

Conference on
“Christians in the Arab Levant: Ambitions of Unity and Enlightenment”

Final Recommendations

Leaders of Christian religious communities from the Levant, alongside a selection of Muslim and Christian intellectuals, gathered on 7th and 8th May 2025 for a consultative conference in the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amman. The conference, entitled "Christians in the Arab Levant: Ambitions of Unity and Enlightenment", was convened at the invitation of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies.

Church leaders who participated in the conference were:

1-His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine of the Greek Orthodox Church

2-His Holiness Catholicos Aram I, Catholicos of the Armenian Orthodox Church of the Holy See of Cilicia

3-His Beatitude Patriarch Mor Ignatius Youssef III Younan, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for the Syriac Catholic Church

4-His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church

5-His Beatitude Patriarch Raphaël Bedros XXI Minassian, Catholicos Patriarch of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics

6-His Beatitude Patriarch John X Yazigi, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Greek Orthodox Church, represented by His Eminence Bishop Qais Sadiq, Bishop of Erzurum and Head of the Ecumenical Studies Centre in Jordan

7-His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, represented by His Excellency Bishop Iyad Twal, Latin Patriarchal Vicar in Jordan and Deputy Director of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies

8-His Eminence Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Maronites, represented by His Excellency Archbishop Moussa El-Hage, Archbishop of Haifa and the Holy Land and Exarch of Jerusalem, Palestine and Jordan for the Maronites

9-His Excellency Archbishop Christophoros Attallah, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Jordan

10-The Reverend Archimandrite Dr. Agapios Abu Sa'da, from the Greek Melkite Catholic Church in Haifa

11-His Excellency Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, represented by Archdeacon Faeq Haddad

12-His Excellency Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar, Head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

13-Reverend Dr. Mitri Raheb, President of Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem

14-Father Ibrahim Faltas, Vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land

15-Father Ibrahim Dabbour, Secretary General of the Council of Churches in Jordan.

The following religious leaders were unable to attend the conference but sent their best wishes for its success:

-His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

-His Eminence Cardinal Mar Louis Raphaël I Sako, Patriarch of the Chaldeans in Iraq and around the world

-His Beatitude Patriarch Youssef I Absi, Patriarch of Antioch and of All the East, of Alexandria and Jerusalem for the Melkite Greek Catholics.

The researchers and academics who participated in the conference were:

1-Dr. Renée Hattar, Director of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, Jordan

2-Dr. Amer Al-Hafî, Academic Advisor at RIIFS, and Professor of Religious Studies at Al al-Bayt University, Jordan

3-Dr Michel Abs, Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, Lebanon

4-Dr. Nayla Tabbara, President of Adyan Foundation, Lebanon

5-Dr. Abdul-Hussein Shaaban, Academic, thinker, and writer from Iraq

6-Dr. Ghassan El Masri, Researcher at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany, and Coordinator of the Network of Centres for Christian-Muslim Relations

7-Mr. Issa Amro, Director of the "Youth Against Settlements" organisation for Peace and Justice in the Middle East, Hebron

8-Dr. Saad Salloum, General Coordinator of Masarat Foundation, Iraq.

The conference was convened around six main themes:

- *“The Dignity and Rights of Peoples from a Christian-Islamic Perspective”*
- *“Religion and Politics: Between Civil Society and the Political Instrumentalisation of Religion”*
- *“Shared Levantine Heritage and Christian-Islamic Patrimony”*
- *“Unity, Diversity, and Pluralism in the Levant”*
- *“Ethical and Human Communication in the Levantine Context”*
- *“Testimonies from Gaza”*

At the concluding session of the conference, and based on the presentations and ensuing discussions, the participants strongly condemned the ongoing violence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the killing of innocent civilians and the systematic destruction of hospitals, schools, universities and places of worship. The participants urgently called upon the international community to implement a ceasefire and to extend aid to the Palestinian people. They also condemned the assaults on the city of Jerusalem and its Christian and Islamic holy sites, which hold deep spiritual significance for believers across the Arab Levant and the world at large.

