

UPF USA Faith Leaders Mark World Interfaith Harmony Week in Washington, D.C.

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Washington, D.C., United States – To celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week, UPF-USA, with co-sponsors the American Muslim and Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council (AMMWEC), and the Pakistan Roundtable, held a dinner program on Sunday, February 4, 2024, in the Founders Room at The Washington Times building.



A total of 65 religious and civic leaders attended this program. Among them were 28 Pakistan delegates who had participated in the International Religious Freedom Summit from January 30 to 31, 2024. Other

guests included local Christian pastors, Muslim leaders, and civic leaders, as well as former Pakistani ambassador to Japan, **Amb. Taqir Hussain** and his wife **Rafia**.

UPF-USA's longtime friend, **Ms. Anila Ali**, president and CEO of AMMWEC, was instrumental in inviting the guests to participate. Addressing the group, she explained that the Pakistani Christian pastors in attendance had worked tirelessly for some time, risking their lives as a bridge between the Christian and Muslim communities in their country. She stated that her organization has given opportunities for women and children, regardless of their religious affiliations, to receive a better education.

"We have been doing well, yet we should do more; our work is never enough," she said. "The country that can give strength and opportunity to women and minorities will grow and prosper. I hope my country, Pakistan, will become a model country to all other Muslim countries."



Dr. Michael Jenkins, president of Universal Peace Federation International, The Washington Times Foundation, and The Washington Times Holdings, gave the welcoming address.

"We must stand together for religious freedom and cooperation," he said. "We should be concerned about what is happening around the world. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and other faith communities are in trouble. The issues are never simple. Therefore, we must respect Allah, or God, who is the source of freedom and peace.

"Freedom does not come from the government. Before diplomacy or political negotiations, faith must lead to peace. Without faith, there will be no peace. The negotiations and agreements between men can be broken easily. However, if we break the covenant with God, we are never free from our conscience. If we obey Allah, God, and Hindu Gods and practice those faith teachings, we will benefit from them and receive the blessing. The amazing thing is if you keep the covenant, you know God protects your nation."

He concluded by emphasizing, "We must unite together. If we are together, we will win, and peace will be ours. If we fight for our own sake, we will lose. We will fight for all. I feel so much hope that we gather tonight, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and other faith leaders, to honor and respect each other."

The dinner was followed by the appointment as Ambassadors for Peace of some of the distinguished guests from Pakistan:

Allama Ehtisam Zaheer Elahi, Roundtable Pakistan

Allama Qazi Abul Qadeer Kahmush, Roundtable Islamabad

Father James Chanon, IRH Co-Chair, Lahore International Freedom
Pastor Amjad Farooq, Karachi Roundtable
Mr. Imtiaz Mir, TV anchor, Metro1 News
Allama Ahsan Siddiqui, Co-Chair, Roundtable Karachi,



The program concluded with prayer, honoring and thanking the Creator for bringing everyone together, and expressing the desire for peace for everyone everywhere.

This interfaith outreach was started by The Common Word Initiative in 2007. It called for Muslim and Christian leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious commandments, love of God and love of one's neighbor, without compromising any of their religious tenets. World Interfaith Harmony Week was adopted by the UN General Assembly on October 20, 2010.