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INVITATION

A DECLARATION OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS

By Mustafa Cerić

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The tragic events of September 11, 2001 in New York, March 11, 2004 in Madrid and July 7, 2005 in London leave no one indifferent. Of course, one should be aware of other attacks, such as in Riyadh in 1995, Dhahran in 1996, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, Yemen in 2000, Bali in 2002, and Istanbul in 2003. The attacks in New York, Madrid, and London are the most disturbing to Islam-West relations however. Muslims around the world, especially, have been shocked by the fact that the perpetrators of these terrorist attacks claimed to have acted in the name of Islam. No reasonable person can accept that such violence against innocent people be carried out in his/her name. So Muslims across the globe have condemned the terrorist attack in New York, the massacre in Madrid, and the terror in London in the strongest terms possible.

Nevertheless, many people claim that is not enough. Muslims should do more to persuade

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1 This document is a product of five years’ experience of interreligious dialogue. This document is intended to inspire further discussion as to the future status of Islam and Muslims in Europe – the West. It was originally publicized in Zagreb, Croatia, in February 20016. The text of the Declaration of European Muslims is being re-published from Mehmet Akšamija, ed. letter pismo, brief, list, risālah. (Sarajevo: Vesatija Center for Dialogue, 2017), 92-109 with the permission of the author and the editor.
European public opinion that their faith is worthy of respect and that their stay in Europe is welcome.

Leaving aside those in Europe who will remain Islamophobic in all circumstances, Muslims must realize that the general feeling about their faith in Europe nowadays is not favorable. European Muslims must take the issue of violence in the name of Islam very seriously, not because some people hate Islam and Muslims, but because the act of violence, the act of terror, the act of hatred in the name of Islam, is wrong. It is against Muslim beliefs. It is against Muslim interests in the world, especially in Europe.

European Muslims must develop a program for anti-violence. They must fully and unequivocally proclaim to the whole world the non-violent nature of their faith and teach their children that the right way to success in this world, and to salvation in the hereafter, is not through argument of force, but through force of peaceful argument.

European Muslims must come out with a clear declaration to the European Union, to the Muslims who live in Europe, and to the Muslim world as a whole.

The European Union

To the European Union, the Declaration of European Muslims should contain a clear message that European Muslims are fully and unequivocally committed to the rule of law, to the principles of tolerance, to the values of democracy and human rights, and to the belief that each and every human being has the right to five essential values: the value of life, the value of faith, the value of freedom, the value of property, and the value of dignity.

Having introduced their commitments to the European Union, European Muslims have the right to express their expectations in the Declaration, such as:
• the institutionalization of Islam in Europe;
• the economic development of the Muslim community so that it may have full spiritual and cultural freedom and independence;
• the development of Islamic schools capable of educating European-born Muslims for the new challenges of European society;
• a political freedom that will enable European Muslims to have their legitimate representatives in European state parliaments;
• a relaxation of European migration policy, which has become very restrictive towards Muslims recently;
• opening the way for Muslim law to be recognized;
• and the protection of European Muslims from Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the like.

Muslims Who Live in Europe

To Muslims who live in Europe, the aim of the Declaration of European Muslims is equally important for the clear and unequivocal articulation of their Islamic identity and European citizenship. First of all, Muslims who live in Europe must realize that freedom is not a gift. Muslim freedom in Europe must be earned. And the overall status of Muslims must be recognized in spite of xenophobic opposition.

Of course, with freedom comes responsibility. So those who are ready to take responsibility deserve freedom. Despite the fact that European Muslims do not enjoy full freedom from fear and poverty in Europe, it is now more appropriate for them to speak about their responsibilities than about their freedoms because, by assuming their responsibilities in
European economic, political, and cultural life, Muslims who live in Europe will earn their right to freedom. Hence, the freedom of European Muslims will not be somebody’s mercy, but an earned value which can neither be denied nor taken away.

The most important statement that should be contained in the Declaration to Muslims who live in Europe is their obligation to present Islam to the Western audience as a universal Weltanschauung, and not as a tribal, ethnic, or national culture. Muslims cannot expect Europeans to appreciate the universal message of Islam if they are constantly faced with an ethnic or national face of Islam. European Muslims can demonstrate to the European public the universalism of Islam, but they can also show that Europe is a good place for Muslims themselves to discover the power and beauty of the universality of Islam.

