

**Religious leaders call for returning to religion as means of dialogue**  
Rafiq A. Tschannen, *Muslim Times*, 31 July 2014 (<http://www.themuslimtimes.org/>)

**AMMAN — HRH Prince Hassan has joined Christian and Jewish leaders in a joint appeal to “the leaders and brokers of power” in the Middle East and the world to turn holy spaces into venues for dialogue and conversation.**

Instead of devolving “into venues that separate us from each other”, places of worship should help followers of all faiths “recognise the values of human dignity and solidarity to which [they] all subscribe”, said a statement issued Thursday.

“Only by having these shared conversations, we will be able to better understand each other,” it added.

The statement is signed by Prince Hassan, founder and chairman of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies and co-founder and chairman of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD), and several Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars and religious leaders.

“In recent days, we have read with horror about Christians being asked to leave the town of Mosul within twenty-four hours. We have also heard about the desecration of Christian holy spaces and their symbols...” the document read.

“These actions are an appalling blot on the proud tradition of pluralism in a region which has been home to Chaldeans, Assyrians and other Churches of the East for more than 1,700 years,” the signatories said.

“These horrors continue to unfold on a daily basis and follow a brutal period of fighting in Syria... We cannot stand by and watch idly, as the lives of the most vulnerable, our women and our children are destroyed in the name of religion,” they added.

They also expressed concern over the “ongoing situation in Israel and Gaza”, saying they “have been particularly distressed by how the name of religion has been invoked to justify the murder of ordinary people”.

Calling for respecting the sanctity of the rights to freedom and human dignity in line with the teachings of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, the signatories said religious leaders can inspire higher ethical standards among followers of all faiths.

“When people turn to their religious leaders for advice, they must not receive rigid statements drawn from the misinterpretations of religious beliefs.

“Rather, they should be able to draw inspiration from the clear ethical standards that have been set over time, the standards that are born out of the timeless concepts of justice, compassion, generosity and imagination,” said the statement, a copy of which was sent to The Jordan Times.

In addition to Prince Hassan, the signatories are: Jamal Daniel, co-founder, vice-president and trustee at FIIRD; Chief Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat, co-founder and secretary of FIIRD; Michael L. Fitzgerald, FIIRD board member; Metropolitan Emmanuel of France (Ecumenical Patriarchate), an FIIRD board member; William Vendley, secretary general of Religions for

Peace; Ahmed Al Kubaisi, founder of Scholars Association in Iraq; and Ahmed Abbadi, secretary general of the League of Mohammedan Scholars in Morocco.

SOURCE: JORDAN TIMES