



DIALOGUE OF ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS FOR WORLD PEACE:

A Series of Webinar from
Ministry of Religious Affairs of
The Republic of Indonesia and
The Leimena Institute

Main Editor: Dr. Muhammad Zain



PERKUMPULAN INSTITUT LEIMENA

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FOREWORD

Praise Allah, Almighty God, for His mercy and grace so we can publish a book entitled "Dialogue of Abrahamic Religions for World Peace: A Series of Webinars from Ministry of Religious Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia and The Leimena Institute."

Implementing a series of international webinars dialogue on Abrahamic religions for world peace continues the Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable on 22 July 2020. On this occasion, the 2019-2020 Minister of Religion, General TNI (Purn) Fachrul Razi, expressed the thought that "Our Main Task is to seek common ground as the Big Family of Abrahamic Religions to be able to work together for the sake of Peace and the Progress of Human Civilization".

This book is a proceeding documenting the complete presentation of the 2019-2020 Minister of Religion, General (Ret.) Fachrul Razi in the Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable (22 July 2020), as well as speakers' papers, questions and answers, and participants' comments from 3 (three) webinar series, namely the International Webinar "Understanding the Abrahamic Family Through Qibla Study" (21 October 2020), International Webinar " The Role of the Abrahamic Family of Religions in Promoting Peace in the World" (27 October 2020) and an International Webinar commemorating International

Day of Tolerance: A New Narrative of Abrahamic Family Tolerance from the United Arab Emirates (24 November 2020).

We especially thank Dr. Muhammad Zain from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia as the main editor and various parties who have helped to ensure this book is well organized and finished.

We realize that there are still many shortcomings in writing this book, and we expect suggestions and constructive criticism for improvement.

Finally, we hope that this book will be of use to stakeholders and the general public who wish to learn and continue to strive to improve cooperation and communication between the Families of Abrahamic Religions so that they can contribute to world peace.

Jakarta, 3 June 2022

ABRAHAMIC FAITHS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
AND LEIMENA INSTITUTE

Jakarta, Wednesday, July 22, 2020

SPECIAL POINTS OF MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

ON ABRAHAMIC FAITHS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Jakarta, Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Assalamu 'alaikum wr.wb.

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

1. Today's discussion is purely a humanitarian dialogue for peace and the benefit of mankind, including Indonesian people. With dialogue, we can reduce tension and conflict due to misunderstanding, prejudice, and lack of communication between the three Abrahamic religions. This first meeting is intended to get inputs on things that became challenges, opportunities, and steps that could be taken to build dialogue and cooperation. The discussion is exploratory, exploratory and brainstorming.
2. Building a dialogue with religious leaders and peace activists in this forum, I am optimistic that it can be done in a more gentle and effective way than political

approach. These dialogues are expected to relieve tensions such as those caused by radicalism and extremism in the name of religion, as well as forcing the will of the strong to the weak.

3. We admit that we have friction. This friction between the Abrahamic religions did not occur overnight, but was the result of a long process. Maybe many of us have been busy with our own people. Whereas, human relations always need time and mutual attention to grow.
4. As a result of this negligence, religion becomes a victim and is accused of being a source of conflict. Talking about the conflict between the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam —, like it or not, the world's attention is focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, because the adherents of the three religions are directly involved and have interests there. Therefore, people of Abrahamic religions need to actively try to support a just peace there. Even if it is difficult to achieve, joint efforts and concerns will surely lead to a better peace in the region. Don't let the enemy of humanity take advantage of this conflict to continue sowing enmity and evil among us.
5. The role of religious leaders and intellectuals is very important to see these political conflicts more clearly. The main meeting point of the Abrahamic religions is that we acknowledge that God is one and only. We must be able to show that religion is not a source of violence and backwardness, but a source of peace and progress

instead. Humanitarian and religious dialogue can also give birth to wider cooperation, both in the fields of religion, as well as culture, politics, and even the economy. Hopefully this dialogue will be the first step to build an infrastructure for world peace and progress.

6. Our main task is to find common grounds as a big family of Abrahamic religions to be able to work together for peace and progress of human civilization. Dialogue is important, but a series of dialogues must lead to concrete results for the common good. Don't stop at empty slogans. This requires collaboration and collaboration.
7. This meeting would be in vain without your supports, ladies and gentlemen, both in Indonesia and abroad. As an African proverb says, "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together". We are not in a race between the Abrahamic religions, but we must prepare ourselves to go a long way. Let's walk together!
8. This dialogue between Abrahamic religions is actually a continuation of similar efforts from world religious leaders so that religion remains a blessing for all humans and the universe, as stated in *Amman's treatise* (2004), *a common word* (2007), *Marrakesh Declaration* (2016), *alliance of virtue for the common good* (2018), document of human brotherhood between Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Prof. Ahmad Thayyib, and Pope Francis (2019), and *Charters of Makkah* (2019).
9. We also need to convey that the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia fosters 6 official religions,

namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. We provide guidance in the form of religious services, both ritual worship, houses of worship, holy books as well as religious education, starting from primary, secondary and tertiary education.

10. Finally, with the hope of the blessing of God Almighty, while saying *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, I declare that the Abrahamic faiths roundtable discussion is officially opened.
11. Thus, may we always be in the protection and guidance of the almighty God. And thank you.

Wassalamu 'alaikum wr. Wb.

Jakarta, 22 July 2020

Minister of Religion

Fachrul Razi

OPENING REMARKS BY
JAKOB TOBING
President of Leimena Institute

Your Excellency Mr. Fachrul Razi,
Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I express our deep appreciation to Minister Fachrul Razi and his Ministry for this important partnership to co-host the Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable. This roundtable idea evolved from the Leimena Institute's meeting with Minister Razi on January 24th, where Dr. Alwi Shihab, Matius Ho, and I myself, were present, together with Shira Loewenberg, our guest from the American Jewish Committee at the time.

This is an important first step towards, what we hope to be, more conversations and even collaborations between Muslims, Jews, and Christians for the sake of peace and humanity. Though we share our common faith ancestry in Abraham, the history of our relations has been tainted by tensions and conflicts.

In the Book of Genesis, God called out Abraham and said, “In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Or as our Muslim friends might say, our religions should be “Rahmatan lil-’alamin”, a blessing to all creation. Should we not work together to bless humanity?

The fact is, religion will not fade away in the face of modernization. The global population is becoming more, not less, religious. Muslims, Christians, and Jews account for more than half of it. With the rise of identity politics using religious slogans, if at least the Abrahamic family can consider how to bring more good than harm to humanity, the impact will be huge.

Rather than letting others spread hatred and bigotry in the name of our religions, can we sow love and respect? Rather than violence, peace? After all, the one persistent conflict in the last few decades involves our religions: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

For us the Indonesians, it is not just our religious calling, but our Constitution’s Preamble also calls us to participate in implementing order in a world based upon liberty, everlasting peace, and social justice.

So let us start by listening to one another in this meeting; what critical issues that we need to address; what barriers to cooperations that we hope to bring down and how. **THAT IS OUR OBJECTIVE TODAY.** That is why your participations, as prominent leaders and scholars, is very important and highly appreciated.

We hope to engage more people, from Indonesia and other countries, in the future. Therefore, once again we are grateful for the Ministry of Religious Affairs’s support and partnership.

The progress of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim majority country, has been built upon religious diversity and multi-faith collaborations. We, Indonesians, owe it to our forebears to preserve and share it to the world.

As fellow Abrahamic religious adherents, we owe it to God, to our patriarch Abraham, and to our future generations to bring blessings to humanity and the whole creation.

I look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY
DR. ALWI SHIHAB
Senior Fellow of Leimena Institute

Let me start by commending the noble courage of His Excellency Mr. Fachrul Razi, Minister of Religious Affairs, to host this first-ever Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable, in partnership with the Leimena Institute. Courage, because there is an elephant in the room: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We all understand it and me personally from my experiences as Ministers and Special Envoy under three Presidents.

This conflict has long been a source of distrust and hostility between the Abrahamic religious followers. It is very divisive and destructive, because politics and religions have become entangled in it. We have let corrupt people manipulate religions. The conflict has played into the hands of extremists in all three Abrahamic religions. It inspires more Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other prejudices, and even violence and terrorism.

What can we do? First, it is essential to separate politics and religions in the public perception of the conflict. This is where our role as religious leaders and scholars is crucial.

We—Muslims, Christians, Jews—need to educate the people that the conflict is POLITICAL, NOT RELIGIOUS. Changing the perception will greatly reduce the tension and open new possibilities for peace. It will make it much harder for political opportunists and religious extremists to exploit the suspicions among us. We know that we need to collaborate for peace, prosperity, and justice, not just in Palestine and Israel, but anywhere in the world.

But how can we get there? Through dialogue like this. Build bridges, not walls. Go beyond the existing prejudices and stereotypes that divide us. For us to achieve the objectives, we must go back to our patriarch Abraham as the source of ecumenical unity to bring peace and mutual understanding. The Abrahamic kinship calls for the children of Abraham to come together.

There are great many teaching and ethical imperatives within the Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures that promote peace and present the means to achieve it. Hence, by going deep into the scriptures—others and our own—and searching for their commonalities, we can bring about harmony between the three traditions. The Qur'an in more than one occasion refers to the people of Abrahamic faiths with high regard, along with the prophets of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Such Qur'anic references provide a solid basis for cooperation. For example, when it says:

O People of the Book! Come, let us come together upon a formula that is common between us that we shall not serve any but Allah (3:64).

Even more explicitly the Qur'an praised a certain group of the People of the Book when it says:

Not all of them are alike, of the People of the Book are a portion that stand for the right, they rehearse the sign of Allah all night long. And the prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and they hasten in all good work; They are in the rank of the righteous. (3:113-114)

The fact that we are all here today affirms the Qur’anic verse. That many people, like us, are different from what is being portrayed by the stereotypes. We are not all alike.

It is worth noting that it is becoming more common to speak of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the three traditions of Abrahamic faith. The term Abrahamic faith came to be widely used on the wake of the 9/11 attack in America with the admirable intention of countering anti-Muslim hatred.

In fact, the American Jewish Committee has taken the initiative to become friends and allies in fighting against Islamophobia, not only in America, but also in other countries. Just recently Sheikh Mohammad al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League (Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami), praised the AJC for their “tireless work and dedication in an effort to rebuild positive Muslim-Jewish relations” and for speaking out against Islamophobia as strongly as against anti-Semitism.

Likewise, the Leimena Institute too has been tirelessly building multi-faith collaborations, both inside and outside of Indonesia, to counter radicalism and to promote tolerance and peace. I myself, together with Prof. Azyumardi Azra and Prof. Amin Abdullah, were part of the Muslim scholars delegation facilitated by the Leimena Institute to talk about Islam Wasatiyah, the middle path Islam, in Europe and the United States.

To make the world a better place, we need courageous

people like them, like all of you here. That's why I am hopeful that this meeting will bring good results. I am even more hopeful because of the courage and wisdom of Minister Fachrul Razi to host this important meeting. Your Excellency's support and guidance will be vital for the continuity of our efforts together.

And I want to end my comments with that keyword. Continuity. Today is just a warming up. We need to have more roundtables and bring more leaders from around the world. But even that is not enough. We need to reclaim the public opinion that has been dominated by the radicals and the bigots. We need to bring our message to the public, locally and globally. With technology like this, for example, we can organize webinars to bring our message to the public in Indonesia, in the United States, in the Middle East, and around the world. It was probably Edmund Burke who said that:

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Thank you.

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR:

**UNDERSTANDING
THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY
THROUGH QIBLA STUDY**

MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
AND LEIMENA INSTITUTE

21 October 2020

WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
THE INDONESIAN MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS:

DR. MUHAMMAD ZAIN

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

1. The Honorable drs Jakob Tobing, MPA, Chairman of Leimena Institute,
2. The Honorable Prof. Alwi Shihab, MA, PhD, Senior Fellow at Leimena Institute,
3. The Honorable Resource Speaker Dr. Ari M. Gordon, PhD, Director of U.S. Muslim-Jewish Relations for American Jewish Committee,
4. The Honorable Dr. Sahiron Syamsuddin, Asst. Prof. at the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN, for its acronym in Indonesian), Yogyakarta,
5. The Most Reverend Daniel Byantoro, PhD, Archimandrite, Head and Founder of the Indonesian Orthodox Church,
6. And all the participants of this webinar, be it inside or outside the country.

Our theme for today is very crucial in increasing religious understanding among the family of Abrahamic Religions,

given that these three religions have very real historical intersections among themselves.

There is a very important hadith that originates from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, an early narrator of Islam who was very authoritative. The hadith reads:

La tusyaddu al-rihal illa ila talathati masajid. al masjid al haram, wa masjidiy, wa masjid bait al maqdis. Do not set out on a journey, traveling, except to the three masjid (mosques): Masjid al-Haram, my Masjid here in Madinah, and Bayt al-Maqdis (House of the Holiness).

These three mosques are regarded as important and very sacred by Muslims and Bayt al-Maqdis for Abrahamic Religions. What is interesting is that it turns out that Islam's religious practices to this day have direct ties with Abrahamic Religions. The Prophet and the Muslims of the Medina period prayed in the direction of Bayt al-Maqdis for a period of time. And up to the present time, Bayt al-Maqdis is acknowledged as a holy place by Abrahamic Religions. This headlines the importance of our research on this occasion, that there is a meeting point as well as similar religious practices in the traditions of Abrahamic religions.

Qibla study is very renowned among Muslims, both in daily religious life and also in serious academic studies, such as the study of *'ilm al-falak* (Islamic astronomy).

Qibla literally means 'direction', namely the direction of the Kaaba in Masjid al-Haram, Mecca.

Qibla as:

- (a) the direction in which Muslims face when performing their prayers 5 times during the day and at night, *al-shalawat al-khamsah*.

- (b) the direction when praying so that the prayers will be answered.
- (c) the qibla is also the direction when entering *ihram* (the sacred state for hajj).
- (d) animals to be slaughtered (*al-zabihah*) are also directed towards the qibla.
- (e) the direction of the qibla should be avoided when defecating.
- (f) the direction of a corpse's alignment when it is buried.

In Islam, the Kaaba is believed to be a sacred site built by the prophets Abraham and Ishmael, and its function as a qibla had been established by God in several verses of the Qur'an revealed through Muhammad in the second year of the Hijri.

Prior to this revelation, Muhammad and his followers in Medina faced towards Jerusalem to pray. So important is the qibla that most mosques have a *mihrab* (a niche in the wall) that indicates the direction of the qibla.

In the Qur'an, there are many verses that talk about the qibla, among others Sūra 2: Baqara verses 115, 145-150, etc.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“To God belong the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn there is the presence of God. For God is All-Pervading All-Knowing.” (Sūra 2: Baqara, 115)

Allah is the owner of the west and east, and even the owner of every single corner of the world. Whichever direction you turn to, there the “face” of Allah is.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلِأَتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“So from whencesoever thou startest forth turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque; among wheresoever ye are turn your face thither that there be no ground of dispute against you among the people except those of them that are bent on wickedness; so fear them not but fear Me; and that I may complete My favors on you and ye may (consent to) be guided.” (Sūra 2: Baqara, 150).

Determining the direction of the qibla is very essential for Muslims. It started from a simple, traditional method to scientific method via astronomy which developed from the mid-9th century to the end of the 10th century. Muslim astronomers developed a method to find the precise direction of the qibla which corresponds to the modern formula. Initially, this “qibla of astronomers” was utilized in addition to the various qiblas that were established using traditional methods, resulting in a lot of qibla variations in Muslim cities during the Middle Ages. Aside from that, the accurate geographic data required for astronomical methods to produce accurate results were not available before the 18th and 19th centuries, resulting in further variations in the qibla direction. Historic mosques with different qiblas still stand today throughout the Islamic world.

From this study, we are hoping to explore new ways to deepen our insight into the study of “early Islam”, early Islamic studies that tend to be forgotten, when in actual fact, this

phase is very important because this phase was the era when the Prophet Muhammad and his companions lived together with their immediate successors. The Prophet had spoken through Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith number 2.457: *...Khair ummaty qarni, thumma al-ladzina yalunahum, thumma al-lazina yalunahum.* “The best people are those living in my generation, then those coming after them, and then those coming after (the second generation).” Some say that the period in which the Prophet and his companions lived, as well as the 300 years after that, were the most important and glorious period, so much so that religious practices during that time were seen as authentic. Although there is also a Narration which states: *Ummaty kaal-mathar la yadri awwaluha khair-un am Akhiruha.* “My people are akin to rain. We do not know which raindrops bring goodness, it could be the raindrops at the outset, it could be the raindrops at the end.”

Hopefully, for academic discussions like this, we will continue to develop them to strengthen religious literacy. Scholars, scientists in the field of religious studies can actually intervene in public spaces by disseminating their new findings, until our people become more and more intelligent and enlightened. We must continue to be committed to forming a community of believers that I call the “Big Family of Abrahamic Religions”.

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
THE CHAIRMAN LEIMENA INSTITUTE:
DRS JAKOB TOBING, MPA.**

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to express our deep appreciation to Minister of Religious Affairs Fachrul Razi and his Ministry for the important partnership to co-host this International Webinar: “Understanding the Abrahamic Family Through Qibla Studies”. I also express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Muhammad Zain, Director at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and to the main speakers in this webinar, Dr. Ari M. Gordon, Director of the U.S. Muslim-Jewish Relations of the American Jewish Committee, Dr. phil. Sahiron Syamsuddin, lecturer at Sunan Kalijaga University, Yogyakarta and Arkhimandrit Romo Daniel Byantoro, Chairman and Founder of the Indonesian Orthodox Church, as well as to all participants of this International Webinar today.

This webinar is a part of series of collaboration between the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and the Leimena Institute to build encounter and mutual understanding among followers of Abrahamic faiths which are useful for the benefit of mankind in general and peace

between nations and countries in particular.

Through today's topic discussion, the Qibla, we will discuss that the differences that are always there, will not prevent us from building mutual understanding and cooperation.

This is in accordance with the motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Unity in Diversity of the Indonesian National Emblem, Garuda Pancasila. Although diversity and differences will always exist in our midst, but that should not prevent us from working together for the good of humanity. So, let us listening to one another in this meeting; what critical issues that we need to address; what barriers to cooperation that we hope to bring down and how.

I look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCUSSION:

DR. ALWI SHIHAB

(Senior Fellow, Leimena Institute)

On this joyful occasion, in the context of this webinar on the topic “Understanding the Abrahamic Family Through Qibla Study”, it feels necessary to convey the similarities of the three major Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) with the aim of bringing the adherents of these three religions closer as one religious cluster and thus emphasize their similarities more rather than their differences which will only evoke conflict and enmity.

As we all know, these three are Semitic religions that believe in God, Allah/Elohim, and they all relate the accounts of the great prophets, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Solomon, Zechariah and others.

All three religions acknowledge the Ten Commandments of God which were revealed to the prophet Moses. They all prioritize love, serving others and caring for orphans.

All three religions glorify the city of Jerusalem; in this city there is an area known as the Temple Mount or *Alharm Al Sharif* which later became the area where the Masjid Al Aqsa was built. The Temple Mount is a sacred place recognized by the three communities of the Abrahamic religions.

For Muslims, the Temple Mount/Masjid al-Aqsa area is

where the Prophet Muhammad and the angel Jibril traveled to heaven known as the Isra Miraj journey. In Islam, the Masjid al-Aqsa which is located in the holy city of Jerusalem was the first qibla of Muslims before the qibla was changed to Mecca.

In Christianity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is an important place of pilgrimage for Christians. It is situated in a location which is very important in the account of Jesus' life, death, crucifixion and resurrection.

For Jews, there is the Wailing Wall or Western Wall in Jerusalem which is a remnant of the wall where the temple stood. The city of Jerusalem for the Jews is the central point of the world where God is present in the temple which is believed to have first been built by the Prophet Solomon.

There are so many family ties that we can use as the basis of the closeness and core of brotherhood among these three divinely revealed religions/Abrahamic religions. Today we will see how these ties also appear when discussing about the qibla.

The steps to explore these ties cannot be separated from the message conveyed by the Minister of Religion Fachrul Razi that "our main task is to find common grounds as a big family of Abrahamic religions to be able to work together for peace and the advancement of human civilization." We should appreciate and support this zeal for the benefit of all mankind.

We believe that if we carry out this approach together, God-willing, our patriarch, Prophet Abraham, will be proud to witness this noble endeavor of his children. That is all.

PRESENTATION OF ARI GORDON

Good evening, good day, good morning to everyone who is viewing.

It's a great honor to be with you. I'm speaking to you from New York city although here you see my background is a university library. I work for American Jewish Committee. I am the director of Muslim Jewish Relations in the United States, and as an orthodox Jewish person growing up in the US, I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to be able to speak with all of you. I imagined that growing up, I could not have shown you where Indonesia was on a map. I did not have Muslim or Christian friends. I went to Jewish schools, Jewish summer camps, and a Jewish university. And, so that I can partner with remarkable institute like Leimena and the very honorable Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia is the privilege of a lifetime, and it is wonderful to be with you, and I look forward to our discussion. Thank you also to Dr Tobing, to Matius Ho and to the whole Leimena team as well as Dr. Shihab for your remarks and Dr Zain. To my co-panelists and respondents, Dr Syamsudin and Father Byantoro, looking forward to our discussion.

Regarding this very important topic, maybe before I start, I would like to tell you a little about our work in building rela-

tions between Muslims and Jews. We know that Muslims and Jews are both a minority. Unlike in Indonesia where the majority of people are Muslim and the government has political parties and the society has a way to take care of these things. In our countries, we don't have that. And one thing that we noticed especially in the last years is that the fear of the minorities. The fear of the other, of Muslims, Jews, and others is growing. We see this in the form of conspiracy theories, where people believe that Jews and Muslims are responsible for problems in the society. We see this in the form of violence and hate crimes against Muslim and Jewish people against mosques and synagogues, of course churches as well. This is a problem in many communities, but for us as minority communities we see the need to work together. And American Jewish committee partnered with a national Muslim organization, Islamic society of north America to form the Muslim Jewish Advisory Council. And we are a network of hundreds and hundreds of Muslim and Jewish leaders in the united states advocating for our communities to improve hate crimes legislation, to push back against hate, to fight islamophobia and anti-Semitism. And we all know the power of what happens when it's not just me that is standing up for myself, but someone from another religious community, another group that is standing up for me. As a Jew, I'm proud to stand up when my Muslim brothers and sisters are experiencing a threat or violence or hatred, and they do the same for me. And this is true about trust building in shared action, but we are here also to talk about trust building through education, where I learn about the other community and I learn what to do not just with commonality as Dr. Shihab and Dr. Zain both talked about so much

in common in our beliefs and in our practice. But, what do I do with difference? What do I do when we are not aligned on an issue? In fact, the challenge of difference is appropriate to our topic talking about the Abrahamic family.

For all of you who have a family, you know that there is a lot of love between siblings and family members, but sometimes the disputes that we have with our family are the most bitter, are the hardest. They are the most difficult to overcome, and there are times when we see in the world today whether it's because of political conflicts in the middle east or political conflicts in our own countries or disputes between us that family rivalry between the Abrahamic family can become very difficult for us to come together. And you know, there's an eminent professor of bible, John Levinson, who is at Harvard University, who wrote a book on Abraham, and his book actually did not try to show commonality, but it tried to show that the way we understand Abraham is not always the same. It is different. He even goes so far as to say that the purpose of inter-religious dialogue should not be to find commonality but should be to honor difference. We might say that we want to see commonality and difference, but it is a good question. How do we do this? How do we work with difference? And in fact, the qibla and our topic today the direction that we face is a perfect example of the challenge when we come together as Muslims, Christians, and Jews to talk about difference. And I'd like to speak with you a bit about why that is.

So, first, let's talk about some of the passages with regard to the qibla in the Quran and we'll start with Islam and then we will also talk about Jewish and Christian qiblas. So, we know that there is a passage in the Quran in Surat al-Baqa-

rah, the second chapter of the Quran that has eight verses from verses 142 to 150, talking about the qibla. And what I have here for you is just one verse about the command to face the qibla “wa min haisu kharajta fawalli wajhaka syatrol masjidil haram...etc.” *wherever you are in the world turn your face towards the masjid al-haram*, towards the Kaaba in Mecca, wherever you turn your faces towards it, so that I may complete my grace upon you and so that you may be guided. The idea that in worship, Muslims from wherever you are in the world must face towards the Kaaba. In some ways, this should not be a topic for inter-religious discussion. In fact, it is an obligation from God and the only response one should have, you could argue, you could say, the only response you should have is to calculate exactly what direction we need to face. And so, you see and as Dr. Zain said, there’s a whole history of mathematical calculations, of maps like the one that I have here for you that show you which direction from whatever city you are in the world how to face towards the Kaaba. Maybe this question is not for dialogue partners, but in fact it is for mathematicians. It is for architects building mosques and maybe in the 21st century for those who are designing apps for our smartphones telling us what direction we need to face. Question number one perhaps this is not for interreligious dialogue because it is purely an obligation.

