

AWARE CENTER

Report for Interfaith World Harmony Week Activities

FEBRUARY 1-7, 2017



It is an honor to present this report of the AWARE Center's participation and in support of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. This Report is aimed to give a brief summary of AWARE Center's mission along with the main events and activities conducted by AWARE staff in an effort to support the Center's mission. This Report covers activities occurring between February 1- 7, 2017. The Report also highlights extraordinary events hosted by AWARE Center to promote the inter-cultural dialogue.

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WHAT/WHO IS AWARE?

The Advocate for Westerners-Arab Relations (AWARE) center is a non-profit organization working for promoting positive, constructive relationship between the Westerners and Arabs by organizing social activities and orientation services related to Arab and Islamic culture. The AWARE Center was established in 2003 by a group of Arabs and Westerners whose aim was to foster better understanding between the Westerners and the Arabs through communication and friendship. It is through culture and tradition that we preserve our heritage, that we express our creativity and to share our uniqueness with the world. Over the years, AWARE has built a reputation as a consistent, trusted, and reliable resource for westerners in Kuwait.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote positive relations between Westerners and Arabs by organizing social activities and information services related to Arab and Islamic Culture. AWARE is guided by Arab and Islamic humanitarian values which advocate peaceful co-existence between cultures and development. Among key values aware promotes are tolerance, better understanding and mutual respect between the westerners and Arab/Islamic world.

OUR VALUES

- AWARE concentrates its activities among the Westerners irrespective of their citizenship and gender.
- AWARE abides by the Arab Islamic values and ethics, as well as a moderate approach in all its activities.
- AWARE remains as a non-political, non-profit, non-affiliated to any particular school of thought in its nature.
- AWARE ensures quality services and maintains high standards in its business.
- AWARE has adapted English as its official language.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVENT

In order to commemorate and celebrate the Interfaith World Harmony Week, the AWARE Center hosted a few lectures and tours for the purpose of promoting interfaith dialogue and better understanding between different faiths. The lecturers were experienced in dismissing the gap between the Christians and Muslims across the Gulf. One Lecturer in particular, Dr. Ebrahim Adsani, conducted several lectures and television interviews as well as successful meetings with officials and religious leaders in Kuwait.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. Identify and suggest methods to achieve the goal of bridging the gap and formulating a better understanding from both sides; Muslims and Westerners.
2. Identify and establish a course of action which can be taken by all concerned individuals allowing the public to move forward and increase awareness and better understanding between Muslims and Westerners.
3. Promote the importance of interfaith dialogue and activities in order to achieve the desired harmony.

1. OPENING CEREMONY CROSS CULTURE INTERFAITH LECTURE PROGRAM:



We held an **OPENING CEREMONY CROSS CULTURE INTERFAITH LECTURE PROGRAM** consisting of 4 lectures on the *1st of February* with around 300 people attending. The participants were mostly Westerners from government, health, education, immigration services, and religion. Along with diverse cultures and ages, the participants represented a diverse range of religious, spiritual, and secular beliefs.

We gave an overview of the entire week programs. We discussed the benefits of building a friendship bridge among different religions & people.

We aim to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith.

This lecture was presented by **Dr. Ebrahim Adsani**, the former manager of AWARE Center, member of the American Society for Training and Development.

2. ABRAHAM OUR PATRIARCH:



Ejup Ganić is a Bosnian founder and chancellor of Sarajevo School of Science and Technology. He was President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1997 to 1999 and again from 2000 to 2001.

On the 2ND of February morning, we held a lecture with approx. 158 attendants where Mr. Ganić spoke about why Abraham is a great patriarch and why he is considered the common spiritual father of the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Abraham (Avraham) originally Abram, is the first of the three patriarchs of Judaism. His story features in the holy texts of all the Abrahamic religions and Abraham plays a prominent role as an example of faith in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

He also shared his experience with the people of different religions & his journey to different places. Many westerners shared their views & experiences & the difficulties they faced in a foreign country. This program was followed by a dinner along with the movie: *Abraham our Patriarch*.



