



INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP:

From Mutual Existence to Shared Conscience

8TH Framework Speech
5th-7th December 2021



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8TH FRAMEWORK SPEECH OF THE ABU DHABI FORUM FOR PEACE

5th-7th December 2021 , 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.

“

We seek a world in which nations compete for the common good, and countries race to offer true Abrahamic hospitality: one that is based on human dignity and considers the foreigner a relative and a friend.

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

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

Our focus on citizenship at the Forum is not novel, but rather has been an integral part of our work since the Forum's inception. Several previous assemblies focused on citizenship as it should be correctly understood, including a reconsideration of our inherited legal tradition, history, and a close look at the changes that have taken place in the world.¹

We recognize that the present world has elevated citizenship to a universally recognized cause. We hosted a series of discussions with many international organizations, through coordination with Wilton Park (an executive agency of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) and the Adyan Foundation of Lebanon on the issue. These allowed us to penetrate deeply into the meaning of the term, the challenges facing it, and the means of actualizing it in the world.

These workshops have underscored the need for novel formulations of citizenship which are inspired by religious texts and which take into account the contemporary civilizational context as manifest in national constitutions and international conventions.

Now, as a crowning achievement on this path, our present assembly will publish the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Inclusive Citizenship. This is a declaration based upon the great documents of tolerance in the present age, like: *The Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities*, *The Abu Dhabi Declarations on Peace*, *The Human Fraternity Document*, *the Charter of Makkah*, and *The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue*.

Citizenship: Past and Present

Citizenship was historically an unstable concept, both in its reality and in its supporting milieu. It is more precise to speak of various 'citizenships,' that were either broad or narrow, depending upon their context.

¹ This is an edited and abridged version of the speech given by HE Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah at the opening session of the eighth Assembly of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, Abu Dhabi, 5 December 2021.

The term in Arabic is *muwatana* which is on the morphological pattern of *mufa'ala* of the root word *watan*, meaning nation. This *mufa'ala* pattern indicates cooperation among two or more people in a single *watan*, nation. There is no corresponding verb on this pattern except *watana/yuwatinu* which means to agree or correspond to something (*muwafaqa*).

Its Latin counterpart is derived from the word 'city.' The city is the organized form of human social existence. Thus, it refers to a relational concept, or a legal capacity, in the human being's relationship to his nation and others that share this nation with him.

A synonym for citizenship in its legal import in ancient Greece – and also in current political usage – is the term 'subject [of the state]' (*ra'iyya*). It is therefore a dividing term that separates those deserving these rights from those who do not. It has retained this discriminatory sense even in its present usage. This is unlike the meaning of the term 'foreign visitor' (*wafid*), or one who seeks to be treated with Abrahamic hospitality.

Though technology has opened up avenues for digital citizenship, it has also brought with it an equal number of challenges facing citizenship. This means that governments must enact laws to govern this new digital form of citizenship, so that its benefits can be brought out and its harms may be deflected.

Historically, citizenship revolved around race, religion, shared memory, and lineage. This led to the social stratification evident in Roman society and among the pre-Islamic Arabs. This ancient form of citizenship was historically common, but it was not the only form. Some cosmopolitan contexts witnessed different modes of citizenship of a contractual sort. These were not based on a shared racial background or memory, nor on shared religious belief. Rather, they were voluntary contractual relationships that formalized their mutual coexistence in a constitutional and legal form that outlines the rights and responsibilities of individual members of society.

This constitutional and legal form of citizenship has become widespread in the modern world, especially in the context of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and the overall heightened interactions between different cultures. This is the product of the diversity we see worldwide; it is as if citizenship has now become voluntary, with individuals joining communities in a contractual manner. Whoever joins it

today has the same rights as the oldest member. There is no difference between the first, the last, the founding member, and the newcomer.

In sum, citizenship is a link or voluntary association contracted in the context of a nation governed by the constitution. It rises above sectarian and tribal affiliations, without necessarily eliminating them. Rather, these affiliations must amicably co-exist with the reality of citizenship.

Inclusive Citizenship within the Context of Global Citizenship

Citizenship is a concept that is as broad as the standards that are upheld by it, and as lofty as the ceiling of rights and responsibilities related to it. In fact, every historical context of citizenship has demands and standards of acceptability that are either broad or narrow.

