

UAE President attends Zayed Award for Human Fraternity 2026 Ceremony

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His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, attended a ceremony honoring the recipients of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity 2026, now in its seventh edition. The event was held at the Founder's Memorial in Abu Dhabi in the presence of a distinguished gathering of leaders, senior officials, prominent international figures, advocates of human fraternity, this year's honorees, and members of the Award's judging committee.

His Highness congratulated the 2026 honorees: His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and His Excellency Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, in recognition of the historic peace agreement between their two countries; Ms. Zarqa Yaftali, in acknowledgment of her courageous advocacy for the right of Afghan girls and young women to education; and Palestinian humanitarian organisation Taawon, in appreciation of its humanitarian efforts in service of the Palestinian people.

Together, their achievements affirm that human fraternity is a deeply rooted and enduring value—one that builds bridges, safeguards human dignity, and demonstrates that peace grounded in dialogue and cooperation can help shape a more just and hopeful future for all.

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed also conveyed his best wishes to the honorees for their continued success in advancing their noble humanitarian missions, expressing hope that their efforts would remain a lasting source of inspiration in fostering peace and coexistence while renewing hope for a future defined by justice, compassion, and solidarity among all peoples. In this context, His Highness commended the independent international judging committee for its thorough, responsible, and dedicated work in selecting exemplary humanitarian models who embody the highest ideals of human fraternity and have contributed meaningfully to advancing a global culture of peace and coexistence.

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed further reaffirmed the UAE's unwavering commitment to supporting the global journey of human fraternity, noting efforts that have continued after the signing of the historic Document on Human Fraternity by His Eminence Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, and the late Pope Francis, 266th head of the Catholic Church. His Highness noted that the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity has become one of the world's leading platforms for honoring champions of humanitarian action and peacebuilding, spotlighting initiatives that advance coexistence and solidarity among peoples and reinforce the global conviction that human dignity is the cornerstone of a more just, peaceful, stable, and prosperous future.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin

Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs; as well as a number of Sheikhs, ministers, senior officials, and guests of the UAE, including heads of state, international dignitaries, and members of the judging committee.

During the ceremony, His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, delivered remarks on the occasion of honoring the peace agreement signed between his country and the Republic of Armenia. He expressed his pride in receiving an award that bears the name of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, describing him as the visionary leader who transformed the UAE into one of the world's most prosperous and successful nations. He added that His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan continues to carry forward the legacy of the Founding Father by advancing the UAE's ongoing journey of development, modernisation, and progress.

He noted that the UAE had become a global model in nation-building, successfully creating a peaceful and stable society that remains deeply rooted in its heritage. He said the country offers a unique experience that combines authenticity with openness and plays a central role in promoting human dialogue and values that bring cultures closer together while contributing to a more prosperous future.

His Excellency Aliyev also highlighted the special symbolism of hosting the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi, saying it reflected the UAE's pivotal role in fostering a climate of dialogue and peace. He expressed his gratitude for the honor and thanked all those who had supported the journey towards peace and believed in its possibility.

In the same context, His Excellency Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, also addressed the ceremony on the recognition of the peace agreement signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, stating that the award stood as a tribute to every Armenian and Azerbaijani who had shown the courage to dream of peace. He said that while the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity had been presented to the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, it was in fact an achievement that belonged to the peoples of both nations. He added that although the two leaders had taken bold steps, it was their peoples' readiness to embrace a new future that had made this historic transformation possible. He also stressed the importance of channelling future efforts towards building a future marked by peace and prosperity.

Dr. Nabil Qaddumi, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Palestinian organisation Taawon, said the honour was aligned with the message of the Award, which is inspired by the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed in promoting human dignity and strengthening social cohesion. He noted that Taawon's approach, developed over more than four decades, is rooted in long-term, sustainable programs in education, healthcare, livelihoods, culture, and capacity building, with the Palestinian individual placed at the center as an active participant in development. He concluded by thanking the judging committee and calling for greater solidarity to achieve lasting impact.

For her part, Zarqa Yaftali, in her address at the ceremony, expressed her great pride in an honor that transcends personal recognition to carry a broader message and responsibility. She dedicated the prize to the girls and women of Afghanistan who continue to persevere despite severe restrictions, to mothers who carry hope for their children, and to every girl who has refused to abandon her right to education. She recalled that only a few years ago, Afghanistan witnessed a reality in which girls

attended school every day without any hindrance and women played an active role in public life, the media, and the judicial system—a reality that has since undergone a profound and troubling change for the worse.

This courageous advocate emphasised that the Award’s message is rooted in rejecting silence in the face of the systematic exclusion of women, calling for a clear and principled moral stance in support of their right to education and the protection of their dignity. In this context, she said she draws inspiration from the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed, who established women’s empowerment as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, affirming: “From the very beginning, Sheikh Zayed recognised the importance of women’s participation in national life in contemporary society, as they constitute half of the community without which no progress can be achieved.” She concluded by underscoring that the future she aspires to build begins with opening opportunities and horizons for every girl and every woman, without exception.

