|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Speak Up-Kōrerotia  Celebrating Eid-al-Fitr  19 April 2023 |
| Souhila | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Ko Sally Carlton ahau. You’re listening to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, the human rights radio show. Today we’re going to be talking about Eid and what is Eid, what does it mean, what’s it like to celebrate it and what does it mean celebrating Eid far from one’s home country and far from cultures that are Muslim? What does it mean to celebrate Eid in Ōtautahi Christchurch? I’m really excited about today’s show, it’s going to be airing just a couple of days before Eid in 2023, so perfect timing for us to talk about what does Eid mean and for people to listen to it as we roll into the Eid celebrations.  We’ve got three guests today and you are all involved in… you’ve been all involved in the Eid celebrations through Asturlab and we’re going to be talking about last year’s celebration and about the celebration that’s being planned for this year as well. I would love to hear from you all, please, about yourselves. If you can tell us your name, where you’re from, how long you’ve been in Ōtautahi Christchurch and how you’re connected into Asturlab and the celebrations for Eid, that would be a really good starting point and we will roll our conversation on from there.Souhila, I’ve known you the longest so how about we start with you. |
| Souhila | Awesome, no worries at all, thank you Sally for having us, thank you for this initiative, we do appreciate it. I do appreciate it on a personal level and Asturlab does appreciate it as well because it’s all about sharing what we do so we can actually understand ourselves better and understand others better and bridge the gaps between cultures. So my name is Souhila Abdelazziz, I’m a coach, broadcaster, teacher and speaker and I’ve joined actually… I moved to New Zealand five years back with my family and it’s a wonderful experience, actually. My husband got a contract here and we didn’t hesitate to come here because we knew that we will be starting a new chapter and New Zealand didn’t fail us. So it’s a beautiful place to be with family and a beautiful place where we can grow and evolve and actually share who we are and add to that, share it with others, learn from others.  And I joined the Asturlab team last year actually as an MC for the Eid event, Mohammed contacted me and I said yeah, why not, you know because it’s… it does tie with my actually values and what I preach through my work. You know, just preach in love and bridging gaps between cultures and promoting understanding and empathy and yeah, just reaching out to others and not wait for the others to understand but just open up and see what comes out of it.   So yes, it was an amazing, amazing, amazing experience last year. It was very informal, we didn’t plan for it, there was a lot of work done in the back stage of course but as an MC I joined and we went with the flow, you know, I loved the vibe of it, I loved how the communities got all together because you know the Islamic world, we are actually… it’s a lot of countries, it’s not just the Arab words, there are other countries as well so it was a learning experience for me as well. We did enjoy it and we did enjoy the most, you know, seeing the smiles of the elderly and the kids, you know and we will talk about it later, about you know how one of the most important values of Eid is share it with family – and because we miss that here in New Zealand, so we have created that environment for all of us actually, as a big family, the community is our big family and sharing it with the other… you know, exposing ourselves to other communities as well. That was amazing. Yeah that’s… for me. |
| Amir | So my name is Amir Rojali, I am a… as I said before I am a data science student and I’m doing… I’m working fulltime at Alliance Group Limited. I’m 21 years old. So I have lived in New Zealand for around, I’d say 12 or 13 years now. My family and I first moved here in 2003, I was like nine months old so I don’t really remember anything. I remember like freezing as a kid, back in Malaysia it’s really hot and then you come here and it’s really, really cold. So yeah… and I… the reason why I joined Asturlab is actually because of… one main reason was Nasrat actually. He invited me to join this and I was like huh, last year, last year was nice, you know because in Malaysia we don’t really have a festival, it’s more our way of having Eid is a bit different which we will talk about later on but when he asked me if I would be keen to join, I was like yeah, like Souhila said, why not. It’s nice to see, you know, like to see all the cultures you know, together and raising each other and being like you know, brothers and sisters and just having… just having a good time. |
