

# “As Syrian in Finland”

## UPF Event

Helsinki, Finland, 4. November 2013



UPF-Finland was the host of an evening event on understanding Syria. An audience of some 30 persons consisted of Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Unificationist faiths alike, old and young.

First, the UPF as an organizer introduced the thought and visions of its founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon for the world peace.

Peace is to be achieved in line with the Creator's ideal for human being and the world. UPF provides insight, fellowship and participation for all peace-searching persons. It is a forum for dialogue and cooperation.

The speaker on the evening's theme "As a Syrian in Finland" was Mr. Anas Hajjar, himself having been born in Syria and living in Finland since 26 years. He is now an imam with one of the Muslim communities in Finland and a chairman of the Finnish national Islam council.

He first described his experiences as an immigrant in Finland as difficult getting into the Finnish society, but once you learned the language and could break the ice through the initially reserved nature of Finns, you could have open and friendly sharing.

As for the Muslim faith community it takes a lot of administrative effort to establish themselves.

About Syria: There are several ethnic and religious populations that have been living side by side for a long time in the past, not in real freedom, but in relative peace.

The present conflict has been triggered by the spreading of "Arabic spring".

With decades of dominance by the Baath-grouping, there has not been space for any opposition in a democratic sense.

Mr. Hajjar refrained from predicting further development in Syria, except that the present administration will not be able to hold its position in any future arrangement.

Three commentators, Mr. Burhan Hamdon (Chairman of the Syrian Association), Mrs. Fatima Usman (Chairwoman of African-European Association) and Mr. Rony Smolar (Jewish Community leader) rounded the issue with specific comments and questions. i.e. specific causes of the present conflict, or the possible role of women in the reconciliation process.

The evening concluded over refreshments with a vivid sharing in an enthusiastic atmosphere among the participants, many of whom knew each other from previous UPF meetings and activities.

Hannu Hassinen