Muslims should be honest and admit that it is in Europe that many of them have discovered Islam in a totally different way from in their homeland, because it is here in Europe that they meet their fellow Muslims from other parts of the Muslim world and thus begin to appreciate the diversity of the Islamic experience and culture. Muslims who live in Europe have the right, indeed the duty, to develop their own European culture of Islam, as the result of the interactions between the East and the West. This new renaissance will lead humanity to a better and safer world.

The Muslim World (Ummah)

Although the notion of globalization is somewhat vague, its impact is felt almost everywhere in all fields of life: political, economic, cultural, and religious. The idea of global awareness should not be strange to Muslims. In essence, Islam is a universal faith and a global worldview.

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2 Weltanschauung.
3 The first interaction occurred in Baghdad in the eighth century, and the second in Spain in the twelfth. Now there is occurring the third interaction between East and West (Islam and Europe) via Baghdad once again.
phenomenon. It would have been fully appropriate if the Muslims had come with an agenda of globalization in terms of a global freedom and security, because Muslims are scattered almost everywhere on the globe, and so their freedom and security are of global importance.

However, Muslims have failed to come up with a genuine idea of globalization, and in addition, they are in general unable to live in a global world. Muslims have no global strategy; they have no global mind or mentality; they do not even have a global calendar to save them from an embarrassing confusion about the date of *Ead al-Adha*. Above all, and most unfortunately, they have an image of threatening the freedom and security of the world: they have the stigma of global terrorism.

It is because of the stigma of Islamic terrorism from which Muslims are unjustly suffering today that a Declaration of European Muslims should be worked out and directed to the Muslim world in order to emphasize the importance of a change from a negative global image to a positive global image for Muslims, especially in matters of their faith.

The center of Islam should take the lead in providing global guidance in practical matters of our universal faith, in global issues of our time, and in global dialogue with our neighbors. But before the presentation of the text of the Declaration, some explanations are needed in order for it to be understood how Muslims understand Europe, how they feel about Islam in a European environment, and what stance they take as to their belonging to the Muslim World (*the Ummah*).

I

**EUROPE**

Europe is neither *Dāru-l-islām* (the House of Islam) nor *Dāru-l-harb* (the House of War). Europe is *Dāru-l-sulh* (the House of Agreement or Contract). Europe is not *Dāru-l-islām*
because Muslims do not constitute the majority of the European population, and thus Muslim law cannot be fully implemented. Europe is not *Dāru-l-harb* because some aspects of Muslim law can be implemented.

The land of Europe is *Dāru-l-sulh* because it is possible to live in accordance with Islam in the context of the Social Contract “as the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association.”

It is not difficult to prove that the idea of a contract, social or otherwise, is a legitimate one. We have plenty of doctrinal and historical documents which indicate the concept of *Sulh* (peace, [re]conciliation, settlement, accord, contract) as an opposite to the concept of *Harb* (war, warfare, fight, combat, etc.).

The very idea of Islam is peace with God, with His Messenger, and with the rule of law: “God does call to the House of Peace...” (Qur’an, 10:25). “The servants of al-Rahman are those who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say, ‘Peace’!” (Qur’an, 25:63).

It is in the spirit of these Qur’anic verses that the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) made treaties with the Bedouins at al-Hudaybiyya, with Jews and Christians at al-Madinah, and with the neighboring kings of Abyssinia, Persia, and Byzantium. The rightful Caliphs have faithfully followed the example of the Messenger, and, in turn, they have been followed by good Muslim rulers throughout the history of Islam as well. This historical fact of the Social Contract, which has been initiated by Muslim goodwill towards other nations and religions, has been well

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As we have said, we have no difficulty in proving the validity of the theory of contract because we can safely claim that it is a genuine part of overall Islamic doctrine and history. Our difficulty lies, however, in the lack of a genuine concept of the Social Contract that could be applied in the context of a European environment that would guarantee a decent status for Islam as a way of life, and of Muslims as citizens of Europe.

