



US Bishops, Iranian Religious Leaders Make Joint Declaration on Life, Dignity

Condemn 'All Forms of Disrespect for the Religious Traditions of Others'

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Washington, D.C., June 18, 2014 (Zenit.org) | 298 hits

Catholics and Shia Muslims oppose actions that endanger the life, health, dignity and welfare of others, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, according to a joint declaration signed by U.S. bishops and Iranian religious leaders.

The June 14 declaration resulted from a dialogue between a delegation from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Supreme Council of the Seminary Teachers of Qom, the preeminent center of religious scholarship in Iran, during a March 11-17 trip to Iran.

The dialogue sought to promote greater understanding and peace between Americans and Iranians. Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the U.S. bishops' International Justice and Peace committee, led the U.S. delegation.

"As religious leaders, we condemn all forms of disrespect for the religious traditions of others," said the joint declaration. "Just as importantly, we commit ourselves to active inter-religious dialogue that transcends governments and national boundaries and serves the common good of the whole human family."

They added: "Shia Islam opposes and forbids the production, stockpiling, use and threat to use weapons of mass destruction. Catholicism is also working for a world without weapons of mass destruction and calls on all nations to rid themselves of these indiscriminate weapons."

Signers of the declaration were Ayatollah Ali-Reza A'arafi, senior member of the Supreme Council of the Society of Qom Seminary Scholars and president of Al-Mustafa International University; Dr. Abdul-Majid Hakim-Elahi, director of the international affairs office of the

Society of Qom Seminary Scholars; Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington; and Bishop Pates.

Full text of the join declaration follows:

Joint Declaration

June 14, 2014 —16 Sha'bān 1435 AH

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

The belief in One God unites Jews, Christians and Muslims, and calls us to work for the common good of the whole human family. It is our conviction that human societies need moral guidance and that it is incumbent on us as religious leaders to share the ethical teachings that flow from our respective traditions.

Christianity and Islam cherish a common heritage that emphasizes, above all, love and respect for the life, dignity, and welfare of all members of the human community. We found this in our recent dialogue between Catholicism and Shia Islam. Both of our traditions reject as reprehensible all forms of transgression and injustice. We oppose any action that endangers the life, health, dignity, or welfare of others. Catholicism and Shia Islam hold a common commitment to peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

These foundational moral values unite us in raising fundamental moral questions regarding weapons of mass destruction. Shia Islam opposes and forbids the production, stockpiling, use and threat to use weapons of mass destruction. Catholicism is also working for a world without weapons of mass destruction and calls on all nations to rid themselves of these indiscriminate weapons.

We call on all societies and persons to respect religion and its role in sharing moral guidance in the public square. As religious leaders, we condemn all forms of disrespect for the religious traditions of others. Just as importantly, we commit ourselves to active inter-religious dialogue that transcends governments and national boundaries and serves the common good of the whole human family. It is our mutual intention to engage in a sustained dialogue based on our shared values.

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