

The Centre for Responsible Leadership's Responsible Leaders Summit at the United Nations

Global Conference on Moderate Islam

FEATURED: Guest Essays from Prominent Leaders

Landmark Signing of the Makkah Declaration

JUNE 2019

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# Responsibility, Moderation & Islam

A Month of Action



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# An Eventful May

**The month of May was packed with eventful moments for H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and the Muslim World League.**

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa signed multiple interfaith agreements with other faith based organizations, he met with influential U.S. thought leaders, chaired the inaugural Responsible Leaders Summit, signed a landmark agreement alongside more than 1000 Muslim leaders in Makkah, and delivered meals to those in need during the observance of Ramadan.





## Notable Quotes

*“Responsible leaders are judicious people. They know that the narratives of extremism will meet a painful end, and whatever gains they inspire are temporary and illusory. This holds for religious extremism or hatred against others for religious or ethnic reasons. It also holds true for extremism in politics. History teaches us that the leader who acts with mal-intent – whether for religious, intellectual, ethnic, political or any other motivation – plants an evil seed that brings harm to everyone involved. The result is often a painful tragedy.”*

– MWL Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Keynote Address, The Responsible Leaders Summit, May 1, 2019

*“Whereas people scour the world to unearth a precious metal, we now look to discover the precious individuals who can harness the elements of responsible leadership. True leaders take their nation to the pinnacle of advancement. True leaders provide stability, security, prosperity, advancement. The false leaders provide the opposite. They lead their nations to ruin. Through their weaknesses and their absence of responsibility, they cause instability, insecurity, lack of opportunity, stagnation.”*

– MWL Secretary General, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Keynote Address, The Responsible Leaders Summit, May 1, 2019

# MWL in May 2019

## Highlights of the Month in Review

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### May begins Ramadan, the “Best of Times” in the Muslim faith.

Looking over the month, we are reassured that this belief has once again fulfilled its promise. Here follows a round-up of the month’s activities, and we are thrilled by the overwhelming success of the Responsible Leaders Summit hosted by the ground-breaking interfaith agreements concluded during the month between our Secretary General H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa and several of the most prominent world religious leaders; the Makkah Conference; and the great mood of optimism that pervaded these events.

Renowned investigative reporter Ann Curry is the recipient of the Truth in Media Award by the Center for Responsibility, May 1 2019.



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and Senator Joe Lieberman gather at the Responsible Leaders Summit in New York.

#### APRIL 25, WASHINGTON, DC

In Washington, DC, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also met with the State Department’s Nathan Sales, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, who discussed with the MWL Secretary General the need to elevate religious leaders to counter violent extremism with messages of peace and moderation. He further visited Catholic University and met with Reverend Mark Morozovich and Dr. Wilhelmus Valkenberg, discussing the importance of building strong interfaith dialogue and understanding.

In Washington, Dr. Al-Issa also met with counterterrorism expert Norman Roule to go over the best educational methods to combat extremism in the world, both through religious and international peace organizations.

#### APRIL 26, WASHINGTON, DC

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa met with the U.S. Ambassador for Religious Freedoms, Mr. Samuel Brownback, to

discuss the support of the Muslim World League for minorities in the U.S. While in the nation’s capital, Dr. Al-Issa visited the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception – the largest Catholic Church in North America. He met with Dr. David Yang of the United States Institute of Peace concerning ways to combat extremism and initiatives for peace building among religions.

#### APRIL 29, NEW YORK

Dr. Al-Issa signed an agreement with the Appeal of Conscience Foundation to unite efforts for the protection of religious sites around the world. The Foundation was established in 1965 by Rabbi Arthur Schneier as an interfaith partnership of corporate and spiritual leaders from all faiths to promote “peace, tolerance and ethnic tolerance resolution.” The agreement was signed at the Foundation’s headquarters on West 57th Street in the heart of Manhattan.

A later visit to the Park East Synagogue was the first visit to a synagogue in the United States by any representative of the Muslim World League.

**APRIL 29**

His Eminence, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese of New York, welcomed H.E. Dr. Al-Issa to Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City following a meeting at Cardinal Dolan's private residence to discuss cooperation between the MWL and the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Dolan praised the MWL Secretary General in the highest terms, calling him "the most influential Muslim voice of moderation and tolerance in the world," whose moral authority in condemning extremist violence and attacks on religious sites is unsurpassed in respect by other religious leaders.

**APRIL 29, UNITED NATIONS**

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres introduced two initiatives against religious hate and violence embodied in a Plan of Action to fully mobilize the UN's system response to tackling hate speech. These include the establishment of a new office of the Special Representative for Genoc-

cide Prevention and a new office of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, which will explore how the United Nations can contribute to ensuring the safety of religious sanctuaries.

**APRIL 30, NEW YORK**

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa met with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) at that body's headquarters in midtown Manhattan for a historic evening with its members and eminent members of other international religious organizations as well as the American media.

“Whenever we have violence or attacks in the world, in America they say: ‘Where are the moderate Islamic leaders to condemn this? I say: ‘You must meet Dr. Al-Issa. He is the leader that does that.

— Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop, The Catholic Diocese of New York



Renowned investigative reporter Ann Curry is the recipient of the Truth in Media Award by the Center for Responsibility, May 1 2019.



Dr. Al-Issa and David Harris, the president of the AJC, signed an agreement that includes plans for the highest-level Islamic delegation ever to visit Auschwitz, tentatively scheduled for January 2020, in time for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of those camps. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed that evening deepens the ties between the MWL and the AJC. Both sides regard the agreement as a model for promoting inter-faith harmony.



"The Holocaust was an incident that 'shook humanity to the core' and cannot be denied," said Dr. Al-Issa already in January 2018, in a letter to Ms. Sara Bloom, Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Dr. Al-Issa will be the most senior-ranking Islamic official of all time to visit the Auschwitz camps.

#### **MAY 1, UNITED NATIONS**

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa chaired the inaugural Responsible Leaders Summit, the main discussion topics of which included: a) Restoring civility to public discourse; b) addressing economic in-



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and David Harris sign MoU at the American Jewish Committee Headquarter in New York.

Ambassador Brinker has been a champion for independent initiative at the local level as the best means of global substance.

With Washington as part of his itinerary this month, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa was praised by Senator Ted Cruz for his commitments to combat intolerance.

## “The world must step up to stamp out anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, persecution of Christians and other forms of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and incitement.

—United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

equality; c) safeguarding the planet; d) uniting the faithful and e) ensuring gender equality. The Summit, an intense all-day session of discussions up to forty-five minutes each, was attended by 150 leaders in the religious, NGO, corporate, diplomatic, governmental and media spheres.

Dr. Al-Issa kicked off the opening remarks at the Responsible Leaders Summit, setting the tone of the hugely popular and high-level event. He was joined by such renowned leaders in their respective fields as Master of Ceremonies David Gregory of CNN and formerly of NBC's Meet the Press; Senator Joseph Lieberman, Ambassador Nancy Brinker, who is also founder of the largest breast cancer awareness foundation; Adam Sharp, formerly of Twitter and now president of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; Nike's Noel Kinder; Rabbi David Rosen, one of the foremost authorities on the Jewish faith and highly sought international speaker — among dozens of others. In his impassioned inaugural statements, Dr. Al-Issa emphasized the necessity of profound, community-level education to establish the proper foundations of rational debate.

In an important lunchtime address at the Delegates Dining Room at the

United Nations, Dr. Ali Rashid Al-Nuami, Chairman of the World Council of Muslim Communities and recipient of the Responsible Leaders Award for Public Service, addressed attendees with an appeal to take action rather than to rely upon the ideals and good intentions of rhetoric. “My message is this,” said Dr. Al-Nuami. “We face the same threat. Terrorism is a danger to everyone. It is never a threat to a single nation. For this reason, words must be matched by will — a willingness to speak openly, act bravely and think strategically.”

At the “Uniting the Faithful” panel, esteemed religious figure Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, Swami Giri Maharaj Avdheshanada, Rabbi David Rosen and Venerable Shi Misgial agreed that Compassion is an essential component to cultural understanding between societies and the very foundation of natural human interaction. “Compassion itself cannot be underestimated or dismissed as merely something ‘sentimental’”, said Rabbi Rosen. “It is a fundamental cornerstone of all civilized behavior, anywhere.”

In addressing the issue of income inequality, Maurice Lévy of Publicis Groupe discussed the power of education in closing the

income gap between communities, nations — even races and genders. He also discussed how unequal access to the internet and technology has resulted in a lack of access to education and has been a critical factor in producing systematic disadvantages.

Continuing the star line-up, Noel Kinder, Chief Sustainability Officer at Nike, Ken Berlin of the Climate Reality Project and Bjoern K. Haugland of Norway 203040 addressed the issue of Sustainability and Climate Change. All addressed not only the need for profound educational reform, but stressed the point that profits and purpose do not have to be in conflict, and that compromise may give away to cooperation.

Mr. Haugland underscored the point that monies levied for the sake of infrastructure always provide substantial return on investment — i.e. the future — and he argued that this is part of the practical and purposeful role of the government.

In an astonishing gesture of support unknown prior to the announcement, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa pledged USD 1 million to the United Nations High Com-



HE Dr. Al-Issa with award recipient, Rabbi Schneier.

missioner for Refugees at the closing session of the Responsible Leaders Summit. In addition to Dr. Al-Issa, on stage were Bawa Jain, Ninette Kelly, the Director of the New York Office of the UNHCR, and Anne Marie Grey, UNHCR Executive Director for the USA.

Ending the events of May 1st a beautiful closing ceremony at the Harvard Club, the Responsible Leaders Summit awarded two great pioneers in responsible causes for their respective professions: Ms. Ann Curry, the award-winning investigative journalist received the Responsible Leaders Truth in Media Award, and Mr. Alex Gorsky, Chairman and CEO of Johnson & Johnson, received the Engaged Leadership Award. Both were selected for their outstanding services

to humanity and for their work in charity, education and bringing important global issues to the center stage of political and media attention. Rabbi Schneier of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation received the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award for his tireless dedication to promoting tolerance and inter religious dialogue. During the awards ceremony, Dr. Cheryl Fishbein praised Dr. Al-Issa for his bravery in bringing together responsible leaders to New York for this seminal inaugural conference.

#### **MAY 4**

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa met with the leading umbrella organization for American Jewry, the Conference of Presidents of the American Sephardic Society. Together

they signed an agreement to explore a range of joint actions to fight hatred and bigotry.

#### **MAY 5, RAMADAN BEGINS**

Ramadan Kareem! In the spirit of the month, one that emphasizes great works and personal discipline to purify and perfect one's moral character, the MWL continued ongoing charitable works around the world, particularly with the ill, elderly and children. The organization sent 500,000 "Ramadan Packages" around the world and inaugurated new mosques in poverty-ravaged areas. The MWL provides ongoing care for more than 1,500 children living in orphanages around the world.

#### **MAY 15-20, PAKISTAN & AFRICA**

The International Islamic Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (the IIRWD) – a humanitarian organization under the aegis of the MWL, also known as the International Islamic Relief Organization – inaugurated the King Abdulaziz Mosque in Haripur, Pakistan. The mosque represents a milestone in the friendly relations between the MWL's home base, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The IIRWD cares for more than a thousand needy children and ill persons around the world and is particularly active during the month of Ramadan, when exercise of the Five Pillars of Islam is of special importance to all Muslims the world over.

**” I believe that by paying my respects to the victims of Auschwitz I will encourage Muslims and non-Muslims to embrace mutual respect and diversity.**

—H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa

🗨️ *As crime feeds on crime, as vile news moves from the fringes to the mainstream, I am profoundly concerned that we are nearing a pivotal moment in battling hatred and extremism.*

— United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

This month also saw an MWL trip to the Republic of Burundi, where the organization visited with the very best medical equipment and personnel in tow for the mission of treating the severe eye disease that ravages the population. The MWL, through the IIRWD, maintains a commitment to combat blindness in African countries through its humanitarian aid projects.

#### **MAY 20, JEDDAH**

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa was part of a reception hosted by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah, and the President of the United Arab Emirates Ifta Council, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah. He was accompanied by several members of the Council.

During the meeting, they discussed the imperative of spreading moderation. Also in attendance were Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Dr. Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf.

#### **MAY 28, MAKKAH**

Closing the month with another historic event that was crowned with its own ground-breaking declaration, the Muslim World League brought together 1,200 Muslim leaders from 139 countries and 27 different Islamic sects for a historic conference in Makkah.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss the advancement of religious moderation and tolerance, and how the Muslim world can join together to face the global challenges of extremism, terrorism and hate.

The conference culminated with the signing of a historic document called the “Charter of Makkah” outlining 30 principles for inter-faith dialogue and peaceful coexistence among people of all faiths and nationalities. King Salman was the first leader to sign the declaration. ❖



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC.