Next, we know that the story of the qibla, as Dr. Zain talked about as well, comes in the context of a debate “Sayaqulusufahā`u minan-nāsi mā wallāhum ‘ang qiblatihimullatī kānu ‘alaihā, qul lillāhil-masyriqū wal-magrib, yahdī may yasyā`u ilā širātim mustaqīm”, *that the fools among people will say what has turned them from the qibla they used to face. Say to them*

that the east and the west belong to God, God guides all whom he wills towards this straight path, the siratal mustaqim. That in fact the command to face the qibla to Muhammad in the Quran came in the context of a dispute, and the hadith, the oral tradition most often identifies those fools as the Jews of Medina. Muhammad used to face Jerusalem and switched to mecca and you see here in the pictures the temple mount or the haram *sharif* where you see the dome of the rock and al Aqsa where Muhammad had his night journey as well as the Kaaba. Again, perhaps the qibla is not a source for dialogue but for dispute when we say what land does God prefer, and what is our connection to Jerusalem to mecca. Perhaps, the qibla is actually causing more problems when we think about the middle east and the conflicts, especially the Israeli Arab conflicts today. Problem number two.

Number three, when we think about difference between communities, we know that in verses like this one as well from the qibla passage that Muhammad is told that the People of the Book, those who received scripture before him “*alladzina utul kitab*”, that those who received scripture face a different qibla from the one that he does. And that he should not follow theirs, and they should not follow his. God clearly says what you do is different. So, again perhaps if I read the Quran on its face, I would say this is not a source for dialogue but a source for difference. This is some of the questions that we come in with the qibla when we think about it. And perhaps, when talking about difference and how we bring the Abrahamic family together, coming up with such a challenging passage and such a challenging ritual is exactly what we need to do. And what I propose to you here today is that the lens, the

lens through which we can see the qibla that will help us and it can help us in so many areas of difference is that of identity and belonging. Identity and belonging, these are, identity is how I see myself as a part of a group, and as human beings, we know we are not just individuals. I am not just Ari Gordon, and I am not just a part of humanity. But, I also am a part of groups. I'm a part of a family religion, a culture. And, identity is a helpful lens. It's a helpful way of understanding because it says, I don't need to claim that I am right and you are wrong. I cannot cancel your identity. If you tell me that something is important to who you are that is then if I'm sitting at the table with you, I must honor that.

And I would also say that identity is important because it talks about these three areas, and if you can look in the middle. I tried to give us some Indonesian friendly examples here. That in the center, you see the badminton game where the Indonesian team won the gold medal in the 2016 Olympics. And ritual, rituals are those we think about it in a religious context, but rituals are those activities that are, we do with our bodies with our whole selves, one. Two, they are repeated, we do them again and again and again, and three they are structured. There are rules they come from outside, and as a result, rituals play a strong role in expressing who we are in the world and also telling us who we are, so just like a game of sports has rules that you must follow and you do them again and again, and it becomes a part of how you play and who you are. The flags that we wave for our countries, that the national anthems, these are parts of who we are. Ritual also is that way and so the qibla as Dr. Zain said is a part of how we slaughter animals to make them halal. It is how

Muslims are buried. it is how we pray five times a day. You pray five times a day as Muslims. It tells us who we are.

Two, if I talk about place uh *tempat* here. The idea that place where I am, I'm a person and I live in the world that is also a part of our identity. The city I live in the country I live in, the culture, its food, how we look, the streets that I walk all of these are also a part of place and in a globalized world where, we are connecting with people around the world. A place becomes even more important. So, what does it mean for us to identify with a particular place as a Muslim, as a Christian, or as a Jew? Certainly, we would say it has something to do with a church, a mosque, or a synagogue that is a part of the place that I live. Maybe it has to do with graves and shrines, but it also has to do with places that I don't live in. For me in New York, Jerusalem is my qibla, it has a part of my identity for you in Indonesia for Muslims in Indonesia the Kaaba in mecca is a qibla it has a place in your identity. Place is very important we could talk as Dr Shihab did and Dr Zain about the importance of Jerusalem and mecca and why they are significant, but this could be a whole class in itself. For now, let's say that a place is important.

And finally, maybe the most difficult category, difference. When we talk about identity, we are talking about a group that we can say, we, this is us, and you cannot have an us, without a them. So, for example, my sister and I are very different people. She is a very religious Jewish person who keeps out television, internet, all culture and music, this is something she does not want to bring into her house because of her traditionalism. But, we both identify as a part of the family Gordon. We have stories. We have things that we do

together, and this makes us different from other families. So, difference and the Indonesian belief in unity in diversity is very much a part of identity. So, when we talked about difference, let's focus there, and we saw the verse in the Quran that says the people of the book those who received scripture before Muhammad do not face the same qibla. So, let's look at those people because what we see is that at the time that Muhammad got his revelation and the Quran came into the world, Judaism and Christianity had already seen their qiblas as a source of identity. And, what we will try to say is the difference does not need to be a source of hatred, but in fact it can be a source of conversation for us.

So, let's start with rabbinic Judaism. Many people may be familiar with the Bible and the story of the prophets that are there. And what I would ask you to do to imagine is Jerusalem as a place of importance to Jews even before Muhammad's revelation. And Jewish life centered around the temple in Jerusalem. We call it "Bayt al-Maqdis" which, by the way, for those familiar with the early Arabic name of Jerusalem "Bayt al-Maqdis", is the same thing the holy temple "Bayt al-Maqdis" the holy temple. And in the year 70 shortly after Jesus was Jesus's death, the temple was destroyed. And you can see here the image on your screen that is from the arch of Titus in Rome. At the time of this, these are the when the romans destroyed the holy temple in Jerusalem. They took all of these vessels. And of course, Jews still practiced their religion but before the temple was destroyed, three times a year all the Jews would go to Jerusalem for what we call "khad", in Arabic might be called "hajj" a similar word, the sacrifices were there in the temple. There were priests,

there was teaching, everything was centered around the temple, and the Jewish people had to ask, after the temple is destroyed, after we are no longer living in the holy land, how do we continue to practice our religion. And our synagogues became small temples for us, and we started to study the law and we created a system of belief and a system of learning and what you see here on your screen this page in Hebrew letters is called the Talmud.

This is a book of a series of many books about 2000 pages of disputes and teachings about Jewish law, about philosophy, stories. These are of the great rabbis, the great teachers of our tradition, from the year 0 to the year 500. And, you see their teachings here in the center of the page. But what you see around that page is also the discussions of later centuries. And so, on one side you will see a rabbi from Tunisia from the 11th century making comments. On another, the great Maimonides, his works are referenced, who was teaching in Egypt in the Fatimida era in the 12th century. From Germany and France, you see disputes on the right, and this is some of how we taught our tradition. And what you see, you see an image of the temple here in the background, that the Jewish tradition teaches that one who was arising to pray if you are outside the land of Israel, you turn towards that land to pray. If you are in the land, you face Jerusalem. If you are in Jerusalem, you face the temple. So that and you can see in the bottom line, one who is in the west faces east. In the north, you face south. In the south, you face north. So that, everyone is facing towards a single place. As we spread out around the world and could no longer live in the land, our qibla became a point of collective identity. And, it was true

for early Christianity as well. When the temple was destroyed, Christians adopted the direction of east to face in the direction as Matthew says that like lightning flashes from east to west, so shall be the come the return of Jesus that the Messiah will come from the east, that the garden of Eden was in the east. The east became a very important direction, and all churches for many centuries faced that direction, and father Daniel's church in the orthodox community still faces east because as we were spread around the world, our direction united us as Jews or as Christians or as Muslims.

So, I'll end with these thoughts. What do we do with difference? When we face different directions, what do we do with this? And you see here we have three ways of thinking about how to talk about difference. One, the difference is how we are human in the world. When I face a certain direction, when I practice ritual, it is the way that I practice, and you can see here the way we speak about our religions, sharia for Muslims, halakha for Jews, thropos as John says, the way the truth and the life. All of these are paths. It is a road that we walk, and when we walk differently, we can learn from one another. Next, I would also say that difference can be a sign of God's greatness, in both Jewish and Muslim as well as Christian tradition. We were all created by God. We were created from Adam, and we know that if God created human difference, then human difference is holy. And, when I honor difference, I also honor God. And, we know that in this verse as you see in al-Hujurat, *lita'arafu*, we say the difference and diversity is there to know one another. This passage from the Talmud that you saw before. Adam was there as one person, and unlike a king who makes coins from one stamp, and they all

come out different, the stamp of Adam came out completely. When a king makes coins from one stamp, they come out the same. When God, the king makes coins from the stamp of Adam, they all come out different, and this is a part of God's holiness. And, I would also say that it is a part of God's mystery, that we do not understand. God is greater than any one of us. And in fact, this is a part of what one verse, maybe my favorite verse in the Quran, tells us in the qibla passage, "Wa likulliw wij-hatun huwa muwallihā fastabiqul-khairāt, aina mā takuṇu ya`ti bikumullāhu jamī`ā, innallāha `alā kulli syai`ing qadīr", that God faced each community towards a different direction. God gave us each a path to tread. God gave us each a different path to walk, but that path does not mean we need to dispute. Actually, it is a call for us to do good together. "fastabiqul khairat", *pursue good together* because God can bring us all together, because "innallaha alaa kulli syai'in qadir", *God can do everything*. We, as humans, do not need to understand it all. We need to do our best to honor God, to honor difference, and to know that God will bring us all together in the end. Thank you.

RESPONSE OF SAHIRON SYAMSUDDIN

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh
Before anything else, I would like to thank the Ministry of Religion, to Leimena Institute for giving me the opportunity this evening to learn from Ari Gordon and also, of course, to respond to his talk.

Personally, I agree with Ari Gordon that the qibla is a collective identity marker. This is important for us to note that all of us need not be the same, but that we also need differences of collective identity as was mentioned earlier. I also concur when Ari Gordon said that collective identity should not become a source of hostility, and should not turn into a source of conflict. Therefore, let the differences in religious identity mentioned earlier run separately and each one practices mutual respect. We should not let it become a cause of conflict between one to the other. I agree as well with Ari Gordon who said that these so-called differences, one of the ways to look at it is to consider them as just different routes: how we achieve salvation in this world and in the hereafter, and the differences in the field of law, and the differences in the field of shariah stated earlier. I agree with almost all of what Ari Gordon said.

There are a few things that I would like to add to this or in other words, there are lessons that we need to take from this

qibla (webinar). As was mentioned earlier, about the change of the qibla itself. The first lesson for me is that God, that Allah SWT in the language of Islam or God in general, does not require space and time. God stands on Himself. Thus, God, in Sūra 2: Baqara verse 142, which was mentioned by Ari Gordon earlier that *“lillahil masyriqu wal maghribu”*, to God belong east and west. God does not need west. God does not need east, nor south, north, and so on. God does not require a place to be, well logically, because everything belongs to God, be it west and east, or south and north; therefore, wherever a person faces, whether to the Kaaba or to Bayt al-Maqdis, or to the east or to whatever direction it is, God is there. Thus, this is actually an important lesson be it for Muslims or other religious adherents. The prophet Muhammad’s answer when asked why the qibla was changed was quite simple, *“lillahil masyriqu wal maghribu”*, because east and west all belong to God. So, there is no need to problematize it. We are indeed different and everything is directed to the One True God. Therefore, that is the lesson that we should hold on to both for Muslims and non-Muslims.

Second, which was mentioned earlier as well by Ari Gordon, is that every religion has its own legal structure, what is indeed called *shariah* in Arabic. Because we believe that everything belongs to God, and undoubtedly all things point to that one God, so then when there are differences in the *shariah*, when there are differences in the legal provisions, including the differences in qibla mentioned before regarding which direction to face, then each one should respect each other’s respective differences, and even competing to

do good, *"fastabiqul khoirot"*, as stated previously in verse 148. It reminded me of another Sūra, namely Hajj verse 39 to verse 40, which is related to the permission for the battle of Badr. I will not mention the whole verse, but it was at the time when the Mushriks, the Polytheists of Mecca, wanted to attack Medina. To make the long story short, after a long process, Allah permitted Medina to be defended. Medina, during the Prophet's time, was inhabited not only by Muslims, not only by the Ansar and Muhajirun, but also by Jews. In fact, Jews were the majority in Medina, and there were also Christians. At that time the Prophet Muhammad defended Medina from the attacks of the Quraysh of Mecca and the Polytheists. One of the interesting things from that verse is *"walaula daf'ullahin nasa ba; dqahum biba'din lahuddimat sowami'u wa biya'un wa sholawatun wa masajidu yudzkaru fiha ismullahi katsiro"*, the free translation more or less being "suppose the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, the people of Medina, did not defend Medina, then what the polytheists of Mecca would destroy at the time would have been Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, and Muslim mosques". What this means is that defending Medina at that time would be in the realm of doing good to anyone. Incidentally, Medina was a city with a pluralistic society in terms of religion. There was a mosque there. There was a synagogue there. There was a church there. All of these were defended by the prophet Muhammad and his companions. That is an example of *"fastabiqul khoirot"*. The Prophet said,

even though we are different from the Jews, different from the Christians, but we still protect the places of worship of other people, the non-Muslims. During that time, it was for the common good of all.

Then the third lesson we need to learn from Islam is that the Prophet Muhammad in the early days, according to some information during that time, faced towards Bayt al-Maqdis. There are two opinions in this case. The first one is that facing Bayt al-Maqdis was the command of Allah SWT. There is a second opinion as to why the Prophet Muhammad prayed facing Bayt al-Maqdis. Initially, it was the Prophet's own choice. So, at the time, there was no command from God where Muslims should face when praying, and so the Prophet chose the direction of Bayt al-Maqdis. The question is, why was the choice towards Bayt al-Maqdis? For me, to put it briefly, the choice to face towards Bayt al-Maqdis indicates because it was the direction that Jews face when praying. The Prophet Muhammad had always guided in the same way from the very beginning, and to me it is an important lesson of respecting the traditions of the community. Because the majority in Medina at that time were Jews, and the Jews faced towards Bayt al-Maqdis, so then the prophet with full consciousness faced towards Bayt al-Maqdis, too, and because he knew the Jews also practiced monotheism. This is regarding the opinion that says that it was the choice of the Prophet, and I agree with it. The prophet's choice was before there was a command towards Kaaba.

Then the fourth lesson, and the final one, why then was there a change of the qibla for Muslims towards Kaaba? One thing stated earlier was that of collective identity, that it needs to be different. It would not make sense if everything is similar to the Jews. Or how about if it is the same as the Christians? That is the illustration, right? So then, there needs to be a collective religious identity. Well, here is where there is one. Thus, the first difference is collective identity. Besides that, what I also need to emphasize is that the facing of Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims towards Kaaba was also a symbol of love for their homeland. This is in an account, in one of the books, "*Laqod istaqor rojulu ila maulidihi*". This was, of course, a statement from the Jews or the hypocrites, as they were called then, "*laqod istaqor rojulu*"; 'the man' mentioned here meant the Prophet Muhammad who missed his birthplace. When asked why he changed the direction just like that, one of the indications was that the Prophet really wanted to return to his homeland, which in other words means, love for his homeland. Those are the four lessons that we might be able to draw from this change of direction. Since we are only given a short time, I do not need to mention the various text references. Thank you.

RESPONSE OF DANIEL BYANTORO

Greetings of peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to all of you, brothers and sisters. Earlier, Ari Gordon said that the Orthodox Church's qibla is oriented towards the east, and that is right. Indeed the Orthodox Church's qibla is towards the east, although the difference is that in Judaism as well as Islam, their qibla points to one place, be it towards the temple in Jerusalem for Judaism and the Kaaba in Mecca for Islam. For the Orthodox church, the Orthodox Christian faith does not point to one place. It is more to denote the symbol of where Christ is now. Therefore, the understanding of this qibla is the same as in Islam, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims, who worshiped facing the qibla in Jerusalem. The reference was to the temple in Jerusalem.

The early Christians also worshiped around the temple area. We read in the Gospel of Luke 24:52-53, "Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God." So initially, they were the same as their fellow Jews. In actual truth, Christians at the time were not thinking about establishing a new religion. Jesus Himself did not establish

a new religion. They felt that they were people who have received the fulfillment of what God had foretold in the prior books, in this case, the Torah and the Prophets, and Jesus was that fulfillment. As a result, when they were in Jerusalem, they identified themselves with the Jews, because the early Christians were Jews. And then many people joined the church after Pentecost, after three thousand people became Christians. Even then Christians still followed the custom among them to face Jerusalem. However, if we look at the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2:46, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” So, at the time the first Christians did not yet have a total break with the temple even though they performed a typical Christian ceremony. What is that ceremony? Holy Communion, the breaking of the bread.

For a time, the apostles and the early disciples of Christ faced towards Jerusalem in their worship. We read in the book of the Acts of the Apostles chapter 3:1, “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.” This was the time when the priest burns the evening sacrifice, and the people pray in the temple. In here, the reference was to the temple, but with the passage of time, as they became more and more aware of Christ’s place in their burgeoning faith, they began to see Christ as the fulfillment of all of these so that subsequently Christ was believed to be the fulfillment of the temple itself. As it says in the Gospel of John 2:19, “Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” And in verse 21 it says, “But the temple he had spoken of

was his body.” As a result of this development, the temple for Christians meant the human body of Jesus. Jesus is acknowledged by the Christian faith as the incarnation of the Word of God, the Word of God made flesh through Jesus, his human body as the temple and the Word of God is what dwells in it. As it is said of the temple in the Old Testament, God dwelt in the temple. Thus, in the Gospel of John 1:14 it says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” The word ‘dwell’ here comes from the word ‘*estinusen*’. *Estinusen* means ‘to camp’ and in Hebrew it is ‘*sakan*’, so the place where God camped was the temple. And so, the understanding of the temple slowly developed into the recognition of having its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In this way, after Jesus ascended to heaven, Christians still relied on the assumption that the qibla is towards the temple, but that the temple now is in the humanity of Jesus.

Because Jesus is now in heaven, it means then that the qibla should face towards heaven where Jesus is, since Jesus now has become the temple of God. The only problem is we do not know where heaven is. If we want the qibla to face towards heaven, it would be difficult to find the location, thus in the end what was taken of it was the symbolism. The symbol of heaven is the garden of Eden. And, according to the Bible, the garden of Eden is said to be located in the east but we do not know where that east is either. It is just symbolic. It only says in the Book of Genesis 2:8, “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden...” Now, what we get out of it is that Eden is in the east and Eden is a symbol of heaven where Christ is now. It means then that the east is a biological symbol regarding the qibla towards Christ,

the qibla towards the temple in this world, directed by the believers themselves, and this is the reason why Christians have their qibla towards the east. Regarding this, if we read from the writings of Saint Basil the Great who lived in the middle of the 4th century, he said in his writings on the Holy Spirit that there were teachings of the apostles which were never written down but were passed on to their disciples in the form of oral tradition. And one of these writings mention that the oral tradition from the apostles which the church still maintains was about what was said earlier, facing towards the east: pray facing the east, make the sign of the cross and ask for the descent of the Holy Spirit, i.e. Epiclesis during Holy Communion. Basil the Great mentioned that it was from the time of the apostles. Therefore, if that was the case regarding the qibla towards the east, it would have eventually become part of the apostle's teachings, from the teachings of Christ's disciples, which has continued in the church. That is the first.

Second, now that Christ is in heaven, what then is His task? In there, Christ has become the Grand Priest, the High Priest, like the priest in the Torah whose job was to slaughter sacrifices for atonement, especially on the feast of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in which the High Priest, once in a year, would offer a sacrifice for the absolution of the sins of all the people of Israel, and He would carry the blood of the sacrifice into the inner sanctuary of the Holy of Holies, the most holy place. In the Christian experience and understanding, it is Christ who has fulfilled that sacrifice, as Christ Himself stated in the Gospel of Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and

to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus called Himself the Son of Man which refers to the vision of Prophet Daniel of Him who is like the Son of Man who is none other than the Messiah, because the Son of Man also came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many, meaning He has died in order to become the Redeemer and, in the end, is risen again. In this way, He eventually brought the result of this redemption, which is His sacrificial body, into the presence of God and is now in the presence of God the Father, there in the temple of God in heaven.

In this way, after functioning as the sacrifice, Christ now functions as the priest as it is said in the Book of Hebrews chapter 8, there He has become the High Priest who is the representative of His people before God. So then, if that is the qibla from Christianity, Orthodox Christianity until now has been facing towards Christ, who is symbolized as situated in Eden in the east. Thus, that is the qibla for the Orthodox Christians so that in every Orthodox Church around the world, the configuration is always such that the altar is towards the east and the priest will face towards the east when leading the worship in front of the altar, and people also face towards the east in their daily prayers, and the daily prayers can be 7 times a day or 3 times a day. What the Orthodox church does is indeed to face towards the east, which leads us to remember Christ and what He did. Furthermore, we are led to live out His teachings, the love that He has taught us, since it is because of His love that He became a sacrifice for us. Therefore, through this qibla, we are reminded of Christ’s sacrifice and how we should follow His example of sacrifice to also sacrifice for others. So, we agree, I agree with Ari

Gordon and Sahiron Syamsudin that these differences does not cause enmity, rather they become a unifying factor. In our differences, we can love one another. Thank you.

RESPONSE OF ARI GORDON

Thank you and thank you to my respondents. Also, special thanks to Mickey, the interpreter. To be able to go back and forth for this long is not easy. I hope that if we do this seminar in person after the coronavirus, allows us to travel. Maybe by then, I will have learned enough Indonesian to speak more directly, but thank you, and thank you. These are really incredible responses and I want to take the two of them together because there were many similar points between Prof. Syamsuddin and Father Daniel.

One, we said that God does not occupy space. God is not in one place or another. So, if I have a qibla to the east, it's not because God is in the east. If my qibla is Jerusalem or mecca, it is not because God lives there, and professor Syamsuddin pointed out the verse in the Quran "wa lillahi al masyrik wal maghrib", the east and the west belong to God. Also, earlier in Surat al-Baqarah in the same chapter in verse 115, we say "Wa lillāhil-masyriqu wal-magribu fa ainamā tuwallū fa šamma waj-hullāh...". Right, that God has east and west, wherever you face, that is where God is. And it's interesting that in the prayer that Solomon, King Solomon, the prophet Solomon gave to God upon building the holy temple in Jerusalem. He said something similar. He was building a temple to God, but

one might think is that where God is in the world. and he said,
 כִּי, הַאֲמַנָם, יֵשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים, עַל-הָאָרֶץ; הֲנֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַי הַשָּׁ-
 מַיִם, לֹא יִכְלְלוּךְ--אָף, כִּי-הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתִי

(ki ha-umnam yeishev Elohim al ha-aretz? Hinei ha-shamayim u-sh'mei ha-shamayim lo yekhalkilukha. Af ki ha-bayit ha-zeh asher baniti). Is it possible that God will have a dwelling on earth? For we know that the heaven and heavens of heavens cannot contain him; how much less this house that I have built. (1 Kings 8:27)

And father Daniel talked about this that east is looking towards something beyond our reality. It's Eden, it's the return of the Messiah, and I think it's important, it's an important point to make that as humans we occupy space. We are in the world, and so some of the way that we worship God is by being in the world, in the same way that we eat certain things, and we don't eat other things, and this is a way that we sanctify. We bring sacredness to the body, to our food. We have holidays during the year and in so doing, we bring sacredness to time. As humans, we can only deal with our limited character although God is beyond all limits.

The next thing that both brought up was the relationship of Muhammad to the Jews or of Jesus to the Jewish people, and father Daniel points out correctly that Jesus was a Jew and a part of the Jewish people, and Christianity continued to be a part of the Biblical line for many years. And, professor Syamsuddin talked about Muhammad in Medina, and you both pointed to the positive elements. So, Muhammad defending Jews and Christians in Medina, and Jesus as taking up certain practices that are similar to the Jews. Now, this

points to another challenge when we talk about difference, and that is chosenness, the belief that my religion was chosen by God. And, the challenge for us as Jews is that our religion reads its story before Christianity and Islam. So, we need to ask what does it mean that God spoke to another people after us. And, for Christianity and for Islam, you need to ask yourselves what does it mean that a precursor, or chronologically, a group that came, a religion that came before, is still here and people still practice that faith. I think that what we must do is take the positive in these stories. Take those good elements of the stories, and those places where we see challenge. If we see conflict between early Christians and Jews, if we see conflict between Muhammad and the Jews in Medina, we read that with historical context. Perhaps, there was a conflict between those people and those Jews at that time, but that does not mean that Christians or Muslims must be in conflict with all Jews for all time. History can be a good theological tool here.

