

THE INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY GAMES 2025: PROMOTING UNITY THROUGH SPORTS

Event Date: February 8, 2025

Organizer: UNESCO Chair in Comparative Study of World Religions, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan (IIAU)

Venue: International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

Participants: Students from the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Tashkent Islamic Institute, and Tashkent Orthodox Seminary

From February 4 to 8, 2025, the **UNESCO Chair in Comparative Study of World Religions** at the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan (IIAU) hosted a **Week of Scientific, Cultural, Educational, and Sports Events** in commemoration of **World Interfaith Harmony Week**. The overarching theme, "*Human Fraternity and Interfaith Dialogue – A Factor of International Solidarity*," underscored the event's commitment to fostering interfaith cooperation, religious tolerance, and global solidarity.

As the **final event** of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, the **UNESCO Chair in Comparative Study of World Religions** successfully hosted *The Interfaith Solidarity Games 2025* on **February 8, 2025**. This unique sporting event was designed to foster interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, and unity by bringing together students from different religious and academic backgrounds in a spirit of friendly competition.

The **Interfaith Solidarity Games** provided a platform for students from **the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Tashkent Islamic Institute, and Tashkent Orthodox Seminary** to interact beyond academic discussions, building relationships through teamwork, sportsmanship, and shared values.

The event aimed to:

- **Encourage interfaith harmony** through shared activities that emphasize teamwork and cooperation.
- **Promote values of respect, inclusivity, and dialogue** among students from diverse religious traditions.
- **Demonstrate the power of sports** as a universal language that transcends religious and cultural differences.
- **Strengthen collaboration** between religious and academic institutions in Uzbekistan.

1. Friendly Sports Competitions

The **Interfaith Solidarity Games** featured a variety of sports competitions designed to encourage teamwork, camaraderie, and friendly rivalry. Students participated in:

- **Chess and Checkers:** Encouraging strategic thinking and patience, these games allowed participants to bond over intellectual competition.
- **Table Tennis:** A fast-paced and engaging sport that highlighted reflexes, concentration, and agility.
- **Football:** The most anticipated event of the day, where mixed teams competed in a friendly match, fostering collaboration and mutual respect on the field.

Each competition provided an opportunity for students to interact, appreciate one another's skills, and build friendships that extended beyond the event.

2. Interfaith Interaction & Cultural Exchange

Beyond the sports competitions, the event also featured **structured interfaith dialogues** where participants could engage in meaningful discussions. These sessions focused on:

- The **importance of teamwork and unity** in building a peaceful society.
- The **role of sports in strengthening interfaith bonds** and promoting mutual understanding.
- **Personal reflections** from students about their experiences interacting with peers from different faith backgrounds.

These conversations reinforced the message that despite religious or cultural differences, shared experiences—such as sports—can create deep and lasting connections.

3. Awards & Recognition

At the conclusion of the games, a **special awards ceremony** was held to honor the most outstanding participants. Awards were presented in the following categories:

- **Best Teamwork Award** – Recognizing the team that demonstrated exceptional cooperation and sportsmanship.
- **Fair Play Award** – Given to the participant who best embodied respect, integrity, and fairness throughout the competitions.
- **Most Valuable Player (MVP)** – Acknowledging the student who showed remarkable skill and leadership.
- **Champion Teams** – Celebrating the winners of each sporting category.

The recognition of these achievements highlighted the **spirit of inclusivity, respect, and shared success** that defined the event.

The **closing ceremony** marked the culmination of the **Interfaith Solidarity Games** and served as a moment to reflect on the week's celebrations. Winners of the sporting competitions were honored alongside the participants of other **World Interfaith Harmony Week** events, reinforcing the **unified spirit** of the initiative.

During the final remarks, participants shared their personal reflections on the impact of the event. Many emphasized how sports served as a **bridge for dialogue and cooperation**, breaking down barriers and creating meaningful connections. Faculty members and religious leaders also expressed their support for continuing such interfaith initiatives, recognizing the role of education and engagement in fostering peace.

The **Interfaith Solidarity Games 2025** demonstrated that sports can be a **powerful medium for promoting unity, interfaith harmony, and cultural exchange**. Through this event, participants:

- **Developed new friendships** with peers from different religious and academic backgrounds.
- **Experienced firsthand the values of cooperation and respect**, reinforcing the importance of interfaith dialogue.
- **Gained insights into the shared human values** that transcend religious differences.

This initiative was a **resounding success**, reinforcing Uzbekistan's **commitment to interfaith engagement** and the **role of youth in shaping a future of mutual understanding and peace**.

The **Interfaith Solidarity Games 2025** was not just a sports event—it was a celebration of unity, tolerance, and collaboration. By bringing students together through shared physical and intellectual challenges, the event exemplified the **spirit of World Interfaith Harmony Week** and reaffirmed the belief that, through respect and engagement, diverse communities can thrive together.

Photos and participant testimonials will be shared on the next page.











