

UPF Netherlands Program: Essence and Roots of Human Rights

Willem Koetsier
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Nijmegen, Netherlands – Adopting the UN theme for Human Rights Day – “Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials” – UPF-Netherlands held an evening program on December 14, 2025, at the parish house of the Antonius van Padua Church in the city of Nijmegen.



MC **Mr. Joseph Salaris** introduced the theme, which emphasizes that “human rights are positive, essential and attainable.” Then **Mr. Hans Noot**, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers (HWRF) in the Netherlands and co-founder of the Gerard Noodt Foundation for Freedom of Religion and Belief, gave an interactive presentation about the relationship between Human Rights Day and Christmas. He explained that human rights are connected to religious values, as religious beliefs shape people’s conscience and awareness of God-given human rights.



The following speaker was **Mr. Shantha Dalugamage**, founder of Mission Lanka, who spoke about his experiences growing up in Sri Lanka and coming as a refugee to the Netherlands in 2011. He explained his anger and desire for revenge after seeing people burned and killed, including his father, during ethnic and religious clashes in his country. Fleeing his country, he ended up in a refugee camp in Bangkok, where he was able to establish two schools. Finally relocating to the Netherlands, he set up his foundation, through which he promotes human rights and education, and seeks to improve the lives of Sri Lankans.

After a musical performance by **Mr. Hans Campman** and **Ms. Eleanor Flowers** of UPF-Netherlands, **Mr. Kadir**, a representative of Zivilisation, Weisheit, Wohltätigkeit,

Aufschwung (ZWWA), introduced a video message from **Dr. Abdulcabbar Boran**, the founder of this Sufi movement from Turkey. After introducing his movement, Dr. Boran pointed out that love and happiness are central themes in all religions, and that these are attained by upholding the rights and duties allocated to humanity by God.



The last speaker was **Mr. Willem Koetsier**, president of UPF-Netherlands. He explained the history of the pursuit of peace in Europe by statesmen who, inspired by Christian beliefs, promoted forgiveness, reconciliation and cooperation. They also advocated sharing raw materials like coal and steel for the benefit of the people. This approach is still valid nowadays, he said, pointing out that recognition of the God-given value and rights of all people leads to the willingness to pursue their well-being. The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights is an expression of these values, he said.



The presentations were followed by a “Dialogue Peace Meal,” during which participants shared their reflections about the contents they had heard, which were summarized in concluding remarks by Mr. Hans Campman.



At the end of this event, two participants were appointed as Ambassadors for Peace for their constructive contributions to their communities.