| Sally | And we’ve got Nasrat himself here, the man himself. |
| Nasrat | Kia ora and salaam alaikum to everyone. My name is Nasrat Hamid**,** I’m a medical doctor back home and currently I’m a student, I’d doing postgraduate in Otago University based in Christchurch. So I have been for one and half year, I remember that we prayed at mosque and Doctor Mohammed who is the chairman of Asturlab, we meet each other there and he invited me to join us Asturlab and he give me a bit of information about Eid festival last year.  So I volunteered straight away and there was no question about it. So there was two reasons for that. The first reason was that Muslim in New Zealand doesn’t have an Eid holiday. So we can celebrate, we can bring all Muslims, all community together, and the second reason was that being brotherhood and also happiness to our community. So this was the history that I join.  And in the past six months, I was the urban manager for this year and then due to my studies and due to personal reasons, then… I’m also now the team member but brother Amir is leading and organising the team so I’m happy for that. |
| Amir | I’m just picking up where he left off. So all this work was done by him. |
| Sally | Well it’s cool to have both of you because you can speak from both perspectives, it’s fantastic. Alright so we’ve heard a wee bit from each of you about your backgrounds. We’ve got Amir from Malaysia, we’ve got Souhila from Nigeria and Nasrat, I don’t know if you mentioned where you’re from. |
| Nasrat | No I haven’t mentioned. I’m from Afghanistan. |
| Sally | Afghanistan. So we’ve got three different areas of the world, which is really cool and three different countries, three different cultures. You’re each going to bring with you very different, I’m sure, ways in which your cultures celebrate Eid. So it’s super exciting to have this diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. But as we get into our kōrero today, the first question for you is: What is Eid? And I think this is a big one because for a start there are two different Eids. So it would be good to hear about those two different Eids but also in terms of the Islamic faith, what does Eid mean? |
| Souhila | I can give my definition but Amir, do you want to start or I can start? |
| Amir | You can start if you want. |
| Souhila | Yeah just a few words, you know, what is Eid. Eid is not a big word and it means in English ‘celebration’. So it is celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan, which is the month of fasting – fasting you know, fasting from sunrise to sunset – and the point of fasting a month or almost a month per year is to cleanse the body, mind and heart. You know, stop eating, stop drinking, stop cursing, stop everything you know, from the mundane things, from halal things, stop doing them. So we affirm our willpower on ourselves and the self-mastery, promote our self-mastery that we can do it. Even if food is halal and drinking is halal, we can abstain from doing that and go into this time of cleansing, cleansing the body, mind and heart so we can start afresh, start a new journey, you know. It is one month in the twelve months, one month per year and it is giving us the energy to finish, you know to continue the whole of the year. |
| Amir | Amazing. |
| Souhila | Yeah so Eid is the celebration of… it is like a gift when we have done this month of fasting, of self-mastery. We are gifted of this Eid where we can you know, go celebrate Eid, enjoy ourselves, share it with family and friends. Yeah, this is how I see it from my perspective but Amir you can add yours as well and Nasrat. |
| Amir | Thank you Sister Souhila, that was lovely. Like you said Eid is definitely a gift, as it has been said. It is a gift from Allah to the Muslims so in history, Eid was first celebrated because of two reasons, two main reasons. One because of in the second year of Hijri, the Muslim calendar, in the second year, Allah he commanded upon the Muslims to fast in the month of Ramadan and during that month, the Prophet and his companions, there was a war between the Muslims and the non-Muslims of Quraysh in that time. And during that time, a war between Muslims and non-Muslims, where Mashallah we overcame the Quraysh…is that how you pronounce it Souhila? |
| Souhila | Quraysh, yeah. |
| Amir | During that time and it is said that during that time the non-Muslims outnumbered the Muslims by 1:3, so three non-Muslims to one. So Eid is not just a celebration because of the Muslims that won the war but it is also the celebration because of like, what Sister Souhila just said, that the Muslims during that time were fasting and it is individual war that we have on a daily for a whole month. Like Sister Souhila said that we have you know, like the mundane things like the little, little things. It seems during other months, it seems so normal but in the Ramadan we should not do that and it kind of reset us and Eid is the gift from Allah to Muslims as you know, as what you call an appreciation for us that we manage to win that war with ourselves. |