The Conference recommended the following:

1. The necessity of building upon the Islamic documents issued by al-Azhar al-Sharif to strengthen Christian-Muslim relations, and to work on developing the *Document on Human Fraternity* launched by His Holiness the late Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb.
2. The promotion of values of dialogue and acceptance of the other within our national educational project by reformulating curricula in schools and universities. This should be accompanied by strengthening human dialogue, which is rooted in mutual understanding between followers of different religions, based on faith in God Almighty and a commitment to the spirit of comprehensive human fraternity.
3. Bearing responsibility for national affairs and reinforcing the strength of the Christian-Muslim social fabric. Every Christian in the Levant carries something from Islam in their identity, just as every Muslim in the Levant carries something from Christianity in their identity.
4. Unifying efforts to promote citizenship rights and the values of diversity, pluralism, and respectful difference by empowering the marginalised and vulnerable, addressing pressing issues such as poverty, the erosion of human dignity,

deteriorating quality of life, and—most importantly—confronting severe crises in governance and the building of the modern state.

5. Investing in Levantine Christian diaspora communities and activating their role in deepening their connection to their homelands and identities. A team composed of individuals from the Levant, both in the region and abroad (the Churches of the diaspora), should be formed to articulate a comprehensive national culture and define the contours of a shared national identity, away from the domination of one group over another or the imposition of cultural uniformity.
6. The question today is not about the future of Levantine Christians alone but rather concerns the existence and shared destiny of all Levantines. We must all—Muslims and Christians—remain steadfast in the face of challenges and resolute in our commitment to our homelands.
7. Emphasising the moral and behavioural role of religion without conflating religion and politics; avoiding the politicisation of religion or the religionization of politics.
8. Considering the diversity of the Arab Levant as a blessing rather than a burden and calling on all countries in the region to enact legislation that ensures the effective management of this diversity.
9. Calling for sincere dialogue among all religious and cultural components of the Levant, grounded in genuine openness rather than pleasantries or political polarisation. Truth must be spoken plainly. (Let us close the pages of the past with sincere forgiveness and embark together on a future filled with hope—this is essential for supporting younger generations.)
10. Combating all forms of extremism and racial, religious, or sectarian discrimination, confronting hate speech, and promoting social harmony and cohesion. Work should also be done with decision-makers to enforce legislation that prohibits religious discrimination in particular, and discrimination in general, as well as hate speech. It is vital to affirm the rights of all groups at the legal, religious, and societal levels.
11. Joint efforts to revisit and develop the concept of a “Parliament of Cultures” that represents the voices of the people and guarantees the right to life and the rights of future generations.
12. Changing the prevailing mindset and re-examining dominant perceptions of other religions and working to establish a Department of Human Dignity Studies in Arab universities.
13. The continuation of Christian-Christian and ecumenical dialogue is necessary to counter ignorance about the other and to revisit the concepts of majority and minority and the denial of rights.

14. Producing objective knowledge about Levantine Christians and the diversity of their churches, while raising awareness of the shared ethical and human values between Christianity and Islam. Media content reflecting this knowledge should be produced, targeting both Christians and Muslims, with a special focus on youth.
15. Promoting political awareness within religious communities and educating future generations about the position of Levantine churches on Zionism and Western Christian Zionism. Levantine Christian leaders unanimously reject all forms of political exploitation of religion as an unethical distortion of Christian teachings—especially those unjust voices that justify occupation and acts of killing and genocide in the name of prophecy or divine promises.
16. Working towards continuing the communication, consultation and cooperation between Christian and Muslim leaders in the Levant, while exploring ways to establish an institutional framework for such collaboration. The Royal Institute takes upon itself the responsibility of coordinating this effort.

The participants offered their heartfelt prayers for the repose of His Holiness Pope Francis and expressed their sincere wishes of success to the new Pope.

The participants deeply appreciated the gracious initiative undertaken by His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal through the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, recognising it as a reflection of the far-sightedness of the leadership of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. At the forefront of this leadership is His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, to whom the participants extended a greeting of honour and respect.