First, we have to understand Europe as the House of Peace, not the House of War. Second, we have to know what the issues are that should be included in the framework of the Social Contract. And thirdly, we have to set up an organization or institution that can represent both Islam as a world religion and Muslims as good citizens of Europe.

We should say that the Contract is the dictate of reason, whereas the Covenant is the will of the heart/faith. Hence, we define a Muslim as a man with an allegiance to God as an act of the will of his heart/faith; and we define a citizen as a man with a duty to the state as an act of the dictate of his reason.

By the Covenant, man gives his heart to God and receives inner security; by the Contract, he gives his reason to the state and receives social security as an inhabitant of a city or town. A citizen is entitled to the rights and privileges of a free man, he is a member of a state, a native or naturalized person who owes loyalty to a government and is entitled to protection from it of his life, religion, freedom, property and dignity.

Europe, as the House of Contract, opens the way for a sincere dialogue not only with Christians as such, but also with European society as a whole:

“Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and good preaching, and argue with them in the ways that are best. For your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path and who

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receive guidance” (Qur’an, 16:125). This Qur’anic principle assumes that the dialogue among religions and cultures must be contextual, equitable, and meaningful; it must be scholarly, objective, and comprehensive. But to achieve this level of discourse with European society, we must understand its contemporary philosophy, culture, and politics. Its philosophy is based on the logic of rationality and science. Its culture is derived from the history of Christianity. And its politics is conceived of the notion of the survival of the fittest.

Let us be clear here: understanding is not accepting. On the contrary, non-understanding leads to the acceptance of things that should be rejected by the spirit of the covenant as well as to the rejection of things that should be accepted by force of the contract.

Furthermore, the ignorance of the reality of European society in its various dimensions makes us unable to distinguish good from bad, and useful from harmful European products which are available for our use. It seems that Europe has more knowledge about Muslims than willingness to accept them, whereas Muslims have less knowledge about Europe than readiness to accept it. This is the basic difference between the European approach to Islam and the Muslim approach to Europe, i.e., the European lack of will to accept Muslims as they are, and the Muslim lack of knowledge of Europe as it is. Europe is ready to tolerate Islam in its House, but it is not ready yet to accept Muslims in its political, social, and cultural life. On the other hand, Muslims are ready to accept Europe as it is, but are not doing enough to increase their knowledge about the European political, social, and cultural environment, which would change their position in European society.

If we accept the concept of the House of Peace as our concept for Europe in terms of the true Muslim as a good European citizen, then we should know what the issues are, which must concern us to make the concept practical. We should know what the issues are that create
tensions between Muslimness and European citizenship. Are they political or economic, cultural or religious? It is correct to say that the issues are all of these.

Politically, Muslims in Europe must know what their human rights are in terms of the representation of their community. They must insist on the removal of prejudices towards Islam and Muslims that exist in the general European public created by the biased media and supported by some political establishments. Islamophobia is a result of political and cultural intolerance and hatred.

We must teach Europe to accept Muslim values and to appreciate the sweat of Muslim workers and intellectuals in building a prosperous and free Europe. It is not only historically that Europe is indebted to Muslims for its freedom and prosperity, but it is also the contemporary Muslim contribution to its development that gives us the right to say that Europe owes us a lot. Economically, we must demand an equal chance for the economic growth of the Muslim European community.

Of course, economic issues are very much connected with the issue of education, which must be our foremost concern. In a broad sense of the word, education designates the totality of influences that nature or other men are able to exercise either on our intelligence or on our will. It includes all that we ourselves do and all that others do for us. It includes even indirect effects on the character and faculties of men produced by things having quite a different objective: by laws, by forms of government, industrial products, and even by physical phenomena, independent of human will, such as climate, soil and locality.6

This definition of education reminds us of the fact that: first, we must know what those things are that we should do to be able to exercise influence on the intelligence and will of our

children; second, we must be aware of the things that others do to influence the character and faculties of our children; third, we must be familiar with the laws and forms of European governments that indirectly shape the minds of our children; and, fourthly, we must recognize the physical phenomena of Europe so that we may appreciate the economic and cultural needs of the European Muslim community. Before asking others to do their part for us, we must ourselves do our part in education. We must set up a clear and comprehensive educational program that should be based both on the fundamental principles of the spirit of our faith as the act of our will and on our fundamental rights and duties as European citizens. It is exactly in the reconciliation of these two demands that I see the need for a development of the concept of *Dar-l-sulh* (House of the Social Contract) that should be applied in Europe.

