

# Islam and Muslims in Europe:

Integration or Assimilation / Alienation: Clash vs. Peaceful-Coexistence

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I am honoured -- and deeply humbled -- to be invited to speak to you this afternoon on the very important and timely topic of the "Islam & Muslims in Europe" or "Muslims of Europe" or "European Islam" or "Islamising Europe" **by the Initiatives of Change of Netherlands**. It depends upon how you perceive the topic from your own perspective. First and foremost there are three words which indeed needed explaining the words: **Islam, Muslims and Europe**.

Let me begin from the very outset to clarify Islam from Muslim. Most people treat Islam and Muslims as synonymous and mutually interchangeable terms, often saying Islam where they ought to say Muslims and vice versa. In my opinion the word "Islam" should be used exclusively for the "Way of Life" based upon divine sources: The Book known as Qur'an, "the word of God" and Sunnah, "the proven practices of the Prophet" (peace and blessing of God be upon him). "Muslims" as human beings are free to abide or deviate from Divine Guidance, as they feel fit according to their own conscience. Islam never claimed to be a new faith. It is the same faith, which God ordained with the creation of the first man sent to earth. Islam confirms almost all Biblical and Hebrew Prophets as the Prophets of Islam and their messages as the messages of Islam as long it is confirmed in the Qur'an the Book of Islam. The moral and ethical code of Islam is similar to Judaism, Christianity and many other major world faiths. The only difference is in theology, concepts and practices in method of worship of the One and the Only One God and methodology how the morality and ethics should govern all spheres and aspects of our human life.

## ISLAM:

The general theory of an Islam begins with a consideration of application of Islamic Shariah (Law) in daily life. Shariah is not a divine Law. It is a human interpretation of the sacred text. According to Islamic teachings, the Creator not only laid down laws governing the natural universe but rules for human conduct in all aspects of life. Unlike natural order, which follows its predetermined laws, mankind has the freedom to rebel and follow its own "man-made" laws, which is, however, a form of unbelief (**shirk**). Non-submission to the will of Allah is not only an act of ingratitude (**kufr**) for divine mercies, but also a choice for evil and misery in this world and punishment in the life hereafter. In Islam, all aspects of natural life have been God-willed, therefore, the ultimate purpose of all creation are the compliance of the created with the will of the creator. Islam is neither purely other-worldly religion nor one focuses too much on worldly affairs. Muslim seek best of both worlds. Islam simultaneously is a creed, ethical norms, social order, and a way of life. Wherever they are, Muslims are expected actively to contribute to the common good and to show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in faith, worldwide..

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\*A lecture delivered in Amaliastraat 10, Hague (Netherlands) organised by Initiatives of Change Netherlands on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2003

## **Islamic Theory : 3 Ds: 1) Din ; 2) Dunya; 3) Dawla**

Islamic way of life can be summarised in three words **1) Din** (religion), **2) Dunya** (Community), **3) Dawla** (State). Islamic Shariah covers all of these three aspects. From Islamic point of view, life is a unity. It cannot be divided into watertight compartments. Islamic Shariah gives directions to all aspects of life in its entirety. Islamic Shariah is a complete scheme of life and an all-embracing social order where nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking. Therefore there is no separation between state and church. Islamic State is not a theocratic state. Secularism, in Muslims view, destroys the transcendence of all moral values. In Qur'anic words "those who forget God eventually forget themselves" (59:19) and their individual and corporate personalities disintegrate. Thus, Islam is considered the religion in which, through voluntary submission to God, human beings find peace with themselves and their environment. A Muslim seeks God's guidance in all matters all the time. There is no contradiction between the divine rights of the individual, anchored in the Qur'an, and the core right as embodied in Universal Human rights declarations. Muslims support fundamental human-rights, rule of law, division of power with accountability and checks and balances, universal suffrage and eligibility, and freedom of speech and conscience. Islamic Shariah commands its followers to observe the local legal order. Muslims can live anywhere in the world, provided they can fulfil their fundamental religious duties. Muslim must respect and abide all laws of the land

## **Duties of Muslims**

Muslims are required to observe religious rules in the community and establish Islamic State to achieve man's righteousness. It is the duty of every Muslim to cooperate with others for seeking common good. It is the duty of Islamic state to establish a just social order based on principles of harmony, respect, freedom and dignity where all human beings are accepted with all of their differences. Diversity is not only recognised but also appreciated in Islamic Society. Muslims can discharge this responsibility collectively with establishing an Islamic State with power to command (**amr**) and prohibit (**nahy**). Thus Islamic State is an indispensable condition of Islamic life in the true sense of the word "Islam".

## **What is Europe?**

What is Europe? Is it a geographical entity, mixture of Judo-Christian culture or is it a product of a secular religion? What is Europe's Identity? The name Europe first appeared in a legend recounted by Greek and Roman authors. The Roman Poet Ovid regarded Europa as a beautiful part of the world where civilisation first flourished in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE in the southeastern part of Mediterranean area. Today everybody associates the name "Europe" with a certain geographical area – though frontiers of Europe are not quite as obvious as they appear.

The term Western Europe, Eastern Europe, European Union and others are used for various reasons. The important contribution of Christianity to the culture of Europe is undeniable. Islam is also a reality of Europe for over 1000 years. All three monotheistic faith traditions Judaism, Christianity and Islam are foreign religions as far as Europe is concerned. All three faiths originated in the Middle East and yet had a profound influence on European culture. For many years and for a long time, Christianity with its strange mixture of Jewish tradition and universal pretension remained the religion of a

marginalized minority. St Paul was convinced that non-Jews could become Christians without having first to become Jews by undergoing the rite of circumcision. At first, this conviction was not shared by every Christian leader of early times, but later it was adopted as a central tenet. This helped Christianity to develop as a world religion. The spread of Christianity was also helped by political and cultural situation of the time. [1] The Roman Empire, with its Pax Romana, was a stable world where Greek language and its culture was dominated. The Christianity became the state religion of Roman Empire with its constitution of the Byzantine Empire. Despite its relationship to Judaism, Christianity developed independently within the Roman-Greek World. Christian see Jews as different but related because they called by the same of God by whom they feel they called: the God and Father of Jesus Christ is, according to Christian faith, the same as the Jewish "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".

### **Continuity of Message**

The Qur'an repeatedly points out that its core message is not new and the relations between Muslims and "the followers of earlier revelations" are one of the same in essence. Islam is the same religion from the same God the creator of Adam and God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Say: We believe in God and that which God revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and tribes and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and to the other prophets from their Lord; We make no distinction between them, and we have surrendered ourselves to the will of God." (3:85). Muslims believe in God whom, like Arab Christians, they call "Allah" – the God of Abraham and of all other prophets – is One and Unique, not limited by time or space. Allah is the uncaused caused of all beings, defeating any attempt at definition: transcendent and immanent, just and merciful. It is Allah Who in his Omnipotence created the Universe and shall maintain it until doomsday, the day of Last judgment. Every Muslim believes that man. In as he enjoys free will, is responsible for his actions and accountable for them on the Day of Judgment. Muslims, male and female alike, share the same task in life: To recognise God, to serve God and Obey His commands. This will also help to assure equality, freedom, justice, compassion, and prosperity on earth. Islam never claimed to be a new faith.

### **Presence of Muslims in Europe: A historical fact**

The Muslim presence was a constant factor in European history from 7<sup>th</sup> Century of its advent soon after the origin of Islam. By trade Muslims were travellers and sailors through out the world. Within a few decades of the death of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (peace be upon him) (632 CE) his followers had burst out of Arabia and entered into Persian and Byzantium, the two empires that had divided the Middle-East between them, and took control of their vast territories from both. Initially Muslims came from the south via Spain (711CE / 94 AH) and Sicily (831 CE / 215 AH) and later through Balkan (11<sup>th</sup> Century onwards). [2] Muslim communities lived in different parts of Europe ever since. There were long spells of Muslims rule in Spain (Andalusia), Sicily, and Balkan ands autonomous Muslim pockets in France, Switzerland, Germany and South Italy. In spite of all political and geographical changes, there has always small communities existed over the centuries. In the European Middle Ages, Islam contributed tremendously in moulding the western, secular and modern rational thought. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe now has a prominent Muslim population. There have been many Muslims in Eastern Europe for some centuries; it's not the same in the West where large numbers of immigrants have arrived during the last sixty to

seventy years or so. According to the latest statistics, **France** has about 5 million Muslims, half of them French citizens. Those who don't become citizens of their host countries are mainly Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians. In **Germany**, there are 4 million Muslims, of whom 3 million are Turks. **Belgium** has about one million and the **Netherlands** about the same number. **Great Britain** estimates its Muslim population to be about 2 million, almost all with British nationality. They come from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and the Near East. Sixty-five percent holds British nationality and citizenship. In 1987, **Spain** had 150,000 Moroccans plus many other foreigners. In 1999, the number had risen to about 250,000 the majority of whom came in through the back door. **Italy's** most recent statistics — a total of 522,000 immigrants. 130,000 come from Morocco, 59,000 from Albania, 48,000 from Tunisia, 33,000 from Senegal, 25,000 from Egypt. Available statistics concerning the number of Muslims present in Italy, don't take into account the illegal immigrants coming from North Africa, naturalised foreigners, and Italian nationals converted to Islam. Countries such as **Bulgaria**, **Hungary** and **ex-Yugoslavia** have had Muslim communities ever since their occupation by the Ottoman Empire. Please see attach Appendix on Europe's Religious population attached at the end of this paper.

These days, there's a whole influx of **Refugees and asylum seekers**, fleeing their countries because human rights are not respected or because the economic situation pushes the inhabitants to seek a new future in Europe. Without this migratory influx, Islam would have remained somewhat marginal to Europe. Now, however, it's presence cannot be ignored, as it increasingly becomes an important social and religious factor throughout Europe. European society has truly become **multi-religious**, something which was neither foreseen nor wanted. What happened to precipitate the arrival of Muslims in Europe in such large numbers? It's all to do with the process of migration — people leaving one part of the world and going to live in another place as mankind has doing it throughout in the history.

In this day and age, Islam came to many parts of Europe with the people who, during the course of several years, came to live, work, and find sanctuary in other countries for a multiplicity of reasons. It's been a gradual but on-going arrival rather than a sudden incursion. Also, it's good to keep in mind the fact that the whole process of the shaping of Islam in Europe today, is underpinned by the process of progressive, reciprocal co-inclusion between the Muslim population and those of Christian stock. The number of people coming to Europe, today, depends largely on how the **economy** is faring. When things are in good shape, then lots of immigrants arrive; when there are problems, and then the number of immigrants decreases noticeably.

After the Second World War in 1945 Europe needed cheap labour to build its economy. There've been a number of migratory waves: During the reconstruction period immediately after the war; during the economic boom in the 1960s; during the 1970s, especially following the economic crisis caused by the rise in the price of petrol in 1973; and from the middle of the 1980s, there's been a definite increase in the number of immigrants seeking political asylum or arriving illegally for whatever reason. A lot of work has been done to: Determine the relative importance of the Muslims' presence; establish where exactly they come from; appraise how they've managed, more or less successfully, to settle into their new surroundings; evaluate their national, regional or international organisations and their cultural and religious requirements. It appears that over a period, people have been arriving, not necessarily seeking work, but wanting to **rejoin their families** who are already there. They then establish their own society within

the already existing local society — with the consequent risk of creating «ghettos». In most European countries, we're now already talking about the third or fourth generation of children of immigrants.

### **European Islam**

For a number of years, there's been talk of what's called an «European Islam,» especially among the **younger** more educated generation who no longer have any direct links with their countries of origin of their parents— those originally coming from Turkey is a prime example in Germany. On the other hand, the countries of origin have representatives of their Ministries for Religious Affairs present in many European countries, especially in their Consulates, and these have a great deal to say about what happens in the numerous prayer rooms or mosques throughout Germany. In practice, a lot depends on which European country they are in, and how closely the local Muslim community wishes to integrate itself with the local citizens. European culture resulted from the classical Hellenistic-Roman heritage, the Judeo-Christian-Islamic one, and the Enlightenment. In fact, Europe culture has been heavily influenced by Islamic philosophy and civilisation. Muslims have been positively contributing in the current transition from modernity to post-modernity and ready to contribute decisively to the overcoming of contemporary crisis. This includes their Qur'anic demanded commitment to religious pluralism, their unconditional rejection of racism and chauvinism, anti-Semitism and bigotry, as well as their wholesome way of the life that shuns any form of addition.

### **The New Muslim Presence**

The new Muslim presence, however in the Western Europe dates back sixty to seventy years due to the international situation soon after two world wars and international migration of population. The permanence migration always caused some problems especially relationships with local inhabitants. It was only through centuries of discussion and conflicts of the other religious and ethnic minorities (such as Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Poles, Italians or Portuguese, according to the country where they migrated), that it was possible to feel at home and acquire some rights in the host country. In the eighties, the new visibility of Muslims within capital cities of Europe suddenness-stimulated misconceptions, suspicion, and at times, mutual rejection. One could say that these tensions were a relatively logical response of a local community but soon became a national issue in last two decades due to rise of unemployment and other social issues.

