

Partnership for Peace in the Middle East

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The eighteenth yearly Women's Conference for Middle East Peace

We would like to introduce the eighteenth annual Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East and the tenth anniversary of the "Women of Peace"—Middle East Peace Initiative, which were hosted by the Women's Federation for World Peace from May 8 to May 16 in Amman, Jordan and Jerusalem, Israel.

Endless religious conflict and war have caused a buildup of tension within the land of Canaan, which has caused distrust and antagonism to become deeply rooted over time. Thanks to True Parents' interfaith movement and dialogue between religions, the flower of peace has been planted in the Middle East.

In mid-May 2014, woman leaders came with motherly love from around the world. Their cries for peace in the Middle East resounded. Hosted by the Women's Federation for World Peace International, the eighteenth annual Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East was grandly held under the title, "Women's Partnership in Achieving Peace and Harmony in the Middle East and the World" in Amman, Jordan, where leaders discussed the role of women in preserving peace.



The 120 leaders, who came from about forty nations, all agreed that specifically because of their position and responsibility within the family, women represent the starting point of global peace. During the opening ceremony, Mrs. Lan Young Moon, international president of WFWP, stated in her welcoming remarks that Middle East peace is directly connected to world peace. She added that she hoped the participants, who came from nations throughout the Middle East, would share their wisdom and experiences.

During the first session, presenters passionately spoke about "Mothers Raising Children in Dignity and Peace," marking the beginning of the four-day peace conference. Ms. Reem Najjar, president of YWCA Jordan, brought up the continuing political confusion in neighboring countries and emphasized the urgent need for interest and support from the international society in realizing freedom and peace in these areas.

The fifth presentation, "But I will Not Hate," was given by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish. Even though he had lost his three daughters through the shelling of his home by an Israeli tank, he refused to give in to any temptation to seek revenge.

His lecture, which emphasized the role of women and the peace movement, triggered sympathy from many audience members, who were moved to tears. According to him, women are the world's only hope because they alone give birth to life. He suggested a family-centered ideology, "familiarity," as a method to build peace. The Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East was one part of the Middle East Peace Initiative, a movement that was started under True Parents' directions after the attack on New York's World Trade Center in 2001.

On the last day, participants read a resolution, emphasizing that female leaders seeking peace must take the lead in bringing an end to violence and death through their emphasizing education, cooperation and solidarity. They proclaimed that men and women must work hand in hand in overcoming the barriers between race, regions, culture and people. After the event, the leaders visited a hospital for Syrian refugees. Expressing their motherly love in small ways, they comforted the patients, who suffered as a result of the endless civil war in their nation.



Setting off on their peace march

Visiting the Holy Grounds

After the leaders finished their scheduled program, they visited a holy ground that True Parents had designated, where they shouted with all their might three cheers of *eog mansei* for the settlement of peace in the Middle East. Following this, they visited historical sites mentioned in the Bible, through which they could renew their understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament and had time to follow Jesus' footprints.

The leaders all sang a holy song at the shore of Lake Galilee, where Jesus spoke to Peter, determined to reject hatred and achieve peace. Participants were able to understand the Middle East and its historical significance. This opportunity helped everyone realize the preciousness of the Completed Testament era and the establishment of Cheon Il Guk, initiatives accomplished through True Parents' providence.

Women of Peace Tenth Anniversary

Following the first event, the Universal Peace Federation and the Women's Federation for World Peace co-hosted the tenth anniversary of Women of Peace, a door-to-door plea for peace in Gaza and Israel, under the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) in Jerusalem, Israel. Religious leaders from all walks of life met in Jerusalem and signed the May 18, 2003 Jerusalem Declaration, which was proclaimed at that time to spark peace in the Middle East and to realize harmony and peace between religions. This initiative has continued to play a role in the fledgling peace movement centered on civilian diplomacy.

The first session covered MEPI's history and vision. True Father first visited Israel in 1965. True Parents have been working and supporting the peace movement in an effort to bring peace to the volatile lands of the Middle East. In his welcoming address, Dr. Chang Shik Yang introduced our late Father, who lived his entire life for the sake of world peace. Dr. Yang went on to suggest ways to resolve the problems in the Middle East.

The second session on Israeli– Palestinian Cooperation was held in a school in Palestine amidst leaders from different walks of life. Despite the difficult economic situation, many practical efforts have been made to educate students in order that they might actively participate in society; money that was raised after seeing such efforts was conveyed to the school on this day. The Jordan River Green Zone Project that has been carried out, encompassing both Judaism and Islam, was emphasized during the session. This was a time through which woman leaders became convinced that a day would come when the people of Palestine and Israel would be able to live together in one community of heart.

The third session was conducted at the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, under the theme, "Peacebuilding and Reconciliation." Around seventy women and religious leaders from different countries partook in this session. Knesset authorities took part in the session, which developed into a significant time through which everyone shared ways to relieve the religious disputes and conflicts happening in the Middle East.

The Peace Walk, the final program of Women of Peace, started from the Jaffa Gate. Before the walk, a prayer for peace was offered. Participants walked in a line for two kilometers to the Western Wall (all that remains of the Second Temple, which was destroyed in ad 70) passing by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Walking through the Christian zone, the Muslim zone and the Jewish zone, leaders prayed that the holy ground becomes a peaceful land with people sharing love among each other, overcoming all religious barriers.

The peace conference was meaningful as women of diverse faiths including Christianity, Taoism, Judaism and Islam engaged with one another and discussed peace at the conference. All participating leaders at the Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East promised to provide substantial support for peace and to continue peace-building activities in the Middle East with the hope that when they all meet again peace will have settled in the land.