



STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FROM THE FIRST GATHERING OF EUROPEAN MUSLIM AND JEWISH LEADERS

Brussels, December 6, 2010

*With the help of God, the delegation of European Muslim and Jewish leaders
who have gathered in Brussels on December 6, 2010 on the invitation of
The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU)
have agreed on the following statement:*

Europe is our common home. Jews and Muslims live side by side in every European country and our two communities are important components of the European religious, cultural and social tapestry. Muslims and Jews are both minority faith communities in Europe, yet both have deep roots and each has more than 1,000 years of historical experience on this continent. Our two faiths and communities are an integral part of Europe; past, present and future.

Leaders of the European Jewish and Muslim communities affirm together that it is quite natural for members of our two communities to be at once fully observant of our respective faith traditions as well as loyal and patriotic citizens of the countries in which we reside and of the European Union. There is no contradiction between those two imperatives at the heart of the life experience of the members of our two communities living here in our common European home.

We further affirm that for members of our two communities to have a decent future in Europe and to ensure that Europe itself has a decent future, we the leaders of the Muslim and Jewish communities must step forward together and put into action a sustained effort to end the estrangement that exists between our two communities. Neither of our communities can afford conflict between us; nor can Europe as a whole.

Jews and Muslims have lived together in relative harmony and mutual cross-fertilization at times in the past—including on European soil in Andalusia in the 11th Century. When Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they resettled in Ottoman lands, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Sarajevo Haggadah has been preserved for the past 500 years; including being hidden from the Nazis by Bosnian Muslims. Indeed, we have been there for each other in times of extreme need: Muslims helped to save Jews in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Africa and elsewhere during the Holocaust; while Jews in Sarajevo stood in solidarity with their Muslim brothers when the latter were under genocidal attack in the 1990's.

We must draw upon those historical experiences, as well as upon our shared roots extending back to our common Patriarch Abraham/Ibrahim in order create a new paradigm of Muslim-Jewish mutual acceptance, respect and engagement on the basis of equality, pluralism and free expression in keeping with democratic traditions of Europe. Whilst respecting the independence and the distinct characters of both the Muslim and the Jewish communities, we are in a position to be of great service to each other in helping to ensure that both communities are fully absorbed and find acceptance from the diverse European societies in which we have chosen to make our homes.

Therefore, with the support of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding and like-minded organizations in both of our communities, we must seize the moment to create together a movement of Muslims and Jews here in Europe and around the world based on communication, reconciliation and cooperation. We must initiate sustained dialogue and cooperative projects between Muslims and Jews in countries across Europe if we are to end the mutual fear and resentment, which, all too often in recent years, has caused violence between members of our two communities.

We owe this effort to Muslims and Jews, young and old, who all-too-typically reside alongside each other in fear and mutual distrust in urban and suburban communities across Europe, but deserve the right to live in peace and security. We believe that our campaign will strengthen the forces of moderation in both communities and serve as a check to voices preaching extremism and violence that are a danger to the moderate majorities in both communities and to our efforts to build a united, free and pluralistic future for Europe.

We are convinced that the building of a Europe-wide Muslim-Jewish movement will not only lessen tensions between our two communities but weaken racist and xenophobic movements that lately have been growing rapidly in countries across the continent. The example of Jews and Muslims coming together in peace and friendship will inspire Europeans of all backgrounds with the understanding that the only decent and sustainable

future for Europe is one based on principles of moderation, mutual respect and pluralism. If our two communities can cease fearing each other, but instead build ties of communication, reconciliation and cooperation, then Europeans of all backgrounds can do so. We will work closely with the various governments of Europe and with the European Union to develop educational programs that will bring this profoundly hopeful message to the largest possible numbers of our fellow Europeans.

Among the key principles of the movement that we are now bringing to fruition:

- Our effort to nurture friendship and trust between our communities should be based on mutual understanding and respect for each other's religions, culture and traditions and for the open expression of those beliefs.
- We strongly denounce all forms of violence in the name of any religious or secular ideology and will do everything to prevent the spread of violent extremism in the name of any faith---including our own.
- We affirm that we respect the sanctity of each other's houses of worship and will stand together in case of an assault on either a mosque or a synagogue. We also stand in solidarity with each other in affirming that both Islamophobia (anti-Muslim bigotry) and anti-Semitism, including Holocaust denial, represent unacceptable moral evils in modern-day Europe, or anywhere in the world, and we will fight against them together. Bigotry against any Jew or any Muslim is an attack on all Muslims and all Jews. In addition we are united in our support of human rights and dignity for all peoples.
- We will continue to explore together the commonalities in our faiths and traditions and our common commitment to freedom from coercion. In that context, we respect the rights of individuals to hold views contrary to our own deeply held beliefs,
- We are also committed to fulfilling one of the highest moral callings of our two faith traditions: the mandate to repair the world (known in Hebrew as *tikkun olam* and in Arabic as *islah*), by working together on cooperative projects locally and across Europe to succor the poor and homeless of all backgrounds; to help protect new immigrants who are threatened by hatred and xenophobia; and to heal the environment. We will make a priority of bringing together Muslim and Jewish youth for joint social action programming. We believe that the example of Jews and Muslims working together for betterment of our common European home will inspire people of all backgrounds with hope for a better future.

- We will continue and enhance efforts at reaching out together to local, national and Europe-wide legislative bodies and regulatory agencies to ensure that Jews and Muslims, both as individuals and as communities, are able to practice our respective faiths fully and unimpeded by intrusive, discriminatory and unfair governmental regulations. This means, for example, that Muslim and Jewish slaughtering practices should be respected and allowed to proceed unimpeded by governing bodies across Europe, as should Jewish and Muslim marriage, burial and other ritual practices. Jewish and Muslim religious law should have full reign within the religious life of our respective communities, but should in no way condition our obligation to observe the laws of the countries in which we reside.
- Many of us who are attending this Gathering have led pioneering Jewish-Muslim encounters in our respective countries. Some recently took part in the 3rd Annual Weekend of Twinningsm of Mosques and Synagogues Around the World in our home communities. We plan to redouble our efforts on the local and national levels as well as combining our efforts on a Europe-wide level by holding regular conclaves like this one to monitor progress in countries across the continent. We will create mechanisms making it possible for us to work much more closely together: sharing experiences, exchanging ideas and giving tangible support to each other.
- We feel sorrow and pain over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the great suffering it has brought to both peoples. We will continue our efforts; both individual and collective, to end the struggle tormenting our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, and offer prayers together for a non-violent resolution of that conflict that will allow both Palestinians and Israelis to live with dignity in peace and security. Yet we have resolved to work together to strengthen Muslim-Jewish ties here in Europe regardless of the situation in the Middle East at any particular moment. We will not allow our efforts to strengthen Jewish-Muslim ties in Europe to be derailed by eruptions of violence in the Middle East because we understand that fostering good Muslim-Jewish relations here is a moral imperative in its own right and is necessary for the health of our own communities and our societies.
- We believe that if we are successful in building ties of friendship and trust in Europe and around the world, that achievement will transmit a message of hope to our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and inspire them with the belief that they, their children and grandchildren are not fated to remain enemies forever.

In conclusion, we commit ourselves to successfully developing good Muslim-Jewish relations in our communities and across Europe; thereby showing our two peoples and the larger societies in which we live that Muslims and Jews can live and work together fruitfully for the betterment of all. We are convinced that the sacred task to which we commit ourselves today represents a profoundly important contribution we can make together to bringing closer the day when there will be peace and security for all the peoples of the world.