry of Health, said: "Building peace is not only an effort of technical specialists. It is really possible through actions in everyday life or on a global scale." She gave simple, actionable examples for the peacemaker that each of us wants to be. She then turned to the role of women, key drivers of the real change of mindset, concluding, "The clue is the empowerment of women; this is crucial to build a culture of peace." ([For Dr. Ayoubi's full speech, click here.](#))

Professor Hanoch Ben Pazi, the head of the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Bar Ilan University in the city of Modiin near Jerusalem, took us down the path leading from "victim of fate" -- in these times of pandemic -- to "master of destiny." Drawing on the ideas of the late Orthodox Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Professor Ben Pazi told us: "As East to West find themselves in fear of the same invisible enemy, everyone has been exposed to the question of fate and suffering. Nature demands that humankind join hands in the battle against [the] corona[virus], and the need to come together is stronger than ever. The awareness of the collective fate that has been forced upon us has the potential to mark a new kind of partnership for humanity as a whole." ([For Professor Ben Pazi's full speech, click here.](#))

Gözde Dizdar, the founding and managing director of the GD Global company, began with a panoramic overview of the region's great (strategic and resource) strengths and awful (military and humanitarian) current realities. She said that all the walls built over decades failed to block the virus. Now, she said, "we should be working to preserve the plurality and diversity of the Middle East ... advocating prosperity, peace and security for everyone." Her proposed way forward went beyond dialogue to examples of fields

in which we should be cooperating with each other. Ms. Dizdar is also the international vice president for strategic partnerships at Centrist Asia Pacific Democrats International and the chair of the Youth Committee at the Global Parties Climate and Ecological Alliance. ([For Ms. Dizdar's full speech, click here.](#))



Asmaa Kftarou, a member of the United Nations Commission on Syria and the granddaughter of Sheikh Ahmed Kftarou, the late grand mufti of Syria, contrasted the vision of peace with the pain of conflict. "What is the use of talking with reverence about prophets who are in the spirit world while we are cursing each other and hating each other, even though we were asked to dialogue with each other peacefully, as the Koran asked us?" She expressed sadness that Istanbul's Hagia Sophia "has been brought back into politics instead of the beautiful symbolism of a great church building in the Islamic world center." Before pleading with the decision-makers to hear her appeal, she explained: "I have always wished for this historic monument to be a place for brotherhood between religious followers, and a home for compassion, forgiveness and love, and that Istanbul would have a great international role in taking care of religions, and establishing an international brotherhood of humanity." Mrs. Kftarou is also a member of the Women's Advisory Board to the UN envoy for political process and peacebuilding in Syria. (For Ms. Kftarou's full speech in English, [click here](#). For her speech in Arabic text, [click here](#).)

Umberto Angelucci, the chair of UPF for the Middle East, was the final speaker. Encouraging us to look beyond the coronavirus to explore new ways and opportunities to interact and tackle problems, he emphasized cooperation. He gave the example of the global cooperation that saved war-devastated South Korea, opening the way to today's prosperous nation. Pointing to the UPF's founders' readiness to risk all to help North Korea, he encouraged Ambassadors for Peace to apply UPF's Peace Values and find solutions to our region's worst-hit nations, such as Yemen and Syria. "Unless we respect our Creator God and the principles by which He created this universe, we will not be able to establish a harmonious and prosperous society." ([For Mr. Angelucci's full speech, click here.](#))

Following the discussion, which included contributions from Jordan, Israel and Pakistan, two participants were awarded the Ambassador for Peace certificate. The forum's moderator, David Fraser Harris, the regional secretary general of UPF for the Middle East, recognized their great efforts for peace, but also reminded them that the certificate was as much a commission as an award. Certificates were given to:

Siham Anies Kawar (from Jordan), a member of the Al-Fuheis Municipality Council and director of the Jordanian Women's Village Association.

Professor Hanoch Ben Pazi, Bar Ilan University, Israel, one of our forum speakers.



**FOLLOW US**



Search ...

