

**HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**

**Keynote Address  
To The**

**OSCE CONFERENCE  
TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST  
RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION**

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Your Royal Highness;  
All Holiness;  
Excellencies;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;  
Dear Friends.

After that generous introduction I feel that I should sit down. I hope that the departure of the Prime Minister is not a sign of what I am about to say. But as I have come to realize, the heads of government are too busy being busy and therefore as a visionary, as I have been inadequately described, have to work to ensure that the silent majority becomes an articulate majority. May I say that first of all if the loadstar of Judaism is law, the loadstar of Islam is justice and the loadstar of Christianity is love, then I feel that we need the rule of law and justice as a commitment to a code of morality which we all share.

I identify Archbishop Fitzgerald as one of our participants, and I would like you to know that on October 1 we will be publishing a casket – the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran - as a prelude to post doctoral teaching of *conscience universelle et valeurs partagé* (universal consciousness and shared values): enhancing what is universal and respecting difference.

With all due respect to all this talk of tolerance, Mr Chairman, may I say I prefer the word *respect*. I do not want to tolerate you and you do not want to tolerate me. But I think if we can learn to respect each other's traditions, particular in this time of world history when it seems to me as though it is being determined by exceptions rather than rules. We need to develop a continuum of commitment to respect for the other.

Two years ago I went to Auschwitz as Moderator of the WCRP (World Council for Religions for Peace). I asked myself, "Why am I accepting this invitation?". I thought to myself Christian and Jewish values particularly, with the emphasis placed on them after the Second World War are in effect our values many centuries before the upheavals of the World Wars. If I exempted myself I would be accused of being a hypocrite and not contributing to triangulating a conversation. The Catholic Church thanked me for contributing to a dialogue, a trialogue, and the Jewish participants were deeply moved by the fact that Muslims and Jews have been the victims ever since the holy inquisition in Spain ever. It was the Ottoman Empire that opened its arms to migrants from the Western Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean, but let us all remember that the killing continued in the Balkans.

I would like to ask you in the wake of the horrific bombings of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, in the wake of the violence that persists, in the horrific bombings in Madrid (a new chapter of September 11) the bombings in Istanbul, the daily killings in our blighted region of the world, in Palestine, in Iraq, Darfur, in Afghanistan. I am not being judgmental; it isn't my role to be judgmental. I want to ask, "when will the pain and suffering be understood?" For only when it is understood will the pain and suffering stop.

I believe that it was the Prime Minister who spoke of prohibiting discrimination; I would rather suggest that we move to a world of cosmopolitanism rather than a world of compulsion. That we continue to rail against unilateralism and call for multilateralism. I would like to suggest when we speak of migration and integration. That there are three letters which should be remembered; TIM. Territoriality, Identity and Migration.

I recall at a meeting of the Middle East North Africa Summit in 1995, ministers of Europe present may wish to know that Shimon Peres and I, after Casablanca, went to the European Union and we said that thirty-five billion dollars are required for a decade of infrastructure development.

To encourage the will of migrants to stay. The answer was a bureaucratic answer; again I am not being judgmental. The answer was first come, first served. There was no question of we will form a working group to come back in a few months. There was no understanding of how we can develop this vision to encourage people to stay in their countries, by providing clean drinking water and infrastructure. We were talking about ten years. After the destruction of the Twin Towers, including four hundred Muslims and people of many nationalities, including people from my own tiny country Jordan, the homeland security bill was signed in the United States. That same figure of thirty five billion dollars was signed to create the situation of enhanced security in the United States.

What, ladies and gentleman, has happened to crisis avoidance? I would like to remind you that before the atrocious attacks in America, occurring only one week after the Durban Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances ended in controversy. I with among others Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, Salem of Tanzania, Roland of Brazil were asked to convene in Geneva in a group of so called eminent persons. I call myself a non-eminent impert. We produced a statement calling for a Racial Equality Index.

You are all aware of the Human Development Report, started in consultation with my late friend from Pakistan Mahmoud Al-Huqq in 1995, but what about the Racial Equality Index? I would like to suggest that it is only when we provide the necessary impetus of support for initiatives that we promote mutual respect between Jews, Christians and Muslims. In particular after 9/11 in dialogue between Islam and the West and Islam and the United States, can we embark on an honest journey towards crisis avoidance?

However, the three traditional baskets for discussion – economics, politics and security – which can be traced from Helsinki through to Barcelona have had humanity/culture as an afterthought. How long will culture remain an afterthought? This fourth basket, culture, has to be added if we are going to make a real change in the human, as well as physical environment.

We have failed to consider, to our own loss, the ethical dimension to the challenges that face us today. Now, more than ever, we need an ethical code of conduct and I call on Mr Foxeman, if he is in this audience, to say that I agree with him on the basis of an inclusionist, non-discriminatory commitment to a code of conduct to protect us from anti-Semitism, anti-Muslimism, anti-Americanism, anti-Arabism; we need a code of conduct

which protects us from Islamophobia, Semitic-phobia, Arab-phobia, Amerophobia and Xenophobia. But rather than solely working against something we need to work *for* something.

