



**Fourth Session of Christian - Muslim Summit
06-09 November 2016**

Call to Action

This Summit represented the fourth in a series of encounters between Christian (Catholic and Anglican/Episcopal) and Muslim (Sunni and Shia) Religious Leaders and scholars coming from four continents. We also were honoured by the presence of representatives of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and of the Jewish and Zoroastrian religious traditions.

This Summit was generously hosted by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue (CID) in Tehran, Iran. We wish to offer our sincere and deep appreciation to our Iranian hosts. The hospitality received by the religious leaders and scholars was superb. Not only were the facilities at the Parsian Esteghlal Hotel excellent, but the visits made to local religious leaders and institutions were most enlightening. Following the Summit, we had the opportunity to visit the Holy City of Qom as well as Isfahan.

The theme chosen for our Summit was:

Respect for Human Dignity – The Foundation of Peace and Security

We, religious leaders and scholars, from the Christian (Anglican/Episcopal and Catholic) as well as Muslim (Shia and Sunni) traditions, believe that:

- Life is God's greatest gift to humanity, and no one has a right to take this life;
- God created all men and women out of love and bestowed on them sacred and unique dignity and inalienable rights and responsibilities;
- God, out of the same love, continues to care for the entire human family;
- The Books we consider sacred include the central message and mandate of mercy, compassion, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, caring for the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the oppressed, and the vulnerable;
- The concepts of believer/nonbeliever (Mumin/Kafir), should not affect citizens' rights and social relationships, but practical behaviour in the context of those who want peace and those who want war and violence should be given priority.

We note with urgent concern and deep sadness that:

- These same Books are sometimes misinterpreted, instrumentalised and distorted to justify and facilitate acts of hatred, discrimination, exclusion, violence and terrorism toward others;
- Women, children, religious and ethnic minorities are the first targets of an erroneous interpretation of the texts, which can lead to various forms of hatred, humiliation or persecution.

We deeply regret that:

- Such behavior offends God since it causes immense harm to the human persons whom God created and who are the victims;
- Such behavior discredits religions, their leaders and all believers.

We condemn:

- Aggressive tendencies and criminal acts against nations, groups, and individuals, including unjust attacks on, occupation or destruction of sovereign lands, territories, property, historical or religious artistic heritage, and forced displacement of peoples within or outside of their home countries;
- Language that is offensive to religious people, and, at the same time, any violent response to such offensive language;
- Misrepresentation and denigration of religion by certain media outlets, governments, and secular social movements;
- Manipulation of blasphemy laws to excuse criminal behaviour;
- Forced conversion in the context of inter-religious marriage, limitations being placed on free practice of religion, including among migrant workers in countries where the majority religion may be different from their own, as well as the abhorrent practices of abduction and conversion of young girls by older men, wherever this practice may occur.

Thus we call for:

- The resolution of wars, conflicts, religious disputes, and civil tensions by constant commitment to enter into peaceful, respectful, and diplomatic and religious dialogue and to avoid violent confrontations or actions;
- Re-reading, renewed comprehension and accurate teaching of our religious beliefs, values, and principles, respectful of every human person, of human dignity and of human rights and responsibilities;

Thus we call for:

- Comprehensive review of formation programs, in particular, for religious leaders, so that they could commit themselves to speak and to write objectively about “the other”, avoid referring to others as “non-believers”,¹ simply because their religion differs from one’s own; and always treat with due respect those who do not profess any religion, since they, too, should never be deprived of their rights or dignity.
- All religious leaders to read and interpret sacred texts in context and be prepared not only to defend their own religious traditions, but also, when necessary, to be self-reflective and self-critical about those traditions and texts; the willingness to be self-critical can constitute a significant way to counteract fanaticism;
- A commitment by religious leaders, here present at this Summit and throughout the world, to put into action our beliefs and the teachings of our respective religious traditions.

We affirm that:

- Belonging to a specific religion should not be transformed into boasting or claims of superiority, which may result in exclusivism and rejection of those who do not belong to this religion or do not profess any religion;
- Believers should avoid contradiction, by their behavior and life, of what they affirm by their words and teaching.
- Each of us must work toward the promotion of human dignity and universal respect for the human rights of all people;
- The presence of women at tables of inter-religious dialogue is indispensable;
- Women bear the disproportionate impact of violent conflict and thus come to peace-making tables with special insight into the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable;²
- The family, where love and respect, freedom and responsibility, are experienced on a daily basis, is an invaluable resource for the promotion of peace and harmony among all peoples;
- Scholars should not be isolated people but closely related to the communities they serve and their religious leaders;
- Religion should not be compromised by political or economic gain or the desire to amass power or other self-interest;
- We should not allow any ideological interpretation or manipulation of the true meaning of our respective religious texts to override our concern for just, equal, fair, and compassionate treatment of all human persons.

¹ As we noted in the Call to Action that was issued during our Summits held in in Beirut (June 2010) and in Rome (December 2014).

Thus we commit ourselves to:

- Promote a culture of non-violence, even in response to violent actions, and in conformity with international, national and local laws and policies, as well as the natural law established by God;
- Protect freedom of human thought, belief, and religious practice, by respecting human dignity of all persons;
- Promote a culture of rational and hermeneutical understanding of religious concepts, creeds, and practices;
- Support communications and relationships among centres engaged with interfaith activities by sharing educational resources, as well as “good practice” models to promote inter-religious and inter-cultural exchange;
- Initiate more effective efforts to eradicate religio-phobia and/or persecution, whether targeted toward Muslims, Christians, or other religious groups, and prevent insults, defacement, or destruction of religious symbols, art, buildings, and texts.

For future action, we will work toward:

- Examine the means to continue the Summit process which has made such a strong contribution to inter-religious dialogue, relying on the current Steering Committee to carry forward these considerations;
- Encouragement of organizations and institutions of religious leaders to promote peace and security;
- Initiation of a Council of Experts to review and refine religious texts and religious interpretations of texts and to clarify common understanding of these concepts and beliefs by sharing them with local religious communities;
- Development of intra- and inter-religious dialogues in order to encourage co-existence and peaceful living;
- Preparation and delivery of testimony about commonly-held Christian and Muslim belief in, and respect for, human dignity at meetings of the United Nations and other inter-governmental and international bodies;
- Expansion of this series of four Christian-Muslim Summits (with hosting by Anglican-Episcopal, Sunni, Catholic and Shia religious traditions) that have been held between 2010 and 2016, into a “network” of dialogue and interaction among inter-religious centres and organizations in various parts of the world and develop a system of membership for such efforts.

By so doing, we firmly believe that we will glorify God and build a peaceful and secure world, a common home for every person, which is filled with joy, harmony, love, respect, equality, and justice.

Signed by the Four Principal Leaders of the Delegations

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Head of Shia Delegation
Director of Islamic Studies, Iran Academy of Sciences

Shaikh Dr. Mahdi Al-Sumaidaei
Head of Sunni Delegation
Grand Mufti of Sunni Muslims in Iraq

The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane
Head of Anglican/Episcopal Delegation
Eighth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and
Senior Advisor on Inter-religious Dialogue to Washington National Cathedral

His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan
Head of Catholic Delegation
Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria

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Tehran, Iran