

UN International Day of Peace 2016 programs held at Arab high schools in Israel

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Haifa, Israel -- In observance of the UN International Day of Peace 2016, programs were held at two high schools in Israel: Mar Elias, a Catholic school, in Haifa, and Kiryat Hinuch Ort H. Shaafi, a Muslim school, in Acre.

The events took place on September 27 and 29, dates that fall between the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha (September 11 to 15 this year) and the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah (October 2 to 4 this year).

Four leaders from the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Druze faiths were greeted and hosted by the principals of the two schools: Father William Abu Shkara of Mar Elias, and Mr. Wafid Mansoor of Kiryat Hinuch Ort H. Shaafi. The principals and the faith leaders spoke about their commitment to peace. A total of 150 students attended both programs.

Mr. Ali Birani, president of Jerusalem Interfaith Forum, who is from the Druze village of Daliat El-Carmel greeted the participants. Sheik Samir Aasi, who is the imam of the El-Jazzar Mosque in Acre, said the solution for the rising violence in the world is forgiveness. "All people are children of God and thus no borders should exist between religions," he said passionately.

Rabbi Edgar Nof brought shofars, musical instruments made of ram's horns that are used in synagogues during the Jewish new year as part of the prayers of repentance for failures in the past year as well as the prayers for a peaceful year to come. Rabbi Nof explained that ram horns are used to symbolize the ram that God sent to Abraham to use instead of sacrificing his son.

The young students were invited to blow the shofar. They enjoyed the opportunity and could create different sounds.

"When I blow the shofar," said the Rabbi Nof, "I blow it for the sake of all humankind, for all nations and religions, with the heart and mind of having true peace in our world. We are living together, and I wish we will continue to live together on the same land peacefully."

The events were coordinated and emceed by Mrs. Miri Kamar of UPF-Israel. Mrs. Adi Sasaki, president of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP)-Israel read words from UPF Founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon about education for peace.