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**Message to the**

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*Universality and Culture: The Paths of Peace*  
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I would like to draw attention to the fact that we are talking not of a path *to* peace but a path *of* peace; my first suggestion for thinking beyond our tendencies to crisis and violence is that peace is not a place which we can reach but is itself the path, representing a human movement that is peacefulness.

Peacefulness in turn is not the mere absence of conflict; it is the active opposite of war. It is the taking up of responsibilities by public figures, military, rulers and citizens alike, including responsibilities for others' actions and reactions. It depends upon cooperation and multilateralism — the ability to work with several points of view, not just one. The 'third world', for example, is my first world. We need to walk a little in each other's shoes upon the path of peace.

It is my belief, expressed many times over the years, that we cannot achieve stable and prosperous societies by addressing the 'hard security' issues of politics and economics alone. The social aspect demands careful and thorough attention to the cultural background and specifics which constitute 'soft security' — a sense of belonging, participation, meaningfulness and identity. Such culture must of course be inclusive rather than exclusive and pluralist rather than fanatically monopolist.

One thing we cannot do is try and simplify the complex – and crazy – minds of what are essentially cultist movements with political motives. Muslims have now to wake up to the enemy within and expose these evil fanatics for what they are. But the supposed

Muslim terrorist threat should not blind us to the wider global context of anti-peaceful agenda. Looked at in context, terrorist organisations calling themselves ‘Islamic’ are part of a much broader picture of extremists dedicated to anti-peacefulness — among Arabs, Anglo-Saxons, Jews, Christians, Muslims, in poor societies and in affluent societies. Their comparative support in poor and chaotic societies is largely explained by the fact that such extremist groups promise change, which government does not provide, from an unendurable situation of humiliation and, often, borderline starvation; and they possess some technological and educational superiority over the majority of the populace.

To address the problem of terrorism we must look to our strengths, not the least of which is our Mediterranean identity that has sustained so much cooperative and creative exchange over the centuries, from Arabia to al-Andalus. Our *terra media* is the sea that links us together; it is a powerful symbol of freedom and possibility. The eighteenth Surah of the Qur’ân records the tale of Moses and his servant Joshua bin Nûn, who, at the ‘place where the seas meet’, encountered a strange man of God identified by later Muslim commentators as al-Khader (‘the Green One’). This mysterious figure, even wiser than Moses, undertakes to enlighten the famous prophet on their travels and, through a series of bizarre actions, teaches Moses concerning the nature of divine wisdom. The ‘place where the seas meet’ (*majma al-bahrein*) is often interpreted as the place between the Persian and the Mediterranean seas. It may even signify the meeting of al-Khader and Moses themselves, whom the late-fourteenth-century commentator al-Damîrî described as two seas of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

I have mentioned that the path of peace is formed by the movement of peaceful people. Perhaps it is a path between the seas of wisdom — our common ground, shaped by our different traditions.

Dialogue between those traditions demystifies each other's hopes and values, replacing received notions with a deeper understanding. It renews connections with common heritage, the heritage of

<sup>1</sup> With reference to the Muslim commentaries on Surah 18, I draw upon the well-known article by A. J. Wensinck in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. ‘al-Khadir’.

Andalus and Sepharad, the heritage of synergy and symbiosis that has always brought out the best in Muslims and Europeans. By taking part in this process, Europeans and Muslims set a positive example. They make a strong statement about the importance of tolerance, moderation and mutual accommodation. They provide an alternative to exclusionary systems of thought, and in particular to the universal phenomenon of religious militancy and the politics of extremism.

The historical relationship between Europe and the Muslim world may have ranged from cordial to brutal; but it has always been a significant relationship, not least in shaping each other's identities. We all notionally endorse the Declaration of Human Rights, although we are not good at implementing it. I suggest that, to work, it needs to be accompanied by a Declaration of Human Responsibilities as formulated by Hans Küng. There are crimes of inactivity as well as crimes of activity. Human rights do not exist *de facto* in a vacuum; they must be upheld. For a new world order, we need a new world attitude which stresses that people who fail to uphold human rights are not guilty of mere inaction but of active irresponsibility which might also be termed the sin of omission.