I have the respect which all or many of us share for Walter Sisulu who I had the privilege of visiting in Soweto, for Yehudi Menuhin, a man from a different background and different religion. In Salzburg Chancellor Schussel invited us to a conversation on politics, business and the arts.

In Budapest next year we are meeting to promote a knowledge society where science participates and I would like to invite you to consider that the world conference against racism, should consider working for the principle of universal humanity enshrined not only in the charter of the United Nations, but in our own: I recall the work of my late departed friend and colleague Sadruddine Agha Khan, and twenty eight nationalities who participated in that meeting including Simone Veil, herself a survivor of the holocaust, Robert McNamara and many others from all over the world for a new international humanitarian order.

Ladies and gentlemen, last year the United Nations General Assembly Resolution called yet again, as it has done consistently since 1988 for the adoption of a New International Humanitarian Order. I refer to Resolution 57-184. The principles are simple: the ethics of human solidarity, global issues, man against man, man against nature. I recall meeting with refugees, with the families of the *Disparacidos* in Buenos Aires, with the families of the street children, with the victims of arthritis, we recognized the forces of change vulnerable groups and man made disasters. But when the NGOs came to us they said we are the lobby of the powerless and I had to admit to them we are the powerless lobby for the powerless.

That is why I recognized the strength of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly where Bosnians, Croats and Serbs speak to each other. I recognized the challenges of the Turkish, Armenians and Azeris and say to people in our region that if the intensity of hatred is so high that part of the world with all their historical baggage why can we not do something about it before it is too late in developing the ERASMAS, SOCRATES, MINERVA program, teaching by analogy, leading to your generous initiative in Europe of a TEMPUS programme of funding the Centre for Mediterranean Humanities.

I will be meeting some of you in Turkey presumably at the EU, OIC Foreign Ministers meeting and I want to make specific proposals; the call

for the teaching by analogy. The rich putting themselves in the shoes of the poor. Arabs putting themselves in the shoes of the Jews and vice versa. Secondly, after education the call for media. Disintermediating the media, citizens' conferencing, teleconferencing, not the monologue about the need for dialogue, but the interactive process of partnership in our common humanity.

Unfortunately we in the region are conditioned by circumstances not of our doing and I would like to remind you that it is barely sixty years since the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, that "very light sleeper", continues to raise its ugly head with every new generation. I say to my Jewish friends of Polish extraction that it is interesting for me - and I am not playing with words I hope - how it is that a Pole is Semite, but I an Arab am not? However, in the words of Pastor Neumann, which I paraphrase, "When they came for the communist I didn't care, when they came for the Jew I didn't care, when they came for me there was no one left to care".

Ambassador Roberto Toscano of Italy cautions that a lot will depend on wise policies on the part of governments – let me stress policies ladies and gentlemen not politics. The public good not private agendas. There was a Byzantine sophist who had on his gravestone in the sixth century, as if it was the cause of his death, "il a ete touché par l'amour de bien être publique" (he was touched by the love of the public good).

We need to develop a capacity to accept higher levels of cultural diversity within all countries. The situation of Muslims in many parts of the world appears to be 'problematic'. Do not misunderstand me, my wife was born in Calcutta and her family has married Sikhs, Hindus, Parsis, my mother was born in Istanbul in Turkey, so pluralism is not a theoretical exercise in my family. I believe in celebrating every holy day, particularly if it offers you a good meal. As Toscano contends, the answer may not be assimilation or differentialism, but pluralism. Perhaps one of the ways to deal with such neo-racisms is to acknowledge every civilisation's symbiotic, organic relationship with the perceived 'other'. Thus, in the case of Islam and Muslims, the shared Judaeo-Christian-Islamic heritage of Europe – and by extension America – should be reflected throughout school textbooks and in popular culture more widely.

Our efforts at promoting awareness and cultural pluralism are clearly falling short. It is a sad sign of the times when we see the British Shadow Home Secretary associated with a book heavily criticised as being little more than 'Islamophobic rant'. Yet this is not an isolated incident, rather part of a more worrying trend in which we have also witnessed in recent

weeks the ‘outing’ of a senior British Council press officer as the author ‘Harry’ Cummins, the contributor of a series of inciteful and ignorant articles to the Sunday Telegraph.

Madeleine Bunting, writing in the Guardian newspaper on the 3 September, warned of a ‘blind strand of opinion which refuses to accept the phenomenon of Islamophobia. Refuses to see how it represents a mutated form of racism, and refuses to see how such comments about Jews or blacks would be quite rightly regarded as unprintable’. I have been involved in the United Kingdom for over twenty five years in Christian, Jewish and Muslim conversations. I studied Hebrew at University and I am the only Muslim member on the Board of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

I think I am permitted to say that it is unfair that such examples be taken as the norm. What is often not discussed is the manner in which integration of the ‘others’ contributes towards a vibrant, rich mosaic of multiple identities which have strengthened pluralism in most European countries today.

