

UPF Africa: Where Peace Learns Its First Language

Adama Doumbia
May 30, 2026

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Where Peace Learns Its First Language

A reflection for the United Nations Global Day of Parents, 1 June, at the close of UPF's "100-Day Campaign: Serving Community" and the Month of Family



Parents rarely call their work peacebuilding. They call it preparing food, staying awake when a child is ill, caring for an elderly parent, holding back a harsh word, teaching patience, and keeping the home steady when life outside becomes uncertain. Yet much of civilization rests on these unrecorded acts. Before a child understands institutions, nations, or public life, the child learns whether people can be trusted. That first lesson shapes everything that follows.



On **June 1**, the world marks the [UN Global Day of Parents](#). For the Universal Peace Federation, the date also marks the close of a [100-day journey](#) that began on February 20, 2026 — and ended exactly where peace always begins.

The arc was deliberate:

 **March — Partnership.** [An interfaith iftar in Washington, D.C.](#)

[A "No Peace Without Women" webinar with voices from 22 countries.](#)

[250+ leaders convened in Yaoundé.](#)


[A continental women's leadership forum in Kenya.](#)

 **April — Service.** [A charity drive in Madrid funding children's education in Cameroon.](#)

[Volunteers repainting a remote school in Sri Lanka's Rathnapura District.](#)

[Ambassadors for Peace gathering in Sydney.](#)

[UPF-Peru marking Mother Earth Day at the Congress in Lima.](#)

 **May — Family.** [Paris convening on "Living Together in the Family and in Society."](#)

[Intergenerational chess in Moscow.](#)

[Educators in Nepal under the theme "Families as the First School of](#)

[Peace." Professionals across Latin America on "The Family as a School of Love and Peace."](#)

Three months. One movement. **Cooperation became service. Service led home.**

The Peacebuilders No Report Will Name

Most parents will never appear in a public document. No one records the night a mother does not sleep. The restraint of a father who chooses patience. The grandparent who tells the same story again because memory itself is a form of love.

Yet these acts carry moral weight. **They form the first language of trust** — the one every later peace depends on.

The UN's [2030 Agenda](#) speaks of poverty, health, equality, and partnerships. Families touch these realities before policy ever reaches them. When families are supported, communities grow resilient. When parents are left alone, society pays the cost later.

What the Day Really Asks of Us

The Global Day of Parent honors mothers and fathers — but it also reminds communities that **no parent raises a child alone**. Teachers,

neighbors, faith communities, youth workers, civic leaders, media, and institutions all shape the air a child breathes.

A society that honors parents offers more than praise. It offers **time, respect, friendship, and practical partnership.**

The Campaign Closes. The Invitation Stays Open.

Carry it forward in whatever form fits your life:

- A visit to someone lonely
- A family dialogue across generations
- A youth service project
- A meal shared across differences
- One concrete act of care for a family under pressure



Peace often begins without an announcement. It begins when someone is heard. It grows when someone is served. **It becomes credible when a child sees adults caring for someone outside their own household.**

What becomes memory in childhood becomes character in adulthood.

👉 **Dr. Tageldin Hamad, President, Universal Peace Federation**



Family is the one institution every culture, every faith, and every nation already agrees on. That's exactly why it might be our most underused tool for peace.

On Sunday, May 31 — 8 AM GMT, the Interreligious Association for Peace & Development (IAPD) and the Universal Peace Federation convene the Africa Spiritual Day around a theme that cuts across borders and beliefs:

🌍 **Family Values: A Blueprint for Interfaith Cooperation.**

INTERRELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION FOR PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
IN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION
PRESENT:

AFRICA SPIRITUAL DAY

- SPEAKERS -

 Tonika Degen Global IAPD Coordinator, USA	 Bishop Mafela Mucamba Mahota Wesleyan Methodist Church, Mozambique	 Imbert Dr. uzor-Lazare Ruelobe Chairman of IAPD-Africa	 Rev. Jean Augustin Gheme Coordinator IAPD- AFRICA	 Rev. Mica Amanteman Regional Director UPFPI	 Bishop Rodrigues Dambo President IAPD Mozambique
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THEME:
Family Values : A Blueprint for Interfaith Cooperation

DATE SUNDAY May 31, 8AM GMT	LINK https://bit.ly/42ne5X4 	VENUE MOZAMBIQUE BROADCAST LIVE VIA YOUTUBE & ZOOM  
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Feb 20 · 2 min read

100 DAYS OF SERVING COMMUNITY



From February 20 to June 1, 2026, UPF invites cross-sector partners to advance community trust through cooperation, volunteer service, and strengthened family life. This period marks UPF's 100-day campaign entitled, "100 Days of Serving Community." The campaign culminates on June 1, the [Global Day of Parents](#).