During the ceremony, His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye; His Excellency Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan; His Excellency Sadyr Japarov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic; His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan; His Excellency Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; His Excellency Joseph Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic; and Her Excellency Emine Erdoğan, First Lady of the Republic of Türkiye, conveyed recorded messages of congratulations to the honorees, which were screened during the ceremony.

In their messages, they commended the honorees’ courage and sense of responsibility in advancing the values of peace, dialogue, and mutual understanding, affirming that these inspiring figures embody the true meaning of human fraternity and send a message of hope that sincere will and a diplomatic approach can build trust and strengthen coexistence in service of the security, stability, and prosperity of peoples everywhere.

On this occasion, His Excellency Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam, Secretary-General of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, stated that recognising the Award’s honorees in its seventh edition for 2026 represents a triumph of human will over the evil of conflict, offers new ambassadors for human fraternity, and reaffirms that the values of peace and coexistence are not merely theoretical principles, but practical paths capable of transforming reality and shaping a better future for humanity.

Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam, who, along with his team, have worked hard to make this another memorable edition, added that the honorees celebrated this year convey a clear and compelling global message: that dialogue, wisdom, and moral courage can build bridges between peoples and safeguard human dignity even under the most challenging circumstances.

He emphasised that the award—drawing inspiration from the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed—has evolved into a unifying international platform dedicated to advancing goodness and peace. This year, the award received more than 350 nominations from 75 countries worldwide, highlighting powerful stories of humanitarian success and encouraging greater global solidarity and cooperation, thereby supporting the journey of human fraternity and positioning it as a driving force for stability, prosperity, and peaceful coexistence throughout the world.

He further affirmed that the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, and His Highness' continued support for the award's independence and global mission to encourage the champions of good and the advocates of peace around the world, stem from the UAE's deeply rooted concern for mankind and its humanitarian principles. He noted that this support embodies Abu Dhabi's enduring message—one grounded in shared goodness and the consolidation of the values of human fraternity, inclusion, and human coexistence.

The ceremony coincided with the observance today of the annual International Day of Human Fraternity, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly by consensus of all Member States to commemorate the signing of the historic Document on Human Fraternity. The occasion reflects the international community's recognition that the values of fraternity, coexistence, and dialogue among religions and cultures are fundamental pillars for building a world rooted in peace, mutual respect, and human dignity.

In its seventh edition, the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity honored the historic peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the establishment of inter-state relations, in recognition of the agreement's exceptional significance. It embodies a wise and forward-looking leadership vision, opening new horizons for peace, cooperation, and regional stability while marking a bold, decisive step toward ending decades of conflict and humanitarian suffering in the Caucasus and offering renewed hope for a more secure future grounded in mutual trust and a sincere commitment to peace.

Also among this year's honorees was the Palestinian humanitarian organisation Taawon, recognised for its outstanding humanitarian impact on the lives of more than one million people annually across Palestine. Since its establishment in 1983, the organisation has invested over one billion dollars in a wide range of sectors, including education, youth empowerment, orphan care, culture, the rehabilitation of historic towns, community development, healthcare, agriculture, and emergency humanitarian assistance. To date, the organisation has implemented more than 8,200 projects aimed at strengthening community resilience—particularly among young people—while working tirelessly to advance social and cultural development, preserving Palestine's rich heritage, promoting sustainable growth, and highlighting a vibrant civilisation firmly rooted in tradition, creativity and renewal.

Zarqa Yaftali, a leading Afghan advocate for women's education, was awarded the prize in recognition of her extraordinary courage and lifelong dedication to defending the right of women and girls to learn. Through her unremitting efforts, she has enabled women and girls facing severe educational barriers to acquire essential skills, knowledge, and qualifications, expanding their access to learning opportunities, and allowing them to receive critical psychosocial support. Her work has reached more than 100,000 people in Afghanistan and even further afield, offering a lifeline of hope to girls living under some of the world's most challenging and restrictive conditions. The Zayed Award for Human Fraternity is an independent, international annual prize worth one million US dollars. It recognises individuals, organisations, and institutions whose outstanding contributions advance peace, human fraternity, and coexistence, and whose work demonstrates the power of moral courage to inspire positive and lasting change across societies.

Bearing this in mind, we must look to the future. There's not a moment to lose, as we're already thinking about next year, with the ceremony also marking the opening of

the official call for nominations for the 2027 edition of the award. Eligible institutions and organisations are invited to submit their nominations through the official Zayed Award for Human Fraternity portal at: <https://zayedaward.org>. We're waiting to hear from you!

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<https://www.mohamedbinzayed.ae>