| Nasrat | Should I add a bit more or… |
| Sally | If you have something you’d like to add, definitely. |
| Nasrat | Okay so what they tell us is amazing. It is literally means festival, feast in Arabic. So there are two major Eids in Islamic calendar per year. Eid-al-Fitr earlier in the year and Eid-al-Adha is later in the year. So Eid-al-Fitr is a three-day long festival and is known as the lesser or smaller Eid when compared to Eid-al-Adha which is a four-day or three to four days, it’s longer, it’s known as a greater Eid and Eid-al-Fitr means that breaking the fast for instance in Ramadan which we recalls the revealing of the Quran to Prophet Mohammed and requires Muslim to fast from sunrise to sundown for a month. |
| Souhila | That’s awesome. |
| Sally | And how about the Eid-al-Adha, the other, the greater Eid. What does that celebrate? |
| Souhila | Yes the greater Eid, Eid-al-Adha comes at the end of the pilgrimage journey, you know and this one, the one we are celebrating here is after Ramadan. The other one is after Hajj, it is the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is like a gift as well. Even if people who didn’t go, we still celebrate it for all… yeah so these are the main two Eids throughout the year for Muslims. |
| Sally | And why is it do you think that… I think in New Zealand anyway and I imagine many western cultures, this Eid, supposedly the smaller of the two Eids is potentially more well known. I certainly see a lot more on social media about this one than I do about the great Eid after Hajj. Any idea on that? Do you think that’s true? Would that be a fair observation? |
| Souhila | I think for us, both of them are equally important. |
| Nasrat | Equally important, yes. |
| Souhila | Yeah but because Ramadan is observed by every and each one of us and not Hajj – Hajj is for whoever can afford it and can do it physically and you know, health wise, yeah we don’t go to Hajj every year you know – so that’s why… We do celebrate it but it doesn’t mean we have gone actually on the journey to… pilgrimage journey or Hajj. So I think they are equally important for us and equally celebrated. Hajj is the sacrifice month, after you know…we do…they come, actually we sacrifice. So there are different rituals, different things we observe so it’s completely different perspective but both of them are considered as a gift and as a celebration. |
| Sally | That’s great guys. So that’s been a super broad and very useful introduction to what is Eid and we’re going to have our first song which is a nice Eid song and then we will come back and think more about how do you celebrate Eid in your different countries and your different cultures and then I think as we move on, we’ll start to think about how are you celebrating it here in Christchurch. |
|  | **MUSIC BY MAHER ZAIN – EIDUN MUBARAK** |
| Sally | Ko Speak Up – Kōrerotia tēnei and today we’re talking about Eid because Eid-al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan is coming up in just a couple of days. We’ve got Souhila who is from Algeria, Nasrat from Afghanistan and Amir from Malaysia. You each bring with you such different cultural backgrounds and I think one of the fascinating things about all religions, but Islam potentially even more so, is just it’s celebrated all over the world. It’s a religion found all over the world. So you might share a religious faith but you all bring these different culture backgrounds to it. So I’m really excited to hear about how do you celebrate Eid in your home countries? What is some of the great traditions that your cultures do and that you personally I guess, amongst your own families, that you do? I’m really keen to hear some of these similarities and some of these differences that you might bring to it. |
| Souhila | I come from Algeria, as you know, but I travelled a lot in the world and in the Middle East and Islamic countries and I see a lot of similarities but I’ll speak from, you know, from my… you know from my perspective, from where I come from, from Algeria. So the preparation starts one week or ten days before, where we start buying new clothes for the kids and even to the adults and to the elderly. So we need to be dressed our best, in the day of Eid, we need to look our best and it starts as well with the preparation of the sweets. We do prepare them at home, so we do prepare a huge variety of sweets that we present to friends and family of the day of Eid after the prayers of course.   