Finally, I wanted to talk about the Jerusalem as a place that we all honor and what that means. Because, that is a challenge that, for Jews for Christians, and for Muslims, this city is holy. Partially, because our prophets all walked there, we share so many prophetic figures that walk there. Our history is there. We all honor that place. And, in fact there is one way to see it as a conflict, and that is I believe Dr. Zain talked about this as the first qibla which we would say *al-Ula Qiblatain*, Jerusalem was *Tsaniyal haramain wa tsalisal masjidin*". That it was the first qibla, the second of the two great holy sites after Mecca, and the third great mosque after Mecca and Medina. And, we could see this as a point of

conflict, or we could see this as a point of shared humanity.

And, I'm reminded of a story. Two stories when Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam after Abu Bakr came to Jerusalem. There is one story where Kaab al-Akhbar, a convert to Islam from Judaism, was with him and Umar asked Kaab, "where is the site of the holy temple?" which at that time was a pile of stones and ruins after the Romans had destroyed it. And, when they were building a mosque on that site, he asked Kaab "where should we put the mosque?" and Kaab said "why don't we put it behind the qibla of the Jews so that when we face the qibla of Mecca, we are also facing the qibla of Jerusalem". And, Kaab said "that is a Jewish practice. It is not our practice". And, so many people view that as a rejection of Jerusalem, there I see some Jews, if I'm critical of our own community, they say, "Jerusalem does not really matter to Muslims because they rejected that qibla". There were people who will say "Christianity took up heavenly Jerusalem and abandoned earthly Jerusalem. It is not important to them".

But I think we need to push back, and as Jews we must honor the connection of others to Jerusalem as well. And, one way we might do this, and I will end my responses for now with this teaching was taught to me by my partner at the Islamic society of North America, Dr Saeed Sayd, another story of Umar in Jerusalem. When he came, he came to the church of the holy sepulcher, the place of Jesus' death and the priest there said, "caliph Umar, why don't you pray inside our church?" and the caliph said, "no, if I pray there my Muslim followers who come generations later will not be able to respect this space, and I want them to respect your

Christian space”. If I read the story about Kaab al-Akhbar and the holy temple mount in the same way Umar was saying, “I do not want to build the mosque facing the Jewish qibla of Jerusalem because the Muslim community that will come after me will not be able to respect the Jewish connection to the city”. And, what we need in the world if we are to take the qibla as a point of connection, we must first respect the humanity and the relationship with God that each of our communities has. And, when it comes to those areas of conflict, physical conflict like Jerusalem, we must respect that that city is holy to all three faith traditions.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

1. *Dr. Ari, please provide an explanation regarding Jon D. Levenson's book, Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. What approach did he use in the research? Thank You.*

Ari Gordon:

Yes, thank you, and I'm glad you were able to mention Professor Levinson's book. He was a teacher of mine and I believe he may be watching and will be happy to know that in Indonesia his work is being studied. Maybe, you will invite him for a future seminar. The question he raises is we use the word Abraham or Ibrahim to talk about the founder of all of our faiths, and each of our holy books looks to Abraham for messages. And he asks the question when we are using the same name. Are we talking about the same person? Is it the same? obviously historically, it is the same person. But are we taking the same lessons? And what he tries to do in this book is to say, we may take different lessons from Abraham. If I, as a Jew, read Abraham as someone who is the beginning of a family for example, that his children, and his children's children are the people of God and so Jews, we aren't one

kind of convert to Judaism if one wishes, but Jewish identity comes not through belief but through birth. If you are born to Jewish parents, you are Jewish. And so, we may read Abraham as the beginning of a family that God wish to speak to and give a certain mission. Many Christians will see Abraham as saved through his faith not because of how he was born, not because of actions that he did but through his pure faith and perhaps the identification of Christians as becoming Christian in those early days through faith alone, perhaps, is a message that's there in the New Testament, a different reading of Abraham. In the Quran, we know the Quran says Levinson Ali Imran that Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian but a Muslim, meaning a person who is submitting to God, who practiced God's faith before there was Judaism and Christianity. So, Dr Levinson is not telling us that we should fight over Abraham and say, no that's my forefather, that is my ancestor not your ancestor, but he is encouraging us not to just say Abraham and assume that everything is the same, but to honor the differences that are there as well.

- 2. The next question is, why did the relationship between the three Abrahamic religions experience ups and downs? And, this is even very sensitive, especially in the Middle East region. In fact, Islam, Judaism and Christianity have the same roots, namely the Semitic religions. Ibrahim is also believed to be their father and prophet. What is wrong with this relationship between the three Abrahamic religions?*

Ari Gordon:

This is a very difficult question, and I would say that the question speaks to a lot of pain that many of us feel who want to see love and who want, we want to see understanding and cooperation but we know that there is a history that at times is full of conflict of mistreatment of Jews in Christian and Muslim lands, of Jewish Muslim conflict. Today, of course in the middle east, we are aware of conflicts that, and I would say about the middle east conflict, I would say about many of these other areas of conflict. Politics and power is the nature of how we are in the world. We organize our countries through politics. These are, this is not completely bad. Politics guarantees us the rights, the freedoms that we have to practice, the services that we give to those in need. However, when we have politics involved it can also lead to conflict, and this is a misuse of group identity. In the ideal world, the way the world should be, our identity, especially when we can see a common heritage in Abraham, a common belief in one god, a common embrace of justice, a common belief that we are here not for ourselves, but to be but to be servants of god and of his creation of one another, that's the world we want to see. But unfortunately, part of what it means to be human and to have collective identities, is that these identities can clash. They can they can come up against one another, and so the challenge and what I hope the qibla can help us do and many other areas where we share a practice or a belief but it's different, is that we learn how to say us, we have a collective identity that is in us, and it may be different from you or from you, but that does not mean we need to be in conflict. We cannot only tell the stories of cooperation of

positive interaction to be naïve about the idea that Muslims, Christians and Jews have always gotten along, and the only problem is problems in the middle east today. We need to tell the good stories, and we need to tell the difficult stories, and we need to tell ourselves, history does not tell us what the future will be, we have the opportunity to write the future. The tools like this one today of the internet, we know that social media can contribute to conflict. Very often I hear only those voices that tell me things that I already believe, but like this seminar today, and like the ministry of religious affairs and the Leimena Institute is taking today, these tools can also introduce us to different voices, and can help us to get that humility, that god wishes of us, and that humility, theological humility, that we need to cooperate and to make the world the place that God wants us to make it.

- 3. The next question is from Meenakim Braker. Thanks, so much Ari for facilitating talk. I'm interested in the hierarchy of place when it comes to identity. The benefits of being in the most holy place whether Mecca, Jerusalem, Bihar, Salt Lake City, etc seems clear. But what about being further away? So, one has to direct prayers and intentions toward along for a place. Are there any spiritual advantages therein? There is a note here, one is inclined to think James Joyce never loved Dublin so much as when he wrote about it from within self-imposed exile or diaspora.*

Ari Gordon

Thank you. The question that invokes so many of the holy places in the world including salt lake city which is a holy

site for Mormons for the church of latter-day saints and the reference to James Joyce, tells me that this question may have come from the great journalist of religion and art in the united states Menachem Wacker, whose work should be read by all. I know that these are areas of passion for him and it's a really good question. and the question as I understand it is, what does it mean that I have a place that is holy to me, that is very very far away, that is not where I live right now. And in the story of the qibla in early Judaism, early Christianity, and early Islam, this idea is there. and so, we talked about Jews embracing the qibla of Jerusalem after the temple was destroyed, it's true that the bible has importance in Jerusalem while the temple was there. father Daniel's namesake, the prophet Daniel in the bible, is said to pray towards Jerusalem but it took on the idea of identity when there was no temple and Jews were spread in a diaspora around the world. and we asked, I'm a Jew in New York, well at that time Jews were not living in New York, but I'm living in New York, there are Jews living in London, there are Jews in Indonesia, they're jaws in Australia. What connects us? One of the things that connects us is this place that is far from all of us, and that we have a longing to return to. A part of my identity is to aspire uh towards this this ideal Jerusalem. And the same is true for early Christianity as father Daniel said. the desire that the return of the messiah the return of Jesus would come from the east. I face east because Jesus is no longer with us. Jesus is not here so Christians are awaiting his return. it's a desire for something outside of the self that is far away. And also, for Muhammad and Professor Syamsuddin talked about this. He was in medina but he had a desire for his homeland of mecca.

the idea that mecca and that Kaaba was even for Muhammad when he faced there, a desire to return to a homeland that he was absent from. and as Islam spread across the middle east and farther, there's a question when you have different theologies, different cultures, different ethnicities, different races, different political systems, what makes us all one ummah. well part of what makes us all one umma is there is something that is far away from all of us that we are all connected to. in a more spiritual sense I would answer that when there is something that we desire, a place that is far from us, it is not only a physical place that I want to get on an airplane to and travel, but it tells me there's something outside of myself that I should yearn for, and it's aspiration. aspiration the idea that where I am today as a human as a religious person is not where I wish to be. that path, that sharia, that halacha, that tropos, the path that religion tells me to walk, is taking me somewhere better than where I am today. And the journey to get there is embodied in the qibla which is far away from us.

- 4. The question is from Abdullah Daladari. Thank you very much for an excellent discussion. The Quran describes the holy mosque in a similar way how the Jewish scriptures describe the temple mount. For example, it is the station of Abraham, maqam Ibrahim, which resonates with the Jewish makom. Many other descriptions of both temple or mosque are shared such as the place where Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son etc. Is there reason for those similarities?*

Ari Gordon

You know someone who looked at many of the similarities between Judaism and Islam around the qibla and some of the language in the Jewish and Muslim sources is a professor from Saudi Arabia Abdullah Galadari who I believe is also on this program today, so it's wonderful that people from around the world are watching and engaging on this subject.

I would say that of course there are certain similarities because Islam when it came to be through Muhammad and through the Quran had a relationship with Judaism that was fully aware. Muhammad saw himself as part of the Jewish and Christian tradition of prophets in relationship to god. And specifically coming in the Arabian context, it took a unique form for his original community there. So, it's not surprising that we will find similarities, not just in *maqam* and *macomb*, the idea of place and as a word in Hebrew and in Arabic, where *kivun* and *kavanagh*, the idea of direction and *kaana*, the Arabic verb 'to be', to be in a certain way. These similarities are partially because history brought Arabs and Jews together in the origin of Islam. But it's also true that the differences are serious and this questioner is asking if there is a tradition where Jerusalem became a place for of Abraham as the bible describes it where Abraham sacrificed his beloved son, that it describes as Isaac, and the Quran, who does not name, by the way the Quran does not name whether it was Isaac or Ismail, but tradition generally reads that as Ismail and sees the sacrifice, or the near sacrifice as happening in Mecca.

These are real differences that I believe should encourage us not to assume that we can reconcile everything, that if

we sit and we talk long enough, we will come up with one universal religion. We really are not looking for one universal religion. In fact, this is one of the differences between what Judaism Christianity and Islam have to offer that is different from ancient Greek philosophy. The Greek philosopher Plato would say that all of our particularity, all of the details of existence are on a lower level than the one unique image. So, let's take an example; every different chair that exists on the planet is its own kind of chair, but the ideal chair is one image, one platonic image in the world. We don't see that, that all of our difference is trying to become one religion, one universal belief system. In fact, for us as religion, our universal god makes particular religions. The challenge for us as people is that how do we reconcile a god who is all-knowing and all-present and universal, when we humans are limited, we are particular. But in fact, what we taught before is because creation and because diversity was created by god. Our sources, the Quran and the Mishnah and other sources tell us diversity is holy. When we see difference, it can teach us something that we did not know about god. And in fact, the chief rabbi the former chief rabbi of England rabbi Jonathan Sachs used to say that if we were all completely different and particular, we would not be able to speak to one another. If we were all completely the same, we would have nothing to speak about. So, the fact that we have connection points with one another gives us a purpose for our conversation. The fact that there are certain things that we cannot make into one means we will always have very much to talk about for many years to come, which is a blessing.

5. *The next question is from Eka Widiastuti. I want to ask Mr. Ari Gordon. If it is true that Jerusalem is the holy crown of three peoples, namely Jews, Christians and Muslims, why has there been a struggle for the city for so long now?*

Ari Gordon

If I knew the answer to this, I think we would see the end of conflict in the Middle East and in Jerusalem. It is heartbreaking to see this and anyone who loves humanity and loves fellow people. If all of us are the children of parents, many of us have children and brothers and sisters. If we think about the love that we have for our parents, for our children and for our sisters and brothers, we know that both Jews and Arabs in the middle east, Palestinians and Israelis have the same humanity. They have parents, they have children, they have family, they have lives. And the question is more heartbreaking and there is no answer that we can give that is sufficient. Why is there so much conflict if we honor this, if we all honor the place. It is, to some extent, it is the challenge that we are dealing with here today. The challenge we are dealing with here today, what do we do when the same figure, Abraham, the same god, the same land is claimed by multiple religions. And I believe the beginning of the answer is to come with a certain amount of humility to say Jerusalem is important to my identity, it is central to my identity. As a Jew I pray towards Jerusalem three times a day. Jerusalem appears in my prayers. Every year on Passover, one of our great holidays, we say “next year in Jerusalem”, and on and on and on. And for Muslims, it’s there in tradition and as father Daniel said for Christianity as well. The fact that Jerusalem is so central to my identity does not mean you have no connection to it. I

believe when we take the category of identity and belonging, it can start to get us towards this conversation. And I believe that it is a different conversation for Jews and Muslims and Christians who are living outside of the holy land, for you and Indonesia, for you in other parts of the world for us in America, we have the ability to say this is a part of my identity and I want to play a constructive and helpful role in making sure that your community's identity is also honored. What we need and what would be a true honor to god and to the place is if the identity and practice of each tradition was upheld there and anyone who visits Jerusalem knows that when you walk in the street, if you are there on a weekend for example, on Friday you will hear the call to prayer, the muazzin for Muslim prayer on Jumma on Friday, on Saturday you will see Jews walking through the streets in their finest clothes going to synagogue and offering their prayers. On Sunday you hear the church bells ringing, calling people to mass on Sunday. If you closed your eyes and you did not read a newspaper you would say this is what we want, three religions practicing their faith in a holy place and being delighted to hear the religion of the other, and then we open our eyes and we see conflict before us. Our calling in this world is to try to make sure that religion does not contribute to political conflicts, but that religion is a tool to be part of the solution and I believe that we can do that, and identity is one of the tools that we have to do so.

6. *The next question is from Benny Hutahean. Dr Ari, thank you for your presentation. How do you see Indonesia should do to implement what you say as focus on similarity rather than differences? thank you.*

Ari Gordon

Well, I hope that you will tell me that this one lecture that you heard gave the exact guidelines for what Indonesia should do. the truth is I will start by saying that many of us around the world have a lot to learn from Indonesia. I know that there are points of tension, I know that there is conflict, I know that Indonesia is not perfect, like no country is perfect. But the idea of unity in diversity, the principles of Pancasila as we have understood them have much to teach us. You have much to teach the Muslim world, the Jewish world, the Christian world. and so, I think continuing to wave the flag and banner of harmony amidst diversity is one way that you can teach the rest of us how to be in the world. But for on the ground my suggestions would be three things.

One, education. you may not have a large Jewish community and to be able to meet Jews directly, but you can learn about the history, and there are many wonderful resources that are out there. Some of which probably should be already translated into Indonesian, and some of which maybe we can work together you know. Another thing is to think about dialogue with difference, whether that is differences between different islands of Indonesia, whether it's different dialogue between Christians and Muslims and Jews who do live there and Buddhists and Hindus and others, or even among our communities. Start to think about difference as something that we don't need to avoid but something that we can honor and embrace and learn from. Difference is a good thing, it means that God, that God's world is bigger than any one of us that is an honor to god. And then the third thing I would ask from individuals is that

we that we take up uh and this is probably a good message to end with.

Bishop Christopher Stendel, a Lutheran Christian bishop who is one of the great figures of interfaith dialogue, had three rules, uh three guidelines for dialogue. And this may be helpful for us as we think about how when I read a story in the newspaper about the other religion, what should I do when I encounter someone of the other religion what should I do. He said first of all do not, do not ever compare the best of my religion with the worst of yours. So, I can't say what are my ideals and what are your shortcomings. We have to compare what my religion aspires to be, and what your religion aspires to be.

Two, don't let people tell you about the faith tradition of another, you always need an insider voice. So, if you read a newspaper article about a different religion and you don't hear someone who is from that faith tradition representing it, you should ask, well I wonder what the religion itself, people of the religion itself would say.

And third, in our hearts we have to make space for what he called holy envy, holy jealousy, that in my heart I know that my religion is beautiful, it brings wonderful things to the world to my community and it brings honor to god. But there should be a little space in my heart when I can when I see something beautiful and holy and wonderful in the religion of the other, I can say, wow, that is wonderful that is special. That is something that is there that I do not have. Again, when we honor difference with dignity, we can serve god in the way that god created this world, and when we find commonality, these are the things we should talk about.

And I'll end the way that I began. we have too much to work on together. There's too much good that we can bring together in the world to allow our difference to drive us apart. That last verse that I brought on the slide show in the Quran, al-Baqara 148 Fastabiqu al-khayrat – "race together towards good works". We have different religions but that's a call to make the world a little bit better, to bring peace into the world. This is what god wants of us. This would please our creator, and this is how we can work together with one another. it's been an honor to be with you. I hope that we will have many chances to meet again in the future and hopefully in person one day as well.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ari Gordon

Thank you and let me join in my thanks to the Leimena Institute to Matias and the whole team for making this possible and to the ministry of religious affairs. Very often we think education is just something that you do, but education that crosses boundaries is courageous, and an act of leadership and we are grateful for your leadership in creating these seminars and these spaces for education across religious difference.

I want to end with a story from my own tradition from the Jewish tradition. I showed you the Talmud before, and I told you it is a compilation of teachings and stories of the great rabbis of the of the first centuries after the destruction of the temple. And one story is about one of the greatest sages of all Hillel the elder, and Hillel had many students and in this teaching. We are told he had 80 students and he is asked in this teaching what was the character of these students, what is the character of the least of his 80 students. And the Talmud tells us, well that student knew all of the scripture. He knew all of the interpretation, he knew mystical teachings, he knew hidden wisdom and revealed wisdom to the point that when two trees were waving in the wind, this student knew

the conversation that they were having. And the Talmud asks, and what was the character of Hillel's greatest student. And he said, well that great student knew everything but he was so intense in his, when he was studying a text if a bird flew over his head it would burst into flames. This is how strong was his study. A great rabbi, the Kotzker Rebbe in the 18th century a mystical tradition, a mystical rabbi, he was asked, okay the Talmud tells me these were the character of the students, what was the character of the teacher. And this great rabbi said, Hillel the teacher, he knew all of the sources he understood the swaying trees in their conversation, he knew it all. And when he studied, his study was so intense that if a bird flew over his head, nothing at all would happen to it. Nothing at all would happen to it, because the torah, the teaching, our religious teaching, should not be there to destroy the world, but it's there for us to interact with the world.

To become a part of it, we bring holiness, we bring sacredness into this world, and perhaps it is no surprise then, that Hillel in a different part of the Talmud when he was asked, what is the entirety of your religion in one sentence, and he said the golden rule, "love your neighbor as yourself". If you love your fellow human being as yourself, this is the entirety of our religion, the rest is just details. And this is true for Christianity for Islam for all of the great world's religions, we have this teaching. And I hope that this seminar helped us to see some of those differences and to bring us a little closer to that vision where religion can be a tool for bringing holiness into the world and not conflict. Thank you.

PROFILES OF THE RESOURCE SPEAKER AND RESPONDENTS



ARI GORDON (Resource Speaker)

Dr. Ari Gordon is Director of Muslim-Jewish Relations for American Jewish Community, where he builds partnerships between Jews and Muslims enabling them to work together on issues of common concern and fostering productive engagement on issues of difference. His work is based on the premise that healthy Muslim-Jewish relations help both communities and strengthens the democratic fabric of our world.



SAHIRON SYAMSUDIN (Respondent)

Dr. Phil. Sahiron Syamsudin is a professor at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, an expert on Islamic hermeneutics. He is fluent in English, Arabic, and German. He is a prolific writer and is a sought-after speaker at various academic conferences, both in the country and abroad. He received his PhD from Otto-Friedrich University in Bamberg, Germany, and continued his postdoctoral research at the University of Frankfurt am Main.



DANIEL BAMBANG DWI BYANTORO (Respondent)

Archimandrite Father Daniel Byantoro, PhD, is an Indonesian archimandrite and founder of the Indonesian Orthodox Church. Under his leadership, the Indonesian Orthodox Church officially engages in interactive dialogue with community and national religious leaders. He is a sought-after speaker at religious seminars around the world, and received his PhD in Religious Studies from Trinity Theological Seminary, Indiana, USA.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

PROF. DR. JAN MICHIEL OTTO

Professor emeritus *Law and Governance in Developing Countries* at Leiden University (Netherlands) and author of the book *Sharia and National Law in Muslim Countries* (2008)

Congratulations on a successful seminar. I could only attend the first hour, which was interesting by itself. Matius was an excellent chair, speakers were quite interesting, the connection was very clear, the translation was good. The topic turned out to be strategic and well chosen. Ari Gordon made that eloquently clear, and it was confirmed by Syamsuddin. I guess more of such seminars will follow. Seemingly Corona gives you an unprecedented chance to reach a world-wide audience.

PROF. DR. M. AMIN ABDULLAH

Professor of Philosophy at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, and Chairman of the Cultural Commission at the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (AIPI, for its acronym in Indonesian)

Awesome. Impressive. This is a meeting that would not have been possible if done offline. It will be inundated with those who do not like it. Gordon is good.

- 1. The keyword, identity is unavoidable. But the theological approach should be humble, (there is) humility.*

2. *Sociologically, religious identity cannot be avoided. However, what is needed is collaboration among the said owners of various identities.*

Religion is a part of the solution, not a root of conflict.

Notes:

- Dr. Ari Gordon's Profile is copied from <https://www.ajc.org/bio/ari-m-gordon>.
- The English translation of the Qur'an verses is copied from A. Yusuf Ali Qur'an Translation: <https://quranyusufali.com/>.
- The English translation of the Bible verses is copied from the New International Version: <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible>.

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR:

**THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY
OF ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS
IN ADVANCING WORLD PEACE**

MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
AND LEIMENA INSTITUTE

27 October 2020

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM THE MINISTER OF
RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC INDONESIA:**

RET. GENERAL FACHRUL RAZI

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Good evening.

Shalom and greetings to all of you.

The Honorable

- President of Leimena Institute, Mr. Jakob Tobing,
- Senior Fellow of Leimena Institute, Dr. Alwi Shihab,

To all the Resource Speakers:

- Sheikh Abdallah bin Bayyah (Chairman of the Fatwa Council of the United Arab Emirates, and President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies),
- Prof. K.H. Said Aqil Siroj (General Chairman of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama),
- Prof. Abdul Mu'ti (General Secretary of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah),
- Rabbi David Rosen, KSG, CBE (International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee),
- Reverend Gomar Gultom (Chairman of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia),

- Bishop Ignatius Kardinal Suharyo (Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Indonesia).
- To all the webinar participants from different countries, ladies and gentlemen wherever you may be.

We extend our praises and gratitude in the presence of Allah SWT, the One Almighty God. Because of the abundance of His grace and blessings, we can meet and dialogue with each other through this virtual meeting in the fraternity of the three families of the Abrahamic Religion: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, whose adherents currently exceed half of the world's population.

On the occasion of this webinar, we are putting forward the theme entitled "The Role of the Family of Abrahamic Religions in Advancing World Peace", which is actually a continuation of the first Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable last July 22, 2020. On that occasion, I have expressed the thought that "our main task is to find common grounds as a big family of Abrahamic religions to be able to work together for peace and the advancement of human civilization."

All religions teach goodness to their adherents. All religions encourage their followers to demonstrate religious values and virtues in their lives, be it in their social, political, cultural, economic, or daily lives. In fact, all religions also teach that there is a life which is more eternal, in the hereafter. Eschatological teachings of religions are important to motivate religious adherents to do good and be honorable throughout their earthly lives.

