

A significant initiative of building bridges of trust and love among religions at Peace Center Lahore

Celebration of the International Day of Peace

The United Religions Initiative (URI) Pakistan and Peace Center in Lahore organized a grand



celebration of International Day of Peace on 21st of September, 2017. A very impressive and significant crowd of more than 150 Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religious leaders, human rights activists, promoters on interfaith harmony, scholars, professors, students

from various universities and colleges as well as youth and women from different walks of life participated in this grand event. All came together under one roof to express their utmost wish to promote peace in Pakistan and around the globe. It was a very significant expression of interreligious dialogue and of building bridges of trust and love among religions and nations.

The theme was the same as announced by the UN “Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity



for All.” His Grace, Most Rev. Sebastian Shaw, Archbishop of Lahore Presided over, whereas, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Grand Imam of Badshahi Mosque, Lahore was the Chief Guest. The Guests of Honor included: Fr. Pascal Paulus OP, Fr.

Nadeem Francis OFM Cap, Dr. Munawar Chand (Hindu), Sardar Janam Singh (Sikh), Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid, Dr. Kanwal Feroze, Mrs. Shabnam Nagi, Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad Farooq, Fr. Inayat Bernard, Dr. Sadia Omer, the Rev. Shahid Mehraj and Allama Mufti Ashiq Hussain.

The program started with planting of an olive tree in the lawn of the Peace Center by the Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, Mufti Ashiq Hussain, Sardar Janam Singh and other participants. The plant was donated by Fr. Nadeem Francis as a symbol of peace among religions and cultures. This was followed by releasing balloons and doves as symbols of peace in the world. Prayers were offered by representatives of Christianity, Islam, Hindu and Sikh religions.



Fr. James Channan OP welcomed all the guests. He gave a brief history of the International Day of Peace and explained theme of this year;



Fr. James Channan OP

“Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All”. He expressed his gratitude to the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Antonio Guterres and his video message at this event. He said that today we will put special emphasis on the sufferings of Muslims of Rohingya and offer solidarity with them. We also pray that there should never be a nuclear war. He also highly admired the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted by 122

countries in the UN on 7th of July, 2017. To deny nuclear weapons is good news and a message of life for the world. He further said all kind of arms, especially nuclear bombs, bring destruction in the world and such kind of war is condemned. Our religions teach peace and each one of us must work for peace and put Golden Rule into practice that “Do unto Others what you would like them to do unto you.” (Matt. 7.12)

The video message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Antonio Guterres, on IDP



Sr. Sabina Rifat

was presented on multi-media. He said; “On the International Day of Peace we reflect the cruel price of war, ruined schools, bombed hospitals, broken families, refugees searching for hope, countries in crises. The United Nations was born from terrible world war; our mission is to work for peace - every day and everywhere. No group interest, National ambition and political differences should be allowed to put peace at risk. On this International Day we call for global

ceasefire, we must never-ever stop pressing for an end to armed conflict. Peace is the right and desire of all people.” Sr. Sabina read the Urdu translation of this message. She also recited a poem on peace and harmony.

Miss Asmara Daud and Faisal Ilyas presented video presentation on the sufferings of Muslims of Rohingya. All expressed their grave concern for the persecutions of Muslims of Ruhingya and asked the government of Myanmar to solve their sufferings as a priority. Appeal was also made to the Secretary-General of the UN to get these crises solved soon.

During this very prestigious ceremony, Mr. Asher Nazir made announcement about the “African



Recipients of Peace Awards from Africa

Interfaith Harmony Award of the Year” given by the URI Africa to Fr James Channan and Maulana Abdual Khabir Azad in recognition of their remarkable and impressive work in bringing healing and reconciliation among people of all religions, especially Muslims and Christians. Fr James Channan received this award by Ambassador Dr. Mussie Hailu in Sarajevo, Bosnia on 15th of September. His Grace, Sebastian Shaw, Archbishop of Lahore presented this

international award to Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad. It was a moment of great jubilation for the entire gathering. Both Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad and Fr



His Excellency Archbishop Sebastian Shaw

James Channan accepted this award with great joy and thanked URI Africa and especially Ambassador Dr. Mussie Hailu for declaring them the winners of this international Golden Rule Peace Award.