The night of Eid actually what we do is we prepare the decoration of Eid. It is different from the decoration of Ramadan, Ramadan we have decoration, light decoration and all of that but we decorate the house for the arrival of Eid. So it’s not just we are looking our best but even our houses, our environment are looking the best for the celebration of this day and the food, it’s the dresses, it’s the environment. We do henna as well for the adults and the kids as well. There is Eidiyah, there is Eidiyah to the kids. Eidiyah comes from Eid which is a certain amount of money that we give to the kids, all kids, our kids and the kids visiting. Yeah that’s what comes to mind when it comes to Eid and the preparation prior to the Eid day.  On the Eid day of course we wake up very, very early preparing ourselves for the prayer of Eid, we go and join to the mosque or we join the community actually for Eid. We go to the mosques and we do the prayers of Eid and we listen to khotba which is the preaching of the imam about you know, Eid and then we go and share happiness and the joy with the elderly, with the kids, with the family, with friends, the neighbours. They come to us, we go to them, we share some of the sweets we have made. Yeah it’s mainly the feeling, the predominant feelings that…feeling blessed, feeling that we are blessed finishing this cleansing journey, feeling that we are feeling joyful and happy and yeah, every and each one from the Muslim wider community, the Islam world, they feel this elevated feelings actually and emotions on this day. Gratefulness as well that we have the health and wealth to finish this and observe this month. We think about the sick people, we go and visit them, we think about the poor people, we share with them. So it’s not just physical, it’s mental and emotional. We go to the weak people and see what we can do, invite them over for Eid, share that with them.  For Algeria, that’s what we do. The meal of Eid. So it’s not an ordinary day, there is no routine about it, it can differ but we go with the flow. The main theme is joy and happiness and how we can feel deepest that day and share this happiness and joy with others as well. It’s not just about us but about how we can share that and maximise it for others. |
| Nasrat | Probably and I think in Asian countries and Middle East countries, they are celebrating similar. So we celebrate like similar as Souhila says and I think there is no differences. |
| Souhila | Same yeah. |
| Nasrat | So all the same, yeah. It’s all the same. |
| Amir | Yes I’m surprised it was like…that sounds similar. |
| Souhila | Yeah the sweets might be different, the dresses might be different but yeah, the theme is the same, the flavour is the same, yeah. |
| Amir | Like in Malaysia, sorry Nasrat, I’m just stealing your… like in Malaysia it is literally the same but the only difference is we start a bit early in terms of like preparing for Eid. We start like I don’t know, three weeks out. So probably next week I’m probably starting already and we change like completely everything like you said, like decorations, what not, new couches, new everything. It’s just like a reset thing. |
| Souhila | Yes it’s a reset, I love the reset. Yeah. |
| Nasrat | And also yeah, like we trying to encourage people to forgive and seek forgiveness and also yeah, there is nothing you know, like a big difference. |
| Souhila | We go and visit as well the elderly centres, we don’t have in our Islamic world a lot of them but the few we have, we go and visit and bring gifts and you know, Eid gifts with us like sweets and henna and things like that. We go to orphanages as well and we visit. So all where we can actually spread a bit of light and joy and happiness, we go to those places and we try to do that because it’s about spreading the joy and happiness and the celebration mood to everybody. Yes. |
| Sally | I like that this idea of the reset is a physical thing, like you’re talking about changing the decorations, new sofas, new clothes but it’s also obviously… and also a physical thing for your body because you’re coming to the end of the fasting. But you’ve also demonstrated that it’s as much an emotional thing as a physical thing, that kind of emotional resetting. Souhila you talked about seeking forgiveness for example, that’s a very powerful thing to reset as well isn’t it. |
| Souhila | There is a lot of self-reflection as well. In Ramadan and in Eid – how can I take those values actually, not just in this month but throughout the whole year? So there is a lot of self-reflection, how can I be a better person, how can I do better and think better, feel better, give better throughout the whole year. Because this self-mastery, it’s not just for one month. We are supposed to carry it throughout the whole year so how can I be master of myself and be a better version of myself throughout the whole year, not just in the month of Ramadan? How can I remember the poor and the weak and the sick and how can I abstain from whatever is not serving me, from the junk food. from you know, eating you know when I’m not hungry? How can I forgive whenever I can, how can I…? All of these things. We are supposed to take them, all these values, beautiful values we have practiced during Ramadan. We are supposed to take them throughout the whole year. So there is a lot of self-reflection and in Ramadan but particularly in Eid between… within the family and within friends and communities as well. |
