

UN International

Day of Peace

2013

The worshippers of the All-Merciful are they who tread gently upon the earth, and when the ignorant address them, they reply, "Peace!" – Qur'an, 25:63.

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The General Assembly of the United Nations declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples. The International Day of Peace was established in 1981.

During the International Day of Peace, local schools, churches, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and community organisations are invited to observe the day by accepting visitors. Last year, thousands of Islamic centres in the UK and overseas led their local communities in observing the day.

Highlights and overview

Friday 20 September

This year, on Friday 20 September, the London Muslim Centre and The Cordoba Foundation invited visitors from various organisations after Friday Prayers (Salaatul-Jumu'a) to exchange messages of peace, to celebrate local peace-building activities and to enjoy the hospitality offered. The Friday sermon delivered by Imam Abdul-Qayyum focused on Hajj and peace. He said "Hajj leads to inner peace and tranquility".

The event after Jumu'a was opened and moderated by Abdullah Faliq, Head of Research at The Cordoba Foundation. Dilowar Khan, Executive Director of the London Muslim Centre welcomed all to the centre, stating how the centre is open to all. Other speakers included Neil Jameson - Director of London Citizens and Dr Angus Ritchie - Director of the Contextual Theology Centre in London. Participants hailed from different faith backgrounds, the media, community leaders, academics including Professor Włodzimierz Korcz from Poland and students from Queen Mary, University of London.





Saturday 21 September

On Saturday 21, the Christian-Muslim Forum supported a Peace Walk in Luton, which was joined by people from different backgrounds. Julian Bond, Director for the Christian-Muslim Forum said "the Peace Day was a great opportunity for the Christian Muslim Forum to collaborate with Muslim and other interfaith organizations to show practically: Christians and Muslims working together publicly and inclusively; give a real sense of how people of faith really are committed to peace; engage with a date in the calendar that has wider public appeal and moves beyond the 'usual suspects' and 'preaching to the converted'".

North London Reform Synagogue welcomed Christian, Muslim and Sikh guests to the Shabbat service and to refreshments in the sukkah afterwards. Sukkot (Feast of Booths or Tabernacles) is one of the three biblically based pilgrimage holidays known as the shalosh regalim. It is an agricultural festival that originally was considered a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. Sukkot are hut-like structures that the Jews lived in during the 40 years of travel through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. As a temporary dwelling, the sukkah also represents the fact that all existence is fragile, and therefore Sukkot is a time to appreciate the shelter of our homes and our bodies.



Sunday 22 September

On Sunday 22, Londoners from various cultures came to fly across the Thames together and exchanged viewpoints about peace and peace-building. The idea behind this unique event was to encourage the “meeting of people who would normally not talk to each other”, said organiser David Wardrop (United Nations Association, Westminster).

The journey from North Greenwich to Newham in the cabins of the Emirates Airline was punctuated by a break at the Crystal’s Café, where participants continued their conversation focusing on dialogue and peace. The event ended with all participants awarded certificates.









Other activities and events

Over the weekend, religious centres and institutions organised similar events and activities throughout the UK.

> The Oxford Islamic Information Centre & Global Ceasefire Project held a series of talks and discussions at the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, in Oxford. Dr Sheikh Ramzy, Director of project hoped people would “work together to bring peace to a world increasingly fractured and at war, so we may restore hope and happiness on earth for our children”. He further said, “Our children deserve more than a diseased, war-torn, damaged planet”.

> Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Centre in London organised an interfaith event where many important religious and community leaders converged to express solidarity with the victims of attacks on a church in Peshawar, with those of recent attacks on other religious communities including in Iraq and victims of the attack on the Westgate Centre in Nairobi. Speakers condemned the attacks, expressed solidarity with the victims and explored ways in which the voices of peace could more effectively work together. Chaired by Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi, speakers included the Anglican Bishop of Kingston, Ayatollah Fazel Milani (Al-Khoei Islamic Centre), Moulana Shahed Raza (British Muslim Forum), Dr Shuja Shafi (Muslim Council of Britain), Revd. Rana Khan (Forum for International Relations Development), Catriona Robertson (London Boroughs Faiths Network), Syed Ali Raza Rizvi (Majlis Ulema, Europe), Fr Habib Jajou (Chaldean Catholic Mission), Revd Toby Howarth (Lambeth Palace), Revd Nadeem Nassar (Awareness Foundation), Harriet Crabtree (Inter Faith Network UK) and Yousif Al-Khoei (Al-Khoei Foundation).