3. CROSS CULTURE INTERFAITH BREAKFAST:



On the *3rd of February*, we held the **CROSS CULTURAL INTERFAITH BREAKFAST** in sets of two for the people to get an opportunity to socialize & to get to know our team better.

4. THE WALK FOR PEACE:



On the *4th of February* morning a group of approx. 100 westerners joined us on the **Cross Cultural & interfaith Walk for peace**. On our way we also visited the Grand Mosque of Kuwait & the mosques which have been built during the early stages of Kuwait.

The Grand mosque has ten gates made of rare wood. The colors and its outstanding calligraphy are designed in such a way to strengthen one's faith of God. The Mosque's geometric architectural style bears a resemblance to the local characteristics of the desert and the Gulf. The authorities have strained their nerves in selecting the artists, fonts (some fonts are kept back for royal or religious purposes) and words.

Grand Mosque is popular for its prayer arrangement during the last 10 days of Ramadan. Thousands of Muslims gather during last 10 days of Ramadan.

The Mosques are an excellent example of the conventional Islamic architectural style and also borrowed heavily from Persian structural design especially things like a central large dome, pointed arches and arcades of pillars forming into windy open-air passageways.

Located in the heart of the city, the Grand Mosque is the biggest and the official Mosque of Kuwait which means that official religious celebrations are held in this mosque only. The Grand mosque is internationally renowned for its Islamic architecture and it has become one of Kuwait's most treasured landmarks.

Locals refer to it as Al-Masjid Al-Kabir with total area of 46,000 square meters (490,000 sq. ft.), in that the building itself covers 20,000 square meters (220,000 sq. ft.).

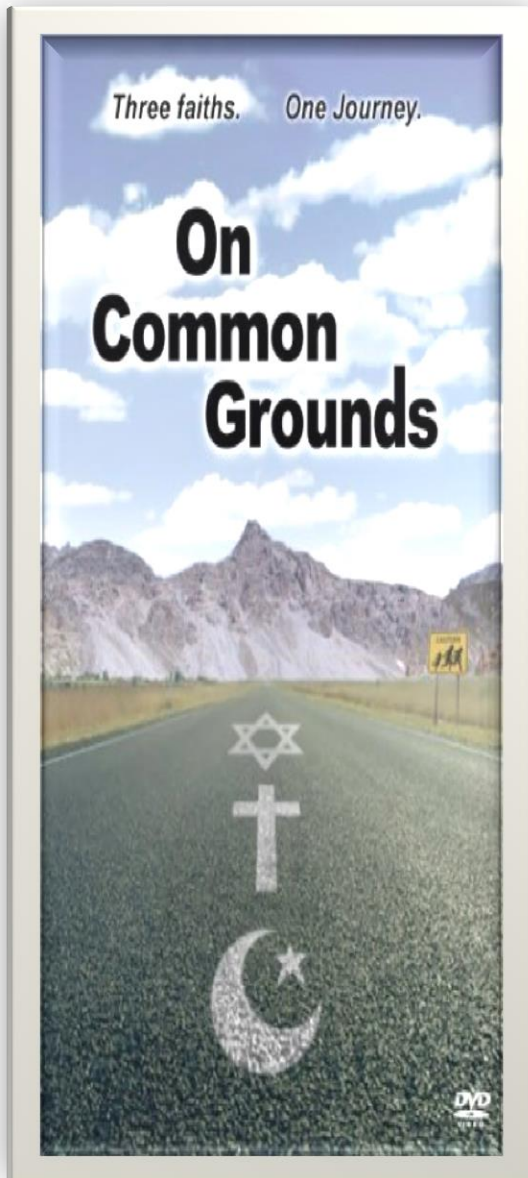
5. EXPRESSING OUR FAITH THROUGH DIALOGUE:



On the *5th of February*, **Dr. Teresa Leshner** held the lecture on the topic Jesus in Quran. She holds her PhD in Information Science from the UK and is now associate professor at the Kuwait College of Basic Education.

