



**FROM RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
TO RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY**  
— May 9-11, 2023 | Doha, Qatar —



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Conference

## From Religious Freedom to Religious Responsibility

(Building Communities of Advocacy and Action)

Qatar - 2023

(09 – 11) May 2023

Le Royal Méridien Doha, Lusail

State of Qatar



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## Welcome

Our dear guest, welcome to Doha. We thank each of you for your time and willingness to be here and participate in this conference:

From Religious Freedom to Religious Responsibility:

Building Communities of Advocacy and Action

The conference provides the unique opportunity for imams, priests, rabbis, religious scholars, researchers, jurists, and academics to all work together to build tolerant and resilient communities. Thank you in advance for being willing to share your ideas, presentations, and information focused on the 4 themes of the conference.

We look forward to everyone collaborating together in working sessions, from which we believe each of you will gain new and improved ideas. We encourage everyone to take these new ideas and make and carry out action plans addressing the many current issues of religious freedom unique to your area. Your leadership of advocacy and action will build trusting relationships in your communities, thus helping to foster increased religious freedom, dignity and human rights.

We hope for your success as you implement new ideas and plans gained during this conference.



## Foreword

Welcome remarks - DICID

**H.E Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi**

**(Qatar)**

Chairman of DICID



Religious freedom is one of the most important human rights, required by all religious laws and recognized by all international conventions, and it is an essential pillar for the realization of equality and human dignity. It aims to improve interpersonal relations and help avoid discrimination against people on the basis of race or religion, which is recognized by all revealed religious laws and affirmed by international conventions. It is also one of the most important means of combating sectarian and racial conflicts and achieving security and stability for a society as well as for the international community. Moreover, religious freedom represents a firm moral foundation and a firm humanitarian principle that points the right way to establishing coexistence among the followers of religions and civilizations, without which human relations will be disrupted and human society will become a scene of bloodshed, oppression of minorities, and the exercise of the most heinous forms of religious persecution.

Dialogue platforms and conferences are not platforms for reshaping religions, laws, and beliefs, nor for changing religions or uniting them, but for getting to know each other, coexisting, identifying common denominators, achieving harmony, pluralism, and tolerance.

If the right to religious freedom makes man an independent and responsible human being who decides for himself what he believes and what his heart and mind lead him to do, without the rule of an authority that oppresses him or an oppression that harms him, then the monotheistic religions have a spiritual richness and a moral transcendence that makes them the first source of this right and even its founder, preceding all international laws and agreements and it even precedes reform theories and philosophical views.

The wisdom of God Almighty has decreed that men should be created different, in their images, colors, and even in their faith and beliefs, and His wisdom has also decreed that man should be created free in his thought, choice, and will. This freedom is the absolute inherent right of man, every human being, and is at the top of the ladder of this freedom (religious freedom). Freedom is necessary for faith, but faith is achieved only through its availability, and it is not permissible in any way to force a person to adopt a religion. Freedom is an integral part of religion, and this principle has been the basis for all Muslims in dealing with others.

In the Qur'an, Allah says: (Shall we, then, impose it –a faith- upon you while you are averse to it?) 11:28.

Allah also says: (Had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community. But, they will continue in their differences. except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy. And for that He has created them.) 11:118 - 119.

None of us denies the importance of the legal protection of religious freedom as a human right because it's enshrined in many international conventions and declarations, and we find it on the first pages of the constitutions of most or all countries, but nevertheless, our world still suffers. Some international statistics say that almost 80% of religious minorities are persecuted and oppressed! Doesn't this demand from all of us a pause that causes fear and concern for our societies and our world, its stability and security?!

Therefore, it is our most sincere desire that at this conference there will be a serious attempt to deal with all aspects of the question of religious freedom, whether it be freedom of belief of religion, or freedom to practice religious rites, there is an enabling power that freedom of religion brings to religious, moral, and legal responsibilities. We trust that all our participants will share any legislation you are aware of which helps preserve and uphold the right to religious freedom.