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

**JUL 28:** [Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)

**AUG 1:** [Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)

**AUG 9:** [Online Rally of Hope](#)

**AUG 19:** [UN World Humanitarian Day](#)

**SEP 21:** [UN International Day of Peace](#)

**SEP 21:** [UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)

**OCT 24:** [United Nations Day](#)

**LANGUAGES**

[Français - French](#)

[Español - Spanish](#)

[русский - Russian](#)

[Italiano - Italian](#)

**Speeches**

**Y. YAMAZAKI: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK**

Written by Yoshihiro Yamazaki, secretary general, UPF-Turkey  
 Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

Good evening! I have lived in your region for over 25 of the last 45 years. So please allow this Japanese man to offer for just five minutes my personal observations relating to the Middle East.

When the Cold War was brought to an end some 30 years ago, human society could have opted for a third path. But the victors of the Cold War resorted to globalizing their free systems in economy, politics and society. Subsequently, while the world population generally enjoyed more freedom, prosperity and peace, this also opened a Pandora's box of "capitalism of greed" to maximize profits and interests.

Eventually the world went through three major financial crises originating in Asia, Europe and America. The free exchange of goods, money and people has to be heavily regulated. Income gaps have reached an unprecedented level. More ominously, the word "freedom" has tolerated anything, especially in moral, ethical lifestyles. Family values are no longer properly appreciated in international conventions. Is this correct?

In my observation, in applying much greater freedom, people have tended to ignore correspondingly greater responsibility. This was partly because the importance of religion was overlooked even after they won the Cold War, which had included an ideological and spiritual dimension of opposition to atheism and religious oppression. Interestingly, religion has since been revived in most of the former communist countries, including Russia.

Another mistake, in my view, has been a widening rift and friction between the West and the Islamic world. The struggle of the Muslim *mujahideen* in Afghanistan against the invading Red Army became a body blow to end the Soviet Union. Still, such a religious factor in fighting and winning was not properly appreciated. If they tried at least to understand it in more religion-friendly perspectives, the Middle East situations and the world outlook could have been much different from what we have witnessed in lamentation.

Since the 1960s, UPF's founders, Dr. and Mrs. Moon, have advocated a future vision of the human community based on interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values. This vision is a social application of the more religious ideal of One Human Family under God. So, by putting these three values into practical policies and social behaviors, we will come closer, step by step, to a human community of peace, prosperity and freedom.

To sum up, all people are created to live in one grand family, substantiating the Creator's heart of mercy and love among brothers and sisters. Naturally, they share wealth in proper balance between the whole and individuals, allocating it as their conscience dictates, promoting prosperity for all. In one extended familial community, everyone shares a common heart and attention, striving for harmonious and constructive relations.

This system of thought played a very important role in the ideological struggle against communism in the 1970s and '80s in Japan, South Korea, North and South America and Europe. The leaders of these countries openly appreciated its contribution in their national and global victory over communism.

When the ideological wall between East and West was being removed, Dr. Moon proposed a drive for universally shared values beyond national and religious barriers on the basis of this thought system. This global campaign is now carried on by the Universal Peace Federation.

Middle Eastern societies have many values and cultures in common with what is advocated in these Peace Values. For instance, interdependence is visible in their families and clans. A sense of collective ownership among community members is strong, compared with Western societies, including my own country, where individual rights and private ownership are the norm. In this part of the world, people largely adopt common ethical standards, while their society is more or less like an extended family. I believe these qualities are behind the increase of the Muslim population across the world in recent decades.

For humanity to realize these peace values, Dr. Moon proposed the following: "For the paths of religion, politics and economy to converge ... , a new expression of truth must emerge which can completely integrate religion and science. ... These will be the foundations for a new political order which can realize the ideal of creation ... on the principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values." (p. 344, Exposition of the Divine Principle).

My engagement in the International Association of Academicians for Peace is one such attempt under the umbrella of UPF, associating scholars in 72 nations of Europe, the Middle East and Eurasia. You are most welcome to join in this endeavor to create a synergy between the holy and secular dimensions of our society. Thank you very much for your attention.

