

## WFWP Stuttgart, Germany's Women's Brunch with Iraqi Guest Speaker

Gabriele Schickert and Ute Lemme  
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"The announcement of a surprise guest had awakened the curiosity of the ten women who attended the women's brunch meeting on 29 November in the premises of the Stuttgart Family Federation.

Ilham Mandalawi would give a report about her recent trip back to her homeland, Iraq.

But first we enjoyed the prepared food and drink before Gabriele opened the official program with a prayer and invited Ilham to speak.

Ilham had been a teacher in Iraq. In 2001 she fled from that country with her three children and sought asylum in Germany. She is now a German citizen and her children have established good careers.

Her reason for her recent visit to Iraq was a sad one -she wanted to visit her sister who was very ill and whom she would see for the last time. However, this visit to her homeland had encouraged her, as she could see that despite the terror, people there are struggling to establish a hopeful future. She told us that in the past, the abrahamic religions were all equally respected, and Christians, Jews and Muslims had lived together peacefully. Both Fridays and Sundays were considered holidays. Ilham's parents had Jewish neighbors and brought the children food on the Sabbath since Jews were not allowed to work-including to cook-on the Sabbath.

We were amazed at how well Ilham knows the Koran, and she chose quotes which gave us deep insight in to the religion of the Muslims and great respect for their faith and social interactions. We were then able to ask Ilham questions, and she explained, for example the political background to the discontent in Iraq. Different groups misuse religion for their own ends.

Gabriele then took the opportunity to discuss plans and wishes for upcoming women's brunch meetings. The next meeting is planned for 24 January 2019, to which two women from Indonesia have been invited to share about their country."

Reported by

Gabriele Schickert and Ute Lemme (English: Catriona Valenta)  
WFWP Stuttgart/Germany