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Public Announcement

REPORT ON EIGHTH SARAJEVO UN WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK  
February 3–7, 2020

**Public Discussion**

***Religious Pluralism in Bosnia: Past, Present, and Future***  
**February 5 (Wednesday), at 18:00, IFB premises**

On Wednesday, February 5, 2020, International Forum Bosnia held a lively and well-attended public discussion on the theme of ***Religious Pluralism in Bosnia: Past, Present, and Future*** at its premises (ul. Sime Milutinovića Sarajlije 10/III). The discussion began at 18:00 and lasted to 21:00.

The topic of this debate was the development of an adequate approach to religious pluralism in Bosnia that reflects the fact that religious identity necessarily has both a public and a private aspect. Nationalism and Communism tend to want a public sphere that is closed to the free expression of religious identity, whether by proscribing or foreclosing healthy interfaith discussion.

A **brief opening statement by the moderator**, Asim Zubčević, was followed by an introductory discussion on *Religious Pluralism in Bosnia* by Prof. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, Prof. Krsto Mijanović and Prof. Mile Babić, who presented their analyses of how the political parties in the country have attempted to close off the public sphere and deploy religious identity and symbolism in the service of political and social division and the creation of closed and mutually opposed communities. In this way, in the words of Professor Babić, the parties promote a politics of egoism and cult of national idols rather than openness to the transcendent and so to our fellow humans as instances of the divine.

The discussion was followed by 8 short presentations. The first to speak was Prof. Ivo Marković on *Anti-semitism and Interfaith Relations*, in which he drew upon his extensive experience as founder and director of the interfaith Pontanima choir and as a Franciscan. Next to speak was Prof. Mehmedalija Hadžić on the topic of *Can a path to human self-realisation be found that does not presuppose the full openness of Sacred Scripture to interpretation*, during which he presented his personal experience of the Recitation and meditation on its meaning as a source of self-realisation. Dr. Mehmed Kardaš discussed *Religious pluralism in Bosnia and Bosnian Mediaeval Literature: impressions from palaeographical research*, with a particular focus on the ways in which the different ethnicised political constituencies attempt to anachronistically coopt mediaeval history and cultural heritage for their narratives. Prof. Enes Kujundžić spoke *On the pluralism of literacy and writing systems in 19th century Bosnia*, with a particular focus on the history of the first printing press in the city and the variety of types it used and so of book production in 19th century Sarajevo. Prof. Mirsad Kunić spoke on *Interfaith relations in Bosniak epic*, explaining the institution of cross-faith blood-brotherhood



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in epic narratives. Desmond Maurer talked on the *Transformation of religious symbols within modern political ideologies*, arguing that while this often represents a corruption of political theology, one can only engage with it if one takes seriously the irreducible connection between the political and the religious as the twin pillars of a just order. Prof. Lejla Nakaš presented *The Venetian Miscellany and its place in Mediaeval Bosnian Literature*, with a brief presentation of the significance of Old Testament references in its version of the Acts of the Apostles for our understanding of the allegedly dualistic nature of the mediaeval Bosnian Church and so of the role of dualistic heresy in Bosnia's religious history. Finally, Erma Ramić-Kunić presented preliminary results of her researches into *The Goražde Printing House and its Place in Bosnian Culture*, explaining the history and significance of the first, early 16th century, printing press in Bosnia and the strange neglect it has suffered not just in Bosnian historiography, but in Balkan and Ottoman historiography more widely.

Unfortunately, Prof David Kamhi was not able to attend and deliver his planned talk on *The importance of religion for the creation of Jewish identity*.

The discussion was followed by a half-hour discussion of the various papers presented.

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IFB Press