As to the religious issues, they are dependent much on the solution of the above-mentioned issues of politics, economics, and culture. Our religion is our way of life. Therefore, the religious issues cannot be left isolated from our life. The building of a mosque in Europe is a religious issue, but it cannot be solved without the political will of the European governments; it cannot be maintained without the economic ability of the Muslim community; and it does not serve the purpose without proper educational facilities.

Muslim affairs in Europe should not be limited to religious issues. They should be extended to social issues as well. Our religion should be treated as being as natural and legal as any other religion in Europe in accordance with the freedom of one’s conscience. Unfortunately, Islam has not been naturalized in Europe yet. It still has the status of a stranger or a special status that is tolerated, but not accepted as an equal representative of the overall European spiritual heritage, despite the fact that it stands today as the second religion to Christianity in many European countries.
European Muslims today are facing great difficulties in preserving their identity because of the lack of will in some European governments to regulate their religious needs and social rights. They are expected to be integrated into European society, very often, to the extent of losing their Muslim identity. Generally, from the European media, one gets the impression that for a Muslim to be a good European citizen, he must deny his Islamic origin, or he will face charges for all that is done by any Muslim at anytime, anywhere in the world, as his own fault.

It is because of this impression that the state of affairs of Muslims in Europe is not only religious, in the sense of an ethical or moral Muslim personality, but in many cases their state of affairs is overwhelmingly political—so much so that they live permanently under the pressure of fear and uncertainty. Therefore, Islam must be depoliticized in the sense of a universal religion that has, as its main goal, to teach its followers good behavior in a global society. This, of course, does not mean that Muslims should not be well informed about the politics of that global society. On the contrary, Muslims should be well equipped with knowledge of global politics in order to be able to save their religion from bad politicization.

Having said that, we have come to the most important issue of Islam in Europe, namely, the issue of representation and institution. First we have to know that, by an approximate estimation, thirty million Muslims live in Europe today. They represent three different groups: 1) indigenous, 2) emigrant, and 3) native. By the indigenous group, we mean those Muslims who have a long historical background in Europe, such as the Muslims of Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, etc.; by the emigrant group, we mean those Muslims who have migrated to Europe, either as students or workers, and have permanently settled, mainly in England, Germany and France; and by the native group, we mean the young generation that has been born in Europe of Muslim emigrant parents. All these groups have one thing in common, viz. Islam. They differ, however,
in their human experience and their life expectation. The indigenous Muslims have on their back a big burden of history, and they expect to be supported in their struggle for their religious and cultural continuity in Europe; the emigrant Muslims are making an effort to establish themselves in Europe, and they expect to overcome the status of a European stranger; and the European-born Muslims are in a state of struggle to preserve their Islamic identity in a challenging European political, economic, and cultural environment, and they expect somebody to tell them how to be proud of their faith and their European birth.

What is to be done so that the common value of Islam can become a common ground of all Muslims in Europe? It is now time that we seriously consider a way of institutionalizing the presence both of Islam as a universal religion and of Muslims as global citizens. It is clear to everyone that a voluntary representation of Islam and Muslims in Europe is as misleading as anything that is against Muslim dignity and European peace. It is not enough that Europe recognizes the presence of Islam in its land. Muslims deserve more than that. They deserve that their presence be legalized in the sense of creating a political and economic climate in which European Muslims can represent themselves through institutions that should have both governmental support and public acceptance. Muslims are very much offended by the insistence of some European media on the presentation of Islam in Europe by the image of Muslim terrorists.