Citizenship was once a political concept based upon basic rights in the context of a constitutional state or a nation protecting freedoms. It later took on an economic and social form in the luxury or consumer state. Finally, a new form of citizenship emerged which focused on the acceptance of cultural rights. People living in our globalized world speak of global or universal citizenship because they are aware of the interconnection between the different nations and societies in the world today; a world characterized by civilizational exchange, social interconnection, and a plurality of cultures, races, and religions living side by side.

Universal citizenship is conscious of the fact that we belong to one greater human family with the earth as our homeland. This is a reality evident to all. We are called upon to realize this fact and its concomitant adoption of the spirit of the ship's passengers. That is, passengers on a single ship united by their final destination and their responsibility towards their craft and fellow passengers. The spirit of the ship's passengers is that of solidarity, compassion, and cooperation.

Solidarity involves dedication to what is good for the other. It is a higher calling that transcends recognition into mutual acceptance and interaction. It involves transcending the individual self into the shared space of commonalities. It moves from restrictive identities to broad spaces of unity: the unity of the entire human race.

All of this can only take place when we consider solidarity to be among the high-

est moral virtues, which include mercy, aid, cooperation and charity. These are virtues that soar above the level of mere rights; rather they are what rights are based upon, and they give rights their true meaning.

In the spirit of the ship's passengers we seek a world in which the fruits of scientific discovery are available for the benefit of all and not monopolized by the strong and rich. We seek a world in which nations compete for the common good, and countries race to offer true Abrahamic hospitality: one that is based on human dignity and considers the foreigner a relative and a friend. It meets the other in good faith, allows them into the home, and treats them with beneficence and charity.

Digital Citizenship

In modern society, digital technology has become an integral part of our identity because of the ease of access to information that it offers. It has remodelled our patterns of life and social relationships. The concept of citizenship has therefore expanded to include this digital dimension, considering the access to technology a right, or at least, the means to attain certain rights.

Ease of access to information, and direct connection to others through digital means has become an integral ingredient for the feeling of belonging to one's nation. It also allows for positive and responsible participation in life. Likewise, it is a tool to fight all forms of discrimination and prejudice, and to protect the dignity of the human being.

However, the same technologies that can support national belonging can also cause humans to lose themselves. It can remove them from the pressing needs of their societies and sink them in imaginary problems and alternative realities where their circles of concern expand far removed from the immediate concerns of real life. Their sense of belonging to their nation is disturbed, and their sources of authentic knowledge are compromised.

Therefore, in as much as technology has opened up avenues for digital citizenship, it has also brought with it an equal number of challenges facing citizenship. This means that governments must enact laws to govern this new digital form of citizenship, so that its benefits can be brought out and its harms may be deflected. In this regard, the United Arab Emirates have issued a charter of ethical codes governing digital citizenship.

The Basis of Citizenship: Certain Rights and Clear Responsibilities

The most important ingredient of citizenship is the foundation of shared responsibilities and equal rights. This means that the relationship between the state and its subject, and between the subjects themselves, must be positive. Differences should be overcome, and there should be a sense of shared advantages enjoyed by the citizenry. The nation state is the guarantor and protector of universal interests: religion, life, property, offspring, and dignity. It guarantees this for all citizens without distinction of class, race or religion.

In the nation state, differences become coalition and diversity turns into cooperation. The relationship with the other constitutes an opportunity to explore spaces of interaction and expand channels of communication. There is no room for harassing others by denigrating their sacred symbols or disrespecting their beliefs. Everyone may practice their religious observances in an atmosphere of respectful freedom. In this way social harmony, coexistence, and respect for human dignity may be secured.

Citizenship can only exist when it is founded on the solid bedrock of values.

In this regard we must praise the policies of the United Arab Emirates that serve to support the foundations of positive citizenship, tolerance, and human fraternity. These are wise policies that are practical in respecting the local context, and they are based on a clear vision and goal, which is the careful and fair balancing of various interests. For example, Union Law no. 2 of 2015 criminalizes discrimination, hate speech, and the denigration of religions. Such a law serves to safeguard and protect society from speech that incites hatred and violence, and threatens social peace and harmony.

Along with the rights that the nation state grants to its citizens there are duties by which these rights are made binding and effective. There are no rights without duties, nor duties that are unrelated to rights. Every right is a duty upon another, and every duty is the right of another.

