



ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE:

An Opportunity for Global Peace

5TH Framework Speech
5th-7th December 2018



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**5TH FRAMEWORK SPEECH OF THE
ABU DHABI FORUM FOR PEACE**

5th-7th December 2018 , Abu Dhabi, UAE

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Abu Dhabi Forum For Peace and its annual Assemblies are hosted, by God's grace and abundant generosity, in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE, the wide and expansive home of Shaykh Zayed Al Nahyan (may he rest in Peace):

*By my life, such a home you are
Whose dwellers are honoured
And afforded your shade, reposing
In the waning of the afternoon,*

We are here through the noble auspices and remarkable concern shown by the leadership of this good country. Their God-given patronage and concern are amongst the principal reasons for the successes of the Forum.

“

The goal of this new Alliance of Virtue is good and harmonious coexistence between humans, a peace not protected by weapons, but protected by the values of tolerance, justice, love and respect for humanity.

H.E. SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH
President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

The Islamic tradition has retained and preserved the memory of a historical alliance held before Islam for the purpose of solidarity and cooperation in activating the values of good and righteousness, supporting the weak and relieving the oppressed, and preventing injustice and assisting and comforting one another in life. This alliance was known as the Alliance of Virtue (*hilf al-fudul*).¹ The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ praised this alliance and confirmed his readiness to participate in the same alliance were he to be invited to it. At the same time, he also clarified that difference in religion and faith does not prevent the formation of an alliance for the purpose of good and righteousness, through his statement: “There is no alliance that existed in the pre-Islamic days, except that Islam increased it in strength and power.”

Scholars such as al-Jassas, al-Nawawi, and al-Qurtubi said in their interpretation of this hadith: “The point of consideration is the ends and values which it represents. If alliances of Muslims were for the purpose of transgression, he would negate and invalidate them. If alliances of the Age of Ignorance (i.e., pre-Islamic), were for the purpose of virtue permitted by sound intellect, and deemed good by Divine Laws (like providing support and assistance to the Truth, carrying it out, and mutual consoling and comforting of one another), then he would affirm it and not abrogate it. Thus, the point of consideration is the ends and aims not the particular participants and parties involved, because Islam recommends and endorses virtue, regardless of its origin and source or the one issuing and producing it.”

This is so because the symbolic and unique feature of the Alliance of Virtue is that it was not founded on shared religious, tribal or ethnic affiliations, but rather on universal values and virtues.

Inspired by this spirit, we made sure that one of the outcomes of the Washington conference was to feed a billion meals to hungry people from humanity’s destitute and needy without distinguishing between them on the basis of religion, race or homeland, especially among societies suffering from the impact of wars and bloody conflicts. I am pleased to thank His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Matouq al-Matouq,

¹ This is an edited and abridged version of the speech given by HE Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah at the opening session of the fifth Assembly of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, Abu Dhabi, 6 December 2018.

Member of the Forum's Board of Trustees, Advisor to His Highness the Emir of Kuwait, for fulfilling his promise in Washington.

In addition to the enabling grace (*tawfiq*) that these initiatives have enjoyed, hope has been renewed along with the conviction of the necessity to proceed on the path to consolidating these successes, through the establishment of a moral alliance between the three religions of the Abrahamic family in all its branches, factions, and denominations, and by the participation of all those who love good and benevolence from among the members of the great human family. Thus, our theme for today is "The Alliance of Virtue: An Opportunity for Global Peace".

This goal of advocating for the values of peace is definitive and necessary in all environments, but even more so in societies afflicted with the scourge of extremism and hatred

This choice was made due to the call to activate the Washington Declaration by deepening the 'archeology of knowledge' regarding the possibility of a new Alliance of Virtue between religions, and recognising the extent of the relevance of religious cooperation in the context of the contemporary reality, which is now governed by a different logic and subject to new international covenants. The Forum also aims to uncover the areas in which this alliance should work and the institutional forms with which to activate it.

We cannot lose sight of the key questions through which the methodological rigor of these initiatives is realized. Do the achievements of the Marrakesh and Washington declarations, with their vast humanitarian prospects and international dimensions and their building on partnership in values, warrant the call for a new Alliance of Virtue? Does this call express a genuine humanitarian need? Then what is the nature of this alliance? What role will it play? What are its areas of operation and methods of work? What are its mechanisms and practical forms?

The need for a new alliance of virtue

When considering the word "alliance," the first thought that may come to mind is a kind of militarization or readiness to use force. However, our alliance is an alliance of virtue and of common values, whose proponents seek to represent these values in their relations and to advocate for their dissemination and realization in the lives of people. Its method is putting forward an exemplary model. Its mode

of expression is dialogue and persuasion. And its goal is harmonious coexistence among human beings under a peace not protected by weapons, but by morality and the values of tolerance, justice, love, and respect for humanity. A peace protected by nuclear weapons is the equivalent of one who entrusts a wolf with protecting the sheep. Instead of protection, it turns into a nightmare.

