

## **"From the United Nations to the United People, from the Brink of Disaster to a Future of Dignity."**

This was the motto of the conference of the organization "Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies" (see also [#digniworld](#)), which took place in Amman, the capital of Jordan, from September 5 to 7, 2022. The delegation that travelled to this conference consisted of Evelin Lindner (founder and president of Human DHS, most recently living in Holtensen near Hamelin), Ella Autti from Rovaniemi, Finland, Mara Alagic from Wichita, Kansas, USA, Zuzana Luckay Mihalčinová from Slovakia, Fatma Susan Tufan from New York, USA, Gary Page Jones from North Queensland, Australia, and Dorothee Densow and Georg Geckler from Hameln in Germany.

How did Dorothee and I get involved with this organization and why am I sharing about this conference? In September 2019, I met Evelin Lindner who had just returned from the burning jungle in Brazil. She told me that one of the conferences she and her friends have organized twice a year around the world since 2002 had taken place there. She has dedicated her life to the disadvantaged people who are exploited, oppressed, and violated under the ruthlessness of the ruling powers and who live in inhumane conditions without the chance of self-determination and improvement of their situation. We all know that the people here live with their prosperity at the expense of these people. Evelin is putting all her energy into changing that. I am now convinced that she should be supported in this wherever possible. Here in Hameln, we have formed a local group to support her, modelled on the corresponding group in New York that has been in existence for years. Evelin Lindner's organization is called Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies and has several thousand correspondents worldwide.

The conference was hosted by the "Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies" (RIIFS) in Amman, which was founded in 1994 by HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal. He is the uncle of the current King Abdullah II of Jordan, and he participated in several events as patron of the conference and gave two impressive speeches.



We had already met Ella Autti from Finland at Frankfurt Airport and flew to Amman on September 3, 2022, on a direct flight of the Royal Jordanian Airline. There we were channelled through the controls like VIPs and driven to our hotels in black painted limousines. Except for Ella and Evelin, who stayed at RIIFS, all participants of our delegation were accommodated in a guesthouse in the old city of Amman. We spent September 4 acclimatizing and getting to know each other, and in the afternoon, we took an excursion on foot into the Old City to ruins dating back to Roman times.

The agenda of the three-day conference included topics on avoiding all forms of violence and promoting human dignity wherever it is neglected. The first day of the conference (Monday, Sept. 5, 2022) was held in the feudal hotel and conference centre "Landmark." A large hall filled with more than 120 people, including local secular and spiritual dignitaries. We were welcomed by RIIFS Director Dr. Renée Hattar and by Evelin Lindner and then HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal gave the opening speech.

He began with, "How can human dignity become the framework for action in politics?" and elaborated that human dignity can serve as a tool for the common pursuit of awareness and promotion of those fundamental values that are at the core of humanity. In particular, these include compassion, respect and cooperation in a world of challenges and turbulence. "Dignity is the search for human solidarity that respects diversity and differences, rather than polarizing and sowing hatred," Prince Hassan said. He made a lengthy appeal for humanity to be empowered to move society forward. The time has come, he said, to usher in the future of the people in their respective regions with a vision of a new harmony between man and nature, including the issues of food, energy, and a secure supply of water. (None of this is guaranteed in Jordan, where climate change is expected to bring temperatures of 50° C by 2050, making the country, which has a population of over 10 million, uninhabitable).



Dr. Renée Hattar, Director of RIIFS, then explained that the Institute aims to build common human values and ethics. This helps to strengthen cooperation and sustainable relationships among the followers of different religions, thereby reducing misunderstandings about the "other" and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Evelin Lindner, co-founder of the World Dignity University initiative, said that this initiative was founded in 2001 for those who want to open spaces for the growth of human dignity. She invited faculty from around the world who already work or have worked in schools and universities to participate online.



This opening event and a break were followed by two rounds of discussion in a separate room. We sat down with about 20 people at tables set up in a square. On one wall of the room there was a large screen on which the speakers could present the images and graphics during their presentations and on which the online participants were also shown.



