

## Middle East Peace Initiative Program on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Jerusalem, Israel—From December 1 to 3, 2015 UPF held a Middle East Peace Initiative program at the Jerusalem Dan Hotel, on the theme, “Toward Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

Interfaith leaders, parliamentarians, scholars and civil society leaders from the U.S., Europe and Israel gathered for the three-day conference to consider and formulate prospects for peace in the region.

On the evening of the first day of the program, several current as well as former government officials, including an Arab MK (member of the Knesset, Israel’s parliament), and a Jewish former government minister, gave a briefing on the history and current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The next day, December 2, featured two sessions at the Knesset with 40 participants. The deputy speaker of the Knesset and three parliamentarians shared their views on reigniting the peace process between Israel and Palestine. UPF president, Dr. Thomas Walsh, and secretary general, Mr. Tageldin Hamad, chaired the sessions and presented UPF’s perspective. The discussions were lively and addressed a wide range of issues, from security arrangements to people-to-people trust building. All in all, the participants gained new hope, and witnessed an energized MK dedicated to the cause of peace.

In the afternoon, the international delegates visited a Jewish school, where they were introduced to the traditional Jewish approach to Talmudic study of havruta, in which a pair of students read and analyze texts in order to enhance their moral values.

On December 3, the conference sessions focused on the role of religious leaders in resolving conflicts. UPF’s regional president for the Middle East, Mr. Umberto Angelucci, as well as several religious leaders—including a Jewish rabbi and a Druze sheik—and a conflict resolution scholar shared their insights on the topic. Mr. Angelucci’s wife, Marilyn, chaired the first panel, which featured a leading Muslim imam, a Christian priest, a rabbi, and a psychologist. A lively discussion followed each session.

The two days allowed the participants to network and inspired them to redouble their efforts towards resolving the conflicts in the Middle East.