II

ISLAM

There are several reasons why the issue of the status of Islam in Europe is of an utmost importance. The perception that, in its self-understanding, Europe has been a Christian continent is not correct. It is a historical fact that many centuries have witnessed not only Muslim but also
Jewish people who have lived in Europe. Both of them have made significant contributions to European life and culture. However, the penetration of Islam into the Balkans and the Iberian Peninsula has left bitter memories of suffering and hatred. Although they have different histories, both Muslim and Jewish communities have been subjected to discrimination and violent persecution that has lasted right to our times.

Unfortunately, Muslims themselves have not always been able to present their case in a manner that is both understandable and acceptable to the European public. Sometimes, Islam has been presented in such a sophisticated and academically complicated way that the minds of ordinary people can hardly comprehend. And sometimes, Islam has been introduced in such a brutally simplified way that it cannot reach out to the hearts of honest people. The difficulty of a clear comprehension of Islam and the lack of a direction for Muslims living in Europe create an unnecessary misunderstanding and mistrust between Islam and Europe that often leads to a bitter feeling.

Nevertheless, the future of Europe will be one of many faiths, including Islam. Therefore, the sooner we realize the urgent need to overcome the history of enmity, the better for both Islam and Europe. In their thinking, Muslims have to give an adequate place to European history, and Europeans must realize that Islam has its history in Europe and take into account the fact that many European countries have sizeable Muslim populations. This is particularly urgent, as existing prejudices against Islam are continuously nourished by a mix of political events, cultural differences and active ignorance.

In addition to that, we have to know that religion is not just an abstract idea or a simple belief. Religion is one of the very important concrete factors that shape people’s identities as individual persons and as groups. Therefore, it is our duty to find a way to harness the potential
of religions to motivate their believers to strive for peace, justice, and tolerance in everyday life situations.

For a long time now, Islam has been in the focus of both the East\(^7\) and the West.\(^8\) In the East, Islam is a center of attraction, and in the West, it is a center of attention. The East believes that Islam is the solution, whereas the West thinks that Islam is the problem. In the East, people claim to defend Islam against its enemies, whereas in the West, people believe that Islam is threatening their way of life. Hence, Islam has become a magic word of the East in the face of the West; and it has become a big puzzle of the West in the face of the East. It is, indeed, one of the biggest challenges of our times to comprehend the magic word of the East and to appreciate the puzzle faced by the West.

It is not for the first time in history that the West does not comprehend the mystique of the East and, vice versa, that the East does not appreciate the perplexity of the West. For instance, Alexander the Great could have become the future ruler of Asia in the East provided he had been able to untie the Gordian knot through patience, and not by the sword. And the King of Granada in Spain, Hassan bin Ismail, could have built more Alhambras in Europe provided he had appreciated the diversity of European religious and cultural life, as his great predecessors had been doing for centuries before him.

Furthermore, it took a long time for Europe to accept the mind of the great philosopher, Ibn Rushd, known as Averroës, while the book *De l’Esprit des Lois* (The Spirit of the Laws) of Montesquieu took a long time to be seriously studied in the East. These historical instances clearly illustrate the fact that the East and the West have always been in a process of dialectical interaction which often helped them to change the path of history towards

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\(^7\) By the East we mean regions where the faith and culture of Islam predominate, especially the Middle East, where most of the Muslim countries are located.

\(^8\) And the West here means regions lying to the west, especially the countries of Europe and America.
better conditions for humanity.

The first historic interaction between the East and the West took place in Baghdad, and the second in Andalusia. In Baghdad, the Muslim Caliph al-Ma’mūn brought the minds of the East and the West to work out the translation of human wisdom at the time. In Andalusia, Western intellectuals visited Muslim universities to study humanities, the result of which was European humanism and renaissance. I believe that we are now at the threshold of a third historic interaction between the East and the West, which again has to do with the phenomenon of Baghdad.

Of course, it has not always been easy for the West to understand the spirit of the East. Nor for the East to accept the mind of the West, but in the end, the West had no choice but to adopt the faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon all of them), which came from the East. In addition, the East could not avoid the path from Might to Right, from Mythology to Science, from Slavery to Freedom, and from the Theory of State to the Legitimacy of State, which came from the West.

