

Bonner Querschnitte

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Schirmmacher calls upon top religious leaders worldwide to sign the UNHCHR's "Beirut Declaration on 'Faith for Rights' (F4R)"

(Bonn, 13.10.2017) The Associate Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, being among other things responsible for interreligious dialogue of this network of 600 million Protestants, calls upon top religious leaders worldwide to sign the OHCHR's "Beirut Declaration on 'Faith for Rights' (F4R)" and to help to fulfill UN's Rabat Plan of Action. The two documents are available in English, French and Arabic under <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx>.

Religious leaders, who want to back the declaration, can inform Michael Wiener of OHCHR under faith4rights@ohchr.org.

The conference, at Beirut's Lancaster Plaza, that finalized the two documents, was attended by a number of high ranking religious, diplomatic and civil society figures and was headed by OHCHR's regional representative in Beirut Abdel Salam Sidahmed.

The conference launched the Beirut Declaration that follows in the footsteps of the 2012 Rabat Plan of Action in Morocco to act as a blueprint for, and endorsement of, coexistence and pluralism.

The declaration lays out three core responsibilities of religious leaders, which are: refraining from using messages of intolerance that may incite violence, hostility or discrimination; speaking out firmly and promptly against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and instances of hate speech; being clear that violence can never be tolerated as a response to incitement to hatred.



Schirmmacher (in purple shirt) speaking at the press release in Beirut presenting the Beirut declaration. Second from left: UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Ahmed Shaheed (Maldives). Third from left: Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman (Bahrain). Left side of Schirmmacher: Ibrahim Salama, chief of the UN Human Rights Treaties Branch. Right side of Schirmmacher: Abdel Salam Sidahmed, OHCHR regional representative. © BQ / Warnecke



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www.thomasschirmmacher.net

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www.hfe.org

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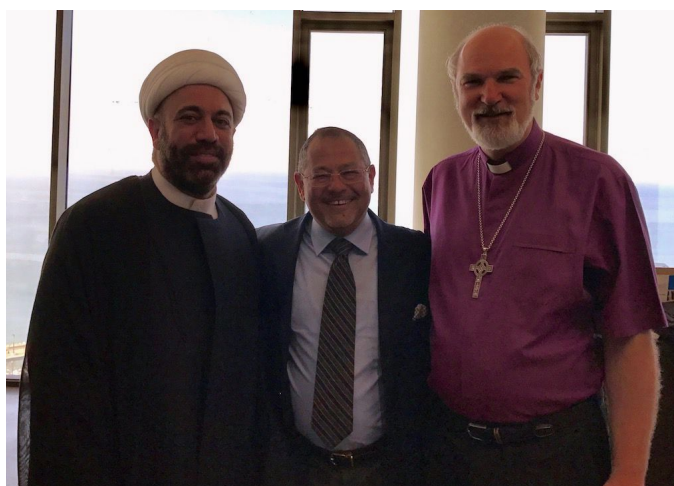
Press release by OHCHR: Beirut Declaration enhances role of religions in promoting human rights

An article from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights

A “Faith for Rights” initiative launched at a recent gathering of faith-based and civil society actors from around the world aims to unite religious communities of various faiths to counter discrimination and religious-based violence through a shared objective to promote human rights and to uphold the freedom of religion or belief.

“Our objective is to foster the development of peaceful societies, where diversity is not just tolerated but fully respected and celebrated,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a video message to participants at the two-day meeting hosted by the UN Human Rights Office in Beirut. “Religious leaders, with their considerable influence on the hearts and minds of millions of people, are potentially very important human rights actors,” said Mr. Zeid.

Building on the 2012 Rabat Plan of Action that laid out religious leaders’ core responsibilities in countering incitement to hatred, the Beirut Declaration ([pdf](#)) expands those responsibilities to the full spectrum of human rights. It calls on believers of all faiths to join hands and hearts in articulating ways in which they can stand together in defending fundamental rights against discrimination and violence.



From left to right: Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman (Bahrain), Ibrahim Salama, chief of the UN Human Rights Treaties Branch of OHCHR, Bishop Thomas Schirrmacher (WEA) © BQ / Warnecke

Sheikh Maytham Al Salman, a religious leader and rights defender from Bahrain, urged religious leaders and faith-based organizations to assume leading roles in countering hate campaigns targeting particular religious groups. “Religious hostility has risen to alarming stages,” he said.

Linked to the Beirut Declaration are 18 Faith for Rights commitments ([pdf](#)) to uphold human rights, including pledges to avoid invoking “State religion” in order to justify discrimination against any individual or group, to ensure gender equality and minority rights, to refrain from oppressing critical voices and to engage with children and youth.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief Ahmed Shaheed said he was concerned about the explicit targeting of youth “by those who would prey on young minds.” He called on religious leaders to pay particular attention to the vulnerability of young people subjected to hate speech.

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“Youths look up to religious leaders for guidance, mentoring, support and advice. Therefore there is a need to engage with those communities at a very early age and provide a mind-set that is tolerant, broad-minded and has respect for others,” said Mr. Shaheed. “It is important to go beyond the human rights council chamber out into the field and to engage people and ensure we develop solidarity and cross-community collaboration to mobilize people to support the freedom of religion or belief.”

Ibrahim Salama, chief of the UN Human Rights Treaties Branch, hailed the Beirut Declaration as a rights-based call to people of all faiths around the world to promote peaceful societies based on mutual respect.

“Rather than focusing on theological and doctrinal divides, the Beirut Declaration favours the identification of common ground among all religions and beliefs to uphold the dignity and worth of all human beings,” he said.

Downloads and Links:

- [Photo 1](#): Schirmmacher (in purple shirt) speaking at the press release in Beirut presenting the Beirut declaration. Second from left: UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Ahmed Shaheed (Maldives). Third from left: Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman (Bahrain). Left side of Schirmmacher: Ibrahim Salama, chief of the UN Human Rights Treaties Branch. Right side of Schirmmacher: Abdel Salam Sidahmed, OHCHR regional representative. © BQ / Warnecke
- [Photo 2](#) (from left to right): Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman (Bahrain), Ibrahim Salama, chief of the UN Human Rights Treaties Branch of OHCHR, Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher (WEA) © BQ / Warnecke
- [Photo 3](#) and [Photo 4](#): Some of the delegates to the OHCHR symposium in Beirut © BQ / Warnecke
- Beirut Declaration on “Faith for Rights” (F4R): <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/21451/BeirutDeclarationonFaithforRights.pdf>
- Beirut Declaration enhances role of religions in promoting human rights: <http://cpnn-world.org/new/?p=9477>

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