All the three religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which are known as the Abrahamic religions, recognize and

place the character of Abraham, not only as having a relation of flesh and blood, but more so as a model and exemplar of a Man of Faith for these three religious communities.

Nevertheless, we also know and acknowledge that in the history of religions, the kinship and relations among these three Abrahamic religions were not always peaceful because of the presence of many differences of interests that went along with them: be it because of political, economic, socio-cultural, and even security interests. These differences of interests have already disturbed the kinship and relations among these Abrahamic religions. World peace is also disturbed because of said inharmonious kinship and relations. We mention one example of this kinship and relations issue, that is between Israel and Palestine, where in this region the children and descendants of Abraham were born and the three Abrahamic religious communities existed, but we continue to witness that peace in this region has not yet been resolved and achieved as we have hoped and dreamt of together.

The challenge for Abrahamic religions is how they can contribute to the creation and maintenance of world peace, especially among the adherents of these three religions themselves. This aspiration will only be possible if the three of them move together to look for more common grounds rather than points of contention, probe and find mutual strengths that enable them to meet and work together in building a life that is more harmonious, dignified, and civilized.

I think we are of the same opinion that there can be no peace without communication. In truth, the current political situation does not allow us to communicate freely through

state channels. This is where the Abrahamic Faith Round Table can play a strategic role because we have almost no barriers to communication. Moreover, we have ties of religious descent that makes us close.

I think this role can be improved even further in the future. We can be included as part of state-level peace negotiations, or at least participate in encouraging our respective countries to take a more moderate stance: not based on mere political interests, but also in the interest of strengthening fraternity ties. It is higher and nobler than politics because it is the message of all religions.

To conclude my welcoming remarks, allow me to express my gratitude to all the trustees of Leimena Institute for initiating this webinar, to all the resource speakers who are willing to attend in order to share their knowledge and experiences, and to all webinar participants wherever you may be, whether in Indonesia or abroad. We hope this meeting will enrich and bring us, fellow adherents of Abrahamic religions, closer.

Finally, with the hope of protection and guidance from Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala, the One Almighty God, I officially open this webinar. Have a good dialogue and discussion. May it bring blessings and abundant fruit for world peace. Thank you.

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Shalom and greetings to all of us.

Fachrul Razi

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
THE CHAIRMAN LEIMENA INSTITUTE:**

DRS. JAKOB TOBING, MPA.

- His Excellency Mr. Fachrul Razi, Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,
- His Excellency Dr. Alwi Shihab, Senior Fellow at the Leimena Institute,
- His Excellency Sheikh Abdallah bin Bayyah, Chairman of United Arab Emirates Fatwa Council and President Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies,
- His Excellency Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee,
- His Excellency Kiai Haji Said Aqil Siradj, Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama of Indonesia,
- His Eminence Ignatius Cardinal Suharyo, Chairman of Indonesian Bishops' Conference,
- His Excellency Abdul Mu'ti, Secretary General of Muhammadiyah of Indonesia,
- His Excellency Reverend Gomar Gultom, Chairman of Communion of Churches in Indonesia,
- Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to express our deep appreciation to Minister Fachrul Razi and his Ministry for this important partnership with Leimena Institute to co-host the International Webinar on “Roles of Abrahamic Religions Family in Promoting Peace in the World”.

Especially, we are very grateful for the willingness of Sheikh Abdallah bin Bayyah, Chairman of UAE Fatwa Council and President Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies and to all speakers that we really respect and are proud of, to participate in this webinar.

This webinar is a program in a series of international seminars that we hold in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs as an effort to improve communication and cooperation between the Abrahamic Religious Families that can contribute to world peace.

We refer to our experience as a very diverse nation, consisting of hundreds of tribes and languages, living on dozens of islands. We are the fourth most populous country in the world. A country with the largest Muslim population in the world. A democratic country based on Pancasila with the motto of “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (unity-in-diversity). We are witnesses, that building communication and maintaining good relations amidst differences, provides ways and opportunities to address various challenges and even to build cooperation for the common good.

We believe that we, who share our common faith ancestry in Abraham, if we manage to build communication that respects each other, surely, we can overcome differences and even disputes that occur between us. Only communication of

mutual respect can provide a fair and lasting solution to every problem between us. Therefore, through meetings like this, let us help build peace in the world, including in the Middle East. We believe this discussion will contribute to the purpose. Thank you.

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
THE SENIOR FELLOW LEIMENA INSTITUTE:
DR. ALWI SHIHAB**

Allow me at the very outset to welcome the eminent speakers as well as the distinguished participants in this important seminar titled The Roles of the Abrahamic Religious Family in promoting Peace in the World

We all agree that peace is a very precious commodity to all of us. All great living religions, revealed or non-revealed are strongly committed to peace. This is even more true to the three Abrahamic faith; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, with deep regret, Peace has been concealed by a number of other goals and objectives, contrary to the main principles of each respective faith.

The history of world events during the last few decades attests to the fact that there exists more suspicion, distrust, enmity, hatred and anger among the believers belonging to these three Abrahamic faiths than the other. The reason being that the primary goals of certain group of the Abrahamic family, are driven by the goal of supremacy and domination rather than of coexistence and cooperation.

Such unpleasant reality leads us to realize the need to find ways to return to our basic commitments and goals, namely

to revive and renew our shared values for the establishment of peace, Shalom, and Salam.

It is worth noting that relations among Jews, Christian and Muslim have been shaped not only by theologies and beliefs of the three religions but also and more strongly by the historical circumstances in which they exist, as a result, history has become a foundation for religious relations either positive or negative.

As such throughout history, the definition or perception of who is regarded as a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim has varied.

As we all know that Jews, Christian and Muslim take their religious orientation from different figures in history, Jews from Moses, Christians from Jesus, and Muslims from Muhammad. Meaning that all three traditions—despite their orientation differences—should be willing to correct themselves in favor of a mutual esteem due to their common historical origin in the Patriarch Abraham.

The fact that people have the tendency to fear something different, leads us to realize our shared obligation to help people see the common human dignity and values that help connect people and make them understand that their roots are the same, originating from Abraham.

In order to achieve this goal, in a concerted effort, all the stakeholders—namely the academic, cultural, religious institutions as well as the media—must rise to the challenge to carry out our parts in fulfilling our moral responsibility.

I do hope that our seminar today may present a humble contribution to the above important goals. Thank you.

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF USAID:
JAVIER PIEDRA**

- Your Excellency Mr. Fachrul Razi, Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,
- Your Excellency Ambassador Jakob Tobing, Chairman of the Leimena Institute,
- Your Excellency Dr. Alwi Shihab, Senior Fellow of the Leimena Institute, Distinguished speakers, esteemed guests, and friends,

Let me express my highest appreciation to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Leimena Institute for hosting this important event.

I am extremely honored to be able to send you my warmest greetings from USAID's headquarters here in Washington, DC. I hope this important event will be the first of many.

I was very excited when I heard about this webinar from my good friend Matius Ho. Not only the theme is important, but building interfaith dialogue and collaboration such as this are now top priorities for USAID. Under the recent Executive Order on Advancing International Religious Freedom, religious freedom for all people worldwide is reaffirmed as a foreign

policy priority of the United States, including in our USAID programs. I would encourage everyone to take a look at the Executive Order.

But without a strong foundation of mutual understanding and respect between different religious believers, how can religious freedom flourish? This is why the event today is so fundamental and important.

What an apt title and timely event: “Roles of the Abrahamic Religious Family in Promoting Peace in the World.”

As is mentioned on the masthead of this webinar, let us continue to explore the spiritual, cultural, and social heritage that Muslims, Christians, and Jews share – for in the end, we spring from one Abrahamic religious tradition.

The Abrahamic Family: from where do those family bonds come? Is it not true that our hope and optimism flow from a firm religious belief, supported by reason, that God and objective truth underpin our worldview and “who we are as human beings”? Does not a recognition of the existence of God support our hope in dialogue. Is not dialogue made possible from humanity’s common moral legacy and recognition of the universal dignity of the human person?

And so, if Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the Abrahamic family, can engage in more dialogue and selfless service towards others, will we not be able to build mutual understanding and respect, and, thus, help strengthen the foundation for peace in this conflict-ridden world?

And so, if I may leave you a thought: is not our challenge today to engage and reassess “who we are as human beings” and rediscover the dignity of the human person and the power of selfless service without which there is no integral

human development but only the vicious cycle of rise and fall, progress and decline akin to an irrational world driven by irrational forces?

We can do better because of our common traditions of peace and mutual understanding. I look forward to the discussion. I am only sorry that I am not able to be with each of you in person.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 1:
SHEIKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH

- *All praise be to Allah SWT, and may Salawat and greetings be bestowed on the final prophet Muhammad and his brothers from among the prophets and apostles.*
- *His Excellency General Retired Fachrul Razi, Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia*
- *His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Tobing, Chairman of the Leimena Institute*
- *His Excellency Dr Alwi Shihab, noble and happy guests, each with the most beautiful name and characteristics (which are often designated to him).*
- *Peace be upon you, and Allah's mercy and blessings*

First, thank you for extending my invitation to attend this seminar on the role of the Abrahamic religious family in establishing world peace.

Our meeting today is held amid a crisis the likes of which humanity has never experienced before. This crisis is a type of crisis that tests our morals, values and faith. The crisis tests our morals by examining the quality of our interactions with

others, both in our homes and with our neighbours. Will we be patient and spread the virtue of patience among us, or will we succumb to a state of despair and frustration?

Indeed, the Creator, in the Qur'an, has commanded us to be patient when He says: "and we have made some of you a test for others, will you be patient?" And the question here has implications for governing, namely: be patient!

The values being tested today occur not only at the individual level but at the level of groups and countries. Even at the level of the entire earth, with all its inhabitants and inhabitants.

Here, I would like to point out what the United Arab Emirates has done with the initiative of providing assistance and fraternity to countries affected by the outbreak (COVID-19), regardless of the country's religion or ethnicity, by assisting humans, wherever they are, as their primary goal and compass of orientation.

The losses caused by the plague seem well known, so I don't need to mention it again (in detail). Starting from stopping movement programs and eliminating meetings and conferences. However, fortunately, there is a facility, which is a blessing from Allah SWT to humans who come to replace in-person meetings with indirect meetings through devices (computers and the internet).

This makes it easier for me to direct this speech to all of you. Even though you are far away, you are close to my heart because you are my friends and brothers.

We are talking today about religion, specifically the Abrahamic family of religions. Religion calls us to work together, work together, and innovate to provide means that

can revive the spirit of brotherhood and hope in the souls of humanity.

Religion calls us to tolerance that goes beyond merely acknowledging that we know one another. When humanity welcomes a bright tomorrow, where every human will see each other as a brother, equal in creation and partner in the homeland, they will not be disgusted with him, both in feeling and in existence on the same earth.

Religion calls on us, based on the rules contained in the Torah, Bible and Koran, that every human life has the same value as the lives of all human beings.

Allah SWT says: "whoever saves one life, then he is considered to have saved the lives of all mankind."

This tremendous spiritual heritage requires us to unite against anyone who abuses sacred things in religion, making this abuse a means of slander.

Peace is a priority, while violence in all its forms, both material and non-material, must be rejected by all religious leaders.

Honorable guests,

We are all aboard the same ship. We are passengers on that ship whether the ship is considered as the ship of Prophet Noah (AS), which was boarded by people who survived the flood or is considered as a ship mentioned in the authentic hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which explains the interdependence of the passengers on the upper floors and the lower floors, by avoiding the occurrence of a hole that could result in the sinking of all passengers.

And this is what he said: "Suppose we (ground floor

passengers) punched a hole on our part (bottom of the ship) without disturbing the people above. If the top passengers let the bottom passengers punch a hole in the ship, they would all sink, but if they prevent the bottom passengers from punching a hole in the ship, they would all be safe."

The destiny of humanity is one, and its life journeys are intertwined. So, the safety of a nation depends on the safety of other nations; no one will escape danger alone, be it nation or religion. And there is no salvation for all unless we work together in goodness. Our mission is an invitation that we relentlessly convey in all peace enforcement forums worldwide on the paths of peace, starting from Abu Dhabi.

Tolerance is a noble value that humanity has always aspired to. We, in collaboration with religious leaders from all over the world, some of whom are from Indonesia, are trying to lay the principles of a moral coalition among the three members of the Abrahamic religious family, including all their groups and sects, by involving all parties who love the goodness of the great human family.

The coalition chose the new name "al-Fudul Coalition". Inspired by the historic al-Fudul coalition (an inter-religious and ethnic coalition that engaged the ancient prophet Muhammad to establish peace during the Hajj season), which represents an interfaith dialogue that is not ordinary, that does not seek to spread 'the essence of Islam'. ' respective religions but instead aims to realize a happy coexistence in the world we live together now. Because coexistence is a necessary and real thing and is a religious obligation that is called upon by all religions, the invitation to establish the new al-Fudul coalition arises from deep faith and a firm belief that

human beings have much in common, which ignores these many similarities have resulted in many wars and destruction.

When humanity moves away from the values bequeathed by the prophets, from the values of truth, goodness and mercy, these similarities are at various levels, starting from shared values between followers of a religion, shared values between Abrahamic religious families, and shared values between all human beings.

These human values become circles of agreement across religions and various human philosophies. Indeed, realizing all these agreements, and linking them in harmony and consistency can bridge gaps, eliminate misunderstandings, and defuse aggressive extremism. (This can be achieved) by renewing these values in the human soul, affirming awareness of the unity of human destiny, and calling for a global awakening of human conscience to restore the effectiveness of cooperation, cooperation and compassion.

(at that moment) We can propose a new concept of humanity, which goes beyond the neutral principle of human rights, to raise the concept of rights to noble morals such as love, brotherhood, mercy and altruism.

The charter of the (new) al-Fudul coalition, which was declared by the Abrahamic religious family last year, can be a firm reference for that revival (of global conscience).

The charter of the (new) al-Fudul coalition is more than just a rhetorical principle with no significant power. It can be (realized) and must be described and embodied in a practical method and applicable program embedded in schools as an educational activity, in places of worship as teachings for believers, and in workplaces as a sense of peace in the heart.

The charter aspires to support the principles of human dignity, freedom and justice. And simultaneously call for tolerance, peace, mercy, and cooperation.

(The charter) calls for a balanced and civilized tolerance model, responsible freedom, positive citizenship, and a cooperative economy.

(The charter) can be a model for a new social contract that humanity has always aspired to.

After Corona, new values should be based on such models.

My brothers and sisters. Finally, in closing, I thank you all. I pray that Allah SWT will take care of our countries and improve our deeds so that our meeting will be full of goodness and help each other and that we will be blessed with success and taufik. Assalam alaikum wr wb.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 2: SAID AQIL SIROJ

*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.
Good evening. Greetings to all of us.
Bismillah.*

The Honorable Jakob Tobing, President of Leimena Institute; Prof. Dr. Sayyidil Habib Alwi Shihab, Senior Fellow of Leimena Institute; Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. The Honorable Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, General Fachrul Razi, blessed resource speakers. I am grateful to have the honor of joining this *mudhakholah*, *muhawaroh*, or discussion. Hopefully there are some usefulness and benefits.

The Arabic term for a human being is *insan*, and *insan* is a noun. The verb form is *anas*. The adjective in its masculine form is *anis*; in its feminine form is *anisah*. It means that *anas*, *anis*, *anisah* denotes harmony of human beings, intimacy, familiarity. Thus, we, as humans beings, live in this world until afterward we face the Almighty God. The mandate that sticks the most, before the religious mandate, before the scientific

mandate, before the mandate of position, property, wealth, the mandate that sticks the most is *insaniyah*, humanity. Because humans are born from one father and mother, “*kullukum min adam, wa adam min thurab*”, all the descendants of Adam, and Adam himself were created from clay. Therefore, religious differences, ethnic differences, differences in positions do not hinder or do not become disturbances to build a universal brotherhood of peace, because we were created from Adam, and Adam was created from clay.

Islam is from the word *salam*, peace, or *salamah*, well-being. Because of this, “*Al Muslimu man salima akhuhu min yadihi walisanihi*”, a Muslim is a person whose neighbors, friends, whoever is on his right and left, feel safe from the disturbances of his hands and speech. It feels happy, pleasant, to live with a Muslim. That is the true Islam. Lastly, Islam is *taslim*, totally surrendering to the Almighty God. All of us are aware that we will return to Him who created us all. So then Islam, Judaism, Christianity, are all from the same source, i.e. Ibrahim. *Ib* means father, *rahim* means the people. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, the city of Kasdim, 10 km south of Baghdad (at present), during the Babylonian empire.

Then, to make the story brief, he had two wives. The name of the first one is Sarah and the second one is Hajar. Sarah had a son, Ishaq. Ishaq had a son, Yaqub. Yaqub had twelve children: Ravbeen Bakr, Sham’oon, Laavi, Yahuda, Visakar, Zabulun, Haad, Ashir, Dan, Taftani, Yusuf, Banyamin. And, Hajar had a son Ismail, who would later on bring forth into being the Arabs and the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the Arabs and the Israelites are from the same lineage, that is, Ibrahim. So, in the Qur’an there is a chapter called Sūra Bani

Isrā-īl or Sūra Al-Isrā, which are the same. Sūra Al-Isrā or Sūra Bani Isrā-īl depicts that the three religions come from the same lineage or origin. Likewise, in the Qur'an we can find several verses that invite "*yaa ahlal kitabi ta'alau ila sentencein sawa'in*", O People of the Book, Jews and Christians, let us join hands together. Let us go together as one line in building peace, humanity, harmony in this life.

In the same way, if we remember that each one of these religions has a long history, has been contained in numerous books or numerous pages, or has filled many historical libraries with contents about the Jewish people, Christian believers, and followers of Islam. Therefore, the conclusion is "*laa fa'idata liddiini biduni insaniyah*", religion has no meaning without humanity, especially Islam. My apologies, "*laisal islamu aqidatun wa shari'atun fahasbu, wa innamal islamu diinul ilmi as tsaqafah, diinu adamil hadarah, diinut tamaddun wal insaniyah*", Islam is not only theology and ritual rules of worship. Islam is a religion of civilization, culture, humanity and progress.

All of these is summarized in the words of the Prophet Muhammad, "*innama buistu liutammima makarimal akhlaq*", I never came to this world except to make it better, to lead towards the good moral, *akhlakul karimah*, which can be summarized into one sentence, one word *khusnul muamalah*, to build a positive life together, build camaraderie, basically morals should be in there. That is why, it is useless for us to have an ideology, it is useless for us to have a sharia if it is without good morals, without *khusnul muamalah*, *khusnul muasyarah*, *khusnul musyarokah*, the same camaraderie, building camaraderie that is charitable, building mutual

cooperation, mutual help, and so forth and so on.

Thus, the world is waiting for concrete steps from these three religions, not only limited to seminars, not only limited to dialogues, not only limited to ceremonial purposes, but moreso in establishing a life that is harmonious, close, full of brotherly care for each other's mutual happiness, for comfort, serenity together. Stop wars, stop the production of weapons of mass destruction, stop each and every thing that will destroy everything: be it drugs, terrorism, weapons of destruction, weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear power, biological weapons. Let us stop for the sake of *ukhwah insaniyah*, the human world that is full of fraternity and peace.

Syukron wa dumtum fil khair wal barokah wan najah, wallahi ila aqwamit tariq. Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 3:
IGNATIUS SUHARYO

To the Honorable Minister of Religious Affairs, Retired Gen. Fachrur Razi. To the Honorable Ambassador Jakob Tobing, and Mr. Alwi Shihab from the Leimena Institute. Thank you for the invitation to join this glorious gathering.

Allow me to speak in Indonesian because exactly 92 years ago this afternoon, the second Youth Congress started which ended with the Youth Pledge, the declaration being “One Land, One Nation, One Language”.

I want to share my experiences as a servant of the people at the grassroots level. Just recently, I read the news that Jusuf Kalla has been going round to several countries because he was selected by the Higher Committee of the Abu Dhabi Documents to become a member of the jury, one of the six people who can nominate the recipient of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity from the Abu Dhabi Document. The said award will be bequeathed on the third anniversary (note: February 2021) of the Abu Dhabi Document on human fraternity for world peace and coexistence. The Abu Dhabi Document was signed by the Grand Imam of Al Azhar and Pope Francis in 2019.

Because of this, I would like to start sharing my experiences as a servant of the people by quoting one of the para-

graphs of this document. After the introduction, there is a quotation stated in this way, "In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace". My reflective question on this statement is towards that statement which begins with the words "in the name of God". My question is, in whose name of God is it? Of course, the answer later is the God of Abraham. But this question arose in me because I believe that the understanding, particularly the experiences, of God will greatly determine the way people think and behave.

When I associate with the people I serve at the grass-roots to explain this, I use a humorous story. The story goes like this, there was a child who wanted to eat the candy that his mother kept. He knew that if he asked his mother it would not be allowed. So he quietly took the candy, sure that his mother did not see. It turned out his mother saw. His mother asked the child, "Son, do you know or not, that when you took the candy without mother's permission, God was there." The child answered sincerely, innocently, "I know, mother." "Then what did God say to you?" "Oh, God ordered me to take two."

Behind this humorous story, there are two images with different understandings of God, and different experiences of God. Then, it is made into such an extreme example to make it clear. For the mother, God terrifies; God sees you. But to the little boy, God is so good. He wanted to take one, God ordered him to take two. That is why, I will try to explain what I usually explain to the people I serve, which is the

image of God. The conclusion is that God is good. His steadfast love is limitless so that for me one of the responsibilities of the Abrahamic religious communities is to accompany their people to come to an understanding of God in that sense. Abraham would then live according to the promise, and that promise would give rise to hope. Therefore, whatever little thing we can do in order to create peace, that is the manifestation of our fraternity as children of Abraham.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 4: **DAVID ROSEN**

Thank you very much, the Host, Minister Razi, distinguished panelists, and listeners to this webinar. Selamat malam, blessings from Jerusalem, my home from Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

I am very grateful to the organizer of this webinar for the invitation, both personally and on behalf of AJC (American Jewish Committee) to be part of this historic focus on our shared heritage within the family of Abraham.

There is a little bit of a challenge when you are the 7th speaker on a common theme as so much of most important things had been said and I, of course, just reiterate the important insights and helpfully may be able to cross some t's and dot some i's.

Abraham for our religion is not only the Father of Ethical Monotheism but he is seen as the paradigm of the example of hospitality. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Genesis, he is portrayed as sitting at the entrance of his tent, looking for wayfarers to offer them hospitality. Indeed, the Midras, the homiletical exposition of the Scriptural text says his tent flap were raised up on all four sides during the day so that he would not miss any wayfarer.

He did not ask them what their ideology was, what forms they have subscribed to, what manifesto they had signed. By average person as a human being, he saw his duty to offer that

hospitality, and hospitality is not just a recognition of the dignity of the others. It is giving the other, if you like save space to be herself or be himself. Abraham, therefore, symbolizes an openness and the generosity to all. Violence, enmity, are nurtured by fear and alienation, and they are exacerbated by ignorance, that leads us to stereotype others and to speak about others with generalization which by them vary definition are going to be unfair.

The challenges for religion, especially for family of Abraham, are clear. It is particularly noted, with the permission of my Moslem brothers here, that the Quran specifically enjoying upon us the imperative of getting to know one another. You may be familiar with the important statement in Surah Al Hujurat 49 verse 13: “Humankind! We have created you from a single man and woman and made you into peoples, nations, that you may know one another.”

There is also within the Bible in a book of Malachi chapter 3 verse 16, he described God is taking a special pleasure when people of faith talk with one another.

We may ask, what is so significant about talking with one another. What is so important about knowing one another that is portrayed by the Quran as being the purpose of our varying existence. The answer to this question, of course, is when we speak with one another and when we get to know one another, we will not be so easily seduced by fear, alienation, stereotype, and by misrepresentation. Knowledge of one another and conversation with one another, it is so the most powerful contribution to the promotion of peace.

The vision that our religion sees as the goal for humankind, the ideal that is portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, and in the Books

of Prophet, as the messianic vision, a world of peace, and a mutual respect.

Therefore, our collaboration is critical in refuting and combating misrepresentation, hate speech, and the defamation. Indeed, when we come together as representative of our religious traditions, we give a powerful message both to our respective adherence and to the world. Then we can magnify this for more and visual more messages or communicate it to the world, the more we contribute to the advancement of peace in our world.

Judaism describes Shalom as the name of God, and of course, this is echo within both Christian and Moslem tradition. But in fact, and indeed, the Mishnah, the oral tradition that was written down in some 2 millennia, stated that the reason of Hebrew narrative, the Bible, described one human being that is created singly to emphasize the idea which we already have heard before, that one human being is like the whole world. To kill one is to destroy the world, and to save one is to save the world. But it also tells us that be a human being was created singly to emphasize peace among humanity, that no one could say “my origins, my ancestors, was greater than yours”, because we have that common origin.