The first waves of Muslim immigrants were predominantly labourers from North Africa, Turkey or Indo-Pakistan. They were a people of modest means and pressured by the economic climate. Their educational standing and fragile status had not permitted for more than a generation to ponder the realities of living in Europe. The first generation built mosques and many religious institutions. It would be the second and third generations who were to transform the mind set that these labourers had. The former demonstrated that their presence in Europe was a reality whereas in Great Britain, the community groups often reproduced the social structure of their home country or region. Furthermore, the economic context had brought about deep social hardships, which we now know today: unemployment, rejection, alienation, violence etc. These factors contributed in making the process of integration increasingly difficult and complex. It is important to note that the following international events of the time had a deep impact in

shaping perceptions. From the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the scandal of Satanic Verses book of Salman Rushdie, the first gulf war of 1991, the attacks and violence in the near-east to the daily horror in Algeria, Terror attacks of US Twin towers in 11 September 2001 -it is hard to say to which degree these events shaped the mentality and negative perception of Islam and Muslims, a widespread phenomena in European society. We do know that these events fed the tensions stemming from the social crisis which Europe was in midst of undergoing with its high level of unemployment, exclusion and violence.

Often defined as a problem of immigration because of its urgency, these factors were enough to make it very difficult or almost next to impossible to debate the issue of the Muslim presence in Europe. One can assume that a sort of "Islamaphobia" had been entrenched in the minds of many according to the title of a fine study commissioned in Great Britain by Runnymede Trust in 1997.[3] This diabolised image of Muslims hindered a thoughtful evaluation of the dynamics that were sweeping across the European communities. Mentioning these points right from the start allows us to avoid dangerous curtailments which bypass a strict analysis, not taking into account the past and judging without the appropriate context. If this is how we were to measure things then most definitely we would come to the conclusion that Islam is incompatible vis a vis the European legislation. Or by the same token, that it is impossible for Muslims to integrate. Finally, we would be given a somewhat irreversible, conflicting and marginalized character of the Muslim identity. A true analysis would take into account the realities of history and everyday life, with its energy, fluctuation and development.

### **Pressure of the second and third generation**

For two reasons, which may on the surface appear contradictory, it was the second and third generation Muslims who played an assertive role in evolving the mind set among the diverse Muslim communities in Europe. On the one hand, the level of young Muslims practising Islam was somewhat weak because for many, integration within the society meant a total assimilation.[4] Compelled by this phenomena, the first generation leaders of the mosques and associations rethought their framework and how it was being implemented. Born of exile and committed to Muslim governments and militants, they learnt to adapt to the context facing these young people as well as the language, which they spoke. They were to redefine their religious teachings and reorient the execution of social and cultural activities. On the other hand, the resurgence of a young, practising Muslim minority created a multitude of associations. Within last fifteen years, their number had doubled or even tripled. Empowered, these young Muslims, usually around the age of thirty, born in Europe, often time students or educated in European universities, became involved in an increasing amount of activities. Their commitment compelled a deep shift in thinking because they considered themselves at home in Europe and having the right to make the most of their predicament.

This is where the rift had occurred between generations-contrary to the first generation immigrants, these young people looked at occupying very openly the intellectual and social sphere. Their energy and European culture stimulated their elders, previous members of Islamic movements in North Africa, Near east and Asia, to completely reassess their previous way of functioning and their intellectual positioning in accordance to the country they were living in. These phenomena provoked important debates within the Muslim communities and, in particular, among the Muslim scholars

(‘ulama). Consulted on matters such as Islamic law and jurisprudence, they were compelled to re-evaluate their own postulate among new legal opinions, which were adapted to the western way of life.

These associations were being formed because the seventies and eighties saw the necessity for a resurgence of Islamic thought in the west. As Europeans, these young Muslims asked directly and indirectly questions which required explicit answers. Should Europe be considered (according to the terminology and geopolitical factors of the ‘ulamâ of the ninth century) as a **Dar al-harb** (an abode of war), vs. **Dar al-Islam** (an abode of peace - a place where Muslims are the majority and live in security and according to the law). In other words, is it possible to live there? If the answer is yes, what should be the relationship of Muslims with regards to the National legislation? Can a young Muslim acquire a European nationality but play fully his role as a citizen? So many questions in which the Muslim scholars had never as of yet been able to respond in a manner, which was concrete, complete and detailed. With the 90’s, the encounters multiplied with the subject matter being theology and legal issues. The ‘ulamâ of the Muslim world but also, more and more Imams and intellectuals settled in Europe and took part in these profound dialogues.[5] With regards to Islamic Jurisprudence, this undertaking brought up some very important points. Sides, scholars as well as the European Muslim communities [6] arrived at a consensus. The following are highlights of some important principles:

### **Religious References and principles of integration**

During the first few years of the Muslim presence in Europe, the feeling most widely shared by the immigrants and Muslim scholars (‘ulamâ) was that they were in the midst of a transition. The feeling was that one-day or another, they would return to their country of origin. Strengthened by a few legal opinions communicated as quickly as possible (Halal Food, meat, mosques, financial transactions etc), no real or organised thought had been made because at the time, it just did not seem necessary. Satisfied with the answers widely used to deal with the situation, it is only with the appearance of the young Muslim generation that it was deemed necessary to re-analyse the main Islamic sources (**Qu’ran and Sunnah**) when it came to interpreting legal issues (**fiqh**) in the light of the European context. This interpretation (**known as ijtihâd**) would make it possible for the younger generation to practice their faith in a coherent manner as many of them had the intention of settling in the country, and a large number had already received their European citizenship. It is important to note that this was a very recent phenomenon, which obliged the scholars and Muslim intellectuals to take a closer look at the European laws, and simultaneously, take time to think about the changes, which were taking place within the diverse Muslim communities. To list all the multiple facets of this transformation is impossible to highlight in this article. What we can mention, however is the five main points, which were established in the light of the Islamic sources and recognised by the great majority of Muslims, living in Europe:

**A.** Muslim who is a resident or citizen should understand that they are under a moral and social contract with the country in which they reside. In other words, they should respect the laws of the country. This is known as **Darul Ahad** (Abode of contract or agreement) or **Darul Aman** (Abode of peace).

**B.** The letter and spirit of the secular model permits Muslims to practice their faith without a complete assimilation that would translate into partial disconnection of their Muslim identity, their faith and their culture.

**C.** Used by the jurists during a specific geopolitical context (9th century), the ancient denominations (**Dar-al-harb**, place of war and **Dar-al-Islam**, place of peace and security) are invalid and do not take into account the realities of modern life. Other concepts were determined to exemplify more positively the presence of Muslims in Europe.[7]

**D.** Muslims should consider themselves as full citizens and participate with conscience in the organisational, economic and political affairs of the country (in which they reside) without compromising their own faith values and ethos. Under the principle of **Maslaha Al-Amma** (General welfare of human beings for seeking common good) Muslims are obliged to participate fully in all spheres of activities in the place of their choice.

**E.** With regards to the possibilities the European legislation offered, nothing stops Muslims, just like any other citizen, from making choices, which respond to the requirements of his own conscience and faith. With respects to any obligations, which could be in contradiction with the Islamic principals (a situation which is quite rare), this would represent a case, which must be studied in order to identify the priorities and the possibility of adaptation (something which should be developed at the national level).

These five principals as presented do not take into account the ensuing thought, adaptation and most of all, steps that were taken in the evolution of scholarly and intellectual Muslim thought. Not very apparent, the latter becomes particularly important when a great number of situations from the past without any answers, had found today a point of reference in which to refer. The five points mentioned above translate into the most essential principals. This made it possible to provide subject matter, which was more explicit in areas where Muslims often referred to, especially in matters marginally understood and badly interpreted. The following are three examples of such cases:

### Some other religious issues

The idea of Muslim identity was widely discussed because it appeared as if it was a barrier to integration. It would therefore be necessary to clarify the requirements, perspectives and its richness while also confirming that the Muslim presence in Europe is not an obstacle. The Muslim identity is an expression of an intangible existence through all its essential elements arriving at an exemplification of the «Muslim being». Here we can mention the four points that explain the Muslim identity:

**1 Faith as a system of belief**, a spirituality and a practice (cultural dimension)

**2 Understanding and interpretation of the text and Context**, as much in the Islamic sources as in the social, political and cultural context –in the Europe (concept of rationality and responsibility).

**3 Education and Dissemination:** Faith is considered as a trust, which one must testify to and in which one must convey through education and training.

**4 Action and participation:** To be a Muslim is to act and participate in the social dynamics directed towards justice and a better way of life.

Each Muslim should be able to have a guarantee that the above-mentioned elements will be protected, in whichever country he/she lives. In other words, he has the «right to identity» and a concrete implementation of his freedom of conscience. A Muslim identity is not closed, confined to an ethnic culture with rigid and fixed principles. [8]

As is the case in Europe today, one can clearly affirm that the legal system protects and guarantees the manifestation of this Muslim identity. Despite all passionate debate and mutual misunderstandings, European Muslims can fulfil their religious obligations under civil laws of European countries, as the followed laws are fundamental human rights recognised by all European states:

- a) **Right to seek knowledge and be educated;**
- b) **Right to practice ones own faith;**
- c) **Right to form an association**
- d) **Right to seek justice – appeal to the law of the land for fair trail – or seek a legal opinion and challenge the discriminatory practices. (9)**

The challenges, which Muslims find themselves in today’s Europe, are more related to a minimalist interpretation, unyielding to the aforementioned legislation. A curtailed vision of the secular model and concern about the prejudice concerning Islam finds its way in this discussion-the ”**question of Islam**“ in Europe is a problem which originates from a certain mentality and susceptibility as much as a supposed legal incompatibility.

### **Theological Foundations for Religions Pluralism**

Through my reading of the sacred text of the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah, I have come to conclusions that are relevant to the application of the Qur’an to contemporary society, particularly with regard to democracy and pluralism. First, one of the core principles of Muslim belief is **Shura**, which means consultation. This was how the Prophet consulted with his companions on making decisions for his society. In the Qur’an, Shura is mentioned twice, as a fundamental belief, just like prayer, and as a practice, according to the time in which one lives. In our times, genuine Shura means genuine pluralism of points of view, and democracy. Second, this view of Shura changes the concept of Jihad, which we hear so much about from the fundamentalists.

The foundations out of which an Islamic perspective on any topic should arise is nothing less than the authentic sources of Islam, the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Both the Qur’an and the Hadith embrace and affirm **Ikhtilaf**, i.e. differences in belief, perspectives and viewpoints, as being natural and an essential part of the human condition. A denial of the right of others to hold beliefs and views, which are different and incompatible to one’s own, is tantamount to a denial of Allah himself. In the Holy Qura’n Surah Yunus, chapter 10, verse 99, Allah, the Sublime, declares:

**“If your Lord had so desired, all the people on the earth would surely have come to believe, all of them; do you then think, that you could compel people to believe?”**

And again in Qur’an Surah Hud, chapter 11, verse 118, Allah, the Sublime, declares:

**“And had your Lord so willed, He could surely have made all human beings into one single community: but (He willed it otherwise, and so) they continue to hold divergent views.”**

Both of these verses establish the principle of freedom of belief and thought in Islam. At the conclusion of the first verse, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is himself reproved for transgressing this principle by being over-enthusiastic in convincing others with regard to the truth of Islam. Thus the Qur'an stresses that the differences in beliefs, views and ideas of humankind is not incidental and negative but represents an Allah-willed, basic factor of human existence. The challenge which the principle of freedom of belief and thought in Islam holds for us is to develop clear ethics and find mechanisms to manage and deal with the differences of beliefs and theologies that exist. This is the challenge that religious pluralism holds for us.

### **Rule of Law**

Some of the major ideas associated with democracy and human rights would be in harmony with Islamic thought. The rule of law, a cardinal principle of democratic governance, is central to Islamic jurisprudence. Centuries ago, Islam recognised that all decisions, acts and procedures of public authorities at `all levels cannot be valid or legally binding save to the extent they are consistent with the law'. This is, of course, linked to the concept of `due process'. As in any society based upon democratic norms and procedures, Islamic law states that “you cannot deprive a man of life, liberty or property except by due process of law”. The emphasis given to virtuous Rulers in Islamic thought, and the examples of honest and upright Rulers themselves, should not obscure us to the other side of Muslim history: the presence of countless Caliphs and Sultans who violated every moral code in their conduct of the affairs of state. They not only abused power and indulged in corrupt practices; many of them were utterly ruthless and incredibly cruel.

**4Rs: Rights, responsibilities, relationships and roles** in the Qur'an are closely intertwined. For instance, if one values one's role as a parent one would also become aware of the rights one enjoys, the responsibilities one bears, the relationships one sustains. As a parent one has certain rights over one's child; at the same time one has to fulfil certain responsibilities. In order to exercise one's rights and responsibilities, one has to actively maintain a loving relationship with one's child. It is this relationship, which, in turn, defines one's role, that endows one's role with meaning and purpose. The importance of maintaining this intimate, intricate link between right and responsibility is underscored by the grim tragedies unfolding in yet another sphere of social and human relationships.

### **Integration vs. ghettoisation**

The major five religious practices of Islam, by its very nature, exemplify the community. Whether it is in the prayer or the fasting, the payment of the social purificatory poor-due (**Zakat**) or the pilgrimage – it is this community dimension, which, through brotherhood and solidarity, transcends to the very essence of a Muslim's being. Beyond his immediate family, the community is the first setting for a Muslim's social enlightenment. There are numerous Islamic teachings which guide the heart and spirit towards attaining

his own individual fullness, which has as its source, the community- a place of faith and spirituality. In other words, if one refers to Islam, one must then automatically allude to a community of beings, of faith, spirituality and brotherhood. This is a fundamental component of the everyday religious practice. The constitution respects this and leaves to the religions the responsibility of defining their own philosophies. It is one thing to say it but another to affirm that Muslims should cut themselves off from any feeling or aspiration of community in order to occupy a place for themselves in the secular arena.