*To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).*

[Print Email](#)

**ABOUT UPF**

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

**TOOLS**

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for](#)

[Reports](#)

**SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:**

Email Address:\*

**FOLLOW US**

**FOLLOW US****CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

[JUL 28: Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)[AUG 1: Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)[AUG 9: Online Rally of Hope](#)[AUG 19: UN World Humanitarian Day](#)[SEP 21: UN International Day of Peace](#)[SEP 21: UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)[OCT 24: United Nations Day](#)**LANGUAGES**[Français - French](#)[Español - Spanish](#)[русский - Russian](#)[Italiano - Italian](#)**Speeches****H. AYOUBI: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK**

Written by Dr. Hajiba Ayoubi, Moroccan Ministry of Health  
 Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

*Salam alaikum.* Hello, dear sisters and brothers.

I would like to start by thanking UPF for inviting me to this important and valuable event on the Culture of Peace and giving us this virtual space to expand the dialogue about building peace. These online Peace Talks are a great opportunity to keep in touch, to communicate and to share thoughts and experiences between the peace communities in this special situation of COVID-19.

What can we do, as UPF Ambassadors for Peace, and how can we contribute to help our people, our nations and our region to build a peaceful future?

I do strongly believe that when we chose to belong to the community of peace, it was not by chance, but it was because we are special, we have peace in our heart and mind, and once we become members of it, whatever our activity, our gender or our status, we are never the same; we become more special. As Ambassadors for Peace, we do make in our daily life inspirational stories that can be some extraordinary contributions to peace.

It can seem idealistic and unrealistic to some people when we say, as peacemakers, that conflict is not inevitable, because we believe that there are always peaceful solutions to conflict at all levels: at home, at work, in the street or between nations. We are so deeply convinced about that, and we feel sad when people choose war instead of peace.

Sure, we live in times of uncertainty. We watch and read in the news about conflicts and war nearly every day, but building peace is not only an effort of technical specialists. It is really possible through actions in everyday life or on a global scale. And to achieve a world of peace, each and every person has a role to play.

How? An Ambassador for Peace must:

- Be a model of peacebuilding in the society;
- Cultivate peace in his heart, family, community and the world;
- Show strong leadership qualities in his or her sphere of activity, such as religion, politics, media, academia, business, art, civil society;
- Show an example, and teach others to do the same;
- Find ways to coexist peacefully with others;
- Protect innocents; seek justice for everyone;
- Commit to creating a life that spreads peace and contributes to a world without violence;
- Work for a beautiful present and future in which everyone feels safe.

As a woman, let me concentrate on what women can do:

Women have energy, creativity and a critical spirit in identifying innovative solutions and building bridges and networks across groups worldwide. If provided with an enabling environment, they can channel this energy into efforts that will benefit a culture of peace for both present and future generations. They have to obtain a "place at the table" in formal mechanisms. This is how they can play an active role; they can bring fresh insights and ask "gendered" questions that may be missed by men.

The role and contributions of women to the Culture of Peace are important not only because women represent the majority of the global population but also because women are key drivers of the radical change of mindsets and cultures. (Isn't that what we all want and seek?)

Women as mothers, grandmothers, and other family members, often being the first teachers of children, can play a vital role in educating and raising children to value peace and hate war.

Through women and by women we can make war against the culture of war and conflicts. Don't you think the same? Or maybe you will challenge me and ask me how?

Well, the clue is the empowerment of women; this is crucial to building a culture of peace. By good and adequate education that can bring sustainable economic and social development, human rights and equality, democratic participation, tolerance and understanding at all levels: in the family, the community, the country, the region and globally.

Let's all work to create an enabling environment for women to prosper in their community, to exercise rights, to regain hope and to adopt a civic engagement as a responsible social actor. This is how women assume their responsibilities as full citizens and put their skills and experiences to the service of their communities, by taking action, directly addressing issues, working with others to solve problems. This is how we can build civic competencies, enable social inclusion, dialogue and non-

discrimination. It is also a key strategy to prevent women from becoming violent or being affected by violence.

Thank you for listening. God bless you.

---

To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).

[Print Email](#)

#### ABOUT UPF

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

[Founders](#)

[Global Peace Council](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

#### TOOLS

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for Reports](#)

#### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Email Address:\*

[Subscribe](#)

#### FOLLOW US



We are an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector dedicated to achieving world peace. UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of marriage and family.

**Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**  
We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Copyright ©2006-2020 Universal Peace Federation. All rights reserved

[Login](#) | [webmaster@upf.org](mailto:webmaster@upf.org)

[About the Founders](#) | [United Nations](#) | [ECOSOC](#) | [Sustainable Development Goals](#) | [Home](#)



FOLLOW US





CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

**JUL 28:** [Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)

**AUG 1:** [Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)

**AUG 9:** [Online Rally of Hope](#)

**AUG 19:** [UN World Humanitarian Day](#)

**SEP 21:** [UN International Day of Peace](#)

**SEP 21:** [UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)

**OCT 24:** [United Nations Day](#)

LANGUAGES

[Français - French](#)

[Español - Spanish](#)

[русский - Russian](#)

[Italiano - Italian](#)

Speeches

## H. BEN PAZI: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK

Written by Professor Hanoch Ben Pazi, head of the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Bar Ilan  
Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

Never has humanity experienced so palpably and unambiguously a feeling of collective fate. The common experience of facing danger and suffering disrupts our faith in life and evokes questions of meaning and existence. I would like to think about these days of COVID-19 by reflecting on the ideas of "fate" and "destiny" based on the thought of the Jewish religious thinker Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993).

Humanity's battle against the coronavirus has succeeded in crossing borders and surmounting walls. From East to West we find ourselves in fear of the same invisible enemy, exposed to the questions of fate and suffering. Nature demands that humankind join hands in the battle against the coronavirus, and the need to come together is stronger than ever. Although the awareness of the collective fate that has been forced upon us has the potential to mark a new kind of partnership for humanity as a whole.

"Contagious diseases" and "great epidemics" have accompanied humanity from its earliest history and have impacted all of aspects of society—politics, economy, beliefs—and at times determined the size of the world's population. This year's epidemic—"the corona epidemic"—is but another episode in humanity's war against its fate, an ongoing struggle.

The question of human suffering has always played a major role in religious thought and still does. It is the question Moses asks as he pleads to God, "Pray let me know Your ways," and by Job as he cries out, "Let me know what You charge me with." It has stirred philosophers and theologians, since the days of the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, to ask how it is possible to comprehend such an enormous natural calamity, if not as the result of the sins of humanity?

Facing a natural calamity such as the coronavirus epidemic subjects us to the hand of fate, one which has no easy explanation. Humanity, Soloveitchik wrote, experiences fate as "being bound up in the chains of existence, [and] stands perplexed and confused in the face of the great mystery called suffering." This is a most appropriate description of life during a plague, in the shadow of an invisible virus, when the fear of our death and that of our loved ones becomes real. "The sufferer wanders lost in the viciousness of the world, with God's fear spread over him and his anger tensed against it; he is entirely shaken and agitated. His agonies are devoid of any clear meaning, and they appear as satanic forces, as outgrowths of the primal chaos that pollutes the creation whose destiny it was to be a reflection of the creator." (Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, 6)

In contrast to this experience, there is another experience: the awareness that a person has a destiny. The experience of "existence under the awareness of destiny" relates to humanity's active existence: "[W]hen man confronts the environment into which he has been cast with an understanding of his uniqueness and value, freedom and capacity, without compromising his integrity and independence in his struggle with the outside world. ... Man is born as an object, dies as an object, but it is within his capability to live as a 'subject'—as a creator and innovator who impresses his individual imprimatur on his life and breaks out of a life of instinctive automatic behavior into one of creative activity." (pp. 5-6)

Judaism teaches human beings that their mission in life is to turn fate into destiny, to turn a passive existence into an active one—to move from being an object dictated to by powers greater than he or she, to a subject who determines his or her own path and meaning in the world. There is a "covenant of fate" that bound the people together facing a situation that was forced upon them, facing their fate. Out of the experience of individual suffering, the people can learn that their suffering is shared by all. The readiness to enter into the covenant of fate—the willpower of individuals to take responsibility for the community, to join together in times of distress, out of a sense of obligation and responsibility—is worthy of honor and recognition.

