

Speaker to discuss peace between Jews and Muslims



By David A. Schwartz, Staff Writer

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Can Jews and Muslims co-exist peacefully? Martin Rutte thinks so.

"We need a new story or a new narrative for the Middle East, especially for Jews and Muslims," argues the founder of Project Heaven on Earth, an initiative that encourages people to get involved to make the world the kind of place they believe is possible.

Rutte will share his ideas for helping people get involved in finding solutions for peace in the Middle East when he presents "Heaven on Earth for Jews and Muslims: How Do We Create This World?" at 6 p.m. on Jan. 19 at the Knight Auditorium, Carl DeSantis Business Building at Nova Southeastern University, 3301 College Ave., Davie.

His talk will be sponsored by Spiritual Life, Hillel, International Muslim Association Nova and JAM & All (an organization of Jews, Muslims, Christians and other religions).

Rutte is a Jewish, Santa Fe, New Mexico-based management consultant who helps companies to establish a dialogue and resolve differences on issues of mutual interest. He is also co-author of "Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work," a collection of stories about spirituality in the work place.

Peace between Jews and Muslims is a "realistic perspective," Rutte said in a telephone interview. "It's not naive or unrealistic. Naive only exists in advance of the results.

"We've had other seemingly impossible situations," Rutte said, mentioning fighting between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, apartheid in South Africa and the fall of the Berlin Wall and Communism in Eastern Europe.

Asked what he means by "heaven on earth for Jews and Muslims," Rutte said he would rather pose the question than answer it. He said he wants to encourage others to come up with creative ways to achieve peace in the Middle East.

"The leaders haven't touched on and unleashed the will of their people," he said. "The vast majority of the people don't want the situation to continue.

"I want to unleash this force," Rutte said. "The current reality shouldn't be allowed to win."

Rutte proposes the establishment of a "Middle East peace prize," presented annually. "What if peace broke out?" he asked.

Rutte is a friend of JAM & All board member Irma Sulaiman. She said he agreed to waive his customary fee to speak at NSU.

"He's a guy full of wisdom who can shed a lot of light on this situation," Sulaiman said. His message "falls in line with what JAM & All is doing," she added. "We are just about meeting and getting to know each other and understand each other. We don't get into the political arena."

"There are so many teachings of Islam that came from Judaism," said Kamruz Husein, a Muslim who is JAM & All's president. "It's surprising how little we [Muslims and Jews] know about each other."

The program is "a fantastic opportunity to increase relations between Jewish and Islamic students," said Kevin Saberre, Jr., a graduate assistant who works with Spiritual Life.

For more information call Kathleen Leonard at 561-289-4621 or Irma Sulaiman at 561-251-5336.