

*"Our aim is that our people, who admire stars, will dare to look up and dream..."—
Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb*

Bringing the Story of Palestine to the World

Born and raised in Palestine, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb is a co-founder of Bright Stars of Bethlehem. He currently serves as the president of Dar al-Kalima University of Arts and Culture. Previously, he was the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the president and founder of Diyar Consortium, a Lutheran-based organization serving the Palestinian community.

After receiving his doctorate from Philipps University of Marburg in 1988, Rev. Raheb returned home to Palestine full of theological concepts to change his community. The brutality of the Israeli occupation, however, resulted in a far greater calling. As a result, he has led numerous projects serving the social needs of Palestinians. In 1995, he opened the first authentic tourism program to encourage international fact-finding missions and justice-oriented groups to see the conditions of the Palestinian occupation. Called "Dar an-Nadwa al-Duwalia," which means "the place where people meet for dialogue," the tourist center that resulted from this program fulfilled Rev. Raheb's vision of establishing links between Palestine and the rest of the world. In 1996, the program was honored with a TO DO award for socially responsible tourism from ITB, the world's largest tourism trade fair. In 1997, Rev. Raheb's focus went to the arts as a means of creative resilience, resistance, and social transformation, and by 1998 he was breaking ground on what is known today as Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture with then-President of the Palestinian National Authority Yasser Arafat.

Described as the most widely published Palestinian theologian, Rev. Raheb is the author and editor of more than forty books. His publications have been translated into eleven languages. He is an internationally acclaimed speaker who has appeared before the U.S. Congress, German Bundestag, European Union, and Scandinavian and Dutch parliaments. He has given lectures at universities around the world, including Yale, Harvard, and Princeton, among others. He has presented keynote speeches at major festivals and summits like the National Prayer Breakfast and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Rev. Raheb has appeared in many major international media outlets, including CNN, ABC, BBC, Al-Jazeera, The Economist, and Newsweek. He was featured in a 2012 segment on the CBS program 60 Minutes about Christians in the Holy Land.

Rev. Raheb has received numerous international awards for his tireless fight for peace, justice, and equality. In 2003, he was given an honorary doctorate from Concordia University Chicago for his outstanding contribution to Christian education and a Wittenberg Award from the Luther Institute in Washington DC for his work promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue among Palestinians and Israelis. In 2006, the Central Institute Islam Archive in Germany awarded Rev. Raheb the Muhammad Nafi Tschelebi Peace Prize, an award for interfaith dialogue. The following year, Rev. Raheb received the Aachen Peace Prize.

In 2012, he was awarded the German Media Prize, which honors public figures who have made a mark on society across political and ideological lines. (Previous honorees include Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama.) Rev. Raheb received the 2015 Olof Palme Prize along with Israeli journalist Gideon Levy for “their courageous and indefatigable fight against occupation and violence, and for a future Middle East characterized by peaceful coexistence and equality for all.” In 2017, he was the recipient of a Ring of Tolerance from the European Academy of Arts and Science. The ring is awarded annually to three people, one from each Abrahamic faith (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism).

Rev. Raheb lives in Bethlehem with his wife, Najwa Khoury. They have two adult daughters, Dana and Tala.