The need for this alliance is reflected in two premises: the first is awareness of the dilemma, and the second is having strong conviction in the existence of common human values.

First: awareness of the dilemma

The call for a new Alliance of Virtue is based on common awareness among people of sound intellect of the dilemma in which humanity finds itself, where many voices clamouring loudly have begun to sound alarm bells, alerting to the inability of the modern civilizational model in which all of humanity is engaged to realize its hopes of prosperity and stability.

It is not our purpose in this paper to exhaust all the aspects of the dilemma, but it is sufficient to shed light on some of the most prominent aspects that all of us are experiencing today. Humanity entered this century in the context of globalization, which has manifested itself in the presence of the other; a presence which may on the surface appear optional, but is really now obligatory. Globalization has created a new reality that is complex in structure and composition, pulled in opposite directions by two forces. On the one end, it is pulled by an aggressive drive to abolish the religious and ethnic particularities and to shape the world according to a new civilizational model. At the other end, it is pulled by relentless and tenacious attachments to narrow identities and the subsequent discrimination and hate speech voiced to re-assert the independence of certain identities. This suggests a discord between the self and the surrounding context, in terms of humanity, environment, values, and civilization.

Humanity has reached a level of technological development which, for the first time in its history, has given it the ability to destroy itself. In view of the widespread proliferation of extremist thought in all its forms, the possibility of using this technology becomes very real, especially in light of the possibility of weapons of mass destruction eluding the authority and control of responsible states. New technological developments even pose questions for the nature of human life itself

through, for example, scientific knowledge of the human genome and the resulting ethical dilemmas. Science has given way to discoveries that may enable us to interfere with embryonic cells and potentially even manipulate the genetic codes of the unborn. Such prospects raise serious questions about the ethics of cloning and the long-term repercussions of such interventions which for now remain behind the curtain of the unseen, and which no one knows except He who “*brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and earth*” (Qur’an 27:25), Glory be to Him. Even the earth which God Almighty has set out for His creatures has been violated to such an extent that it vomits out its insides. All of this has led to the prevalence of anxiety, anticipation, uncertainty, and loss of confidence and trust. A state which made it incumbent and inevitable for humanity to relentlessly strive to parallel scientific progress with moral progress, in order to frame and fortify these inventions with a fence of values of good, love, and peace.

Another manifestation of the dilemma that humanity is living through is the sharp divide in the system of production and distribution between the philosophy of economy and the spirit of morality, where material values are void of all divine or noble human values. This has led to man becoming a physical and bodily creature, living self-indulgently, totally immersed in its pleasures without nobility, generosity, altruism, or solidarity, as well as being blind to the outcomes of his actions outside of profit margins. This spiritual ravenousness has taken over the souls of many from among the wealthy and affluent, and contributes to our malaise.

Violence has become the language of every bankrupt person in the East and West, and hate speech a popular commodity. But there is no despair of God’s comforting mercy. There are still peace-loving people, united in purpose.

Making the call for an alliance of virtue ever more urgent and necessary are the recent tragic acts performed by those dressed in the garb of religion without any power or authorization from religious authorities. Misunderstanding has thus been compounded. Added to the accumulated historical hatred and rancor was a stack of occurrences that turned into raging events causing the soothsayers of the clash of civilizations to believe in their speculative claim; this soothsaying has materialized into a disaster.

We now face a civilizational failure that degrades the value of man. What is the point of man conquering and invading space and reaching the furthestmost planets

while he still remains incapable of engaging in understanding with his companions and peers on earth?

Terrorism, due to the effectiveness of its methods and the power of its recruitment, has become an existential challenge to all peace-loving people and imposes the imperative of joint action to develop holistic and integrated plans that are much more effective and much more rapid in order to root out extremism and terrorism.

It can be said that all religions are now in the dock, where some consider religions to be responsible for violence and wars. It has become incumbent upon religious leaders to challenge this claim by refuting it in both word and deed. This is to show that the person who interprets religion erroneously, exploits and appropriates it for his own agenda and ulterior motives, is the one that must be held accountable and not religion itself. This is achieved by referring to their religious texts and heritage with the aim of extrapolating solid foundations for tolerance and coexistence, presenting them as radiant models whose revival contributes to entrenching and inculcating the values of good and peace in the hearts of the followers of these religions.

The duty of this day and age requires religious leaders to cooperate in order to remove the moral armor through which inflammatory discourse seeks to strengthen itself and to take away its religious legitimacy, showing the true essence of religion as a force for making peace, engendering love, and bringing opposites together by highlighting the great potential of interfaith work.