We invite each of you during this conference to share in a kind, friendly, and collaborative manner your beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and perceptions on how to seriously address all manifestations of violations of the right of religious freedom, even if the current visions and trends are different.

It is our sincere hope that your thoughts, ideas, and the wonderful new relationships you will form with each other during this conference, will lead to ideas and actions which will serve all people of every country, race, religion, and color.



## Foreword

Welcome remarks - MFNN

### **Pastor Bob Roberts**

founder of the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network and Chief Pastor of Northwood Church in Dallas, Texas, USA Chairman



Hello and welcome to Doha! I am so glad that you are here! You are each impressive in your own right, and this gathering is a unique collection of esteemed individuals with great influence and capacity. I am very excited about the potential we have to see substantive progress made over the coming days!

It is important that you understand that this is not a typical academic conference. Rather than a lengthy gathering of reading papers, and making speeches, we will be working together, collaboratively, to better understand each other, to consider possible opportunities to work together, and to make concrete plans to help work together towards the development of communities that are resilient against hate, angry rhetoric, and violence.

Religious groups around the world used to live in relative isolation from one another but globalization has meant that our world today has seen increasing levels of diversity. All religions are now everywhere, and this has led to fear often rooted in misunderstanding. With more

than three billion people belonging to monotheistic religions we have the opportunity to not only live in peace, but to work to create peace. If these three billion people worked together to serve their communities, it will lead to change and build trust. There are many important multifaith and interfaith initiatives around the world, but we need to create a new model that reaches the grassroots masses, not just scholars and clergy.

In 2015, Imam Mohamed Magid and I, along with the help and partnership of Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, and the Government of Qatar, organized the first meeting of pastors and imams from the United States and Pakistan, which eventually became the cornerstone for the establishment of the Multi-Faith Neighbours Network (MFNN). MFNN now represents 200 congregations with 500,000 people in cities across the United States and around the world to build bridges of mutual trust and respect between the followers of the three Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) by assisting religious leaders in civic engagement, authentic relationships, and sincere dialogue.

Populist rhetoric is on the rise in the United States and Europe. We also see the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, hate speech against religious, racial, and ethnic minorities increasing from individuals and the media. Among other things, misleading media coverage and hate speech reinforces a sense of unfounded fear.

Extremists from all sides of the spectrum tend to dominate the media, and moderate voices are rarely given a platform to speak out and highlight the danger of these extremist voices. This leads to real and dangerous consequences for our societies. Some political leaders often



unfairly exploit this for political gain. Supporting relationships, dialogue, and cooperation between followers of religions can play an important role in building bridges. We believe that local religious leaders are one of the keys to the masses in their communities, and once bridges of trust are built between them, this can spread to all members of the broader community. This happens through unity and cooperation, serving our cities together, defending each other's religious freedom, and responding to moments of crisis together.

One vital aspect that is often missing in conflicts is trust. Building trust between individuals, institutions, and governments is extremely difficult. Even with sincere intentions, a lack of trust can make living together and working together difficult. How can the desired bridges of trust be built? How, if at all, does it lead to mutual respect, joint action, and the building of resilient communities?

Peace-loving religious leaders are crucial to this process, as they are at the center of state and society, helping to establish moral foundations that touch all aspects of life. Clergy of different faiths can form friendships and work together for the good of their communities.

Trust is not built through money and influence but rather through relationships. Trust must be present at the highest levels as well as at the grassroots. The chain of relationships may seem complicated, but we work together to build that trust, and when that is achieved, the desired results are quickly realized.

Many countries are often lacking close working relationships between governments and religious leaders, and sometimes they rely on each other for their purposes, but these relationships are critical when it comes to the issue of religious freedom.

## Conference Concept Paper



### Preface:

Today, we live in a world where all religions are everywhere. Our religion can be a majority in one place, and a minority in another. As different global trends create tension (e.g., inflation, slowing economic growth, the war in Eastern Europe, etc.), it is too often the case that some individuals, governments and even religious majorities can stereotype and/or work against religious minorities.