| Sally | On a personal level, do you have a particular part that means the most to you? Your favourite part of the day or the lead up to it? |
| Souhila | For me as a mother and a wife and a woman, especially here in New Zealand – I was not aware of this part before when I was in Algeria because I was surrounded with family and friends so it was created for us by default – but here I have this huge responsibility to create those actually, this environment, this mood, this flavour for my family and for the community as well. That’s why I… actually I love joining the Eid festival because it’s allowing me to create a bit of that, contribute in this creation of this beautiful celebration and beautiful love and happiness and joy mood, actually. So I love creating that for my family, preparing the house, preparing the food, preparing the dresses and sharing with others and yeah, spreading the joy. |
| Amir | Personally Eid for me is more of like… kind of like a month. So in Malaysia we have a saying that’s [*in Malay*], that means like we have Eid for the whole month actually. So every week, every weekend we will go and connect, like you know… sometimes I don’t even know if this person is related to me but somehow I’m at their house, somehow this is my mum’s cousin, second cousin or what not and… |
| Souhila | No boundaries! |
| Amir | Yeah exactly. Like Souhila said that in New Zealand, obviously okay… this is my first year away from my family. So I’m feeling that as well, like the responsibility of creating that atmosphere is within each person in New Zealand currently because everyone is away from their own families and the only way you can actually get a taste of how it was back at home, is that everyone kind of helps each other and create that atmosphere. |
| Nasrat | Yes for myself, because I’m the eldest son of the family, it’s quite a lot of responsibilities. Like one of my brothers who has a physical disability, who got cerebral palsy, so I should prepare him and you know, new dresses, new clothes for him. Take him to the mosque for prayer so it’s a lovely, for myself and I love to do that. |
| Sally | Just to get back to something that you were talking about Amir and Souhila as well, this idea of…actually all of you, all of you touched on this idea of family and family being I suppose the western concept of the nuclear family – your immediate brother for example but then also wider or extended family and also this idea that when you are not in your countries, your Muslim community becomes almost like a wider family or a wider whānau and I think that’s a really lovely idea and the fact that you can connect with each other through faith and appreciate all these differences and all these similarities that you bring to the celebrations, that sort of thing.  I think what we’re going to do now is have our second song and then we’re going to come back and think more about your celebrations in New Zealand, in Christchurch, and how they might differ from or be the same as at home. But also how you’re bringing that sense of light and joy that you’re talking about Souhila, how you’re trying to bring that to New Zealand which is a pretty big task but one that I think hopefully people are really appreciating. |
|  | **MUSIC BY MAHER ZAIN – EIDUN SAEED (feat. Mesut Kurtis)** |
| Sally | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and we’re talking about Eid, specifically Eid-al-Fitr which will be in a couple of days’ time. We’ve got AmirRojali, Souhila Abdelazziz and Nasrat Hamid, and you’re all bringing with you your various perspectives and your various backgrounds and your various cultures to this discussion. In our final segment we’re going to be thinking about the Eid festival that you’re all involved in, that Asturlab brought to Christchurch last year, 2022, for the first time and will be running for the second time this year. I guess I’d like to think about first of all why, why did Asturlab and all of you want to get involved in this initiative? We’ve already spoken at the beginning a wee bit about wanting to show the city what it is that you celebrate and what it is that you believe in but anything else you’ve got to add to that. And then we’re going to think about some of the other elements of this cool festival that’s going to be taking place. |