> The Muslim Association of Britain organised a Peace Candle Vigil, on Saturday 21 September at the Piccadilly (Peace) Gardens, in Manchester.

> St. Peter's Walworth Church of England joined with the Old Kent Road Mosque in London to develop their joint project on praying for peace. Visitors and leaders from the Old Kent Road Mosque were received at the Church service on Sunday, to observe the morning service to mark the UN International Day of Peace.



> A Sukkot sermon on peace was delivered at Alyth Synagogue in North London. Marking the International Day of Peace, Rabbi Maurice Michaels said “peace is of the highest importance in Judaism.”

> Wandsworth Quakers held a silent Vigil for Peace on a busy shopping street and shared ideas for peace-making with over 800 passers-by.





> Over 100 people from different faiths took part in a Peace Walk organised by Hillingdon Inter Faith Network.

A number of churches and synagogues opened their doors to people of other faiths, to observe their religious ceremony where messages of peace were promoted and exchanged. A Sunday service at the Church of St Giles, Cripplegate, located at the very heart of London, welcomed guests from other communities as part of Peace Day.

Similar events and activities were held abroad, including in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Dr Hussein Effendi Kavazovic issued a message of peace ahead of the Peace Day, where he said "All religious teachings foster peace, because only the peace gives a chance to people to save their souls and live in harmony with each other."



MESSAGE OF GRAND MUFTI OF BOSNIA
HE HUSEIN EF. KAVAZOVIC
FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

"Today, we perceive religion as a tissue that connects our kind on Earth. At the same time, it interprets and clarifies the meaning of our lives.

All religious teachings foster peace, because only the peace gives a chance to people to save their souls and live in harmony with each other.

The Qur'an teaches that one of the God's names is the Peace-Giver and the Overseer (Qur'an Al-Hashr, 23).

Monotheistic religions profess a belief in one God, who addressed the people by His word, which is preserved in the books. These books we study and interpret. The books say that God created Adam from the first substance of its existence: We created man from an extract of clay (Qur'an, Al Muminun, 12).

The Prophet of Islam said: You are the sons of Adam, and Adam was created from clay (AlTirnidhi, Sunen).

In this, seemingly simple act of creation we recognize the following: God did not create people to fight one another and shed blood of each other nor to live in such triviality and be driven by such frivolous urges.

On the occasion of September 21, the International Day of Peace we pray to God to guide us to the paths of peace and that we resort to each other in order to overcome an abyss between us."

Sarajevo, September 19th 2013.
Husein ef. Kavazovic
Grand Mufti of Bosnia

About the organisers

The International Day of Peace initiative has been led in the UK by a coalition of organisations headed by Catriona Robertson, convenor of the London Peace Network and the London Boroughs Faith Network. In addition to these two organisations, other partners include Peace One Day, The Cordoba Foundation, Christian Muslim Forum, Majlis-e-Ulama Europe, United Nations Association (Westminster), Al-Khoei Foundation, Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, London Muslim Centre, Muslim Council of Britain, Faiths Forum for London, and Churches Together in England.



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The Cordoba Foundation is delighted to be part of the International Day of Peace initiative. The initiative is both timely and important, as we all desire for a world that is just and peaceful”.

Dr Anas Altikriti, CEO – The Cordoba Foundation

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The UN International Day of Peace brought together people from a huge variety of backgrounds. They shared ‘Flights for Peace’ across the Thames and were welcomed to each other’s places of worship. I visited an Islamic school with a Greek Orthodox priest on Friday and a synagogue with a Shi’a scholar and a Sikh for the Shabbat service on Saturday. There were walks of peace, seminars, shared silence and various peace ceremonies. There is an appetite on the ground for peace and it is an inspiration that so many different religious and community organisations worked in partnership this year.”

Catriona Robertson, Convenor, London Peace Network.

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