

THE HOUSE OF LITERATURE, OSLO, JUNE 5TH & 6TH



TOLERANCE AND COMPASSION
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
DIASPORA EXPERIENCES
RELIGION
NATION

POET AND ACTIVIST

HENRIK WERGELAND (1808 – 1845)

International
conference
on tolerance
and compassion

Litteraturhuset

In 2008 Norway celebrates the bicentenary of Henrik Wergeland, Norwegian national poet and activist, engaged in the current issues of his day.

By courtesy of the House of Literature and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a two days conference on the humanitarian ideals expressed in Henrik Wergelands' poetry, life and achievements will be held in Oslo.

At this interdisciplinary conference authors, journalists, human rights activists, scholars and religious leaders are invited to express their opinions on themes like religion's potential as a peacemaker, modern diasporas and freedom of expression in a contemporary Middle Eastern perspective.

PROGRAMME IN BRIEF

THURSDAY JUNE 5TH

-
- 8.15 Registration and coffee
-
- 9.00 **Opening address by the Norwegian minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre**
-
- 9.30 **RELIGION**
Speech by Amin Maalouf
- 10.00 Session 1
The grand mufti of Sarajevo, dr. Mustafa Cerić, Bishop of Jordan and the Holy Land Munib Jounan, Ayatollah Ahmad Iravani and Rabbi Ma'ayan Turner
Moderator: Gunnar Stålsett, former Norwegian bishop of Oslo
-
- 12.00 Lunch
-
- 13.00 **FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION**
Speech by Hoda Barakat
- 13.30 Session 2
Rana Hussein, Heba Raouf Ezzat, Amira Hass
Moderator: Elisabeth Eide
-
- 16.00 **THE DIASPORA EXPERIENCE**
Speech by Mustafa Can
- 16.30 Session 3 (parallel)
A: Minorities in Europe
Tariq Ramadan, Mustafa Cerić and Ziba Mir-Hosseini
Moderator: Kari Vogt
B: The idea of a homeland
Dorit Rabinyan, Samir el-Youssef, Sinan Antoon, Mustafa Can
Moderator: Mah-Rukh Ali

FRIDAY JUNE 6TH

-
- 8.30 Registration, new participants
-
- 9.00 **THE NATION**
Speech by Tariq Ali
- 9.30 Session 4 (parallel)
A: Security in everyday life
Rana Hussein, Mazen Kerbaj, Ghassan Zaqtan, Dorit Rabinyan
Moderator: Nils Butenschøn
B: The necessity for a national state: Israel, Palestine, Iraq
Amira Hass, Tariq Ali, Sinan Antoon
Moderator: Cecilie Hellestveit
-
- 12.00 Lunch
-
- 13.00 **Artistic performance by Mazen Kerbaj**
-
- 13.30 **TOLERANCE AND COMPASSION**
Speech by Elias Khoury
- 14.00 Session 5
Elias Khoury, Samir el-Youssef, Amira Hass
Moderator: Anders Heger
-
- 16.15 **About reconciliation**
Speech by Thorvald Steen

08.15 – 09.00 Registration and coffee

09.00 – 09.30 Opening address by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre

Religion

«Every religion has a kind and loving heart.»

– Henrik Wergeland

Henrik Wergeland was a theologian and a fervent defender of the freedom of faith. He was a believer until his death, but he had an ecumenical understanding of Christianity and of religion in general. In his time he was considered to be a radical, as he strived for the Jews' admittance to Norway, and because he was well acquainted with Islam. In line with Wergeland's ideas we will on this conference focus, not first and foremost on religious differences, but on mutual understanding and faith's reconciling potential. We have invited leaders from Christianity, Judaism and Islam to discuss how religion can contribute to peace.

09.30 – 10.00 Speech by Amin Maalouf

10.00 – 12.00 Panel

(including break)

How can religious leaders and common faith in God contribute to peace and reconciliation across borders and religions in the Middle East? What are the premises for a lasting peace between Christians, Muslims and Jews?

The grand mufti of Sarajevo, dr. Mustafa Cerić, Bishop of Jordan and the Holy Land Munib Jounan, Ayatollah Ahmad Iravani and Rabbi Ma'ayan Turner

Moderator: Gunnar Stålsett, former Norwegian bishop of Oslo

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

Participants are invited to visit the exhibition based on the city of Kristiansand's Wergeland project for children. In Amalie Skram, 1st floor.