As an organization in consultative status with the [United Nations Economic and Social Council](#), UPF connects local peacebuilding with the United Nations agenda and the practical spirit of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), including [SDG 16](#) (peace, justice and strong institutions), which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies. This campaign also resonates with the [International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development](#), which highlights volunteer action and civic participation as drivers of social cohesion and resilience.

Through collaboration with UPF, partners can broaden volunteer engagement around local priorities, gain international visibility through UPF communication channels, and strengthen public confidence by placing measurable community benefit at the center of joint activity. Outcomes can be documented in short public updates and visual materials that acknowledge partner participation and make results accessible to wider audiences.

Work across the campaign is organized around a three-month sequence of themes. March emphasizes partnerships, with attention to cooperation with municipalities, civil society organizations, educators, faith communities, youth networks, and local institutions. April emphasizes visible volunteer service that communities can recognize and welcome. May emphasizes families and values-based education, with special attention to the role of mothers and women as the heart of strong families, a theme that resonates with the [International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026](#). This prepares the ground for the [International Day of Families](#) on May 15 and the [Global Day of Parents](#) on June 1.

During the campaign period, partners may also choose to align joint activities with widely recognized UN observances, including the [World Day of Social Justice](#) on February 20, the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#) on April 6, and [International Mother Earth Day](#) on April 22.

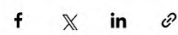
UPF founders [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#) have taught that lasting peace grows when families are strong, moral responsibility is practiced in public life, and service becomes a living culture that transcends differences. Living for the sake of others is the true source of peace and human dignity. They taught that every act of service is an expression of one's identity as a child of God and a member of One Family under God. In this spirit, by promoting dialogue, partnership, and community service, the campaign serves as a practical contribution to the [2030 Agenda](#).

We warmly invite every partner to join us in this spirit of service, so that together we may strengthen communities, strengthen families, and make constructive contributions that endure beyond the campaign period and contribute directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, President, UPF-International
February 20, 2026

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Mar 1 · 2 min read

INTERFAITH IFTAR MEAL SHARES THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM



Washington, D.C., United States – As part of the observance of Ramadan, the month-long period of fasting and prayer observed by Muslims worldwide, UPF-USA hosted an interfaith iftar dinner on March 1, 2026, at the Washington Times Building in Washington, D.C. Ramadan this year runs from February 17 to March 19.

For the past four years, UPF-USA has sponsored an iftar dinner, the meal held after sunset throughout the month of Ramadan, with other organizations. This year, under the banner of the "Peace Starts with Me" Alliance, UPF-USA was joined by the American Muslim & Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council, the FFWPU-Capital Family Church, Women's Federation for World Peace, the American Clergy Leadership Conference, and Youth and Students for Peace.

To open the program, the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), as part of UPF-International, conducted the "Water of Life" ceremony as a reflection of the spirit of Ramadan. **Ms. Tomiko Duggan**, global coordinator for IAPD, explained that this ceremony was created as a symbol of unity and harmony among all religions, inspired by Rev. Sun Myung Moon's words: "Religion is like a wide river flowing toward an ideal, peaceful world. The river flows for long distances before it comes to the wide expanse of peace. On its way, many streams flow into it. The streams cease to be streams from the point they meet the river. From that point, they too become part of the river. In this way, they become one."

Ms. Kaelegh Moffitt, president of UPF-USA, welcomed the guests, saying that the Iftar dinner is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the spirit of love and kindness among neighbors. She explained that UPF conducts many interfaith activities, including recently honoring the UN Interfaith Harmony Week, in an effort to bring humanity together, to love God and love one another.

Ms. Anila Ali, president of the American Muslim & Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council, explained the similarities between Ramadan and Lent, the 40-day period of fasting and prayer observed by Christians: "Ramadan and Lent, though distinct, both teach that self-restraint strengthens the soul. Hunger awakens empathy. Sacrifice deepens spiritual clarity. True devotion must be visible in how we serve humanity."

She added, "At a time when our world is restless – marked by conflict, division, and uncertainty – we pause tonight to pray for healing, and we boldly declare our longing for peace across every nation and every heart."

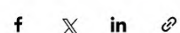
At 6:00 pm, a video from Mecca was shown, presenting a prayer announcing the breaking of the day's fast. The Muslim men and women, with covered heads, offered their prayer and gratitude, then everyone shared the drinks and dates that had been prepared to break the fast.