The right of the nation over its citizens is that they defend it against transgressors, and protect its safety and stability. Likewise, they must respect its laws and the constitution governing its existence and social order. They must also respect

its governors and state officials, and subject themselves to the authority of various state bodies.

Imam al-Mawardi has a wonderful statement on the integral of a state which is relevant to nation states of our times. He mentions the importance of the general safety of the whole population, perpetual economic growth, and expansive hope. By expansive hope he means a long-term strategy that guarantees for citizens the realization of their long-term dreams for a good life. It is a positive outlook for the future that establishes trust in the state, supports the spirit of scientific inquiry, and gives people a sense of security and tranquility.

Religion as a Support for Citizenship

Islam, like the other religions of the Abrahamic family, does not negate historical achievements in the evolution of citizenship, even though it holds a set of ethical values that are absent in most contemporary, secular conceptualizations of citizenship.

Islam's contribution to the definition of citizenship is part of a recent resurgence or return of religion in public discourse, a fact commented upon by many of the leading thinkers in Europe and North America. They have had to devise novel conceptualizations of citizenship that are open to religious influence. Some thinkers like John Rawls have thought deeply about the conditions for coexistence, and have commented on the importance of religious participation in this regard. This would allow each religion to offer input from its ethical and scriptural teachings into ethical public discourse.

This is the methodology that we follow in the Abu Dhabi Declaration of Peace and other documents on tolerance. We translated therein the language of religion into the language of public discourse, or the language of civic life and the law. We took inspiration from historical texts to apply these teachings to the present, whilst keeping in mind that each has its own language and spatio-temporal context. We allowed the sacred texts to speak for themselves and whilst remaining loyal to their higher objectives. We engaged in hermeneutical interpretation of these sacred texts in accordance with our jurisprudential tradition. We also compared our conclusions to the attainments of humanity in the modern period to examine how best to protect human welfare and interest.

Through this interpretive approach we were able to achieve the necessary concord between religious and national identities, and to resolve any conflict between the two. Some people believe that a strong sense of belonging to a particular religious identity leads to a weakening of national identity. They think there is an essential conflict between these two, especially in fragmented societies made up of multiple religious groups where the state authority has weakened. They believe that in such a context religious identity forcefully takes over and each group seeks refuge in its own identity which offers a sense of comfort and safety.

Our work in religious legal hermeneutics had precisely this sort of objection in mind. We wanted to invert the equation so that religious identity could be a support for citizenship and religious differences may not stand in the way of realizing the higher aims of citizenship.

There is no room for harassing others by denigrating their sacred symbols or disrespecting their beliefs. Everyone may practice their religious observances in an atmosphere of respectful freedom. In this way social harmony, coexistence, and respect for human dignity may be secured.

We were able to do this through recourse to the *Charter of Madina*, which represents a solid foundation for contractual citizenship in multicultural societies. This is what the times call on us to evoke. We must focus on commonality and leave aside the causes of separation and disunity. *The Charter of Madina* is sympathetic to our efforts here in that it was an agreement that was made without warfare, violence, or coercion. It was an agreement voluntarily made by the parties to it, who were the various groups living in Madina at the time. It was an agreement to actualize societal peace founded upon a recognition of shared rights and responsibilities. It accepted others with different beliefs, objectives, and lifestyles, whilst allowing them recourse to a common authority that enables the resolution of conflicts and differences.

To achieve this, we have also thought deeply about the reciprocal relationship between the sacred and the profane in Islam – or between human welfare and religious values. The religion has allowed for a large amount of people's lives to be governed by the dictates of reason and wellbeing. Among these things are the general laws governing society; the meaning of the nation state (and the various forms it can take when these do not conflict with the requirements of sacred law); and

guidance as to how we can adapt to the particular circumstances of our age.

It was for this reason that we devoted the Forum's third assembly to affirming, from a religious perspective, the validity of the modern nation state and its respect for diversity. We also affirmed that the nation state in the Islamic world effectively stands in the place of the great historical empires to which human beings belonged. These affirmations were made on the basis of the religious need to preserve the good and prevent harm.