The other covenant, the "covenant of destiny," is entered into when the shared bond between people is not the product of common suffering but rather a *shared ideal*, the desire and readiness to enter into an agreement to lead an ethically elevating and worthwhile life. The "covenant of destiny" is one that people have to choose with their free will. This shared covenant is "an active experience full of purposeful movement, ascension, aspirations and fulfillment." (p. 65)

I would like to think that the aspiration taught by this Jewish tradition—to transform fate into destiny—can become a message for all humanity. In these days, when humanity must enter into a "covenant of fate" to cooperate to fight the threat of the virus, we can find the power of the spirit to transform this covenant and partnership into a "covenant of destiny" for the elevation of all humankind.

An all-inclusive covenant of destiny would seek to jointly create an inspiring and noble foundation for life and survival, one in which humanity's involvement is not only a response to distress but part of its ability to become a partner in the greatest

project of all—its own creation, that is to say, humanity's creation.

To put this in biblical terms, a covenant can be created today that represents humankind's readiness to respond to God's call: "Let us make a human being!" In the traditional *midrash*, God is calling to the angels to join Him in the creation of humanity, but contemporary interpretation offers an alternative approach: It is as if God says to human beings before they are created, "You and I together will create humanity"—and human beings become God's partner in their own creation. The next step is for this unique covenant to be transformed into a covenant of destiny, which has the potential to give new meaning to the concept of a partnership of all humanity.

---

To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).

[Print Email](#)

#### ABOUT UPF

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

[Founders](#)

[Global Peace Council](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

#### TOOLS

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for](#)

[Reports](#)

#### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Email Address:\*

[Subscribe](#)

#### FOLLOW US



We are an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector dedicated to achieving world peace. UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of marriage and family.

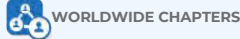
**Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**  
**We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

Copyright ©2006-2020 Universal Peace Federation. All rights reserved  
[Login](#) | [webmaster@upf.org](mailto:webmaster@upf.org)

[About the Founders](#) | [United Nations](#) | [ECOSOC](#) | [Sustainable Development Goals](#) | [Home](#)



**FOLLOW US**



Search ...

Go

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

[JUL 28: Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)

[AUG 1: Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)

[AUG 9: Online Rally of Hope](#)

[AUG 19: UN World Humanitarian Day](#)

[SEP 21: UN International Day of Peace](#)

[SEP 21: UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)

[OCT 24: United Nations Day](#)

**LANGUAGES**

[Français - French](#)

[Español - Spanish](#)

[русский - Russian](#)

[Italiano - Italian](#)

**Speeches**

**G. DIZDAR: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK**

Written by Gözde Dizdar, founding and managing director of the GD Global company  
 Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

First of all, many thanks to the Universal Peace Federation for the opportunity to talk about "Mutual Values and Prosperity in the Middle East" in these extraordinary days of COVID-19.

When we look at the Middle East, on the one hand it is the intersection of commercial air and sea travel between the other key regions.

The geography of the Middle East is diverse and includes everything from fertile river deltas and forests to mountain ranges. And we know that most countries in the Middle East are oil-rich. The Middle East can be seen as a global energy hub, a linchpin of international financial networks and a crossroads for human civilizations and migrations.

On the other hand, the Middle East has been the world's most controversial region for more than seven decades and still today. There is a saying that much of what is good (and evil) in the world is based in the Middle East or passes through it.

If we have a closer look at the general picture of the Middle East before COVID-19, what we see is wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel, the unsolved quarrel over Kashmir, the recent clash of powers between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Additionally, there have been three ongoing civil wars—lasting for five years in Yemen, six years in Libya, and nine years in Syria—plus months of deadly protests in Iraq, the implosion of Lebanon's monetary system, and the third Israeli election in a year.

We should underline the fact that Syria's war has displaced more than 12 million people (half its population) both internally and externally. A total of 6.5 million have been displaced internally in Iraq and Yemen. In Libya, more than 435,000 people have been displaced. The startling statistics go on: About 11 million people in Syria need humanitarian aid; in Yemen, 24 million; in Libya, 2.4 million; and in Iraq, 4.1 million.

Additionally, in recent months the region has become even more fragile, since being hit by what I call "twin disasters": the coronavirus pandemic and the historic collapse of global oil prices.

From my point of view, these are the facts that we should accept and think about more deeply in order to face the challenges.