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa meets with Ambassador Samuel Brownback in Washington, DC.

A month of historic events for the MWL closes with the seminal Makkah Declaration of May 28, 2019.



# THE BEST OF TIMES

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

“” *The Mission of the Muslim World League is to clarify facts and counter extremist rhetoric with wisdom and moderate language. We call on all governments to act in the face of violence and terrorism.*

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, May 1, 2019

## **In the Muslim tradition, the month of Ramadan**

is known as “the best of times.” This observance, one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, calls upon Muslims to demand the very best in themselves as an act of purification, renewal and regeneration that emphasizes the individual Muslim’s own relationship with Allah. In a word, this month of highly disciplined rituals inspire Muslims to attain the divine within themselves. To do so is, at the same time, to attain the fullest sense of one’s own humanity. As a result, at no other time during the year do Muslims feel as called upon to perform good and great deeds within one’s own community and, indeed, the world. Though a tradition steeped in the richest reaches of our historical past, it is one that is ever new and therefore ever optimistic of the future.

This sense of “the best of times” could not have found more ambitious expression than in the May visit of Secretary General H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa to Washington, D.C., and New York City as part of a series of ground-breaking meetings with several of the world’s most influential religious leaders. The visits were crowned by an all-day international conference hosted by the Committee for Responsible Leadership at the Secretariat of the United Nations. A “star-studded” assembly of leaders in international media, industry, government, diploma-

cy, entrepreneurship and some of the most influential global NGOs came together over the course of the day-long conference centered upon the theme of inter-faith unity and branching into several seminar settings devoted to addressing some of the most pressing economic and social issues of the day.

Dr. Al-Issa both headlined and closed the conference with characteristic intensity, wisdom and generosity of spirit. From H.E. Dr. Al-Issa’s opening address to his pledge of \$1 million to UNHCR, the mood of the event was one of the idealistic made realistic and the lofty taking firm root. Filling out Dr. Al-Issa’s framework was to be found a trove of real treasure in the form of panel discussions ranging from the historic ties of the Abrahamic faiths to the economics of sustainability and gender equality, each of which brought out vigorous convictions and inspired debate among participants. Though all respected the elegant diplomatic setting, strong perspective and conviction were not compromised.

There is something tremendously inspiring about the fact that such assemblies are called together at all, particularly when such take place in the aftermath of extreme acts of violence that are done in the name of religion or against the holy sites. All

too aware of this fact, and never himself satisfied with any such visits being mere “talk shops,” Dr. Al-Issa made of the New York trip — just as the Washington trip which preceded it — one of an exhaustive schedule of high-level meetings and several milestone agreements and MoUs aimed at promoting a sincere international culture of tolerance where it is most visibly meaningful.

An elegant reception at the Harvard Club capped off the activities, with an awards ceremony to several prominent personalities honored for their commitment to Responsible Leadership, highlighted by Ms. Ann Curry, the renowned investigative reporter and formerly of The Today Show, and Mr. Alex Gorsky of Johnson & Johnson. Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the venerable Appeal of

“*In the darkness of Auschwitz, we will light a candle. Muslims, Jews, together. A candle to honor the memory of the victims. A candle to light the way to greater cooperation between Jews and Muslims. It is always better to light a candle than curse the darkness.*”

— David Harris, President, American Jewish Committee, April 30, 2019

Conscience Foundation was bestowed a Lifetime Achievement Award. It is no exaggeration to say that the month was the very best of times. ❖



### **Excerpts from the Opening Statement of H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Responsible Leaders Summit** May 1, 2019

“The responsible leader understands that his or her own personal peace is tied to finding peace in this world, and that reaching this peace requires an all-inclusive vision and sustainable action. To build this platform for a sustainable future, we must focus on education. That is why the teacher is at the heart of building awareness of responsible leadership.” [...]

“The responsible leaders must realize that history will commemorate noble works only. The rest will be lost in the pages of history, or condemned.” [...]

“Responsible leadership is not just an idea. If your form of leadership is just theory, that is an illusion and a deceit that people will realize over time. This will have negative repercussions. Responsible leadership requires practicing responsible leadership.” [...]



THE CENTRE FOR  
**RL** RESPONSIBLE  
LEADERSHIP



# RESPONSIBILITY AT CENTER STAGE

## The CRL Summit at the United Nations Makes History

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

**New York — On May 1, 2019**, an international conference gathered at the Secretariat of the United Nations that exemplified the very reason why that historic body was created in the first place: a setting and forum for influential diplomatic discussion that results in concrete global action and tangible global results. The “Responsible Leaders Summit,” an intense series of seminars throughout that day focused on solutions to economic and gender inequality, religious and racial intolerance, the lack of civil discourse in the current global political climate, and extremism — and all the expected ancillary issues arising from these historical and social challenges. The mission of the Summit was a clearly defined one: to fuse interdisciplinary thinking into an actionable strategy that will bring to some reasonable level of management the surmountable ills that face all humanity.

The vigor of the conference was demonstrated on two levels. First, there was the remarkable high-level attendance of guest speakers who spoke at length and in an unscripted format, expressing convictions both courageous in their bluntness and eloquent in their presentation. Second, there was active audience participation that was lively, educated and engaged, rendering the exhaustive 9:00-to-5:00 format into unnoticed passing hours of intelligent debate. As with all fulfilling creative endeavors in the flow of realizing their aim, time was no object, and several seminars continued past their appointed scheduling and into the stately corridors and formal dining rooms of the Secretariat. “I will not tolerate discussions that are only talk shops,” declared MWL Secretary General and Chairman of the

Responsible Leaders Summit H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa at the opening of the conference that brisk New York morning. “I will participate only in those that result in action.” He then went on to state one of the more quotable lines from the Summit: “We don’t just need words, we need action. We don’t just need initiatives, we need to initiate.” Thus the mood of the day was set, and the energy was palpable.

A particular standout was the diversity of the participants representing more than 100 prestigious names from the worlds of industry, politics and religious authority.

Senior executives from Nike, PayPal and the Center for American Progress; former Senators, Ambassadors and Cabinet Members; leading spiritual leaders and the heads of some of the most influential NGOs were among the guest speakers. In addition, the sessions were moderated by many of the most prominent names in media and top-tier academia.

Together these include: former Senator Joseph Lieberman; former Homeland Security Advisor Fran Townsend; former Ambassador and founder of the Susan B. Komen Cancer Research Foundation Nancy Brinker; Lauren Bush Lauren, CEO and Co-Founder of FEED Projects; Cecile Richards, former President of Planned Parenthood; Adam Sharp, President and CEO of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; Neera Tanden, President of the Center for American Progress; Noel Kinder, Nike Chief Sustainability Officer; Maurice Levy,

Publicis Groupe; and former U.S. Middle East peace envoy Ambassador Dennis Ross.

The moderators included: Robert Bazell, Professor at Yale University and former Chief Science and Health Correspondent for NBC News; Paula Faris, Anchor and Senior National Correspondent for ABC News and host of the Journeys of Faith podcast; and Cindy Lieve, Senior Fellow at the University of Southern California's Annenberg Center and former Editor-in-Chief of Glamour Magazine. David Gregory, the renowned journalist and former moderator of NBC News Meet the Press emceed the Summit.

Sustainable solutions to such problems as inequality, racial and religious intolerance and other unacceptable obstacles to modern, civilized society are challenges of enormous scale for any gathering of powerful leaders and influencers. Their existential persistence has, indeed, rendered them a kind of metaphysical reality — that is, their complexity has attained a level of abstraction almost too unwieldy to apprehend. In this regard, many international conferences attempting to address these issues tend to lack a center of focus, eventually running out steam and dissolving into cloudy pools of rhetoric. The CRL Summit was the complete antithesis of this all-too-common flaw of “talking shops.” Here are the elements that distinguished it:

1. The selection of the UN's Economic and Social Council at UN headquarters as the principal site of the sessions added a sense of dignified tradition, pragmatic technology and travel logistics as well as “neutral territory” for the conference. In a word, it was a setting that not only underscored the high-level character of the Summit and its participants, but reinforced the theme of “Responsibility” in the fullest sense of the true spirit of the United Nations.
2. Five clear focus areas were established for the Summit, allowing for more clarity of presentation. These included: 1) Restoring Civility to Public Discourse; 2) Addressing Economic Inequality; 3) Safeguarding Our Planet; 4) Uniting the Faithful; and 5) Ensuring Gender Equality.
3. Pledges were made in a six-point summary at the end of the conference, to be made public on the website of the and to stay there, as a reference for accountability. In addition, concrete commitments were presented, including:
  - The MWL promised \$1 million to the UNHCR — stunning even that recipient organization itself, which had not anticipated such generosity.
  - Maurice Lévy of Publicis outlined his global agency's education plan to introduce Internet and technological access to impoverished and rural areas, on the theory that it is the lack of education otherwise easily obtainable that keeps entire regions from self-advancement.
  - The Norway energy solution team, Norway 203040, led by speaker Bjoern K Haugland, announced a new round of youth-driven programs that award innovative sustainable solutions that are created by teens and young adults in a way that will engage both their entrepreneurial instincts and their political/ environmental passions through high-profile, high-energy competitions.
  - Dr. Al Nuami of the Heyadeh Foundation and the World Council of Islamic Charities announced that his organization would undertake a “watchdog” program of monitoring extremist views that may arise in any charity that aligns itself with the Muslim faith. He urged the leaders of other faith-based organizations to make that kind of rigorous monitoring a part of their activities as well.
  - On the periphery of and during the conference, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa signed three major agreements: 1) an MoU between the Muslim World League and the American

👉👉 *We all know that individuals are led by thoughts, and these can range across various levels of awareness or degrees of backwardness. But who is responsible for building awareness? And who is responsible for the existence of this backwardness? If we were to ask every extremist or terrorist: 'Who molded your thoughts and feeling?', he will answer that it was you. Now the most important question is what we will do with the answer we have received. We know what we need to do.*

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, May 1, 2019

👉👉 *Never stop believing that what is possible can be realizable if people take action.*

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, May 1, 2019

Jewish Committee; 2) an Agreement between the Muslim World League and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; and 3) the pledge to the UNHCR. With Cardinal Timothy Dolan in New York and Senator Sam D. Brownback of Kansas, now the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, and State Department Commissioner for Counterterrorism Nathan Sales, Dr. Al-Issa committed to closer understanding of the role of religion in fighting extremist and intolerant doctrines that abuse the name of religion.

In his stirring opening address — quoted throughout this issue and reprinted in full with other keynote addresses — His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa succinctly captured the spirit of the conference and the mood of optimism when he expressed the role of religious leadership as an active force for global influence — and not a passive, incidental, “academic” presence, or one called upon only in times of crises. He stated:

“From a personal point of view, I believe that religious leaders should develop concrete programs to address the dangers and threats in their communities and among their spiritual followers. They also must join hands with other leaders. Together, they should forge respect for the existence of all religions in every humanitarian project they undertake. Any coalition that comes together at the expense of a system of religions, especially the three Abrahamic religions, is without exception and under any pretext exclusionary. It should be classified within the sphere of hatred, and seen as fostering hostility towards the other. This includes ignoring the existence and rights of religious minorities. Every case of religious, intellectual, or political extremism poses a threat to world peace, regardless of the degree of the threat.”

The place of religion in the lives of entire communities and civilizations is among the most powerful forces in the world — and the most unchanging. This statement of Dr. Al-Issa cannot be underestimated for the impact of its meaning, the reach of its influence, and the timeliness of its message. ❖

## Prominent Responsible Leaders Summit **Participants**



H.E. Dr. Mohammed Al-Hssa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League and Chair of the Responsible Leaders Summit

Bawa Jain, Founder and President of the Centre for Responsible Leadership



David Gregory, Renowned Journalist and Former Moderator of NBC's Meet the Press

Ambassador Nancy Brinker, Founder of Susan G. Komen

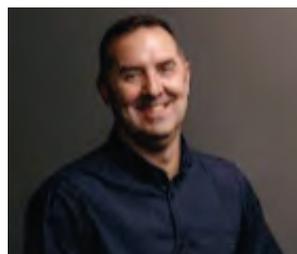
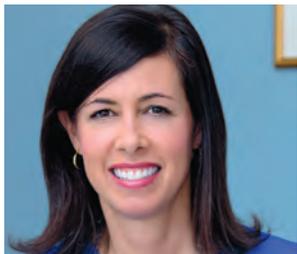
Bjorn Haugland, CEO of Norway 203040



Maurice Lévy, Chairman of the Board at Publicis Groupe

Senator Joseph Lieberman, Former U.S. Senator

Franz Paasche, SVP, Corporate Affairs and Communications at PayPal



Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission

Noel Kinder, Chief Sustainability Office of NIKE, Inc.

