

Celebrating the UN's International Day of Peace

David Fraser-Harris
September 21, 2013
Glasgow, United Kingdom



Professor Maitles

The Glasgow Peace Federation is a registered Scottish charity set up by Ann Breslin in cooperation with representatives of different faiths in the Glasgow area.

20 of us gathered in Partick Burgh Hall in Glasgow on the evening of 21st September to commemorate the UN's International Day of Peace.

MC Ann Breslin began by showing a short video showing the origin of this day – and the enthusiasm behind the original proposal. Ann offered a few words of explanation, highlighting the fact that this year the theme of this day is Education for Peace. Ann chose to focus on the words of a Holocaust survivor, who noted that the killers were highly educated – leading to the call that the most important result of education is that we should be human. Next we enjoyed a beautiful reflective song – a moment for prayer that set the tone for our meeting.

The first speaker, Professor Henry Maitles, head of the School of Education at the University of the West of Scotland in Ayr, picked up on the introduction, referring to scenes in Schindler's List that graphically illustrated the same point. He spoke about citizenship education in schools, focusing in particular on the importance of encouraging debates on conflict and peace. He cited studies that showed pupils, whether they changed their views or not, became more rounded just by being able to understand what their opponent was saying.



Mian Abdul Wahab Mahmood

David Fraser-Harris noted that what was most notably lacking in Syria was this very citizenship education. He spoke of a number of projects of UPF that tackle education for peace, referring to upcoming events such as the consultation on Syria and the Youth UPF Malta exchange program and to past projects such as RYS and World Scripture, before focusing on UPF's character education program. He concluded by showing a short video of a Peace Club project in Jordan, The Way of True Champions, which trains football coaches to incorporate 11 virtues – for football and for life – in the football training.

The last 2 speakers were Samuel Yerokun, minister of an African church in Renfrewshire, and Mian Abdul Wahab Mahmood, representative of the Ahmaddiya Muslims. Each gave a presentation summing up their religion's perspective on education for peace.