Education and its Role in Citizenship

Citizenship is not based solely on equality in rights and duties, nor on its legal definition alone. Rather, citizenship can only exist when it is founded on the solid bed-rock of values. These values are established in the human soul through education, and they allow citizenship to rise to the level of fraternity and upgrade the concept from mutual existence to a shared conscience. Citizenship is a crucible in which all affiliations are fused. Only when harmony exists between various members of society can the citizen find his true place therein.

In order for the rights that citizenship offers to be firm, they must be offered within the context of a social contract that is based on balancing not only legal interests, but spiritual and psychological ones also.

Religious efforts to support citizenship are also clearly manifest in the educational and pastoral dimension. This is because in most environments it is religion that truly educates the human being and thoroughly influences their mental conception of the world by which they govern their actions and values in their personal and social lives. Citizenship is not just a set of facts or values that are learned, but rather a way of being and behaving that one is trained in through effective education. By education we mean the refinement of behavior, action, and character. Through such an education the human being learns to live in society and the values of citizenship take root in his soul.

In order for the foundations of citizenship to be strong and unshakeable, it must become a firm character trait in society as a whole. It must be based on mutual appeasement and commitment so that the rights of every member spring forth from their mutual tolerance and respect for one another.

How can we actualize Inclusive Citizenship?

In this past century mankind has entered a phase of globalization where the presence of the other and interaction with it is an unavoidable fact of life. This has led to a new reality that is complex and appears as a dialectical struggle between two tendencies: one, a movement towards negating all matter of religious or cultural uniqueness and making all acquiesce to the culture that is victorious over all others, and another that involves rigidly holding onto narrow identities and forms of restrictive discourse. This leads to contradictions and disharmony, among the public, in the environment and values systems, and even within civilization itself.

The age of empires has ended, and human societies have entered into the form now known as the nation state. Likewise, allegiances are now no longer solely religious, but are rather complex allegiances affected by multiple interconnected factors. Individualism has also come to the fore, and so the social context is no longer the governing factor for the actions of any one individual. Also, international charters and conventions now exist between nations, and international law governs relationships with the other. Diversity of culture, race, religion is a phenomenon present in every land. The culture of freedoms is a strong force in reality, and human rights have become a means for minorities to live safely among the majority.

We want to invert the equation so that our religious identity becomes a support for citizenship.

All of the changes above are integral for a novel universal classification for the present age. It raises a number of academic questions about how to apply and put into effect our systems of religion and ethics. It forces us to ask how we can actualize citizenship, and what is the foundational value system to base this citizenship upon? Is every voluntary contract immediately a sufficient ethical authority, or do we need an exemplary model to follow?

It is in sorting out these details that our different understandings and points of view lie. In fact, we could say there are as many models of citizenship as there are nation states. The approximation or harmonization that we consider most fitting, and which have placed before you in this declaration today, is a subtle one. It is founded on a careful study of how to conjoin the pressing needs and realities of our globalized age with the demands of individual and local uniqueness.

Our approximation seeks to find a balance between three factors:

- The global context and its standards
- The local context
- The strategy of peace, since it is the foundation for citizenship's very existence

1. Citizenship and the Age of Civilizational Interrelation

It is necessary to admit the effect of the universal demands of the present age on the concept of citizenship. Ignoring it will lead to failure and perhaps even civil strife. Realizing citizenship in our time requires us to take into account the circumstances of our age, in particular its moral norms pertaining to freedom and human rights, as well as women's and children's rights. These norms are characterized by the intermingling of civilizations and intermarriage of traditions.

In the nation state, differences become coalition and diversity turns into cooperation. The relationship with the other constitutes an opportunity to explore spaces of interaction and expand channels of communication.

It is clear to the people of our times, the age of the global village, what the reality of being a human being means. It means that our paths and destinies are united. What happens in one corner of the world affects the living on the other side of it. What some of us do, nonetheless affects us all. We are united in a single framework in which there is no separation or disconnection.

This profound understanding of our age dictates that we must work together. It refuses alienation and a divisive perspective that focuses only on uniqueness and difference in place of appreciating the connection of all humankind. This is the recognition that founded the international relations of our day, along with its various bodies and organizations, all of which focus upon the goal of world peace, the ending of warfare, and supporting the spirit of fraternity between peoples, nations, and cultures of the world.

The governments of nation states have also seen profound changes as a result of this new order that affect their lands, population, their powers, and their laws. The absolute authority of the government is now conditioned by other sources of authority, which we may term international authorities. Local constitutions are

now linked to international charters in a system of interrelationships that may be mutually supportive or restrictive, as the case may be.

