

Father of Slain Journalist Speaks at UNT about Religious Tolerance



Judea Pearl speaks at UNT about mending relations between Muslims and Jews on Monday.

DENTON, TEXAS: October 21 - The father of slain Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl said Monday that people of all faiths need to start talking frankly with one another about religion to help end the hatred that killed his son.

Judea Pearl, 72, said that universities, including those in Muslim countries, should have interfaith centers to provide a place to discuss religion and that those discussions should be centered on history as much as theology.

"Let us tackle the hard questions first. The easy ones can follow," Pearl told a crowd of about 250 at the University of North Texas student union.

Pearl was asked how he explains his son's death to his grandson and about Israeli crackdowns on Palestinians.

Who are the Pearls?

Daniel Pearl, who was Jewish, was working for the The Journal in 2002 when he was kidnapped and beheaded by Islamic terrorists in Pakistan. Three months after Pearl's death at age 38, his wife, Mariane Pearl, gave birth to their son, Adam.

Judea Pearl founded the Daniel Pearl Foundation in California to help end religious and ethnic hatred. Judea Pearl is also a computer science and artificial-intelligence professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.

About his son

Throughout Judea Pearl's talk, his son's photo served as a backdrop against a white screen. Judea Pearl said his son was a classical violinist who communicated joy, humor and understanding through his music. As a journalist, he tried to give a voice to millions of Muslims and to provide a human face behind the news.

"His murderers tried to sow fear, humiliation and division among us," his father said.

How he tries to end hatred

The foundation promotes concerts and Muslim-Jewish discussions and provides internships for Muslim journalists in U.S. newsrooms to foster understanding of a free press. Judea Pearl noted that a concert in Kabul, Afghanistan, next week will be dedicated to his son.

What he tells his grandson

He said Adam's family has told him that his father was killed by evil people, though they don't discuss the details. They tell the 6-year-old that his father is in heaven.

How does he justify Israel's treatment of Palestinians?

Pearl said Israel has no choice but to set up walls and checkpoints. If the country backs down, terrorist attacks would increase. He said the Israeli military tries to minimize civilian deaths, as opposed to terrorists, who try to maximize them.