These are some of the manifestations of the crisis, whose awareness and sense of urgency form the basis of the responsibility of all elites, especially the religious elites involved in the initiative. Any delay in the initiative to act in a timely manner would jeopardize the future of humanity and make future generations captive to processes they would not be able to control, such as population growth, civil wars, environmental decline, and highly unjust inequalities between geographical regions and even within single communities.

Second: Building Strong Conviction in the Existence of Shared Human Values

The call for a new Alliance of Virtue stems from deep faith in the conviction that all of humanity shares much in common. Disregarding these shared things and ignoring particular properties and peculiar aspects in their place have led to many wars and much destruction, isolating humanity from the values established by the

Prophets: goodness, love, and compassion.

These common values are shared at different levels. Some are at the level of a single religion; some are at the level of the Abrahamic family of religions, and others pertain to the higher commonalities that are shared by all human beings. These are embodied in the values on which humanity has reached consensus and unanimous agreement among all of its various world philosophies. The mobilization of these circles and further connecting them in harmony and agreement is what will heal the rift, remove misunderstandings, and ease the overzealousness of difference and disagreement.

As we have shown in previous deliberations, the other in Islam is not the Aristotelian counterpart to existence, non-being or non-existence. Nor is it the Hegelian antithesis that must be dominated for the self to be self-conscious in the deterministic inevitable struggle for self-affirmation. It isn't even what Sartre would assert; the hell which strips the individual essence from its original freedom and perfection. Instead, Islam teaches that the other is your brother, who either shares your belief or your humanity. This is sublimely reflected in the way Islam presents human dignity as the first shared or common human property, because all human beings, regardless of their different races, colors, languages, and beliefs, have been honored and dignified by God Almighty by the blowing from His Spirit into their father Adam ﷺ.

Dignity is prior to faith-based dignity both in conception and existence. Thus, Islam places strong emphasis regarding the holistic conception of the other on the unity of species, equality in human dignity, the search for cultivating commonalities, and rejecting the criteria of differentiation or the preference of one over the other except on the basis of goodness (*khayr*), piety, and God-consciousness (*taqwa*), which is affirmed by the words of the Prophet ﷺ: “O People, indeed your Lord is one and your progenitor is one. No precedence does an Arab have over a non-Arab, or a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white skinned person over a black skinned person, or a black skinned person over a white skinned person except through piety and God-consciousness.”

The commonalities among human beings is the universal values on which people of sound mind and intellect do not disagree and which transcend the vicissitudes of time, the determinants of space, and the tendencies of human beings. This is because they possess roots and foundational principles that protect them against

the calamities and catastrophes of time and the abuses and injustices of humankind.

Many philosophers, under the leadership of Kant, argue that truth, goodness, and beauty are absolutes independent of time or place. While there are differences between the Kantian and religious theories of these absolutes, the general notion is consistent with revealed religions, and can provide them with the relevant and necessary vocabulary, terms, and concepts for applying their teachings to the discourses of modern philosophy.

The new Alliance of Virtue links citizenship and its values, such as freedom, to two basic goals: social peace and the preservation of public order.

The absolute values which we all share must be expressed in our lives, and can already be found in all the messages, supplications, and prayers of the Prophets. All of humanity today is in need of these values, similar to the infant's need for tenderness, love, and affection, particularly after the foolish and the insane have transformed their fields of operation into minefields. They are the permanent, fixed, and unalterable values of peace, endorsed by sound minds and intellects and required by public benefit and interest. This shared level of values cannot be labelled as deficient, ineffectual, and incompetent or what Paul Ricoeur calls "poor morality" (*de morale pauvre*). Rather, they serve as a solid foundation for joint action, no matter how much the theological or philosophical foundations on which each side is based may differ.

We need to start from the common desire that stems from shared values and shared responsibility in order to let peace take the place of war, love the place of hatred, and harmony the place of discord. This would mobilize the energies of the religious scholars, intellectuals, and academics – among people of intellect and wisdom from all religions and faith communities to ally themselves in an alliance of virtue in order to eliminate this civilizational scourge and danger.

Humanity is now on board a single ship which is on the verge of sinking, and it is the moral obligation of people of values to take the hands of those who want to pierce holes in the ship, to borrow the metaphor used in the Prophetic hadith.

The Aims of the New Alliance of Virtue

Peace is at the forefront of the aims of the new Alliance of Virtue and the goal of the partnership between its various parties and members. Peace is an end in itself and a means to reach other goals. It is through the realization of these goals that we ensure the continuation, perpetuation, and furtherance of peace.

1. Creating a United Front made of People of Faith to Call towards Peace and Reject the Exploitation of Religion in Conflicts and Wars

The first step in the path of peace is to form a group made of religious scholars and people of faith from the Abrahamic family as well as those who wish to be part of it from other religions of the human family to adopt shared aims and goals, which in itself is a goal and an achievement.