Adam Sharp, President and CEO of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences



Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee

Ken Berlin, President and CEO of The Climate Reality Project

Robert Bazell, Professor at Yale University



Paula Faris, Anchor and Senior National Correspondent at ABC News

Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims

H.E. Dr. Ali Rashid Abdulla Al Nuaimi, Chairman of the Council of Muslim Communities



# UNITING THE FAITHFUL

## Forging Unity Among Differences

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

Irony, when it is most memorable, is very often most tragic. The Responsible Leaders Summit, hosting preeminent religious leaders of our times, as well as an international delegation of high-profile business, diplomatic, media and NGO leaders, took place after a string of terrible assaults against mosques, synagogues and churches right up through the day of the inauguration of the conference on May 1st. The events served to intensify the time, place and symbolism of the Summit, but their recent occurrences did little to make things easier upon those who assembled at the UN Secretariat in the best of spirits and intellectual background for the purposes of promoting unity and peace. Indeed, irony entered the picture, but the narrative kept center stage and the participants refused to diminish their optimism.

As someone whose constant travels keep him in contact with both the tragedies of religious intolerance and the enormous energy of those combating it, the two quotations above from an op-ed by Dr. Al-Issa and published in the magazine Newsweek highlight how his mission is not merely limited to international summits. His mandate is to speak to the world at large, and the audience he has in mind is that of one ongoing, global "Summit" that permanently addresses all the faithful of the world. These excerpts – which mirror past writings and statements internationally by

Dr. Al-Issa over the course of visits to the Vatican, the Great Synagogue of Paris, to Holocaust Museums, and other places – demonstrate that his is a ceaseless drive forward to get one message out to the world. No extremist violence has ever thwarted that mission. His appeal is that the essence of every religion is always about peace, an essence that is always about moderation and about guiding the faithful to apply proper religious principles to the conduct of life. Above all, his message is that religion is never an ideological platform for abuses and distortion.



*We say there is no such thing as a 'radical religion,' but there is also no religion that does not have some extremist followers.*

– H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, opening address, Responsible Leadership Summit, May 1, 2019

It is this kind of activism on the part of Dr. Al-Issa that set the stage for the unprecedented Summit that took place on May 1. One can only imagine the sense of adventure and love of risk involved in packing a United Nations chamber full of rabbis and sheikhs, business tycoons and environmentalists, economists and women's rights advocates. Yet it was all as seamless as it

was effective, bringing "actionable solutions to the world's problems," as the website of the CRL opined, confident that the inaugural Summit would meet "its own lofty ambitions." The diverse cast of 150 pioneers listened attentively to Dr. Al-Issa's opening statement, particularly for the clear, sometimes blunt, direct message he stresses (over and over again) about the evils of intellectual and moral passivity toward acts of extremism and the cowardice of those who exploit religion as an



Three star panelists argue for a return to Civility. Source: MWL Twitter Feed

excuse for violence, and thereby corrupt religion. He spoke directly to the events of Christchurch, Pittsburgh, San Diego and Sri Lanka without having to “name names,” as he knows that the crime is always the same crime, anywhere, against any religion at any time. His address also introduced the newly launched, whose genesis was explained. Founded by Bawa Jain, a long-time collaborator of the U. and various faith-based communities around the world, the organization seeks to fuse leadership concepts from politics, business and religion.

Dr. Al-Issa has never shied from taking even a controversial stand for the cause of interfaith peace and harmony. For example, in November 2018, he called for a Muslim-Christian-Jewish interfaith delegation to travel to Jerusalem to promote the cause of peace by finding common ground among religions. As he told Fox News in an interview at the time: “We should send a peace convoy that is representative of all three Abrahamic religions. They should be Muslim, Christian and Jewish and they should visit all holy sites. They should meet everyone and find common ground, and they should provide fertile ground to find solutions for peace.” The call, noted the Times of Israel in a respectful editorial on Dr. Al-Issa, “is highly unusual given that Saudi Arabia has no formal diplomatic relations with Israel, and that much of the Arab world does not

recognize Israel and rejects its claims to Jerusalem.” Dr. Al-Issa added at the time that such a delegation should be “independent of politics” and “should have no political agenda whatsoever. They will be more influential without a political agenda because they are independent.”

The ultimate objective of the Summit was not to push any specific policy, “but a shared methodology toward outcomes, wrapped around the concept of “responsible leadership,” as the CRL website states. That translated to former Senator Joe Lieberman arguing for a return to civil discourse in entertainment and politics; Nike Chief Sustainability Officer Noel Kinder speaking about uniting profit and purpose; and former Hillary Clinton confidante Neera Tanden discussing elevating not only girls and women, but all people through gender inclusivity. A more ideal portrait emerged of how different faiths, different “walks of life,” diverse perspectives, eclectic careers and an intense intellectual atmosphere of individually impassioned causes can come together in such a harmonized and unified manner. A profound thanks to His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa and Mr. Bawa Jain, of the World Council of Religious Leaders, and to all who participated that groundbreaking day and for their leadership in inspiring a fighting spirit to combat the world’s deadened souls. ❖



# RAISING STANDARDS

## The Power of Leadership

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

Mr. David Gregory, the Master of Ceremonies of the Responsible Leadership Summit, is known to the world as a political analyst at CNN and is perhaps just as recognizable as the former Chief White House Correspondent for NBC and the former moderator of NBC's Meet the Press. He has traveled extensively around the world covering politics, leadership, media and the most exclusive of the international diplomatic and economic conferences such as the G8 and Davos; he even traveled with President Bush on 9-11 and during Mr. Bush's first visit to Ground Zero in New York. But it may come as a surprise to many that he also speaks on the subject of Faith, having written a critically-acclaimed memoir, *How is Your Faith?* It is no surprise, then, that Mr. Gregory was the top pick to emcee the rigorous panel discussions on May 1st.

One of the remarkable features of the CRL's Summit was the number of high-profile leaders unified by no

less than the calling to promote Faith as one of the most powerful means by which to approach questions of international societal consequence. For at the root of terrorist acts, economic inequality, gender discrimination, even climate change are "beliefs" that, while not specifically religious per se in content, are founded on certain fundamental values that determine codes of conduct and behavior that, in collective form, attain political critical mass. In this regard, the Summit was remarkable for its concentration on this foundational aspect to world crises – distinguishing itself from the norm of other "bold name" conferences that merely discuss symptoms, statistics and causes bereft of cures.

In this context, true leadership came into focus. The Host Committee for the Summit included Dr. Cheryl Fishbein, the Chair of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; the Honorable Patricia de Stacy Harrison, the President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; M. Maurice Levy, Chairman of the Board of Publicis Groupe; Senator David Lieberman, Senior Counsel at Kasowitz Benson Torres; Rabbi David Rosen; Ambassador Dennis Ross, the former Special Assistant to President Barack Obama; Mr. Adam Sharp, President and CEO of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences; Mr. Fred S. Teng, President of the America China Public Affairs Institute; and Ms. Frances Townsend, Executive Vice President, MacAndrews & Forbes.

In addition, the Advisory Board to the and to this Summit exemplified this profile of engaged members of global society in positions of authority and influence. These include Mr. Bjoern Kjaerand Haugland, Chief



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa "takes Manhattan" and especially much of Times Square, May 1, 2019. Photo Credit: MWL

Sustainability Officer, DNV GL; Mr. Malcolm Honlein, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Mr. Iqbal Kassam, Founder and President, Zynik Capital Corporation; Mr. Samir H. Sanbar, Executive Editor, UN Forum; Mr. Ronald G. Weiner, Chairman and President, Perelson Weiner LLP; and Ms. Nora Wu, former Vice Chairwoman and Global Human Capital Leader, PriceWaterhouseCoopers International. The featured panelists, listed earlier in this Journal, were as distinguished as this Committee not only in name and accomplishment, but in recognition of the role of Faith in giving moral weight to leadership.

The virtues of responsible leadership are under assault. All around the world heads of nations, businesses, social groups, communities and families are facing diverse threats, spurred by rising inequality, migration and climate crises, and compounded by global extremism and weakened state institutions. In such an environment, it has become all too easy for leaders to choose the easy route of temporary answers, even if these solve nothing at all.

But it was H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa who was, of course, the local celebrity par excellence. The Summit stressed the pivotal role of the MWL in maintaining global harmony and peace and reinforced the international recognition of that organization as the leading voice for moderate Islam in the world. Dr. Al-Issa, in delivering his opening and closing remarks at the Summit — together with Bawa Jain, the Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders — focused on the vital role that responsible leadership plays in facing global challenges and surmounting them with this force of Faith. “It is important for leaders to inspire others and provide them with positive energy,” he said. “No matter what the differences in our own culture and religion may be, we all agree on the key humanitarian norms that constitute the framework of our natural law. Even ten percent of this common ground is enough to bring about global harmony and peace.”

Dr. Al-Issa went on to list several attributes that are key to responsible leadership, and these include: a) strength and integrity; b) a knowledge of history and

🗨️ *The launch of cooperative projects by AJC and MWL, and Dr. Al-Issa’s visit to Auschwitz, are a direct rebuttal to the extremists who threaten us all. By educating people on the horrors of history, we can plant the seeds for a future where Jews, Muslims and all other groups can live free of fear.*

— David Harris, President, The American Jewish Committee, April 29, 2019

a willingness to learn from it; c) being proactive and constantly monitoring performance, and d) recognition that the most important pillar of the peace of [one’s] own nation is world peace; and e) education as one of the main drivers of a sustainable, peaceful future, stressing that “preparing teachers” is a main point of focus.

The role of Faith in leadership was underscored further by Dr. Al-Issa. Respect for other religions, he said, is “vital for peaceful co-existence.” He added that the efforts of certain isolated religious and sectarian groups to impose their ideals on others and reject the right of others to exist have led to exclusion, hatred and hostility. Quoted by Arab News, he stated: “Such negative ideas have created extremism of all kinds, including the rise of the extreme right in some countries.” He made clear that each case of extremism, whether intellectual or religious or political, is a threat to world peace.

Leadership that understands the power of Faith is leadership that understands the only kind of lasting power. This leadership recognizes that, as Dr. Al-Issa noted: “Evil grows with time, through its effects on unconscious emotions. All stable people are aware that extremist rhetoric has a painful end. They also realize that its quick gains are deceptive. It is a seed of evil that will backfire.” Only Faith can destroy this nature of evil, but only true leaders can assure that such Faith be given the prestige, the platform and the priority to be heard throughout the world, as one. ✨



# MARKING MILESTONES

## An Evening with the AJC

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

“Increasingly, Jews and Muslims are becoming partners in grief.” It was an eloquent, if somewhat melancholic, statement describing the nature of growing solidarity between the Muslim and Jewish faiths, as noted by the Times of Israel. The paper summed up this common bond between the two civilizations in a May 14 editorial marking the occasion of the visit of H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa to American Jewish League headquarters in New York. As that paper opined: “Pittsburgh and Ponway and Christchurch have become synonymous with white nationalist hatred against adherents of the two faiths. Now Jews and Muslims will together strike a chord of religious solidarity – and a blow against Holocaust denial – with a high-profile visit to the killing fields of Auschwitz.” January 2020 will mark the 75th anniversary of the death camp’s liberation by the Allies.

“*I believe that by paying my respects to the victims of Auschwitz, I will encourage Muslims and non-Muslims to embrace mutual respect, understanding and diversity. The heinous attacks in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in Christchurch, New Zealand, and most recently in Sri Lanka [against houses of worship in the three major Abrahamic faiths] compel us all to unite and stand up against those who want to divide us.*

– H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, April 29, 2019

That announcement was made at a remarkable evening conference held at the AJC on April 29. With unseasonably warm weather gracing a tree-lined street in one of the most beautiful, vibrant areas of Manhattan, a resplendent Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and his entourage arrived at the organization headquarters primed to take part in a rigorous debate, interview, and historic cooperation agreement, the likes of which have not been seen before in modern Muslim-Jewish history. Dr. Al-Issa, the leading global voice for moderate Islam, has been a passionate advocate of improved relations between the two religions: In 2017, he visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and declared Holocaust denial a crime against Islam.

As part of the MoU, Dr. Al-Issa also has accepted an invitation from Mr. Harris to address the AJC Global Forum in Berlin in June 2020. Mr. Harris, in turn, has accepted an invitation from the MWL Secretary General to lead an American Jewish League delegation to Saudi Arabia.

One of the highlights of the evening was Dr. Al-Issa’s live interview with Professor Ari Goldman of Columbia University, a former writer for The New York Times. Balancing his questions between “hardball” and “softball” inquiries into Dr. Al-Issa’s perspectives on Muslim-Jewish relations, Mr. Goldman demonstrated the kind of tact coupled with intellectual curiosity that exemplifies the honorable and critical role played by solid journalism in covering sensitive religious issues.