Freedom of thought and expression

«Can Goodness, Greatness, Beauty thrive in fetters bound?»

– Henrik Wergeland

The struggle for freedom of the press and freedom of expression was a central issue for Henrik Wergeland throughout his life. The new Norwegian constitution of 1814 had established that «Freedom of the press was to be secured», but Wergeland would not content himself with this. Throughout his short life he worked for the common man's opportunity to use this right by means of enlightenment of the people, that is public education and public libraries. We have invited authors, journalists and popular educators from the Middle East to discuss the freedom of speech and the significance of public debate – and the impact of literature on today's society.

13.00 – 13.30 **Speech by Hoda Barakat**

13.30 – 15.30 **Panel**

(including break)

Is freedom of expression and freedom of the press an essential condition for a peaceful development? What part may society play in the intercultural understanding in the Middle East? And what part can the author play on the public scene?

Panel: **Rana Husseini, Heba Raouf Ezzat, Amira Hass**

Moderator: **Elisabeth Eide**

The Diaspora Experience

«Freedom must be welcoming
It must bring
In its heart love's bright fire»

– Henrik Wergeland

Being a refugee or being without a homeland has been a harsh experience for millions of people during the last two centuries – and still is. In his time Henrik Wergeland was heavily involved in the struggle for homeless Jews' admittance to Norway. Today, Norway like most other European countries is characterized by a multicultural and multiethnic population. The establishment of a multicultural national and European identity is as difficult today as it was 200 years ago. While Jews from all over the world now have got a homeland in Israel, the refugee camps, and state- and homelessness are permanent problems in the other parts of the Middle East. War, dejection, aggression and occupation make the diaspora experience a constant factor. In this session we will discuss in what respect this experience is a hallmark of the Middle East today and how to make a new sense of belonging for the minorities in Europe.

16.00 – 16.30 **Speech by Mustafa Can**

16.30 – 18.30 **Parallel sessions**

(including break)

A. Minorities in Europe

How does it feel to be an ethnic or religious minority 200 years after Wergeland? Is it possible to establish a European Muslim identity without simultaneously arousing a conflict of cultures?

Panel: **Tariq Ramadan, Mustafa Ceric, Ziba Mir-Hosseini**

Moderator: **Kari Vogt**

B. The idea of a homeland

It has been said that the problems in the Middle East cannot be solved unless the Palestinian refugee problems finds a solution. But is that enough? What framework is there in a country where a refugee can never feel completely at home? And is it a certain fact that any country is able to offer an identity that one can feel at ease with?

Panel: **Dorit Rabinyan, Samir el-Youssef, Sinan Antoon, Mustafa Can**

Moderator: **Mah-Rukh Ali**

The Nation

«Love of one's country is mother of the great virtues.»
– Henrik Wergeland

Henrik Wergeland's name is inseparably connected with the development of an independent Norwegian state and nation. As a poet, debater and a committed member of society he worked for Norway's and all other nations' rights for independence. He regarded the Nation as an essential premise for Man to act according to the liberal and democratic ideas that he maintained. In great parts of the world this issue is as hot as ever it was for Wergeland and Norway. In this conference we will discuss life within and without a nation from two widely different starting points, on both a superior political level and based on the sense of security people experience in their everyday life.

09.00 – 09.30 **Speech by Tariq Ali**

09.30 – 12.00 **Parallel sessions**
(including break)

A. Security in everyday life

What does security on a micro level signify for political processes on a macro level? Is it possible to understand one another's insecurity? Can literary depictions of reality seen from another group's viewpoint constitute a difference in one group's attitude and fear of another group?

Panel: **Rana Husseini, Mazen Kerbaj, Ghassan Zaqtan, Dorit Rabinyan**
Moderator: **Nils Butenschøn**

B. The necessity for a national state: Israel, Palestine, Iraq

Does a people really need a state, and can many peoples share the same state? The Jews lived without a state for a long time, the Palestinians and the Kurds today share the common experience of being without a nation state and Iraq is a disintegrating state. What does it mean to have a state of one's own in the Middle East today?