The search for a new Alliance of Virtue makes religious scholars and people of faith carry the burden and responsibility of every religion to address and deal with extremism and excessiveness, and to drive out – as the saying goes – the mangy and scabies-ridden sheep from the flock, and to bring back balance in every religion in order to build bridges between them – bridges founded on solid foundations and strong pillars of continuity, stability, and prosperity.

This can only be achieved through the search for practical mechanisms that ensure that the largest possible number of religious scholars and people of faith from the Abrahamic family engage in practical steps to promote peace through adopting a conciliatory approach that allows them to spread the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood among their followers and faith communities, urging them to overcome and transcend all forms of animosity and feelings of hatred. This goal of advocating for the values of peace is definitive and necessary in all environments, but even more so in societies afflicted with the scourge of extremism and hatred.

2. Recommending Social Contracts and Establishing Positive Citizenship

One of the objectives of the new Alliance of Virtue is to recommend social contracts, particularly contracts of positive citizenship based on the principles of equality, freedom and mutual respect, in which societies join together in agreement to avoid war and strife. Through the Marrakesh Declaration, here at the Forum we have authentically grounded the new concept of citizenship in the Islamic religious

and intellectual tradition starting from the *Charter of Madina*. The Marrakesh Declaration is thus an option designated by time and values to deal with the universal principles in the era in which we live by activating what is common and shared amongst humanity and neutralizing elements of exclusion and expulsion. We have aimed at reconciling between religious identity and national identity, and we do not believe that the strength of one's affiliation to religious identity leads to the collapse of the spirit of citizenship. Rather, we believe that religious affiliation may serve as an incentive for strengthening citizenship and neutralizing the negative effects that the impact of religious difference may have on it.

The members of the Abrahamic family should return to their texts which are a framework that reinforces the religion's positive energy, so it may be a balm for the wounds of humanity and a cure for its tragedies.

The two most important constituents of citizenship in the Marrakesh Declaration are: (1) the acknowledgement of pluralism and the recognition of religious freedom, and (2) the equal treatment of equal duties and rights.

In this approach, citizenship develops into fraternity, and shared existence and being (*wujud mushtarak*) evolves to shared sense and conscience (*wijdan mushtarak*). The new Alliance of Virtue links citizenship and its values, such as freedom, to two basic goals: social peace and the preservation of public order as two elements that frame the application of these concepts to different environments and contexts in such a way as not to result in citizenship being invalidated or breached. Thus, it is incumbent to link freedom to social peace and to link the principle of freedom of expression, which has become sacred in the reigning civilization, to the principle of taking responsibility for its potential repercussions.

3. Respect for All Sacred Symbols

The new Alliance of Virtue is calling for a charter among the followers of the Abrahamic faiths that affirms mutual respect of their respective sacred symbols. It will not be accepted or tolerated from any one of them to insult or desecrate the sacred symbols of others or vilify the religious traditions of others. They are all equal in this regard.

Insulting sacred symbols cannot be considered part of freedom of expression,

because the abuser intends nothing except to harm others and abuse them. He is not intending through his abuse to achieve something good or beneficial for himself or for others, because insulting the sacred symbols of the followers of a particular religion is in fact tantamount to insulting and abusing those who believe in these sacred symbols and a violation of their right to have their beliefs respected. This is apart from the fact that these insults and abuse also threaten peace and security, which is one of the most important considerations. The priority of peace between citizens and all human beings should be given great care and consideration. For this reason, we appreciate the European Court's decision (360/2018) of mid-October 2018, upholding the soundness of the verdicts of the Austrian judiciary regarding insults to our Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of God ﷺ. This important ruling declared that abusive and offensive claims cannot fall within the scope of freedom of expression, as they infringe on the rights of other citizens to have their religious beliefs respected and threaten religious peace in Austrian society. This decision contributes to the promotion of world peace and the spread of brotherly love and tolerance in the world. Along with similar verdicts, it represents a legal precedent that the courts of the West will have to take into account and affirms what the law of the UAE respects, honors, and upholds.

4. Addressing the Persecution of Minorities in the Name of Religion

The new Alliance of Virtue emphasizes and stresses the rejection of any persecution directed at a religious, ethnic, or cultural minority. It also categorically rejects the exploitation of religion in these heinous acts that no intellect accepts nor religion endorses.

5. Endorsing international treaties that aim to establish and promote peace

The new Alliance of Virtue endorses and supports international and regional treaties that aim to establish and promote peace, end conflicts, and support a spirit of harmony and brotherhood between nations, religions, and cultures.

Islam enacted treaties, for pre-Islamic Arabs did not know about ending wars via treaties. In fact, they would dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to conflict and sacrifice their lives in the process, and often a war between two tribes would last for decades. However, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ signed many treaties with different factions and faith communities in order to spread peace in the Arabian Peninsula.