After Dr. Hattar had given an overview of the program of the three conference days and explained that the discussions would take place in a total of five so-called "Dignilogues", each followed by rounds in small "Connection-



Reflection Groups", we started with the first Dignilogue. Its theme was the interaction of crises and learning by looking at three ecologies: In the intellectual, in the social and in the environmental. With moderation by Prof. Dr. Ala'aldeen Al-Hahouli (President of the German-Jordanian University in Amman), Evelin Lindner, Lyndon Harris (online) and Mirna Abou Zeid presented short papers. Due to the delays that occurred, the associated Connection-Reflection-Groups were omitted.



Dignilogue 2 had as its theme the strengthening of a language of dignity for the future in global solidarity that recognizes the other. Zuzana Luckay Mihalčinová moderated the three presentations.



Fatma Turan described the discrimination she experienced first-hand against Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11, which she, as a Turkish woman who went to school in the U.S. and trained as a teacher, found wholly inappropriate. She had never had anything to do with Islamists and was viewed and hated by white



Americans as a person of low origin only because of her appearance and headscarf - a disregard for her dignity as a human being.

Mara Alagic is a distinguished professor of dialectics at a university in Kansas, USA. She is from Yugoslavia at the time of Tito and was also educated there. Her talk described new developments in methods of teaching at universities and schools, where students learn with their teachers and professors at eye level and with mutual respect. There is then no more looking down or up - in contrast to teaching methods where punishments or even beatings are still used everywhere in the world today. So the

language of dignity should be spread as widely as possible here, too, because that is how you achieve the greatest educational successes.

Thirdly, Mrs. Oroub Elabed reported on the situation in Arab countries, which have taken in a particularly large number of refugees. The refugees live for the most part in camps where conditions are undignified. We Europeans are familiar with images from former camps in Greece. Refugees in Lebanon, for example, are much worse off, however, because most of the locals there are already affected by severe poverty. - The subsequent group discussions came off well this time. There was an in-depth discussion about the presented gradations of a lack of dignified interaction with each other and about possible improvements.



After a common lunch at the Landmark Hotel, we 8 participants of the delegation from the organization "Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies" were invited to a first excursion organized by RIIFS. The destination was Salt, the former capital of Jordan, which we reached after a 45-minute drive. There we visited oriental stores and stores with their own exotic charm. The highlight was a house of worship used equally by Christians and Muslims (see photos). The central mosaic had once been donated by the family of Sandy Quaqish, the RIIFS organizational assistant who accompanied us. In the evening we were driven (all the time in luxury cars) to our quarters and the next morning to the conference venue.



The second and third days of the conference were held at the RIIFS building. HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal and his cousin, HRH Prince Firas bin Ra'ad (a member of the World Bank) also attended.

On Day 2 (September 6, 2022), Dignilogues No.3 and 4 were on the agenda.

The theme of Dignilogue 3 was: The transformation of systems of oppression into systems of mutual respect: from competitive polarization to cooperative diversity and to regenerative economic systems. The questions posed on this topic by the organizers were: How do we break away from outdated habits of competitive polarization that cause oppression of people, hurtful conflicts, and environmental damage? How can we start a movement toward cooperative diversity and responsible collaboration in humanity and on our planet? Following the presentations by speakers Gary P. Jones, Zuzana L. Mihalčinová and Iyad Abu Haltam, moderated by Ella Autti, Connection Reflection Groups were again held on-site and via Zoom to discuss the presentations in greater depth.



Dignilogue 4 was held under the motto: How can civil society and interreligious dialogue usher in a new era of mutual respect and respect for human dignity? The following questions were addressed: What are the advantages of a transdisciplinary study community to be established globally? Who can feel safe? Who will be heard? How can we collectively gather and perceive the traditions and customs that provide dignity in each culture? How can we

repair the consequences of oppression and violation in its many forms (domination, colonization, aggression, etc.)? The moderator was Mara Alagic and speakers included Fatma Tufan, Gary P. Jones, Amer Elhafi and Rami Abu Naffaa.