Panel: **Amira Hass, Tariq Ali, Sinan Antoon**
Moderator: **Cecilie Hellestveit**

12.00 – 13.00 **Lunch**

Participants are invited to visit the exhibition based on the city of Kristiansand's Wergeland project for children. In Amalie Skram, 1st floor.

Tolerance and compassion

«Tolerance is the unyielding principle in our love of humanity.»

– Henrik Wergeland

The House of Literature and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have decided to focus on the spirit of Henrik Wergeland in this celebration of the poet's bicentenary. An uncompromising focus on compassion and tolerance in religion, politics and literature ran like a thread through his 37 years of life. Wergeland was willing to fight many a hard battle against those who impeded these principles, but held on to a fundamental respect for all who did not share his view on life or his political attitude. Finally in this conference we will discuss what is needed to make a stable Middle East and a world where a peaceful coexistence is obtainable – not to erase the differences between people, but on the contrary to find a solution where the differences can be met with respect and human compassion.

13.00 – 13.30 **Artistic performance by Mazen Kerbaj**

13.30 – 14.00 **Speech by Elias Khoury**

14.00 – 16.15 **Panel**

(including break)
What is needed in order to reconcile the peoples of the Middle East today? Is a global reconciliation called for? What are the conditions for tolerance?

Panel: **Elias Khoury, Samir el-Youssef, Amira Hass**
Moderator: **Anders Heger**

16.15 – 16.30 **About reconciliation**
Speech by **Thorvald Steen**

Asmaa Abdol-Hamid (b. 1981) is a Danish social worker and politician living in Odense, born in the United Arab Emirates to parents of Palestinian descent. Her political career started in 2005 when she was elected as deputy member of the Odense city council for the Red-Green Alliance. Last year, she ran for the Danish parliament with support from local imams, amongst others. She ended up as a substitute on the Red-Green list, and might be the first woman to attend «Folketinget» wearing a hijab.

Tariq Ali (b. 1943) is a world-famed historian, author, film maker and political activist. He has been engaged in international debate since the Vietnam war. His fiction includes a series of historical novels about Islam. His non-fiction includes *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* (2002), *Conversations with Edward Said*, *Rough Music: Blair, Bombs, Baghdad, London, Terror and Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (all from 2005). Ali is a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio and contributes articles and journalism to magazines and newspapers including *The Guardian*, *the London Review of Books* and the *New Left Review*.

Sinan Antoon (b. 1967) is an Iraqi poet and scholar. He escaped to USA during the Gulf War in 1991, where he now works as a professor of Arabic literature at New York University. Antoon has contributed to numerous translations of Arabic literature into English, including Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. His works have been published in many newspapers and magazines, eg. *The Nation*, *Middle East Report*, *Al-Ahram Weekly* and *Journal of*

Palestine Studies. Antoon has published two novels that are both translated into English. He has also co-directed the documentary *About Baghdad*.

Hoda Barakat (b. 1952) is a Lebanese author, now living in France. In 1976 she broke off her PhD studies in Paris to return to her native country and work as a reporter, translator and teacher during the Lebanese civil war. Her first novel, *The Stone Laughter*, is the first literary work in Arabic with a homosexual man as a main character. She has won the Naguib Mahfouz Prize and the Al-Naqid Prize, and her books are translated into many languages, including Norwegian this coming autumn.

Mustafa Can (b. 1969) is a Swedish-Kurdish writer and journalist widely acclaimed for his reportages and personal tone. He has received a number of journalism awards including the Swedish Journalist Award in 2002 for an article on the Swedish nationalist party Sverigedemokraterna. At the age of six, he left his home village of Kurekan in Turkish Kurdistan with his family and emigrated to Skövde in Sweden. His debut novel *Day by Day* is about to be published in many European countries.

Dr. Mustafa Cerić (b. 1952) has worked as an imam and professor in Islamic theology in Croatia, Malaysia and USA. He is today the supreme religious leader of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Sanjak and Slovenia and is also an important spokesman for Muslims of all nations living in Europe. In 2003 he received the UNESCO Felix Houphoët

Boigny Peace Prize for Contribution to World Peace. He has also received other awards – The International Council of Christians and Jews Annual Sir Sternberg Award for his contribution to dialogue and understanding across religious borderlines.

