

More than 60 UN Ambassadors Attend Passover Seder

The European Coalition for Israel and the Forum for Cultural Diplomacy arranged for a High Level Diplomatic Passover Seder to take place at the UN headquarters in New York, just three days ahead of the Jewish Feast. The pre-Passover Seder on Tuesday was co-hosted by the Israeli Permanent Mission to the UN. The speakers reminded the more than 60 UN-ambassadors and senior diplomats who attended the event of the unique set of circumstances which led to the Exodus, the liberation of the Jewish people from 400 years of slavery in Egypt and their well-documented path to freedom and self-determination in Eretz Israel – the Land of Israel.

“It was a long journey, but now you are home”, ECI Founding Director Tomas Sandell said in his opening remarks as he reminded the audience of the upcoming 70th anniversary of the modern State of Israel.

Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, explained that the Hebrew word ‘Seder’ means ‘Order’. “At a time of upheaval around the world it is critical that we all come together and ensure that ‘order’ is kept. As representatives of our countries, we have the responsibility to ensure that the UN is not blinded by bias and that it stands up to the Pharaohs of today who threaten freedom, peace and security”, he said.

In his speech, ECI Director of UN Affairs and Co-founder of the Forum for Cultural Diplomacy, Gregory Lafitte, referred to the Passover story as “the first written account of diplomacy”. “It is a story that tells about the exodus out of Egypt and the birth of a people, which led to the receiving of the Torah”, he explained.

“The Jewish insight is that freedom is not the ability to do

whatever we please—that's anarchy. True freedom is to be able to relive the story, to ask questions, to know the truth, and to choose what is right. True freedom is not what we obtained at the crossing of the Red Sea, it is what we received at Sinai", he added.

This is the third consecutive year that a Passover Seder has been held inside the UN headquarters in New York. In 2016 ECI, together with the Israeli Permanent Mission to the UN, initiated and hosted the first ever Passover Seder at the UN headquarters which was attended by some 40 ambassadors and senior diplomats. Three years later the event has grown to over 80 participants, including 60 UN ambassadors and senior diplomats from four different continents.

The diplomatic success of the event was enhanced by the fact that the Turkish Ambassador to the UN, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu, also participated in this year's ceremony, despite many years of frosty relations between Jerusalem and Ankara.

The ECI delegation consisted of Tomas Sandell, Gregory Lafitte, J. Rudolf Geigy and Faith Collins Childress. The Passover Seder was one of the many ongoing ECI activities at the United Nations in New York which since 2014 are held under the name of the Forum for Cultural Diplomacy.