

UPF EUME: Muslim and Sikh Scholars Explore Shared Values and Vision

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June 20, 2026



UPF-EUME – A webinar titled "Bridges of Love" brought together Sikh and Muslim scholars on June 20, 2026, to highlight the shared values and vision of these two distinct faiths. The program was hosted by UPF-Europe and the Middle East (UPF-EUME) and the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development.

The starting point for this webinar was the publication of a book by the same name, the result of a pioneering collaboration between two visionaries, Dr. Surender Singh Kandhari, chairman of the Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar, and Dr. Mohamad Habash, chairman of the Center for Studies on Human Fraternity, both in the United Arab Emirates. The book "Bridges of Love," with contributions from five scholars in each faith, was launched in Abu Dhabi the day before the webinar.



The webinar featured four speakers, two Sikh and two Muslim, and was introduced and moderated by **Mr. David Fraser Harris**, secretary general of UPF-EUME. The speakers explored the common themes highlighted in the book, including monotheism, service to others, patience and coexistence, emphasizing that both faiths believe in one supreme Creator and stress compassion and selfless service to humanity.

While the book is based on scholarly research, the webinar was noticeably personal and informal, filled with mutual respect and genuine enthusiasm. The program opened with the screening of a video which

had been prepared for the book launch. The narrator's words aptly capture the attitude underlying the whole project: "Bridges are not built by those who stay on their side of the river; they are built by those who believe the other shore is worth reaching."

Dr. Mohamad Habash, a Syrian jurist and religious scholar, explained the project's foundation in Islamic principles of tolerance and coexistence. He noted that the project, supported by the Human Fraternity Center and Guru Durbar Temple, has received patronage from Sheikh Ali al-Hashimi and involves collaboration with scholars from both faiths. The initiative plans to organize a major conference in India to promote understanding and reconciliation between the two communities, with Dr. Kandhari set to lead this effort.



Dr. Surender Singh Kandhari described the book as "a humble prayer and a reminder that faith was never meant to divide humanity," but rather "bring us closer to the Creator and closer to one another." He highlighted the example of lifelong companionship between Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana Ji as a beautiful example of interfaith harmony, where their friendship demonstrated that religion can serve as a bridge rather than a wall when the heart is connected to the divine. He described the book as "written to celebrate the values that bring us together." While recognizing the distinct identity, beauty and discipline of each faith, "we must recognize the shared light... Today the world needs these values more than ever. We have enough wars. What we need now is dialogue, respect, love in action."



Dr. Ismail Yassin, a former lecturer at Damascus University and current director of the Al Salam Center

and Mosque in Vienna, referenced Islamic teachings about unity and coexistence, including Quranic verses about all people belonging to God and living in fraternity. He emphasized that the shared principles of equality, purity, service and monotheism between Islam and Sikhism can pave the way for a better future not only between these religions but also between many different groups and nations. He told the story of a Sikh businessman named Gurvinder, who had attended his Friday sermons but wondered why no one asked about his religion. "This mosque is not my mosque," replied Dr. Yassin; "it belongs to Allah, and Allah is your God and my God."



Historian **Mr. Simar Singh**, an internationally recognized heritage scholar and cultural diplomat, and the world's youngest Sikh historian, shared historical examples of cooperation between Muslims and Sikhs, including Guru Nanak's companionship with Muslim musicians. He spoke of the time when a Sikh guru in Punjab commissioned a mosque for the Muslims and laid the foundation stone himself; while it was a Muslim scholar who laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple, the center of the Sikh world. All this is echoed in Dubai, where the Muslim ruler has opened the way for the building of the Sikh gurdwara.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on the shared values between Sikhism and Islam, focusing on themes of service, patience and religious harmony. Mr. Simar Singh emphasized the common spiritual and ethical foundations of both faiths, highlighting historical examples of cooperation and mutual respect. Dr. Kandhari explained the concepts of langar and seva in Sikhism, while Dr. Habash, in response to a question about service, pointed out that in "Bridges of Love," the Islamic article on serving others was written by Eng. Mamoun Dyoub, an Ismaili Muslim who was able to write about the humanitarian work of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Development. The panelists also explored how concepts like patience (sabr in Islam) and divine will (hukam in Sikhism) are shared across both traditions.

The hope shared by all the speakers is beautifully expressed in these words, taken from Dr. Kandhari's concluding remarks in the book itself: "May you be a lighthouse of tolerance in your own community. And may the friendship between our two great faiths – Sikhism and Islam – grow stronger with every passing day, rooted in mutual respect and watered by the spirit of service. The road ahead is long, but we do not walk it alone. The One Creator walks with us."