This being said, one should not confuse a community based on faith with an ambitious community whose sole purpose is to be isolated and to stand out within the social, political and legislative framework. This whole notion of intellectual and physical segregation is alien to the very spirit of Islam. Practicing one's faith within a community is one thing; isolating oneself from the surrounding society is another. Legally and politically speaking, Muslims must be considered as individuals who can exercise their consciences with regards to their rights and obligations as citizens. This would then imply knowledge of laws and participation in the social, political, and economic climate. To put it simply, Muslims should have a genuine feeling of belonging within the European society. The mind set prevalent between some second and third generation makes no sense living in a bubble and ignoring the societal context without even having mastered the language, as occurs in several English regions. The community is the place for enlightenment of the spirit and should provide serenity and an intellectual vigour which permits for the blossoming of the Muslim individual as a European citizen.[10]

### **Identity, Community with European Islamic Culture**

Like the concept of identity and community, the reference to an «Islamic culture» brings to mind an image of isolation and rejection of the European culture. Certain people would see the proof of this by saying that Muslims are not genuine in their desire to integrate, playing on the one hand, the citizenship card whereas at the same time, looking to maintain their cultural particularities, such as their dress code, management of space when it comes to men and women, music and other issues. In their eyes, a real integration would mean what affects every aspect of one's character. This is actually a very narrow vision of integration, almost resembling the notion of assimilation. One admits theoretically the rights of Muslims to practice their religion but then one refuses to do so when this expression becomes too visible.

Actually, the future of Muslim presence in Europe will come to a truly "European Islamic Culture" disengaged from the Arabic culture of North Africa, Turkey and Indo-Pakistan, although it is okay to refer to them for inspiration. This new culture is just in the process of being born and moulded. As is the case in Europe, through thinking about the dress code to the artistic and creative expression, a whole new culture is being mobilised with a European energy while taking into account the national customs and simultaneously respecting the Islamic values and guidelines. Far from being an isolated undertaking, it is more a true acceptance of the realities of living in Europe together with the promise of cultural enrichment. The mixing of ideas and initiatives among the young Muslims is sign of an interesting phase about to be set in motion. [11]

One cannot say enough about the importance of taking into account the aspect of time when evaluating the integration process of Muslims in Europe. Behind the veil of tension and violence in certain suburbs, a profound, new, unique energy is sweeping among the young generations of the Muslim communities. In less than ten years, a new conscience

has arisen around the issues of the social, political and economic ventures, which are trying to find a place to manifest. The nineties in this respect was a period of transition and gestation, a challenge without a doubt. But yet, how rich and promising as well. More and more young Muslims of the second generation are acquiring confidence and a political maturity founded not only from the awareness of their own identity, but also from a thoughtful analysis on the legal, social, political and economic parameters. They achieved what their parents had not been able to and developed an attitude less and less frivolous and more and more participatory on the local and regional level.

### **Protecting one's Faith and remaining Muslim**

Active young Muslims in certain associations for the longest time had been receiving the message that to tolerate their presence came at the price of their religious practice. This rhetoric, mainly from the political personas and the media appeared to confirm such a conclusion. So they conclude that it is better to be isolated. It is only very recently that through analysis, debates, external and internal discussions that it became apparent that nothing in the letter or the spirit of the European legislation was in opposition with a peaceful and complete practice of the Muslim religion. [12] The laws do not say what some would like to say or interpret. Essentially, what the practicing Muslims wanted was to protect their faith and to be assured about their right to practice their religion. The awareness of this possibility personally and legally, that is to be fully Muslim and European created in a vast majority of Muslim associations, a coherent and open dialogue of identity. This stimulated a break from the past where the discussions had often been reactionary and aggressive, ten years back. This achievement is of utmost importance even though these associations are always faced with bothersome administrative aspects due to suspicion, fear, and the widespread confusion that if someone is practicing, that means he is «already» a fundamentalist or extremist.

An increasing amount of Muslim associations are committed to transmitting a civic awareness to their members. Some citizen training programs are in the process of being internally structured or in collaboration with certain institutions that specialize in this area. Just until now, these initiatives remain an abstract discussion. However, whoever makes the effort to discover the initiatives and come into contact with the work of the Muslim associations will notice the consciousness, maturity and energy, which drives a great number of these Muslim associations. They have gone beyond any obstacles without compromising their religion to achieve a true citizenship, which commits them to becoming truly aware of their obligations and rights in the European setting. Relationships are strengthening with other social and political players on the local level and discussion are being organized. Such initiatives are new, growing and frequent, especially in France, Holland, England, Italy, Belgium and Germany.

### **Religion: Bridge building or Wall Erecting?**

Religion as a social force can be harnessed to build bridges or manipulated to erect walls. How religion functions in society depend upon a number of factors, among them, the political, economic and cultural environment in which the particular religion operates. We should see religion as a total way of life anchored in faith in God and expressing itself in ethical conduct at the individual and social level. Justice, love and compassion - values that are highly cherished in any religion - rather than form, ritual and symbol, should propel this way of life. Since these values are universal, religion, which serves as a conduit for them, should also be preached and practised in a genuinely universal

manner. This is what one expects the practitioners of the religions to do in the coming century to counter the challenge of globalisation. They should discard the narrow, exclusive concept of religion, which often confines virtue and goodness to one's own kind. Justice and compassion in this exclusive approach seldom transcends one's own religious boundaries. We should eliminate forever such religious exclusivism. In a sense, certain aspects of globalisation may make it easier for us to put across the universal, all-embracing message of religion and its core values. Given the worldwide reach of the media we have today, for the first time in history the opportunity exists to convey to humankind as a whole the universal essence of each of our religions. Instead of allowing narrow-minded bigots to monopolise the airwaves, why shouldn't men and women with a universal outlook state their case through the global media infrastructure? Even more important, societies everywhere, as we have observed, are becoming less and less exclusive and more and more multi-religious.

It is as if social reality itself is forcing us to get rid of our exclusive attitudes and develop a universal orientation to our religion, which will be more accommodating of 'the other'. Indeed, one gets the feeling that each and every society is slowly, often painfully, beginning to realise what "humanity as a single family" means. Perhaps this is the path that nations must take for a universal community founded upon our common humanity to emerge. It is a community that globalisation will never be able to achieve. When such a universal community of different religions and peoples bound by their common humanity becomes a reality, we will understand what the illustrious mystic, Jallaluddin Rumi, meant when he wrote, "The lamps are different but the light is the same." In brief, religion motivates its followers to do good deeds such as charitable work and encourages doing common good for the betterment of all humanity.

### **Interplay of Religion and Politics**

Although a deep understanding of the interaction between the political and religious spheres requires a systematic and elaborate examination of their meaning, I will limit my statement to delineating their boundaries and identifying a few areas of friction between the two.

Religion refers to those aspects of life that relate to the determination of the total meaning of existence. It is concerned, in particular, with three grand questions about human existence: its origin, its purpose, and its destiny. Although the above three questions can be raised from a philosophical point of view, the religious response to them is distinguished from the philosophical by the degree of conviction one enjoys over the other. That is to say, a religious conclusion with regard to the above grand questions is not only supported by rational arguments, but by emotional attachment and possibly spiritual experience as well.

This difference gives religion an advantage over philosophy in that it makes religiously based convictions a better springboard for action. It is a fact of history that people with deep religious conviction are willing to endure greater difficulties and make greater sacrifices in pursuit of their religious ideals than those whose attachment to their ideals is based on purely rational calculations. Paradoxically though, religion's source of strength is also its source of weakness. For it is always easier to dissuade people from erroneous points of view when the latter are based on theoretical arguments rather than religious convictions. And while shared religious conviction can create more harmony in the public sphere, the possibilities of interpersonal and inter-communal conflicts are bound to increase in multi-religious societies.

## **Islamic Democratic roots**

In the Muslim world, the relationship between religion and politics has not been articulated in clear and unambiguous terms, but is still a matter of experimentation and debate. Historically, Muslim political order was established by a community that rejected the idea of conferring any religious status on the head of the state and political authorities. Political succession was based on a notion of choice (**ikhtiyar**), but this was later transformed into a de facto domination by powerful clans beginning with the Umayyads. This prompted Muslim scholars to limit state power to the realm of defence and maintaining intercommunal order, and to limit legislative authority within juristic confines, away from the dictates of the state. There is a dire need of modern political practices and institutions in the Muslim world. Democracy, constitutionalism, and the rule of law are no more than a show, a political façade in most Muslim societies. The roots of the problem can better be understood when one realises that modern political structures are superimposed on an intrinsically traditional political culture.

There is a desperate need to evolve a new understanding of how religion and moral standards relate to the public sphere form within the Muslim experience, instead of relying on notions borrowed from the historical West and superimposed on society. The western world, which continues to experience an erosion of the moral and transcendental core of its social life, stands, on the other hand, to learn a great deal by opening itself to the remarkably different mode of interplay between religion and public life in the world of Islam.

Islam is essential for the development of a better future for human society because its adherents constitute one-fifth of world population. No democratic order can be achieved or maintained by discarding the aspirations and ethos of one-fifth of world population. Yet Islam is an essential partner for developing a democratic and peaceful world for more basic reason. Islam holds in high esteem the most fundamental values that make a democratic and pluralist society possible, namely equality, freedom, justice, and interracial and interreligious solidarity and co-operation. The emphasis Islam places on the values of equality, freedom, justice, and pluralism is manifested in the Islamic scripture—the Qur'an, in the practices of the Prophet of Islam and those of his companions, in the historical experience of Muslim society, and in ethos of the contemporary Islamic reform movements.

A Muslim who commits a serious crime or murders a non-Muslim for monetary gains or any reason deserves to receive a just punishment, and a non-Muslim who save life deserves a praise and admiration. Reaction of Christians and Jews to these acts would be no difference. One ought to condemn wrong doings and support good deeds, regardless of the identity of the actor. Hence, action rather than religious affiliation should determine the social worth of people. The question of global peace in a multicultural, multi-religious world is ultimately a question of shifting the locus of social evaluation and order from doctrine to value. Since complete secularism has led to the erosion of morality and the rise of nihilism, religious commitment is becoming increasingly central to public life.

## **In Search of a Common Ground**

The question that preoccupies us as implied by the theme is this: Can we find a common ground on which Muslims and non-Muslims stand comfortably in a democratic and pluralist society? My answer is a resounding yes. The Qur'an directs the Muslims to find a common ground with other religious communities. This common ground is

expressed as a mutual respect of the freedom and autonomy of different religious communities. That none should appropriate to them the right to impose their way of life on other religious communities. The Qur'an is also clear that there can be no force in matter religious. The Qur'an urges Muslims to seek a political order based on peaceful cooperation and mutual respect, and warns them against placing religious solidarity over covenanted rights and the principles of justice

Religious conflict, particularly between Islam and Christianity in the past, or more recent conflict between Israel and Palestine, more often than not rose out of human excesses and the desire to stir religious passion to support political goals. It is true that the these Abrahamic religions (Islam / Judaism / Christianity) advance a slightly different conceptualisation of God and of humanity's relation to the divine, but *doctrinal* differences are not limited to inter-religious relationships. One can find more doctrinal diversity within each of these world religions that between them. Muslims, Jews and Christians, on the other hand, share similar core values of respect of human life and dignity, and profound commitment to charity and the common good.

### **Good deeds and Moral values:**

As a Muslim I believe that faith in the broadest sense includes all that is good in life, and Islam emerged as a moral challenge for humanity to respond to the call of the faith with active submission to Divine Will, with a commitment to obey the Creator in providing welfare to all beings in the society without any consideration to race, gender, language, colour, culture, physical build or ethnic origin. The goal of Islam - of its concepts, worship and teachings relating to values, attitudes, morals and behaviour - is to create an Islamic personality of an individual Muslim preparing himself for a wider role in this life. Belief in Islam is not a simple assent to a dogma. All Islamic beliefs have a reference to an action. Good actions become a part of Islamic faith, which leads to a more virtuous life. Man is thus accountable for his own actions and behaviour. Humans have the responsibility to choose and implement a moral and righteous life in obedience to God's commandments for common good

The Qur'an and teachings of the Prophet of Islam strongly suggest that Faith without the backing of good deeds is meaningless. Faith based on **Aqida** (belief system) leads towards good deeds and good deeds prepare a man for a full Islamic personality. Islamic concepts of **Taqwa** (God Consciousness), **Falah** (well being) and **Hayat Tayyibiah** (good life) facilitate the realisation of an Islamic personality - when a Muslim seriously pursues the broader goals of the creation believing that **mankind is but one community and striving hard with others for freedom, justice, and peace**. It is upon an individual Muslim to build Islamic qualities, values and morals such as **brotherliness, sincerity, honesty, truthfulness, pursuit of knowledge, responsibility, integrity, fair dealing, keeping promises, discipline and self-control, humility, patience, courage, thankfulness, modesty, honour and self-respect, warmth and lovingness, generosity, hospitality, charitableness, kindness, helpfulness, respect, tolerance and mutual understanding, obeying the commandments and abstaining from the prohibitions**. These attributes transcend religious belief.