Sharing the meal and enjoying music together, many Christians who were present learned from their new Muslim friends about unfamiliar traditions, including the meaning of headscarves, and a different way to pray. A spirit of kindness, holiness, and generosity permeated the room, in affirmation that all are brothers and sisters as One Family under God.

By Tomiko Duggan, Global Coordinator, IAPD
March 1, 2026

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Mar 2 · 1 min read

VOLUNTEERS BRING JOY & SUPPORT TO REMOTE SRI LANKAN SCHOOL



Rathnapura District, Sri Lanka – The Vevegananda School in Noparell, Baladgod, perched high on a wooded mountainside, is known as the most beautiful, and one of the most remote, schools in Sri Lanka. UPF-Sri Lanka and the Religious Youth Service (RYS) chose this isolated location to carry out a youth leadership service project under the theme "Empowering Minds, Enriching Futures."

Under the leadership of the RYS national coordinator, **Mr. Pulinda Prabath**, the program took place from March 1-2, 2026. Bringing together over 25 passionate young volunteers along with generous donors, the project aimed to uplift and support this underserved educational community.

Volunteers spent the first day repainting and refreshing the school buildings, transforming the environment into a brighter, more inspiring space for learning.

The second day focused on the children's happiness and well-being. The team organized fun-filled games, provided a delicious lunch, and distributed essential items, creating a day filled with joy, care, and meaningful connection. The team distributed warm jackets suitable for the local climate, along with school stationery items and chocolate or candy packets to every child.

The youthful volunteers spent two days immersed in the natural beauty of the Balangoda region, fostering a meaningful connection between community service and the environment.

The success of this project was made possible through the generous sponsorship and dedicated support of the secretary general, **Dr. Chula Senaratne**, and treasurer, **Ms. Champa Cumararatunge**, of UPF-Sri Lanka, as well as other individual donors.

By Pulinda Prabath, National Coordinator, RYS Sri Lanka
March 2, 2026

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May 15 · 3 min read

PANEL UPHOLDS IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA



South and Central America – On May 15, 2026, a group of professionals from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean joined a webinar to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Families, under the theme “The Family as a School of Love and Peace: Inequalities and Child Wellbeing.”

The event was organized by UPF and three of its associations – the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), and Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) – and moderated by **Mr. Mario Salinas**, regional secretary general of UPF for Latin America and the Caribbean.

UPF regional president **Mr. Eliecer Araya**, in his welcoming words, highlighted the importance of “remembering that the family is the first place where we learn to love, to serve, and to build peace. In every home, the seeds of the future society are planted; it is there that the values sustaining harmony among generations and peoples are born.”

Participating from Brazil, continental president of FFWPU for Latin America and the Caribbean **Rev. David Dong Woo Kim** praised UPF’s efforts in marking this important date. He recalled that the Christian family model served as a lifeline during the fall of the Roman Empire, a period marked by the moral and cultural decline of its people and, in particular, its leaders and rulers. In light of the challenges we face today, called for the restoration of family-centered values and principles.

Dr. Azucena Castillo de Solano, a former congresswoman and government minister from Nicaragua, stated: “Although the structure of the traditional family has historically been the natural and fundamental element of society – and therefore has the right to the protection of society and the state – this protection has not been properly upheld, neither by the United Nations nor by many governments in Latin America. It has been the family’s own resistance and resilience that have allowed it to survive.” She voiced the need to resist “activists of new ideologies seeking to replace the role and purpose of the family with that of the state.”

Mr. Edgardo Martinez Zimarioff, director of the Association of Human Potential Facilitators in Uruguay, said: “The family shapes the future of children. It is there that they learn their first values, principles, and basic notions of life ... Various studies show that we learn 20% when we read, 30% when we listen, 90% when we act. This confirms that the family, as a space of daily practice, becomes the most powerful school for character formation, the acquisition of values, and the emotional development of every human being.”

Dr. Amavelia Morales Diaz, a psychotherapist, family mediator with Peru’s Ministry of Justice, and founder of the Seeds of Love Program, explained, “When there is an environment of love, respect, and emotional stability, individuals develop greater psychological well-being and stronger social skills. Within the family, we receive unconditional love that allows us to feel safe and permanently cherished.”

She pointed out that not all families have the same opportunities or conditions, adding, “Family well-being does not mean the absence of problems; it means having the emotional and relational resources needed to face difficulties in a healthy way. A family that promotes well-being is often characterized by assertive communication, emotional listening, healthy boundaries, mutual support, and respect for individuality.”