Islam held the matter of treaties in very high esteem and built them upon good faith and transparency. God Almighty says: “As for those idolaters who have honored the treaty you made with them and have not supported anyone against you: fulfill your agreement with them to the end of their term. God loves those who are mindful of Him.” (Qur’an 9:4). God Almighty also says: “Honor your pledges: you will be questioned about your pledges” (Qur’an 17:34). It is reported in a hadith that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: “There is no religion for one who cannot uphold a covenant.”

6. Reviving Values and Establishing virtue

It is also one of the most important aims of the new Alliance of Virtue to revive the values of virtue, make them known, and invite others towards them. This is achieved by emphasizing the values of noble character - not just human rights - which represent the bare minimum necessary for the coexistence of humankind. The values of noble character include compassion, mercy, altruism, solidarity, and helping the needy from among the poor and weak, without regard to their race, religion, or geographical origin. This would introduce a new concept of humanity and humanitarianism that extends beyond the neutral principle of human rights as manifested in equality and showing indifference to differences, as well as promoting positive social interactions that fills others with the warmth of love and fraternity.

One of the most important values that has experienced erosion and atrophy in the globalization of values is the value of hospitality.

One of the most important values of virtue that has experienced erosion and atrophy in the context of the globalization of values and the values of globalization is the value of hospitality. This principal value, which is authentically rooted and grounded in the Abrahamic family, should be revived by the new Alliance of Virtue because of humanity’s dire need for it.

The Qur’an states: “Have you heard the story of the honored guests of Abraham? They went in to see him and said, ‘Peace.’ ‘Peace,’ he said, [adding to himself] ‘These people are strangers.’ He turned quickly to his household, brought out a fat calf, and placed it before them. ‘Will you not eat’, he said” (51:24–27). Abdullah ibn Amr (may God be pleased him) said: “Whoever does not show hospitality is not from Muhammad nor from Abraham.”

Similarly, the value of good neighborliness is authentically rooted in the values

of the Abrahamic family. The Prophet ﷺ praised the Negus, King of Abyssinia, a Christian, due to the fact that he was a king in whose company and care no one was wronged. He protected the Muslim refugees fleeing from the oppression of the pagans of Makkah. He said to them: “Go your ways, for you are safe in my land. Not for mountains of gold would I harm a single man of you.” In Exodus (23:9), it is stated: “Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.” And in Leviticus (19:33–34) it is stated: “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

These texts represent the ideal framework for the members of the Abrahamic family to do what they have to do with respect to the right of every stranger who enters a land that is not his land, especially in the context of what the world is currently witnessing in terms of wars that have led to the displacement of scores of people fleeing from death and hunger in search of a dignified life to areas and regions that may not hold any affection for them or harbor fear and mistrust towards them. Religions have a major challenge in front of them that is connected to their role in fixing the faults and flaws in the international mechanisms serving to protect refugees, displaced persons, and migrants, and to confront humanitarian crises.

The members of the Abrahamic family should return to these texts in order to represent for them the ideal framework that reinforces the religion’s positive energy, so that it becomes a balm for the wounds of humanity and a cure for its tragedies, serving as a tranquility that descends upon the hearts and a love that flourishes in the souls.

To conclude, we must put our minds together to create a road map for achieving some of these goals, applying our cooperation and collaboration on the ground, and affirming that which is common and shared amongst us. This is the best response to extremists of all persuasions, who exploit the masses to ignite wars and strife and spread the spirit of hatred. In doing so, we offer the best proof that religious ethics and morals can once again guide the world to the path of salvation from its intractable problems in this world. These include injustice, ignorance, intolerance, fanaticism, wars, terrorism, genocide, and the threat of nuclear and chemical wars. We need to replace them with the spirit of fraternity, justice, love of humanity, reconciliation, and settlements. Religion, in this way, provides an environment for human, social, and economic development.

The model of the peace caravans can establish a new kind of dialogue for getting to know one another. At his church in Texas, Pastor Bob Roberts receives his Muslim brethren. Rabbi Bruce Lustig opens for them the doors of his synagogue in Washington. Imam Magid celebrates with his brethren from the Evangelicals and Jews in his mosque at the ADAMS Center in Virginia. It is a gathering of people from varying backgrounds in a spatial and temporal locus, even if it is for a limited period, where they participate in living together, eating together, and traveling together, whilst performing the rituals of their respective religion that are part and parcel of their daily life in full view of the other. They talk and seek, but what is most important is that they witness and discover that they are brothers who share more than they originally thought.

The new Alliance of Virtue should reinforce and consolidate this model into a more practical, efficient, and traditional mechanism for cooperation and coexistence that can be widely disseminated and utilized. This experience will continue to serve as a model for mutual acquaintance and the process of dialogue, facilitating positive mutual acquaintance and cooperation for good and righteousness in a movement that has established and inaugurated a new era in the relations between the Abrahamic religions. It opens an era of cooperation and collaboration between people of enlightened minds and understanding in order to rectify the course of humanity. Many efforts are being made within the framework of all religions for the sake of peace. Prayers are held and supplications are made all for this purpose, but the tide of solidarity and cooperation must eventually emerge and carry out field work that proves to the whole world that religion is a source of salvation and mercy unto the world.

