

## Israel observes International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

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*“Women should work together, take initiative, and empower one another across traditional lines of race, culture and religion to create healthy families as the cornerstone of the culture of peace”*  
– Rev. Sun Myung Moon, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen* (pg. 199)

**Haifa, Israel** -- UPF-Israel and the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP)-Israel joined forces to organize a one-day seminar in observance of the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2016 on November 23. Twelve women from four different faith traditions discussed questions related to the responsibility of women in creating a safe and better society where woman and man hold equal value, and thus mutually respect, help and support one another, and disallow any form of violence, humiliation or disrespect in the family.

The seminar comprised of two sessions. The first one was dedicated to subject of **The Position of Women in Front of God**. Questions of essence were raised: Were women created in the image of God? And if so, what are God’s expectations of women? Do women share equal value in front of God? Or were they created having less value than men?

Rabbanit Esther Bardea said that man and woman were created in equal value in the eyes of God. “They do have different missions in life,” she added. “But their value as human beings created in the image of God is equal.” Mrs. Karima Katily, a member of the Christian Arab community in Acre, a city in the northern coastal plain region in Israel, spoke of the heart connection between husband and wife: “God did not create the woman from Adam’s tow – so the man will not be superior on the woman. God did not create the woman from Adam’s part of the head – so that the woman will not be superior on the man. God created the woman from Adam’s rib – a place close to the heart, and in the middle of the body. Thus, they are both equal and connected through the heart.”

Following the discussion on the ideal of equal value of men and women in front of God, the practical reality of **The Position of Woman in Front of the Husband and Family** was discussed. The following questions were considered: Is there a correlation between the way women value themselves and the violence women face? What is our responsibility towards women? How can we help women to push away any kind of violence that is directed towards them?

Mrs. Patrishia Relf, from the Netanya synagogue, shared painfully how once the women she supports start to realize their equal value, their husbands bring up divorce. The husbands are used to having submissive wives, and once the wives start to enjoy freedom, the husbands want to divorce. Thus, said Mrs. Relf, we need to involve the husbands as well and teach them that women are equal in value to men.

Mrs. Tamam Waked-Dabach, the principle of a Christian-Muslim school in Jdayde Maker village, expressed her concern for women who are not aware of the equal value that the Holy scriptures give to them. Due to misinterpretations of the Holy book’s words, many women are taught to believe that their role in the family is to be the servant of the husband. “It is our responsibility to teach young girls and young boys in their school years – to learn their equal value, so once they arrive to marriage life, they are

prepared”.

Mrs. Katily said that both husband and wife should first bow to God, then they can bow out of respect to each other. It is wrong if a husband expects the wife to bow down to him first and vice versa. She concluded with concern: “We suffered from being mistreated. It is our responsibility to make sure that the next generation would not suffer like this. Boys should be educated. Boys should learn that they should not treat women as their slaves, and yet they can and should receive love and respect from their wives. Girls should learn that they have equal value in front of God. They are daughters of the king of kings; they are princess not slaves.”

Mrs. Lazar mentioned that fewer people are valuing the family and respect toward parents and the elderly is declining. “This should be changed,” said Mrs. Lazar. When the value of the family is appreciated—naturally, there will be more harmony in the family.

Some of the participants shared their course of pain in the family and what they have done to overcome disharmony and being disrespected in the family. The discussions and the content of the sessions had an empowering effect on all the participants, who are determined to take an active role in helping and supporting other women, other men, other families.

The meeting concluded with a reading of an excerpt from UPF founder, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon’s autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, about the family as the school of love: “The family is the only institution created by God. It is the school of love where people can learn how to love each other and live together in peace.” (pg. 207)

#### **Participants:**

- **Rabbanit Esther Bardea** – Ambassador for Peace and a former director of the College for Education and Professional Training
- **Mrs. Mitsuko Ben Zvi** – senior advisor of WFWP-Israel
- **Mrs. Badira Birani** – representative of the Druze community
- **Mrs. Tamam Dabach-Waked** – principal of a Christian-Muslim school in Jadeida
- **Dr. Nurit Hirschfeld** – secretary general of UPF-Israel
- **Mrs. Karima Katily** – Ambassador for Peace from Acre
- **Ms. Toshika Kamijo** – director of the youth department of UPF-Middle East
- **Mrs. Miri Kamar Miri** – former president of WFWP-Israel
- **Mrs. Patricia Relf** – Ambassador for Peace and a member of the Netanya synagogue
- **Mrs. Rosa Shmueli** – former president of WFWP-Israel
- **Mrs. Adi Sasaki** – president of WFWP-Israel
- **Mrs. Liel Whiller Hill** – secretary general of WFWP-Israel
- **Mrs. Osnat Yahel-Lazare** – Ambassador of Peace from Pardesiya