Finally, let me say the word ‘Shalom’, the Hebrew word for peace, implies more than simply say no to violence, that count from the Hebrew root ‘Shalem’ meaning complete. It means a complete relationship within ourselves, others, and our environment.

May we be worthy of this called of peace of our religions and be worthy of the define blessing of the family of Abraham. May God be with you, Allah ma’akum.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 5: GOMAR GULTOM

The Honorable Minister of Religious Affairs, the Honorable Sirs/Madams of Leimena Institute leadership, the presenters whom I love, and Ladies and Gentlemen, whom I respect.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in my understanding, living peacefully is the dream and longing of each and every human being, and I think that is also the goal of the formation of the unified state of the Republic of Indonesia. As can be seen in the fourth paragraph, the fourth objective of the Preamble to our Constitution states, to participate in achieving world peace which is our concern today. And the formation of the United Nations is none other than to create a life together which is peaceful. That is very clear. That is why every September 21 we celebrate World Peace Day internationally as a mandate from the UN General Assembly.

However, the reality we face is that in this world, in and around us, violence is becoming more and more commonplace, discords, conflicts, wars, and injustices are everywhere, and victims of war, also economic violence are happening until now. In the midst of a situation like this exists the Abra-

hamic religions that we have been talking about tonight. We surely heard the explanation from the previous speaker that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all against violence. All of them declare living in peace as the same common thread. From shalom in Judaism, Christianity also talked about this, and Islam also talked about *salam*. All of us are represented.

From the perspective of Christianity itself, I suppose also in other religions, the call of religion is clearly to be a fellow human being - how we behave towards others, not how others treat us. So, it is the opposite of what we have been doing so far. But, how do we treat others, how do we become a fellow human being to others? Christ always identified Himself as a fellow human being. What we do to others we also do to Christ. What we do not do to others we do not do to Him. In truth, peace in this perspective is a good relationship between fellow human beings that engenders peace.

So that's it. However, the historical fact is that turmoils caused by religious sentiments are very prominent. Religion is used as a justification for all violence and murder. And, everything is always on the pretext of religious defense. We remember the 30-year war in Europe, internal religious strife between Catholics and Protestants in 1618–1648, an extraordinary happening, and various other events, such as the Crusades, how the American pioneers eradicated the native Indian groups and so forth. These are historical facts that we cannot deny.

So, if it is said that everyone wants peace, why does this violence keep happening? It is obviously contrary to religious beliefs, be it Islam, Christianity, or Judaism; it always surrounds us. The problem is, perhaps in attaining peace for

oneself, we often sacrifice other people's feelings of peace, when in truth, true peace is in fellowship. Without fellowship, without justice, peace will be hollow (not getting anything).

I would like to look at two problems that exist in these religions, be it Islam, Christianity, or Judaism. These three religions stand on scriptures and traditions, and as such there is a problem with the language and symbols used in texts and traditions; in this case, there is a hermeneutic problem. Over and above the question of hermeneutics is our interpretation of the texts and our interpretation of this tradition. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is very perceptive in introducing religious moderation, which strives to mediate textual approaches that are extreme in status on the one hand and contextual approaches that are also extreme on the other hand. Therefore, this needs to be developed in order to establish cooperation among these three religions to balance the textual approaches and the contextual approaches. That is an internal matter.

The second problem is an external problem, the problem of presenting oneself in the public sphere. Religions do not share public space, but instead compete for public space. In a context like this, there are often other accomplices, politicians or economic interests thereby instrumentalizing their own religion. In this way, I offer a way out. First, how about we open up room for new interpretations and not close ourselves off so as to make religious understanding a sacred ideology. It is necessary to be aware that the existing medium (this may be a bit harsh, maybe some will disagree with me), including scriptural texts also have limitations because of the language and situation at the time of its writing, but even more so because we who read it also have our limitations.

Therefore, when we are aware of these limitations it will bring forth a willingness to hear different interpretations; furthermore even within the same religion it can give birth to different interpretations. Now, this makes it easier for us to accept others, but we can enter the deepest meaning of the text itself, beyond the words of the existing text. And it is within this framework that self-emptiness is needed, to fight against selfish tendencies, to overcome subjective interpretations. Such self-emptying makes it easier for us to maintain universal values which are actually the substance of these three religions, and make them an attitude towards life. And, this self-emptying will also encourage us to open up ourselves more easily to cooperate with various social groups in this world, along with all the citizens of this world who have the good will to resolve environmental problems, resolve poverty problems, resolve problems of corruption, and so on.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 6:

ABDUL MU'TI

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.
Good evening. Greetings to all of us. Peace be upon you.

First of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share each other's insights and thoughts in this very important event, and therefore allow me also to greet the Minister of Religious Affairs, Retired Gen. Fachrul Razi, also Ambassador Jakob Tobing, also Mr. Alwi Shihab, as well as all the panelists earlier who had conveyed their extraordinary thoughts. Mr. David Rosen from Jerusalem, thank you very much for joining us. Also His Eminence Cardinal Ignatius, also Mr. Gomar Gultom, and the Honorable K.H. Said Aqid Siroj, as well as all the participants whom I respect.

I have read Zachary Karabell's book. He wrote a book entitled "Peace Be Upon You", in which he explained how the Abrahamic religions have many common teachings and many basic values that allow these three religions to share reciprocally and also synergize mutually in creating a peaceful world order.

Among the similarities between the teachings of the three Abrahamic religions is what is mentioned in the Qur'an in

Sūra 5: Māida, verse 32. In it, God spoke, “*katabnaa ‘alaa banii isroo-ila annahuu man qotala nafsan bighoiri nfasin au fasaadin fil ardli fa kaannamaa qotalan naasa jamii’aa. Wa man ahyaaaha faka-annamaa ahyan naasa jamii’aa*”, which means more or less, “I have ordained for the Children of Israel as a teaching that has been imparted, commencing from the Jewish religion on to the Christian religion and in the Islamic religion”. The teaching reads “*man qotala nafsan bighoiri nfasin au fasaadin fil ardli*”, ‘if anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he slew the whole people’. “*Wa man ahyaaaha faka-annamaa ahyan naasa jamii’aa*”, ‘if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people’.

I think this verse is also mentioned in the Jewish scriptures, as well as in the Christian scriptures, and it contains a universal teaching about how Abrahamic religions revere life and revere mankind. There are indeed differences from the theological side and also from the ritual side. However, there is one thing in common and that is, when talking about humanity or what Kiai Said Aqil Siroj earlier mentioned as *insaniyah*, the unity of mankind is the common ground wherein these three religions not only have the same teachings, but can also take the same steps in creating world peace. In this regard, peace and reconciliation can be formed if humans mutually involve each other, not mutually invalidate one another, build coexistence and establish cohabitation by revering humans as God’s exalted creatures. In light of this, how peace can be formed, of course, we can look at the respective texts of each religion, but we can also look at how the challenges ahead can involve Abrahamic religions in creating a peaceful world order.

Earlier, Rev. Gomar Gultom, my close friend, already conveyed how this world is facing extraordinary challenges. Planet earth is not yet entirely peaceful. Because of this, our shared challenge is how to create a world that is more peaceful: not only a world in which there is no war, but also a shared responsibility for how peace can be created when we jointly respond to the challenges ahead.

Rev. Gomar Gultom also mentioned the issue of economic inequality and poverty which becomes a source of war and a source of tension among religious groups and among nations. We have a great responsibility, a shared responsibility to preserve the environment, as well as face a world that is increasingly threatened by global warming with all its consequences. This is all part of a shared task, in what ways Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - can build together a peaceful world order: a world in which humans mutually respect one another, humans who mutually help each other and a world in which we live in a lasting environment where we can live together. These are just the simple thoughts that I can convey. Hopefully it is beneficial.

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

- **Question for Ignatius Suharyo:**

In 2019, the Holy Father Pope Francis, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, signed a document on human fraternity for world peace and coexistence. Can this document be used as a basis for building fraternity among Muslims, Christians, and Jews for world peace? How should we understand it?

Answer:

We definitely can, because that is what it was meant for. The title alone is for world peace and coexistence. The problem is, these are concepts that have been formulated for big problems which have to be translated into ideas, and those ideas have to be small and can be turned into actions. So, for instance, what I distinctly remember is that when this document was just released, I was invited to join a meeting initiated by friends, comrades who are Muslims. At that time, a participant, a Muslim activist said something like this, “I invite my students to read this document in Arabic every evening, and invite my students to reflect and talk about it very concretely.” Likewise, at the Indonesian Bishops’ Conference

last year, I invited leaders of various religions to make notes on this, and I think Prof. Abdul Mukti wrote something to translate this document into a wider audience for distribution later on at the grassroots level. Thus, the process would of course be long, but even the smallest effort to socialize, to bring this document to the grassroots, should be done.

- **Question for David Rosen:**

The question for David Rosen came from us through Asrul Asmadi Mochtar. What is the mechanism or approach that can be used to unify all of the faith community or mankind in this world? Is there such thing as 'unity in diversity' in making this world a better place by way of uniting mankind?

Answer:

Yes, I think that is precisely the challenge. And in fact, interesting enough, it is I think the secondary implication all the verses from the Quran, that I got from Al Hujarat because that verse, an indeed similarly for example in the Biblical messianic vision, a vision of the messianic edge. It is not a wall which we are denationalized and everybody is reduced to the lowest common denominator. Many nations will go up to the mount of the Lord. Nations will not lift up soul against nation. Seemly the idea, that we need to know one another to clear the difference, means that diversity is part of the define plan. It's part of God's glory. And when we understand that diversity is not something that we need to compete against, but something that we need to celebrate then we have a

totally different orientation. So, respect to diversity, together with the recognition that every human being is created and defined and, in another word, every human being within alienable dignity, those are the guideline. When we follow this guideline, appreciation of diversity, respect to the human individuality, we will be true to the most of values of our respective heredities. And when we do it together and we are greater even on some of our different parts and it would be even more affective in achieving those goals.

- **Question for Gomar Gultom:**

Are there any documents or efforts from Protestant churches in the world that talk about relations among Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, these three Abrahamic religions? How can today's dialogue support such efforts, that is, to build relations of mutual respect?

Answer:

Thank you. There are several documents related to this; for example the document produced by the World Council of Churches together with the Vatican and the World Evangelical Alliance which invites all mankind to spread the Gospel in the midst of the context of each respective society with a new understanding of the Gospel itself, that it is joyful news. Also, the document of the World Council of Churches, which invites us to see that truth and goodness are present on the other side, so that in preaching the Gospel, for example, we should not make the other as an object, but equally as a subject to bring about the good news, and so the other is treated

as a partner. The latest one is a document from the World Council of Churches, jointly with the Vatican, whose title, if I'm not mistaken, is translated into Indonesian "Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity". It's just a few months since it came out in the context of we, as humans, serving together in the situation of this Covid-19 pandemic regardless of ethnicity, regardless of religion. Let us look at it all together. So many documents were issued, be it singly by the World Council of Churches or in collaboration with the Vatican and the World Evangelical Alliance. And also, these materials are implemented through conversations within the sphere of churches in Indonesia.

- **Question for Abdul Mu'ti:**

Prof. Abdul Mu'ti, do schools or universities under the guidance of Muhammadiyah have a world peace special program or curriculum, particularly about the Middle East region?

Answer:

Specifically, there is no such document yet, but in practice we already practice it. First, related to education, Muhammadiyah, with the hundreds of universities and the thousands of schools in its name, has students not just from Muslims only, but also many from the Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist circle, and so on. We do not have a Jew yet, but we mention and convey on this occasion that in Muhammadiyah schools and universities, religious studies are provided according to the student's religion, so that

in Muhammadiyah schools, students who are Christians and Catholics receive their religious studies on Christianity and Catholicism as taught by religious teachers who are Christians or Catholics themselves. Therefore, I think this is an experience for which there are no documents, but we have already taken the necessary steps, and we call this building cohabitation and building an atmosphere of camaraderie, an atmosphere of harmony by respecting each other's existence and serving religious adherents according to their beliefs.

- **Question for Ignatius Suharyo:**

The Nostra Aetate or Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions is one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council which states that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. Can this understanding be understood as the framework for strengthening fraternity among Abrahamic religions? How do we make it happen on a practical level?

Answer:

We definitely can. Of course, the Nostra Aetate document, once again like any other document, should be translated into actionable ideas. So, for instance, in the framework of the five-year basic direction of the Catholic Archdiocese; in the Diocese of Jakarta, the motto is practice Pancasila, five years from 2016 until the end of this year. In the same way, Pancasila is a big ideology. Thus, it should be translated into ideas. The said ideas are translated into actions. Likewise, Nostra Aetate

respects other religions. This is a major revolution within the Catholic church that must reverse the way of thinking of Catholics, not only in Indonesia. Because of this, for example, students from the Faculty of Theology are invited to live in Islamic boarding schools, which is a very concrete action. It's the same with prospective priests, even from the high school level; they are also invited to do the same, and many numerous concrete things like that which are done at the grassroots level. Talking about this can take a long time, so for instance, going back to building a so-called Pancasila habitat, that idea is quite general, but those who are actively involved in that movement, with different inspirations from their respective faiths, build camaraderie by doing something that can be done, especially in overcoming or in dealing with Covid-19. There are many interfaith committees who really serve at the grassroots level.

Next to my house, there is the Daya Dharma house, a social service wherein during this pandemic, volunteers from various different backgrounds are there working together. Thus, it is not talking about religion, but about the inspiration of different faiths in doing social services together.

- ***Question for David Rosen:***

What does common ground mean for the Abrahamic family of religions? How do these three religions work together to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic?

Answer:

Well, thank you, I mean this is very big question, and I could give many examples. One of the organizations I am involved

in is Religion for Peace and there is, of course, very significant Indonesian as representation in that. Religion for Peace, as being very much engaged in terms of bringing religious figures together over the question of COVID-19, and many other world organizations on that regard. Very fact, we come together in itself, this is I have mentioned earlier, a powerful demonstration of solidarity. But there is something specific with regard of COVID-19. COVID-19 has been an opportunity for many negative elements to exploit it in different ways. And you have, for example, conspiracy theory claiming this community, or that community, or another community is behind it. That is a classic example, where we as Moslem, Christian, and Jewish should stand up together and refute falsas, lies, misrepresentation, any kind of hate machinery and so that we stand together and of course there are other areas where we must work together. All of us have our charitable organization, we need to bring this organization together to work for the needy, for the poor, for the suffering. And more, more, more latest being done today, there is more collaboration between the religions than ever before. But the member of family of Abraham, we have a special responsibility to work together. I hope that gives some kind of answer to the question.

- ***Question for Gomar Gultom:***

Love is the spiritual core of the Gospel which rejects all forms of persecution and denounces hatred of fellowmen. How can this love be developed in the Abrahamic religions in order to bring about fraternity and world peace?

Answer:

I think that love should be manifested in concrete actions. What has been happening thus far is that our love remains as emotions and does not manifest into concrete actions, even though love is an action that is concrete in which God the Almighty humbled Himself, sacrificing Himself in order to become a human being. That is indeed true love. We should also do that as I understand it, and that is what we have to do, how to implement it in concrete actions, in the form of sacrifices. If it is a concrete action but with strings attached, it is not love but a transaction. What we are talking about are acts of love. If all religions, adherents of Islam, Christianity, and others, perform acts of unconditional sacrifice, I think that is definitely true love and it is possible to do so. Many examples have already happened around us, including the context of overcoming the current pandemic; there are many humanitarian actions carried out by people without thinking of religion, ethnicity, and race, sacrificing themselves as much as they can. Look at the doctors and nurses in the hospitals who have sacrificed many things, even at the risk of getting infected from this covid; that is love. This means love is not something that exists only in the beginning, does not only remain as emotions, but must appear in concrete actions.

- **Question for Abdul Mu'ti:**

Prof. Abdul Mu'ti, I am a student of Sultan Hasanuddin State Islamic University, Banten. As the young people of the next generation who will one day take part and become the biggest influencing factor in increasing the role of the Abrahamic family in relation to world peace, I realize that

the differences as well as the pros and cons will undeniably always exist in our lives. How, Sir, can we have the courage to face differences in interests that can disturb peace in the Abrahamic family? What should we know, also what should we do, so that we, the young generation, can contribute to creating harmony among these Abrahamic religions? Thank you, Sir.

Answer:

There is a saying in Indonesian: if you don't know, then you won't love. Therefore, so that we can live in peace, we must know each other and interact with each other personally. In psychology, it is called building personal proximity. I and Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo as well as Mr. Gomar are devout followers of our respective religions, but we can be very close friends, because we have personal closeness and we interact with each other with the principle of mutual respect. Secondly, if we talk about it in relation to the Qur'an, religion is a matter of choice. Even the Quran in verse 99 of Sūra 10: Yūnus emphasizes that 'If it had been the Lord's Will, They would all have believed,— All who are on earth ! Wilt thou then compel mankind, Against their will, to believe!'. Now, if we have arrived towards that principle, then to have religion is each one's choice, but doing good is the teaching of all religions, and that we can do if we do not become exclusive individuals, but become inclusive individuals. Make friends with as many people as possible, and make friends to be able to create goodness in the biggest way possible.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ignatius Suharyo

For all of us, the three religious communities, Abraham is our ancestor in faith. Because of this, at the grassroots level, I always invite the people I serve to grow increasingly into individuals with more faith, not just more religious. Because, for me, faith can be distinguished from religion. Thus, the invitation is to increase in faith. One of the most important indicators for me, my personal conviction of true faith, is fraternity. So, when the people are invited to have more faith, then they are also invited to fraternize more; inevitably if one feels that he has faith but his fraternization does not improve, then his faith should be questioned. And, the third fruit of true fraternity is compassion, so the more we fraternize the most obvious fruit is when there is mutual compassion. Thus, at the grassroots level of the area that I researched, the dynamic formula that I teach to the people is the more we have faith, of course Abraham's faith, the more we fraternize, the more we have compassion. Thank you.

David Rosen

Thank you very much for the host. First, I think the practical obligation that comes out of this very important webinar is

that we all have the obligation to stand up for one another. When there is a manifestation of Islamophobia or hatred of Moslem or disrespectful on their tradition and heritage, Jewish and Christian must stand up together with their Moslem brothers and sisters and repudiate it and condemn it. When there is an expression of anti-Semitism things that said about Jewish their derogatory, and it is important for Moslem and Christian stand up together with their Jewish brothers and sisters and repudiate it. When something is done or said that damage or threat Christian or misrepresent it, Jewish and Moslem must stand together with their Christian brothers to condemn it and then repudiate it. This is our obligation as true believers on representative of our religious tradition. Let me finally say that while I profoundly believe that we share the most profound religious ethical radius, we must not minimize the differences, we are not the same, we are different religions, and we must respect those differences, and the challenge for us is to be able to respect and maintain a particular narratives while at the same time a firming our universality of being one family, one humanity, with responsibility to all human beings. Thank you.

Gomar Gultom

Thank you. What I understand from today's conversation is that the family of Abrahamic religions are actually the same; they all teach how we should treat each other, to love, to respect, to be at peace with fellowmen. Not the other way around, how other people should treat us as religious people. Loving others, respecting rather than being respected, prioritizing others rather than being prioritized, putting others first rather

than being put first. If this is our way of religion, then believe me, whatever your religion, be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, peace will be real. So, make yourselves useful for others.

Abdul Mu'ti

Thank you. My message is the same with what Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo conveyed, the same with what Reverend Gomar Gultom conveyed, the same with what Rabbi David Rosen conveyed. Let us put it into practice and make it happen together.

Thank you.

PROFILES OF THE RESOURCE SPEAKERS



ABDUL MU'TI

Prof. Dr. Abdul Mu'ti is the Secretary General of Indonesia's Muhammadiyah and the Chairman of the National Education Standard Agency (BSNP). He is a lecturer in the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, where he also got his doctoral degree. He completed his master degree at Flinders University in Australia. He has been actively involved in interfaith dialogues in Indonesia and other countries.



ALWI SHIHAB

Dr. Alwi Shihab is a Senior Fellow at Leimena Institute. He was a former President's Special Envoy to the Middle East and the OIC in 2015-2019 as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RI in 1999-2001. Together with the then chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, KH Abdurrahman Wahid, he founded Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa. A staunch advocate of interfaith dialogue, he has served as a board member of Hartford Seminary and Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions.



DAVID ROSEN

Rabbi David Rosen, KSG, CBE, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, is the Director of International Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee. He is a member of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel; and serves on the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).



FACHRUL RAZI

General Fachrul Razi (Ret.) is the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. His vision in leading the Ministry is religious moderation and harmony. Previously he achieved a brilliant military career as Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense, Deputy Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI, for its acronym in Indonesian), Chief of Army Staff, and Governor of the Military Academy. He led the Indonesian peacekeeping force under the United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) in 1989-1990.



GOMAR GULTOM

Rev. Gomar Gultom is the Chairman of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), where he served previously as its General Secretary. He is actively involved in strengthening interreligious relations and diversity in Indonesia, and chaired the Conference of Muslim-Christian Religious Leaders of Asia 2013 to strengthen relations between the two religions. Earning a master's degree at the Jakarta Theological Seminary, he is very enthusiastic about strengthening the church's contribution to peace in Indonesia and the world.



JAKOB TOBING

Jakob Tobing is the President of Leimena Institute. This graduate of Harvard Kennedy School of Government chaired the General Election Commission in 1999 and was awarded the Bintang Mahaputera Utama by the President. In 1999-2002 he chaired the House of Representatives (DPR, for its acronym in Indonesian) Commission for Constitutional Amendments which transformed Indonesia into a democracy. As the Indonesian Ambassador to Korea, he was awarded the Gwanghwa Medal, First Class, Order of Diplomatic Services in 2007 for his role in facilitating the Summit.



JAVIER PIEDRA

Javier Piedra is the Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Asia, where he oversees USAID operations in 30 countries in Asia, which in 2018, has an annual budget of over \$1.3 billion.



CARDINAL IGNATIUS SUHARYO

Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo is the Chairman of the Indonesian Catholic Bishops' Conference in Indonesia and Archbishop of Jakarta. He completed his doctorate in Gospel Theology at Urbaniana University, Italy, and was a former lecturer and Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Sanata Dharma University. He is the first Indonesian to be appointed as a representative and member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and is counted on to implement the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.



SAID AQIL SIROJ

Prof. Dr. K.H. Said Aqil Siroj is the *Rais Aam* (Chairman) of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). He was named as one of the most influential Muslims in the world by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center and was awarded by the daily newspaper *Republika* for his commitment to strengthening diversity in Indonesia and his active role in world peace, particularly in the Middle East. He completed his master's and doctoral degrees at Umm al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia.



SHEIKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH

Sheikh Abdallah bin Bayyah is the Chair of the Fatwa Council of the United Arab Emirates and President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. He is recognized by Muslim scholars in the world as one of the prominent authorities in legal methodology of *usul al-Fiqh* (The Principles of Jurisprudence). He is known for his remarkable expertise of traditional sources and texts from the four Sunni schools of thought to address important questions of contemporary Muslim society.

The Sheikh had also developed a theory of *fiqh* in non-Muslim circles, known as *fiqh al-aqalliyyat* (Minority Jurisprudence). He is an outspoken critic of terrorism, having written several articles and books exploring the Islamic response to the issue. The Sheikh's work focuses on addressing some of the most pressing issues facing global Islam.

In 2014, the Sheikh founded the Forum for Peace (FFP) in Abu Dhabi, under the auspices of Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. The vision of this

Forum is to answer the various crises facing global Islam from the framework of Islamic traditions and legal theory applied to local contexts. More than 1,000 prominent clerics and other leaders from various traditions attended the launch of FFP.

In January 2016, the Sheikh initiated the Marrakesh Declaration as the culmination of efforts made since 2011 to address the issue of violence and oppression against minorities in Muslim-majority countries. The Declaration applies traditional Islamic texts to affirm the Islamic principle of equality of citizens as taught by the Prophet. The declaration was signed by clerics and politicians from across Muslim countries.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

WORDS OF APPRECIATION FOR
MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
AND LEIMENA INSTITUTE

Drs. H. Jaimudin, M.Ed.I

**(Principal, SATap Lontar 2 State Junior High School (SMPN,
for its acronym in Indonesian), Serang)**

Seminars such as this should be held more often, so that the people of the world will be able to feel how beautiful this world can be if these three major religions that originate from the prophet Abraham unite, love and respect each other. I am very lucky to have been able to join this webinar. Thank you very much to the organizers.