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, has long been a pioneer in interfaith relations and

created the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council in 2016 to deepen ties among faith groups. The agreement between MWL and AJC is an initiative of the and its Founder and President, Bawa Jain, head of the World Council of Religious Leaders.

Such initiatives are not new and have never been defined as merely ceremonial. For example, Marshall Berger, a professor of law at Catholic University, has organized two “spiritual trips” to Auschwitz for prominent imams and Muslim leaders from the United States under the auspices for the Center for Interreligious Understanding in Teaneck, New Jersey. Mr. Berger, who served as White House Jewish liaison during the Reagan administration, said the itinerary he put together for those trips stressed the religious aspect and understanding of the Shoah. As reported in New York Jewish Week, Mr. Berger stated that Muslim participants on such Auschwitz trips he organized “felt it existentially. That is terribly important if you want to move forward on interfaith relations.”

While interviewed during the signing ceremony by Professor Ari Goldman, Dr. Al-Issa demurred on the question of whether a trip to Jerusalem would follow his visit to Auschwitz. “We are not a political entity,” he said. He added that he would be willing to visit Israel

“*The launch of cooperative projects by AJC and MWL, and Dr. Al-Issa’s visit to Auschwitz, are a direct rebuttal to the extremists who threaten us all. By educating people on the horrors of history, we can plant the seeds for a future where Jews, Muslims and all other groups can live free of fear.*”

— David Harris, President, The American Jewish Committee, April 29, 2019

“if a just peace [between the Israelis and the Palestinians] is achieved.”

Like the two Abrahamic faiths themselves, the AJC and the MWL have a long history together — relatively speaking, of course. The New York-based organization first visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia nearly 25 years ago. And in the words of Mr. Harris, with each visit the chance “to learn more about current efforts to launch interfaith initiatives” increases. There is no doubt that this evening proved the power of the spirit over politics, borders, battlefields — and most of all, over ignorance. ❖

In 2018, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington.





# MANY FAITHS ONE VOICE

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

The idea of international religious leaders gathering at one of the most respected institutions in one of the world's most powerful cities might inspire in these cynical times one overarching first impression: that it is a "Beautiful Idea" born of the best intentions and deserving the highest support and commendation. Ultimately, it is a showpiece for those leaders to praise ideals that are diminishing in observance by their respective human communities. This view, unfortunately pervasive among both secular and religious-extremist nihilists, burdens those leaders with the added pressure of having to disclaim idealistic flights of fancy about global harmony, while at the same time not come across as too condemnatory of that which they must — heart, soul and spirit — battle for the good of society.

Enter MWL Secretary General H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, who Cardinal Timothy Dolan of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York referred to in early May as the "go-to" Muslim for anyone seeking the world's most influential moderate voice of Islam. Taking the reins in his opening remarks at the Responsible Leaders Summit in New York on May 1, Sheikh Dr Al-Issa commented: "It is important here to speak about religious leadership. Religious leaders carry great responsibility in the world today in matters relat-

ed to harmony and peace. This includes addressing the narrative of hatred and all the theories of religious or ethnic extremism that lead to violence or terrorism. At the same time, the religious leaders must enhance everyone's intellectual immunity to extremism, in particular among young people, through the levers of

spiritual influence. After all, we are talking here about extremism and terrorism that is not based on military might or a political entity but on ideology — a religious-espoused extremist ideology."

Then came the show of force — spiritual force. In attendance at the conference among world religious leaders were Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, Rabbi David Rosen, Swami Giri Maharaj and the Venerable Shing Miyi. Each has a fascinating biographical background.

The Venerable Shing Miyi summarized in his statement what all religions ultimately, collectively seek — despite all of the differences of culture, civilization, historical experience, language and often ethnicity or race that make for artificial barriers — and that is the most powerful force known in the universe: human love.

The presence of these religious leaders at the Summit served to intensify the meaning of a



*Religious leaders must enhance everyone's intellectual immunity to extremism, in particular among young people, through the levers of spiritual influence.*

— His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Responsible Leadership Summit, the United Nations, New York, May 1, 2019

nearly week-long series of unprecedented agreements undertaken by Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and the Jewish as well as Christian communities in New York and Washington, which framed the Summit. The hateful, horrific terrorist attacks on the San Diego synagogue, of Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand and on Christians in Sri Lanka made for “an urgent call for the civilized world to strengthen international solidarity and cooperation to fight hate, bigotry and fanaticism,” according to a May 2 agreement between the Muslim World League and the Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations with the American Sephardi Federation. That statement summed up a week of groundbreaking agreements between the MWL and world faith organizations on a level truly unprecedented in substance and scope. As this particular agreement noted: “Words are not enough. We, as leaders, organizations and concerned people of faith, pledge to engage in concrete actions to root out hate in all its forms and to prevent prejudice from leading to persecution, instigation from triggering assault and radical ideologies from inciting to violence.” (The signatories to this agreement were Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa; Arthur Stark, the Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman/CEO Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; David E.R. Dangoor, President of the American Sephardi Federation and Jason Guberman-P., the Executive Director of the American Sephardi Federation.)

This was but one agreement during the week beginning the end of April through the first week of May,

a time that coincided with the commemoration of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and during the United States Holocaust Remembrance Week, as well as coinciding with the Summit — and last but not never least, the onset of Ramadan on May 5.

The seminal events began with an April 28 meeting between H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and His Eminence, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, at the private residence of the archbishop adjacent to one of New York’s most beautiful and iconic structures, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, on Fifth Avenue. Dr. Al-Issa emphasized that interreligious dialogue and the fight against bigotry are at the heart of the MWL mission. He stated: “Islam and Christianity are religions of peace, and both are rooted in co-existence, cooperation and interreligious harmony. I am pleased to work with Cardinal Dolan in any way that shows how much there is that unites us, and that rejects the messages of those who seek to divide us.”

Here once more, the words were not mere “talk”, for the meeting was the latest manifestation of the MWL’s growing relationship with the Roman Catholic Church:

- In 2017 Dr. Al-Issa became the first head of the Makkah-based organization to visit the Vatican when he met with His Holiness, Pope Francis.
- Last year, Dr. Al-Issa signed a cooperation agreement with the late Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, which established a permanent working group between the two institutions.

**“Both Islam and Judaism envision a more peaceful, just, and secure world and mandate that we work toward its realization. Through a series of initiatives, the Muslim World League and the American Jewish Committee will raise awareness about these two faiths’ common mission to pursue respect, human dignity and interreligious harmony**

— From the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the MWL and the AJC, April 30, 2019



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa, Bawa Jain and His Eminence, Cardinal Dolan, take in the beauty of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

“When I am asked, ‘Who is the influential leader of the moderate voice of Islam we can turn to in times such as these?’ I always answer: ‘Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa — he is your man.’”

— Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, April 28, 2019.

Following the visit with Cardinal Dolan, on April 29, an Agreement of Cooperation was made between Dr. Al-Issa and Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation “for the purpose of enhancing the cooperation between their institutions, using interreligious cooperation as a platform for advancing peace, diversity and harmony and elevating the level of their advocacy for the protection of religious sites worldwide.”

The agreement was an explicit, detailed one that, among other mandates, required of both parties:

- “To explore joint efforts to elevate the level of advocacy for the protection of religious sites around the world ‘whether they are Churches, Mosques, Synagogues or Temples...’;”
- “To call upon all people, nations and leaders to ensure the sanctity of these places as essential to our common humanity and the preservation of faiths and cultures, “with the guiding principle being that no one should have to risk his or her life to pray, worship or remember and honor past loved ones;”
- “To advocate among all spiritual leaders, and especially those who preach, teach and lead in prayer, to avoid, abandon and condemn hate speech of any kind...;”
- “To call on religious leaders, educators and scholars and individuals of leadership and influence...to reject any form of violence or other crime in the name of religion...;”
- “To continue their promotion of interreligious understanding, mutual respect, concord and peace recognizing...shared roots in our ancestral spiritual father Abraham...”

Then, on April 30, this spirit of cooperation continued with the historic signing of an MoU between the Muslim World League and the American Jewish Committee at the headquarters of the AJC in the center of Manhattan’s Upper East Side. H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, of the MWL, and David Harris of the AJC, represented

🗨️ *God grant that we may be a people who pursue these ends to advance justice, righteousness, mercy and peace*

— The Appeal of Conscience Foundation, Agreement between the Muslim World League and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, April 29, 2019.

the two bodies “for the purpose of enhancing the co-operation between their institutions and elevating the level of mutual understanding among Muslims and Jews worldwide.”

In addition to the landmark announcement of the planned trip to the Auschwitz death camp in January 2020, other cooperative measures between the AJC and the MWL outlined in the MoU include:

- Dr. Al-Issa will attend, as a guest of honor, and address the AJC Global Forum taking place June 14-17, 2020, in Berlin.
- Bawa Jain, Founder and President of the, will serve as guarantor of this agreement, “entrusted with ensuring the two sides’ faithful implementation”

Some concluding remarks of Dr. Al-Issa captured the spirit of this week dedicated not only to the expression of noble sentiments for inter-faith cooperation, but to the necessity of taking action and staying on that course of action until the goal is met. The Secretary General stated: “As the leading voice of moderate Islam, I am honored to share the true message of Islam with the world – a moderate Islam that empathizes, understands and accepts all. I took a solemn vow to confront the challenges around the world, and I strive to embody the responsible leadership in all that I do.” Such words are the very essence of religious faith, and because of that, belong to no one religion yet to all of them. ❖



Lights, Camera, Action for a new era of outstanding relations, spearheaded by Dr. Al-Issa and Rabbi Schneier. Photo Credit: MWL

Harmony, Beauty and Understanding at its loveliest. H.E. Dr. Al-Issa stands with children against Hate. Photo Credit: MWL



# Milestones & Highlights

## The Muslim World League and Interfaith Progress An Overview

- May 1, 2019: The inaugural Responsible Leaders Summit, held at the Secretariat of the United Nations. Groundbreaking for the number assembled and diversity of high-level corporate personalities on the CEO level, former U.S. Senators and Ambassadors of continued influence; respected NGOs and seasoned journalists with decades of expertise, including coverage of war, international race and religious relations, and faith-based initiatives and organizations.
  - May 1, 2019: In a surprise conclusion to that Summit, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa pledges USD 1 million to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
  - On April 30, historic MoU between the Muslim World League and the American Jewish Committee is signed at the headquarters of the AJC in the center of Manhattan’s Upper East Side.
1. The MOU codifies the commitment of the two global institutions to further Muslim-Jewish understanding and cooperate against racism and extremism in all forms.
  2. Dr. Al-Issa and Mr. David Harris announce a joint AJC-Muslim World League delegation to Auschwitz in January 2020 for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp.
  3. Dr. Al-Issa will attend, as a guest of honor, and address the AJC Global Forum taking place June 14-17, 2020, in Berlin.
  4. Mr. David Harris will lead a high-level AJC delegation to The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at a point no later than 31 December 2020.
- On April 29, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation Agreement was signed between H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and Rabbi Schneier as a comprehensive commitment to work in tandem against extremist groups that have the potential to rise within their respective religions and within the nations with a majority representation thereof.
  - On April 28, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and His Eminence, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, met at the private residence of the archbishop. The two leaders vowed to enhance cooperation between Catholics and Muslims, and to explore new ways to step up efforts to promote tolerance and interfaith understanding.

### Recent historic precedents:

- In November 2018, Dr. Al-Issa welcomed the highest-level delegation of U.S. evangelical Christian leaders ever to visit Saudi Arabia.
- In May 2018, Dr Al-Issa visited the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.
- In April 2018, Dr. Al-Issa signed a cooperation agreement with the late Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, which established a permanent working group between the two institutions.
- In November 2017, Dr -Al-Issa visited the Grand Synagogue of Paris.

- In September 2017, Dr. Al-Issa became the first head of the Mecca-based organization to visit the Vatican when he met with His Holiness, Pope Francis.

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## Opening Remarks Of H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.

### Responsible Leaders Summit, United Nations, May1, 2019

Excellencies, Eminences, Graces, Ladies and Gentlemen, Esteemed Audience,

May the Peace of Allah be upon you!

It is with great pleasure we meet together for this significant event; the conference of Responsible Leaders. I am equally delighted to see the participation of a constellation of religious and political leaders, men and women of thought, people of justice who are here to speak about responsible leadership in all its forms. We must make responsible leadership our approach nationally and internationally, and let it guide our humanitarian efforts.

At the heart of every goal for good lies responsible leadership. The world today is facing many challenges. Whereas people used to scour the world to unearth a precious metal, we now look to discover the precious individuals who can harness the elements of responsible leadership. True leaders take their nations to the pinnacle of advancement. True leaders provide stability, security, prosperity, advancement. The false leaders provide the opposite. They lead their nations to ruin. Through their weaknesses, and their absence of responsibility, they cause instability, insecurity, lack of opportunity, stagnation.