Humanity is together aboard a single ship at risk of sinking. It is a moral obligation on all of us to take hold of those who would strike holes in the hull.

It is time for religious leaders to demonstrate greater effectiveness and greater involvement in the concerns of human societies for the re-establishment of rectitude and right guidance, removing the spectre of deadly wars and strife. If some view religion as a source of division and disintegration of the social fabric of nations and communities, then the new Alliance of Virtue looks to rectify these views through demonstrating through practice how religion can and must be a force for building, development, harmony, and extinguishing fires. It builds instead of demolishes, it

unites instead of divides, it constructs instead of destroys. This is the lesson, the invitation, the message, and the mission that we direct and convey through this alliance.

We are anxious and concerned about those children who quarrel and wrestle while they should reconcile. They are men, but they are really overgrown children who need sensible and intelligent men to keep them apart, protect them from one another, and guide them to the best way and best form of action. As Plato says, through dialogue, alternatives to violent conflict become manifest. War, especially in this day and age, has no victors. Instead, all are losers.



It is time for religious leaders to demonstrate greater effectiveness and greater involvement in the concerns of human societies for the re-establishment of rectitude and right guidance, removing of the spectre of deadly wars and strife.

H.E. SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH
President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace



Imam Ali defined the 'other' from the point of view of Islam: "People are of two categories: your brother in religion, or your equivalent in creation." This means that the 'other' is your brother either in faith, or in humanity.

H.E. SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH
President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace



BIOGRAPHY OF H.E SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH

H.E. SHAYKH ABDALLAH bin Bayyah is recognized by Muslim scholars around the world as perhaps the greatest living authority on the Islamic legal methodology known as *Usul al-Fiqh* (Principles of Jurisprudence). Beyond that, he is known for his scholarship drawing on scripture and traditional texts across all four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence to address the crucial contemporary concerns of Muslim communities. In recent years, he has been the driving force behind the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, which seeks to unite Muslim scholars around the world in pursuit of peace, and to address the crises facing Muslim communities worldwide.

Born in eastern Mauritania in 1935, the Shaykh grew up in a family known for its grasp of the Mauritanian classical curriculum. His father, Shaykh Al-Mahfoudh bin Bayyah was a senior judge and chosen twice as the head of Ulema (religious scholars) of Mauritania upon the country's independence. From an early age, the Shaykh demonstrated his exceptional memory and understanding of the Mauritanian texts.

Under his father's tutelage, he developed an advanced understanding of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, and knowledge of pre-Islamic Arab poetry. He also developed an advanced understanding of the Qur'anic sciences: legal theory, syntax, language, orthography and the ten forms of Qur'anic recitation. He specialized in the Maliki school of jurisprudence, and was qualified to give authoritative legal opinions (fatwas).

In his early 20s, he was selected as part of a group of scholars to go to Tunisia for training in modern legal systems, which were to be introduced to Mauritania. He graduated at the top of his group, and on his return to Mauritania was appointed a judge, rising to become Minister of Justice, Minister of Islamic Affairs, and eventually Vice President.

When some government officials criticized his lack of fluency in French, he taught himself the language by listening to French radio with a dictionary in hand. He later surprised his critics by addressing a ministerial meeting in the language. His mastery of French has allowed him to study European thought and the history of ideas. He is rare among contemporary Muslim scholars for his knowledge of the work of Western philosophers and social theorists.

In the 1980s, Shaykh joined King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he taught several subjects, including Qur'anic studies, jurisprudence, and advanced level of Arabic, for over three decades. This allows him to combine the study of the scriptural sources of Qur'an and Hadith, the various schools' approaches to *Usul al-Fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence), and *Maqasid al-Sharia* (the purposes of Islamic law). This breadth of study has allowed the Shaykh to develop a universal framework in which Islamic jurisprudence can be adapted to local contexts while maintaining its essential principles and purposes and ensuring its continued relevance in the lives of an increasingly diverse global Muslim population.

The Shaykh has developed theories of Islamic jurisprudence in secular or non-Muslim societies, called the Jurisprudence of Minorities (*fiqh al-aqalliyyat*). He is also an outspoken critic of terrorism, authoring several articles and books exploring Islamic responses to the issue. He has applied this work practically, not least in the successful efforts to secure the release of French war correspondent Florence Aubenas, and her translator Hussein Hanun, in Iraq in 2005.

Over the past 25 years, the Shaykh has taught students who have become some of

the most prominent scholars in the Middle East and North Africa. In the late 1990s he started to visit the West, particularly teaching British and American students, gaining a following amongst prominent Western Muslim leaders. He has written several books and hundreds of articles and essays, mostly in Arabic, which are used by scholars around the world.