Trinirmala Ningrum

(Director, Skala Indonesia Foundation, Jakarta)

Very interesting discussions; it's good if it can be conducted as often as possible, so that mutual respect for each other will be built. Only now did I participate in a Ministry of Religious Affairs discussion that seems to represent my longing and I believe is also the longing of the Indonesian people, at which point the Ministry of Religious Affairs is genuinely the so-called umbrella for existing religions in In-

donesia. Maybe someday we might be able to discuss several things, for instance environmental issues, disasters from the perspective of Abrahamic religions.

Maksimus Hardy

(Catholic religion teacher, Ruteng)

It's amazing to be able to attend this webinar. For the next topic, it would be wonderful if it is sharpening the action aspect, such as the concretizing of theory as a discussion session aiming towards love because in our opinion love is not a theory. Thank you to the resource speakers, thank you to the Minister of Religious Affairs, thank you to Leimena Institute for initiating this webinar. Regards.

Randi Rangga Aditia Tapahing

(Lecturer, Yogyakarta)

A webinar with this kind of topic is very refreshing. This is one of the good breakthroughs in diversity. My hope is that you will continue to hold webinars relating to peace in Indonesia with other topics; for example, topics which deal more specifically with concrete measures for peace. In this way, the goal is that there are measures that must be taken in Indonesia involving components from religious leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONDUCT SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

Mochamad Gilang Ardela Mubarak

(Lecturer, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Serang)

This discussion was very good, but the short period of time made us less satisfied with the discussion of the issue of Abrahamic religions' fraternity. Hopefully Leimena Institute and the Ministry of Religious Affairs can facilitate this

fraternity meeting of interreligious adherents again so that we will be able to answer the contemporary problems of these people, regarding the fraternity of interreligious adherents which at present often becomes a cause of discord among religious communities, more so a religion that becomes muddled and there is a lack of knowledge about their own religion and other religions.

Desty Pandie

(Teacher, Lobalain 2 SMPN, Rote Ndao)

In my opinion, this webinar activity is very good and excellent. It can open shallow mindsets about the diversity that exists in the world, especially in Indonesia. If I may suggest, what if another activity like this can be held for religious teachers throughout Indonesia.

WORDS FROM PUBLIC FIGURES

Prof. Dr. Amany Lubis

(Rector, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta)

Thank you for conducting such an important webinar with all of distinguished speakers. For the future we can discuss more about the Alliance of Virtue that is explained by Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah in his speech.

Y.W. Junardy

(Board of Supervisors, Pondok Kasih Foundation, Jakarta)

Inspiring and important dialogue toward achievement of world peace and Indonesia Damai! Thank you.

A WORD FROM THE YOUTH

Sri Utami Tatuhas

(Student, Manado State Christian Institute)

I think this webinar is very good, very good especially for young people like me because it is very motivating. For that I am very grateful for organizing this webinar and God bless.

Monica Dwi Chresnayani
(Our Daily Bread Indonesia)

This is my first time attending interfaith dialogue and it was good and eye opening. Hope to see attend more interfaith dialogue, especially regarding misconception of other religions, phobias and such, and how we can eliminate suspicions and hatred among followers of each religion and promote peace.

NOTES:

1. Names of Yaqub's sons, Indonesian version, is copied from: <https://kumparan.com/berita-hari-ini/kisah-keturunan-nabi-yakub-dari-empat-orang-istri-1wfRaXZKAV4/2>
2. Names of Yaqub's sons, Arabic version, is copied from: <https://muslim.fandom.com/wiki/Ya%27qub#:~:text=Ya'qub%20was%20the%20father,in%20Misr%20for%2017%20years>.
3. English translation of the Abu Dhabi document, is copied from: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html
4. English translations of the Qur'an texts in this document are copied from *The Holy Qur'an: Translation by A. Yusuf Ali* (Online source: <https://quranyusufali.com/>), except those translated/paraphrased by the resource speakers themselves.

International Webinar on The Occasion
of The International Day of Tolerance

**A NEW NARRATIVE OF
ABRAHAMIC FAMILY TOLERANCE
FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
AND LEIMENA INSTITUTE

November 24, 2020

**WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE INDONESIA:**

FACHRUL RAZI

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.
Shalom.

Good evening and greetings to all of us.

The Honorable drs. Jakob Tobing (President, Leimena Institute),
Dr. Alwi Shihab (Senior Fellow, Leimena Institute),

The Honorable Resource Speakers:

- Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi (Member of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates and Chairman of the World Council of Muslim Communities),
- Rabbi David Saperstein (Former Ambassador for International Religious Freedom and Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council of AJC),
- Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (Senior Advisor to the Executive Office of the President, Republic of Indonesia, and Commissioner of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (2012-2018)),
- Rev. Johnnie Moore (President of The Congress of Christian Leaders and Commissioner of the Commission on International Religious Freedom, United States).

Blessed participants of this webinar,
We extend our praises and gratitude to the One Almighty God. Because of the abundance of His grace and help, this webinar is able to run smoothly according to the plan. For Muslim friends, our *shalawat* (prayers to God) and greetings are always extended to the Great Prophet Muhammad *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, his companions and family. Prophet Muhammad is also known as the bearer of the religion of peace, that is, Islam, as it is with the other Abrahamic religions.

The theme of our webinar this time is “A New Narrative of Abrahamic Family Tolerance from The United Arab Emirates”. This theme is important in order to dig into the experiences and share knowledge between the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia or other countries in the world. Sharing knowledge in the field of religion, culture, politics and peace dialogue is crucial to mutually enrich all our ideas, concepts and experiences.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As is commonly known, religion is oftentimes used to create intolerance and trigger intolerance and other acts of extremism. Even extremist groups in the world, many use religion to further inflame intolerance, hatred, and hostility. They are even able to work together across national borders. And again, the gap in the relations among Muslims, Christians, and Judaism - the major religions of the Abrahamic family - is what is usually exploited. It is time for us to see tolerance and peace that is bigger than ourselves, bigger than our respective countries. It is time for countries and nations that respect religion as the foundation of tolerance, peace, and humanity to work together, so that religion is reinstated to its

true and honorable nature. We must not lose to groups that, if truth be told, abuse the lofty values of religion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this webinar series since last October, we started with the great Abrahamic religions. In the spirit of the International Day of Tolerance, today we will look at the experiences of the United Arab Emirates, a country that is a close ally of Indonesia and our friends, too, wherein even though we are separated by distance, but in terms of commitment and social capital for religious tolerance, we actually have a lot of connectedness and similarities. It is time for us to get out of the shackles of negative stereotypes that anti-tolerance and anti-peace groups have implanted, so that we can learn from each other and work together across nations, across countries, to bring about tolerance and peace to the world. In this way, *insya Allah* (God willing), religion will be reinstated to its noble essence. Religion as *rahmatan 'il alamin*, mercy to the whole universe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In mid-December of 2019, we visited Abu Dhabi wherein one of our goals was to have a mutual exchange of ideas about the management of religious life affairs. Indonesia can derive good pointers from the UAE in managing tolerance and harmony in religious life. This is because the UAE is an example of a developed country, be it in matters of economy, technology and religious life. Progress in the UAE is built on the framework of the values of moderation, tolerance and harmony that is exemplary.

The United Arab Emirates is currently building a worship complex consisting of a mosque, a church and a synagogue

in the nation's capital, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi. Referred to as the Abrahamic Family House, this complex is used as a place of worship as well as various activities that emphasize interfaith dialogue. Those are the little things that we learned about Abu Dhabi.

In the future, we can be more proactive in terms of collaborating on the exchange of expertise and experience to promote the concept and values of religious tolerance and moderation. We should also continue to promote collective awareness of the dangers of extremist ideology. The ideology of extremism is a threat to Abrahamic religions and can disrupt the global peace order.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The values of peace and tolerance are basic values and ethics that must be upheld in the life of the society and the nation. In the Scriptures of the Abrahamic religions, there is not a single verse or teaching that inflames the zeal for hatred, enmity, or all other forms of negative behavior. All Abrahamic religions teach love, justice, fraternity, and respect for differences.

Fraternity among people from all nations, and different cultures, different religious backgrounds do not become barriers for us in building cooperation and doing good collectively. Differences of opinion and views are a source of wealth in dialogue.

The Abrahamic religions exist to save mankind and advocate a peaceful life. All religious people yearn for a life that is tolerant and peaceful.

In the context of the importance of peace, tolerance and fraternity between fellowmen, Sa'di Shirazi, a Persian Sufi scholar once said, "Human beings are members of a whole, in creation

of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, other members uneasy will remain. If you have no sympathy for human pain, the name of human you cannot retain.”

On this occasion, I would like to thank all parties who have been involved and have contributed. The resource speakers, in particular Dr. Ali Rasyid al-Nuaimi, Chairman of the World Council of Muslim Communities, Rabbi David Saperstein, Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, Rev. Johnnie Moore, for their willingness to give their thoughts in this webinar. To the Leimena Institute Team in collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Mr. Jakob Tobing, Prof. Alwi Shihab, Mr. Matius, Dr. Muhammad Zain et al, for their dedication and tenacity, until at last this webinar can be carried out according to the original plan. Hopefully this will be a virtual meeting full of memories for a more tolerant and peaceful life, especially for the family of Abrahamic Religions.

And finally, let us open this webinar by mentioning the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*. May the Most Wise God direct all of us towards the right path always. May our lives continually be peaceful and prosperous.

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Shalom and greetings.

Jakarta, 24 November 2020

Minister of Religious Affairs of RI,

H. Fachrul Razi

WELCOMING REMARKS FROM THE
CHAIRMAN LEIMENA INSITUTE:

DRS. JAKOB TOBING, MPA.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning, Good day, and Good evening

At the beginning of our program today, please allow me, on behalf of Leimena Institute, to express our deep appreciation to Minister Fachrul Razi and his Ministry for the important partnership to co-host this International Webinar: *“A New Narrative of Abrahamic Family Tolerance from the United Arab Emirates”*.

Our high appreciation and gratitude also to our speakers in this webinar, His Excellency DR. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, Member of UAE Federal National Council and Chairman of World Council of Muslim Communities, His Excellency Rabbi David Saperstein, Former US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom and Member of the Muslim - Jewish Advisory Council of the American Jewish Committee, Honorable Reverend Johnnie Moore, President of Congress of Christian Leaders and Commissioner, US Commission on International Religious Freedom and Honorable Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, Senior

Advisor, Indonesian President's Executive Office and former OIC's Human Rights Commission. Our high appreciation also goes to all participants of this International Webinar today.

This program is in commemoration of the International Day for Tolerance and the third program of this kind in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Through this series of programs, we believe we can contribute to building friendly communication among the followers of the three Abrahamic religions, especially among their leaders around the world, including in areas that are currently facing disputes involving the Abrahamic faiths.

In that regard, we are grateful in particular, to HE Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, who is willing to share the UAE experience in building and spreading the tolerant narrative. We believe that UAE's experience will be a real contribution to the world peace process, especially to resolve the conflict in the region involving followers of the Abrahamic faith.

Further, we will also learn from the experiences and thoughts of Rabbi David Saperstein, Rev. Johnnie Moore and DR. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, on how to build new and tolerant narratives. Likewise, we believe that the participants of this webinar will contribute to enriching and strengthening the new narrative of the Abrahamic religious family in building tolerant communication as for paving the road to peace.

Furthermore, we believe that the leaders of the three Abrahamic religions in the world will welcome this tolerant narrative, including the Abrahamic religious leaders in the Palestinian and Israeli states.

I look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

WELCOMING REMARKS FROM
SENIOR FELLOW LEIMENA INSITUTE:

DR. ALWI SHIHAB

Distinguished Participants,

We gather here today to listen and learn from world renown speakers and their perspectives in building communication and relation between Muslims, Christians and Jews as one of Abrahamic families, in a Webinar titled ***“A New Narrative of Abrahamic Family Tolerance from The United Arab Emirates”***

Today’s Webinar is timely as we are in the week of celebration of the ***International Day of Tolerance*** along with the growing initiatives globally in building better communication for tolerance.

As we all know that **The International day of Tolerance** is annually observed to educate people about the need for tolerance in society and to help them understand the negative effects and the risk of intolerance which may lead to violence and terror. We all agree that tolerance is harmony in differences and the virtue that makes peace possible. It is an act of humanity which we must nurture in our life.

In spite of the ugliness that we see around us today, caused by religious, racial and ethnic intolerance, responding back

with another act of intolerance is not the right answer. Two wrongs will never make a right.

Instead, in order for the world to function, tolerance should be a practical and moral imperative for our own well-being. One of the important ways to achieve this goal is through education, knowledge, and personal conscience.

However, while education has an undisputed ability to enlighten people for tolerance, it is not always highly considered by governments seeking quick results in international policies.

In many cases, international policies do not always follow the moral laws and standards of positive interactions. Rather it is power that really matters; in line with the mantra ***“Might makes Right”***. With the widespread media coverage of religious and socio-ethnic intolerance there have been a growing interest in recent years in how principles of tolerance are learned and manifested.

Abrahamic religions which make up more than half of global population are expected to play an important and strategic role to actively engage in fostering peace and harmony for the world.

To maintain and strengthen peace in the Middle East and around the world, it is imperative to encourage efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue as we are doing today. It is only by developing friendly relations among communities and states that we may advance the interest of lasting peace in the Middle East, Indonesia, and around the world.

Finally, I have the honor to introduce His Excellency Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, A trusted advisor to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He is a

Member of the UAE Federal National Council and Chairman of the Defense Affairs, Interior & Foreign Affairs Committee at the Council. He is the founder and chairman of World Council of Muslim Communities. A strong advocate for tolerance and peace, Dr. Al Nuaimi chairs the Steering Board of Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, based in Abu Dhabi. Today he will share with us the UAE's experience in building better communications and relations between Muslims, Jews and Christians and how it can promote tolerance and peace in the world. In March this year, he was the keynote speaker at a seminar on a similar subject at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Dr Nuaimi, the time is yours.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 1:
ALI RASHID AL NUAIMI

Waalaikumsalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Assalamualaikum. Shalom. Good day, your excellency. It is a great honor for me to participate in this event you know Indonesia, you know, for me is not only the largest Muslim country but also you have a rich history in presenting Islam as a religion of peace, and you should be proud of it, and I think all Indonesian should take this message as Islam became the religion in Indonesia as a message of peace and harmony not like other places. So, you know, whenever I talk about Indonesia in many places in the world, I will always feel that an Indonesian should talk about Islam and present Islam, not me. So I'm very grateful to be part of it, and I know that we all face so many challenges, but I trust with the right leadership that we have in the UAE, Indonesia, and other parts of the world will be able to create a better world for the next generation, a world of peace and harmony for everyone.

Your excellency, when it comes to when we want to talk about the UAE, the UAE is a small country. We got independent in 1971, but we have a rich experience because we were

fortunate to have the right leadership who has a vision and who believe in people and believe also in humanity. Many in the world they don't know that Shaikh Zaid *rahimahullah* became a ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966, but the first place of worship that he opened officially and built on his own money was a church, not a mosque and that was in 1968. And, he had a vision where the diversity and coexistence are our path to the future to build our nation. So, in the UAE you know in the last 47 years and now and it will be the same vision for the future, and our path to the future is coexistent, and tolerance is not an option, but it's a survival kit for us as a people and as a nation actually and in this regard you know we always think globally but we act locally.

We believe that our religion Islam is the religion of peace but it was hijacked by those terrorist group, by those extremists, and used as an ideology to serve a different agenda, or a political agenda. This is why we feel as Muslim it is our responsibility to get our religion back and present it to the world as a religion of peace and in this regard you know why you know being proud as a Muslim, we believe that all religion especially the Abraham family religion they are they have great values in common. All religions have great values, there is no bad values in the religion, but sometimes some religious leaders use religion as an ideology and here where we miss the point.

So, when it comes to us in the UAE we believe that the three religions, their root is in the middle east so they belong to our area and we are proud to have all these three religions rooted in our region and this is why we believe that we have to come together, work together and try to create a better

world and this is why you will see in the UAE a very diverse community. Maybe my friend Johnnie Moore had visited us several times and he saw that we have many churches. Now we have more than 70 churches in the UAE you know and we have now synagogue we have our place of worship and temple for Hindu and for Sikh and for Buddhism. So, we believe freedom of religion that will bring things that will build bridges between us, bridges of trust and love and where we can work together to create a better world.

This is our vision and it's the most important thing that we should have the courage to speak up about it and create programs and initiatives that will promote it. And here you know when as professor Shihab mentioned the educational system from the beginning we invested in our educational system we made sure that's promoted coexistence and tolerance and counter hate and extremism and this is why you will see at the end that UAE people are easy going, they accept others, they respect others.

Yesterday, actually I met a rabbi who came from Europe, I won't mention the country, but it was his first visit to the UAE and he said, "Ali I am really shocked. I feel here safe much safer than in any European country". I said, "how did you find out about it?". He said, "you know I went to the mall; I see these young UAE national you know boys and girls I talk to them I feel that they are easy going. They speak with me with open heart and open mind", and this is what we are proud of. This is the real investment that we think the region and the Muslim world needed. This is why you know we create we decided to have this the Abraham family house to represent the three religion and to have a model where we can live to-

gether work together and also share the value that we have from our three great religion and humanity to create a new message a new narrative to the world. And this is why our leadership actually took the decision to uh have a peace treaty with Israel above the Abraham Accord and you know we moved very fast even many Israeli officials they were shocked how to see that the response of the general public in the UAE when it came to this peace treaty.

So, your excellency, brothers and sisters. You know, working for promoting coexistence and tolerance is not a job. It's a noble cause. It is something that we have to work together and you know, no religious leaders by themselves can do it. We have to engage all the stakeholders in this, and you know at the end the outcome of this will be a better world for all of us. A world of peace that you know everyone will gain from it. If we didn't do so, those who are promoting hate who are promoting extremism will gain, and this is why we have to support our religious leaders from the three religion and other faith also who believe in these things to come forward, work together, give them the right support, create the right platform for them to speak up with a new narrative that will gain the heart and the mind of the people, especially the youth and women to create a better future.

We need to create a narrative that is convincing to the youth, not a narrative that is convincing to us, and here you see I am approaching Muslims, especially. We have to look into what the youth you know what's their need, their challenges, the way they think, how to convince them, how to engage them in you know promoting peace and harmony for all humanity. Because, if we didn't do so, those others

will hijack, you see and use our youth and other things that promote hate and extremism. This is why in the UAE we had to look into the renew our curriculum do special training for the teachers and principals and also do a huge reform in our Islamic affairs; do special training for the imam, special training for them, we had unified the Jumu'ah Prayer sermon to make sure that we are sending the right message to all the people with one message not different message from different mosque and different imam and this is why you see that now in the UAE there is one narrative when it comes to the religious narrative. It's a narrative that promote peace, try to build bridges with others with other faith, and to give them respect, and give them also assurance that they are free to practice their religion and that we are here not to convince them to change their religion, but we want to work together with them to promote the shared value that we have together in the three religion.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 2:
DAVID SAPERSTEIN

Well, thank you. I'm really honored to be a part of this program with such distinguished colleagues. I want to thank the government of Indonesia and particularly its ministry of religious affairs, that, building on its historic value of Pancasila, has embraced the policy and cultural goal of increasing tolerance and religious freedom for the Abrahamic faiths as captured so keenly in Minister Razi's opening keynote. The recent July 2020 round table on the roles of the Abrahamic religious family and promoting peace in the world was an important step forward.

My thanks as well for the ongoing work of the Leimena Institute, Ambassador Tobing, and the very strong staff there for its long-time efforts not only on interfaith dialogue, understanding and tolerance but for a richer sense of relations based on mutual respect of religious freedom and multi-faith collaboration more broadly. These ideas have been strengthened by the work of Indonesia's vast and influential Muslim grassroot groups, the important public formal statements, in recent years, of Nahdlatul Ulama and religious freedom, the Muhammadiyah's similar expressions of a tolerant Islam, its willingness to open its schools to Jews

as well as to members of the formerly recognized religious minorities of Indonesia.

And all of this is enhanced and paralleled by the groundbreaking work of the UAE represented today by Dr Al Nuaimi's powerful message providing a visionary gathering that led to the historic document of the Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. It's providing a home for the Forum for Peace in Muslim Communities an effort that spurred the Abrahamic-based Alliance for Virtue.

In the UAE's recent Abrahamic Accords, a political obstacle to such interfaith cooperation and understanding has been lessened and with the opening of the first public Hindu and Jewish houses of worship in the past two years hopefully other nations will follow soon. This is such an urgent time for the endeavors that you have undertaken. A Pew research centers alert us that today, well over 80 percent of the world's population lives in countries with serious restrictions on religious freedom either by government action or by social hostility. Among the factors that have caused this are: The growth of religious extremists and non-state actors willing to use force to impose their religious and political views on others; the growth of authoritarian forces across the globe who are always threatened by ideas and institutions around which people organize their lives in ways that the state cannot easily control including religious ideas and institutions; (and) the regulations that restrict religious institutions and the laws that punish heartfelt beliefs or peaceful practices.

If ever we needed structures, education, programs that seek to promulgate religious understanding and cooperation, it is now. So, to see a leading and influential Arab Muslim nation

and a leading and influential Asian Muslim nation working together on behalf of greater religious tolerance freedom and interfaith cooperation, Abrahamic and more broadly, provides the potential for global impact.

I am Jewish, of course, and Jews have tragically been the quintessential victims of religious persecution and ethnic cleansing over the centuries. And, today, as we see anti-Semitism raising its head in growing numbers of countries, efforts as you have undertaken are such an important expression of a very different kind of world; a more open, inclusive, and hopeful model. Core values and concepts within my own faith tradition within Jewish law tradition and theology lead to affirming and embracing such steps towards Abrahamic dialogue and understanding and cooperation for the common good for peace and justice in our own nations and across the globe.

Let me mention just a few of these values and concepts relevant to your efforts. The infinite value of every human being rooted in the belief that we are all created in the divine image that all of us have a spark of the divine within. Within Jewish thought this applies not just to Jews but to every human being, every child of God. Secondly the fundamental equality of all people connected with the idea of the value and dignity of all humanity. But, this idea of the fundamental equality is rooted as well in the interpretation of the Bible in midrashic interpretive stories that ask: Why were we all descended from one couple Adam and Eve? Why was Adam made from the dust of the four corners of the earth so that none of us, we are told, can claim that the merit of our ancestors was greater than anyone else's? We are all equal before God, we are all

truly brothers and sisters, or as an important medieval text explains, “I call heaven and earth to witness whether one be gentile or Jew, man or woman, slave or freeman, the divine spirit rests on each in accordance with his deeds.”

There are diverse, equally valid paths to God and to salvation in Jewish thought. Based on the historic views of the Noahide Covenant between Noah and God, between God and humanity, forged after the flood, as described in the Hebrew Bible. Any people who believe in God and act ethically can find salvation. Any religion that promulgates the one God and ethical behavior gives their followers a path to the presence of the divine and to salvation. It’s one reason, amongst a number of reasons, why Judaism was never a proselytizing religion the way many other religions are, because we think there are equally valid paths to God and to salvation.

Now, for historical reasons, this did not result, of course, in frequent respectful exchanges between the communities -- albeit, despite the Dhimmi, second-class citizenship of Jews and Christians under Muslim rules, in general, they fared better in such societies than did Jews and Muslims under Christian rule. At the same time, while it’s hard to think of any pre-Age of Reason country that embraced norms that today we would fully equate with robust religious freedom, there are numerous examples of periods of pluralistic, tolerant societies that manifested social cohesion despite religious diversity among various sects of a dominant religion and with other religions.

Just consider the Jewish experience of Alexandria Egypt from 200 BCE to 100 CE, or the episodic flourishing of the Jewish life in Babylonia over hundreds of years from about

300 into the Muslim era up to 1000 CE. The so-called “Golden Age of Spain” in Granada and the Caliph Abd al-Rahman III’s Cordoba, where towering Jewish figures played roles in the broader society as well in the Jewish community of 17th century Amsterdam. All these saw Jewish life flourish even as Jews contributed substantially to the general society with significant interaction between Jews and Christians and Muslims. The era of Averroes and Maimonides saw significant exchanges of intellectual ideas and helped shape both communities and so too episodically that would happen with Christian communities.

