

UPF and FFWPU Sidon, Lebanon's 2021 Peace Road to National Unity

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November 6, 2021



Sidon, Lebanon - UPF held a "Peace Road" event with the aim of promoting national unity, especially among young people.

For five years, "Peace Road" events in Lebanon have been convened annually as bicycling celebrations in various districts around the country. However, recent incidents of violence between groups of Lebanese moved UPF, on November 6, 2021, to hold its first "Peace Road" event focusing on national unity.



Students from Lebanese American University and American University of Beirut were invited to participate, reaching across religious and cultural boundaries.

The event, titled "'Peace Road' to National Unity," was organized in collaboration with the Lebanese chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, and Sheikh Abou Zeid, a professor of comparative religion, law and contemporary Islamic thought.

Approximately 30 participants walked to two houses of worship in Sidon (Saida). Their first stop was the Aysha Mosque, where Sheikh Abou Zeid gave them an inspiring message. The next stop was the St. Nicolas Church, where Father Joseph Khoury and Father Ibrahim Saad welcomed the students and also

gave a great message.

At the start of the "Peace Road" walk, UPF-Lebanon President Thomas Schellen told the participants that a determined minority that advocates for peace and national unity, against the tides of division and mutual hatred in Lebanon, will be a majority with God.

The event thus sent a signal to communities and participants that national unity in Lebanon is both crucial and possible for internal peace and a return to prosperity.

Speaking to the participants at their second stop, St. Nicolas Church in Sidon's Old Town, Mr. Schellen also referred to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26), which was taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.



"Today's highly important task of finding climate justice and climate peace and the long-standing quest of our search for peace in Lebanon both depend on your future leadership," he said. "Climate justice and peace among the communities in Lebanon are tasks where your generation is called to take the initiative, just as they are natural missions for the communities' religious leaders."

The "Peace Road" event concluded with lunch, during which Sarah Ahmed, vice president of FFWPU for the Middle East, addressed the participants, expressing her appreciation for their commitment to promoting peace in Lebanon.

In the following days, the participants in their reflections expressed that the event stood out among their volunteering experiences for bringing hope and joy amid challenging times.

The Lebanon event is part of UPF's global "Peace Road" initiative and sends a sign of the Lebanese people's desire for lasting peace. The "Peace Road" concept is rooted in the proposal for an International Peace Highway that UPF founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, first proposed at the 1981 International Conference for the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS) - an organization that they founded.

UPF-Lebanon is registered as a Lebanese non-profit organization. Over the past 14 years it has been dedicated to peace education, interfaith collaboration, strengthening of families, and humanitarian aid activities in Lebanon, specifically distributing food boxes and holding family festivals in the past two years. UPF-Lebanon is associated with the international Universal Peace Federation, which was established in 2005.

With regard to our first Peace Road event to promote national unity in Lebanon, we hope to continue with this project, reaching out to many more young people across religious or cultural boundaries in order to foster a true national patriotism.

We wish to thank the honorable Sheikh Abou Zeid and the two noble priests Father Joseph Khoury and Father Ibrahim Saad for making this event possible and welcoming and inspiring the young people with their great messages of peace.