Collectively on a community level, a Muslim's obligation is to establish what is right and eradicating what is wrong; Strive for an Islamic identity supporting, promoting and protecting a Muslim way of family life; Dealing with health and educational issues and for the creation of a condition wherein perseverance of mutual compassion and well-being prevail for the benefit of the individual. On national and international levels a

Muslim must work towards a better and peaceful world. With their own actions and deeds they can dispel myths and misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims. The Muslim community has a great responsibility in promoting the teaching of Islam and its values as a part of a global Muslim **Ummah** (World Community). Muslims must squarely confront the reality of British secular trends and adopt a different approach in their strategy in a minority setting of **Darul Ahad** (Domain of alliance and treaty agreement) from the majority setting of **Darul Islam** (Domain of Peace) where Muslims have power and authority over their own affairs.

### **Interfaith Dialogue:**

Interfaith Dialogue among people of different religious communities is more needed today than ever before. For many of us involved in this process, dialogue is an avenue to explain one's own faith to the other and to learn a little about the religion of one's dialogue partner. There are some who would like to see this dialogue go beyond '**knowing one another**'. They hope that through active intellectual interaction and engagement a shared universal spiritual-moral worldview will emerge which will serve as the basis of a new truly just and compassionate global civilisation.

What they are seeking is not just inter-religious understanding but the nurturing of a deep human bond of love and empathy transcending religious affiliation. Individuals who live in fear and lack of comprehension of other cultures are more likely to resort to acts of hatred, violence and destruction against a perceived "enemy". Those who are exposed to the cultures of others and learn about them through communications across cultural divides are more likely to see diversity as strength and celebrate it as a gift. Today, globalisation, migration and communication are bringing different races, cultures, ethnicities and religions into even closer contact with each other. People can and should take pride in their particular faith or heritage but share common human values.

People of faith always come together at the time of difficulty. They draw instructions from their own faith to bring reconciliation and understanding as truest fruits of religion is healing. People of faith do talk about: the danger of war and destruction by the powerful nations, lack of clean water to millions people on our planet, poverty, hunger, air pollution and our regard to environment, the increasing erosion of common human moral values and many other concerns such as peace, justice, tolerance and dialogue.

Regardless of any influence of religious teaching in their daily lives, such values generally accepted by all: love, respect, mercy, forgiveness, charity, brotherhood, dignity of human life and human rights etc. Most of these values are derived from religious beliefs. However, Interfaith movement has to involve itself in major moral issues which world is facing today. Interfaith dialogue is the only answer to religious exclusiveness. Sad is a nation whose young people have no dreams; sadder yet is a nation where the old try to kill the dreams of their young.

### **In 1981 Isaiah Berlin once wrote a note on "Prejudice" :**

"For things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals or groups that he or she or they are in the sole possession of the truth; especially about how to live, what to be and do, and that those who differ from them are not merely mistaken but wicked or mad, and need restraining or suppressing. It is a terrible and dangerous

arrogance to believe that you alone are right; have a magical eye which see the truth and that others cannot be right if they disagree”.

### **Spiritual-moral Imperatives: Missing dimension of state craft:**

The adulation of wealth and the immortalisation of so-called ‘creators’ of wealth have raised fundamental questions, which go beyond economic philosophy. Have we legitimised and institutionalised greed and selfishness as no civilisation before us has ever done? Isn’t it true that the legitimisation of greed has challenged the moral fabric of contemporary society? From an ethical perspective, isn’t it becoming increasingly evident that economic acquisitiveness now wears the mask of social respectability? If acquisitiveness has become respectable and greed has become legitimate, isn’t it because we have consciously sought to separate economic endeavour from moral considerations? This is why the great task that awaits us in this century is to provide a moral foundation and a moral framework to the monumental challenge of eradicating poverty. Indeed, all economic endeavours should be guided by spiritual and moral criteria. There are perhaps at least four fundamental spiritual-moral imperatives that should govern the conduct of our economic affairs. Some Europeans are concerned about their faith and moral situation in secular European Society. See [www.caux.ch](http://www.caux.ch)

### **WAR: A moral dilemma:**

Every war is a product of human failure. In Iraq we have seen the powerlessness of innocent civilians caught between two evils - another example of a humanitarian disaster and tragedy of a huge magnitude. The suffering caused by 12 years of sanctions was multiplied by the brutal, dictatorial and ruthless regime; the ordinary citizens of Iraq had no choice but to be patient. The ‘Gulf war II’ was the most controversial war in living memory. It divided the world into two opposite camps. Interfaith movement was also divided into pro and anti war camps. So many commented on the moral issues of the war on Iraq especially whether it is legal or can be justified. Many religious leaders opposed this war on the basis that it is premature and not needed. The doctrine of the pre-emptive strike cannot be justified on moral grounds and this will definitely lead to anarchy in the world.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Williams summed up these moral arguments in his famous Easter 2003 sermon. He said “For months now, we have witnessed a profound and disturbing moral argument raging backwards and forwards in this country over the rightness of the war against Iraq. You’ll have noticed the way in which some opponents of the war insisted that the motives of those in power must be personally corrupt, greedy, dishonest and bloodthirsty – as if the question could be settled simply by deciding on the wickedness of individuals. Equally though, there have been defenders of the war who have accused its critics of being unable to tell good from evil, of colluding with monstrous cruelty and being indifferent to the suffering of nations. On one side, people seem to see an equivalence between Saddam Hussein and the coalition leaders; on the other, an equivalence between Saddam Hussein and a grandmother from Surrey, a JP and Conservative voter, who finds herself, much to her amazement, on the anti-war march in February. ‘Imperialists’, ‘butchers’, cries the one side, ‘blood for oil!’ ‘Appeasers’, shouts the other, ‘Useful idiots.’

This is not simply about how we conduct controversies (though it has some relevance to that, to the barbarous superficiality of some of our public arguments). It is about that odd

and not very pleasant tendency in our hearts to ignore the mixture of motives and the uncertainties of understanding that lie behind our own decisions, to deny the elements of chance and hidden prejudice, temperament and feeling that make up our minds, even on the most profound matters. It is about the fear that if we admit this sort of mixture in ourselves we fail to distance ourselves clearly enough from what we believe to be evil. It leads to a further darkening of our minds, as we try to make out that the effects of the war are exactly what would confirm our initial judgements. It is a great victory; 'all the problems will disappear very soon, and reports of regional discontent are much exaggerated'. Or it is a catastrophe; 'we are on the edge of social and political collapse in the Middle East and the demise of international law'. It is indeed a clinging, gripping tightly on to whatever perspective we are comfortable with and allowing no time to wait for a fuller discernment to be born. The truth is that we don't yet see clearly. And even if we did, that would not settle the moral rights and wrongs of the conflict's origins. "

### **Poverty and the Gap between Rich and Poor: The Biggest threat to World peace:**

The World is the divided between the rich and the poor, which poses the greatest threat to the future of humankind. It was this divide, which right through the ages caused great social upheavals. It sometimes gave birth to peasant uprisings. On occasions, it sparked off political revolution. Poverty already claiming many victims, as millions are starving although we have enough food for six billion people of earth; millions do not have clean water for drinking and this gap is widening due to unjust trading systems, shameful agricultural and fishery policies and a crushing debt problems.

The adulation of wealth and the immortalisation of so-called 'creators' of wealth have raised fundamental moral questions, which go beyond economic philosophy. Have we legitimised and institutionalised greed and selfishness as no civilisation before us has ever done? Isn't it true that the legitimisation of greed has challenged the moral fabric of contemporary society? From an ethical perspective, isn't it becoming increasingly evident that economic acquisitiveness now wears the mask of social respectability?

Today, the divide between rich and poor has assumed a new, and potentially more dangerous dimension. As the tidal wave of globalisation creates a borderless world, the rich and poor are emerging as global entities whose destinies are no longer determined by domestic forces. The wealth of the global rich, for instance, is sustained to a considerable degree by global enterprises and global markets just as the poverty of the global poor is caused to some extent at least by international trade regimes and the ebb and flow of foreign investments. It is of course true that, "(In) the past 50 years poverty has fallen more than in the previous 500 years And it has been reduced in some respects in almost all countries."

This blatant injustice is a ground for violent conflicts. Nonetheless, absolute poverty remains a major scourge facing humanity at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A third – "1.3 billion people – live on incomes of less than US \$1 a day." 515 million people in South Asia live in absolute poverty; 220 million in Sub-Saharan Africa; 110 million in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1960 for instance, "the 20% of the world's people who live in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%-by 1995 82 times as much income." Consequently wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1998 Human Development Report, "the world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over one trillion, equal to the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world's people

(2.5 billion). The three richest people have assets that exceed the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries. The 15 richest people have assets that exceed the total GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa. The wealth of the 32 richest people exceeds the total GDP of South Asia."

Over the last five years, the number of people living on less than 1 US\$ a day has risen from 1 billion to 1.3 billion. 840 million people – as many as the combined populations of Canada, the United States, Japan and Europe - go hungry every day. Meanwhile the gap between the richest and the most impoverished is widening more and more rapidly. An average pet cat in Norway has more spent on it in a year than the annual earnings of most people in Sub-Saharan Africa. Is this scandalous situation beyond the control of the religious and spiritual communities, or can they do something to change it? How can a spiritual and moral vision help to solve the complex issues of our day?

Religious communities have a depth of knowledge of the poor, which is shared by few others. For thousands of years, faith-based organisations have been, in the best of cases, part of the poor. Many of their leaders are poor themselves, they live in poor areas and have poor friends. Moreover they don't tend to come and go. They stay where they are, firmly rooted. Poverty is, however, only a "virtue" if it is undertaken as a voluntary witness, and as a way of showing solidarity. There are no grounds in any religion for assuming that hunger and homelessness, for example, are the will of God or a manifestation of the divine order. It is for this reason that religious organisations have always worked to counteract poverty, by providing services, such as health care and education, or programmes to open up economic outlets for peasant farmers, rural and urban artisans, fisher people and traders. They can give countless examples of ways in which, mostly at a local level, they have been successful in overcoming the most detrimental aspects of poverty. They thus have a key contribution to make to the improvement of the planning and implementation of development programmes.

But in these critical times of rapid change, the faith communities are challenged to make a contribution, which reaches beyond their practical work. In the face of the cruel injustice all around us, we cannot rely only on economists and technical experts. The world urgently needs religious leaders, who have the insights to understand what is going wrong, the courage to denounce it and the wisdom to make alternative proposals. Religious and spiritual leaders are called upon to be at the cutting edge of all key debates about the nature of the global society we are creating, or should create. Over the last fifty years, the mainstream vision of development has been focused almost solely on economic growth, rising income levels and technical progress. The disastrous effects of this for the billions of people who have been excluded from any benefits, as well as for our natural environment, are now leading to gradual changes.

For religious thinkers the notion of freedom has always been central to their understanding of human progress. Freedom from oppression is an essential ingredient, but the ultimate aim is spiritual freedom, the freedom to love and freedom from enslavement by "illusory" goods such as wealth and status.

The aim of globalisation to integrate the people of the world into a single economic system is not a-moral or value-free. The religious traditions' vision of people belonging to a worldwide family, whether as creatures of the same Creator or as ever-changing beings whose existence depends on others, is not reflected in the reality we see around us. It is not a case of evoking guilt among those who live in abundance, but a sense of

responsibility towards those who can barely survive. It is a case of recognising where there is a causal relationship between wealth and poverty and refusing to accept that the disparity between the rich and the poor is in any way “natural” or justifiable. Religious insights and a deepening of the spiritual dimensions to life have a unique role to play in providing new hope and purpose, which bring release from the desire for power and status.

The teaching of the religious traditions to bring an end to suffering (Buddhism) and to care for the poor (which in some, such as Islam and Judaism, explicitly means enabling the poor to earn their own living), can enlighten and inspire people to be enthusiastic about contributing to building up a “**right balance**” or more just relationships in society. There are many creative ways in which the rich can and do share responsibility with the poor, one of which is the Muslim banking system whereby the money lender demands no interest, but shares in any profits made. This is why the great task that awaits us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to provide a moral foundation and a moral framework to the monumental challenge of eradicating poverty. Indeed, all economic endeavours should be guided by spiritual and moral criteria.

Leaders from the different spiritual and religious traditions have a moral obligation to propagate the concept of a justly balanced middle community at the local, national, regional and global level. It is a concept that has to be further refined and developed through research, analysis and reflection. How it will shape specific policies aimed at eradicating poverty and transforming the economy will depend upon the ability of economists and social planners with a spiritual-moral vision to give the concept the substance and content it deserves. Indeed, one would like to see how the justly balanced middle approach would impact upon politics, culture, technology, ethnic relations and other spheres of life.