Indeed, our global challenges demand trust-based solutions if they are to be sustainable. Trust comes partially from a mutual engagement that tolerates differences, does not demean or denigrate, but celebrates the dignity of our neighbor and understands and respects the essence of our neighbor's identity (even if, and especially when, we do not agree with our neighbor's beliefs and/or behavior).

Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue believes that the essence of religion is peace and that religions should be used as a power for enhancing relationships and freedom. Each religion has mechanisms that help human beings to be good and productive, as well as social dynamics and infrastructures that can build societies and thus develop nations and civilizations. For a pluralistic society to coexist and sustain itself, the members of the society should be wise in their words, reasonable in their thoughts, and restrained in their actions. Indeed, these are the teachings of almost all religions, with few exceptions.

Moreover, to live together in the age of globalization, people are interested in learning about religions other than their own, not only to achieve the common good but also to interact with each other and make progress. People in today’s world respect differences, accept diversity and agree that each individual religion and community should be respected for who they are and how they believe. Dialogues are not platforms for reshaping religions and belief systems, just as dialogue conferences and seminars cannot transform religions. Harmony, pluralism, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence do not mean religious people have a uniformity of coexistence in which all think and act alike.

Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue is hosting—in partnership with Multi-faith Neighbors Network—this international conference, on 9-11 May 2023, entitled:

**“From Religious Freedom to Religious Responsibility: Building Communities of Advocacy and Action.”**

The purpose of this conference is to highlight issues related to coexistence, religious freedom, and religious pluralism from the standpoint of human rights, legislation, and religious perspectives. Different faith communities will exchange practices and approaches to understand each other’s perceptions and address existing global issues and problems. In addition, ways to move from religious freedom to religious responsibility will be discussed, and communities will be formed to advocate for this cause and take further action.



## Objectives

The main objectives of the conference can be summarized as follows:

1. To create a platform for discussion and interaction among intellectuals, academics and researchers, religious and government leaders to develop solutions and work plans for various difficult issues related to coexistence, and religious freedom from the perspective of human rights, legislation, and religious perspectives.
2. To build trust between state and society, and between religious leaders and religious followers.
3. To identify the responsibility of religious and government leaders to move beyond diversity and religious freedom to responsibility, solidarity, recognition, advocacy, and action.
4. To mutually engage, respect, and protect all people, of all faiths, all the time while observing and respecting cultural diversity and religious differences.



## Themes

The forum will address topics and issues related to the following areas:

### **Theme 1:**

Religions and law: Responsibility toward the other as a believer, as a common citizen of the same country, and the same world

### **Theme 2:**

Peacebuilding trust within and among faith communities, between those communities and their governments

### **Theme 3:**

Institutionalize practical impact at the policy level, through government actions, and at the individual level through faith communities

### **Theme 4:**

The global horizon of this conference through our home country, our home city, and our geographic home



## Desired Outcomes

- 1 Implications for religious ethics and the rule of law in terms of harmony, pluralism, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence
- 2 Action plans for transition from diversity and religious freedom to religious responsibility at the local and international levels
- 3 Enhance relationships among religious leaders in Qatar, the United States, and the region, building trust and joint community engagement
- 4 Build trusting relationships between government and civil society leaders in Qatar and the surrounding region
- 5 Develop a regional network of religious and government leaders who can work together to create resilient communities
- 6 Foster the “new normals” of the 21st century and what dignity, peacebuilding, human rights, and religious freedom “look like” in this global world context.