I would like to say here, to my European friends, that we are aware of the pains which are troubling you at this moment. I said to Rita Süßmuth when she presented her study on immigration to the German Parliament “It reads very well, but there is very little reference to the reason for migration”. To the best of my knowledge, and I stand corrected, there is only one centre in Germany and possibly the whole of Europe, that studies migration: the University of Osnabrück. Cause and effect. Sadly I know from my work with refugee studies - there is a centre at Oxford University at York University in Canada - very little being done to study the full phenomenon. For that reason when I was invited by Senators Ludgar and Biden to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Meeting to call for partnership for what is sometimes called Casablanca-to-Calcutta or Marrakech-to-Bangladesh, sometimes referred to as the Greater Middle East Initiative, I said provided it is based on partnership and not patronage. Partnership means full involvement by all of us for a better understanding of the other, putting the text into the context. Moving from our episodic existence – moving from crisis to crisis – to a broader view of intra-regional co-operation and intra-independence.

As Muslims, we must share the blame when raising the issue of the dire level of ignorance that afflicts non-Muslim perception of important issues such as women’s rights. We must also share the blame as it has been pointed out in numerous reports of our own shortcomings in governance,

politisation of the armed forces, the absence of vibrant civil society, some say in the absence of democracy. But let me say that the essence of democracy is freedom. Particularly before 9/11 I have challenged the ministers of interior of the Muslim and Arab world to meet with thinkers to define clearly the limits of freedom which I would define in one word: responsibility. Solutions to our problems are not, in the words of the film *Casablanca*, *only round up the usual suspects*.

I am participating in a conference in a few days time entitled *It's Not Only About Economy, Stupid!* I would like to suggest that we move from the culture of futility to the culture of altruism and of giving.

Shimon Peres and I agreed, many years ago, that would it not be of greater inspiration to see the U.N co-coordinating blue overalls rather than blue helmets?

In other parts of the world, "Violent conflict causes massive humanitarian suffering, undermines development and human rights and stifles economic growth". (*Ensuring Progress in the Prevention of Violent Conflict: Priorities for the Greek & Italian EU Presidencies 2003, April 2003*) in such scenarios, "conflict creates conditions where terrorism and organized crime thrive", the parallel economy, the parallel society thrive. That is why I applaud the work of the Grameen Bank and those poverty empowerment agencies that work in different parts of the South Asia and South East Asia. I work with the Catholic Bishops Council and the Asian Muslims Association in Thailand and Cambodia, where we are addressing or attempting to address the question of the sex slave trade. Over a million and a half children are sold every year into the sex slave trade. Do governments want to know? In Africa we are working together with the Copt Church and the Mosque in altruism in the HAC (Hope For African Children). Where is the support that we require? My colleague Bartholomeos of the Nuclear Threat Initiative knows that we have spent over five billion dollars through the initiative with Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar and dismantling Weapons of Mass Destruction and finding alternative occupations. Can we imagine that scale of funding for the issues I am addressing? The revenues in the Gulf Region and I am not talking about Iraq, Libya or Algeria, the Gulf Region has increased thirty five billion dollars over the last year. Is it not the right of millions of people to ask where is that money going? Three Arab countries represent seventy eight million people Egypt, Morocco and Yemen; seventy eight million illiterate people. We ask where are the limits to ignorance? In the words of Conrad Adenauer where are the limits to man's stupidity?

It is indeed a vicious cycle of despair, but “To fight poverty is to fight the war to end all wars, and to win that war is the only way to winning lasting peace”. (Eveline Herfkens, UN Secretary General’s Executive Coordinator for the Millennium Development Goals Campaign, WFUNA, 9 May 2003).

One last word. Partnerships of peace which would address root causes such as defense expenditures, terrorism (including state-sponsored violence), humanitarian contingency planning, poverty alleviation, education and development, civil society, and so on. Ethics or morality dictate respect for human dignity and ethical change cannot be brought about within an exclusionist discourse.

I hope that we can start speaking sooner rather than later. Not of petropolitics, but anthropolitics. I hope that the concept of a New International Humanitarian Order will be studied by you as a bridge of understanding of working towards integrating those common values that all humanity shares.

I would like to conclude my remarks by quoting a zahirite – a who lived in Spain between 1165 and 1240. Think where we have come in terms of psychological environment since then. In 1165 Ibn Arabi said:

*"My heart is open to all the winds:  
It is a pasture for gazelles  
And a home for Christian monks,  
A temple for idols,  
The Black Stone of the Mecca pilgrim,  
The table of the Torah,  
And the book of the Koran.  
Mine is the religion of love.  
Wherever God's caravans turn,  
The religion of love  
Shall be my religion  
And my faith."*



**Websites of interest:**

Majlis El Hassan  
[www.elhassan.org](http://www.elhassan.org)

The Arab Thought Forum  
[www.almuntada.org.jo](http://www.almuntada.org.jo)

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<http://www.clubofrome.org/tt30/index.php>