### **Annihilation: Armament: Our Mutual Responsibility:**

We live in the presence of monstrous military potentials, enough to eradicate life on this planet. This overemphasis on military means encourages the belief that might is right and peace can be achieved through strength. Some facts:

**1) Nuclear threat** is greater than ever, despite the recent agreement about the reduction of number of nuclear weapons. Most people are not aware of the development of a whole new generation of nuclear arms and introduction of a new “pre-emptive” strategy widening the possibility of actual use of nuclear weapons. I remind you of the warning given by former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe US General Goodpaster: “I realise that the notion nuclear arms bring security, the idea that somehow we were in charge, that somehow all of this was infallible and manageable and we could make it work is totally flawed”

**2) New arms technologies** are under preparation. During the Afghanistan and recent Gulf War, despite the powerful manipulation of the international media, a glimpse has been seen – terrible effects of the cluster bomb, the daisy-cutter and thermo-baric bombs. All major powers have massive weapons of mass destruction – only United States of America’s weapons can destroy the whole world eleven times over.

**3) Excessive military Spending** will soon reach the outrageous level of \$1000 Billion a year worldwide (over 40% of which is for US only). We in Britain are ready to spend millions to wage war against Iraq (where certainly civilians will die) rather spend a portion of this money on decent wages for fire fighters, for example. Actually we live in an absurd paradoxical situation: rising military expenditure that does not lead to enhanced security but to a greater insecurity.

**4)Weaponisation of Space.** This is a spine chilling fact that next to existing theatres of warfare on land, sea and air, a fourth theatre is in full preparation: Space. Details can be found in US Space agency, **Vision 2020**. For absolute supremacy the next war will be fought in space, from earth into space and from space to earth.

**5)Progressive Ecological Degradation:** I consider that the alarming rate of Ecological Degradation will lead to a serious degradation of the quality of life and will lead to irreparable damage to our natural environment. Just to mention a few consequences: global climate changing; bird and mammals species are disappearing at the rate 100 to 1000 times the rate at which extinctions naturally occur. Seventy percent of marine fisheries are either fished to capacity or over fished. Half of the tropical forests are gone; most people will soon live in water stressed areas.

For further information Please see speeches of **Edy Korthals Altes** of The Hague, made at Caux (Switzerland) August 2002. He is the author of "Heart and Soul for Europe: An Essay on Spiritual Renewal", He is a Former Ambassador of the Netherlands and is currently an Honorary President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (**WCRP**)

### **Islam and Challenge of Modernity:**

What is relation between Islam and modernity? Is Islam really against modernity? First let us see what modernity is. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary modern means, 1) "of the present and recent times" and 2) "in current fashion; not antiquated." Keeping this definition in view the question arises: To what extent will there be a relationship between religion and modernity? The next question then arises: What is religion? What constitutes religion? If religion is of a permanent nature what exactly ensures its permanence? These are important questions to be dealt with if we have to grapple with the issue of Islam and modernity. Religion is not only set of rituals but also set of beliefs, values and institutions. A religion also gives a thought system to its people. Any religion, despite its eternity carries the birthmarks of its historical circumstances. This social and historical context is as important in understanding religion as its own eternity. Since followers of religion have strong emotional bonds with their religion they accept whatever reaches them as permanent lock, stock and barrel. They often refuse to take notice of changes in historical context.

Here arises the question of whether everything inherited by a believer, by way of religious rituals, institutions, values and thought systems is permanent and unchangeable or dynamic and adaptable. The religious leaders and faithful would say yes, they are permanent. The reformers, on the other hand, would advocate changes in certain practices and traditions. Modernity, as pointed out above, relates to what is recent as opposed to what is ancient or old. Thus there is bound to be some kind of incongruity between religion and religious traditions and what is construed as modernity. All religions, not only Islam, face this challenge earlier or later depending as when

modernity dawns in the area where that religion has its way. Christianity faced it much earlier than other religions.

Here we should keep in mind that modernity cannot be defined only as something temporal or related to time. It is to be dealt with also as something to do with mental approach and way of accepting or rejecting a proposition. In other words we have to speak of modernity as value. Also, it would be wrong to think that modernity was accepted by other religions without struggle whereas Muslims resisted it. All religions went through a crisis of modernity, though the degree of crisis might have varied. It would also be wrong to think that any religious community accepts or rejects modernity uniformly. The intellectual elite of the community as well as other beneficiaries may accept it more readily than others. It is also true that the Islamic world in general has been very late in accepting modernity. Other religions or other peoples did it earlier or with less resistance. But nowhere it was accepted without struggle or resistance.

### **Independence and Integration of the citizen**

More and more associations are acting in a very independent manner and are born of the local, indigenous dynamic. This phenomenon, which oftentimes goes unnoticed, is of great importance. Associations are being created and looking to respond to the needs of the Muslim community at the local level. This process is occurring everywhere in Europe and is a sign that Muslims of the old continent are in the process of finding their voices and mainly, their political and financial independence. It is true that for the moment, this movement appears to be scattered and chaotic but it is the needed transition for the Muslim presence to pass to higher level which is free, independent, self organized, a master of their own destiny and of their representation. A large number of projects are seeing the light of day, responding to urgency, coming out of the dark, and mobilising the Muslim community at the regional level in financing the new constructions underway and totally independent from a foreign power. The example, which sticks out the most, is that of the mosques. These are certainly not just mosque/cathedrals, but instead functional, dignified spaces that respond to the needs of the population. Access to this financial and political independence is crucial and pressing for it is through this that Muslims will be able to fully and freely attend to the challenges, which are waiting for them in Europe.

### **Representation: The choice of the rank and file**

Oftentimes in the different European countries, thought has gone into the notion of Muslim representation. The first order of action was to determine who would be the facilitator who is acceptable, someone who has knowledge of the territory. The initiations in this sense were numerous and one cannot say that the new experiments were elaborated in the same light. The future of the Muslim community of Europe through their financial and political independence requires that they be respected for having chosen to be Muslims, their fundamental choice. This process will bring into being a representative core which could be long and require some meditation, and which follow the shift in mentalities. This will culminate into a real awareness among the young Muslims of their required individual commitment and their responsibility in the success of this undertaking. Inevitably, the above-mentioned points are bound to stimulate some interesting dynamics. To want or to decide upon a unique institutional representation is neither serious nor realistic and reveals once again that it is not an exercise of political transparency. In the hour of transition and the building of awareness, more and more Muslims are showing stability. The only road for them to

reasonably follow is one, which has plural expressions, where the Muslims can think about a large council, which succeeds in reuniting the diverse ways of thinking to respond to the urgency of certain decisions. One should hope in the meantime that these initiatives would bring the fabric of the associations, at the local and regional level to move towards a project which is more refined and which is independently represented. We are very far still from this reality. Here the community needs time whereas the government appears to be in a hurry. Unless the latter doubts the indigenous, independent energy, and truly democratic climate within the Muslim community, wisdom and lucidity will oblige the government to take into the account the realities of this context.

The past fifteen years have seen an enormous change within Europe's Muslim communities. There is upheaval as generations of children born here in the Europe: association has increased in numbers, and there is new voices talking about citizenship and political participation, and claiming inherent rights to nationality and rights. There is also a more visible commitment to fighting against discrimination-Islamophobia in areas such as employment, places of worship, education, state laws and so on. This is happening throughout Europe, though it varies according to how long there has been a Muslim presence there. But in the end, Muslim integration into the fabric of Europe will have three main strands - straightforward taking-on of citizenship, involvement in society and politics at all levels, and the demand for financial and political independence. In Europe Integration may soon become a reality; yet the Muslim communities settled in Europe are still need to be included in power and resource sharing in their own place of residence as citizens.

### **Islamophobia and Social Exclusion**

After 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, the wave of anti-Muslim prejudice and attacks on European and American Muslims was more than doubled comparing from the statistics available during the Gulf War in 1991. Muslims from all backgrounds were threatened day and night, and suffered an acute sense of vulnerability in their homes and mosques, as well as on the streets. Several Muslims were killed in retaliation. A number of mosques endured arson attacks. To address the issue of Islamophobia, the American Congress passed laws providing further protection against anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hostility. As European Muslims have no protection under the present laws any recourse to criminal justice system would be appropriate. I think that European Governments must outlaw Religious Discrimination and enact laws against the incitement of religious hatred and vilification of religious sanctities. It is important to amend the present Public Order, Crime and Disorder, Human Right and Race Relation current legislations urgently to protect many innocent lives. This would be an act to address Extremism and fanaticism from our Multi-ethnic, Multi racial and Multi-faith British Society in 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Moves to meet the growing demands of Islamic pressure groups to outlaw 'religious discrimination' and islamophobia in Europe is being debated which will have its far-reaching implications. (For details See Reports published by EUMC at [www.eumc.eu.int](http://www.eumc.eu.int) and Open Society Institute's publications such as Monitoring the EU Accession Process Reports 2002 see theirwebsite: [www.eump.org](http://www.eump.org)) Pressure, particularly from Muslim groups who now make up 65% of all Britain's ethnic minorities, to be defined by religion rather than race, is mounting. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia has produced a number of reports on Islamophobia especially 15 counties and five cities. On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003. Second round-table conference was held on the subject

followed by the first round-table conference on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2001 and the third and final will be held in March 2003.

A spokesperson of the Muslim Council of Britain said: 'when it comes to the needs of British Muslims like health and housing Muslims are excluded. The Asian umbrella is being addressed but the Muslim community, which constitutes the largest ethnic minority, is not, and our identity is first and foremost religious. This is cultural Racism. There are various issues at stake being tackled in different ways: incitement to religious hatred.

European Union has issued a mandatory circular on 27 Nov 2000 to outlaw religious discrimination in Employment but not in services or goods. [13] Each member state has to domestically incorporate this legislation into their legal system soon. It is important to define discrimination. 'If it means with respect to right to have a social housing and healthcare, right to access an employment then of course we are all against it. If it means discrimination that you make claims and counter claims with regards to truth one believes and practices as their religion then it destroys all possibility of inter-faith dialogue.'

- discrimination in terms of the delivery of services and employment
- discrimination that implies that one religion is inferior to another.

British Government has so far resisted moves for a law against religious discrimination, despite sympathy in the rest of Europe where race legislation is less effective than in Britain. There is already 'indirect provision' under the British Race Relations Legislation:

- Flexibility in workplace clothing was introduced in 1990 to allow for headscarves and trousers to be worn as uniform by women. Police and army have issued guidelines for Muslim Women to wear **hijab** in the United Kingdom
- In 1992 the company Precision Engineering was found to have indirectly discriminated when saying it did not want to employ any Muslims
- A tribunal in 1993 upheld the right of a Muslim worker to take unpaid leave to attend Eid.

### **Combating Terrorism and Fear**

Terrorism is a plight that must be fought. No amount of anger and discontent can justify the targeting of non-combatant civilians with the brutality we all witnessed on September 11, 2001. The level of destruction inflicted on civilians, the brutality with which the terrorist attacks were executed, and the fact that the terrorist design is undertaken by extensive deliberation and determination sent shock waves throughout the world, and brought condemnation from foes and friends alike. Targeting thousands of unarmed civilians, using civilian airliners carrying civilian passengers, and bringing down two of the most spectacular buildings in the whole planet, in a drama that was played on live TV in front of millions of viewers, made the attacks even more sinister and apocalyptic.

But terrorism cannot be fought by mystifying it or by ignoring its root causes. The first step for developing a sound strategy to effectively combat terrorism is to examine the conditions that give rise to the anger, frustration, and desperation that fuel all terrorist acts. To focus on individuals and organizations that employ terror, while ignoring the

socio-political circumstances that give rise to acts of desperation, can potentially strengthen the arms of the terrorists. A devastating force unleashed against elusive groups can exacerbate the very conditions that gave rise to resentment, frustration, and anger.

Terrorism is fuelled by the actions of exclusivist regimes that privilege some and deny basic rights to others. Rogue governments that use state security agencies and excessive force to silence critics and political opposition fuel it. To be effective in fighting terrorism we must dry the swamps of abuse and injustice that breed radicalism all over the world.

### **Terrorism and Islam:**

There is no accepted definition of “**Terrorism**” by any international organisation. The present usage of the word “Terrorism” means the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property, to intimidate or coerce civilian population undermining the civil authority, excluding acts perpetrated by states or by coalitions of states. A definition of terrorism from an Islamic perspective might well be more wide-ranging than current usage.

The Islamic Scholars (**IMAMS and Ulema**) of Muslim Council of Britain (**MCB**) in their meeting on Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2001 suggested that Terrorism include:

“Indiscriminate murder and the shedding of blood without due process of law, driving people out of their homes and lands, destruction of crops and livestock, the spreading of **Fasad or Fitna** (destruction, chaos, mischief and corruption which encompasses political, economic, social and moral corruption) on earth - are examples of criminal acts and evil behaviour condemned by Islam.”...to spread mischief and corruption on earth and destroy crops and cattle. God does not like mischief and corruption. (2: 25).  
**(For full text see [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk))**

Islam and terrorism are contradictory terms opposed to each other. Islam condemns and rejects all forms of terror, killing without due process of law, injustice, corruption, tyranny and oppression. There is no justification for the usage of terms such as ‘Islamic terrorists’. As a Muslim we must take account of our deeds by other Muslims on the name of Islam. I feel ashamed when I hear that Muslims are breaking the Law of Islam. I sincerely apologize to those who have suffered due to any senseless actions of so-called Muslims. I seek forgiveness from Allah for any mistake done and ask forgiveness from my fellow beings. However, we must find the root cause of the problem.