This lecture we attended by around 45 westerners and they discussed the similarities of Jesus in Quran & Bible. The status of Jesus was compared to that of Muhammad and other prophets, and Muslim's attitude toward him was explained. It was a great step to build a bonding between the Christians and Muslim & creating harmony between the religions.

6. SHARING SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT FROM OUR OWN FAITH:



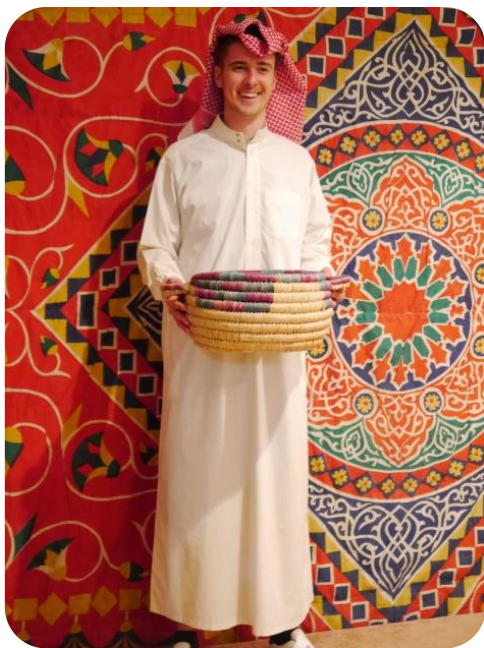
On the 6th of February, we thought of doing something different and as a result the AWARE team came up with a new idea: Why not keep a Movie Night & a discussion related to developing a friendship bridge among the Muslims and the Christians or other faiths?

We chose the movie – **On Common Grounds**. This award winning film follows three Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups in their attempt to overcome their differences by building a house together for a poor family in Mexico. However, this gesture of good will proves to be rather challenging for this diverse crowd. Not only will they have to face each other for the first time, but these inexperienced builders must complete the house in an outrageously short amount of time.

This movie was followed by a discussion.



7. INTERFAITH DINNER, CULTURAL NIGHT & CLOSING CEREMONY:



On the 7th of February, we held an Annual Interfaith dinner, Cultural Night & of course the closing Ceremony of the Interfaith Harmony week. We invited a few Kuwaiti people among them were, **Ms. Lidia Qattan** (owner of House of Mirrors), **Mrs. Iman Martin** (British/Kuwaiti), **Mr. Mohammed Met'eb** (Assistant Manager of The Grand Mosque of Kuwait), etc. They were very happy to share their life experience with the Westerners.

On this night we gave them a chance to wear the Traditional Clothes worn by the Arabs, Arabic henna & of course the cuisine.



Last but not least we held a class on Islamic Arabic Calligraphy where a professional Calligrapher wrote their (Westerners) name in Arabic Calligraphy. This program was attended by around 360 people, mostly Westerners.

This night was followed by the closing Ceremony & dinner.

CONCLUSION:

Interfaith dialogue is extremely important, especially now a days. World Interfaith Harmony Week is a way to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith. Recognizing the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions to enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people, the AWARE Center conducted very successful events during that week to the spread the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill. In conclusion, interfaith dialogue proved to be an important way to promote peace and change attitudes and as we move forward and get better at interfaith dialogue and discussing the common issues that we all share, we are certain that attitude change will be even more striking and pronounced.

TESTIMONIALS:

"Brief but very informative. Light hearted & direct. Enjoyable & thank you for this excellent initiative." – W. Kazak

"It was fantastic. The presenters were funny, personable & informative. The food was the best I've had in Kuwait. Thank you for your hospitality." – Daniel Froese

"I enjoyed the entire package programs. It was nice to meet locals & other Westerners. I look forward to the other social outings" – Malcolm Marshall

"Great informative! I really enjoyed learning about the culture from a native." – Teresa Kovach