But in general, interfaith dialogue and cooperation is a recent phenomenon in human history. Indeed, today we live in an era of interfaith relations that surpasses in numerous scope and depth anything known in human history prior to this era. Such efforts became ingrained in the last century between Jews and Christians in the Americas and the Europe. In recent decades increasingly Muslims have been brought into such interfaith structures as well. And we know what it takes to make a sustained successful effort: religious literacy of our respective faiths, which calls for serious dialogue and respectful dialogue between our communities’ leaders and grassroots; for our children to have the opportunity to study about other religions; explicit agreement in such interfaith efforts not to proselytize; opportunities for learning by inviting those of different religions into our homes to see how we celebrate our festivals and life cycle ceremonies. This calls not just for dialogue, but (for) working together, for when we work to address common challenges in our communities and in our nations , it forges bonds of trust far stronger than

pure dialogue can do alone. In this kind of engagement, when we must explain ourselves, when we work together really effectively, we can model the very kind of world that we are trying to create. May that be the blessing of the efforts that you have undertaken and may its impact inspire others to do likewise. Thank you.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 3:

SITI RUHAINI DZUHAYATIN

*A*ssalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening. Shalom. Allow me in and outside to convey my gratitude and appreciation to the minister of religious affairs, General Fahrur Razi and colleagues in the minister of religious affairs, and also colleagues in Leimena institute, Ambassador Jakob Tobing, our great mentor, Professor Alwi Shihab, and also colleagues in the institute for inviting me to such a timely and pertinent forum on celebrating the international day of tolerance. It is a great honor to celebrate such an important day by learning and sharing the initiatives, the challenges, as well as the best practices from the prominent experts and the defenders of peace and tolerance. His excellency, Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi and then rabbi Dr. David Saperstein, as well as Reverence Dr. Johnny Moore.

As we celebrate the digitalized and borderless worlds with unprecedentedly connects people in more effective and more efficient ways which we expect to foster better understanding to each other and eventually celebrate

diversity and differences as the treasure of humankind. However, what we witness in so far is the reversal and the setback where political identity is resurfacing everywhere, no exception of Indonesia. And also, we painfully expose to the gross violation of human rights in many parts of the world in the name of religion. We also witness the use and the abuse of racial and ethno-religious sentiments to turn back the world into exclusive, monocultural, mono-existent, by undermining the existence of others. We strongly condemn the clash and the unresolved contestations of this so-called the protection of right of expression in one side and the other side the defending of religious dignity which sadly claims the innocence lives in France.

So, in Indonesia we also experience what we call the social polarization which is now is alarming which potentially jeopardized the most pluralistic multicultural nations in the world, and also Indonesia is scattered in the separate islands. If ethno-religious sentiment is not carefully managed so it will be a great danger to our identity.

In the last 10 years, ethno-religious sentiment is coupled with the prevailing belief of the conspiracy theory between Islam and the Muslim as the major populations in Indonesia against the capitalists west and Christianity and also it is also adding with the communism of China. In additions it is a complication has been sustained also with the growing of transnational ideologies aiming at restoring the Islamic *Khilafah* against the constitutional great nation states of Indonesia.

Such a narrative has been politically abused as a political interest and power over the desperate people for better life

indeed, as also mentioned by excellency Nuaimi that religious plurality and multicultural are deeply rooted in the history of Indonesia and we expect that it will be well maintained in the future as the national identity of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* or diversity in unity in the project of the nation state declared in 1945.

So in my presentation I would like to focus more on how Abrahamic religion in Indonesia, in particular Islam and Christianity which interact and evolves within socio-political and economic issue in the grounds, and we learn from Dr Al Nuaimi on how the united Arab is now succeeded in establishing the more harmonious environments by establishing more religious holy houses and in Indonesia because we don't have such a big Jewish community so that we have to learn from you. But I will focus mainly on how we have the problems in Indonesia and how we solve this within the socio-political and economic issue in Indonesia. So, I focus on this issue rather than reiterating the tenets and the basic teaching that I believe all of them promoting peace and justice, protecting human rights and human dignity, and respecting differences. Only in the real and the actual social encounters that those teachings are justified and meaningful to the people, particularly in the plural and multicultural context.

To some extent Indonesia has relatively succeeded in handling the tensions between two major Abrahamic religions; Islam and Christianity over the ownerships of the country. We reconciled within Islam as claimed as the religion of the indigenous and the Christianity perceived in the past as the religion of colonials, and we bring together the two

religions into the official religions of the Independent State of Indonesia. And since then effort to strengthen the two religions are fostered in many levels and scopes. Of course, we still have minor tensions happen in some places, but in general the two religions are working together to establish religious harmony in Indonesia. Generally public educations have been equally accessible for both and also for all the citizens of Indonesia regardless of the ethnics and also religious background as also for political and economic participation. And the establishment of modern religious organization as mentioned by rabbi Saperstein that we in Indonesia we have Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Islam and other religious association, and this is actually, and they are actually the footholds of religious mainstream and moderations. Over 30 years that the state carefully managed social religious harmony in moderate manner mainly for securing our national stability and fostering our country.

In this issue, the New Order in the past trying to manage the political party separated from religious affiliation in order to curb the detrimental sentiments which nearly thrown the country apart as happened in political turmoil in 1950s. Nevertheless, the policy, such policy on the better social coexistence through the pragmatic policies in housing, education, as well as community activities across ethnic race and religion. The state imposes strong measure to religious fanaticism and extremism for not disturbing national stability. But unfortunately, this is little effort to foster sincere understanding and respecting the differences.

The state policy creates only what the so-called artificial coexistence because the interaction occurs in cognitive level

of knowing but not engaging. So, following the reformation movement in 1998 where democracy was restored and ironically many religious exclusive groups reviving under the theme of religious freedom and association which publicly provoked hatred and intolerance. Very often they incite violence to those who were blamed for deforming their faith external and internal like the case of Shia and Ahmadiyya. A global threat of political identity has worsened, the circumstances where religion is used and abused for political gain.

And in this contentious situation we are grateful that we have religious mainstream, religious organization which remain non-political but still having critical roles in providing constructive and evaluative input to the state in wider spectrum. As such the co-existent approach seems to be not enough in responding to reformation era where religions are politically contested. It needs a shift into more pro-existent approach by engaging into more substantive initiative in the areas where religious ethno-religious sentiments are likely to raise.

So, I just summarize this for five points; one is religious leaders and organization should remain non-political but providing moral force for the government for observing good governance, combating corruption, as well as ensuring socio-economic justice for all. Second, ensuring inclusive job opportunity in private sector across ethnics and religions based on merit and affirmative action. Third, fostering economic partnership across religion and ethnic in private business, for encouraging religious partnership in humanitarian assistance in local, national, and international level especially in disaster

and crisis response such as in the pandemic Covid-19. Finally maintaining in the religious and inter-ethnic communal activities in helping the vulnerable groups as such as disabilities and those economically marginalized. So there, it's safe from the coexistence to pro-existence and this is actually the message that I would like to convey in order to strengthen the relations and the cooperation of the Abrahamic religion particularly Islam and Christianity and hopefully in the future we can include Judaism. Thank you.

RESOURCE SPEAKER 4:
JOHNNIE MOORE

I am unbelievably honored to spend some time in this early morning in Washington DC with all of you. I'm grateful to the Minister of Religious Affairs for beginning our time together, and my many friends on this webinar here today, from Ambassador Tobing and Dr. Alwi Shihab. Of course, Ambassador Rabbi David Saperstein. I would consider, perhaps, a new friend, Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, it's a pleasure to meet you here, you know, in this environment. And of course, my dear, dear friend and brother, Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi.

This is an incredibly timely conversation because as Rabbi Saperstein has reminded us, we are in the golden age of interfaith harmony. I like to call it multi-faith harmony, however, because we're not asking anyone to put down their religious convictions or their religious identity. We're asking everyone to choose to be a profoundly committed person to their faith but to live in harmony with one another. And this is the golden age of multi-faith harmony in our world. Then, Indonesia, because of its history, and the UAE because of its leadership, are, in my estimation, a match made in heaven.

Indonesia, the world's most populated Islamic country, a country known for its Wasatiyya approach to Islam. And the UAE, which and, with due deference to all my friends, you know, across the Middle East, but I have a particular fondness for the UAE as the crown jewel, perhaps, of the Arabian Peninsula, a definition of all that is rooted in history, and all that is the blessing of our modern world.

A “blessing” is a good world, actually, to begin my very view comments here today because religion, if nothing else, as has already been said in this webinar, by His Excellency, the Minister of Religious Affairs, nonetheless. Religion ought to be a blessing in the world. What must God think when He looks down and He sees His people in immunity, in His name. There's no, there mustn't be a greater offense to God than to look down and see people using religion to divide, and the best way to honor God many times is not let religion divide us but let religion be the blessing that is meant to be in the world that we're living in today.

And also, in summary of the other comments that have been made here. For Jews and Muslims and Christians. We believe that God made a diverse world on purpose. You know, I'll tell you, I know the bible much more than the Quran. But in my reading of the Quran, even as an elementary student of Islam, a (default) Christian, who you know has read many Islamic texts. You know when the text says that God made tribes in some tribes so that we might recognize one another, it's clear, He made diversity. God intended on us being different and yet God intended on us living together. And this is not just the decision of nations though it's the decision of nations, and as Dr. Al-Nuaimi has said, the UAE has become what the UAE is

because of its extraordinary founder, one of the great leaders in human history if you ask me. And the profound actions of His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Zayed, who would change a name of a mosque named in his honor, in his honor, to “Mary, the Mother of Jesus” in order to honor the Christians that lived in the Emirates.

And in fact, in my own Evangelical community, Evangelical medical doctors came to the UAE at the very beginning of the modern kingdom. And when they came there, they wanted to provide healthcare, for people, for free. The land that they built the hospital on was provided by *Sheikh Zayed*. The hospital that the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Zayed, was born in, was that hospital. Because this is the cycle of friendship that exists between Abrahamic religions. We come to bless one another, we don't come to curse one another, because our religions demand respect for all.

The challenge is trust. And as I've said in every, I think, square inch of land across the Middle East and the broader Islamic world from Indonesia through the Islamic part of Nigeria.

Trust, not oil or not any other commodity, trust is the most valuable commodity in the world. And trust takes time to build, but trust takes action as well. And this webinar is about the new narrative of the United Arab Emirates, and I would tell you, it is a narrative of action. It's a narrative of action from the top of the country, but it's also a narrative of action among neighbors who've decided to live in harmony with one another, to not simply wait for their good leaders to take the actions that they have taken and continue to take, but to choose to know those who are different than them in the apartment building across the street or the neighboring

town or the city they drive through that's slightly ethnically different from the one that they live in. It takes curiosity. This is why the United Arab Emirates has, as I've often said, become the Switzerland of religions. It's the convening place where people go to solve the problems that cause-when religion is causing problems in many other places in the world, people go to the UAE to solve it. And in many times in history, people have done the same with Indonesia. And so that's why I believe, the collaboration between these two countries is a match made in heaven. It's also demonstrated by the little things. And I'll finish my brief comments here.

When the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Zayed, invited the Catholic pope and I'm not a Catholic, I'm an Evangelical. When he invited the Catholic pope to speak in Abu Dhabi, he could've chosen to allow the pope, as many-as should be totally respectful, to address Catholics in the Catholic church. Instead, he shut down the entire country, he made it a holiday, he provided buses for any Catholic in the country that were- or any curious Emirati that wanted to travel from Dubai or any of the other Emirates to Abu Dhabi. And profound to me, as I woke up that morning in Abu Dhabi as an Evangelical that doesn't attend Mass, we don't have Mass as Evangelicals, but I went to attend the Catholic Mass. And in every Arabic language newspaper, in Arabic, was the pope, emblazoned on the front of it, a welcomed visitor with the hospitality that has been the historic contribution of Islam to the world, the most profound contribution, perhaps, in many places, a hand-extended of welcome.

And when the Catholic pope delivered his mass in a stadium, a filled stadium, it wasn't just translated in the language of

the expatriate Catholics, who are working in the UAE. It was translated in Arabic. Because a confident nation has nothing to fear for tolerance. A confident nation has everything to gain by demonstrating to the world that there is no enmity or terrorism, or conflict, or corruption of religion. That can cause a confident nation to forsake the religion that's important to them. And at the core of it, is this value of tolerance.

And so, what a privilege it is to spend some time this morning with two of the great great Islamic countries in the world collaborating on what the one thing that we need in our world today. A little bit of-more tolerance one for another.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

- **Question 1 for all the speakers**

It's wonderful to have more dialogues like this, where Muslims, Christians, and Jews as Abrahamic religious family, can discuss how to work together to strengthen peace and tolerance. However, last September, there were agreements called the Abraham Accords signed by the UAE, Bahrain, Israel, and the US. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has hurt Muslims, Christians, Jewish relation, which this Abrahamic dialogue is trying to mend. Will those agreements, which are political but bear the name Abraham become a hindrance to this growing initiative of Abrahamic religious dialogues? Or how should we understand the Abraham Accords agreements? Each of the distinguished speakers brings a different experience and expertise. I'm sure their answers will complement each other and bring more enlightenment.

Answer 1: Dr. Ali Al-Nuaimi

You see the region have been suffering for decades because of the issue, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And what we

hear from both sides (is) something that, you know, we don't see any light in that channel that there is something will be coming forward, that we change what we had been experiencing in the last seven (to) eight decades. Saying that, when the UAE decided to make the initiative actually, we saw the dead end in the peace process and this is where we decided in the UAE, instead of trying to target the Israeli or Palestinian leadership, we should go and speak to the Israeli people.

And here (is) where the article that His Excellency, Yousef Al-Otaiba, the UAE ambassador to Washington, wrote an article, it was in the Israeli newspaper, and the article actually the messages in it was to the Israeli people. And the message was a message of peace, a message of acceptance, a message of assurance, where we want to show them that we consider them as people and as nation, part of that region. And this is a message that we as an Arab, we failed to do so in the last seven decades. Why?

Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel, Jordan had a peace treaty, even the Palestinian authority had a peace treaty and when you look into the Muslim world, there is about 29 Muslim countries have a relation with Israel. So, the UAE decided to break the ice, and to build the bridges, bridges of trust, bridges that would send the right message, not only to the Israeli or to the Palestinian but to the region as a whole, to the people, not to the government. That, you know, enough is enough. We don't need more wars; we don't need more hate. What we need is peace. We have to live together. The three religions, as we mentioned earlier, have been part of this region. Their root is here. Why don't

we try to start from this vision? Jews, their root is in the Middle East, it's here. Why don't we send them the right message? A message of acceptance, a message of peace, a message of appreciation, for them as people. We know there is issue when it comes to the political side, but at the end, we have to live together. And this is where the UAE decided to make that initiative.

We want the Israeli to hear from us, to hear about us from us, and we want to hear about the Israeli from the Israeli. We talk to the Palestinian, we try to convince them. It's a game changer, not only for the UAE and Israel, but for the Palestinian, and for the region. Unfortunately, we didn't get the right response from the Palestinian leadership. We found out that this leadership, by dividing themselves, fighting, between the Palestinian leaders themselves, actually they are blackmailing the Arab world and using the Palestinian coast to serve them, to serve their personal agenda, and not to serve the Palestinian coast. You know, when we announced about the treaty, I found out that there is two million Arabs in Israel. They are eager to have a relation, they want someone to listen to them, to talk to them, we neglect them, we consider them our enemies, there no one-there is no Arab, Muslim Arabs, in Israel (that) can visit most of the Arab world, and if you deal with them, that will be, you will be breaking the law in your country. So what we felt that we need to do something that will be considered a game changer for the whole region. And by the way, those who opposed what we did. Who are they? It's either those terrorists and extremists supported by those who are using Islam as an ideology, but the Palestinian people themselves, they accepted what they did. They were eager

to see a new peace process that will serve their coast. This is why when you look into who demonstrated against the UAE announcement of making peace inside, less than a hundred. And this (less than a) hundred are part of these terrorist groups. So, I am very optimistic that this will open a new era, not only for the UAE and Israeli, but also for the Palestinian people. Bearing in mind that more than 150.000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, every day they go and work in Israel, and the Israeli are opening doors for them to go and work there. So, what we want (is) we want to encourage the dialogue between the Israeli and the Palestinians to sit together, and when they sit together, I am sure that we will be able to build bridges of trust, respect, and at the end, peace should be for all. You can't have peace for one side while neglecting the other side. Thank you.

Answer 1: David Saperstein

If I hear Dr. Al-Nuaimi correctly, this is exactly the right approach. In the North American Jewish community, since the Oslo period in the 1990s, (there) has been very strong support for a two-state solution(and) recognition that, as long as the history of Jewish, nationalism (i.e. Zionism) (may go back) in the history of Jewish people, today there's a Palestinian people who believe (as) deeply in their gut, (that) they have a right for self-determination, as Jews believe that they have in this land. And the two-state solution is the only way to accommodate both national aspirations. If this new change is used to legitimate the status quo right now, where right now, Israelis do not trust Palestinians to make peace and Palestinians do not trust the Israelis to make peace, then

it will further destabilize the region. If, as Dr. Al-Nuaimi said, this is going to be used to transform the debate in a way that does achieve the two-state solution, then it will be a major step forward. And I remain hopeful that (the) latter choice will be the direction that all will follow.

Answer 1: Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin

I think this is also the understanding of the Indonesian government, and the Indonesian people, that peace between Israel and Palestine is to prevail. So, the two-state solutions, as mentioned by Rabbi Saperstein, and also rightly highlighted by (His) Excellency, Dr. Al-Nuaimi, is also the message to the Indonesian people that we have to support the realization of the two-state solution. What we can do as the family of Abrahamic religion is we have to talk internally to our people because the problem is mainly in the understanding of our people, and it should be goes beyond the political, only the political issue. So, of course, we support all their initiatives for peace and harmonies between the two countries, but the internal understandings of people have to be nurtured. So, in Islam, for example, or in Indonesia, for example, we encourage the Majelis Ulama Indonesia to convey the message to the people, not to use the issue of Palestine as the Islamic issue and for the internal, for the domestic political interest. Because the Palestine and Israel, this is the political issue, it's not the religious issue. So, this one is actually the message that we have to offer in overtimes that we have to convince people that we have to go beyond only for the political issue. The Indonesian government always sends the message that the government is supporting the two-state

solution. And we learned from Dr. Al-Nuaimi, for example, to broadens the understandings of the harmonies of the people for the three Abrahamic religion, even though we don't have that massive Jewish community, we have a few Jewish in Indonesia, but again, as part of the Muslim countries, as (a) part also from the global community that Indonesia and the people of Indonesia is supporting the two-state solution in strengthening the understandings of the people.

Answer 1: Johnnie Moore

In two minutes, I will make three observations. One is political, and that is the fact is the UAE is known for solving complex political problems. And the truth is, despite what some of the political leadership in the region might say to Indonesians and others around the world, the vast majority and majority of Palestinians are very happy to have the UAE involved in this. Number two, it's a human right observation. Before the UAE made the Abraham Accords with the state of Israel and the United States, the UAE sent a plane of humanitarian assistance to help Palestinians who are struggling with the coronavirus. That aid was rejected by the Palestinian leadership. And if you believe that every human being has dignity, equality, and is in need (of both), then this was an incredible offense to humanity and I think it was a critical moment where the UAE decided we cannot let a few leaders keep us from saving our brothers' lives among the Palestinians. And thirdly, a religious observation. If the Prophet Mohammad consulted with Jews and Christians in Medina for the Charter of Medina, if the Quran advises to consult with Christians and Jews, on the texts that preceded the Quran, if the Quran says do not say to anyone who greets

you with a greeting of peace that they're not a believer, if these are all Islamic teachings shared by the entire Islamic world, how is it? That the UAE could, if they have the chance to not take the chance to allow Emirati Muslims and other Muslims around the world to visit the third holiest site of Islam, the Al-Aqsa Mosque. And I can tell you, I took a peace delegation from Bahrain to Jerusalem a number of years ago, just quietly. And a Bahraini Muslim of mine was rejected when he tried to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque to worship in the third holiest site of Islam. That was not a religious decision, that was a political decision, and it behooves Arab Muslim countries around the world to ensure that their citizens can practice their faith at the third holiest site and it just became time for countries like the UAE and Bahrain to take that in their own hands. And I can guarantee you, we will not only see a better scenario for Arabs across the region, but also for Palestinians before you know it because of the wise intervention of the UAE and others in this protracted conflict.

- **Question 2 for Dr. Ali Al-Nuaimi**

I read in the UAE website that in October 2017, UAE government appointed a Minister of Tolerance. What is the story behind the formation of this ministry? What kind of narrative that UAE wants to build for peaceful coexistence in UAE, Middle East, and the world, through this ministry for Abrahamic family? What is the importance and urgency of this?

Dr Ali Al-Nuaimi:

Thank you. You see the UAE as a nation is very diverse. We have more than 200 nationality, we have all religion and faith on earth, you name them. And the good thing (is) that, all these people with all these differences in religion, nationality, ethnics, color, are living in the UAE and enjoying peace and harmony. And we wanted to maintain that. This is why we created this ministry, Ministry of Tolerance, to look after issue that will bring people together, and to look into the social interference between the different community within the UAE and make sure that always, we have the right narrative, we have the right legislation, we have the engagement of all the stakeholders in the development of the country, and also in assuring everyone, regardless of their religion, that they are welcome to come, work, live in the UAE. In the UAE, we have about 500 the Jews, the Jewish communities, about 500. It was the first time that I talked to them, to that community, before four months, and it was on Zoom. And I told them: look, you are Jews, you are very welcomed in the UAE, you are welcomed to live, work, enjoy all what we have here in the UAE. So the Ministry of Tolerance, (it is) actually, its responsibility to make sure that everyone in the UAE, regardless their religion, their ethnic, their nationality, their color, they are having the same opportunity and that they feel that they are welcomed, and they are secure, and they will get the right support to live and worship according to their belief.

- **Question 3 for David Saperstein**

The question for Rabbi David, the Jews in Indonesian context or in the world are generally not well-understood

and sometimes leading into suspicion. It might happen due to the prolonged conflict between Israel and Palestine. If terrorists show cruelty, we should show peace and love which all people highly expect to the world. How to explain about Judaism, especially to Indonesian, without any sentiment?.

David Saperstein:

It would be helpful to think systematically about how we educate each other about our respective religions. It should always be done in consultation with, and, wherever appropriate, using religious leaders of the faith group about which we are teaching. Otherwise, narratives that may not be accurate narratives will often slip in. So what are the possibilities that on the airwaves in Indonesia, in schools and universities in Indonesia, teaching about Christianity and teaching about Judaism, can be lifted up in ways over a period of time. You can't solve the very vexing, challenging problem that you put before us in a week or a month or a year, but (only) over (a long) time. Careful education that is accurate can help change the narrative in people's minds, can help alleviate the fears and it means dealing candidly and honestly about things that do bother people.

You know what, it is very common for critics of other religions to lift up the worst of the texts, the lines in their text, the worst of the incidents that have happened in history, and use that as a filter to portray the (entire) religion. We all have that problem; we all have lines in our sacred texts that can be understood in ways very different from the normative understanding of our own faith. So trying to be sensitive to

that, (we must) work together and develop a systematic way to bring to the public a different kind and a more accurate kind of understanding, and to show where, in many places around the world, Muslims and Christians and Jews are working together and doing it in ways that benefits all of their faith groups, enhancing religious freedom for all and working together to create a better society for all. Using, again, media and education to lift up successful examples of this, can be indispensable in addressing the important challenge you just laid before us.

- **Question 4 for Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin.**

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika or Unity in Diversity has become the foundation slogan of Indonesia which is of course very much in line with the peace efforts being pushed forward in the world among the Abrahamic families. De jure, tolerance should have been a part of the identity of the Indonesian nation, but de facto, tolerance is still a collective problem for all of us, especially in the relations of the Abrahamic religions. What are the ways you think we can bring hope and reality closer, not only among religious leaders but also among the populace? Are there any special efforts being done by the Indonesian government in this regard? Thank you.

Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin:

Thank you very much for that question. I actually made a suggestion to Leimena to bring our Jewish brothers from the UAE to Indonesia, so that we have people, I mean Jews, not only from the US, not only from Israel, but we also have said

community from the Arab countries. Thus, it will change our people's understanding in that the Jewry is not Israel.

So, His Excellency Dr. Ali Rashid Al-Nuaimi, we are hoping for you and your Jewish brothers and sisters from the UAE to come to Indonesia, to tell the Indonesian people that Jews are everywhere, also in the rest of the Arab world. In this way, it will increase people's understanding because when they interact, their views will be considerably different from before. This is actually a request from me, too, so that Leimena can visit, hopefully this pandemic will end soon, or hold a webinar with Jewish brothers from the Arab world to ascertain that we are talking about Abrahamic religions outside of Palestinian and Israeli politics.