In the Middle East, due to its controversial nature, the biggest investments so far have been in guns, defense systems, military expenses; in other words, "security" has been the biggest concern. Building higher walls has been the growing trend for many years and decades.

Yet maybe in a way we should be thankful to COVID-19, which made us understand again that none of these walls are high enough to protect against even one unseen virus, since it threatens the oil-rich billionaire and a refugee in the same way and almost equally—no matter what statues, religion, gender and ethnicity that person has.

Therefore the journey to "Mutual Values and Prosperity in the Middle East" starts when we leave ambitions, stop looking down on one another, and stop looking at people and nations to see how wealthy they are.

*Instead of building walls, it is time to build bridges from heart to heart.* It is the time for empathy, the time for peace and making investments in health, education and technology. Therefore, we should be working to preserve the plurality and diversity of the Middle East. We should be advocating for prosperity, peace and security for *everyone*, remembering that we are all equal under one God.

In this journey we should include people of different faiths and embrace fact-based, respectful dialogue, mutual recognition and cooperation to promote justice in the Middle East through the advancement of educational, cultural and social ties in our local and global communities. *Our dream should be promoting unity and peace!*

At this point we can talk about different formats, we can establish a number of different ways and institutions to focus on:

- Energy sharing
- Water sharing
- Wealth sharing
- The establishment of a Customs Union and a Common Market can be motivating for the business world.
- Common cultural, educational and linguistic institutions
- Common institutions for the peaceful resolution of differences and conflicts can be functional.



The establishment of governments that respect the rule of law, with better governance, and respect the human rights of their citizens and minorities is also vital in the Middle East.

Yet, considering the realities of our conflicted world—where power is scattered and diffuse—regional and global peace and security stand a chance only if all nations and all regions are united as *a family*. Therefore, we need more bridges instead of walls.

*"In times like these, we need each other more than ever."*

---

To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).

[Print Email](#)

#### ABOUT UPF

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

[Founders](#)

[Global Peace Council](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

#### TOOLS

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for Reports](#)

#### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Email Address:\*

[Subscribe](#)

#### FOLLOW US



We are an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector dedicated to achieving world peace. UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of marriage and family.

Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Copyright ©2006-2020 Universal Peace Federation. All rights reserved

Login | [webmaster@upf.org](mailto:webmaster@upf.org)

[About the Founders](#) | [United Nations](#) | [ECOSOC](#) | [Sustainable Development Goals](#) | [Home](#)

**FOLLOW US**[DONATE](#)[WORLDWIDE CHAPTERS](#)[NEWSLETTER SIGN UP](#)**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

[JUL 28: Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)[AUG 1: Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)[AUG 9: Online Rally of Hope](#)[AUG 19: UN World Humanitarian Day](#)[SEP 21: UN International Day of Peace](#)[SEP 21: UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)[OCT 24: United Nations Day](#)**LANGUAGES**[Français - French](#)[Español - Spanish](#)[русский - Russian](#)[Italiano - Italian](#)**Speeches****A. KFTAROU: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK**

Written by Asmaa Kftarou, United Nations Commission on Syria  
 Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

It is my pleasure to talk to you today at this international meeting conducted by UPF about the message of peace and love between religions in the Middle East.

It is painful that the Middle East for so many decades has been painted red on world maps due to continuous conflicts for more than half a century, and for different reasons like injustice, tyranny and a culture of hatred passed down through generations.

From my position in the Islamic field in the institution established by Sheikh Ahmed Kftarou 70 years ago, I can say that the essence of the Koran's message is peace. The word "Islam" stems from the root "peace" in the Arabic language; one of God's names is Peace, and the Muslim greeting is "Peace be upon you."

These are clear values seen in the sacred Mosque of Mecca when people in white robes gather in millions in peaceful spiritual gatherings.

But the reality in the Middle East is still far from the peace that we wish for. In this context I'm not an expert in politics, but I will talk from a religious point of view and the Koranic point of view revealed through prophet Mohammed to establish peace on Earth.

The Koran is clear when it talks positively about Christians of justice and goodness:

"You will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say, 'We are Christians.' This is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly.

