

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. A Salaam aleokoum and shalom aleigum.

My name is Samira Bouchibti. I am member of the Dutch parliament. Dutch of Moroccan descent and a Muslim.

36 years ago I was born in Fes, Morocco. To reunite my family I came to the Netherlands, where my father lived and worked, 34 years ago. Along with my mother and 5 brothers and sisters.

As the daughter of a immigrant I wanted to make my fathers' dream of a better life come true. I was encouraged to change my life for the better. Why else did my father bring us to the Netherlands?

Until I reached the age of fourteen my father had always thought he could go back to the country he came from. But his dream to earn money and than go back never came true. Five years ago he died.

Until this day I ask myself, why have I become the person I came to be? Who am I today and why?

Until the age of 25 I had been working on my personal development. I always wanted to become a journalist and so I did. I have always felt Dutch, and since I never bothered any Dutchman, I was always seen as one. But this all ended after the events of September 11, the murder of Pim Fortuyn, the murder of Theo van Gogh.

From that moment on I became that Muslim. No more, no less.

All of a sudden I was responsible for the behaviour of the Muslims in the Netherlands, way beyond that, it included all Muslims around the world.

I don't mind. I want to be a responsible person. But I do not want to be held accountable for the action of all Muslims, all Dutch or all Europeans.

I can see Dutch Muslims, struggling and falling along the way. I can see young people, fortunately a minority, who can't find their way. Who don't feel accepted and see the society as their enemy. Who feel neither Dutch nor Moroccan.

I can also see Dutch Muslims who struggle but survive. I am one of them. That brings me back to the question: why have I become who I am?

I am an idealist in heart and soul. I am a social democrat. I want the strongest shoulders carrying the heaviest burden. I will always defend the weak and call upon the responsibility of the strong.

I think I can build a bridge between the strong and weak, religious and non-religious, Jew and Muslim. I am a bridge come to life, and so are you. I am convinced of that, otherwise you would be elsewhere today, with family or friends.

Ladies and gentlemen, whether you like it or not, the relation between Jews and Muslims, anywhere in the world lies in your hands. All over the world it is so

important to form coalitions. Jews and Muslims in the diaspora should join hands. Together we must defeat antisemitism and islamophobia, we must defeat extremism and fundamentalism. We have to join forces. Why? Because we face mutual threats.

For the rest of my life I will fight racism and xenophobia. I will not tolerate it and I will always stand for the rights of Jews. Because I know how it feels to be that other person. I will not tolerate it if a Moroccan from Amsterdam abuses or spit on a Jew from Amsterdam. And I will stand up for the rights of Muslims.

Some years ago I joined the Jewish Moroccan Network Amsterdam. The mayor of Amsterdam took the initiative to bring together Jewish and Muslims. The mayor Job Cohen always tells us “de boel bij elkaar houden” – we have to keep one and another together. Every city needs a Job Cohen.

Ladies and gentlemen, please, let us be allies. We must come to a dialogue and stay there. We must continue to find each other, to meet each other and talk to each other, work and live together.

How can we join hands in defeating antisemitism and islamophobia. How?

First: it starts with trusting one another, be honest with one and another.

Second: start small. Find each other in the neighbourhood. Join forces. And involve everyone you can, individuals or organisations.

Three: make a common agenda. What do you want to accomplish and why?

Four: If you're stronger, enlarge the group and reach out, making the group even larger. But... always remain fair.

Have the guts to talk about all subjects. Including Israel and Palestine. It is difficult and painful, but trust me, there is so much to gain.

Ladies and gentlemen, I started my speech with the words peace be upon you.

I would like to wish you more than that. I wish you peace within you around you and between all of you.