The lessons of responsible leadership, in the political or religious spheres, or any other sphere, show us the right path to tread. It is one of justice and values. Even when our religions and cultures differ, these values remain the same. Responsible leaders agree on the common ground that binds us. These commonalities represent fundamental humanitarian rules that shape our natural law. I have spoken on more than one occasion about how mobilizing just 10% of the bonds that unite us are enough to bring about harmony and peace in our world.

- Responsible leadership means strength and trustworthiness. It is not about realpolitik, acting out of convenience, utilitarian decisions or any behavior that acts at the expense of common human values.
- Responsible leadership means opening up to others and facing challenges with confidence and optimism, and constantly seeking solutions, no matter how great the cost or risk.
- Responsible leadership means assessing past experiences, learning from failures, recalling the lessons of history and not making the same mistakes.
- Responsible leadership is not just an idea. If your form of leadership is just theory, that is an illusion and a deceit that people will realize over time. This will have negative repercussions. Responsible leadership requires practicing responsible leadership.

With any program, with any initiative, responsible leadership involves continually putting your performance to the test. Responsible Leaders must realize that what their actions mean for the future is as important as what they offer to the present. In most instances, actually, the effect on the future is even more important.

Responsible leadership means building harmony among all and realizing that dialogue, unity of purpose, setting goals and prioritizing properly are all key elements of success.

The responsible leader understands that his or her own personal peace is tied to finding peace in this world, and that reaching this peace requires an all-inclusive vision and sustainable action. To build this platform for a sustainable future, we must focus on education. That is why the teacher is at the heart of building awareness of responsible leadership.

The responsible leaders must realize that history will commemorate noble works only. The rest will be lost in the pages of history, or condemned.

It is important here to speak about religious leadership. Religious leaders carry great responsibility in the world today in matters related to its harmony and peace. This includes addressing the narrative of hatred and all the theories of religious or ethnic extremism that lead to violence or terrorism. At the same time, the religious leaders must enhance everyone's intellectual immunity to extremism, in particular among young people, through the levers of spiritual influence. After all, we are talking here about extremism and terrorism that is not based on military might or a political entity, but on ideology — a religious-espoused extremist ideology.

Here again, we must clearly distinguish between religion and religiosity. Accordingly, we say that there is no religion originally built on extremism. But we must acknowledge not a single religion is free of extremists among its followers.

From a personal point of view, I believe that religious leaders should develop concrete programs to address the dangers and threats in their communities and among their spiritual followers. They also must join hands with other leaders. Together, they should forge respect for the existence of all religions in every humanitarian project they undertake. Any coalition that comes together at the expense of a system of religions, especially the three Abrahamic religions, is without exception and under any pretext exclusionary. It should be classified within the sphere of hatred, and seen as fostering hostility towards the other. This includes ignoring the existence and rights of religious minorities.

Every case of religious, intellectual or political extremism poses a threat to world peace, regardless of the degree of the threat.

Responsible leaders are judicious people. They know that the narratives of extremism will meet a painful end and whatever gains they inspire are temporary and illusory. This holds for religious extremism or hatred against others for religious or ethnic reasons. It also holds true for extremism in politics.

History teaches us that the leader who acts with mal-intent - whether for religious, intellectual, ethnic, political or any other motivation - plants an evil seed that brings harm to everyone involved. The result is often a painful tragedy.

We all know that individuals are led by thoughts, and these can range across various levels of awareness or degrees of backwardness. But who is responsible for building awareness? And who is responsible for the existence of this backwardness? If we were to ask every extremist or terrorist: 'Who molded your thoughts and feelings,' he will answer that it was you. Now the most important question is what will we do with the answer we have received.

We know what we need to do.

Evil cannot expand except in the absence of good. Injustice can only prevail in the absence of justice. Backwardness can be defeated if countered with knowledge. And we can stop what I call "negative utilitarianism" by putting all our energy into advancing the public's interests. The ramparts of our harmony will never be penetrated or overrun, unless we, the guardians of the fort, relinquish our posts around the bastion.

As responsible leaders, we can never flee from our sacred responsibility.

In conclusion, I thank this distinguished audience for accepting our invitation and contributing to the noble and critical objectives of this meeting. I offer everyone all my support and wish you all the greatest success. ❖



Excerpt from the *Times of Israel*, April 28, 2018

## Conference of Presidents honors Muslims who protected Jews during Holocaust

**Speakers at New York event included the secretary general of Saudi-based Muslim World League and co-founder of Morocco Muslim student movement**

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations held an event in New York this week honoring and commemorating Muslims who protected Jews during the Holocaust.

The event's featured guest at the Museum of Jewish Heritage was Mohammad Al-Issa, the secretary general of the Saudi-based Muslim World League. He discussed the state of Jewish-Muslim relations and highlighted the importance of Holocaust education in the Muslim world.



"We must overcome the hurdle that has been put in our way, trying to prevent us from helping others. We must follow the seeds that our forefathers have sown and try to serve peace the best way possible," the Haaretz daily quoted Al-Issa as saying at the event on Thursday, held in cooperation with the American Sephardi Federation.

In January, Al-Issa wrote a letter to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in which he publicly acknowledged the tragedy of the Holocaust, "an incident that shook humanity to the core, and created an event whose horrors could not be denied or underrated by any fair-minded or peace-loving person."

Stephen M. Greenberg, chairman, and Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman/CEO of the Conference of Presidents, [representing] over 50 US Jewish groups, said in a statement: "In the presence of many leaders of the American Jewish and Muslim communities, Dr. Al-Issa joined us as we commemorated and paid tribute to the immensely important, but too little known, acts of human decency and kindness of people in many majority Muslim countries during the Holocaust that enabled Jews to survive the horrors of the Nazi drive to exterminate them."



# Agreements & MoU's Signed

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa | April and May 2019

## APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE

### AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE AND APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE FOUNDATION

#### PREAMBLE:

In light of the terrible terrorist attacks during Passover at the Chabad of Poway Synagogue near San Diego, California, at multiple churches on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka, the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and other violent acts at Houses of Worship, it is more important than ever for the forces of peace and understanding to unify and expand their efforts to promote interreligious harmony. At the center of this elevated campaign should be the protection of religious sites. These sanctuaries are critical for communities worldwide to freely express their religious and spiritual beliefs, and for the preservation of cultures and traditions that define our humanity.

#### AGREEMENT:

This Agreement of cooperation is made on this day, 29 April 2019, by and between His Excellency, Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa of the Muslim World League and Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation for the purpose of enhancing the cooperation between their institutions; using interreligious cooperation as a platform for advancing peace, diversity and harmony; and elevating the level of their advocacy for the protections of religious sites worldwide.

#### WHEREAS:

Both parties are interested in working together in connection with the purpose as described in this Agreement.

In pursuant to this Agreement, the parties agree to carry out their obligations to implement faithfully the terms of this Agreement.

#### IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

The parties intend to explore joint efforts to elevate the level of advocacy for the protection of religious sites around the world, whether they are Churches, Mosques, Synagogues or Temples, or other Places of Worship, Veneration or Commemoration, and to call upon all peoples, nations and religious and political leaders to contribute to this effort.

The parties intend to call on all people, nations and leaders to ensure the sanctity of these places as essential to our common humanity, and the preservation of faiths and cultures, with the guiding principle being that no one should have to risk his or her life to pray, gather for worship, or remember and honor past loved ones.

The parties intend to call on religious leaders, educators and scholars and all individuals of leadership and influence who are dedicated to the pursuit of teaching the Truth to condemn and reject any form of violence or other crime in the name of religion, which is the greatest crime against religion.

The parties intend to advocate among all spiritual leaders, and especially those who preach, teach and lead in prayer, to avoid, abandon and condemn hate speech of any kind, bearing in mind that children are not born with fear or hatred, but can be taught to fear and hate.

The parties intend to direct any leaders with whom they hold influence to disown any form of speech that could be inflammatory or violate the sanctity of human life, with the conviction that religion shall not be misused to teach or inflame the passion of enmity, and that generations of children yet to come rely on our creation of a world where people are no longer taught to hate one another, especially in the name of God, religion, race, ethnicity or national origin.

The parties intend to work together to build stronger bonds between their institutions and serve as a model for how to promote peace, diversity and interreligious cooperation.

The parties intend to continue their promotion of interreligious understanding, mutual respect, concord and peace, recognizing both our common humanity and shared roots in our ancestral spiritual father Abraham, and call upon all people of faith to join us in working for and pursuing these goals critical to harmony, prosperity and peace.

God grant that we may be a people who pursue these ends to advance justice, righteousness, mercy and peace.



**H.E. Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa**  
Secretary General  
Muslim World League



**Rabbi Arthur Schneier**  
Founder and President  
Appeal of Conscience Foundation

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE AND AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

### **PREAMBLE:**

In a time of increased hateful rhetoric and violent attacks, responsible leaders of religiously identified communities must unite to promote mutual understanding and interfaith cooperation. Muslims and Jews must be allies in this effort. Both religions value diversity and teach peaceful coexistence. Both Islam and Judaism envision a more peaceful, just, and secure world and mandate that we work toward its realization. Through a series of initiatives, the

Muslim World League and American Jewish Committee will raise awareness about these two faiths' common mission to pursue respect, human dignity and interreligious harmony.

#### MEMORANDUM:

This Memorandum of Understanding is signed on this day, April 30, 2019, by His Excellency, Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa of the Muslim World League and David Harris of American Jewish Committee, for the purpose of enhancing the cooperation between their institutions and elevating the level of mutual understanding among Muslims and Jews worldwide.

#### WHEREAS:

- Both parties are interested in working together for the purpose described in this Memorandum of Understanding.
- In pursuant to this agreement, the parties agree to carry out their obligations to implement faithfully the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding.

#### IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWED:

- The parties intend to work together to build stronger bonds between their institutions and let their partnership serve as a model for promoting interfaith harmony.
- Dr. Al-Issa and Mr. Harris will lead a joint AJC-Muslim World League delegation to Auschwitz in January 2020 for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp.
- Dr. Al-Issa will attend, as a guest of honor, and address the AJC Global Forum taking place June 14-17, 2020, in Berlin.
- Mr. Harris will lead a high-level AJC delegation to The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at a point no later than 31 December 2020.

- The parties resolve to explore other joint efforts to elevate the promotion of Muslim-Jewish understanding and foster broader interreligious dialogue and cooperation.
- Bawa Jain, Founder and President of the Centre for Responsible Leadership, will serve as guarantor of this agreement, entrusted with ensuring the two sides' faithful implementation.

TERM OF MEMORANDUM: This Memorandum of Understanding is effective April 30, 2019. This MoU can be terminated, without cause, by either party upon written notice.

### **HEAD OF MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE MEETS CARDINAL DOLAN IN NEW YORK TO ENHANCE COOPERATION, STEP UP EFFORTS TO PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING**

NEW YORK \_ His Excellency, Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, met Monday with His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, and vowed to enhance cooperation between Catholics and Muslims, and explore new ways to step up efforts to promote tolerance and interfaith understanding.

The two faith-based leaders met in the private residence of the archbishop adjacent to St. Patrick's Cathedral. Reflecting on the horrific attacks on religious worshippers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Christchurch, New Zealand, and most recently in Sri Lanka, Dr. Al-Issa emphasized that interreligious dialogue and the fight against bigotry is at the heart of the MWL's mission.

"Islam and Christianity are religions of peace, and are both rooted in coexistence, cooperation and interreligious harmony," said Dr. Al-Issa, the leading

global voice on moderate Islam. "I am very pleased to work with Cardinal Dolan in any way that shows how much there is that unites us, and that rejects the messages of those who seek to divide us."

The meeting is the latest manifestation of the Muslim World League's growing relationship with the Roman Catholic Church.

In 2017, Dr. Al-Issa became the first head of the Mecca-based, Islamic organization to visit the Vatican when he met with His Holiness, Pope Francis. Last year, Dr. Al-Issa signed a cooperation agreement with the late Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, which established a permanent working committee between the two institutions.

Dr. Al-Issa has led the Muslim World League since 2017. His meeting with Cardinal Dolan comes two days before he will chair the inaugural Responsible Leaders Summit at the United Nations. While in New York, he also will be conducting various interfaith initiatives with Jewish leaders of the city.

Cardinal Dolan's various interfaith initiatives have included leadership of an interfaith advisory council created by the Governor of New York. He has been Archbishop of New York since 2009. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, he previously held senior positions in Washington, St. Louis, Rome and Milwaukee. ❖



More than 100 prominent leaders from around the world gathered at the UN to discuss responsible leadership.