Ms. Elisenia Sanchez de Pineda, a prominent community leader and member of the Family Federation in Panama, gave the final presentation. She stressed the need to support and bolster families, to ensure that every child receives love and care within the home. “When these experiences are absent or weak, emotional wounds arise that affect child well-being. Today we see profound inequalities that impact millions of children: poverty, lack of access to education, domestic violence, emotional neglect, and the absence of healthy role models. These inequalities are not only economic. Many times, there is an even deeper poverty: relational poverty, when a child has material resources but lacks attention, listening, affection, or moral guidance.”

All panelists voiced their appreciation for this opportunity to share their views on a topic that deeply concerns them, and has vital implications for society.

By Mario Salinas, Secretary General, UPF-Latin America and the Caribbean
May 15, 2026

- UN Relations
- AFP Ambassadors for Peace
- IAPD Interreligious Association for Peace and Development
- IAPP International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace
- IAAP International Association of Academicians for Peace
- Family Values
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The US kidnapped a president — what does that mean for sovereignty everywhere?



Universal Peace Federation - Africa

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On 3 January 2026, in the dark hours before sunrise, US special forces entered Caracas under the code name “**Operation Absolute Resolve.**” They hit military targets around the capital, jammed communications and even disrupted parts of the power grid, according to military analysts who later unpacked the operation. [The Conversation explains how the mission was planned and rehearsed over months.](#)

By the end of that day, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were no longer in Caracas. They were blindfolded, handcuffed and flown out of their country by US forces. [CNN and other outlets confirmed they were taken first to a US Navy ship and then to Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center in New York.](#)

From Mar-a-Lago, President Donald Trump announced that the mission had succeeded, that it involved more than 150 aircraft from across the hemisphere, and that Maduro would now “face justice” in a US court on old drug and narco-terrorism charges. [The official Pentagon statement called it a “joint military extraction” of an “outlaw dictator.”](#)

In a single night, a sitting head of state was removed from office by a foreign army and placed in a prison cell on another continent.

What International Law Says (and Doesn’t Say)

International lawyers did not need long to react.

Chatham House described the operation as a “joint US-led military

Chatham House described the operation very directly: a large-scale military strike in and around the Venezuelan capital, followed by the forcible abduction of a sitting president, without any UN Security Council mandate and without any claim of self-defence. It called the move a “**significant violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and the UN Charter.**”

The US, for its part, has described the raid as a kind of extended law-enforcement action: a judicial “extraction mission” to bring an indicted suspect to court. The Justice Department first charged Maduro in 2020 with conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism and cocaine trafficking. A 25-page indictment accuses him and others of working with cartels to move tonnes of cocaine into the United States.

There is a strange tension here. On one side, an argument about **human rights and accountability**: shouldn't leaders who flood other countries with drugs and violence face justice, wherever they hide? On the other side, a basic rule of the international system: **countries are not supposed to invade each other and kidnap presidents**, even bad ones.

Chatham House notes another uncomfortable legal reality: US courts have a long-standing doctrine (the **Ker-Frisbie** rule) that allows trials to go ahead even if the defendant was brought to the US through illegal means. In practice, this means Maduro's trial will likely continue, regardless of what international law says about how he arrived. The think tank concludes that “it is difficult to conceive of any valid legal justification” for the attack itself.

For international law, this is not a technical footnote. It is a stress test.

How the Global South Saw It

Reactions were telling.

China demanded Maduro's “immediate” release and called on the US to respect Venezuelan sovereignty. Live coverage from CNN noted Beijing's concern almost as soon as the news broke.

Across Africa and Latin America, many governments chose their words carefully but the message was similar: this is dangerous ground. Several African capitals and the African Union expressed “grave concern” and called for strict respect for the UN Charter. A joint statement from a group of Global South policy institutes argued that, even if the allegations against Maduro are serious, the method chosen sets a precedent that weaker states will remember. A South African analysis framed it as a “wake-up call about the fragility of sovereignty in a world of power politics.”

This is where Africa comes into the picture.

For many African leaders, the images of a president blindfolded on a foreign warship revived old fears: that in moments of crisis, the rules are different for powerful countries. That **regime change from outside** remains a tool on the table, even after Iraq and Libya. Researchers at ISS Africa noted that the episode “revived long-standing anxieties about external intervention” and whether African states can rely on international law when interests clash.