| Nasrat | Especially celebrating Eid-al-Fitr in Christchurch so it helps the young Muslim community to create an identity that is connect with the, like Kiwi Muslims. So one of the goal is that. And also in many countries with large Muslim populations, like, Eid-al-Fitr is a national holiday, like school, offices, businesses, everything is closed and they can, you know like enjoy Eid and celebrate Eid with family, friends and neighbours, with all like wider community. Also in the USA and UK, Muslims may request to have the day off from school or work to travel, to celebrate Eid with family and friends. We are hoping to have in New Zealand too and that’s why on the weekends Asturlab bringing all community together and to celebrate Eid wider with all community. So it’s a significant, I think, advantage to the community. |
| Amir | Yes lovely words, Nasrat. Exactly like what you said. My opinion, Eid is both that aspect and also like why we’re having Eid in such a big scale is not just to have a holiday or to showcase the cultural aspect but it is also to show us as Muslims. That it is much more than just a holiday. From my understand Asturlab is deciding, organising Eid, is to also kind of like bounce back from Muslims, especially in Aotearoa has been through throughout the years. So not to forget like what happened, the tragedy that happened a few years back. That we can as Muslims take back the narrative and kind of show that we are in charge of our own perspective instead of letting someone else to talk about us. We won’t be, you know, affected in such a way and people won’t just create stories or anything else and just share them without our own kind of view and to me, I think that is why Asturlab took the initiative to organise this Eid. |
| Souhila | Thank you Amir, wonderful. |
| Sally | You’re going to make me cry. |
| Souhila | Beautiful. When it comes to me actually joining the Asturlab adventure and journey, it came from this deep willingness actually, to share our culture with others. Usually I’m very happy when I go and celebrate Christmas with Christians and Nowruz and Diwali, I love the cultural aspect and the richness and they do their job actually, showing us how it is culture… how they are celebrating and what is their culture. They are opening up towards the wider community and we enjoy it so much, so why not doing that for us, for our faith, for our communities.  Usually we celebrate Eid-al-Fitr over the previous years, you know behind closed doors, it was very intimate and closed event but when Asturlab came with the genius idea to do it in the open, in festival format, I loved it because this is allowing us to show others how we are celebrating as well and as Amir said, to not leave actually the space for others to speculate or say. We tell… because we are ambassadors of our faith and ambassadors of our culture so who is better than that to showcase that and share it with the world. Share the joy, the happiness, the way we are doing it and doing it with this, you know, with actually this desire to ask others to join us because we join others in their celebration and we celebrate with them and we love it. So ask others to celebrate this actually event, special event with us because it adds to our joy and happiness. |
| Amir | And also Asturlab create an opportunity to them and Muslims, to have a better understanding of Muslim cultures and celebrate Eid and be integrated with Muslim community. So yes. |
| Souhila | Like open doors festival. Everyone can come and ask… Last year for instance, I hold the mic and we were walking around and asking people do you have questions about Eid, do you want to ask a question and people started asking questions, the non-Muslims and it was amazing actually. They had this opportunity to share their curiosity actually and get their curiosity answered, it was a beautiful gesture of love and bridging the gaps between cultures. |
| Sally | When I went to the Eid festival last year, it was fantastic. Because part of the Islamic faith is celebrated all around the world so automatically there were so many different cultures present there but also so many people who I know and who I know are not Muslim. It was great, it was fantastic, such a good opportunity for people who are not Muslim to go to a lovely event for a start but also an event that you’re right, is opening up some doors and breaking down some barriers.  Souhila, you mentioned before this festival last year, the different communities used to celebrate almost behind closed doors. Do you feel like those celebrations then and I guess with this big festival now, are there still parts of Eid that you feel like you miss or that you miss out on? That you still haven’t managed to capture here in New Zealand? |
