



Prayer for Peace

International Day of Peace

September 21, 2014

"The Right of Peoples to Peace"

Setup: Create a sacred space with symbols of human rights and peace, e.g., candle, dove, peace sign, food, clothing, medicine.

Song: Choose music to aid in focusing your group, e.g., *Prayer of St. Francis*, *Let There Be Peace on Earth* or instrumental music.

Introduction: The theme for this year's International Day of Peace, "The Right of Peoples to Peace," focuses on how war deprives victims of their human rights, illustrated poignantly in this reading:

Leader: "Life in a War Zone—Syria"

Abu Yahya, his wife and four children are squeezed together on a sofa. This is their living room and now it's also their bedroom. Abu Yahya used to sell fruit and vegetables from his small pickup truck. Not anymore. "The situation is not stable enough to tour the neighborhood with a truck." Because they rarely have power, his wife Umm cooks over a fire on the balcony. They have only enough food for two meals a day.

These days, he drives an ambulance for the local medical center. "I'm so worried about him," Umm says. "He works while all the shooting is still going on." Everyone, and everything, is considered fair game, he says. Nowhere is sacred. "Even the graveyard is under attack." The children have not been to school for three years, and their parents know that they can only teach them so much. "They dream of going back to school, being with friends and graduating. This is no life for children; collecting water and wood."

—*theguardian.com*

Reader: The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights sets forth these rights:

- Life, liberty and security of person
- Families are entitled to protection by society and the State
- All are entitled to protection of their property by society and the State
- The right to work
- A standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and of one's family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services
- The right to education

All: We commit ourselves to work for justice so that all of humankind may live in peace.

Reflect and Share

Leader: We now take a few minutes to reflect in silence on one of the following questions or one rising from our own consciousness.

- Which human right do I have the most difficulty respecting? (*Pause*)
- Are there war zones within the place where I live? What can I do to ensure the rights of the people there? (*Pause*)
- How can I live in spiritual solidarity with persons in war zones? How can I act to secure a peaceful environment for them? (*Pause*)



Leader: I now invite anyone who would like, to share briefly your reflection on one of these questions.

Sharing

Leader: We now offer prayers for persons everywhere who are denied their human rights, especially those experiencing the terrors of war.

(spontaneous prayers)

Leader: God, hear our prayers and grant peace to these members of our personal and world community.

Closing Prayer

Leader: God of Lavish Equity, we come before you as a repentant people, but as a people who dares to hope for freedom. We ask you to hear our prayer and bring us justice, that we may experience the joy of peace. Amen.



Image: AFP Photo/Safin Hamed

Members of an Iraqi displaced family, who fled violence in the northern city of Tal Afar, carry bags as they arrive at Khazer Refugee Camp near the Kurdish checkpoint of Aski Kalak, 40 km west of Arbil July 27, 2014.

Act to Ensure Human Rights

- ∞ Organize a prayer vigil for persons who are deprived of their human rights, especially because of war.
- ∞ Join Campaign Nonviolence at www.paceebene.org— sign the pledge and consider taking the recommended actions, such as nonviolence training.
- ∞ Gather a group to study the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights; compare this document with the scriptures of religious traditions and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.
- ∞ Read stories of life in war zones to better empathize with the victims; watch a video or invite a person from a war-torn country to share her/his story.
- ∞ Use IPJC resources on peace: www.ipjc.org/links/peacemaking.html

