

## **Interfaith Week: Celebrating Dialogue and Tolerance in Kurdistan**

Kurdistan, with its rich religious diversity, hosted a meaningful Interfaith Week event aimed at promoting dialogue, understanding, and tolerance among different religious communities. The event brought together representatives from seven religions—Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Yarsanism, Baha'ism, and Sabian Mandaism—through the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

### **Icebreaking Session: Embracing Diversity**

The event began with an icebreaker to foster interaction and openness among participants. Each representative was randomly assigned a value word from a set of papers placed on a table, without knowing what was written beforehand. The words included:

- **Love**
- **Honesty**
- **Friendship**
- **Freedom**
- **Coexistence**
- **Peace**

Each participant reflected on the chosen value from the perspective of their religion, sharing insights on how these values are embedded in their faith traditions. Through this, it became evident that despite theological differences, all religions uphold the principles of peace, respect, and human dignity.

### **Musical Representation: Unity in Culture**

To further illustrate the shared cultural heritage, a special musical performance was presented by a Muslim and a Yarsani artist. This musical collaboration symbolized that, regardless of religious beliefs, the cultural fabric of Kurdistan unites its people. The performance was a powerful reminder that while religious practices may differ, the shared artistic and musical traditions remain a unifying force.

### **Group Collaboration: Exploring Common Values**

The next activity involved forming four diverse groups, each consisting of representatives from all the participating religions. Every group was given a question related to love, coexistence, and peace and tasked with discussing and identifying common values across their faiths. These discussions revealed a profound truth:

**When we focus on common values, we work more productively together, and what unites us is far greater than what divides us.**

## **Final Reflections: Lessons Beyond Religion**

By the end of the event, participants came together to reflect on what they had learned from each other, not just about religion, but about human connection, empathy, and shared experiences. Many expressed that while they entered the event representing their faith, they left with a deeper understanding of one another as individuals, beyond religious labels.

Through open discussions, personal stories, and collaborative activities, everyone recognized that respect and curiosity toward others foster true unity. The event proved that embracing diversity is not just about accepting differences—it is about learning from them, growing together, and finding a common humanity that transcends religious boundaries.

## **Conclusion: A Unified Message**

The event concluded with a collective reflection, where participants emphasized that tolerance, coexistence, and peace are universal values found in all religions. This gathering not only strengthened interfaith relations but also reinforced the idea that embracing diversity leads to a more harmonious society.

By the end of Interfaith Week, it was clear that Kurdistan's religious diversity is a strength, not a division—a foundation for building mutual respect, dialogue, and a peaceful future.