

Catholics, Muslims Note Need for Religious Freedom

Stress Importance of Working Together in Society

TEHRAN, Iran, NOV. 16, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The importance of religious freedom as a right inherent to human dignity was one of the points of agreement of a Catholic-Muslim colloquium in Tehran.

The 7th colloquium of the Tehran-based Center for Interreligious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue concluded Thursday.

It was led by the joint presidency of Mohammad Baqer Khorramshad, president of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, and Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the pontifical council.

This three-day gathering focused on the theme "Religion and Society Today: Christian and Muslim Perspectives."

Catholic and Muslim participants presented various perspectives on this topic, developed in three subthemes: Religion and Civil Society: A Philosophical and Theological Perspective; Religion and Civil Society: A Historical-Legal Perspective; and Religion and Civil Society: Contemporary Difficulties and Opportunities.

In a concluding statement, the participants published several points of agreement reached during the meeting.

Human dignity

In one of these, the Catholic and Muslim representatives agreed that "faith, by its very nature, requires freedom."

"Therefore," they continued, "religious freedom, as a right inherent to human dignity, must always be respected by individuals, social actors and the state."

"The cultural and historical background of each society which is not in contradiction with human dignity should be taken into consideration in applying this fundamental principle," the statement added.

The participants also agreed that "believers and religious communities, based on their faith in God, have a specific role to play in society, on an equal footing with other citizens."

They noted that "religion has an inherent social dimension that the state has the obligation to respect; therefore, also in the interest of society, it cannot be confined to private sphere."

The participants agreed that "it is necessary for Christians and Muslims as well as all believers and persons of good will, to cooperate in answering modern challenges, promoting moral values, justice and peace and protecting the family, environment and natural resources."

They reported that they were "pleased with the friendly atmosphere of the meeting" and, while "recognizing the similarities and respecting the legitimate differences," they "emphasized the necessity of continuing on the path of a genuine and fruitful dialogue."

The 6th colloquium took place in Rome in April, 2008. The next one will be held in two years, again in Rome.

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