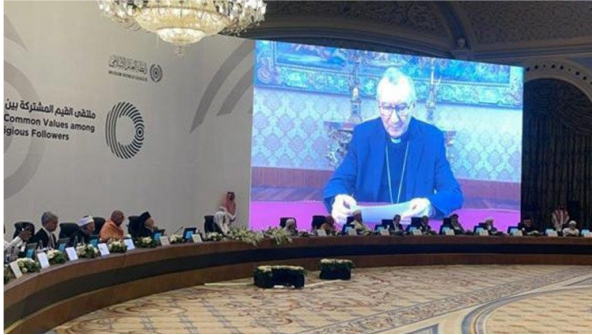


Muslim scholars, bishops, rabbis and Hindu leaders meet in Saudi Arabian religious conference

Islamic, Christian, Jewish and Hindu faith leaders defend family unit, children's education



Timothy H.J. Nerozzi, *Fox News*, 12 May 2022

World religious leaders gathered in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday in a display of inter-faith cooperation.

The Muslim World League (MWL) convened the first-ever "Forum on Common Values among Religious Followers" in Riyadh with support from the Vatican, evangelical church leaders, internationally recognized rabbis, and more. The forum, which featured panel discussions of international religious issues and offered opportunities to establish cross-cultural partnerships between faiths, produced an official communiqué outlining fundamental agreements endorsed by all faiths represented.

"The Forum's collective objectives were to reach a universal consensus within the context of a common civilizational vision to enhance cooperation and trust between global spiritual leaders, leverage their commonalities by placing them at the forefront of common principles of human values, promote the values of moderation and harmony, effectively support efforts to advance tolerance and peace, and set rational intellectual-frameworks to immunize against the dangers of extremist ideology and behavior regardless of its source," the communiqué reads.

The communiqué went on to list areas of agreement for religious policy reached at the summit, including the fundamental role of religion to society, the spiritual basis for basic human rights, and a rejection of an "inevitable civilizational clash" view of future religious affairs.

"The thesis of an inevitable civilizational clash, and attempts to achieve religious, cultural, political and economic advantage without respecting rights or ethics, are forms of extremism and arrogance, and an embodiment of racism driven by a superiority complex," the faith leaders wrote. "It demonstrates an ignorance about the power that the Creator possesses over us – which is evident from human history. The true advantage (irrespective of which discipline it is achieved in) comes 'organically' through 'ethical' power that is made possible through tangible, sincere and noble intentions."

A central agreement of the forum was the necessity to protect family unity. The leaders referred to the family unit as the "nucleus of society" and demanded international institutions – including the United Nations – protect the integrity of both the family and children's education.



The forum also initiated plans for an "Encyclopedia of Common Human Values" – a proposed religious document for global cooperation outlining basic rights and expectations for interfaith governance.

Major Christian attendees included Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and Congress of Christian Leaders President Johnnie Moore Jr. The Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Ivan Zoria, also attended the event.

The MWL is a government-funded NGO that aims to both evangelize Islam abroad and advocate for greater religious freedom in countries suffering under fundamentalist Islam.

Muslim World League Secretary General Dr. Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Issa is considered by many to be the leading voice against extremist Islam worldwide. Issa previously spoke with Fox News Digital about the MWL's efforts to connect with other religions and affect meaningful change in interfaith relationships around the world.



"Interfaith cooperation is not merely a symbolic endeavor," Issa told Fox News Digital in an interview. "It must be actualized through real world action. It is this thought that informs the very soul and operations of MWL."

After leaving his minister of justice post in 2015, Issa moved to MWL, where he currently serves as its leader. However, the MWL is not totally separated from the government. The organization was founded in 1962 by then-Crown Prince Faisal Bin Abdul-Aziz. It is based out of Mecca, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to serve as its main benefactor.

Issa says his tenure as secretary general has been focused on breaking through entrenched divisions and offering concrete changes.

Timothy Nerozzi is a writer for Fox News Digital. You can follow him on Twitter @timothynerozzi and can email him at timothy.nerozzi@fox.com