I will cite three examples relevant to us today. The first is from the Israeli writer Shulamit Aloni, in *Ha'aretz* of March 9, 2003. Ms Aloni's article is entitled 'Murder of a population under cover of righteousness'. She comments on current Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories as follows: 'Dr. Ya'akov Lazovik writes (in 'Academic Genocide', *Ha'aretz*, 4 March) that in the State of Israel it is impossible that the regime and the nation will plan and commit a genocide ... As we know, there is no single fixed method for murder and not even for genocide. The author Y. L. Peretz wrote about "the righteous cat" who does not spill blood, but only suffocates.'

In a broader war context, the researcher Claudia Card has taken up the issue of mass rape as a method of 'ethnic cleansing': "There is more than one way to commit genocide. One way is mass murder ... Another is to destroy a group's identity by decimating cultural and social bonds. Martial rape does both. Many women and girls are killed when rapists are finished with them. If survivors become pregnant or are known to be rape survivors, cultural, political, and

national unity may be thrown into chaos. These have been among the apparently intended purposes of the mass rapes of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Rwandan women by Hutu soldiers (Lorch 1995), of Vietnamese women by U.S. GI's, of the systematic rapes of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971, and earlier of Native American women by British soldiers." (Card, Claudia. 'Rape as a Weapon of War.' *Hypatia* 11.4 (1996), 5-18.).

More recently, Dr Ian Roberts in London has called for a more complete definition of 'biological warfare' as any activity which encourages disease and bad health to flourish unchecked when methods for promoting better health already exist. As he explains, biological warfare is defined in the developed world according to ideas of what the developed world cannot deal with; thus, cholera, dysentery, diphtheria, micro-nutrient deficiencies and other diseases do not constitute a war threat. However, in a case such as Baghdad at the present time, where electricity and water have not been restored and the hospitals have been allowed to be largely destroyed, such 'controllable' diseases can rampage unchecked and the lack itself of any check constitutes a method of damaging and demoralising the population.

I would like to applaud the UN's Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the Right to Food for his comments. "Globalisation is a daily terror for three-quarters of mankind," he said. "Thanks to cyberspace and the free market those in power have enormous vitality. Never has the massacre of mankind taken place so quickly: every day 100,000 people die of hunger. And this on an affluent planet."

We might note that 1.3 billion people live on less than a dollar a day (which incidentally is less than the sum allotted — \$2.20 — to each cow/head of cattle in the EU).

So the cultural dimension of peace is extremely important in that we need a culture of peaceful activity. But there are even more immediate issues of basic health and safety to be addressed in many parts of the world; and, in some ways, the cultural changes need to occur in those other parts of the world which might help and are not doing so, whether because of the bottom line, or because of political expediency, or because of sheer indifference. The poor who are

getting poorer may need aid; but it seems that, in many cases, the rich who are getting richer need education towards a culture of altruism which is not patronage and not condescension but the pure willingness to help.

I call again, in the interests of a new humanitarian order, for the recognition and practice of human responsibilities alongside human rights; I call for the restoration of the moral status of religious and humanist thought and the promotion of common values between cultures and traditions. Let us recall that all three of the major monotheistic religions emphasise the role of free will in human affairs and the importance of making the correct choice. The choice not to kill directly but rather to prevent treatment, to prevent aid, to prevent help from arriving — to allow starvation, rape or disease to take their deadly course among a civilian population — must constitute as grave and intentional a war crime as the choice to drop bombs.

May I repeat, then, that peace is not the absence of war. Peacefulness is not a nothing which happens but a something which must be created. It derives from the teaching and taking of responsibilities. Without education for ethics, legislation for justice and post-war special processes, we may all perish from inaction.

In my region, we need to move beyond being a region only in name to being a cooperative and interactive region capable of helping its own. We need reconciliation committees for our damaged peoples — for every person has the potential to become a weapon of mass destruction. We need conflict resolution centres and a regular regional meeting of ministers towards peaceful initiatives and economic cooperation across borders on issues such as water and energy. We need the leaders of the faiths to recognise that hate-speech, incitement to violence, and even indifference to the plight of other human beings are unacceptable to any true adherent of our various religions.

All our religions, and secular humanism too, call for action, not inaction, in the face of oppression, tyranny, violence, and suffering. All our cultures treasure art, music, dance, the power of creativity and the values of justice, mercy, wisdom, courage and benevolence.

We have these things in common. We cannot allow crimes of omission to escape through loopholes of international law and international apathy to decimate our cultures until they are no longer capable of considering values because they are too busy considering how at all costs to avoid their bodily demise.