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Promotion of the Amman Message in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

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In promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, we contribute to enhancing peace and stability in society, strengthening effective communications, building awareness and acceptance of differences and promoting peace, tolerance and coexistence.

It can be argued that collaboration between faith-based organizations in the Euro-Mediterranean region furthers interreligious and cross-cultural understanding. Positive grassroots relations in the region can be an unexpected but valuable by-product of faith-based work (Kessler, 2017).

The Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies has increased the number of collaborative projects with regional, European and international partners. In addition to building upon the work that the Royal Institute has done on the promotion of the Amman Message through organizing training workshops for youth, imams and preachers. These events are aimed at furthering interfaith dialogue that can, in turn, lead to better relations in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The need to continue the promotion of the Amman Message has become evident. It is vital to work together in order to promote the values of this message in the region. This two-year project (2012-2014) was funded by the European Union, contracted by the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Jordan and a consortium of local, regional and European academic and civil society organizations. Under the umbrella of this project events were organized in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, UK, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Denmark.

The Amman Message: an Overview

The "Amman Message" was launched by HM King Abdullah II in 2004, and sought to expound a vision characterized by flexibility and openness based on Islam in terms of the values of tolerance, mutual respect and humanism. Its goal was to clarify to the Modern world the true nature of Islam, and to bridge relationships between Islamic and international communities.

In view of the challenges related to the distorted image of Islam, the importance of learning about and revealing the true side of Islam is a great global concern. The Amman Message is a relatively short message that contains the most significant characteristics of this religion. Also, it must be stated that the Holy Qur'an shares the messages of tolerance and love with Abrahamic religions, which make the Amman Message universal.

The main target groups of the Amman Message are youth, imams, preachers and believers. It is crucial to clarify the need to work for intercultural communication and tolerance with the goal of enhancing the values of understanding and comprehension.

Promotion of the Amman Message

This project laid a significant base for the work of the Amman Message in Jordan, the Arab Region and across the Euro-Mediterranean region. The implementation of this project by the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, which was established in 1994 in Amman, under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, a non-profit, non-governmental organization, built on the institute's experiences in providing a platform for the interdisciplinary study of intercultural and interreligious issues with the aim of

defusing tensions and promoting peace, regionally and globally.

In Europe, the Amman Message has found some traction at the national and governmental levels and has been well-received by civil society, academics and media representatives.

Engagement in interreligious dialogue must be followed by action beyond the words and concepts shared

Through the course of the project, meetings were held that included a number of local, regional and international partners, who are delivering related activities within communities. This two-year project has opened up a powerful interfaith dialogue locally, regionally and internationally which has provided support for the implementation of the Message and its key themes. The project itself aims to promote the content of the message not the text itself, in order to contribute to good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to counter the root causes of terrorism.

Key Challenges

These events have been followed up by a number of training sessions, workshops and seminars to help tackle the challenges that confront interfaith dialogue. Some of these key challenges can be listed as follows:

- To avoid all negative comparisons and distortions, compromises, conversion attempts, settling of rigid coexistence, as well as all defensive and confrontational stances and revenge;
- To focus on family upbringing of children based on the acceptance of the other and cultivating affection, good behaviour and forgiveness, not for a limited time, but constantly;
- To concentrate on the Qur'anic verses that call for peace and respect for the followers of different religions;

- To insist on good citizenship and equality among all, regardless of religion, colour and gender;
- To resolve conflicts by peaceful methods and good treatment of the other.

Hans Küng, a Swiss Catholic priest, theologian, and author, says that there cannot be peace in the world in the absence of interfaith harmony. Let us think of harmony as the natural consequence of difference. Harmony is firmly based in the values of mercy, equality, humility, justice, generosity and charity. In strengthening interreligious dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the significance of the relationship between faith-based communities and civil society organizations cannot be underestimated. This partnership requires an increase in the levels of learning about each other and a better understanding of the complexity of religious beliefs and world-views and ultimately better project results. These projects can contribute to a better understanding of the contextualization of specific topics within religious traditions and within secular society and can further enhance greater openness of all sides involved.

Interreligious dialogue inspires us to work together in order to shape a culture of peace and harmony through our respective religious traditions

The implementation of “The Promotion of the Amman Message” project has increased awareness of the values of the “Amman Message” (in Jordan, the region and the EU) through conducting and collating surveys in Europe, and through research, educational programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and partnerships between different Jordanian and European stakeholders.

It has enhanced coordination mechanisms among the key stakeholders towards further promotion of the Amman Message content through dialogue with different partners in Jordan and Europe to provide guidance to the project and establish a research committee aimed at gathering scholarly contributions and research papers, prepared by credible,

enlightened and well-informed intellectuals from both the Arab world and Europe.

It has created partnerships and links amongst schools, universities and Islamic and community organizations leading to the creation of platforms for dialogue among different groups to help eradicate stereotypical images of Islam.

More effective, consistent data collection in relation to Islam is needed throughout, for which the Amman Message Project could provide advocacy support. There is also a need for more research into the aims and achievements sought from national immigration and integration policies. The project highlighted the need for leaders of Islamic communities to engage in dialogue with other religious leaders in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Triumphalism, as the belief which assumes the primacy of one's own values and the right to rule others, has no place in interreligious dialogue

The aims of the seminars held in five European countries (UK, Germany, Greece, Italy and Croatia) can be stated as follows:

- To enhance the understanding and awareness of the Amman Message and its promotion through presentations by key speakers and the opportunity to discuss with experts in the field;
- To provide opportunities to discuss the Amman Message and its relevance to Europe;
- To provide an overview of the challenges faced by Islam and Muslims in the abovementioned European countries and Europe as a whole and to facilitate a discussion about how the Amman Message can address some of these challenges;
- It is vital to foster interfaith dialogue inside schools and universities and find ways to educate citizens to be able to accept dialogue. Also, we have the responsibility to educate the media while focusing on the positive use of social media.

A network of key organizations, institutions and individuals working primarily at international and nation-

al levels have been engaged and have shown strong support for the work of the Amman Message.

The Amman Message states the profound principles needed for the good of humanity: “unity of the human race, equal rights and obligations, peace, security, social equality, the honouring of pledges, good neighbourliness and respect for others, and the protection of belongings and property.”

Shared Values and Areas for Future Focus

A shared system of ultimate values is a crucially important element in any society. Balancing unity and diversity is a continuing challenge for multicultural nation states across the world. Unity without diversity results in hegemony and oppression; diversity without unity leads to Balkanization and the fracturing of the nation state (Banks, 2004).

Partner institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region can meet in the context of “interfaith” or “tolerance,” a practice that is directly related to the diversity of our societies. The values of “tolerance” and “respect” for the other have their place in the central values of the socio-political system in which we live. We must remember that shared values are only one factor which permits action to be integrated.

The Amman Message has unfolded new and wide horizons for constructive interreligious dialogue and reconciliation between Muslims and other Euro-Mediterranean, Western and oriental communities. It is paramount to encourage citizens to be more actively involved in dialogue over the issues of concern that affect them all. Hence, the need to continue the “promotion of the Amman Message” in the hope of building a better world for current and future generations.

References

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