

Religions for Peace Speaks Out on Hagia Sophia: Living Together with Peace and Respect*

We, men and women faith leaders, come together in this moment of history, to speak as one voice.¹ We refer to the powerful statements already made about events around the Hagia Sophia, by some of us – including His holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, his Holiness Pope Francis, the World Council of Churches, Middle East Council of Churches and KAICIID. As we hear our Christian brethren, we raise our voices as faith leaders representing Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous Spirituality, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths.

Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is meant to be shared with all the world. We are committed to the universality of heritage as something that can create peace and respect for all faiths.

As faith leaders, we recognize and accept the sacred duty and the responsibilities of appealing to the highest instincts of our shared humanity, and service to the Divine within and among all.

As such:

We call for calm, in times when some may see the use of religious sentiments and institutions in a manner that could be deemed as divisive, thus pitting some believers against one another.

We recognize that there are deep-rooted concerns around the (ab)use of religious sentiments, and symbols, for political purposes.

We stand on the side of peace, and of deliberate, intentional, coexistence, particularly as we hear of the voices, and see the actions, of divisiveness and hatred from many quarters.

We are determined that faith not be utilized in the service of the interests of the few today. Rather, we rally the spirit of all, for a peace that goes beyond any one faith, any race, any gender, any ethnicity, any label, any institution, and any nation.

* Published at <https://rfp.org/rfp-hagia-sophia-statement/>

¹ The diverse leaders of *Religions for Peace* steward the world's largest multi-religious organization with affiliated multi-religious leadership platforms in 90 countries and 6 regions. They represent the wisdom and compassion of all faith traditions. This statement was agreed to by the majority of the *Religions for Peace* global membership, inclusive of Indigenous, Jewish, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Jain, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Sikh, and Bahá'í leaders and communities.

We appreciate the civil state that guarantees peace and equal freedom to all inhabitants, respects religious liberties, ensures equal rights to all religions and guarantees the rule of law.

We are committed to modelling the call we make to all: to show mercy, love and compassion, precisely in these moments in our shared history, and we appeal that any and all power be used with compassion and respect for one another.

Ours are the voices, and hands, raised, from all pulpits – physical, virtual, visible and invisible – to urge for mercy and respect towards one another, to declare our love for one another as people of faith, and to demonstrate compassion – especially towards those who come from different faiths – in these troubled times.

Our houses of worship reside, foremost, inside each and all of us on this earth. But we recognise that there are deep rooted ties to various religious houses and sites of worship, by different faith groups. Thus we believe that respecting the sanctity and symbolism of such places, is honouring our collective human dignity.

Organizația *Religions for Peace* se exprimă cu privire la Sfânta Sofia: a trăi împreună în pace și respect *

Trad. din eng. de Pr. Conf. Dr. Habil. Daniel BUDA

Noi, bărbați și femei care suntem lideri religioși, ne-am adunat împreună în acest moment al istoriei pentru a vorbi cu o singură voce.² Facem trimitere la declarațiile pline de putere făcute deja în legătură cu Hagia Sofia de către unii dintre noi – inclusiv Sanctitatea Sa Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu, Sanctitatea Sa Papa Francisc, Consiliul Mondial al Bisericilor, Consiliul Bisericilor din Orientul Mijlociu și KAICIID. Auzindu-i pe frații noștri creștini, noi, liderii religioși care reprezentăm credințele bahá'í, budistă, creștină, hindusă,

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² Diferiți lideri ai *Religions for Peace* slujesc în cea mai mare organizație multi-religioasă din lume cu platforme multi-religioase afiliate din 90 de țări și șase regiuni ale lumii. Ei reprezintă înțelepciunea și compasiunea tuturor tradițiilor religioase. Prezenta declarație a fost emisă cu acordul majorității organizației membrilor *Religions for Peace*, inclusiv a liderilor și comunităților religiilor indigene, iudaismului, hinduismului, zoroastrismului, jainismului, budismului, creștinismului, islamului și a religiei sikh,