

## UPF Norway's World Interfaith Harmony Week Event in Jewish Museum in Oslo

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UPF Norway celebrated "World Interfaith Harmony Week" with an event in the Jewish museum in Oslo on the 15th February, 2018. We have been in churches, mosques and temples before – this time a Jewish surrounding served as our venue.

The topic for the event was «World Peace Through Interreligious Harmony–Cooperation based on common values»

The program opened with religious representatives lighting candles for peace. As each one lit their candle, a holy text was read. The Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist representatives offered a short meditation for peace as a conclusion.

Following the opening ceremony, a panel of five speakers took their seats. The MC wished everyone welcome and explained the background for the initiative.

The Muslim speaker, often interviewed in Norwegian media, commented on the title «Common values – different practices». -At their core, all religions have similar values. When conflicts arise, it is usually in contradiction to the message from our sacred texts, he said.

The second speaker, a Christian lady minister from the organization Areopagos, spoke on the topic of globalization of religion.

Our part of the world used to be a homogeneous society where interfaith dialog was hardly heard of, except for the specially interested. It is not like that anymore. Today interfaith dialogue is a necessity. She also emphasized that such dialogues are usually a positive stimulation for both sides.

Our third speaker, the first female rabbi in Scandinavia, elaborated on the topic «Bridges across opposites». As a female rabbi, and pioneer for the role of women in a Jewish Orthodox community, she could give practical advice on the topic.

As a general metaphor she used the body as an example and said: All religions or cultures can be compared with the different organs in the body, we all have a purpose connected to the whole and need to work in harmony.

The next speaker was the head monk from the Oslo Buddhist Vihara, a Srilankan Buddhist community, who spoke on the topic «Religion and peace». He stated that religion is a positive force. Wars occur from other causes than our spiritual background. Many people think about changing the world, but very few think about changing themselves. Only peace based on inner peace is stable in the long run, he concluded.

The final speaker was the Norwegian UPF leader. His topic was «The role of religion in the 21st century». He opened with a definition of religion – to bind together, in the form of binding ourselves with God, the origin or the universal ideal.

The role of religion is to provide a spiritual path toward this goal, he said. He also suggested that we are all part of a greater masterplan which is greater than any of the individual religions and we need to cooperate to fulfill this plan

Our event was organized at very short notice and was attended by around 30 participants. Refreshments and social sharing closed the event.

