

Religions for Peace

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Esteemed Colleague in *Religions for Peace*:

The recent threat by a Florida-based pastor to burn copies of the Koran on the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack is grievously wrong. It is intentionally designed to offend what is utterly sacred and dear to Muslims. It has rightly been denounced by the heads of Christian communities around the world.

Sincere committed believers of all faiths reject this kind of “double” manipulation of religions. In this case, Islam is the clearly targeted victim: it is intentionally being slandered and demeaned. This is wrong and people around the world feel moral solidarity with Muslims when they are so unjustly affronted.

At the same time, the vast majority of Christians also feel grieved and grossly manipulated by this vulgar threat. Given the global media attention, it can appear like “Christianity as a whole” is being disrespectful to Islam. This, too, is wrong.

Unfortunately, every religious community is vulnerable to this kind of “double” manipulation. In these cases, extremists misuse the name of their own religion to attack others. They feel they succeed if they can create tensions and polarizations among religious communities and a backlash from the community they attacked.

In every such situation, sincere religious believers need to defend one another across the boundaries of their religious communities. It is critically important for religious leaders and communities to stand together in solidarity whenever any religious community is slandered or abused.

More principled multi-religious dialogue, cooperation and solidarity is the necessary response in the present situation. It is, perhaps, the only really effective antidote to extremism.

Religions for Peace, the world’s largest multi-religious organization, has advanced principled multi-religious cooperation for forty years. During these years, leaders and believers of the world’s great religions have worked side-by-side in solidarity for peace in over 100 countries.

Throughout these years, religious leaders and other believers have worked together to mediate civil wars, used their local mosques, churches and temples to assist those impacted by disease or poverty regardless of their faith; and stood together to reject the abuse of religion. As they worked together, they also grew in their mutual respect, trust, solidarity and friendship. Such qualities are especially needed whenever an extremist intentionally tries to offend an entire community by engaging in wrongful, disrespectful acts.

Yours in solidarity,



Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General