# GUEST ESSAYS

AMBASSADOR NANCY G. BRINKER;  
MR. BAWA JAIN, MR. BJOERN K. HAUGLAND

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019



— Ambassador Nancy Brinker being awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Obama in 2009.

Nancy G. Brinker, Founder of Susan G. Koman; Former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary; Former U.S. Chief of Protocol; and Former Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Control to the U.N.'s World Health Organization

## Entering the Arena of Public Discourse With Passion and Civility

*Nancy Brinker, founder of Susan G. Komen, the world's largest breast cancer charity, has served as U.S. ambassador to Hungary, U.S. chief of protocol, and as a Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Control to the U.N.'s World Health Organization. She is continuing her work in efforts to end death from cancer.*

Newsmax — June 2019

*Original article was published in Newsmax. Newsmax is an American news and opinion website founded by Christopher Ruddy and operated by Newsmax Media. ❖*

In 1910, Theodore Roosevelt gave what would become what was perhaps the most quoted speech of his career. The former president and devoted naturalist was eager to travel the world following the end of his presidency, so he spent a year hunting in Africa before embarking on a tour of Europe in the spring of 1910, giving speeches in cities such as Cairo, Berlin, and London, among others.

He stopped in Paris on April 23, before a crowd that included more than one thousand students and an audience of two thousand more ticket holders. It was there where Roosevelt delivered a speech called "Citizenship in a Republic," which would come to be known more prominently over the following century as "The Man in the Arena."

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Language — both spoken and written — has the power to divide as well as to unite, to conceal as well as to convey, to hurt as well as to heal.

Today's discourse that pervades the arena spoken of by the 26th President of the United States, is as much a source of promise as of peril. Our capacity to persuade and be persuaded is critical to our ability to live with one another without violence, force, or tyranny. Yet this capacity can, with greater finesse and more lasting consequences than sheer violence, undermine social norms and institutions.

During a recent summit sponsored by The at the United Nations, I joined with former Senator Joe Lieberman and Adam Sharp, President & CEO of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, to discuss restoring civility to public discourse. In an age of increasingly divisive rhetoric, everyone — the media, our public leaders, the general public — has a role to play in the restoration of civility in public discourse. If we are to build and safeguard an environment conducive to collaboration and reasonable decision-making, it cannot be based on bullying, threats or embarrassments.

As someone who served America domestically and abroad under a conservative Republican President, was confirmed by Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate and received

the Presidential Medal of Freedom from a liberal Democrat president, I firmly believe we need to preserve the space for rational debate.

As someone who has endured partisan attacks and faced heated public controversy, I also know we must strive for respectful disagreement and constructive compromise.

We must meet our current and future challenges head-on and leave a world that our children can enjoy and thrive in. Surely that begins with entering the arena with passion and civility as opposed to merely joining the chorus of critics on social media or cable news intent on sowing discord. Otherwise, you'll surely land among those timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

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## Bawa Jain, Founder and President, the Centre for Responsible Leadership; and Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders

### **"The Adventure of Peace in My Lifetime"**

*Bawa Jain is a visionary leader in the interfaith movement and a pioneer of religious diplomacy. He is the Founder and President of The Centre for Responsible Leadership and Secretary General of The World Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. He also served as Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit, which took place at the United Nations in New York in 2000 and effectively launched what is known today as religious diplomacy. After working closely on that initiative with the office of the United Nations Secretary-General, Bawa committed his life to finding ways that the worldwide religious and spiritual*

*communities can work together as interfaith allies with the United Nations on specific peace, poverty and environmental initiatives.* ❖

It would be something of an understatement to say that I absolutely love what I do. As Secretary General of The World Council of Religious Leaders, it is my job to mobilize some of the most powerful voices on the planet for the cause of Peace. My work is a constant battleground of ideas, philosophies and visions that must be won over with diplomacy after years, or even centuries, of being fought over by extremist threats.

I am always seeking out local, national and international leaders to participate in various panel discussions, based upon their past positions that align with the values of my organization. The goal is to inspire them to exert influence on behalf of the collective interest of the majority, rather than for the few who are always in the lead, as it were.

The work can be exhausting, yet it is also exhilarating, especially when events like the Responsible Leaders Summit that took place at the United Nations in New York finally come together. After years of planning and careful preparation, my dear friend and esteemed colleague, His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa and I launched the Centre for Responsible Leadership and hosted our inaugural Summit on May 1, 2019.

The Centre for Responsible Leadership (CRL) was founded with a very specific focus. Everywhere H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and I looked, we saw the virtues of Responsible Leadership under assault. We saw nations, companies, social groups, communities and families facing diverse threats, from rising inequality and migration challenges to climate change and growing intolerance. And we saw too many leaders taking the convenient road that can only be described as destructive and divisive.

The CRL was established to foster a new atmosphere for finding solutions. The atmosphere we envisioned was one in which Responsible Leaders make decisions in the best interests of the future, not only the present. They make decisions out of

conviction, and not convenience. They make decisions that are constructive, not destructive.

I like to think the ideals that led me to establish the CRL were a culmination of a journey that began in my native India, under the guidance and assistance of my spiritual mentor, Acharya Shuhil Kumar. As a child, I was quite affected by the violence between Hindus and Muslims that accompanied the granting of independence to India and Pakistan half a century ago.

Like my Guru, I adhere to Jainism, an ancient Indian faith derived in name from a Sanskrit term meaning “the path of victory” in crossing life’s stream of rebirths through an ethical and spiritual life. We believe in ahimsa, a principle of non-violence, which holds that we do no harm to any living being.

Acharya Shuhil Kumar directly affected my outlook on life. My Guru was one of the first to try to bridge the gap between Muslims and Hindus. My Guru understood the importance of dialogue and cooperation. And my Guru comprehended the need for coexistence among all people, no matter their religion, faith, or creed.

I first came to the United States in 1981 when my Guru acquired the former site of a Jewish summer camp in Blairstown, New Jersey to build the first Jain pilgrimage outside of India. Later, when Acharya Sushil Kumar left his physical body in 1994, he asked that I continue his inter-faith efforts. I responded by dedicating my life to promoting dialogue among religious groups. Of course that meant working with the United Nations — a community that I have now been working in and around for nearly 30 years, and during that time I have earned a lot, including how difficult diplomacy can be on such a large scale.

I vividly recall one example, when then-President George W. Bush spoke to the UN General Assembly in the early 2000’s. It was during the era of his “Axis of Evil” remarks and former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad responded by hurling a number of accusation at the Bush administration,

including one that claimed the US routinely committed human rights violations. I sat down with Ahmadinejad and asked, "How can you come to an international house of diplomacy and say these kinds of things?" That day I told Ahmadinejad that the rhetoric he was employing would not help his cause. This kind of discourse continued after the election of President Barack Obama, when Senator Mitch McConnell stated that his "only purpose from that point forward was to see Obama defeated at every step."

I had recently become a U.S. citizen and could not believe the disintegration of civil discourse in my adopted country. With the current political landscape, the bipartisanship became so dysfunctional that I knew it was time to do something. I began to give talks on responsible leadership, which led to a meeting with Dr. Al-Issa, and from that point, we agreed to convene the Responsible Leaders Summit together.

I confess that I am a dreamer. It would not be possible to do this work if I were not one. However, I am as well motivated to work with people I disagree with. That is the best way to grow — for we learn nothing by always being surrounded by those who share your perspective on each point. I believe that part of the great learning experience is the fact that we choose, on purpose, to bring controversial issues to the table. It is also more fun, I might add.

My great hope for the lasting influence of the Summit is that if we succeed in convincing the thought leaders — who in turn mobilize the masses — our message will be carried to the most powerful individuals on the planet. How much they will listen I cannot say, but I do know that once enough people begin to talk about the need for civility in public life, that will have an effect on voters and, of course, on those running in next year's elections.

We are already getting feedback from leaders who participated in the Summit. They are keen to move forward and so we are creating a steering committee, along with task forces for each of the

panel discussions we had. This would include an advisory board of people of influence who have the ear of our leaders. I am of the deep conviction that if you can make an impact in the US, the world will follow.

I would like to consider my life an adventure in peace making, but of the most practical, effective kind — matching the right vision with the people who are in a position to really promulgate those ideals. To be fair, there are a lot of challenges inherent in the UN system - and in all kinds of charitable and NGO work, largely because of bureaucratic inefficiencies and the short-term political gain of exploiting so called "great causes." But I would not continue to do this work if I did not believe in it so strongly.



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and Bawa Jain signing the MoU that brought the CRL into existence.

As the great philosopher, St. Augustine once said, "God provides the wind, but man must raise the sails." The United Nations is the wind, providing us with the only platform to come together to discuss some of the world's greatest challenges. However, it is up to us as responsible leaders to raise the sails, and take action to find concrete solutions to make the world a better place for all.




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## Bjoern K Haugland

### “Sustaining a Sustainable Vision: The Corporate View”

*Björn Kjærand Haugland is the Chief Executive Officer of NORWAY 203040.*

*NORWAY 203040 is a business-led climate initiative. Our mission is to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy and support the government in delivering on its national climate commitments by 2030. The coalition hopes to demonstrate, to businesses and the government, the business potential that exists in the low-carbon economy and help drive the transition. He is the former Executive Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer in DNV GL Group. In his capacity as CSO for DNV GL group he oversees DNV GL’s sustainability performance and drive company-wide sustainability initiatives. Mr. Haugland has extensive experience assisting multinational companies in areas such as sustainability, climate change and corporate sustainability and ensuring ethical and sustainable performance within complex global supply chains.*

*Mr. Haugland was the co-founder of the global solution platform SUSTAINIA and was responsible for DNV GL’s partnership with UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. ❖*

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast” is a famous quote from legendary management consultant and writer Peter Drucker. To be clear: he did not mean that strategy was unimportant — rather that a powerful and empowering culture was a surer route to organizational success. A “target zero” mindset helps organizations to build their sustainability culture. For, it is part of my work — indeed, I should say, a part of my personality — to imagine a world where every organization had zero accidents, zero carbon emissions, zero waste and zero use of non-renewable materials, just as it is of great interest to me to conceive of a world where every community had zero people without good jobs, zero people without a good education and zero children living in poverty.

To many, this may sound impossible because they believe that losses to the environment and society are just part of life; it also sounds too idealistic for a corporate outlook that must be concerned with the efficiency of performance that can provide the kind of financial opportunity need to achieve such ideals. And yet, already organizations and communities are achieving that kind of performance. So we must ask ourselves: What makes those organizations and communities different? What is it that can merge corporate realism with visionary idealism and make it work on a practical scale with global impact?

The answer lies in the long-term. For, in my professional culture, high performing organizations and communities have decided these social and environmental issues are so important that they have set their performance expectation at this kind of “target zero” I envision above. There is a corporate vision active within this outlook that maintains that any accident, carbon emission, waste or child poverty is a loss of a nature that they are not prepared to accept.

Around 1900, fatalities and disabling injuries were commonplace in the workplace, and society accepted this as just part of doing business. However, within the last 100 years, the expectations have changed and workplace accidents are not considered any more acceptable than child labor was at the turn of the 20th century. The advances in safety and loss-control management, as it is known, in organizations over the last century have taught corporations invaluable lessons as we seek to improve our sustainability performance.

So, when I came to attend the inaugural Summit of the in New York this past May, I arrived inspired by the excellent news that we can create a world by 2050 where nine billion people thrive within the current environmental limits of the planet. These are truly exciting times.

The coming decades will likely present humanity with graver challenges than anything previously encountered and before us we have a unique opportunity to shape a future where the planet thrives, where human creativity and collaboration can flourish and where society is just, stable and prosperous. But we must act now.

The panel discussion at the Summit in which I spoke focused on the specter of climate change, entitled "Safeguarding Our Planet," which was moderated by the outstanding scholar Robert Bazell of Yale, the former Chief Science and Health correspondent for NBC News. Because we are the leading provider of risk-management and quality-assurance services to the maritime, oil and gas and power and renewable industries, we, like any corporate sustainability organization, have had to teach ourselves to look at the world with new eyes. One part of this outlook, is, as I mentioned, target zero in accidents, emissions, waste and non-renewable materials. The new corporate ethos is to be constantly on the look-out for any potential loss. Once identified, the causation of the loss is studied and systems put in place to reduce or eliminate it. In other words, these organizations nurture a culture where employees understand

that any loss costs money: to drive out loss is the same as driving up efficiency and profitability.

This brings up one of the points I made in my discussion, and that is that profit does not have to compete with purpose. There need not be a conflict between making money and doing good. We just do not see it that way because, as I just outlined, to be burdened with any kind of waste; to deal with accidents, non-renewables, loss of human potential – all adds up in costs: health costs, environmental costs, infrastructural costs, shipments and delivery. There is no way to avoid it. Technological efficiency is key, however: We launched in April 2019 a new International Sustainability Rating System (ISRS), a world-leading system to assess, improve and demonstrate the health of an organization's business processes. Using ISRS gives organizations and their stakeholders' peace of mind that their operations are safe and sustainable.