## The Program

First Day of the Conference Tuesday, May 9, 2023	
Time	Details
9:30 -10:00 am	Registration
10:00 – 10:30am	<b>Opening Ceremony</b>
10:00- 10:05am	(Showing a film about the conference)
10:05- 10:10am	Master of the Ceremonies: Mr. Ahmed Al-Rumaihi Recitation of the Holy Quran: Mr. Yahya Al-Naimi
10:10- 10:15am	<b>Welcoming Speech by:</b>
10:15- 10:20am	H.E Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi - Chairman of DICID
10:20- 10:25am	Pastor Bob Roberts – Co-Founder of Multi-Faith Neighbors Network
10:25- 10:30am	Dr. Chris Seiple – President Emeritus, Institute for Global Engagement
10:30 – 10:35am	Imam Mohamed Magid - Co-Founder of Multi-Faith Neighbors Network
10:30 – 10:35am	Video message: His Beatitude Theophilus III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine.
10:30 – 11:00am	<b>Introductory Session</b>
10:30 – 11:00am	<b>TOPIC:</b> Discussing the reforms that are happening in Uzbekistan and Vietnam towards religious freedom
	<b>Moderator:</b> Dr Jan Figel (Slovak)
11:00 – 11:15am	Break

<b>GROUP SPLITS To: Religion, Rule of Law and the Religious Leaders Groups</b>		
<b>Theme No.1</b>	<b>First Session</b>	
	<b>Religions and law: Responsibility toward the other</b>	
<b>11:15 – 12:30pm</b>	<b>First Group</b> <b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group</b> <b>Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<b>Moderator: Dr. Aisha Al-Mannai (Qatar)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Brett Scharffs (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Ali al-Qaradaghi (Qatar)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Kristina Arriaga (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Maher Khodair (Palestine)</b></li> </ul>	<b>Issues of global impact and their relevance on religions and laws</b>  <b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b>
<b>12:30 – 12:45pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>Theme No. 2</b>	<b>Second Session</b>	
	<b>Peacebuilding trust within and among faith communities, and governments</b>	
<b>12:45 – 2:00pm</b>	<b>First Group</b> <b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group</b> <b>Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<b>Panel discussion: Human Dignity</b>  <b>Moderator: Dr. Dheen Mohamad (Sri Lanka)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Elder Anthony D. Perkins (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Nedzad Grabus (Slovenia)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Jamal Badawi (Canada)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Mohamed Khalifa Hassan (Egypt)</b></li> </ul>	<b>Panel discussion: Peace-building at the institutional level: Introduction</b>  <b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b>



<b>2:00 – 3:00pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Theme No. 2</b>	<b>Third Session</b>	
	<b>Peacebuilding trust within and among faith communities, and governments</b>	
<b>3:00 – 4:30pm</b>	<b>First Group</b> <b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group</b> <b>Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<b>Peacemaking</b>	<b>Peace-building at the institutional level (Building Strong Communities)</b>
	<p><b>Moderator: Ms. Palwasha L. Kakar (USA)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monsignore Khalid Akashah (Vatican)</b></li> <li>• <b>Mrs. Sheikha Ghanem Al-Kubaisi (Qatar)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Abbas Aroua (Switzerland)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Jennifer Catherine Murtazashvili (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Badran Ben Lahcen (Algeria)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Mahmut Erol Kiliev (Turkey)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b></p>
<b>5:00 – 7:00pm</b>	<b>Visiting Qatar National Museum</b>	
<b>7:00 – 9:30 pm</b>	<b>Dinner at “Orient Pearl” Restaurant</b>	

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<b>Second Day of the conference Wednesday, May 10, 2023</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Details</b>	
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Fourth Session</b>	
	<b>Institutionalization: Faith communities and government actions</b>	
<b>9:00 – 10:30am</b>	<b>First Group Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Conceptualizing, Advancing and Institutionalizing Religious Freedom</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Ms Besa Ismaili Ahmeti (Kosovo)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Burhan Koroglu (Turkey)</b></li> <li>• <b>Mr. Cole Durham (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Barakat F Hasan (Palestine)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Dennis Hoover (USA)</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identifying Commonalities to enable mutual respect and to work together for the common good</b></p> <p><b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b></p>
<b>10:30 – 10:45am</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Fifth Session</b>	
	<b>Institutionalization: Faith communities and government actions</b>	
<b>10:45 – 12:15pm</b>	<b>First Group Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Introduction to International Human Rights Relating to Religion and Belief</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Dr. Emad Al-Falouji (Palestine)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Hussein (Palestine)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Turki Bin Abdullah Al-</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Common perceptions of one's own religion and other religions: Models and Examples</b></p> <p><b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b></p>