The Shaykh's work has not been focused on scholarship for its own sake, but on applying it to address some of the most pressing issues facing global Islam. In 2008, he became the founding President of the Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance (GCRG), a London-based think tank that applies scholarship to strategic solutions to pressing intellectual and spiritual issues facing global Islam. This reflects the Shaykh's belief that ideas can only be defeated by ideas, and that Islamist extremism must be answered by sound reasoning drawn from orthodox, accepted sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

This approach was applied in Mardin, Turkey, in 2010, when his organisation convened a conference to examine a fatwa issued by the 14th century scholar Ibn Taymiyya. His Mardin Fatwa is widely used by jihadi groups to justify attacks on both non-Muslims and Muslims who do not follow their understanding of Islam. The 2010 Mardin Conference revealed that a transcription error had been introduced in a 1909 edition of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa, turning the verb "to treat" into the verb "to fight" and that jihadi groups were relying on the incorrect version. Under the Shaykh's leadership, the conference published a report entitled, *Challenging the al-Qaida Narrative: The New Mardin Declaration*, correcting the jihadi understanding of the fatwa. Three separate spokesmen of al-Qaida responded to this threat, attacking Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah by name.

In 2014, the Shaykh established the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace (ADFP) in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage of Sheikh Abdallah bin Zayed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates. The vision of the ADFP is to address the crises facing global Islam from a framework of Islamic tradition and legal theory, applied to local contexts. Over 1,000 of the world's leading Muslim scholars from a variety of traditions, as well as academics and thought leaders, attended the ADFP's launch. The ADFP is the first global gathering of scholars designed to provide a response to extremism, sectarianism and terrorism.

Since the 2014 Forum, the Shaykh has travelled widely to advance its work, in North Africa, the Middle East, Far East and the West. This included a conference

with the African Union on tackling the religious conflict in the Central African Republic, and the release of the Chibok girls by the Nigerian jihadi group Boko Haram. He has led Imam training initiatives in the US, UK and Europe, and spoken widely on the issue of global peace, including at the World Economic Forum in 2015 and 2017, and at the UN Countering Violent Extremism Summit in 2015. In 2014, the Shaykh's work and that of the ADFP were referenced by President Barack Obama at the UN General Assembly. Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah thus became the only Islamic scholar ever to be publicly quoted by a sitting President of the United States.²

In January 2016, the Shaykh convened the Marrakesh Declaration, as the culmination of an effort running since 2011 to address the issue of violence and oppression against minorities in Muslim majority countries. The Declaration applied traditional Islamic texts, and in particular the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ *Charter of Madina*, to affirm the Islamic principle of equal citizenship as prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ. It was signed by scholars and politicians from across the Muslim world.

In February 2018, following the Shaykh's initiative, hundreds of American religious leaders, scholars and politicians, as well as others from around the world gathered in Washington, D.C., to discuss the 'Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good'. This conference promulgated *The Washington Declaration*, calling on the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths to join together in a new Alliance of Virtue, using their shared values to promote the global commonweal.

In 2019 the Shaykh launched *The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue*, a voluntary document that seeks to bring together religious leaders of good-will for the benefit of humanity. It is an effort across religions to enable their members to live side-by-side in peace and happiness and cooperate on the basis a theology of God-given human dignity that actualizes virtue and benefit for all. In 2020, the Shaykh used this document to press for an attitude of 'the Spirit of the Ship's Passengers' which is a Prophetic metaphor for the status of human beings as the passengers of single ship with a common destiny. The Shaykh continues to argue that this is the only possible means for facing the challenges of war, pandemics, and climate change that threaten humanity.

The Shaykh has received multiple awards recognizing his work and serves in the

² The White House Archives, 2014. See: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/24/09/2014/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>

leadership of many organizations seeking peace, including as one of four Executive Co-Presidents of Religions for Peace, the largest interfaith organization in the world.



An objective of the new Alliance of Virtues is social contracts against war and strife: contracts of positive citizenship based on... equality, freedom, and mutual respect. The Marrakesh Declaration shows that such concepts are firmly grounded in Islam.

H.E. SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH
President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace



ABOUT THE ABU DHABI FORUM FOR PEACE

THE ABU DHABI Forum For Peace, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates was established during the pinnacle of social strife in the Muslim world following the Arab Spring. The Forum works earnestly to bring an end to conflict and establish peace through facilitating spaces for dialogue and the dissemination of a discourse of moderation. It strives to allow its participants to put behind them the differences of the past and focus on a secure, peaceful societies future together.

The Forum takes an academic and theological approach to the problem of violence, holding that any violent act begins as ideology before emerging as action. Wars are waged in the realm of ideas before they devastate the physical world. Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, the Forum's founder, teaches that we must construct defenses of peace in the heart and mind and inculcate a correct understanding of Islam. This is one of the primary roles of the scholarly elite and religious leadership in our time.