| Souhila | No I think we are the creators of our realities and we try to… Of course we miss the family, of course you know the parents and the family but we create a new family here. Our friends and communities are our families and we are not just talking about the Muslim communities, the wider community is our family and so we reach out to others. And something we… I omitted for instance, when it comes to Ramadan, Eid is like inviting for instance for me…it is routine for me, I invite Muslims and non-Muslims to my place and we share with them the rituals and what we do in Ramadan as you know, as a way to bridging the gap. As we try whatever we… as ambassadors to bridge the gap and share who we are and what we do with others. So I think the family are missing but we create new families here, yeah, in New Zealand. |
| Sally | Do you have a sense of how many people went to last year’s event and do you have an expectation for this year’s attendance? |
| Nasrat | According to the police, last year probably… approximately 3,500 people were attending at the Eid festival. For this year, Amir will answer the question. |
| Amir | Yes this year we are looking to double that figure actually. We’re looking to invite more people and be more open. So we’re targeting around like 7,000 to 10,000 people. |
| Sally | Very cool and what were your favourite moments from last year’s event? Souhila, you were the MC so I’m sure you have a lot. Amir, were you there or were you still overseas? |
| Amir | Yes I was actually there but I will let the MC talk about that first, she must have a lot to talk about. |
| Souhila | The whole festival was the highlight, everything, every moment, every new experience, every smile on you know, a kid’s face. The energy, being there, seeing all the cultures coming together from different… you know, the wider community. It was beautiful to see the union there and see the non-Muslims join us with questions and enjoy the sweets and go throughout the different stalls and play and it was beautiful, beyond descriptions, there are no words actually to describe what we felt as a team and on a personal level last year. It was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, yes.  It's seeing the values of Eid and Ramadan embodied in front of your eyes, what can you… you know, you cannot ask for more, it is beautiful. So we are… the aim is to do the same and even more this year and create this atmosphere of Eid for the families. There are some families, they said they haven’t felt this way since they came from their hometown actually, countries and so it was a big achievement for all of us as a community. Creating this sense of belonging, yes. |
| Amir | Yes me personally, as far as I know back in Malaysia we don’t actually have like a festival type of thing. So when I went there last year I was like taken aback, like wow, just wow because usually like for me for instance, I celebrate within like my own culture. Like I never really go out to see like you know, the Algerians, the Afghanistan, the Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, it’s usually within the Malaysian you know, parameter. I never actually seen an atmosphere where you can see everyone and it was just amazing, it was just breath-taking to be honest. |
| Nasrat | For myself, especially when from different community, especially the non-Muslims, you know when they were attended, the last year Eid festival. They were very happy and I saw that I feel we are one. There is nothing different between us. |
| Souhila | Music as well was breath-taking, you know, the music. All the people from different cultures then seeing at the end of the festival together, it was amazing and showing their moves and dances and yeah. |
| Amir | Yes that was one of the most memorable parts, if I were to narrow it down. |
| Souhila | Yes trying to narrow it down. So that was amazing going and yeah, dancing the Dabka where they join hands in this long line and try to dance, you know that was beautiful. The music was amazing, we had and we will have them this year as well, it is Simurgh music school team, they did amazing last year and they still… yeah they are with us this year as well so their music is just out of this world. Yeah. |
| Nasrat | And we had last year an amazing MC and this year we have too. |
| Souhila | You have done the whole work, you are doing amazing as well Nasrat and Amir and all the work you are doing in the back stage, it is awesome, a lot of work. |
| Amir | If I may just say one more thing about Eid last year. |
| Souhila | See, see you are talking now Amir! |
| Amir | I’d say the most favourite part was the food, was the food. |
| Sally | I was just thinking no one has mentioned the food and that’s so critical. I was about to jump in and say, “What about the food?!” |
| Souhila | The food is… yeah. |
