

## **Al-Azhar, the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue issue joint statement**

*Symposium at Al Azhar University in Cairo titled, “The Role of Al Azhar Al- Sharif and of the Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence”.*



*University of al-Azhar*

**MUNIR BAYOUK\*, VATICAN INSIDER, 24 FEBRUARY 2017**

The Joint Committee of Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue held a symposium at Al Azhar University in Cairo on February 22-23 titled, “The Role of Al Azhar Al- Sharif and of the Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence”.

At the conclusion of the two-day symposium, the conferees issued the following statement:

In the framework of the joint cooperation between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, the two Councils held a symposium at Al-Azhar Al-Sharif in Cairo in the period between 22th and 23th of February 2107 titled: “The Role of Al-Azhar Al- Sharif and of the Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence”.

Representatives of Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue have participated in the symposium.

The symposium was started by a speech of Professor Abbas Shauman, Deputy Al-Azhar, and Professor Mahmoud Hamdi Zakzouk, Head of Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and a member of the Authority of Senior Scholars. Also, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tuaran delivered a speech.

The speeches of the symposium were delivered over two days. The participants presented six research papers, in Arabic and English, on the following points:

1. First point: Fanaticism, its causes and ways to counter it.
2. Second point: Extremism, its causes and ways to counter it.
3. Third point: Violence, its causes and ways to counter it.

The symposium has concluded the following recommendations:

- 1.** The symposium recommends the significance of dialogue between Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue and activating the common human values to counter fanaticism, extremism and violence.
- 2.** The symposium recommends the importance of respecting the religious diversity.
- 3.** The symposium stresses the necessary of addressing causes of the phenomena of extremism, violence, poverty, ignorance and the political abuse of religion and incorrect understanding of religious texts.
- 4.** The symposium recommends the necessity of paying attentions to the issues that concern young people, opining dialogue channels with them, explaining correct concepts ordained by religions, training them and developing.
- 5.** The symposium reaffirms paying attentions to education curriculum that establish the common human values, taking into consideration women and youth issues and bearing the responsibility of caring for children.
- 6.** The symposium stresses the values of mercy, love and respecting other official values in countering extremism, violence and intolerance.
- 7.** The symposium stresses the necessary of difference management. Diversity in faith or sect does not mean to negate peaceful coexistence.
- 8.** The symposium stresses the importance of cooperation between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue in terms of promoting coexistence and communication with the decision makers to cooperate in the areas of security and development.
- 9.** The symposium confirms the position adopted by Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue to consider dialogue as a basis for the relations between peoples, individuals, civilizations and religions in order to establish peace, security and stability. The symposium also rejects all forms of fanaticism, extremism and violence.
- 10.** We recommend that such symposium and meetings between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for inter-Religious Dialogue for clearing any misconceptions and confirming the values of tolerance and easiness among the followers of religions.
- 11.** The symposium recommends all the international governments, organizations and authorities to cooperate with each other in countering extremist and violent groups. These groups have negatively impacted stability and peaceful coexistence among peoples.
- 12.** Assisting the call to alleviate violence and stress among the followers of religions in many countries of the world and eliminating the phenomenon of developing the spirit of hatred and animosity for religions and defaming religious symbols, since these are some hostile actions.

**13.** Establishing serious cooperation to counter, in a realistic and applicable way, terrorism and terroristic organizations; working on drying their resources, stopping giving them supplies of money and weapons, closing the gates to the social communications before them in order to protect young people from its devastating ideologies.

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