



THE AMMAN
INTERFAITH MESSAGE





The Amman *Interfaith* Message

Cover:
Detail of mosaic floor from the
Byzantine Church in Memorial of Moses,
Mount Nebo, Jordan, 530 CE,
symbolising *Vision* and *Unity*.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of God,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

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His Majesty King Abdullah II

(I) The Amman Message

In November 2004 H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan launched the Amman Message. Its purpose is to clarify to the world what true Islam is and what it is not.

Then, in July 2005 H.M. King Abdullah II convened an International Islamic Summit to specifically identify what Islam does and does not allow, who is a Muslim and who can speak for Islam. In it over 180 leading scholars, representing 45 countries, and supported by *fatwas* from 17 of the world's greatest Islamic authorities, reached, for the first time in history, a signed unanimous consensus on a number of critical issues:

First, the declaration recognized the legitimacy and common principles of all eight of the traditional schools of Islamic

religious law (*madhhabs*) from the *Sunni*, *Shi'i* and *Ibadi* branches of Islam, and of *Su* , *Ash'ari* and moderate *Sala* Islamic thought. Second, it defined the necessary qualifications and conditions for issuing legitimate *fatwas*. This, in and of itself, defines the limits and borders of Islam and Islamic behavior. Amongst other things, it exposes the illegitimacy of the so-called '*fatwas*' extremists use to justify terrorism, as these invariably contravene traditional Islamic sacred law (*Shari'ah*) and betray Islam's core principles. Third, the declaration condemned the practice known as *takfir* (calling others "apostates"), a practice that is used by extremists to justify violence against those who do not agree with them.

H.M. King Abdullah II is building upon these historical developments with political, religious, educational and media

initiatives to establish and implement the principles they represent at all levels of culture, education, religion and government in the Islamic world.

(II) The Amman *Interfaith* Message

Parallel to the Amman Islamic Message, in 2005 H.M. King Abdullah II also launched the **Amman *Interfaith* Message**. **The purpose of this message is** not merely to diffuse tensions between Muslims, Christians and Jews — the followers of the religions of Abraham (peace be upon him), and the believers in the One God — nor simply to promote tolerance between them, but rather **to establish full acceptance and goodwill between them**. For Muslims, Christians and Jews together comprise around 60% of the world's population, and establishing acceptance and

goodwill between them means in effect establishing peace and friendship over most of the world.

King Abdullah's *Interfaith Message* is based on the following Qur'anic injunctions:

Say: O ye people of the Scripture, come to a common word between us: that we will not worship other than God and not associate anything with Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides God.... (Aal-'Imran, 3:64).

Truly the believers are brothers. Therefore make peace between your brothers and observe your duty to God that perhaps ye may obtain mercy (Al-Hujurat, 49:10).

It has three central ideas that are

common to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, the three great Monotheistic religions: (1) belief in the Unity of God, (2) worship and devotion to God, (3) love and justice towards fellow human beings. In a speech at Catholic University in Washington DC on September 13th, 2005 H. M. King Abdullah II said the following:

"Jordan is an Islamic country – and home to a historic Christian community. All Jordanians participate in creating our nation and our future. I believe that we have together found, by the Grace of God, a larger community of shared respect. It is based on the deepest teachings of our religions, teachings found in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike: belief in and devotion to the One God ... and

love for our fellow human beings. In the Holy Bible, Jesus taught:

The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; / And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. / And the second commandment is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (The Gospel according to St. Mark 12: 29-31)

Likewise, in the Qur'an, it is written (3:64):

Say: O ye people of the Scripture, come to a common word between us,

that we will not worship other than God and not associate anything with Him....

It has never been more important that we understand – and live by – the “common word” of our faiths. It is a bond that can unite us in mutual respect ... and shield us against religious incitement. Such an approach is vital to global peace. Dogmatic conflicts create walls of mistrust. But if we break down those barriers, if we recognize our deepest shared values, we open the way to a better future. There are issues, certainly, but they are political, and political problems can be resolved by pragmatic solutions among people of good-will....”