However, the dialectical tensions between East and the West nowadays are quite different from previous historical instances. Now, the West is not what it used to be—the non-communist countries of Europe and America—and the East is no longer the communist countries of the Soviet Union. Now, the West tends to perceive itself as the non-Islamic countries of Europe and America, and the East is somehow defined as the Muslim countries of the Middle East, or non-Christian countries with non-Western values. The best example to that effect is the case of Turkey, which is a non-Christian country, and it is therefore not part of the West.

In addition, there is a perception in the minds of a number of Western intellectuals that Islam is today what communism was yesterday to the West: the big obstacle, nay, the real
threat to the way of Western life and civilization. Some people in the West believe that the
dialogue between Islam and the West is a waste of time, and the only way for the West to deal
with Islam and Muslims is therefore the argument of force, not the force of argument.

On the other hand, there are people in the East who believe that the West is an old enemy
of Islam, and so Muslims should fight the West. They believe that there cannot be any dialogue
between Islam and the West. According to their logic, there can be only the dialectical
opposition between the two.

Our difficulty in facing the above views lies in the fact that those who promote the idea of
religious and cultural conflict take Islam as their starting point for their idea of the Clash of
Civilizations. They forget, however, that Islam is not communism and that the Muslim world is
not the Soviet Union.

Islam is a way of life that is compatible with the way of common reason and human
decency both in the West and in the East. In addition, the Muslim world is a great diversity of
nations and cultures united by the idea of human goodwill in both the East and the West. On the
basis of what has been said so far, one tends to believe that Islam is a victim both of the East and
of the West. Why is it so?

Firstly, because the East is too weak to live up to Islamic ideals such as freedom, democracy
and human rights; and the West is too arrogant to recognize the Islamic sincerity in morality.
Secondly, Islam is a victim of both the East and the West because the East is too narrow-minded
to allow the universal spirit of Islam to prevail over the tribal mentality; and the West is too
oxenophobic to recognize the fact that Islam is its neighbor to stay.

Unfortunately, the extreme views of some people, in both the East and the West, reduce
Islam to their liking and thus suffocate both Islam as a faith of freedom of good choice (Arabic
ikhtijar) as opposed to freedom of evil choice, and Muslims as freedom-loving people. They
forget, however, that Islam is not reducible to any particular race, color, or nationality and that
Muslims are eligible to have God-given freedom, decent democracy, and legitimate human
rights. Muslim people should not be treated as immature children who cannot bear the
responsibility of freedom, the challenge of democracy and the legitimacy of human rights.

No, it is not true. Islam has never been a reason for the suspension of freedom. On the
contrary, Islam has taught humanity that there shall be no compulsion in religion. Lâ ikrâhe fî el-
dîn there shall be freedom in religion because a lie cannot be imposed and the truth needs no
force. So the question is now: who is imposing the lie and who needs force for the truth?
Obviously, those who believe that ‘might makes right’ tend to impose the lie, and those who
think that they have the right to play the role of God tend to enforce only their truth.

Once again, Islam is used and misused both by the East and by the West. Why? Firstly,
because the East claims to defend Islam, but in fact, the East uses (or misuses) Islam to cover up
its own shortcomings. Thus, the bitter truth is that Islam is defending Muslims more than
Muslims are defending Islam. As for the West, it is also using (or misusing) Islam to show the
western audience that an enemy has been found and that the world should trust western heroes
who are in search of weapons of mass destruction.

And, secondly, Islam is used and misused by both the East and the West in order to
demonstrate that Islam, as a way of life for more than one billion Muslims around the world, is
an obstacle on the way to a better relationship between the East and West. The people in the East
who believe that there should be no dialogue with the West say that the West is a devil:
therefore, those who live in the West are doomed to go to Hell. And, to prove that, they use—
indeed, they misuse—the name of Islam.
Similarly, some people in the West believe that Islam, as an idea that came from the Orient, is not acceptable to the Occident simply because it is an oriental idea. They do not want to know, however, that thanks to the very idea of Islam, their own cultural heritage from Greece was saved, and their own religion was strengthened, by the Islamic confirmation of the validity of divinely inspired books such as the *Tawrat* (Torah) and the *Injil* (Gospel). So, the people in the West who have a hard time curing themselves of the disease of xenophobia use—indeed, misuse—Islam to promote Islamophobia in the West.