| Amir | Of course the food has to be mentioned, of course. Like that’s the closest thing I could… like atmosphere I could get like back in Malaysia. I’m pretty sure it’s the same with other countries as well is that in Ramadan especially during the night, you would have like bazaar, like bazaar, like night markets and that was the closest thing I could get and it was just like different, like really different. Almost like what you call… like different food like I’ve never tried before and I was like wow. |
| Souhila | Last year I was, you know I was on the stage and I didn’t get time actually to taste the food but this time I will not miss it. What I loved when it comes to the food, at the entrance of the festival, you know there were dates and tea, how we actually welcome our guests, I loved that gesture as well, welcoming them with dates and milk and tea. So I loved that as part of the food, you know, culture we have in our home town, home countries, yes. |
| Amir | Yes that’s going to be repeated this year as well. |
| Sally | And I think as a non-Muslim attending, one thing that I would comment on about the food was there was so much food that was obviously special to those different cultures. So different sweets, different deserts, different whatevers that had obviously been, yeah made especially for that event because that is what your different cultures have and that was really cool to see as well and to taste obviously. |
| Souhila | Yes that’s awesome. |
| Sally | Have you got anything else you’d like to say as we wrap up? Hopes for this year’s festival, hopes for Ramadan moving forward, hopes for Islamic culture and faith moving forward, whatever it may be. |
| Amir | As I said before, I just hope that we can actually use this Eid as the method to take back the narrative and bridge that gap between us and non-Muslims and not just us and non-Muslims but like between cultures as well because if you actually think about it and look at it, like last year, like the atmosphere, we were all just one Christchurch, just one New Zealand, and I hope that that’s what we can get from hosting this Eid year by year. |
| Souhila | For me actually I think that fasting is not just in the Islamic faith, fasting is a powerful too for all the faiths. It does exist in Christianity, it exists in Judaism, in all the actually faiths because it purifies the body, heart and soul. So let’s see the things that are gathering us, that are getting us together rather than what separates us because there are zillions of things that are actually linking us and gathering us together rather than what separates us. So let’s concentrate on those and share those with others. Fasting is everywhere and it’s not just for Muslim but for all the faiths but when you use it properly, as to elevate your state as a human being mentally, emotionally and physically, and share this state with others, it’s beautiful actually to share the celebration of it as well and to elevate and actually enjoy that with the other cultures, with other human beings, with humanity in general. |
| Nasrat | Yes and from myself I am hoping, we are hoping that bring all communities together. We are not only focusing on Muslim communities, for the non-Muslim communities that they can come and join us and have a taste of it and just want to see we are one and we are one New Zealanders and there are no differences between each of us. |
| Amir | Sorry if I may, I just want to touch a bit on like what Souhila did say. How like other religions do have like fasting and that’s what I also hope, what I said before, like we are, like Nasrat said as well, like we are actually just very much the same. We are one New Zealand and I really hope that Inshallah that the Eid will help bridge those gaps and shall help us. |
| Sally | So if people are keen to come to the festival – which obviously they should be, we’ve spent this whole hour describing exactly why people should be really excited to attend your festival! – what are the details? |
| Amir | So if you are keen and like what you hear, please do search up Asturlab Cultural Centre on Instagram, on Facebook, because Eid is something that will be decided later on but based on the calendar it would be the 23rd of April 2023. |
| Sally | Very cool well I really hope that this discussion has been nice for you guys, I’ve got the impression that you’ve enjoyed hearing from each other’s perspectives and learning about each other’s different ways that you celebrate and also the similarities. But hopefully also for our listeners, you’ve also learnt a lot about Eid and through it, the Islamic faith and also got a little bit excited about a new festival in our city that is well worth getting behind and definitely well worth attending. Tēnā koutou, thank you all so much for sharing your thoughts and your perspectives with me today. |
| Souhila | Thank you Sally, thank you for having us. |
| Amir | Thank you Sally. |
| Nasrat | Thank you Sally for giving us this opportunity. |
|  | **MUSIC BY MAHER ZAIN – RAMADAN (ENGLISH VERSION)** |