



Kazakhstan: Jewish Rabbi upholds role of religions in promoting peace

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American-born Rabbi Marc Schneier, the President of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, and a participant at the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, underscores the importance of religion in peace-building and speaks against imposing religious beliefs on others.

The ongoing 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, brings together delegations from varying religions from around the globe in their search for common human landmarks in world and traditional forms of religions and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among them.

Pope Francis, on his 38th Apostolic Journey abroad, is also present in the Kazakh capital in these days, and is addressing participants at the 14-15 September event.

On the sidelines of the 2-day Congress, Vatican News' Deborah Castellano Lubov spoke to Rabbi Marc Schneier, President of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU), who highlighted the importance of the Interfaith Congress and the impact can religious leaders can have in the fight against societal ills and in the promotion of world peace.

A significant event

Rabbi Schneier, a veteran at these Congresses, has had the opportunity to participate in and address the participants on various themes including interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation, which, he says, are critical principles of coexistence in our world today.

He notes that this seventh iteration is particularly significant because it is taking place in “a Muslim-majority country” and is “an expression of what Kazakhstan is and its commitment to inter-religious intercultural dialogue and cooperation.”

More so, he says that the presence of Pope Francis and his remarks to the religious leaders has set a tone that encourages the participants to raise their voices against the so many ills facing society today. The Rabbi distinguishes this year's event from other others where, according to him, there was a “deafening silence and moral laryngitis on the part of faith leaders.”

Role of religion in promoting peace

With the Congress taking place against a backdrop of the war in Ukraine which is in its seventh month, Rabbi Schneier upholds the impact that religious leaders and religion can have in promoting peace in conflict areas.

He says the repeated appeals made by Pope Francis about the war “resonate not only around the world, but in Russia itself”, as he made reference to the absence of the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church at the event.

The Rabbi however seized the opportunity to highlight some of the remarkable progress made in the field of promoting interreligious dialogue, pointing to the impact of interfaith channels in terms of the Abraham Accords and the existence of interfaith centers in several Gulf countries, among others.

He also gave the example of the Abraham house in Abu Dhabi with a Church, Mosque and Synagogue on the same campus – a bold step that, according to him, would have been unthinkable even a decade ago.

Rabbi Schneier affirms that we need to “move from seeing religion as black and white, to more gray,” explaining that there are different religions with different paths to God, and thus, no one should have the arrogance to think that their way is the only way or impose their religion on others.

“We can expose people to different religions, but we should not impose our religious belief,” he says. “If we can move to that place, I know that would contribute greatly to a diminution of conflicts, wars, clashes and confrontations.”

Source: [Vatican News](#), September 14, 2022.