We are, indeed, in desperate need, as never before, to say that Islam is beyond the East and the West. Why? Firstly, because Islam is both faith and religion, culture and politics, people and land, East and West. This dual meaning is inseparable from the full meaning of Islam because Islam is a deep faith of the individual heart and a recognizable religion of the collective conscience; it is a unique culture of the world and a real politics of the globe; it is a large number of people around the world and a vast land in the heart of the planet; Islam is an inerasable sample of the East and an inevitable presence in the West. Secondly, Islam is beyond the East and the West because of the Qur’anic verse that says:

You should know by now that it is not the Right Way only to face your faces towards East and West. But the Right Way is for you to have trust in God, and in the Day of accountability, and in Angels, and in the Book, and in God’s Messengers. It is the Right Way also that you spend your wealth on your kin in need, on orphans, on the needy, on the wayfarer, on those who ask, and for the freedom of slaves. Also, the Right Way is to hold fast to prayer, to observe prescribed charity, to honor the contracts which you have made, to be firm and patient in hardship, and to overcome times of fear. Such people, says the Qur’an, are on the Right Way to the truth, and they are close to God (Qur’an, II, 177).

Thirdly, Islam is beyond the East and the West because Jews, Christians, and Muslims share a belief in the One God, who created us all from a single soul, then scattered us like seeds into countless human beings; they share the same father, Adam, and the same mother, Eve; they
share the air they breathe and the rise of the sun they see every day; they share Abraham’s faith and Noah’s Ark for salvation; they share a love of the Virgin Maryam (Mary) and a respect for her son, Isa (Jesus); they share true stories about Moses and his people, divinely guided around the Sinai desert; they share the clear word of the Holy Qur’an and the exemplary life of the Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him); and they have no choice but to accept the Ethics of Sharing as the right way towards a better future for all. Based on what has been said, it is obvious that Islam will stay beyond the East and the West. The East will continue to claim the ideals, and the West will face the realities of its relationship to Islam and Muslims. It is in the context of these ideals and realities of Islam that European Muslims should seek their place to stay in Europe.

While Islam is beyond the East and the West, Muslims are not. They are neither beyond nor between the East and the West any more. They are now in the midst of all of this and all of that. Of course, European Muslims have the right to hold fast to the ideals of the East, but they have an obligation to face the realities of the West as well.

It is not only that the realities of the West are merciless, but also that the ideals of the East are no longer the same. In fact, European Muslims are now in a position to articulate some ideals of the East, which one day might become realities both of the East and of the West. This is, indeed, the most challenging mission for today’s Muslims: to be a vanguard in promoting good and preventing evil. This is also the right way for the Ummah to regain dignity at a time of despair. Here is the power of the moral teaching of Islam—in its broad moral view, which comes from the idea of promoting good and preventing evil, an idea from which may be derived the following moral imperatives:
First: Read and Learn!

“Read and learn in the name of God who has created.” (Qur’an, 96:1).

This means, then, that the revelation of the Qur’an did not begin with the imperative of faith, but with the imperative of knowledge. God Almighty did not ask Muhammad (peace be upon him) to believe; He asked him to read and learn what and how to believe. This is so because man is born with faith. There is no need, therefore, to ask man to believe if that is already in his soul. But there is a need to remind man that he ought to read and learn what is in his soul. So man needs knowledge with faith as well as faith with knowledge. And here is where both the East and the West need Islam to teach them: the East to practice knowledge, and the West to appreciate faith.

Second: Believe and work hard

“Those who believe and work hard deserve God’s forgiveness and a great reward” (Qur’an 5:9).

Man lives neither in a pure spiritual world without matter, nor in a pure material world without spirit. The secret of success is that man unites in himself these two values: his spirit and his body. In other words, the purpose of man’s life is in the activity of his spirit, and that is his faith, and in the activity of his body, and that is his hard work. Muslims will regain their dignity if they learn how to make a balance between these two forces of progress: the faith of heart and the work of hand.