"And when they hear what has been revealed to the apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say, 'Our Lord! we believe, so write us down with the witnesses (of truth).'

"And what (reason) have we that we should not believe in Allah and in the truth that has come to us, while we earnestly desire that our Lord should cause us to enter with the good people?"

We have to be clear in our principles of reconciliation. We are not talking about uniting the two religions, a notion which is not useful to either; rather we mean the peaceful coexistence of religions, in a way that is fair to both, despite their differences. Why should we let the difference in faith become a source of hatred, enmity and war?

The religious brotherhood which we are talking about is Koranic in its essence.

In the opening verses of the Koran, Surat al Fatiha says, "Praise to the lord of all creation." This expresses the fundamental innocence of religion, free from the racism or fanaticism that some groups (in East and West) are calling for.

At the end of the Koran, the verse says Allah is "the lord of all people, the king of all people," indicating equality between people regardless of their religion, ethnicity or color.

And between the opening and closing of the Koran there are many other verses that support believing in other prophets as a duty for all Muslims in order to build loving relationships.

It is strange that the relationship of brotherhood between Muslims and Christians is a relationship of dispute, though we are asked to believe in and dialogue with each other.

What is the use of talking with reverence about prophets who are in the spirit world while we are cursing each other and hating each other, even though we were asked to dialogue with each other peacefully as the Koran asked us?

In order to build this brotherhood, the prophet wrote a letter to the Christians of Najran [a city in Saudi Arabia], protecting their crosses, churches, and priests as an Islamic pledge to them. So Muslims and Christians lived together in Damascus, Baghdad, Aleppo and Cairo.

Here I am talking about such a wonderful history, but I feel sad that this beautiful way of life is disappearing from our life today. It is a sad situation in which people have been driven back to conflict and struggle between mosques and churches. In this context Hagia Sofia [in Istanbul] has been brought back into politics instead of the beautiful symbolism of a great church building in the Islamic world center. This symbolism is no longer there now, bringing people back again to the mosque-church struggle.

I have always wished for this historic monument to be a place for brotherhood between religious followers, and a home for compassion, forgiveness and love, and that Istanbul would have a great international role in taking care of religions and

establishing an international brotherhood of humanity.

I wanted to take this opportunity and appeal to the decision-makers in Istanbul, in the hope that these values can be preserved in their new plan, that a clear space remains in this great historic monument of religious brotherhood, and that efforts and energies can be united to build the culture of peace and prevent the culture of revenge from returning.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who organized this meeting for us, and I hope my message is clear. I would like to say that we are all required to spread the culture of peace and love between people.

We need, in every city in the world, a house of God that transcends the small boundaries of denominations and is accommodating to all people of God without discrimination:

"And for Allah is the East and the West, therefore, wherever you turn, there is Allah; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."

---

*To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).*

[Print Email](#)

## ABOUT UPF

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

[Founders](#)

[Global Peace Council](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

## TOOLS

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for Reports](#)

## SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Email Address:\*

[Subscribe](#)

## FOLLOW US



We are an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector dedicated to achieving world peace. UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of marriage and family.

**Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**  
**We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

Copyright ©2006-2020 Universal Peace Federation. All rights reserved  
[Login](#) | [webmaster@upf.org](mailto:webmaster@upf.org)  
[About the Founders](#) | [United Nations](#) | [ECOSOC](#) | [Sustainable Development Goals](#) | [Home](#)



FOLLOW US



Search ...

Go

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

[JUL 28: Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations](#)

[AUG 1: Sunhak 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition](#)

[AUG 9: Online Rally of Hope](#)

[AUG 19: UN World Humanitarian Day](#)

[SEP 21: UN International Day of Peace](#)

[SEP 21: UPF-UK: Seeking Racial Harmony](#)

[OCT 24: United Nations Day](#)

LANGUAGES

[Français - French](#)

[Español - Spanish](#)

[русский - Russian](#)

[Italiano - Italian](#)

Speeches

**U. ANGELUCCI: ADDRESS TO FIRST MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALK**

Written by Umberto Angelucci, regional chair of UPF for the Middle East  
Thursday, July 16, 2020

*Address to First Middle East Peace Talk, July 16, 2020*

Good evening to everyone: Ambassadors for Peace, colleagues, brothers and sisters.

