

## UPF Middle East Peace Ambassadors Meet in Tirana, Albania

David Fraser-Harris and Artan Kurti  
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Tirana, Albania -- A small group of Ambassadors for Peace from the Middle East and North Africa met with other peacemakers over three days.

From November 18 to 20, 2022, they met at the UPF Peace Embassy in Tirana and held a special consultation titled "Towards a Middle East Peace Council: A Consultation with Ambassadors for Peace."



The purpose of this meeting was to tap into the wisdom and experience of Ambassadors for Peace and others dedicated to peace and reconciliation. We heard from Bahrain and Turkey, from Israel and Morocco, from Syria, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates.

Some of our senior advisors have known UPF and the work of its founders for many years, and some for just a few months. The lively and sincere exchange was rich and enlightening and allowed us to develop a framework for our working group.

The first session included a brief overview of UPF by Regional Secretary General **David Fraser Harris** and a case study of UPF's role in peace negotiations in Nepal, by **Binod Paudel** of UPF-Turkey.

Following some guiding remarks by **Hod Ben Zvi**, the chair of UPF-Israel, and a break for lunch, we

dedicated three full sessions to input from our participants. They spoke in response to such questions as: How would you do it? Which areas or issues need the most attention? Where can UPF be most effective? What can we do about (an issue)? Which strengths of UPF can be applied? What help does UPF need: experts? research? Who should we be working with (partners)?

The discussions were both frank and constructive. Veteran Ambassadors for Peace and new friends alike brought different skills to the table; we were able to openly discuss "off-the-table" subjects, such as repression of dissent and endemic corruption, and to float ideas.



Topics included the unresolved Israel-Palestine question; approaches to dialogue involving art and music; the role of youth; UPF's history of engagement with the Islamic world; and UPF's "magic touch."

One Ambassador for Peace explained the "magic touch" this way: "Every time I come, it is not to talk. I feel happy. You are my family. I go to many conferences, but with UPF I feel different." Another said: "I came here for the future of UPF. We feel UPF is our family; it's like a tattoo on the heart."



Holding our event at UPF's Peace Embassy in Tirana gave us the chance to hear from Gani Rroshi, the secretary general of UPF-Albania. Mr. Rroshi explained the impressive development of UPF-Albania's 61 municipal peace councils, and then answered a number of questions from our Middle East participants.

Day One closed with a 30-minute interfaith session, with readings from the holy scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Day Two focused on "Engaging with the UPF Approach." Presentations included the Founders' Philosophy of Peace, and UPF and the UN.



We were honored with a visit from H.E. Alfred Moisiu, former president of Albania and chair for the Balkans of UPF's International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP). President Moisiu emphasized the importance of strong families for a nation's future, a theme very much in keeping with another UPF conference held the day before at the same Peace Embassy, with speakers from Albania and the Balkans, as well as Korea and the United States.

We closed the sessions in time to catch the opening of the World Cup before gathering one final time for our last dinner together. This consultation is the start of a process which we hope will involve more Ambassadors for Peace as we seek to lay the groundwork for an effective regional Peace Council and chart a course toward lasting peace in the region.