**Terrorism**, in fact, is systematic, premeditated and calculated. It spans vast aspects covering the entire world, and manifests itself in various forms and shapes. Sometimes the religion of Islam is held responsible for the acts of a handful Muslims who are associated with acts of destruction and terror. Islam whose name means peace cannot encourage its adherents to work for death and destruction. It is an irony of our time that the light of Islamic learning, which brought an end to the dark ages of the West, is now being seen as responsible for the advent of an age of terror. Islam is peace not terror.

The efforts to blame Islam for terrorism are not only baseless and erroneous, but are unmistakably malicious and ill intended. Islam, like many religious traditions, stresses charity, mercy, and compassion. Historically, Islam is recognized for its tolerance

toward other religions, even when bigotry and intolerance were widely accepted and practiced in medieval times. But like other religious traditions, Islam recognizes the right of peoples to fight aggression, even though it puts higher premium on forgiveness. Reciprocity, or eye for an eye, is found not only in Islam, but in Christianity and Judaism as well. Further, like other religions, Islamic texts contain statements that emphasize forgiveness and peace, along with others that permit the use of force for fighting back against aggression and for achieving just peace.

In Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah, Moses narrates to the Israelites a fiery message from God as they prepare to enter the promised land: "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." Likewise, the Gospels contain texts that call for the use of force to avenge the rights of people and to punish the unjust. In the Gospel of Matthew, a statement attributed to Jesus reads: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but the sword."

A partial and out-of-context reading of religious texts, combined with a desire to reciprocate against real or perceived injustice, may lead misguided individuals and radical groups to commit atrocities in the name of religion and justice. Muslim scholars and leaders must speak against using Islam and Islamic doctrines to undertake acts rooted in political ambition or frustration. By the same token, media organizations have the duty to present a balanced picture of Muslim society and faith, rather than feeding on the frenzy of bigotry and stereotyping. The media more often than not focuses on the eccentric and extraordinary, and as such brings distorted pictures of Middle Eastern realities. Rather than showing that radical Islamic groups standing on the fringe outside mainstream society, the media reverse the picture by projecting radicalism and extremism as the norm in the Middle East. The sight of a handful Palestinian youths celebrating an American calamity is newsworthy, but a demonstration by thousands of sympathetic Arabs is not.

### **Religious Extremism:**

Islam is religion of moderation. Holy Qur'an defines Muslims as the well-balanced middle nation model for others (2:143) and advised them not to follow extremism in religious interpretation (4:171, 5:77, 22:78). The Holy Prophet warned Muslims: "Beware of Extremism in your religion as people before you were destroyed themselves because of their extremism", "Do not be hard upon yourself in your opinion in the matter of faith", " Always choose easy way in your religious way on matters of faith. Certainly religion is easy" (Collection of sayings of the Holy Prophet by Ahmed, Nisai, Al-Hakim and Ibne Maja). In my humble opinion Islam believes in a civil Society based on rule of law, anyone who creates chaos (**Fitna or Fasad**) in the society through terror can be treated as **harabi** (waging war against the society) and should be brought to justice accordingly by legal process. Islam and terrorism are contradictory terms opposed to each other. Islam condemns and rejects all forms of terror, killing without due process of law, injustice, corruption, tyranny and oppression. There is no justification for the usage of terms such as 'Islamic terrorists'. The Holy prophet of Islam said, "By God, he is not a true believer, from whose mischief his neighbours do not feel secure."(Bukhari, Muslim)

### **Sanctity of life:**

One of the distinctive features of the present world is the overwhelming presence of violence in our societies. The nature of indiscriminate and senseless violence is considered one of the prime threats to the world peace and security. I must make it clear that **Islam** upholds sanctity of human life, as the Holy Qur'an declares that killing one innocent human being is like killing the entire human race (5:32, 6:151, 17:33), like all other faith traditions. Islam considers all life forms as sacred. The first and foremost basic right of a human being given by God is the right to live in peace and security. However, taking a criminal's life by the state in order to administer justice is allowed in Islam as it upholds the rule of law, and helps maintain peace and security of the society. Only a proper and competent court can decide whether an individual has forfeited his right to life by disregarding the right to life and peace of other human beings. The accused must be given full facilities under the law 'the right of defence'. Extra judicial killings are strictly prohibited in Islam.

### **Suicide killing:**

Killing one's own self (suicide) is prohibited in Islam (4:29), as it is an abuse of the Divine gift of Life. According to Islamic Law those who commit or try to commit suicide are committing a major sin and will be sent to the fire of hell. Even patients who are in severe pain are prohibited to wish death. Holy Prophet said: "Do not harm yourself or injure others". : The holy book of Islam does not call on young volunteers to strap explosives to their bodies and set them off in crowded public areas in Israel. That much is clear. Suicide bombers are waging a distinctly modern type of warfare not sanctioned in any faith. Many Muslim clerics and scholars have criticized the theology of suicide bombers, and the practice is very controversial within Islam. In the past year alone, the supreme religious leader and Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah al Sheikh, said he feared that using explosives in this manner is a form of suicide, and therefore condemned. And an influential Sheikh Al-Azhar Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, said bombers who detonate explosives among civilians are not fighting a true war and cannot be considered martyrs. These voices are not often heard because the Muslim community is united in the moral righteousness of the Palestinian cause. Let me remind ourselves the Islamic position:

**"Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds."** From the last sermon of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).

**"Hijacking Planes, terrorizing innocent people and shedding blood constitute a form of injustice that can not be tolerated by Islam, which views them as gross crimes and sinful acts."**

Shaykh Abdul Aziz al-Al-shaikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior Ulama, on September 15th, 2001

**"The terrorists acts, from the perspective of Islamic law, constitute the crime of hirabah (waging war against society)."**

September 27, 2001 - Fatwa, signed by Many scholars such as:

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Grand Islamic Scholar and Chairman of the Sunnah and Sira Council, Qatar

Judge Tariq al-Bishri, First Deputy President of the Council of Preachers, Egypt

Dr. Muhammad s. al-Awa, Professor of Islamic Law and Shari'a, Egypt

Dr. Haytham al-Khayyat, Islamic scholar, Syria

Shaykh Fahmi Houaydi, Islamic scholar, Syria  
Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Chairman, North America High Council

**"Neither the law of Islam nor its ethical system justify such a crime."**

Dr Zaki Badawi, Principal of the Muslim College in London. Cited in *Arab News*, September 28, 2001.

**"It is wrong to kill innocent people. It is also wrong to praise those who kill innocent people."** Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, Pakistan. Cited in the *New York Times*, September 28, 2001.

(The above statements by high ranking international Muslim scholars and leaders appeared in an advertisement placed by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, in the *New York Times*, October 17th, 2001 and reproduced in **MCB** book on 11 September "In Quest of Sanity") See [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)

**Roots of Extremism and Fanaticism.**

There are Muslims who claim to be religious but try to impose their views over others by force or violence. They forget that Islamic teaching advocates the fundamental principle to respect for individual freedom of conscience and belief. Islam believes that freedom of belief is a basic God given right to all human beings. Extremism and Fanaticism is alien to Islam. However there are a few verses of the Holy Quran, which have been interpreted in such a way that some Muslim may take a view to impose their views over others. For example The Holy Qur'an commands Muslim to live and rule their lives according to the revealed message of God. If any Muslim does not decide according to the Holy Qur'an then he is not only wrongdoer, a rebel, disobedient but a non-believer also (5:44- 47). These verses were interpreted by some that if a Muslim ruler has completely abandon the Islamic Law then it is legitimate to disobey him and change him by force. They also believe that, as Islam does not make any distinction between communities of believers and the Islamic State - because the State is simply a political arm to establish common good, it is important that Islamic Law must be established within Islamic societies. Due to their political ends they establish effective ways to promote their views by every means available to them.

In my opinion, fanaticism, terrorism and extremism are symptom of a problem, not the actual cause. In order to combat and eradicate these evils totally our long-term goal should be to eliminate the underlying social and political causes which breed them. We must continue fighting against Racism (colour or cultural), Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Xenophobia, and bigotry in words and deeds in all aspects of our society. Paralleling our actions against terrorism, we must have equally vigorous efforts to enhance freedom, human dignity, justice and humanitarian values. Some of the possible factors behind the violent terrorists acts may include:

- 1) Hatred, hurt and prejudice
- 2) Fear and powerlessness
- 3) Occupation and domination
- 4) Injustice and suffering
- 5) Corruption and greed
- 6) Oppression and Control
- 7) Dictatorship and total authority
- 8) Debt, poverty and hunger
- 9) Frustration and helplessness

**10) Dislike of inclusive Society and above all  
11) Discrimination and Islamophobia**

There is a new type of terrorism, which has emerged recently in the forms of arson, bombing and sabotage in the name of saving the environment, ecology and animal and zoological kingdom. Racism (colour or cultural), anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Xenophobia, bigotry must be in words and deeds. I am glad to note that from the very beginning the British Prime Minister together with the American President made it clear that Islam and the Muslim Community are not to blame for the tragedy. We are dealing with fanatic individuals who have behaved in this most abhorrent and abominable manner. This is not a crusade or conflict between Islam and the West. Rt Hon **Tony Blair** said: "Blaming Islam is as ludicrous as blaming Christianity for loyalist attack on Catholics or nationalists attack on Protestants in Northern Ireland".

**Peace and Justice**

Islam is a religion of peace. This fact is borne by both Islamic teachings and the very name of "**Islam**." The term Islam essentially means to submit and surrender one's will to a higher truth and a transcendental law, so that one can lead a meaningful life informed by the divine purpose of creation, and where the dignity and freedom of all human beings can be equally protected. Islamic teachings assert the basic freedom and equality of all peoples. Islam stresses the importance of mutual help and respect, and directs Muslims to extend friendship and good will to all, regardless of their religious, ethnic, gender, cultural, linguistic or racial background.

Islam, in fact, makes of peace at every greeting, which Muslims exchange whenever they meet by saying, "Peace be unto you" (**Assalamu 'Alaykum**). The Muslim also utters this statement at the end of every ritual prayer. From its inception, the Qur'an emphasized peace as an intrinsic Islamic value. In fact, the terms "**Islam**" and "**Peace**" have the same root, **salaam**. Furthermore, God has chosen the word peace (**salaam**) as the Muslim's greeting to reminds believers as one of God attributes.

Islam commands Muslims to be just and fair in all circumstances even if it may go against oneself or their next of kin. The universe is constructed on what the Qur'an calls the *mizan*, or a balance. That balance is justice. The Glorious Qur'an says: "And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance, So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance" [Al-Qur'an 55:9] Justice is essential to maintain the balance of the human mind. Whenever any human being is deprived of justice, the mind is inclined to imbalance. The greater the injustice, the greater is the likelihood of imbalance. That is the reason the Glorious Qur'an warns against allowing hatred to cloud one's judgment and sense of justice.

The following four verses of Qur'an confirms the uncompromising stand on Justice: "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (4:135). For The Declaration of World Muslim Leaders Summit held in Jakarta in December 2001 see Appendix four

### **Forgiveness: A different outlook and a new start:**

In Islamic history one may find an outlook of a different nature. When the Romans conquered any country, the first thing they would do is mass massacre. When the Muslims entered any country, they would give guarantees of life, property and honour to all the non-belligerents. Even in war a Muslims are not allowed to kill an old person, a woman, and a child, those who are crippled or disabled. Not only that, even trees are not to be cut and crops are not to be burnt. The entire Islamic history does not know of the concept of mass killing or massacre of enemies. One cannot find one single example of any Inquisition or ethnic cleansing on the name of Islam

I draw your attention to look to the actions of the Holy Prophet of Islam when he entered Makkah as victor. **Everyone was offered complete amnesty and complete forgiveness.** When Caliph Umar entered Jerusalem he was not even prepared to pray in a Church for fear that those who came after him may treat the place as a mosque and take it away from the Christians. But when the Crusaders there took the city of Jerusalem was total massacre of the population. What happened in Spain? Not a single Muslim or Jew was left unexecuted or un-exiled. It was the same in Sicily where all the mosques were demolished. Even in the last century the same practice was adopted in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya and many other parts of the world.

Islam condemns and rejects all forms of terror, killing without due process of law, injustice, corruption, tyranny and oppression. There is no justification for the usage of terms such as 'Islamic terrorists'. As a Muslim we must take account of our deeds by other Muslims on the name of Islam. I feel ashamed when I hear that Muslims are breaking the Law of Islam. I sincerely apologize to those who have suffered due to any senseless actions of so-called Muslims. I seek forgiveness from Allah for any mistake done and ask forgiveness from my fellow beings. However, we must find the root cause of the problem.

### **Diversity recognised, appreciated and celebrated**

Islam presents the concept that all human beings are equal and we are equal because we are all creatures of God with no distinctions of colour, race or country, or tribe or clan or anything else. One would find that fanaticism is generated in the last analysis either from any of these false prejudices, when you try to group humanity into certain watertight compartments. One cannot change the colour of his skin; one cannot change his place of birth. If one believes in any of these standards, then rational fusion of the human race is not possible and you become intolerant towards others.

In Islam, the rational fusion is possible for whatever tribe, you come from, from whatever race you come, whatever colour you may have, whatever territory You might be born in, whatever language you speak, you are one, you can be one. You belong to one race the human race, the one family the human family. You belong to one brotherhood. Diversity among fellow human beings must be recognised, appreciated and valued in all aspects of life. The majority community is always judged the way it treats its minority community.