	<b>Mahmoud (Qatar)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Chaker Mezoghi (Tunisia)</b></li> </ul>	
<b>12:15 – 12:30pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Sixth Session</b> <b>The global horizon of this conference: Future Actions</b>	
<b>12:30 – 2:00pm</b>	<b>First Group</b> <b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group</b> <b>Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<b>Current Issues in IRF:</b> <b>Registration, defamation of religions, blasphemy laws, gender</b> <b>Moderator: Dr. Osman Mahmoud Osman (Sweden)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Jadnan Al-Hajri (Qatar)</b></li> <li>• <b>Mrs. Katherine Marshall (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Abdel Nasser Abu Samhadana (Palestine)</b></li> <li>• <b>Mr. James Chen (USA)</b></li> </ul>	<b>Developing Strategic Action Plan</b>  <b>Moderators: Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, Rabbi David Saperstein</b>
<b>2:00 – 3:30pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Seventh Session</b> <b>The global horizon of this conference: Future Actions</b>	
<b>2:00 – 3:30pm</b>	<b>First Group</b> <b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>	<b>Second Group</b> <b>Multi-Faith Workshop with Religious Leaders</b>
	<b>Religion and Rule of Law</b>  <b>Moderator: Dr. Josef Meri (USA)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <b>Mr. Gregory Mitchell (USA)</b> <b>Dr. Yousuf AlSideqi (Qatar)</b> <b>Dr. Yahya Hendi (USA)</b> <b>Mr. Wade Kusack (USA)</b>	<b>Reflection on strategic action plans</b>  <b>Moderator: Pastor Bob Roberts</b> where each group will present their Strategic Action Plans
<b>5:00 – 8:30pm</b>	<b>Trip to Souq Waqif</b>	
<b>8:30 – 10:00pm</b>	<b>Dinner at hotel</b>	

<b>Third Day of the Conference Thursday, May 11, 2023</b>	
<b>RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>9:00 – 10:00am</b>	<b>Eight Session Enhancing Social Cohesion</b>
	<p><b>Moderator: Dr. Chris Seiple (USA)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <p><b>Amb. Sam Brownback (USA)</b>  <b>Amb. David Saperstein (USA)</b>  <b>Amb. Rashad Hussain (USA)</b></p>
<b>10:00 – 10:15am</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>10:15 – 11:15am</b>	<b>Ninth Session Engaging Your World</b>
	<p><b>Moderator: Rabbi David Saperstein (USA)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Isra Bhatti (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Ken Lockard (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Farhan Latif (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. William Christopher Stewart (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Imam Yaqub Mirza (USA)</b></li> </ul>
<b>11:15 – 11:30am</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:30 – 12:30pm</b>	<b>Tenth Session Protect and Respect</b>
	<p><b>Moderator: Imam Mohamed Magid (USA)</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Mohammad El-Sammak (Lebanon)</b></li> <li>• <b>Rev. Paul Nasr Mansour (Egypt)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Qibla Ayaz (Pakistan)</b></li> <li>• <b>Mr. Abdur Rahim Abu Taher (Bangladesh)</b></li> </ul>

<b>12:30 – 12:45pm</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>12:45 – 1:45pm</b>	<b>Eleventh Session Citizenship</b>
	<b>Moderator: Mr. Mohamed Al-Ghamdi (Qatar)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Archbishop Makarios Mavrogiannakis (Greece)</b></li> <li>• <b>Abdassamad El Yazidi (Germany)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Hanan Malaeb (Lebanon)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dr. Abdul Qadir Bakhush (Algeria)</b></li> </ul>
<b>1:45 – 2:45pm</b>	<b>Closing Session</b>
	<b>Moderator: Dr. Hassan Al-Sayed (Qatar)</b>  <b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pastor Bob Roberts (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Rabbi David Saperstein (USA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Imam Mohamed Magid (USA)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Word of thanks: H.E Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi (Qatar)</b>	
<b>Group photo</b>	
<b>Departure</b>	