A few days later, in a speech at

Riverside Church in New York, H.M. King Abdullah II added the following:

“Traditional Islam has the same two basic principles as Judaism and Christianity—to *love the Lord your God*, and to *love your neighbor as yourself*. The Holy Qur’an says, of the righteous (*Al-Bayinah*, 98:8):

God is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him.

And the Prophet Muhammad—peace and blessings be upon him—said:

By Him in whose Hand is my life, none of you believes until he [or she] loves for their neighbor, what they love for themselves.

We can all agree upon our common human nature and the need for peace, human rights, social justice and moral values. The Qur’an says (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:177):

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and giveth wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.

My friends, Muslim, Christian or Jew – extremism divides us from each other and corrodes us from within. It is time to move beyond a world of walls and suspicion. The answer lies not in challenges over the truth of each other's beliefs, but trust in God. God says in the Qur'an (*Al-Ma'idah*, 5:48):

And for each of you We have made a law and a practice; and if God wanted He would have made you a single people. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you. So vie with each other in good works. Unto God ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differed. ”

* * *

In addition to spreading and promoting this ecumenical message, H.M. King Abdullah II has launched a number of social, political and media interfaith initiatives with the same object of establishing true acceptance and goodwill between all believers, and thus peace and friendship between the nations of the world.

* * *

(III) The Jordanian Religious Experience

H.M. King Abdullah II's message did not come out of a void. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been blessed with one of the most harmonious religious experiences in the world. For although only 2.5% of the population (2005 estimate) are Christian (mostly

Orthodox Christians — Jordan is over 97% Sunni Muslim), Christian Arabs were the original inhabitants of Jordan. In fact, when in 629 CE, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent a contingent of Muslims (including his own cousin Ja'far bin Abi Talib) to Jordan to spread the message of Islam — and they were met and fought by the (Christian) Byzantine forces — the Ghassanid Arab Christian Tribes of Jordan fought with their fellow Arabs against their co-religionists whom they regarded as oppressors. They thus earned the title '*Al-Azeizat*', 'the re-enforcements' (of the Prophet's emissaries), a title by which their descendants are still known and revered to this day in Jordan.

Christians in Jordan hold a special place at all levels of Jordanian life and are fiercely patriotic. Historically

speaking, there is no country in the world with more religious harmony, camaraderie and goodwill than Jordan at either the government or the popular level. In the Parliament Christians have 9 seats reserved for them out of a total of 110 seats (i.e. over 8%, compared with their real population of 2.5%); out of a cabinet of about 24 ministers, they always hold 1-3 ministries; they hold top posts in the Army, the Intelligence, the Judiciary, the Royal Court, the media, the educational institutes and at every level of government administration. They are amongst the largest landowners and generate close to 10% of the county's private sector economy. The Christians Churches enjoy their own official council and their own laws whereby they determine their own affairs. Moreover, Jordan officially protects and promotes their

Holy Sites. In acknowledgment of this, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem¹ still chooses to recognize only the sovereignty of the King of Jordan and of Jordanian law over its Holy Sites. On 18th of August 2005, all the representatives of the Orthodox Christian Communities, Churches, NGOs, institutes, popular and political groups *in Jordan, Palestine and Israel* unanimously signed a letter to H.M. King Abdullah II saying the following:

The Chairman and Members and the various organizations of the Central Orthodox Committee in Jordan and Palestine, meeting in a plenary session in Amman on the evening of 18/8/2005, are honored to send to His Royal Majesty deepest thanks and appreciation and most sincere sentiments of respect and deepest

allegiance and loyalty, and are in full concurrence with His Majesty's gracious actions and sincere efforts to preserve and protect the Holy Places (both Muslim and Christian)... Permit us, your Majesty, on this occasion to also acknowledge and approve the righteous role of your government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

In recognition of his tireless efforts to maintain this peace and spread it beyond the borders of Jordan, on November 16, 2005 H.M. King Abdullah II became the first non-Christian to receive the John Paul II Peace Prize.

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2nd Edition

Footnotes

¹ The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest church in the world and is the original Church of the Holy Land. Its first Patriarch was St. James, Jesus' (peace be upon him) kinsman. It owns, amongst other holy places, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Baptist Site in Jordan.

والحمد لله رب العالمين

And praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds

For more information on
H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan,
please see www.kingabdullah.jo