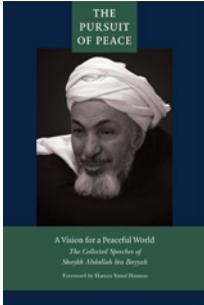
Likewise, the Forum focuses on securing the rights and safety of religious minorities living in Muslim lands. *The Marrakesh Declaration* launched in 2016, calls on Muslim states to accord the rights of equal citizenship to all minorities in their midst on the basis of *The Charter of Madina* and the Islamic values of benevolence, solidarity, human dignity, peace, justice, mercy and the common good. Most recently, the Forum has focused on elevating interreligious cooperation from the discourse of shared rights and responsibilities to the heights of a common conscience and genuine loving kindness towards the other. This is profoundly showcased in the promulgation of the 2019 *Charter for a New Alliance of Virtue* and the 2021 Abu Dhabi *Charter of Inclusive Citizenship*.



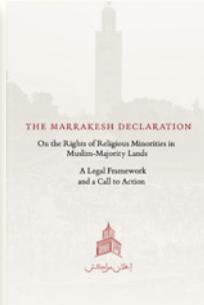




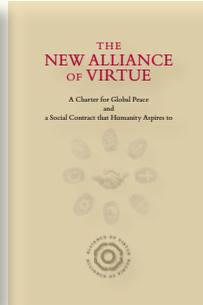
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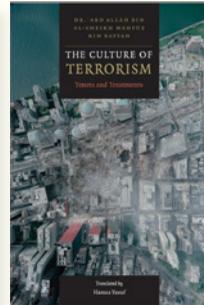
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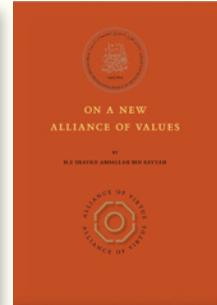
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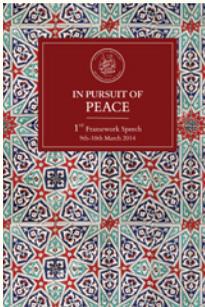
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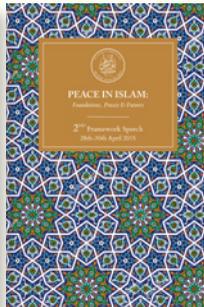
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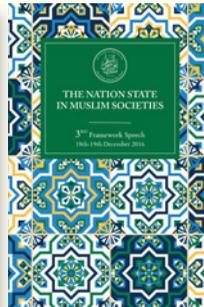
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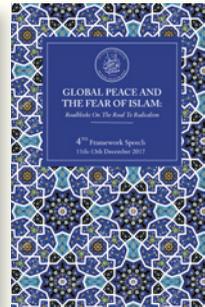
1st Assembly
In Pursuit of Peace
2014



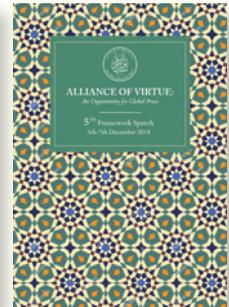
2nd Assembly
Peace In Islam:
Foundations, Praxis
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2015



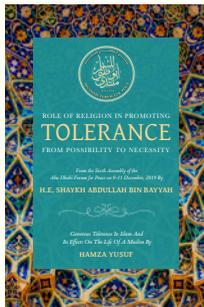
3rd Assembly
The Nation State in
Muslim Societies
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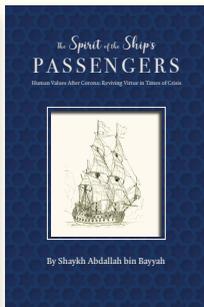
4th Assembly
Global Peace And
The Fear of Islam
2017



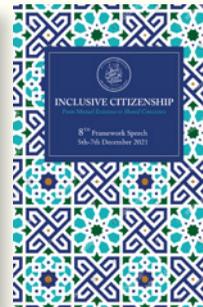
5th Assembly
Alliance of Virtue:
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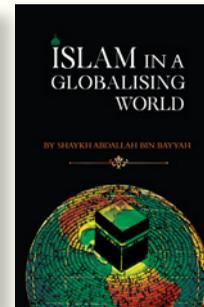
6th Assembly
Role of Religion in
Promoting Tolerance
2019



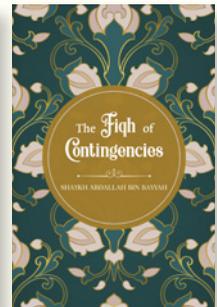
7th Assembly
The Spirit of the
Ship's Passengers
2020



8th Assembly
Inclusive Citizenship:
From Mutual
Existence to Shared
Conscience 2018



Islam in a Globalizing
World



The Fiqh of
Contingencies
2020

