

## Japan-Europe Forum Hears Middle East Analysis

Kazunori Arase  
February 16, 2015



Tokyo, Japan—Lord Nazir Ahmed of the United Kingdom’s House of Lords addressed Japanese leaders at the fourth Japan-Europe Forum from February 14 to 16, 2015.

Lord Ahmed, the first Muslim appointed to the UK’s upper house of Parliament, spoke on the topic “Middle East Peace and Japan's Roles: A European Perspective” before hundreds of citizens and experts in the cities of Kobe (February 14), Fukuoka (February 15) and Tokyo (February 16).



A special leadership forum also was convened on February 16 at the international conference hall of the National Diet (Japan’s legislature). Approximately 80 people, including a dozen Diet members, scholars,

media personnel and religious figures, heard Lord Ahmed's discourse on Islam, his analysis of the rebel group Islamic State and the need for reform of the United Nations.



Emphasizing the importance of the forum, UPF-Japan President Dr. Eiji Tokuno explained that peace and stability in the Middle East are of vital national interest to Japan, as nearly 90 percent of the country's energy supplies come from that tension-filled region.

Appreciating Lord Ahmed's decade-long support for UPF projects in Britain, Europe and the world, including the Middle East Peace Initiative, Dr. Yong Cheon Song, regional chair of UPF-Japan, introduced Lord Ahmed as a Muslim with European perspectives.



Lord Ahmed explained that Islamic teaching forbids the killing of the innocent, including women and children, even in a war situation. The Quran advises followers to "make peace among brothers," indicating mediation between conflicting parties and peacemaking as essential duties of Islam. Quoting a Quranic verse, "There should be no compulsion in religion," he suggested not to argue about faith but rather to respect others' beliefs.

In view of these tenets of Islam, Lord Ahmed said that the rebel group Islamic State, which threatens the world with its rampant atrocities, has nothing to do with Islam. He even pointed out that the Islamic State abuses religious sentiments and dogma to justify its political objectives.

In analyzing the current civil strife and diplomatic tensions across the Middle East, Lord Ahmed referred to a proxy war between two regional powers with strong religious fundamentalism: Saudi Arabia, representing Sunni Islam, and Iran, representing Shia Islam. As a case in point, the genesis of the Islamic

State had much to do with Iraq's sectarian politics, eventually obliging its Sunni people to resort to violent means against both Syrian and Iraqi regimes.

With little hopes for economic well-being or a political future, young people are susceptible to radical groups that sell cheap justice backed by certain religious worldviews and visions. "These radical groups will not easily disappear from the world scene," he predicted.



As for an international response, Lord Ahmed expressed hope for the United Nations as a mediator between various parties at conflict in the Middle East. However, he criticized the five nuclear-powered permanent members of its Security Council for abusing their veto powers, thus paralyzing this international body.

"The UN has become so outdated that its reform is absolutely necessary. If the UN advocates democracy for its member states, why doesn't it apply democracy in its own system?" he asked.

Concerning Japan's roles in promoting world peace, Lord Ahmed praised Japan's three-pronged peace initiatives: promoting political dialogue, building confidence, and providing economic assistance for the Palestinian people.

"Postwar Japan has shown remarkable achievements in helping the developing countries around the world without its own geopolitical interests or military ambition. Japan is thus well qualified to apply its proactive peace-making capacity," he said, encouraging those Ambassadors for Peace in attendance.

In every speech Lord Ahmed expressed his appreciation for UPF's peace ideals advocated by its founders, Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, in addition to its clear and firm orientation toward strong family values.