Another initiative that I presented at the UN is one of our most important of this year, which is the scaling up of our innovation community, the Global Opportunity Explorer together with the UN Global Compact and in collaboration with some high-profile strategic partners from the business sector and academia. So far, we count more than 1,000 sustainable solutions from cities and corporations and pioneering start-ups from all over the world.

The idea that I would like to leave behind as the core statement of my values, both corporate and personal, is that high-performing business does not have to compromise its success for the sake of attention to causes which, for much too long, have been branded as anti-business or antithetical to industrial growth. Quite the contrary: The growth comes from innovation and the innovation from the ongoing search to sustain sustainability. It is the great industrial challenge of our time, and one that is thrilling for me as a business leader and environmental enthusiast to regard as the defining opportunity of my lifetime.



# SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ESSAY:

## THE 2019 RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY

DELEGATES DINING ROOM, UNITED NATIONS

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

At noon in the Delegates Dining Room of the UN Secretariat, one of the livelier sessions of the conference took place as participants enjoyed, an elaborate lunch that quite deftly and discreetly rose to the occasion in tending to the dietary needs of three major religions assembled in the room (and with enviable diplomatic panache in the execution). His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, seated at the center of the center of attention, did not appear to be as engrossed by the lovely preparations as he was cordially navigating spontaneous ambushes by selfie-seekers and more low-key admirers. Yet none of it appeared to cast a pall on his enthusiasm, for a high-profile award was soon to be bestowed, and this one on an individual to whom Dr. Al-Issa is particularly close: a gentleman whose innovative work has graced the Gulf and those states' new energy renaissance. The overall mood was spontaneous, social, jovial and disorganized. From the intellectual rigor of the panel sessions to this much-needed respite, it is safe to say that the participants in the Summit and their esteemed figurehead and host were having, in a word, a great time.



Malcolm Heonlein giving brief remarks at the Responsible Leaders Summit Lunch.

Mr. Christian Rynning-Tønnesen, the CEO of Norwegian Statkraft, one of the top-rated Nordic and global firms in the area of alternative energies, was the 2019 recipient of the Excellence in Sustainability Award, and a more worthy honoree would be difficult to come by. Having led five Nordic and global energy firms in the fields of wind farms, oceanic sustainability, and alternative fuels with particular innovation in the British Isles and in the Mideast, Mr. Rynning-Tønnesen spoke passionately about his work: "Renewables will be an important part of the global energy mix with rising global energy requirements and the need to reduce carbon emissions," he said. "The future calls for more energy but less carbon. With more people, we need more energy." He also noted that energy demand will grow mostly in emerging economies and emphasized the need for renewables to have a bigger share in the energy mix. "Renewable energy costs are going down, and there is strong growth in renewable energy and its production, especially in wind and solar," he stressed.



The Award Recipient and his friend H.E. Dr. Al-Issa enjoying the afternoon break.

Afternoon break- with H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and Monsignor Khaled Akasheh at Responsible Leaders Summit.

H.E. Dr. Ali Rashid Abdulla Al Nuaimi giving remarks at Responsible Leaders Lunch.

Honorees and distinguished guests.

## **Muslim World League hosts global conference focused on advancing Islam's core principles of tolerance and peace.**

Alongside our successful Responsible Leaders Summit at the United Nations, we hosted a historic conference in the holy Sacred City of Makkah. The objective of said event was to find actionable methods to advance the tolerant and peaceful principles of Islam among all Muslims, and especially future generations, as well as establish the common values that connects Muslims to cultures around the world.





## Notable Quotes

*"Moderation is the law of the universe and the law of judgments, which is the balance of Sharia, that doesn't cause neither excess nor negligence."*

— Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, President of the UAE Ifta Council

*"We in Saudi Arabia, based on our commitment to the guidance of the Sharia in its moderate approach, our Islamic responsibility for the sanctity of the all-encompassing Qibla, and the love of Muslims for their sacred places, renew the call to put an end to the rhetoric of racism and hatred, whatever its sources and pretexts."*

— His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al Faisal, Governor of Mecca in a speech delivered on behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman.



# THE MAKKAH CONFERENCE

May 28, 2019

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud received on Thursday the Charter of Makkah upon the conclusion of the four-day international conference titled "Values of moderation in the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah" organized by the Muslim World League (MWL), which took place in the Holy City of Makkah.

This came during His Majesty's reception of the leading Islamic scholars participating in the conference. As many as 1,200 prominent Islamic figures from 139 countries, representing 27 Islamic components of various sects and schools of thought, endorsed the Charter of Makkah. The objective of the conference was to find actionable methods to advance the tolerant and peaceful principles of Islam among all Muslims, and especially future generations, as well as establish the common values that connect Muslims to cultures around the world.

Addressing the audience, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques welcomed the scholars participating in the conference, adding that the Quran and Sunnah stress the importance of moderation and peaceful coexistence. The King expressed his pleasure to see the scholars of the Muslim community at this platform, to unite their views on important issues, especially with regard to confronting the ideas of extremism and terrorism.

The conference covered the following topics:

- Centrism & Moderation: Meaning and Significance
- The Prophetic Approach to Moderation
- Moderation in Islamic History and Jurisprudence Heritage
- Religious Multiplicity & Cultural Interaction
- Common Values in the Contemporary International Relations
- Moral & Human Values in the Prophet Guidance
- Practical Programs to Promote Moderation Among Youth
- Moderation and the Message of Civilized Communication



Worshippers at Makkah at Ramadan 2019. Photo Credit: Arab News.

Scientists and intellectuals at the Makkah conference on the Islamic values of moderation



King Salman, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah with the Charter of Makkah — a landmark agreement that offers Muslims with world guidance on the true principles of moderate Islam.

stressed the importance of moderate Islamic discourse and preserve the rights of minorities in non-Muslim countries.

They also hailed the active role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in reuniting Muslims, rejecting extremism, instilling moderate discourse and preserving the rights of Muslims and keeping them away from terrorism.

As reported in Arab News, Dr. Ahmed Al-Dubyan, director general of the Islamic Cultural Center in London, noted that the conference organized by the Muslim World League “convened in difficult conditions witnessed throughout the Muslim world, which have been caused by an intellectual deviation that resulted in scourges, calamities, deviation in thoughts and attacking others.”

The paper also cited Muhammad Salah Dinov, president of the Islamic Council of Russia, who called for “inculcating common denominators linking Muslims at the economic, cultural and social levels.” Scholars called for reuniting the ranks of the Islamic nation “so that no one can destabilize and undermine it.” This can be achieved by rejecting turmoil, encouraging moderation and equality, communicating with each other, strengthening the

bonds of love between Muslims and fighting the wrong perceptions about Islam. The conference also called on all Muslims to study their religion properly as sent down by Allah, “a religion of love, moderation and authentic values that have contributed to the spread of Islam around the world.”



His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al Faisal addresses Muslim leaders and scholars at global conference on Moderate Islam.



Muslim Leaders gather to Discuss Moderate Islam.

## THE MAKKAH DECLARATION

### King Salman Receives Charter of Makkah

On May 28, 2019, the “Charter of Makkah” was endorsed unanimously by an unprecedented group of the world’s leading Muslim scholars, who gathered in the Holy City for the promotion of moderate Islam. “The Charter of Makkah” offers Muslims around the world guidance on the principles that speak to the true meaning of Islam. The Charter of Makkah is orientated around the following principles.

- 1 All people, regardless of their different ethnicities, races and nationalities, are equal under God.
- 2 We reject religious and ethnic claims of “preference.”
- 3 Differences among people in their beliefs, cultures and natures are part of God’s will and wisdom.
- 4 Religious and cultural diversity never justifies conflict. Humanity needs positive, civilized partnerships and effective interaction. Diversity must be a bridge to dialogue, understanding and cooperation for the benefit of all humanity.
- 5 God revealed Himself to all mankind and is the origin of all religious belief, and its various messages and methods, when practiced in their true form. We shall not define any religion by the false political practices of those claiming to be adherents.
- 6 Civilized cultural dialogue is the most effective way to achieve tolerance and understanding, deepen community ties, and overcome obstacles to coexistence. We recognize and respect the other’s legitimate rights and right to existence. We set aside preconceived prejudices, historical animosities, conspiracy theories and erroneous generalizations. Those

who were alive when the mistakes of history occurred are the ones responsible for them. No one should be held accountable for the mistakes committed by the other; no one should be held accountable for a sin committed by another, irrespective of when in history it occurred.

- 7 Religions and philosophies are exonerated from the sins committed by their adherents and claimants. These sins reflect the adherents' opinions, not the religions. The role of religious leaders is to call people to worship their Creator and seek His satisfaction by caring for his creations, protecting their dignity, and making positive societal and family contributions.
- 8 All Muslims should work together to prevent destruction and benefit humanity. We should establish a noble and effective alliance that goes beyond theory and empty slogans, and tackles the root causes of terrorism.
- 9 We should advance laws to deter the promotion of hatred, the instigation of violence and terrorism, or a clash of civilizations, which foster religious and ethnic disputes.
- 10 Muslims have enriched human civilization and can further enrich it today through their many contributions to addressing ethical, social and environmental challenges.
- 11 All individuals must combat terrorism and injustice, and reject exploitation and the violation of human rights. This duty is neither discriminatory nor partial.
- 12 The planet we enjoy is a gift given to us by God. The pollution and destruction of our natural resources are both a violation of our own rights as well as the rights of generations to come. To protect the right to live in a clean environment, all countries should sign climate treaties, cease polluting the environment, and manage industrial progress in a manner that safeguards mankind now and in future.
- 13 The clash of civilizations that calls for conflict and the spread of fear between one another are symptoms of isolation and hegemony, caused by racism, cultural dominance and seclusion.
- 14 These symptoms work together to deepen animosity among nations and peoples, and prevent peaceful coexistence and positive national integration, especially in multi-religious and multi-ethnic countries. Hatred is the raw material of nourishment for the industry of violence and terrorism.
- 15 The phenomenon of Islamophobia results from an inability to truly understand Islam. True understanding of Islam requires an objective view that is devoid of stereotypical and prejudicial notions, which are often projected by those falsely claiming to be true Muslims.
- 16 All individuals must promote noble moral values and encourage responsible social practices. They should cooperate in fighting moral, environmental and familial challenges according to concepts shared by Islam and humanity.
- 17 Personal freedom cannot justify violating human values or destroying social mores. Freedom does not equate chaos. Every freedom must stop before it limits the values and freedoms of others, and should respect the boundaries of constitutional and legal frameworks, while taking into account the public conscience and societal tranquility.
- 18 Intervention in the internal affairs of countries is a flagrant violation of sovereignty. This includes the practice of political dominance through economic or non-economic means, the promotion of sectarian beliefs and attempts to impose religious edicts (Fatwas) without respect for local circumstances, conditions and social conventions. Regardless of the pretext, intervention can never be justified, except in rendering relief aid,

humanitarian support or social development programs, or in answering a legitimate and official request from a prominent public interest to confront aggression or corruption.

- 19 We should follow the examples of accountable global development efforts that deter all types of corruption, apply the principle of accountability, and change consumption patterns that interfere with development goals, deplete economic capabilities or waste resources.
- 20 Responsible educational institutions form the social safeguard of Muslim communities. They require effective curricula and teaching tools. The responsibility includes promoting centrism and moderation, especially among youth.



Muslim Leaders listen tentatively during conference where Muslim Leaders agreed to a landmark Declaration on moderate Islam.

- 21 All world leaders and international organizations should cooperate effectively to achieve safe coexistence among the religious, ethnic and cultural communities of humanity. No individual should be discriminated against based on his or her religion, ethnicity or otherwise when it comes to political, economic or humanitarian assistance.

22 Global citizenship is a requirement. The principles of Islamic justice dictate respect for all nations, and their constitutions and laws. While citizens must faithfully pledge allegiance to their state, the state has requirements, too. It must ensure security and social peace, protect sanctuaries from desecration, and shield religious symbols from ridicule. These reflect the principle of mutual requirement, with rights for all elements of society, including religious and ethnic minorities.

23 An attack on a site of worship is a criminal act. The world must respond to such attacks with firmness of law, strong political will, and a unified stance against the mindset of terrorism that supports such acts.

24 Programs to combat hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, racial discrimination and environmental destruction require the solidarity of all responsible institutions. These include governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and those active in humanitarian service. Each should strive to preserve the dignity of mankind and the human rights of men and women.

25 The empowerment of women should not be undermined by marginalizing their role, disrespecting their dignity, reducing their status, or impeding their opportunities, whether in religious, academic, political or social affairs. Their rights include equality of wages and opportunity.

