

A MESSAGE OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG PEOPLES
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II
CITY HALL
AMSTERDAM
31 OCTOBER 2006

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim Your Majesty, Mr. Prime Minister,

Distinguished guests, Thank you for your kind welcome. Mayor Cohen, I am deeply grateful to you, and all the people of Amsterdam, for your warm hospitality. It is truly a pleasure [for Rania and myself] to experience this dynamic and historic city. And may I say, I am especially honoured to be the first head of state to be invited to speak here at City Hall.

My friends,

We meet at a critical time for the great civilisations of Europe and the Middle East. It is clearer than ever that our future is shared... that countries and communities do not stand in isolation... that prosperity, security and progress, depend on cooperation.

But in recent years, our closeness has also put a focus on our differences.

Crises have challenged the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims here in Europe and around the world. People are asking: How do we live with one another? How do we build trust?

Leaders and societies must respond. And answering these questions is especially important for our youth. The children of the 21st century are beginning to fill our schools. My own youngest daughter is in the first grade. These children and their older brothers and sisters absorb every message of our societies. They are the targets of those who seek to recruit a new generation to extremism, fear and suspicion. It is up to us to send a different message, a message of strength and confidence in our values and shared humanity.

This is especially important in the dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims. Distortions — from whatever source, for whatever motive — must never be allowed to mask the reality of the values and goals we share. The links begin in ancient history, and are rooted in the monotheistic heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each honour a deeply familiar principle. Indeed, everyone here, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, will recognise it in the words of the Prophet Mohammad — peace and blessings be upon him. He said: By Him in whose Hand is my life, none of you believes until he [or she] loves for their brother, what they love for themselves. This is the Golden Rule of our responsibility for others.

The fact is that the ideals of tolerance, fraternity and humanity are shared by cultures and religions around the world. Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, values human rights and liberties, requires respect and tolerance for other religions. It abhors wanton violence, especially when it is committed in the name of religion.

It is also important to recognise our shared commitment to our cities and nations. We all understand that no people should be marginalised from participating and sharing in the promise of our century. And Islam does not instruct Muslims to isolate themselves from the progress of human development. Islam calls on people to be active participants in public life — to uphold the welfare of the community, to strive for good, not for ourselves alone, but for all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. This is the essence of good citizenship, anywhere in the world. It is certainly our experience in Jordan, where Christians and Muslims have lived side by side for more than 13 hundred years. Today, all participate in creating Jordan's future. It is, God willing, a national community of mutual respect.

This holds true wherever Muslims may find themselves in the world. One does not need to sacrifice a Muslim identity to be a good citizen — or give up your identity as a good citizen to be a good Muslim. According to Islamic law, in countries like those of Europe, where Muslims enjoy equal justice and the freedom to practise their religion — and even to express it in the public domain — they must abide by the laws of the lands in which they live. And millions upon millions do, living peaceful and productive lives to the benefit of all society. This is in itself an expression of faith. Muslim communities everywhere in the world are important partners for peace and progress.

My friends,

The success of pluralistic societies is being watched by people all over the world. It is vital to show that debate can be depolarised... that mistrust and misunderstanding — and even genuine grievances — can be overcome... and that fellow citizens can settle controversies in a constructive framework. In the end, this is the only basis for lasting peace and progress – here in Europe, in the Middle East, or around the world. We cannot delay. Our young people are depending on us.

The Netherlands has a global reputation for looking beyond old limits and creating new horizons. Yours is a nation that made land from the sea... helped create modern global commerce... and revitalised international ideals of tolerance and compassion. Now there is a new challenge, for all of your people. Everyone is a leader, from the neighbourhood to the nation, who helps prevent and overcome divides.

Progress begins when we come together and communicate with each other. Your Majesty, Prime Minister, I know you are strongly committed to interfaith dialogue and action. Mayor Cohen, I especially admire your motto: "Listen to all sides." Thank you for allowing me to enter that dialogue today.

I believe that in partnership, we can create a future enriched by respect for our unique cultures, and strengthened by our common humanity... a future that holds new hope of opportunity and peace for all.

Thank you very much.