At the moment, there is a big discrepancy between the Muslim heart and the Muslim hand; there is a big gap between Muslim faith and Muslim work. There is no Muslim dignity unless this gap is overcome in such a way that the faith of heart and the power of mind work together.
Third: Be pious and respect your parents

“God Almighty has prescribed that you worship none except Him and that you do good to your parents...” (Qur’an 17:23).

This Qur’anic emphasis on the relationship between the worship of God and the respect for parents has a strong message for both the East and the West. The message to the East is not to concede to the pressure to give up on family values; and the message to the West is to stop the hazardous game with the future of humanity. The institution of family tradition has no alternative. The issue of family values is not only a moral demand of human society, but also an existential condition of humanity. The attempt to break the common law of family life is the equal of an attempt to break the common law of the nature of the sunrise in the East.

Fourth: Be honest and fight for your rights

“Labor on the way of God courageously and honestly...” (Qur’an 22:78).

Success here and salvation in the hereafter do not come by themselves. One should go after his/her success. One should fight for his/her rights here and now. One should also work for salvation in the hereafter; one should deserve God’s mercy. The difference between the East and the West is that the East believes more in God’s mercy than in hard work, whereas the West relies more on hard work than on the mercy of God.

Fifth: Be aware of tomorrow

“Let everyone, male and female, see what he/she is doing for tomorrow...” (Qur’an 59:18).

In this verse of the Holy Qur’an, there is clear proof that we have the right, nay the
obligation, to plan our future and to believe that our future may be better than our past. It is really peculiar how some have come to the idea that the Muslim future is hopeless, and so hope lies only in the Muslim past as a way of life and a goal of history. This idea has no foundation in Islam. It is not only that God teaches the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that “your future will be better than your past” (Qur'an, 93:4), but also that common reason tells us that we cannot change our past, but we can, with God’s help, shape our future.

So we are not responsible for past Muslim history, but we are responsible for future Muslim history. That nation has been and gone. What awaits them is what they deserved, and what awaits you is what you have deserved (Qur'an 2:141). So Muslims should not be afraid to think about their future, in the same way as they should not be possessed by their past. Muslims have a future because they have faith in God. And they have faith in God because they believe that truth and justice will prevail.

III

THE UMMAH (THE MUSLIM WORLD)

The *Ummah* is the universal Muslim Community, tied with the bond of faith in the One God and the last prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims believe that the Ummah is a legitimate heir of the successive revelations of God from Adam through Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus to Muhammad (peace be upon all of them). Islam is an inclusive religion by the fact that it recognizes the existence of other religions. It is, therefore, an Islamic duty upon each and every Muslim male and female to promote mutual respect among all faiths. Therefore, by its nature, Islam is a global religion.

Although the notion of globalization is somewhat vague, its impact is felt almost
everywhere in all fields of life: political, economic, cultural, and religious. To Muslims, the idea of a global awareness should not be a strange thing. In its essence, Islam is a universal faith and a global phenomenon. It would have been fully appropriate if Muslims had come with an agenda of globalization in terms of global freedom and security, because Muslims are scattered almost everywhere on the globe, and so their freedom and security are of global importance.

However, it is not only that Muslims have failed to come with a genuine idea of globalization, but they are, generally speaking, failing now to live in a global world. Muslims have no global strategy; they have no global mind and head; they have no global calendar to save them from the embarrassment of confusion about the date of *Eid al-Adha*. Unfortunately, they have the image of threatening the freedom and security of the world: they have the stigma of global terrorism.

It is because of these images and stigmas from which Muslims are unjustly suffering today that a Declaration of European Muslims should be worked out for the Muslim World in order to emphasize the importance of the need for a change from a bad global image to a good global image for Muslims, especially in matters of their faith.

The center of Islam should take the lead in providing global guidance in practical matters of our universal faith, in global issues of our time, and in global dialogue with our neighborhood.

As a Muslim of European origin and as a European of Muslim faith I expect my fellow Muslims, wherever they may be, to prove to the world that Islam is both sincere faith and rightful religion; that it is both attractive culture and peaceful politics; that it is both good people and rich land; and that Islam is both the wise man of the East and the rational man of the West.