26 The highest responsibility of states and international organizations is the welfare of children, and their health, education and upbringing. The family also is responsible for development a child's critical thinking to broaden his or her horizons, nurture abilities and creativity, and develop communicative skills, while safeguarding against deviation.

27 We must enhance the identity of Muslim youth, with its five pillars — religion, country,

culture, history, and language – and protect it against exclusion. We must protect youth from the ideas of a clash of civilization, and block efforts to mobilize against those with whom we intellectually disagree. We must combat intellectual extremism along with militancy, violence or terrorism, by helping raise awareness among youth and guiding them according to the Islamic values of tolerance, peace and harmonious coexistence. These values teach comprehension of the other, preservation of the other’s dignity and rights, and observation of the national laws in which one resides.

- 28 We should establish an International Forum to promote constructive dialogue among youth inside and outside Muslim communities.
- 29 We should strive beyond resolutions, rhetorical initiatives and programs, and theoretical proclamations to achieve effective and authentic results that advance world peace and security, and fight techniques of annihilation, ethnic cleansing, forced migration, human trafficking and illegitimate abortion.
- 30 Only learned scholars such as those gathered at this Conference and agreeing to this Charter can speak in the name of the Muslim Ummah, or any matter pertaining to its affairs. We share common religious and human objectives to advance the interests of all. We recognize that this necessitates the participation of all, without exclusion, racism or discrimination against anyone, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or color.



**Blessing and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and all companions.**

*Issued in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in the vicinity of the Holy Ka’bah*

By the Conference on the “Charter of Makkah” convened between (22-24 Ramadhan 1440AH corresponding to 27-29 May 2019 )



Muslim leader speaks at opening ceremony in Makkah.

Opening ceremony at global conference on moderate Islam.



# SPECIAL SECTION

## RAMADAN

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

### The Spirit of Ramadan:

#### MWL Sends 500,000 Food Baskets to the Poor Around the World

It is the most important month in the Islamic calendar, one that demands the highest discipline and the most generous spirit of the individual practicing the Islamic faith and its Five Pillars of belief. Living up to this observance as well as to the humanitarian spirit of its own founding, the Muslim World League distributed more than 500,000 food baskets among the poor and the needy in 28 countries. These countries included those found in Africa, Asia and Europe, with H.E.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stating, according to the Saudi Gazette, that this “was within its humanitarian role to support the needy people everywhere in the world.” Each food basket contained “sufficient food ingredients” including sugar, tea, edible oil, rice and others. The distribution was done by the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which dispatched special envoys to these countries for the purpose.

According to the MWL, the baskets were distributed primarily in Egypt, South Africa, Jordan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, Comoros, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Djibouti, Sudan, Uganda, Togo, Malawi, Senegal, Mauritania, Tunisia, Bosnia, Somalia and Yemen.



MWL delivers Iftar meals during the sacred month of Ramadan.

# SPECIAL ESSAY

## A RAMADAN FOR THE WORLD

H.E. SHEIKH DR. MOHAMMAD BIN ABDULKARIM AL-ISSA

The Washington Times | June 4, 2019

A few days prior to the onset of the most holy month in the Islamic calendar, I traveled between New York and Washington, DC, for a series of historic interfaith meetings with several of the most prominent religious leaders from around the world. The multicultural dimensions of that U.S. visit established a new milestone in international recognition of my Mecca-based organization and of the Islamic faith as a whole.

One particularly significant aspect of the trip in terms of our global outreach, however, was the opportunity the occasion afforded to demystify and to exemplify the essential meaning of Ramadan, which began on May 5, at the conclusion of those groundbreaking meetings. We had just signed inaugural agreements with the highest echelons of the American Jewish community, established a new working relationship with Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, and voluntarily pledged material support to UN-mandated international relief agencies, irrespective of administrative preference to nation or faith. In those events, the true spirit of this month's sacred observances found a level of expression long lacking in substantive examples of our traditions to a Western or non-Muslim audience. As we Muslims say of Ramadan, it is the "best of times." In the context of my US trip and the optimism I have gained since then, that sentiment certainly defines this month.

To most non-Muslims, Ramadan is vaguely understood as a longish, localized ritual involving fasting from dawn until sundown, rigorous per-

sonal discipline, and a rather perplexing calculation of lunar cycles. Yet what is unique about this "most Islamic" of our customs as one of the five pillars of the faith is the fact that its practice is the most cross-culturally universal in terms of theological foundations, civilizational history and moral principles, for the most important feature in this thirty-day observance is the call to the spiritual purification and renewal of the individual. That specific ethical imperative is one that the three Abrahamic religions all share as a common tradition and therefore as a common hope.



In Islam, Ramadan was the month that the Holy Koran was revealed to Mohammad (peace be upon him), sent by revelation during the layla-al-qadr, or the "night of power." According to our hadith, all holy scripture was sent down during this month: the Scriptures to Abraham, the Torah to Moses, the Psalms to David, the Gospels to Christ. All followed by the revelation of the Koran



MWL launches aid program in Pakistan on May 13, 2019.

itself, on specific days throughout the month. As such, our tradition relates directly to the larger traditions of Judaism and Christianity in this focus upon personal repentance and renewal. For example, the historian Philip Jenkins has compared Ramadan to the strict Lenten disciplines of eastern Christianity; writers in the West often refer to Ramadan as “the Muslim Lent.” There are deep resemblances between Ramadan and this Christian practice — as well, of course, as many differences. More profound still, there is a claim by some Muslim Clerics that Jesus fasted during Ramadan. If true, one could interpret Islam as honoring and preserving aspects of authentic Christianity.

Within the Jewish tradition of Rosh Hashanah — the New Year of that faith — the restoration of personal virtue through repentance is also emphasized, as in Ramadan. The Yom Kippur observance that then follows is a time of fasting, akin in its custom to the Islamic imperative of “divine cleansing”.

In a word, all three faiths teach this essential principle of personal atonement and spiritual strength before God, recognizing that, ultimately, peace among nations may be gained only through the moral perfection of the individual.

These reflections came to mind when my organization signed an unprecedented cooperation agreement at the headquarters of the American Jewish Committee and later hosted one of the largest high-level assemblies of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders at the United Nations—events made all the more significant but also more poignant by the highly-charged international atmosphere resulting from the Christchurch, Sri Lanka, San Diego terror attacks only weeks earlier. But, as I said to Cardinal Dolan in New York, whose meeting followed on my first ever trip to the Vatican in 2017, our goal is show ‘how much there is that unites us and to reject the messages of those who divide us.’

A guiding rule in Ramadan is the practice of *tha-wab* — that is, the necessity of performing good deeds in the awareness that these are “being watched” by God. It is my sincere desire that as open, honest dialogue between world faiths continues to bridge our common human values at a level never seen before in history, such deeds and God’s watchfulness of them will secure, at last, peaceful results for all humanity. Although this month is a celebration of “the best of times” for Muslims, I can only wish a Ramadan for the entire world that all may share in these times — and for many months, if not years, to come.

# INTERNATIONAL

## SCIENCE, MEDICINE & TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

### MWL DEVOTION & SAUDI HIGH TECH DEDICATED TO HELPING THE AFRICAN BLIND

#### MWL Sends 500,000 Food Baskets to the Poor Around the World

Earlier this year, Muslim World League Chief H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa inaugurated a hospital in the Burundi capital of

Bujumbura designed to combat blindness. The program is part of the huge project to combat blindness in the African continent, where the MWL is represented by its own international relief, care and development foundation. Dr. Al-Issa's visit came "in solidarity and communication with patients," assuring them that the MWL is in contact with everyone in order to provide support and aid to humanity without religious or ethnic discrimination, "and that their Muslim brothers join with them and provide them with material and moral support."

The advances on this front are coming from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself. The Wilmer Insti-



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa greets a blinded Burundi man, January 2019. Photo Credit: Asharq al-Awsat.

tute at Johns Hopkins University in Washington recently called Saudi eye care among “the best in the world” and has formed a partnership with the King Khaled Eye Specialist Hospital in Riyadh. In the Kingdom, new colleges of medicine have been built over the past decade, as well as numerous modern hospitals in various regions. But the jewel in this crown is the King Khaled Hospital, “probably the largest (263 beds, 12 operating rooms), most luxurious, and best-equipped eye hospital in the world,” according to one journal review. For many generations, Saudi Arabia has witnessed epidemics of ocular diseases that created major health problems and contributed to the high degree of blindness or major ophthalmological diseases in the country, necessitating innovation in that area of specialization.

The cause of blindness, and medical issues in general, are close to the heart of the MWL, and Africa is its focus on that front. In March of this year, the MWL traveled to South Africa to conduct 500 operations for blindness, cataracts, and lens transplants, and that same month distributed eyeglasses throughout Somalia. Last year, the MWL conducted 4,000 operations in Nigeria as part of its health initiatives on the African continent. One million people benefited from a series of medical projects, including camps to combat blindness, treat orphans and establish a charitable hospital. The MWL recently launched a heart surgery program for the elderly, provided assistance for 14,000 orphans, and implemented a program to fight disease in Sudan’s eastern state of Kassala

As represented by its arm, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIROSA), the MWL also intensified its work in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, sponsoring a medical camp for eye cataract surgeries between Sept. 25 and Oct. 1, 2017. The camp is MWL’s second of its kind in Zimbabwe and was established as a response to the many requests MWL received two years ago when H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa called for the continuation of such medical camps, a major project organized and fully funded by the MWL.

Last year, the MWL also implemented an urgent relief campaign distributing food baskets to more than 40,000 refugees from Central Africa who are residing in the refugee camps on Chad’s borders.

It has been providing relief since the beginning of the armed conflict in the Central African Republic and the displacement of its residents to neighboring countries, including Chad. It is the only international humanitarian organization that is still providing aid for Central Africans, with major support from relevant governmental and security bodies in Chad (while most organizations long ago stopped their work on the borders for different reasons).



# HISTORICAL ESSAY

## THE FOUNDING OF THE UNHCR: THE MWL'S PLEDGED PARTNER IN RELIEF

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | June 2019

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa stunned the participants in the Responsible Leadership Summit with his pledge of USD 1 million to the US representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but it was certainly not the magnanimous spirit of the MWL leader that caused such astonishment. Rather, the source of the delighted shock was twofold in nature: First, the size of the gift – which surprised even Bawa Jain, by his own admission, who was on stage at the Summit with the two organizations for the celebratory closing of the day's sessions. The second reason had to do with the fact that the pledge was to an organization without a specific Islamic country-oriented mandate and, in fact, was originally founded to help Europeans. It is testimony to the multi-faith emphasis on aid,

relief and charity that the MWL, especially in the person of Dr. Al-Issa, so gallantly represents.

Few may be aware, however, how closely the MWL and the UNHCR work together. Their main area of joint cooperation is in Africa, where the MWL has conducted training camps in humanitarian aid under UNCHR auspices. The UNHCR organized two training sessions last year in coordination with the International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development, a sub-organization of the MWL in humanitarian endeavors, on the legal protection of refugees. UNHCR field workers have praised the efforts of the MWL in the field of humanitarian work, and expressed their satisfaction over the skills of the organization's staff.

The UN Refugee Agency emerged after World War II to help Europeans displaced by this conflict. Established on December 14, 1950, the agency was given a three-year mandate to complete its work. But the work didn't end. In 1956, UNHCR faced its first major emergency – the flight of refugees from Hungary after Soviet forces crushed its revolution. In following years, displacement grew into a worldwide phenomenon. In the 1960s, decolonization in Africa sparked the continent's first refugee crises, and UNHCR responded. Over the following decades, UNHCR went on to tackle emergencies in Asia and Latin America. By the end of the 20th century, displacement had come full circle.



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa speaks on the need for coexistence and tolerance among all religions, faiths and creeds at the Responsible Leaders Summit in New York.



Indefatigable, unstoppable and committed to Responsibility.

Fresh crises emerged in Africa and conflicts in the Balkans created Europe's first refugees since the end of WWII. With the turn of the 21st century, UNHCR has continued its work in Africa (in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia), and is active in Asia, where the Afghan refugee situation marks its thirtieth anniversary.

In recent years, UNHCR has expanded its role by coming to the aid of the internally displaced, and by helping millions of stateless people who have been denied basic rights because of their lack of citizenship. In Africa and Latin America, regional legal instruments on refugees have strengthened UNHCR's original 1951 mandate. In 1954, UNHCR was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its groundbreaking work aiding the plight of European refugees. In 1981, UNHCR received another peace prize for its worldwide efforts. The citation for this prize noted the political obstacles the agency faces and overcomes in the completion of its mandate.



“Responsible Leadership means opening up to others and facing challenges with confidence and optimism and constantly seeking solutions no matter how great the cost or risk.’

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.



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