Second, one thing we should be grateful for in Indonesia is that we have succeeded in actually reconciling one sentiment that once existed between Islam and Christianity. It becomes one religion that owns Indonesia because previously both claimed that it belonged to Muslims because they are the biggest group. In truth, our accomplishment, as stated by Rev. Moore, is the trust between these two religions in the Nation State Indonesia project that is actually achieved, and what the current government is doing is shifting the approach of just coexistence to pro-existence, which is being more involved, involving the community, and is currently being initiated in several places; how matters that relate to those that evoke sentiment, such as economic marginalization, are tackled through micro, small and medium enterprises (UMKM, for its acronym in Indonesian) across ethnicities and religions to implement this approach called pro-existence. That's what I think.

- **Question 5 for Johnnie Moore**

This question is for Reverend Johnnie Moore. As the Christian leader that lived in the Middle East for quite some time in the past, you're involved in drafting the Bahrain Declaration of Religious Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence in Middle East three years ago. What is the importance of this document for developing the tolerance in the Abrahamic family? What kind of impact that you think will be brought by this effort to a country like Indonesia and to the world? As a Christian leader, what is your message to churches in Indonesia? Thank you.

Johnnie Moore:

There have been a number of declarations that have come from the Islamic world. Some of them have been theological like Bin Bayyah Declaration. There was the great historic declaration from the UAE upon the Pope's visit with the Grand *Sheikh* of Al-Azhar. The significance of that would have been unimaginable. In most of history to have the Grand *Sheikh* of Al-Azhar and the Roman Catholic Pope sign anything together much less, you know, a declaration of this nature. The Bahrain Declaration, however, was especially unique for two reasons, aside from the fact that it was very early in this discussion. Number one, it was under the patronage in the name of an Arab king. This was, it was the Kingdom of Bahrain Declaration for peaceful coexistence signed by His Majesty, King Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain. It was by an Arab monarch. And number two, it was short, clear, and concise. It was a popular document. It wasn't a document meant

for scholars; it wasn't a document for leaders of religious institutions. It was a document and is a document meant for the tens of millions, the masses around the world. So, the language is clear, concise and understandable. You don't have to be a theologian or even a religious believer. And it also enshrines under the patronage of The King. The responsibility that leaders of countries have to promote peaceful coexistence in their country, it's one thing for a religious leader like myself to write that. It's a whole different thing for a head of state to do it. And so in this way, the Kingdom of Bahrain Declaration was a profound historic significance. The other thing about Bahrain that's interesting is Bahrain has the oldest continuing history of peaceful coexistence in the region. You have a two-hundred-year-old Hindu temple adjacent to a mosque in a synagogue in Manama, it's a demonstration of the fact that this can continue. And that's why it's befitting that it was both, you know, the UAE and Bahrain that took this profound step standing on the portico of the White House saying that our commitment to peaceful coexistence is so powerful. It even transcends the great political divide, you know, of the last generation. So, this document is a document to gift to every Indonesian all across the country and all around the world.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ali Rashid Al-Nuaimi

Thank you. First of all, I would love to come and visit Indonesia as soon as possible and I hope that all of you stay safe and the vaccine will be soon available for the world. In conclusion, I think there is lesson to be learned. We encourage religious leadership first to come forward and speak up and promote the common values that all religions share together which we at the end as human being share. Don't leave a vacuum for others who are hijacking religion or using religion as an ideology to approach and gain the heart and the mind of our youth. I encourage religious leaders to sit together, listen to each other, engage in a dialogue that will bring the three religion followers together and bridging the gap between the follower of all the three religions and at the all human beings. Also, not to play with politics, leave politics for politicians. Religion is something that we all feel that it's part of our integrity, part of our heart. Politics is, it's a game, and when you talk about politics always there is a compromise but when it comes to the values of religion, the great values of all religion, we can't compromise because of, you know, about this value. We have to maintain these values and protect

them. Thank you very much and I hope that soon we will meet and present.

David Saperstein

We do lift up here some of the best of what is going on in terms of interfaith cooperation (and) Abrahamic understanding and cooperation. Every country in the world has real challenges and problems that we cannot paper over or ignore: the growth of extremist, hate crimes, hate speech; how do we effectively work together to confront those; the challenges of how we treat minority faith groups within our own countries particularly when they hold views that the majority of people really don't like; and what are the tough decisions that have to be made about how to protect rights in those situations as well? What would be the path in Indonesia that UAE has taken (in) that a synagogue that had existed for a number of years is now able to function out in the open? Can this Abrahamic cooperation lead to a similar development in Indonesia? What can our respective countries do to strengthen working together in other countries that fail to take the message we've talked about here and bring it effectively to the broader world? There are all of these significant challenges that we face but this is what I know, working together effectively we can do things that none of us can just do alone.

Sometimes within our own faith tradition we have challenges that we can best address within our faith community. But in a broader world, we can do things together that we can't do alone. And that to me has been really need urgent and inspiring impact of this conversation and of the work going on in all of our countries. So, thank you.

Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin

To bring peace and harmonies among religious community and religions, I would derive from three words. One is from (His) Excellency, Dr. Ali Al-Nuaimi, one is beyond politics. This one has to be in our initiatives beyond politics, especially when its deal with Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The second is the words from Rabbi Saperstein: engagement. Engaging people in the grounds what is actually the source that divided people, we have to work and engage them. The third, I took from Reverend Moore, trust. We have to trust each other that our religion is bringing peace, harmony, and respect human dignity. So, this is actually my closing remarks.

Johnnie Moore

Just a couple of observations and then I will be a pastor for a moment and tell a story. Observation number one is find what you admire about those who are different from you. I'll give you an example, every time I hear Moslem leader say "*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*" before they make a religious speech or a statement. That speaks to me, because it acknowledges God and the primacy of God and the name of God before they make their words. Find something you admire about someone that's different, that means you have to know people that are different than you and if everyone you know looks like you and believes like you, then you need to find some friends that are slightly different then you listen to them. That leads to the last point which is it's much harder to hate or even to not trust someone that you know and that takes work.

Finally, the story. I know there are hundreds of people in this Zoom, the thousands more watching us, and thousands

more that will watch us later on. I know this is a difficult time all around the world for everyone. It reminds me the story of a little girl. She was on an airplane, and the airplane was in severe turbulence. We're kind of in a turbulent time. It was shaking and everyone in the airplane was nervous, but the little girl was calm. So, this businessman sitting next to this little girl after the plane safely landed, looked at her and said, "Everyone thought the plane was going down, everyone thought we were in a dangerous situation and you looked so calm. How could you be so calm in such turbulence?" and the little girl said, "It is because, Sir, my father is the pilot". I think as people faith one of the great contributions we give to the world is a faith and a trust in God that whether it is pandemic, or violence, terrorism, or whatever the crisis may be, that there is a guiding force in all of it, and that is I think an additional contribution perhaps we have made to those listening to us today.

PROFILES OF THE RESOURCE SPEAKERS



ALI RASHID AL NUAIMI

H.E. Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi is a Member of the UAE Federal National Council for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Defense Affairs, Interior & Foreign Affairs Committee at the Council. He is the Founder and Chairman of the World Council of Muslim Communities. He also currently serves as the Chairman of the International Steering Board of Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism. As a pioneer of educational reform and policy in the UAE, Dr. Al Nuaimi served as the Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University and the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge in his capacity as a Member of the Executive Council of the Government of Abu Dhabi.



DAVID SAPERSTEIN

Rabbi David Saperstein is former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom under President Obama and a member of the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council at the American Jewish Committee. He is also Director Emeritus of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Designated by *Newsweek Magazine* as the most influential rabbi in America, for decades he directed the Center,

representing the largest segment of American Jewry to the US Congress and Administration. Later, he served as President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. He is also a member of the Steering Committee of The Alliance of Virtue, initiated by Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah upon the shared values of Abrahamic faiths.



JOHNNIE MOORE

Rev. Johnnie Moore is President of The Congress of Christian Leaders. He is a Commissioner for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. He is one of the best known Christian leaders in the Middle East for his work to promote peaceful coexistence between religious communities, meeting with regional leaders, including most heads of state across the Arab world, on multiple occasions. In 2017, he participated in the drafting of the landmark Bahrain Declaration on Religious Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Association of Evangelicals.



SITI RUHAINI DZUHAYATIN

Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin is a Senior Advisor to the Executive Office of the President and former Special Staff for International Religious Affairs to the President Joko Widodo. She was the Chairperson of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 2012-2014 and Commissioner in 2014-2018. She is also a lecturer at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta and actively promoting women's rights and human rights.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Events like this should be held frequently. For the sake of humanity and at the same time for the people, it will be very effective if interreligious dialogues are enhanced through TRIALOGUE. The Indonesian nation as well as religious people are no longer pitted against one religion with another. The Abrahamic Religion TRIALOGUE will be able to lead to the actualization of a “cooperation” that reduces tensions in the life of the nation and state, be it for national, international and transnational interests.”

Prof. Dr. Alef Theria Wasim (Board of Experts, Indonesian Association for the Study of Religion)

“This webinar is very good. I propose that it should be held again.”

Rev. Lipiyus Biniluk (Chairman, Papua Province Interreligious Harmony Forum, Sentani)

“Informative. Thank you.”

Prof. Dr. Amany Lubis Lubis (Rector, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN, for its acronym in Indonesian) Jakarta)

“An excellent webinar, full of information, camaraderie and it is enlightening. This must be continued, but with a wider audience, even to the segments of the populace.”

Dr. Alamsyah, M.RE. (Vice Rector, Raden Intan UIN of Lampung)

“So good. So useful. Thanks.”

Rizal Azizi (Treasurer, Daarul Uluum Pesantren Foundation, Bogor, West Java)

“It’s great and webinars such as this needs to be held frequently for religious peace and harmony in the future.”

Muhamad Suheli (Teacher, Bawang Sunan Kalijaga Islamic Junior High School, Batang, Jawa Tengah)

“The topic of the webinar is very interesting. Topics like this should “resonate” globally so that hopes for world peace can be promptly realized.”

Artha Battu (Religion Teacher, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Palopo)

“Webinar was very interesting. I would like to hear more practical examples of how to deal with the religious freedom and the Freedom of Religion or Belief (human rights) challenges we’re seeing around the world that Rabbi Saperstein referred to in his concluding remarks.”

**Sharon Rosen (Global Director of Religious Engagement,
Search for Common Ground, Israel)**

“The webinar has opened our minds, particularly it provided a little overview of the relations of these Abrahamic religions in the Middle East itself.”

**Anis Bamarty Amora Putri (Facilitator, Young Interfaith
Peacemaker Community Indonesia, Karanganyar, Central Java)**

“An enlightening discussion because there was a lot of interfaith information and knowledge that enriched our minds and awareness as religious people. I think the theme about the practicalities of interreligious dialogue will be interesting to talk about.”

**Dr. Faizal Amin, M.RE. (Lecturer, Pontianak State Islamic
Institute (IAIN, for its acronym in Indonesian), West Kalimantan)**

“Learning about the Jews directly from a Jew.”

**Mahmud Muhsinin (Secretary, Religious Studies Program,
Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya)**

“The webinar went well. Everything is good. Another interesting topic to discuss, in my opinion, is related to the resolution of the Palestinian -Israeli conflict, beyond politics. How can the relations among Muslims, Christians, Jews promote peace in the said region? Thank you.”

**Dr. Natalina Nilamsari, M.S. (Lecturer, Faculty of Communication,
Prof. Dr. Moestopo University (Beragama), Jakarta)**

“An exemplary webinar, conveying an understanding of tolerance not only among nations but among civilizations.”

Mohammad Afnan, M.Ed.I. (Program Head, Annuqayah Islamic Science Institute, Sumenep, East Java)

“Very good, enlightening and opening up one’s mind to interreligious dialogue and cooperation, religion must be above politics, without suspecting each other, and building mutual trust with others of different beliefs. Greetings of diversity, Bhineka Tunggal Ika.”

Junry Jan Alow, M.Th. (Lecturer, Pelita Harapan University, Tangerang)

“This webinar is excellent. We need to look at positive things.”

M. Amin (Lecturer, Banjarmasin Antasari UIN, South Kalimantan)

“I have already attended two webinars organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Leimena Institute and I am very enthusiastic because this topic is very important. I think in the future there should be more people who need to attend this kind of seminar. If there is another one, I will share it to even more friends. Thank you and success always. God bless.”

Dyah Erwina Hadiningtyas, M.Th. (Lecturer, Jakarta Baptist Theological Seminary)

“Topics of discussion such as this are very important in opening up our minds, we who are indeed of different faiths. Why is it often the case that the desire for power uses the

pretext of religion, which sometimes breeds or is accompanied by anarchism?"

Dra. Oksiana Jatningsih, M.S. (Lecturer, Surabaya State University)

"This discussion inspires to live a life with other religions in Indonesia."

Dra. Emy Wuryani, M.H. (Lecturer, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga)

"This webinar is very beneficial in terms of building camaraderie in diversity. Hopefully the subsequent topics will be more substantive in this regard."

Dra. Marjuqoh, M.A. (Lecturer, Syarif Hidayatullah UIN Jakarta)

"It is terrific."

Dr. Meyke Mamahit, M.Ed. (Lecturer, Manado State Christian Institute)

"The theme is interesting and provides new knowledge to people."

Khaeron Sirin, M.A. (Lecturer, Syarif Hidayatullah UIN Jakarta)

"It is very good for promoting interfaith peacebuilding."

Pratomo Nugroho Soetrana, M.A. (Lecturer, Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta)

“This second webinar that I have attended is more interesting because it concerns transnational issues that are currently happening. Thank you very much.”

Mohammad Rofiqi, M.H. (Lecturer, Yogyakarta Nahdlatul Ulama University)

“The webinar was well prepared and well structured. Well done to all the webinar’s committee members. Issues on interpretation of the Koran, the Bible, the Torah have been a major hurdle in promoting peace in Indonesia.”

Adham Khrisna Satria, M.A. (Staff at the Campus Spiritual Center, Duta Wacana Christian University)

“Integrating tolerance into the educational curriculum of madrasas.”

Dr. H. Ayit Irpani, M.Ed.I. (Department Head, Cicalengka Al-Falah Islamic College, Bandung)

“It is very inspiring if we are able able to live harmoniously in diversity and mutually respect fellow religious communities.”

Dr. Nur Wahyu Rochmadi (Lecturer, Malang State University, Jawa Timur)

“An outstanding webinar among those that I’ve attended so far. We hear directly and take a closer look at the dignitaries of these respective religions. My hope is that religious

tolerance will become a unifying victory for the people of the world. Amen."

Artika, B.Ed. (Teacher, Aqzia Islamic Elementary School, Teluk Kuantan, Riau)

"Thank God. I hope this program can be useful for the future and be the best for all."

Muzakki, B.Ed. (Madrasah Principal, Darut Tauhid Islamic Junior High School, Sampang, East Java)

"The topics discussed are outstanding being that it strengthens brotherly relations between religious communities."

Shofi Wahyudi, B.Ed. (Character Education Teacher, Sume-nep 2 State Islamic Junior High School, East Java)

"This webinar is very good and inspiring to continue to maintain harmony and mutual understanding between religious communities. Hopefully this can be followed and realized by more people everywhere. Good for Muslims, Christians and Jews in particular and religious communities in general."

Eko Suwandi, B.RE. (Teacher, East Kotawaringin State Islamic Senior High School (MAN, for its acronym in Indonesian), Central Kalimantan)

"Impressive, it expands our way of thinking."

Norbaiti, B.Ed. (Teacher, Tanah Laut Insan Cendekia (IC) MAN, South Kalimantan)

“An exemplary webinar, where in here differences can be settled.”

**Anshari Rahmat (Boarding School Teacher, Tanah Laut
Insan IC MAN, South Kalimantan)**

“The webinar is extraordinary, opening our minds to new insights and information about World Peace under the Abrahamic religions.”

Adnan (Teacher, Sambas 1 MAN, West Kalimantan)

“Thanks to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Leimena Institute for conducting this webinar. I feel like I’m directly facing world religious leaders who are also world peace figures. I was so touched that my eyes filled with tears. And there is one message earlier from Rev. Johnnie Moore that is also very touching: “Find one strength in people who are different from you.” I was really touched when he also quoted verses from the Qur’an. Thank you, hopefully all the good deeds of the organizers of this activity will be rewarded by Allah. Amen.”

**drs. Abdul Aziz Muslim (Pancasila and Civic Education
(PPKn, for its acronym in Indonesian) Teacher / Coordinator of
the Meetings of the Teachers of PPKn, Jember Regency, Ajung
Jember 1 State Junior High School (SMPN, for its acronym in
Indonesian), East Java)**

“The material provided through this webinar is really extraordinary. This webinar provides a positive understanding

for me personally and for religious people in this case Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as Abrahamic religions, so that as adherents of these religions, we can all prioritize tolerance and make our religions a grace or blessing for humanity in this world.”

Elisabeth Suzana Souisa, B.Th. (Teacher, Maba 4 SMPN, East Halmahera)

“The knowledge is very inspiring and motivates oneself to further build character especially the millennial young generation in the era of globalization. It is very beneficial and inspires creative innovation for the Indonesian nation which is diverse with various ethnicities, religions, race and customs / various groups.”

Marsuphiati (Teacher, South Jakarta 37 SMPN)

“I think the webinar is truly exemplary. The issue of tolerance is a very good and very urgent issue that should be discussed repeatedly and must be actualized in the communal life of interreligious communities.”

Yakobus J.S. Tukan (Christian Religion Education Teacher, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara)

“This webinar truly inspires and motivates us as Webinar participants to work hard together as part of the Abrahamic family in creating world peace. We hope that such Webinar activities will continue to be carried out with captivating themes.”

Bernat Rombo (Christian Religion and Character Education Teacher, Pamona Utara 2 SMPN, Poso, Central Sulawesi)

“The webinar is very interesting, because it discusses an issue/topic that is happening in Indonesia today. Politics and religion are closely related; because of this, it is necessary to provide the right understanding/teaching so that politics and religion do not become the root of problems in a country.”

Ribka Aguspuspita Sari (Teacher, Sampit PGRI Vocational School, Central Kalimantan)

“This event is really exemplary. Peace is irrevocable, tolerance must already become a culture in our country, Indonesia.”

Jaenudin (Teacher, Sukahurip 2 State Elementary School, Tasikmalaya, West Jawa)

“Thank you. Tonight I received a lot of enlightenment regarding the relations among the Abrahamic religions’ religious lives. One thing I am sure of is that there is no religion that teaches about humiliating humans. In this discussion, there are many constructive breakthrough inputs that should be grasped and implemented by the leaders of our nation, community leaders and the religious communities themselves.”

Rosidin Karidi, B.S., M.S. (Data Division Head, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs)

“This webinar activity is great and needs to be held often, opening our minds regarding the common goals of Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Judaism, which is peace and coexistence with mutual respect. The right insights and knowledge about Abrahamic religions really need to be

understood by today's young generation, in order to reduce excessive fanaticism towards their own religion. Hopefully there will be a next webinar, it is worth waiting for."

Hernando (Religion Teacher, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Merauke, Papua)

"It is exemplary, increases knowledge about religious peace in the world."

Syofiah Nurdeliana Harahap (Islam Religion Teacher, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Padang Lawas)

"Thank you for an event that is really good in building interreligious harmony and tolerance. Hopefully cooperation between the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Leimena Institute will always carry on so that similar activities can continue on a regular basis in the future to strengthen the values of goodness and the broad religious understanding of the religious communities, especially the leaders."

Contasia Karmelitas, B.RE. (Catholic Education Section Head, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Lembata Regency)

"My opinion is that this webinar is very GOOD, and EXTRAORDINARY because it has revealed a wrong understanding or belief that repels distrust of other religions, particularly Islam, which in tonight's discussion, especially from the resource speaker Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, is very satisfying. That Islam in truth teaches love, respect of other religions, not to discriminate

as is happening until now. It turns out that what happened was due to the political interests of those who wanted to profit by using religion.”

**Yepi Trisnawati Lagoari, LL.B. (Government Section Head,
Poso)**

“Excellent. I am very grateful that I can be accommodated in this webinar. This is really something extraordinary. Thank you to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Leimena Institute.”

**Maksimus Hardi (Religion Teacher, Indonesian Ministry of
Religious Affairs, Ruteng)**

“A good webinar, beneficial, worthwhile discussions, provides insights to develop religious moderation, multiculturalism and pluralism.”

**Johnson Parulian Hottua, LL.M., M.Th. (Legal Subdivision
Head, Directorate General of Christian Community
Guidance, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs)**

“This kind of encounter should be more grounded in Indonesia so that misunderstandings and misinformation can be reduced.”

**Rev. drs. Harsanto Adi (Chairman, Indonesian Pastors
Association)**

“It is an inspiring conversation with a common hope and commitment for positive contributions of Abrahamic religions to pro-

mote tolerance, peace with justice in the world. It will be good to further discuss possible common actions of people of Abrahamic religions at the grassroots level in overcoming prejudices and working together to save the earth as a common home, with some concrete examples.”

**Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang
(Advisory Council of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia
(PGI, for its acronym in Indonesian))**

“An outstanding seminar. Needs to be continued. Thank you.

**Pdt. Dr. Daniel Ronda (Chairman of the Synod, Gospel
Tabernacle Church of Indonesia)**

“This webinar is a very positive thing for renewing the understanding of diverse religious communities in Indonesia and I hope that there will be many further discussions on this topic. Thank you.”

**Catur Sigit Purnomo (Senior Pastor, Kasongan Assemblies of God
Church)**

“A very good and commendable effort, thank you to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Leimena Institute.”

**Rev. Joseph Tee (Pastor, Harvest Indonesian Church of Christ,
Australia)**

“Very good. A topic that also needs to be discussed is what kind of program is needed to safeguard religious harmony.

This includes a curriculum for Christian schools that relate to religious harmony.”

**Rev. Syarif Oppusunggu, M.Min. (Director,
Komunikasi Bina Kasih Foundation)**

“Thank you for holding this Webinar, which I think is very important and relevant right now to build more tolerance and love among the Abrahamic descendants, the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians. We do hope that there will be continuous and consistent webinar of this kind held in the future with different topics to discuss, involving more groups and also with the millenials. Thank you.”

**Hana Amalia Vandayani (Chairman, Pondok Kasih Foundation,
Surabaya)**

“It’s very interesting so it should be done consistently. Through dialogue, the mind becomes increasingly open and the paths to peace will be realized.”

**Sarindan Harry Soloman (Deputy Secretary, Indonesian
National Youth Council, Regional Representative Council,
Merauke Regency)**

“In the discussion that was just held, it strengthened our knowledge of how religious tolerance should be upheld in Indonesia in particular, and other countries in the world in general. This is also reflected in the strong religious tolerance present in the United Arab Emirates. This warrants Indonesia to learn religious tolerance from the United Arab Emirates.

In that way, there will be no more groups that use religion to spread intolerance and the ideology of extremism.”

Farida (Journalist, Media Sindonews/Koran Sindo)

“I think this webinar is very useful for me as a Muslim. Besides getting new knowledge, I can also find out a number of things from the perspective of non-Muslim religions. Thank you to those who have organized this webinar, I hope we are all healthy and always protected by God.”

Yuniar Maulidyana Putri (Student, Brawijaya University)

“It’s an insightful session. It would be great if the next topic, is related to Jews as a belief, since majority Indonesians have very little knowledge about it.”

Dien Yudithadewi (Postgraduate Student, Paramadina University)

“This webinar is very interesting and beneficial especially in making me open-minded in matters of tolerance among religious people and answering all my questions about issues related to religion, particularly in Indonesia, which learns from the world’s religious system. I really hope that webinars like this will be held again in the future.”

Dorothea Alexandra Manuputty (Student, Satya Wacana Christian University)

“In this webinar forum, I was able to learn how tolerance exists in the life of the Abrahamic family who upholds religious tolerance and as an example, the Arab Emirates practices it, which can be taken as an example that can be applied in the consciousness of all countries in the world.”

Erza Yuli Hayanti Anwar (Student, Samarinda IAIN, Berau)

*The translation of Sa’di Shirazi’s poem is copied from <https://theconversation.com/bani-adam-the-13th-century-persian-poem-that-shows-why-humanity-needs-a-global-response-to-coronavirus-134836>

Implementing a series of international webinars Dialogue of Abrahamic Religions for World Peace continues the Abrahamic Faiths Roundtable on 22 July 2020. On this occasion, the 2019-2020 Minister of Religion, General TNI (Purn) Fachrul Razi, expressed the thought that "Our Main Task is to seek common ground as the Big Family of Abrahamic Religions to be able to work together for the sake of Peace and the Progress of Human Civilization".

We hope that this book will be of use to stakeholders and the general public who wish to learn and continue to strive to improve cooperation and communication between the Families of Abrahamic Religions so that they can contribute to world peace.

