

UPF Dusseldorf Commemorates Victims of Religious Violence

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Düsseldorf, Germany – On August 23, 2026, UPF-Düsseldorf hosted a gathering to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Established by the United Nations in 2019, the observance has been held annually on August 22 since 2020.

Ms. Anja Brina, representative of UPF-Düsseldorf, hosted the program. She explained the background of the day, which honors individuals who have been persecuted, injured or killed on account of their religion or belief. Among those affected are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Yazidis, and other religious and ethnic minorities, including Shabaks and Shiite Turkmen, who have suffered acts of violence motivated by religious intolerance.

As a vivid example of such violence, Ms. Brina highlighted the experience of the Yazidi population in the Sinjar region of northern Iraq. In August 2014, the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State (ISIS) attacked this community. Thousands were killed, while women and girls were abducted and subjected to enslavement. The United Nations has classified this act as genocide.

The program also drew attention to individuals who face imprisonment or persecution because of their faith or religious activities. The case of UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han was cited as an example; the 83-year-old leader is currently in detention while facing trial in South Korea over actions viewed as “collusion between religion and politics.” Human rights organizations have raised concerns over religious freedom and the proportionality of her treatment.

The observance on August 22 is dedicated to all victims of religiously motivated violence, irrespective of their religion or faith community. It affirms the principles of religious freedom, human dignity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The United Nations calls on the international community to oppose religious hatred and discrimination and to uphold the right of every person to practice their faith freely and without fear.



Following the presentation, participants were invited to light a candle and offer a personal prayer, reflection or moment of silent remembrance. The gesture created a solemn atmosphere of quiet contemplation. The event concluded with participants standing in a circle and singing together. This shared closing moment underscored a sense of fellowship and conveyed a message of community, mutual respect and peace.



The commemoration served as a reminder of the continuing need to oppose religious persecution, hatred and discrimination, and to safeguard the freedom of every person to live out their faith in peace and dignity.