Samir el-Youssef (b. 1965) grew up in Rashidia, a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon. He now lives in London, working as an author and critic. His first collection of short stories, *Domestic Affairs*, was published in Arabic by AISP in 1994. In 2004 he gave out Gaza blues – Different stories in collaboration with Israeli author Etgar Keret. el-Youssef writes for *New Statesman*, *Al Hayat* and other Arabic newspapers and magazines worldwide. In 2005, he was awarded the PEN Tucholsky award for promoting peace and freedom of speech in the Middle East. Last year came *The Illusion of Return*, his first novel written in English.

Heba Raouf Ezzat is an Egyptian political scientist at the Cairo University, and a considerable contributor to the think tank Institute for Islamic Thoughts in Cairo. She is interested in Muslim relations to modernity and human rights, in dialogue between faiths and society in general. Ezzat is an exponent for the Islamic renaissance with focus on values and tradition, while at the same time she is a keen supporter of development and equality. On IslamOnline, which she is editing with her husband Ahmed Mohammed Abdalla – and which is visited about 20 million times a year – she is justifying and defending women's use of veil, for one thing.

Amira Hass (b. 1956) is an Israeli author and journalist. She is renowned for her column in the newspaper *Ha'aretz*, where she gives her reports from her daily life in Gaza and on the West Bank. Hass visits Palestinian precincts to enhance the understanding in Israeli general public, and she has for many years been the only resident Israeli journalist in the occupied regions. In 2000 she won the award Press Freedom Hero from The International Press Institute, and in 2003 the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom prize. She has also published the books *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land* and *Reporting from Ramallah: An Israeli Journalist in an Occupied Land*.

Rana Husseini (b. 1967) is a journalist and human rights activist from Jordan. As a senior reporter in *Jordan Times* she has exposed and discussed honour crimes, and she will later this year publish a book about the problem. Husseini has been recognized on the international stage with awards like the 1995 MEDNEWS award for best article («Murder in the name of honour») and the Human Rights Watch Award in 2000. She has also functioned as a coordinator for United Nations' Development Fund for Women and consultant for the American organization Equality Now. She is furthermore a former captain of the Jordanian women's team in basketball.

Ayatollah Ahmad Iravani is a professor and leader for the Islamic studies and dialogue at the Catholic university in Washington DC. He is also professor (khaleg) in Islamic studies at the University of Qom, Iran. Iravani is

one of the few Iranian religious leaders living in USA who is still appreciated by the priesthood in Iran.

Mazen Kerbaj (b. 1975) is a Lebanese blogger, improvising musician and cartoonist. He is frequently touring in Europe and blogging about life in Beirut. He is often mentioned for his musical piece *Starry Night*, an impromptu with himself on trumpet and the Israeli air force on bombers, recorded on his balcony in Beirut in July 2006. His graphic book from the same summer *Beyrouth juillet-août 2006* came out in France in 2007.

Elias Khoury (b. 1948) is a Beirut born novelist and critic, today one of the leading intellectuals in the Arabic world. His novels are translated into a number of languages. He is presently chief editor of *Al-Mulhaq*, the cultural weekly supplement to the biggest newspaper in Lebanon, *An-Nahar*. He is also a guest professor in Arabic and comparative literature at the New York University. His most renowned work is *Gate of the Sun* (in Norwegian in 2004), a critically acclaimed and award-winning novel about the fate and history of the Palestinian people.

Amin Maalouf (b. 1949) born in Beirut within the minor community of Christian melkites, journalist and writer, emigrated to France in 1976. Maalouf gave up his journalist career (in particular exerted in the Lebanese daily newspaper *An-Nahar*, and later in *Jeune Afrique*) to devote himself entirely to writing. He is the author of many novels which have as a framework the Middle-East, Africa and the Mediterranean world. Among these,

The Rock of Tanios brought him the Goncourt Prize in 1993. In his books he builds bridges between East and West. «When one lived in Lebanon, the first religion which one has, is the religion of coexistence.»

Ziba Mir-Hosseini (b. 1952) is an Iranian anthropologist and public debater living in London, where she works at The School of Oriental and African Studies. She has also been a guest lecturer at several other universities. Her subject areas are sex, family relations, Islam, legislative and developmental issues. Mir-Hosseini is also a documentary filmmaker and author of books on Islam, Iran and feminist research.

Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962), holds MA in Philosophy and French literature and PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He is, among other positions, Professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford. Through his writings and lectures he has contributed substantially to the debate on the issues of Muslims in the West and Islamic revival in the Muslim world. Ramadan is currently President of the European think tank European Muslim Network in Brussels.

Dorit Rabinyan (b. 1972) is an author, journalist and film critic currently living in Tel Aviv. As an Iranian Jew raised in Israel she is concerned with the Israeli identity – which she claims can be perceived as European-hegemonic and exclusionary towards Sephardim and other groups. Rabinyan wrote her first award winning novel *Persian Brides* at the age of 22. A few years later she received The Best Drama of the Year Award (1997) from the

Israeli Film Academy. Her two books are translated into more than ten languages.

Thorvald Steen (b. 1954) has published a wide range of novels, plays, poems, short stories, children's books and essays. He has distinguished himself as one of Norway's leading internationally-oriented writers. He has chaired The Norwegian Author's Union and been on the board of PEN. Steen's work, including titles like *Don Carlo*, *Giovanni and Constantinople*, is translated into 18 languages and published in more than 30 countries. Steen has received several prestigious literary prizes.

Ma'ayan Turner is a woman rabbi from Israel, working in the network Rabbis for Human Rights.

Munib Younan (b. 1950) is archbishop of the evangelical Lutheran church of Jordan and the Holy Land.

Ghassan Zaqtan (b. 1954) is a Palestinian poet and editor of the literary section in the *Al-Ayyam* newspaper in Ramallah. He has also edited the *Bayader* (PLO's magazine for literature) and *Al-Shuara* quarterly (*The Poets*). Zaqtan has written several collections of poetry, and has been represented in a number of anthologies abroad. He also stands behind one novel and two documentaries. His poetry has been published in Norway, by the Oktober publishing house, *You caught hold of me and disappeared - selected poems* (2003).

MODERATORS

Mah-Rukh Ali (b. 1982) is a journalist and anchor woman at the Norwegian television station TV2's news channel.

Nils Butenschøn (b. 1949) is the former head of The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights at the University of Oslo, where he now works as a political scientist.

Elisabeth Eide (b. 1950) is a journalist, researcher and author of both fiction and non-fiction books. She received the Norwegian P.E.N's Ossietzky prize in 2002.

Anders Heger (b. 1956) is a publisher at Cappelen Damm and chairman of the Norwegian P.E.N.

Cecilie Hellestveit (b. 1972) is a Norwegian legal expert and researcher currently working on a PhD in Public international law and civil wars at the University of Oslo.

Gunnar Stålsett (b. 1935) is the former bishop of Oslo and a previous member of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee.

Kari Vogt (b. 1939) is an assistant professor of religious history at the University of Oslo and author of several books on Islam.

ØVRIG PUBLIKUMSPROGRAM

Alle arrangementer er gratis. Ingen plassreservasjon – vær tidlig ute.

TIR. 3.6 KL.20 - ONS. 4.6 KL.16.30

Poesi på all verdens språk

11 norske og 11 utenlandske poeter

Opplesninger fra UDs poesiverksted i anledning Wergelandsjubileet

Espen Stueland • Sharon Hass
Hanne Bramness • Fadhil al-Azzawi
Erling Kittelsen • Dong He
Torgeir Rebolledo Pedersen m.fl.

Arrangør: Utenriksdepartementet

ONSDAG 4. JUNI KL.19.30

Islam in Europe

Foredrag ved Tariq Ramadan

Why are Muslim women a challenge to Europe?

Foredrag ved Ziba Mir-Hosseini

Introdusert av Kari Vogt

Sted: Wergeland

TORS DAG 5. JUNI KL.19.30

Midtøsten forteller

Møt forfattere fra Libanon, Israel, Palestina og Irak

Elias Khoury • Hoda Barakat
Dorit Rabinyan • Samir el-Youssef
Ghassan Zakhtan • Sinan Antoon

Sted: Wergeland

FREDAG 6. JUNI KL.18.00

Filmvisning: *About Baghdad*

«a grim index of the situation in Iraq»

- New York Times

Introduksjon ved regissør Sinan Antoon

LØRDAG 7. JUNI KL.12.00

Foredrag ved Tariq Ali

Sted: Wergeland

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