The present crisis has demonstrated the need for international cooperation, and the inability for individual efforts to tackle the problem at hand. Institutions of cooperation between countries need to be active to effectively share information and the fruits of scientific discovery, to support each other, and to offer aid in times of crisis.

This pandemic has proven that the nation state provides the natural and necessary refuge in times of crisis. It alone is capable of taking the essential measures to enable communities to face these challenges. For this reason, people have returned to their homelands for safety and nation states have taken it upon themselves to put measures in place to protect their people from the pandemic and confront the resulting challenges.

2. The Relativity of Application

An appreciation of the globalized and interconnected nature of the world should not lead us to ignore local, societal, cultural, and historical differences between people. Citizenship must be organically tied to the social fabric for it to be authentic and effective. It must therefore be linked to a people's cultural heritage; they should not become alienated from their heritage and appreciation of it.

The Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor states that the standards of human rights are based upon human dignity. The standards of inclusive citizenship, on the other hand, are based upon the recognition of the other. The first has to do with the quality of humanness that is in every one of us, whilst the second focuses on the individual identities that differentiate one person from another, which must be recognized to affirm their personhood. The foundational rights of inclusive citizenship must be applied with regard to their cultural, temporal, and anticipated future context. Rights of the group must be balanced against the rights of the individual for the social order to be protected and maintained.

Global relevance should not be a standard devised by one group as against all others simply because of their developmental or civilizational attainment. One particular society should not present itself as the global standard against which others are measured, and to which others have to conform. Rather the true meaning of a

global standard is one that allows all individualities to meet equally. It is none other than the human whole in which each culture represents itself as an integral facet, and to which it belongs by virtue of what it is.

The challenges facing harmony between universal values and particular, contextually bound, applications is manifest in the ambivalence present in the UN's universal declaration of human rights, considered to be the topmost international document in this regard. In the first articles of the declaration, rights are delineated in an absolute fashion. Then in Article 29 – one that seeks to limit the absolute nature of the foregoing declarations – a balance is sought between rights and responsibilities, the individual and society, and freedoms and public order. The Article includes the following provisions:

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

The Article here takes recourse to public order, which is defined in law as “something whose purpose is to realize some general political, economic, or social benefit related to the constitutional order of society.” This is a principle that differs with respect to different governments and civilizations because it is drawn from the constitutional order of a particular society. Some jurists termed it an obscure principle, and this obscurity is intentional so as to allow state powers to intervene if a need arises. It is a measure of flexibility that the lawmaker requires to achieve some public benefit or good.

The application of these conditions is the prerogative of local authorities. The conditions also dictate that when we speak in universal terms about citizenship, we must bear caveats in mind. We must be cautious about how we deploy terms and concepts, and maintain sensitivity towards cultural differences. Understandings cannot be imposed upon people from the outside, or from above by sheer force of power. History has shown us that such attempts always lead to something other than what was desired.

Let us agree that wherever laws exist to protect these universal principles, citi-

zanship can exist – no matter the particularities of its interpretation or application. Natural differences do not harm or negate citizenship in any meaningful way.

3. Towards Inclusive Citizenship that Grows in the Soil of Peace

It is our firm conviction that there is no way to achieve inclusive citizenship except through the strategy of Peace. Without peace there can be no rights. The loss of peace involves the loss of all rights, including the right of citizenship. We cannot imagine the existence of the inclusive citizenship we seek in a troubled, unstable environment.

Through peace we can actualize inner peace and tranquillity for every member of society. This is then reflected in the relationship between individuals and groups. Social peace is a state of harmony that manifests in solidarity and cooperation, actualizing the good, and preventing harm. It is apparent in the language we use, how we behave, and how we transact. There should be no violence in language, no transgression in behaviour, and no oppression in our transactions.

*Along with the rights that the nation state grants to its citizens
there are duties by which these rights are made binding and effective.
There are no rights without duties, nor duties that are unrelated to
rights. Every right is a duty upon another, and every duty is the right
of another.*

Peace leads to an atmosphere of love, happiness, and a sense of belonging to community and a nation, and care for its wellbeing. This is based first and foremost on peace within oneself. Only once we are at peace with ourselves, can peace be attained with the other.

