

Forum on the role of religious leaders in preventing incitement that could lead to atrocity crimes

Fez, Morocco, 24 April 2015

Draft declaration

We, representatives from different religions and faiths, assembled in Fez, Morocco, from 23 to 24 April 2015, for the “Forum with religious leaders on preventing incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes”:

Having discussed the increasing risk of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (hereinafter “atrocity crimes”), as well as their incitement, perpetrated against a background of religious tensions and violence committed in the name of religion and the need to intensify the fight against those crimes and their incitement at local, national, regional and international levels;

Expressing our abhorrence at the commission of atrocity crimes and the unacceptable levels of violence perpetrated against civilians on the basis of identity, including religious identity, and which include ethnic cleansing, killings, sexual violence, mass displacement, etc.;

Emphasizing that atrocity crimes constitute a global emergency and one of the most formidable threats to peace and security and social and economic development, as well as to the effective enjoyment of human rights by all, without discrimination;

Deeply concerned with the rise of extremist and violent ideologies that claim to identify themselves as part of specific faith traditions, beliefs or tendencies, or claim to speak on behalf of a part or a whole of a religion;

Deeply concerned as well with religious-based mass atrocities and the violent targeting of individuals and groups based on their religion or belief, perpetrated by violent and extremist groups;

Mindful of the increasing number of reports of “hate speech” and incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence worldwide and, in particular, in regions where there are high levels of religious tensions and violence;

Cognizant of the role played by some religious leaders in inciting discrimination, hostility and violence and in disseminating “hate speech”, including in places of worship and educational settings;

Cognizant as well that “hate speech” and incitement to violence [as well as violent ideologies], including on the basis of religion or belief, are often disseminated by and through the media, including social media and the Internet;

Stressing the necessity of a gender-sensitive understanding and approach to mass atrocities and incitement to violence;

Recognizing that in situations where tensions are high and populations are divided along identity or sectarian lines, religious institutions and leaders can play a paramount role in preventing and responding to atrocity crimes;

Emphasizing the important role and demonstrated impact of religious leaders in calling for an end to tensions, hostility and violence that could lead to atrocity crimes and in promoting peaceful coexistence based on equality, mutual respect and non-discrimination;

Recognizing that non-governmental faith-based organisations play a paramount role in monitoring and responding to discrimination, hostility and violence, advocating on behalf of the victims of discrimination, hostility, violence and atrocities crimes and in building societies that are based on peaceful coexistence and mutual respect;

Reaffirming that freedom of expression and association, and an independent and pluralistic media, including social media, play an important positive role in addressing social tensions, promoting a culture of mutual respect and informing the public about all matters of public concern, including those related to atrocity crimes and their root causes, and efforts to prevent atrocity crimes;

Insisting on the primary role of the State in respecting and protecting human rights without discrimination, including the right to freedom of religion and belief, and in establishing an enabling legal and policy environment for religious leaders, civil society and the media;

Acknowledging that respect, peace and the sanctity of human life are essential ingredients of all religious teachings;

Recalling and reaffirming previous commitments to oppose violence in the name of religion, including the KAICIID Vienna Declaration (19 November 2014);

Recalling and reaffirming previous commitments by civil society and mass media to prevent and respond to incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, including the Amman Declaration, (18 November 2013);

Recalling and endorsing the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (Rabat, 5 October 2012) and in particular its six part threshold test for defining limitations on freedom of expression, for defining incitement to hatred, and for the application of article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

Cognisant of relevant international standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the ICCPR, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, UN Security Council Resolutions (CITE)

and Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the UNESCO Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance.

Adopt, in Fez, the following declaration:

We, representatives from different religions and faiths assembled in Fez, Morocco, from 23 to 24 April 2015 commit to:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Publicly denounce all instances of atrocity crimes and acts of violence, including those perpetrated in the name of religion and belief (whether one's own or others');
2. Publicly denounce the intentional destruction or damage to cultural heritage or property, including of a religious nature;
3. Publicly condemn all instances of incitement to violence, and of "hate speech", including those uttered and disseminated in the name of religion;
4. Publicly condemn all instances of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and commit to respect and promote diversity and the human rights of all individuals and populations, without discrimination, including their right to freedom of religion and belief;
5. Refrain from uttering or disseminating messages of hate and incitement;

PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSES TO, ATROCITY CRIMES AND THEIR INCITEMENT

6. Monitor and report on the dissemination of ideology that promotes hatred, and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence including, but not only, on the basis of religion or belief;
7. Monitor, report and respond to all instances of "incitement to atrocity crimes on the basis of religion or belief, including when they are disseminated through places of worship and education or through the media, including the social media;
8. Monitor and report on all instances of hate crimes including by and against members of our own religious community;
9. Disseminate messages of mutual respect in places of worship, education and through the media, including the social media;
10. Engage in dialogue with those attracted to, advocating or involved in extremist ideology and acts of violence that are justified on the basis of religion, with a view to preventing or curbing such violence or mitigate its effects;
11. Contribute to interreligious and intra-religious dialogue;
12. Engage civil and political leaders to increase political support for all of these actions;
13. Implement this Action Plan in totality or in part;
14. Ensure a gender-sensitive approach in implementing the Declaration;
15. Appeal to all people of faith, belief and good will who strive to build a more cooperative and peaceful world to adopt these commitments and work with us toward achieving our goal.