

Jerusalem Women's Pilgrimage for Peace

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June 15, 2014



About 200 women leaders gather for a picture at the Jaffa Gate of the Old City in Jerusalem, Israel on the 15th to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace in Jerusalem.

“Let Us Establish a Peaceful Global Village through Motherly Love.”

10th Anniversary of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace

Jerusalem Women's Pilgrimage for Peace, Attended by about 200 Women Leaders from 17 Countries

“Let us pray for peace. All people are blessed by the grace of God. We are grateful for the nations and all cultures. Thank you. We are grateful for peace. Amen.”

“Amen.”

On the morning of the 15th (local time), clergy from the three great religions of the world (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) gathered together at the Jaffa Gate in East Jerusalem's Old City. After Australian Christian clergyman Nelson Pervaz's prayer, echoes of 'Amen,' 'Peace' and 'Shalom' could be heard throughout the crowd of attendees. This was the opening act of the event sharing the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace with the world.

The Pilgrimage for Peace, held in the Old City, was attended on this day by about 200 NGO and religious leaders from 17 countries, including the Netherlands, Taiwan, America, Italy, Japan and Korea. Everyone came together in one heart to pray for peace, transcending Christianity, Taoism, Judaism, Unificationism and other religions. This year's event is the “10-Year Anniversary of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace in Jerusalem,” which was originally held in 2004 in the Old City, and attended by about 526 women leaders from 41 countries. The event was co-hosted by the Universal Peace Federation and the Women's Federation for World Peace.

About 30 minutes after departing from the Jaffa Gate, the procession passed through a maze-like alley only about two or three shoulder widths apart to reach what is known to Jewish clergy as the “Wailing Wall.” There were separate entrances built for men and women, and prayer notes were stuffed into the cracks and crevices in the wall. Everyone gathered at the wall either had their faces pressed close to scriptures, or else bent their heads close to the wall as they whispered prayers to it. Some were crying as they prayed. The Golden Dome of Islam could be seen from over the wall.

Throughout the Pilgrimage for Peace, each participant strengthened her own wish and will for peace. Irmgard Mantler (56), a WFWP member from Austria with a Christian background, said, “I attended the Pilgrimage for Peace 10 years ago, and I have been newly inspired this time. Although it is important for both men and women to find ways to seek and maintain peace, this event was a good chance for us as women to consider how we can contribute to peace.” WFWP Kwangju branch manager Mi-Eun Kim (50) said, “The path of each religion of different, but we all have the same goal. I was very inspired to see such a variety of people all walking together for peace. We will transcend all borders of race, region, culture, or what-have-you, and bring about and expand the realm of peace through motherly love.”

After the end of the 10th Anniversary of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace in Jerusalem, the attendees visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built upon Jesus' grave, and prayed together for peace through each of their religious practices.

“Peace is the Only Way to Resolve the Israel Palestine Conflicts... They Must Put Themselves in Each Other's Shoes and Understand Each Other's Pain.”

Seminar Commemorating 10 Years since the Pilgrimage for Peace in Israel

Peace is the only way to resolve this conflict. Each must embrace the pain of the other.”

The “Seminar for the Building of Peace and Reconciliation in Israel and Palestine” was held on the 14th (local time) at Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), and was attended by about 50 political figures and human rights activists. The participants discussed how the constant conflict between Israel and Palestine was blocking the road to peace in the Middle East and the world, and appealed for reconciliation and cooperation between the two. The seminar was jointly hosted by the peace initiative organization Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), in commemoration of the 10-year anniversary since the Pilgrimage for Peace in Israel.



Former Knesset minister Ran Cohen (3rd from left) giving the main presentation at the seminar marking 10 years since the Pilgrimage for Peace in Israel.

In his presentation, former Knesset minister Ran Cohen (77) stated, “The values that we must emphasize are those of peace and justice. The Israeli government must negotiate with the military faction of Hamas.” Hamas beat the Fatah party (led by President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas) in the 2006 general election and has constantly been provoking conflict with Israel during its rule over the Gaza Strip ever since. During this time, the 1,650,000 Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip have been suffering from the deprivation of their basic rights. Israel regards Hamas as a terrorist organization and Hamas does not recognize the nation of Israel.

Israeli human rights activist and former deputy attorney general of the UN Commission for Children’s Rights Judith Carp (76) said, “The Jewish people and the Palestinians are unable to escape from the trauma of their holocaust, bloodbath and loss of territory. If they want change and reconciliation, the two must understand the pain in each other’s hearts.” Carp called upon the NGOs present to offer their support and cooperation in this effort.

Many peace initiatives for reconciliation and cooperation between Israel and Palestine are being carried out in Israel, bringing about substantial positive results. Two examples are the Tsur Baher School, located in the capital city of Jerusalem, and the Hand in Hand School. The Tsur Baher School specializes in teaching students with ADHD and other mental disorders about the Kidron Valley, and leads the way in cleaning and purifying the surrounding valleys and water sources. The Kidron Valley is polluted by sewage, causing water shortages for the Palestinians living in the area. The Hand in Hand School, attended by both Israelis and Palestinians, introduced to Israel for the first time a curriculum that teaches both Hebrew and Arabic, as a way to reduce conflict.