This foundational principle that we call to at the Forum is necessary in every context and every society. However, in the countries of the Arab and Muslim world the need for peace is more pressing and evident, and the need for its acknowledgment is persistent.

It is in this regard that we must take a step by step approach for its actualization. We have to differentiate between the level of recognition and the level of actualization. We must differentiate between the different levels of rights related to citizenship: between its essential, necessary foundations and its complementary merits or bonuses, which differ from one environment to another. A gradual approach must be taken to actualize these things through the strategy of social peace, so that these

complementary bonuses do not negate our foundational principles.

Thus, we cannot strip a social contract between a state and its citizens in a given country of its designation as citizenship simply because some secondary or formal requirement of an ideal conception of citizenship is not present. This is why I believe that inclusive citizenship (*al-muwatana al-shamila*) should be understood as citizenship that fosters diversity (*al-muwatana al-hadina li 'l-tanawwu'*).

Discussions around inclusive citizenship necessarily include questions about criteria and possibilities of quantifying the quality of citizenship. What is the optimal criterion for measuring the quality of citizenship? How is this criterion applied in various contexts, taking into account its requirements and its developmental and social conditions? What are the indicators of this quality? What are the measures used to improve it? How do we improve the condition of citizenship and raise its level by achieving its complementary merits within a framework that preserves civil peace and public order?

These are the principles guiding the vision of our leadership in the United Arab Emirates, a vision based on the values of innovation, quality and excellence. Here the reality of positive citizenship is enhanced every day through creative initiatives that improve the quality of inclusive citizenship and contribute to the advancement of the social contract between the state and its subjects, and the promotion of loyalty and belonging to one's homeland. It also improves the quality of global citizenship through good governance and selfless care offered by the state to all of its residents, regardless of their background and religion.

I would like to conclude by stating that the foregoing reflections stress the importance of peace and social and societal concord. Without peace citizenship can neither be contented nor successful. In fact, without peace nations can easily turn into arenas of conflict and bloody warzones. Noble character and the spirit of tolerance, love, concord, forbearance, and broad-mindedness are what protect nations, and render citizenship an opportunity for generosity and charity towards others.

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Islam, like the other religions of the Abrahamic family, does not negate historical achievements in the evolution of citizenship, even when it adds to it a set of ethical values that are lost on most contemporary conceptualizations of citizenship.

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



We renew our hopes and reiterate the call that this crisis is an occasion for a new beginning. It is an opportunity for the birth of a new human being, with a new vision of the world that is based on the value of virtue.

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'ānic sciences: legal theory, syntax, language, orthography and the ten forms of Qur'ānic 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'ān 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.



Our focus on citizenship at the Forum is not new. Several past assemblies focused on citizenship as it should be correctly understood. This involved a reconsideration of our inherited legal tradition, history, and a close look at the changes that have taken place in the world.

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

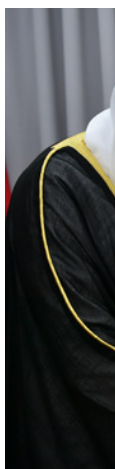


ABOUT THE ABU DHABI FORUM FOR PEACE

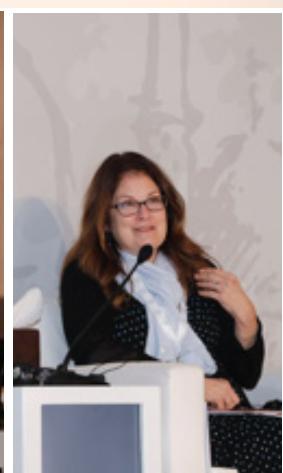
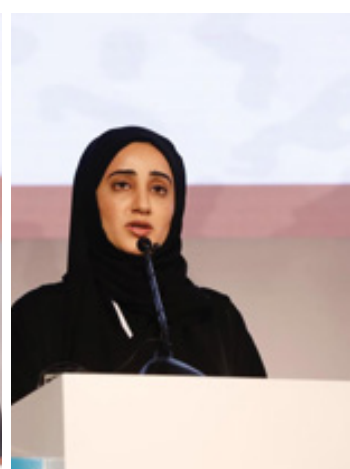
THE ABU DHABI Forum For Peace, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates was established during the pinnacle of social strife in the Muslim world following the Arab Spring. The Forum works earnestly 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.