What This Looks Like to African Youth

If you are a young African watching this unfold on your phone, what do you see?

You see the same United States that lectures your leaders about elections and constitutional term limits fly into another country, ignore the UN, and remove a president by force. You see a world where some states can break the rules and call it justice, while others are punished for far less

the rules and can it justice, while others are punished for lat less.

You might not like Maduro. You might support Venezuelans who have suffered under misrule and economic collapse. Many do. But you also see a pattern:

- Assassination by drone in one region.
- Sanctions that cripple economies in another.
- Now, a full extraction of a sitting president to face trial on foreign soil.

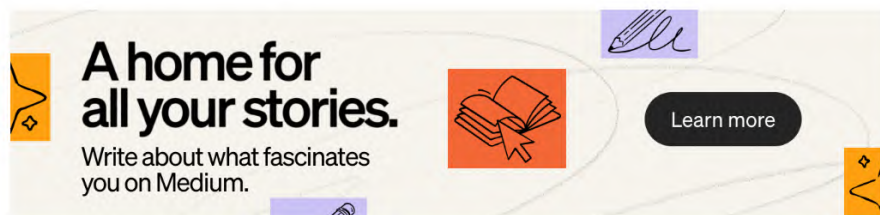
It is not surprising that young people in Lagos, Nairobi or Dakar would ask: **if they can do this in Caracas, what protects us?**

Analysts in Pretoria and Addis Ababa have already started asking what this means for African security thinking. Does it push some leaders closer to new partners like Russia or China, not because those partners are better, but because they are seen as a counterweight? Does it make it harder to talk honestly about reforms, knowing that any weakness might be exploited from outside?

These are not abstract questions. They shape how young people think about justice, power and peace.

A UPF Lens: Justice, Yes — But How?

From a Universal Peace Federation perspective, two principles meet here and collide.



On one hand, **no leader is above the law.** If the charges against Maduro are true — massive drug trafficking, violence, corruption — then he has caused real harm to families both in Venezuela and abroad. Victims of that harm have a right to justice. US court documents describe tonnes of cocaine shipped toward US cities under his watch.

On the other hand, **the way justice is pursued matters for peace.** When justice arrives in the form of foreign troops, drones and power cuts in the middle of the night, it sends another message: that might still makes right. That large states can decide when borders count and when they do not.

UPF's core idea is that true peace is built on **mutual respect, dialogue and the recognition that we are one human family**, not on humiliation and fear. For that reason, this operation raises uncomfortable questions:

- What would a response look like that defended Venezuelan victims **without** tearing up the UN Charter?
- Why were regional bodies like CELAC or the African Union not part of a broader approach to hold Maduro accountable in a multilateral way?
- How can smaller states trust that the rules will protect them, if those rules can be set aside when it is convenient?

There are no easy answers. But the questions are worth asking, especially from continents that have lived through their own share of “external solutions” with heavy costs.

Why This Should Matter in Africa

Africa is not Venezuela. But the principles at stake are very close to home.

Many African countries are battling **their own sovereignty dilemmas**:

- Foreign mercenary companies securing mines and palaces.
- External powers building military bases in exchange for loans.
- Jihadist threats used to justify open-ended foreign deployments.

In this context, [the ISS Africa piece on “lessons for Africa” from the US operation in Venezuela](#) makes a simple point: African states need to strengthen their own institutions, courts and regional bodies so that accountability can happen **at home and within the law**, not from outside at the barrel of a gun.

That means:

- Stronger regional courts that can hear serious cases against leaders.
- More credible elections, so that voters, not foreign soldiers, decide who governs.
- Honest conversations about drug trafficking, corruption and organised crime inside our own borders.

The more seriously African societies take justice internally, the less room there is for others to claim they are “stepping in” for the sake of victims.

A Question to Leave With

You do not have to admire Maduro, or approve of his years in power, to feel uneasy about how he ended up on that plane. You also do not have to defend the US to recognise that many Venezuelans genuinely want accountability for what they suffered. Both of these can be true at the same time.

The deeper question is this:

What kind of world do we want our children to grow up in — one where justice travels with an army, or one where the law is strong enough that even the powerful are held to account without war?

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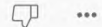


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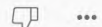
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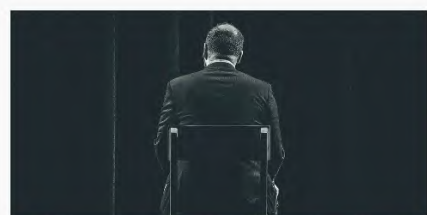


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