

# Religions for Peace

*In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful*

## **THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM FOR PEACE AND CO-EXISTENCE**

Kyoto, Japan

21 September 2010

We—Muslim leaders and scholars from Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, together with Japanese religious leaders and scholars—convened in Kyoto, the old capital of Japan, with our sincere and strong wish for reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan and other parts of the world, to convey the message of Islam for peace and co-existence.

This high level consultation followed from the *Roundtable Discussion on Reconciliation and Peace: Prospects for Shared Security in Afghanistan* held in Tokyo Japan, (November 23 to 25, 2009) which included a recommendation that the World Conference of *Religions for Peace* Japanese Committee (WCRP/Japan) convene prominent Muslim leaders and scholars to reiterate the message of Islam for peace and co-existence.

We confirm that Islam is a religion of peace and mercy for all humankind. It respects the sacredness of life and inherent dignity of human existence, which is the foundation of all human rights without any distinction as to race, color, language, or religion. It teaches a fundamental principle that human beings were created into different nations and tribes that they might know each other based on human brotherhood.

We believe that Islam promotes tolerance, moderation, and the unity of the human family based on truth and justice. It emphasizes universal brotherhood and solidarity not only among Muslims but also with peoples of different faiths. It also recognizes the need for harmony with nature and the environment.

We are convinced that *jihad* is one of the important teachings of Islam and therefore it must be understood in the comprehensive context of the universal teachings of Islam that instruct Muslims to establish peaceful relations with others based on truth and justice. The greater *jihad* is indeed a struggle to

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transform oneself in accordance with the commands of the Supreme Creator and to work for the betterment of His creation and for the development of just, prosperous, and peaceful society. The lesser *jihad* is for legitimate self-defense based on Islamic Law. It does not condone aggressive war against others or the killing of innocent people by any means including suicide bombing.

We believe in the right of peoples to self-determination and we consider occupation as oppression and a source of violence. Therefore, we call for an end to occupations in any place of the world, including in Palestine.

Islam protects the security and well-being of persons and societies and proscribes all practices that would harm them, such as cultivating, stockpiling, trafficking, and usage of illicit drugs.

We recognize that Islam is misused through misinterpretation inside the Islamic community and misunderstanding outside of the Islamic community. This may arise from either ignorance or the pursuit of self-motivated, political, social and economic objectives that propagate hate, discrimination, injustice and intolerance. We request the media to be careful in its coverage of terrorism and to avoid linking it to any religion, including Islam.

Based on Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, we call on all states to take measures to fulfill their responsibilities to protect their citizens from religious and racial hatred. This would include the desecration of holy texts—such as the burning of the Holy Quran—and discrimination against followers of Islam over their values, beliefs, and outlook in the non-Muslim world. Freedom of expression includes the obligation to respect the feelings of others.

We express our deep appreciation to our hosts, WCRP-Japan, for their hospitality and for their partnership in our common pursuit of peace, justice, and shared security.

We pray for God The Almighty to guide us on the right path.