It is a pleasure to be with you again. It has been a long time since some of us met at the World Summit 2020, last February in Korea. That was an incredible experience, I am sure you all agree.

I have been listening to your insightful speeches and appreciate your devotion to peace in the Middle East.

We all know that the Middle East at this time is facing different challenges, and to overcome this situation, we must come up with drastic solutions.

The coronavirus has affected us in many ways. Already it has been four months since it started, and it seems as though the situation is not going to change. This is affecting us in different ways. We need to think how we are going to respond to this challenge.

Due to the coronavirus we are requested to keep social distance and not have much personal interaction. We are isolated, and unnecessary fear is being created. There is a feeling of loss and disappointment.

At the same time this situation is forcing us to look at new ways to reach out to each other; otherwise it would be a disaster. We know that through isolation and separation we cannot create a prosperous and peaceful world. The only way is to interact and get involved in the problems of our society.

The founders of the Universal Peace Federation, Father and Mother Moon, are calling all Ambassadors for Peace to join hands and take action together based on the principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

The idea of this forum is to create the platform to find new ways to solve the problems of our society.

I would like to share with you one of Mother Moon's biggest concerns. She is planning to support the peaceful unification of North and South Korea and thinking how all of us can contribute as a network of peacemakers.

As you may know, South Korea after the Korean War was in a disastrous situation: The entire country was devastated by the war. Because many nations from all over the world contributed to the rebuilding of South Korea under the banner of the United Nations, we can see a prosperous South Korea today.

The country by itself could never have reached this level of development alone; only with the support of the international community could this happen. This is one effective example of interdependence and mutual prosperity in our history.

Likewise, Father Moon during his life contributed greatly to the development of North Korea. He met Kim Il Sung, the president at the time, and made agreements on the peaceful unification of the peninsula. He made many economic developments with his personal investment for cultural exchange, industry, and tourism.

Mother Moon is planning on visiting North Korea soon to finalize this dream, and she will invite many high-level dignitaries to join her.

In preparation for this visit, she will hold a series of online Rallies of Hope, and the first will be on August 9. We hope you can join her and demonstrate your support for her peace initiatives and efforts. She is continuing the effort to unite the Korean Peninsula using these same principles of investing unconditionally and living for the sake of others.

As many of you are familiar, we have similar initiatives in other parts of the world such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

In the Middle East we held the Middle East Peace Initiative programs for many years, bringing Israeli and Palestinian brothers together in peace. Also, we have organized conferences with Parliamentarians for Peace and made memoranda of understanding with other peace-minded organizations in the United Arab Emirates and Morocco.

We have organized projects to face the issues of Syria, interreligious harmony, educating youth to become Youth Ambassadors for Peace and serving refugees, to name a few.

From this forum we would like to encourage all Ambassadors for Peace to come up with new peace initiatives targeting specific issues such as Syria, Yemen, etc.

To conclude: In order to solve the problems of the world, we need to apply in our life the principle of interdependence and mutual prosperity based on universal values. Unless we live for the sake of others, there will be no final solutions to the problems

of the world.

Unless we respect our Creator God and the principles by which He created this universe, we will not be able to establish a harmonious and prosperous society.

Let us find many common points through this forum and take the lead in bringing solutions to the Middle East and the world.

Once again, thank you very much for your contribution to this initiative. May God bless you all.

---

To go back to the first Middle East Peace Talk article, [click here](#).

[Print Email](#)

#### ABOUT UPF

[Donate](#)

[Mission](#)

[Contact](#)

[Principles](#)

[Founders](#)

[Global Peace Council](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

#### TOOLS

[Downloads](#)

[Guidelines for Reports](#)

#### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Email Address:\*

[Subscribe](#)

#### FOLLOW US



We are an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector dedicated to achieving world peace. UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of marriage and family.

Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Copyright ©2006-2020 Universal Peace Federation. All rights reserved

[Login](#) | [webmaster@upf.org](mailto:webmaster@upf.org)

[About the Founders](#) | [United Nations](#) | [ECOSOC](#) | [Sustainable Development Goals](#) | [Home](#)