### **Ends cannot justify means**

Another point is that Islam is very unique and firm in asserting that the ends cannot justify the means. A source from where fanaticism and intolerance have most often come is the mistaken belief that ends justify means. This means that to achieve even

good ends you could resort to evil means. The principle that Islam has enunciated is that **"Good and bad are not equal. Replace evil by good"**. (Holy Qur'an 41:34)

If you fight falsehood with falsehood it is falsehood that prevails. If you replace vice with vice, it is vice which triumphs. If you change evil by evil, it is evil which is victorious. Islam says that evil is to be eliminated by good. If you pursue this technique then only you would be able to fill the earth with goodness, and justice, and peace and fellow feeling. Islam has struck at the roots of fanaticism. If you reflect upon the system that Islam has given, you would find that fanaticism has no place in it but idealism is the lifeblood of it. In the Qur'an it has been mentioned that the mission for which this Muslim nation has been created is that you call people to goodness. As far as the wrong (**munkar**) is concerned, you are permitted to eliminate it. But as far as the truth and virtue (**ma'ruf**) is concerned, it is not to be enforced by power.

You can very easily see that Islam has clearly discriminated between idealism and fanaticism. It has done everything to generate in us real idealism, noble idealism, virtuous idealism, and to protect us from the evil influences of fanaticism. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has said that Islam is a religion of the middle path.

The Qur'an has called the Muslim nation **'Ummat al-Wusta'**, the people of the middle and model nation, the people who maintain balance and equilibrium in all their affairs. Adhering to idealism, protecting and avoiding the extremes of fanaticism - this is the middle path and it is this path which Islam invites to all humanity. Through Education, diplomacy, Dialogue and firmness Muslims are urged to deal with extremism and fanaticism in the world.

What we are dealing with here is a very serious problem of hatred, fear and prejudice. Those people who were responsible for killing thousands of people in America in what was clearly a carefully planned and expertly executed operation must be brought to justice. However, deep-rooted hatred can only be fought with dignity, education, understanding, dialogue and diplomacy. Unless the roots of hate are addressed there will be irrational people who will continue to commit such heinous evil crimes against humanity. Let all sensible people stand for peace, justice and make concerted efforts to fight terrorism by eliminating all injustices and exploitations in their part of world. I believe that being tough on the causes of this evil act is as important as identifying the terrorists themselves. I believe that without a revival of moral values, nurturing a shared sense of forgiveness and understanding may be we face an even greater challenge. We must pray to overcome hatred and violence in ourselves. Let us rededicate ourselves to peace, human dignity, and the eradication of the injustices that breed rage and vengeance. It requires multi-religious co-operation of all decent people from all shades and all sections of our communities from all over the globe. I have given some good practices of bridge-building from various International Interfaith organisations, three faith forums and interfaith network as the end of this paper as Appendix: One

### **Spiritual-moral Imperatives: Missing dimension of state craft: Europe's role**

The adulation of wealth and the immortalisation of so-called 'creators' of wealth have raised fundamental questions, which go beyond economic philosophy. Have we legitimised and institutionalised greed and selfishness as no civilisation before us has ever done? Isn't it true that the legitimisation of greed has challenged the moral fabric of contemporary society? From an ethical perspective, isn't it becoming increasingly evident that economic acquisitiveness now wears the mask of social respectability? If

acquisitiveness has become respectable and greed has become legitimate, isn't it because we have consciously sought to separate economic endeavour from moral considerations? This is why the great task that awaits us in this century is to provide a moral foundation and a moral framework to the monumental challenge of eradicating poverty. Indeed, all economic endeavours should be guided by spiritual and moral criteria. There are perhaps at least four fundamental spiritual-moral imperatives that should govern the conduct of our economic affairs.

### **Poverty and the Gap between Rich and Poor: The Biggest threat to World peace**

The World is divided between the rich and the poor, which poses the greatest threat to the future of humankind. It was this divide, which right through the ages caused great social upheavals. It sometimes spawned millenarian movements. At other times, it gave birth to peasant uprisings. On occasions, it sparked off political revolution. Poverty already claiming many victims, as millions are starving although we have enough food for six billion people on earth; millions do not have clean water for drinking and this gap is widening due to unjust trading systems, shameful agricultural and fishery policies and a crushing debt problem. Today, the divide between rich and poor has assumed a new, and potentially more dangerous, dimension. As the tidal wave of globalisation creates a borderless world, the rich and poor are emerging as global entities whose destinies are no longer determined by domestic forces. The wealth of the global rich, for instance, is sustained to a considerable degree by global enterprises and global markets just as the poverty of the global poor is caused to some extent at least by international trade regimes and the ebb and flow of foreign investments. It is of course true that, "(In) the past 50 years poverty has fallen more than in the previous 500 years And it has been reduced in some respects in almost all countries." [14]

This blatant injustice is a ground for violent conflicts. Nonetheless, absolute poverty remains a major scourge facing humanity at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A third – "1.3 billion people – live on incomes of less than \$1 a day." 515 million people in South Asia live in absolute poverty; 220 million in Sub-Saharan Africa; 110 million in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1960 for instance, "the 20% of the world's people who live in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%-by 1995 82 times as much income." Consequently wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1998 Human Development Report, "the world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over one trillion, equal to the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world's people (2.5 billion). The three richest people have assets that exceed the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries. The 15 richest people have assets that exceed the total GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa. The wealth of the 32 richest people exceeds the total GDP of South Asia." [15]

### **Conclusion**

Taking into account the element of time, understanding the unavoidable tensions which result from the first contact of co-existence (with the added factor of the «other's visibility»). We are getting closer to the realities of the moment to detect the profound dynamics, which are widespread among the diverse Muslim communities. The open and positive confirmation of the Muslim identity as we have discovered, is a concrete reality as is the integration of the citizen, de facto. Far from being a ghetto mentality,

the majority of Muslims opt for a serene and open presence and some will go as far as proposing a «European Muslim Culture».

We see the subsequent rumblings of an «intimate integration» into the European society, which should be objective and the finality of any pluralist society, which respects the concepts of identity and differences. Europe these days is a cosmopolitan society with people of many different races and religions. Because of this, some basic principles concerning how people live and work have to be drawn up. There must be a definite policy delineated by the European states. Also, there ought to be a better exchange of information and experiences among the countries concerned.

This policy should cover such headings as:

**1. Equality of religions in the public sector** — In many European countries, the juridical status of Islam, (and other «immigrant» religions), is not on the same footing as that of long-established religions. Islam ought to have an equivalent position and Muslims ought to be offered possibilities to carry out their religious duties protected by the country's laws. On the other hand, it also means that the civil authorities can meet not all the Muslims' demands. When there is a conflict of interests, appropriate structures would ensure that the authorities and the Muslim organisations can discuss the matter constructively.

**2. Less dependence on foreign governments: inclusion into mainstream society** — When it comes to financing their activities, Muslim communities should be less dependent on foreign financing, so as to reduce the influence of their country of origin, over what is said and done. One way would be to grant a Charitable Status to certain charitable works or training activities, as is done with organisations belonging to Christian Churches. Another method would be to grant tax relief to religious organisations. (In fact, a number of European countries already have this on their statute books).

**3. Setting up ways and means for training leaders.** — It should be made possible for the local Muslim community to establish training centres for their religious leaders (Imams, religious teachers) who are required for the organisation of the Muslim community and for religious teaching. The study programme should be adapted to European society.

**4. Pay more attention to civic education, democracy, human rights and to the existence of a state built on the rule of law: Community co-hesion**— If you're going to talk about democracy and a state built on the rule of law, then all citizens (including naturalised citizens) must be formed in these principles. Education in these principles ought to be part of an assimilation process into local society, and of the study programme for religious leaders.

**5. Importance of dialogue among religions: Peace; Justice; forgiveness**— Even though Islam has a long history, Muslims have only recently settled in Europe. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims takes on an added importance from the point of view of today's society. People will thus get to know more about each other, understand each other and respect each other. Because in Europe there are now so many people coming from other religious traditions, it's important that on a European level, contacts between representatives of the various Christian Churches and Islam should be placed on a more official level, such as within the Council for Europe, the European Parliament and the European Union Commission.

One should remain lucid, however. The obstacles are great and the explicit or subtle rejection and discrimination are everyday realities of many Muslims, who at times doubt the intentions and actions behind the political actors and co-citizens. The position is that in order to be European, one must be less Muslim. One should remember the meetings, debates and communal projects, which have brought to light the issues at the local level – a very important step that contributes to going beyond mere suspicions. Some Muslims have found hope when they were given the opportunity to meet with the concerned players, who were respectful, constructive, and ready to commit to an honest

and adherent dialogue. These exchanges paint a picture to demonstrate true change is underway.

For many Muslims, this new phenomena will also give them the opportunity to see themselves in another light. Often seen as a enigma, some have unfortunately internalised the idea of assimilation by making oneself «very small», disappearing in the woodwork as an «invisible presence». The surrounding pressure has made them hide their religion as one hides a inferiority complex. Such an attitude will not bring promise of social peace and harmony but instead, possibility of an explosive situation. The present dynamics are such that they should transform the above mentioned feeling. In time, Muslims will understand that their presence is richness for the European society. As the debates unfold and awareness is created, this presence will allow this society to access a religious diversity and a new unique culture. This feeling culminates when increasing numbers of Muslims participate in debates, which concern the central foundation of their society: questions on meaning, values, education and ethics. This is what is required of them, obliging them as citizens to ask questions and to participate together with their social, political and economic partners. Their integration will be seen as a very positive contribution to the larger society while at the same time maintaining their spiritual integrity.

However, many European countries still see Islam as something not only foreign but dangerous to boot, and at all events a source of instability. They prefer to deal on the quiet with the dictatorships of the Muslim world, which may not observe the law but give them security and protect their interests. With a few exceptions, no European country seems to talk directly to its Muslim citizens and residents other than – explicitly or otherwise – through these foreign states. Virtually all the European states want autonomy for their Muslims, and yet they pursue a policy based on affiliations and allegiances with the governments of origin (and on information gleaned from the various intelligence services).

In the years ahead, the states of Europe are going to have to rethink how they cope with their Muslims and with Islam in our midst. The associative movement proliferating all over Europe is producing full Muslim citizens of those countries, who are politically and financially independent and are already beginning to ask questions about the justification for the Europeans' link with the dictatorships of the Muslim world. Already, they are claiming the right to organise themselves on their own and decide for themselves the legitimacy of their religious representation. This is a fast-growing phenomenon. Whatever the countries of origin may want, they are losing ground, and second- and third-generation Muslims feel fewer and fewer ties with the countries their parents came from. If Europe is to succeed in the tricky venture of achieving cultural and religious pluralism in its societies, then there is an urgent need to move away from security-based thinking, in order to encourage dialogue, negotiation and confidence between states and their citizens: the only democratic way is one that respects both the law and its citizens.

### **Global Ethics and Interfaith Dialogue**

I am reminded the words of Professor Hans Kung “**No peace among nations without peace among the religions and no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions**”. I add “**No peace without Justice and no Justice without forgiveness and compassion**”. [16] Dialogue and agreement must be

conscientiously applied and maintained, so to create bonds of love, care, trust and confidence. Its prerequisite is proper education and learning from one another. We must speak and act truthfully with compassion. We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. Every human being must be treated, fairly, humanly and with dignity without any fear or discrimination.

I admire the work of **Prince Hassan El Talal** over the years for promoting better understanding between different faiths and advocating dialogue for resolving conflicts. His short book “**Continuity, innovation and Change**” is must read for every Muslim. I not only share his vision but also say that he represents true Islamic scholarship in the current debate on the issue of World peace. The building of peace requires an attitude of sanctity and reverence of life, freedom and justice, the eradication of poverty, dissolution of all forms of discrimination and the protection of the environment for personal and future generations. The ideals of peace include fundamental and global directives such as:

- \*Do not kill i.e. have respect for life;**
- \*Do not steal i.e. deal honestly and fairly;**
- \*Do not lie i.e. speak and act truthfully;**
- \*Do not commit sexual immorality i.e. respect and love one another.**

I confirm that Islam is faith of moderation and girder of unity for all mankind and blessing for mankind because Muslim model communities where:

- \*All of God’s creation – whether human, animal or the environment – is valued and respected;**
- \*Where people want more to serve others than to get what they can for themselves;**
- \*Where no one has too little or too much;**
- \*Respecting the right of others to disagree with us;**
- \*Being sensitive and courteous to all.**

We affirm that in Islam the belief in God or the Divine is the bedrock of one’s faith out of which flows ideas on the meaning and purpose of life; on the unity and dignity of mankind. Human dignity thus is an acknowledgement of the divine presence in each and every one of us and unites us into a single family. We believe in “Thinking globally but acting locally.” The world will not change for the better unless the conscience of individuals is changed first.

We should pledge to increase our awareness by positive thinking in understanding one another. We must pledge to be courageous defenders of peaceful teachings and interpretations of Islam, and to be exemplary peacemakers in our personal, family and social conduct of our lives in order to socially beneficial, peace fostering, bridge-builder and nature-friendly way of life.

**Remember, Remember. Remember. Evil is not in the body. Evil is in the mind, therefore harm nobody. Just change the mind.**

**Lord** You said and your word is true! Love is stronger than hate. O God Almighty You are peace and from You peace comes. Bestow upon all of us Your peace and make our final destiny in your eternal abode of peace. **Let there be respect for the earth,**

peace for is people, love in our lives, and delight in the good, forgiveness for our past wrongs and from now on a new start.