His Excellency Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, congratulated for the wonderful celebrations and the meaningful speeches of the honorable guests. He said today we are very happy to celebrate the IDP. He said peace is a state which of mind which urges us for love and mercy towards other. It also helps us to see the mercy of God. He is always merciful and loving. God wants that we must also show mercy towards others, so that there is peace around the globe. He congratulated by Fr. James Channan and Maulana Azad for receiving international award from Africa. He strongly condemned the genocide of Burma Muslims and wished to have peace over there. He appreciated the video presentation on the sufferings of Muslims in Rohingya and prayed for the world peace and end of violence against humanity.



Maulana Abdual Khabir Azad

Maulana Abdual Khabir Azad said: “I am feeling very honored and immensely excited for receiving the ‘African Interfaith Harmony Award of the Year.’ I thank the URI Africa for choosing me and Fr James Channan for this prestigious award.” After that he expressed his deep sadness over the situation of Muslims in Myanmar. He said, “It is very shocking and disturbing to know the situation of Myanmar. Their government is persecuting and killing Muslims and chasing them out of Myanmar. I

appeal to the UN to take note of this and provide relief to Muslims. Today is the Peace Day and I pray to Almighty Allah for peace in the world and especially in Myanmar.”

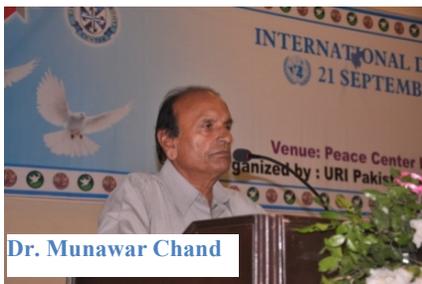
Fr. Pascal Paulus OP- Prior vice Provincial, Dominican Order Pakistan said, “I am very happy to



Fr. Pascal Paulus OP

see you all in this Peace Center for the celebration of International Day of Peace.” He congratulated the organizers. He said, “Let us be channels of peace and remain cool like diamonds. Let us be the heralds of the good news.”

Rev. Fr Francis Nadeem OFM Cap also highly appreciated the program. He laid great stress on the more affective role of the UN in establish lasting peace. Allama Muhamamd Moed and Rev. Shahid Mehraj also spoke at the occasion.



Dr. Munawar Chand

Dr. Munawar Chand, a Hindu leader, admired the celebration of this IDP and congratulate Fr. James Channan and his team to organize this beautiful program. He said Hindu religion

teaches love for all and peace among all. A prominent Sikh leader Sardar Jaman Singh congratulated all at the celebration of IDP. He said that it is very important to overcome 4 things which bring disunity and intolerance among us and those are; complains, comparing, miscalculating and criticism. If we overcome all these vices we can make this world heaven on earth. For that we must start peace from our homes.”



Sardar Janam Singh



Allama Mohammad Zubair Abid

Rohingya.

Mr. Zahid Anwar, a Christian poet, recited a very moving poem which he had written to pay tribute to Fr. James Channan OP for his marvelous contributions toward promoting peace and harmony among people of all religions, especially Christians and Muslims. Zahid also highlighted his remarkable services and recognitions at levels and forums. He is the pride of the nation and God bless has blessed him abundantly and his mother Khursheed Channan has played a great role in his formation and making him a herald of peace. All enjoyed his poetry very much. Mr. Jarwaiz and Dominican students presented beautiful peace songs with their melodious voices. Furthermore Cake Cutting Ceremony for the celebration of Peace Day was carried out by the honorable guests and this created great charm to the celebrations. All guests shared cake and were delighted as well. Dominican brothers sung a moving peace song and everyone waved flags of various countries and wished peace, safety and dignity for all. This very impressive and colorful program ended with prayers for the world. Special word of thanks was extended to the hardworking team of URI and Peace Center; Fr. James Channan OP, Sr. Sabina Rifat, Asher Nazir, Ms. Asmara Daud, Faisal Ilyas and Ms. Neelam Nisari.



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