

**Reza's exhibition at the United Nations, in New York and at UNESCO, in Paris, at the European Parliament, in Brussels and at the Azerbaijani Cultural Center of Paris.**



ough my photographs, I have always tried to capture testimonies of human kind, particularly in places where different cultures intersect. For thirty years I have travelled the roads of the world examining religion. From covering the great myths of the Bible to the hajj to Mecca, I have crossed paths with diverse groups of people with varying religious beliefs and cultures, all brought together by a mutual respect for the other.

Not too far away, there is a place where Christians, Muslims and Jews live peacefully on the same land. I was lucky enough to meet these people over the course of several months while reporting in Azerbaijan: I was invited to break the fast with Muslims during the month of Ramadan, witness the first Christians (the Oudis) from the Caucasus region pray, and explore the small streets of the "Red Village," one of the only all Jewish enclaves outside of Israel. From one community to the next, I was deeply moved by these profound believers. In my photographs, I strive to grasp the moments when humans begin to reveal their true selves. I find a sort of serenity and intrigue in small details, such as a hand that clutches a sacred book or rosary.

In this photo, I focus on the graceful sweetness of the grandmother's arm guiding her granddaughter in the pilgrimage to celebrate Saint George. The grandmother carefully protects the young girl's delicate hand from dripping wax from the bees-wax-candles, lit in memory of this venerated destroyer of dragons who is now worshiped by Christians and Muslims alike. The fragile flame of the candle, illuminating the child's eyes, instills a certainty in me that tolerance weaves the ineffable links of a plural society. At the United Nations in New York, this visual homage to tolerance will be exhibited, starting on September 27th, within the framework of the forum organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

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September 27th, within the framework of the forum organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. It was also exhibited on October 22, 2013 at UNESCO in Paris to commemorate the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Azeri poet and philosopher Seyyid Yahya Bakuvi (Shirvani). An exhibition will be held at the European Parliament, in Brussels and at the Azerbaijani Cultural Center of Paris, as well.