After Connection-Reflection Groups and coffee break, several "Messages to the World" were delivered on the spot or via zoom. In the invitations to the conference, attention was drawn to the fact that anyone could formulate a "Message to the World" of up to 4 minutes and submit it as a short video or give it as a live lecture. The "MTTW"s that were not presented during the conference are now also available on the HumanDHS homepage.

After lunch and a break in the quarters, we were chauffeured to a dinner in the park-like garden of HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal's villa on this 2nd day of the conference. First, after being greeted by His Royal Highness and his wife, Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath al Hassan, we were seated in large garden chair rounds for small talk. At 8 p.m., we were led to two lavishly set tables, with the Prince seated at one table and the Princess seated at the other table in the center. I felt especially honoured as my place card was placed right across from Prince El Hassan. Dorothee was seated at the princess' table. Wonderful Levantine food and drinks were served and stimulating conversations were held. Among others, the President of the German-Jordanian University in Amman, Professor Dr. Ala'aldeen Al-Hahouli, who had graduated from the Technical University of Braunschweig and during this time had lived in Peine not far from the train station there, sat at our table. (I lived and worked in Peine for over 25 years and my children and grandchildren live there). After dinner we sat down again in the garden, and because the moon was shining down really pretty, Dorothee and I performed the wonderful song: "Der Mond ist aufgegangen" and also "Dona nobis pacem".

On the third and final day of the Dignity Conference at RIIFS, first Evelin Lindner gave her keynote address on the topic of her latest book, *From Humiliation to Dignity for a Future of Global Solidarity*. **She showed that humanity must manage its affairs on this planet in such a way that a dignified life is possible for all, and how this goal can be achieved.** This presentation was also followed by in-depth Connection Reflection Groups on site and online.

Now followed the last Dignilogue (No. 5) with the motto: Shaping our lives with dignity: The roles of beauty, music, movement, poetry, spirituality, nature and art. The following questions were considered: How can creativity contribute to insight and energy in our endeavours? What lessons about encounters can we learn from indigenous, spiritual, religious, and cultural traditions? How can the giving of "gifts of beauty" plant the seeds of peace and dignity for everyone? After the speakers' presentations (Dorothee gave an impromptu talk on the diverse aspects of dignity in community choral singing, I presented seven theses on creativity that my brother Dieter had put forward), connection-reflection groups followed again.



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The official part of the Dignity Conference at RIIFS in Amman ended with more performances of Messages to the World, reflections on the entire conference, closing comments, and finally tributes to the hosts, staff, supporters, and guests. Afterwards, we eight participants from the HumanDHS Movement were able to experience an excursion to the mountain "Mount Nebo" organized by RIIFS. From there Moses is said



to have shown his people the Promised Land before he died there. Via the small town of Madaba, where we were once again invited to an excellent meal, we were driven back to our hotel in Amman.

For Dorothee and me, this conference was a unique experience. Most impressive was the extremely generous hospitality of the hosts and the tireless commitment of Prince El Hassan and the Institute's leadership for a more humane world. We ended the meeting with our Dignity friends with a rest day with a farewell dinner in a Jordanian restaurant with oriental flair.

The next day (Friday, September 9, 2022) we began our six-day tour of Jordan in a pre-booked rental car. We visited the sights in Karak (a Crusader fortress), Petra (inhabited city in a sandstone gorge since ancient times), Wadi Rum (a sandy desert developed for tourism with huge bizarre rocks, which is crossed by jeeps and where nomadic tents are visited), Aqaba (with swimming in the Red Sea) and back along the border to Israel and the Dead Sea. On September 15 we flew back home with Royal Jordanian Airlines.

[Translated with the help of DeepL](#)

*Georg-W. Geckler*