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**25 February 2003**

**1** For more details please read Karle Blei's "**Freedom of Religion and Belief: Europe's Storey**" published by Koninklijke Van Gorcum BV Postbus 43, 9400 AA Assen : The Netherlands , 2002

**2.** For further details See professor Khurshid Ahmed's Interim Report on "**Muslims in Europe**" submitted to the Islamic Council of Europe on April 1976 published by the Islamic foundation Leicester United Kingdom.

**3** Commissioned on the Muslims of Britain, and overseen by Professor of Sussex University Gordon Conway with eighteen members (10 Muslims and 8 non- Muslims), **Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all**, Runnymede Trust, October 1997

**4** 60% to 70% say they fast during Ramadan, but only 12% to 18% pray everyday; 75% to 80% do not speak at all their mother tongue or speak it very badly. See To be A European Muslim, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, November, 1999

**5** About a dozen ‘ulama of the Muslim World met with each other in July 1992, and then in July 1994 at the European Institute of Social Sciences at Chateau-Chinon to give an Islamic Legal perspective on the Muslim presence in Europe. In Great Britain, Islamic Foundation multiplied their efforts in this respect as of 1990. But London has also seen the creation, in March 1997 of The Islamic European Council was formed to elaborate on judicial opinions and research. Sheikh Dr Yousef Qarzawi was elected its President See the periodical Sawt Uruba (The voice of Europe), Irland Islamic Centre’s report and the reports of Federation of Islamic Associations of Europe, Milan, May 1997.

**6** The regrouping of Hizul-Tahrir, Al-Muwahhidun and Al-Muhajirun, aggressively call to a minimizing implementation of the Sharī’a in Europe, very isolated, even if the big media accord them immeasurable importance. Their views are that Muslims cannot live under man-made laws. Without Islamic Khilafa Muslims cannot implement Islamic Laws.

**7** In Dr Tariq Ramadan’s famous book “**To be a European Muslim**” published by the Islamic Foundation Leicester UK 1999, he discusses these concepts in great details and he discusses, in the light of Islamic sources, the concept of **dar-ash-shahada**, a space where one testifies to the importance of attesting to faith before God (**ash-shahada-Witness**) which makes a Muslim who he/she is (**intimate dimension**), and the witnessing before man which is an exemplification of his participatory presence in the society in which he lives (**collective and social dimension**).

**8** One should note that each individual has the right to make his choice, among the principals mentioned above, to which the practice ones own faith.

**9** See Tariq Ramadan “**Muslims in France: the way towards Co-existence**” published by the Islamic Foundation Leicester UK 1999

**10** The opposition brewing between first and foremost being a Muslim or European is, according to this perspective, a false debate as the two are from the same source but not of the same priority. To be a Muslim, is to carry a concept, a meaning of life and death; to be French, British or German is to play one’s role as a citizen of a nation. There is no more contradiction of being Muslim and French or British and Humanist and French or British. For example, the formulation «French humanist» shocks no one when it refers to a philosophic framework, nor «French humanist» when it comes to a reference of a political commitment. We are to use the same vantage point when referring to Muslims.

**11** Next to some simple musical imitations which are sufficient enough to “Islamises“ the text, there exists some very interesting and original experiments in the subject areas of: song, theatre, organisation of celebrations, and creating of clothing. The fundamental idea is to harmonize the respected Islamic recommendations and the process of expression where the importance is kept of connecting with societal roots and customs.

**12** The question of integration does not apply to those men and women who have decided not to practice their faith.

**13** For further information see Council of Europe Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000

**14**UN Human Development Report 1997, New York (UNDP) Page 2 \*

15 Ibid p.3 \* as quoted by Dr Chandra Muzaffar of the Just World article “the Global Rich and Global Poor : seeking the middle path published 1998.

16 Hans Kung in “**World Religions: Universal Peace and Global Ethics**” published by The Global Ethics Foundation Tubingen (Germany) [www.global-ethic.org](http://www.global-ethic.org)

17 Prince Hassan El Talal in his “**Continuity, innovation and Change**” published in Amman 2001

### Appendix One : Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs

In Britain today, people of many different faiths and beliefs live side by side. The opportunity lies before us to work together to build a society rooted in the values we treasure. But this society can only be built on a sure foundation of mutual respect, openness and trust. This means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so too. Our different religious traditions offer us many resources for this and teach us the importance of good relationships characterised by honesty, compassion and generosity of spirit. The Inter Faith Network offers the following code of conduct for encouraging and strengthening these relationships.

As members of the human family, we should show each other respect and courtesy. In our dealings with people of other faiths and beliefs this means exercising good will and:

- Respecting other people's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions
- Learning to understand what others actually believe and value, and letting them express this in their own terms
- Respecting the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behaving in ways which cause needless offence
- Recognising that all of us at times fall short of the ideals of our own traditions and never comparing our own ideals with other people's practices
- Working to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict
- Always seeking to avoid violence in our relationships

When we talk about matters of faith with one another, we need to do so with sensitivity, honesty and straightforwardness. This means:

- Recognising that listening as well as speaking is necessary for a genuine conversation
- Being honest about our beliefs and religious allegiances
- Not misrepresenting or disparaging other people's beliefs and practices
- Correcting misunderstanding or misrepresentations not only of our own but also of other faiths whenever we come across them
- Being straightforward about our intentions
- Accepting that in formal inter faith meetings there is a particular responsibility to ensure that the religious commitment of all those who are present will be respected.

All of us want others to understand and respect our views. Some people will also want to persuade others to join their faith. In a multi faith society where this is permitted, the attempt should always be characterised by self-restraint and a concern for the other's freedom and dignity. This means:

- Respecting another person's expressed wish to be left alone

- Avoiding imposing ourselves and our views on individuals or communities who are in vulnerable situations in ways which exploit these
- Being sensitive and courteous
- Avoiding violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements, or the misuse of any kind of power
- Respecting the right of others to disagree with us

Living and working together is not always easy. Religion harnesses deep emotions which can sometimes take destructive forms. Where this happens, we must draw on our faith to bring about reconciliation and understanding. The truest fruits of religion are healing and positive. We have a great deal to learn from one another which can enrich us without undermining our own identities. Together, listening and responding with openness and respect, we can move forward to work in ways that acknowledge genuine differences but build on shared hopes and values.

Inter Faith Network for the UK 1993, 2000 [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)

## **Appendix TWO :**

### **Joint Statement by 14 International Interfaith Organisations**

Fourteen international Interfaith Organisations released a statement following the September 11th tragedy. Their web sites offer an excellent introduction to the work of these organisations and initiatives in interfaith dialogue that are contributing to peace and justice throughout the world.

In response to recent tragic events in the United States of America and ongoing conflicts with religious dimensions around the world, our international interfaith organisations offer our inter-religious dialogue expertise and resources to address the current crisis and promote peace-building initiatives.

We have direct experience of bringing into peaceful and constructive dialogue the mainstream and marginalised, moderate and militant religious voices of our world. Working with the world's faith communities, we have found that inter-religious dialogue can help heal wounds caused by feelings of injustice, isolation, and inequality.

Our international interfaith organisations with their global outreach and networks offer peaceful alternatives to war. Contact us: *(in alphabetical order)*

• **Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions**

E: info@cpwr.org

W: [www.cpwr.org](http://www.cpwr.org)

• **International Association for Religious Freedom**

E: hq@iarf.net

W: [www.iarf-religiousfreedom.net](http://www.iarf-religiousfreedom.net)

• **International Interfaith Centre**

(Coordinating organisation)

E: iic@interfaith-center.org

W: [www.interfaith-center.org](http://www.interfaith-center.org)

• **Interfaith Youth Core**

E: jpinzino@ifyc.org

W: [www.ifyc.org](http://www.ifyc.org)

• **Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders**

E: info@milleniumpeacesummit.org

W: [www.milleniumpeacesummit.org](http://www.milleniumpeacesummit.org)

• **Minorities of Europe**

E: deepak@gnaik.freemove.co.uk

W: [www.moe-online.com](http://www.moe-online.com)

• **Peace Council**

E: icpc@peacecouncil.org

W: [www.peacecouncil.org](http://www.peacecouncil.org)

• **Temple of Understanding**

E: templeunderstanding@prodigy.net

W: [www.templeofunderstanding.org](http://www.templeofunderstanding.org)

• **United Nations Spiritual Forum for World Peace Initiative**

E: ggonzale@netline.cl

• **United Religions Initiative**

E: office@uri.org

W: [www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org)

• **World Conference on Religion and Peace**

E: info@wcrp.org;

W: [www.religionsforpeace.org](http://www.religionsforpeace.org)

• **World Congress of Faiths**

E: worldconfaiths@aol.com

W: [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org)

• **World Faiths Development Dialogue**

E: wfdd@btinternet.com

W: [www.wfdd.org.uk](http://www.wfdd.org.uk)

• **World Fellowship of Inter-Religious Councils**

E: upasana\_dr@satyam.net.in

Our activities include:

- Working with religious leaders and activists in conflict situations throughout the world, including the Balkans and Africa.
- Developing a voluntary code of practice for religious and belief communities.
- Preparing a summit of religious and spiritual women at the United Nations in Geneva.
- Giving voices to marginalized young people throughout Europe.
- Internationally addressing issues of racism, communalism, conflict transformation, disarmament, security, the needs of HIV/Aids orphans, and religious freedom.
- Bringing local people into locally rooted yet globally connected dialogue.
- Contributing peaceful and constructive solutions to difficult situations.
- Training young people for community based interfaith work and social action.
- Evolving a Global Engagement Network of guiding institutions to address global critical issues.
- Organising a Parliament of the World's Religions.
- Creating active dialogues between faith communities and multilateral development agencies on poverty and development.
- Hosting international gatherings to promote interfaith understanding and co-operative efforts for peace.
- Making available a variety of information and educational programmes to encourage widespread spiritual, religious, cultural, intellectual and social reflection.

### Appendix Three: European Religious Population



For British Religious official Census please see [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

### Appendix Four

The Summit for Muslim World Leaders  
**Islam and a Future World of Peace**  
Jakarta, Indonesia — December 21 - 23, 2001  
**In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful**  
**Jakarta Declaration 1422 H/2001**

#### Preamble

We begin by invoking the blessings of Allah on this effort and with salutations on the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)

We, the participants and guests of the Summit of World Muslim Leaders gathered to reaffirm the teachings of the Holy Qur $\square$ an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH), under the theme Islam and a Future World of Peace, on 6 - 8 Shawwal, 1422 (20 - 23 December, 2001) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

**We affirm that:**

Islam is a religion of peace and justice. From its core values emanate respect for life and human dignity, affecting all ideals and actions that guide the day to day life of the Muslim.

Our understanding of religion and spirituality grows from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These resources provide the basis for resolving all challenges of this and every age, as well as all social circumstances.

The universality of the teachings of Islam affirms the sanctity of humankind, and thus enjoins on us an enduring dialogue of faiths and civilizations.

Deliberations proceeded along three lines of inquiry: Religion and Spirituality, Civic Responsibility in Political Society, and Interfaith, Intercultural, and International Relations.

## **1. Religion and Spirituality**

**We affirm that:**

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as mercy for all humankind. The message he delivered aims to produce peace and prosperity, promote love, compassion and forgiveness, and create a humane society. It is an important source of guidance in a changing and shrinking world and must be recognized as such.

To fulfill the ideals of the Prophet (PBUH) Muslims must recognize these teachings and his example as a guiding principle of their moral and spiritual development.

Islam rejects violence in any form against the innocent. In fact, it promotes justice and exhorts Muslims to be just even it be against their own selves, their parents, or kinfolk. Thus implementation of justice for and by the Muslims will be the single most important factor in the elimination of violence and terrorism.

To be just is the spiritual obligation of all faiths and nations.

Muslim leaders and scholars are responsible for, and have a moral obligation to teach and promote knowledge about the fundamental ethics of Islam, thus providing the foundation for peace and peaceful coexistence and harmony in the world.

## **2. Civic Responsibility in Political Society**

**We affirm that:**

Muslim nations must devote their energies toward education of their masses, and improvement of economic opportunities for their people. They must enhance their interaction with other Muslim countries in joint projects for the welfare of their populations.

All nations of the world must apply their energies to conflict resolution globally, and be consistent at both home and abroad in their concern for justice, freedom and human rights.

In any system of government, the protection of the freedoms and rights of the citizens is paramount.

### **3. Interfaith, Intercultural, and International Relations**

#### **We affirm that:**

Dialogue toward harmony and understanding is a Muslim religious responsibility. As a consequence, Muslims encourage people of all faiths to acknowledge, accept, promote, respect and appreciate the diversity among their different faiths and cultures. Interfaith dialogue for the purposes of removing fear of the unknown, generating good will, and establishing mutual trust, should occur at all levels including at the level of individuals, faith groups, larger communities, and globally.

Intellectual and spiritual leaders are obliged to establish enduring structures of dialogue to prevent conflict among people of differing religious commitments and opinions. These leaders of all faith must convince their constituencies to work harmoniously with other groups and influence their elected or appointed leaders to promote peace and justice as the cornerstone of their agenda, policies, and practice.

May Allah bless this effort and forgive our shortcomings.

**Jakarta**  
**23 December 2001**