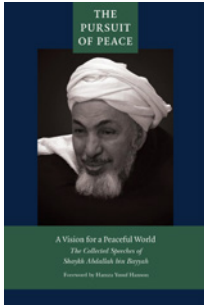
Likewise, the Forum focuses on securing the rights and safety of religious minorities living in Muslim lands. *The Marrakesh Declaration* launched in 2016, calls on Muslim states to accord the rights of equal citizenship to all minorities in their midst on the basis of *The Charter of Madina* and the 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*.



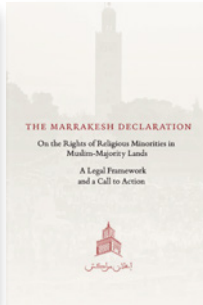




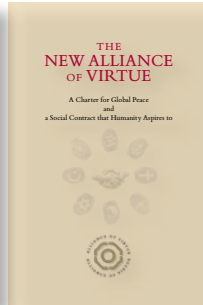
OTHER PUBLICATIONS



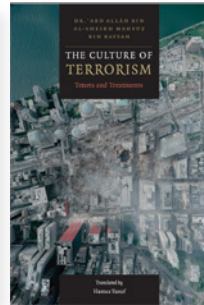
The Pursuit of Peace
June 2022



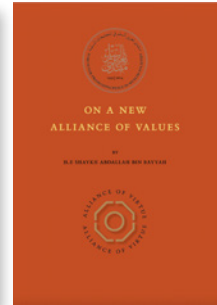
The Marrakesh Declaration
January 2016



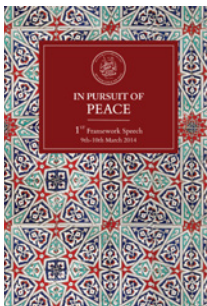
The New Alliance Of
Virtue: A Charter
For Global Peace
28th September 2019



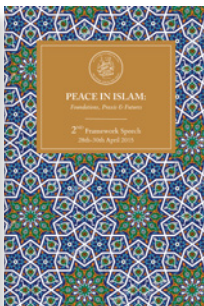
The Culture Of
Terrorism: Tenets &
Treatments
November 2014



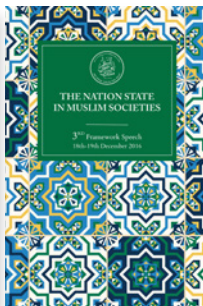
On A New
Alliance Of Values
October 2007



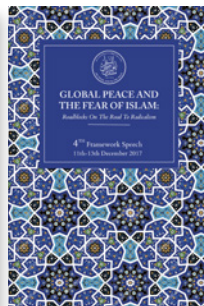
1st Assembly
In Pursuit of Peace
2014



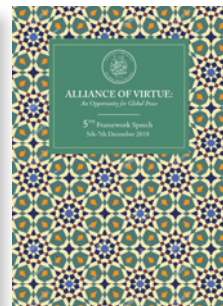
2nd Assembly
Peace In Islam:
Foundations, Praxis
and Futures
2015



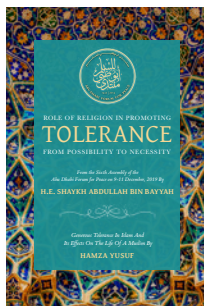
3rd Assembly
The Nation State in
Muslim Societies
2016



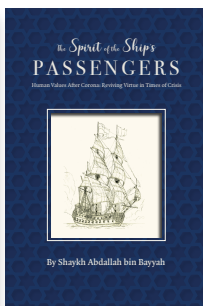
4th Assembly
Global Peace And
The Fear of Islam
2017



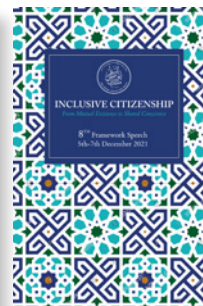
5th Assembly
Alliance of Virtue:
An Opportunity for
Global Peace
2018



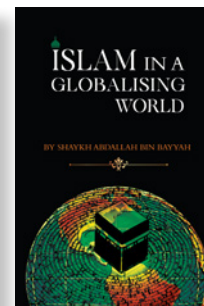
6th Assembly
Role of Religion in
Promoting Tolerance
2019



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

