



## **REFLECTIONS ON THE TRAGEDY IN BALI**

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Sympathy, outrage, sadness, anger and contemplation. The horrific attacks in Bali have brought back the same, contradictory, feelings that were felt by nearly all of us last year following September 11, 2001. As moderator of World Conference for Religions and Peace (WCRP), my heart goes out to the families and loved ones of those who died in this latest affront to our common humanity. Whilst I feel anger towards the perpetrators of this latest carnage, I am comforted by the knowledge that as one human family these men of evil are making the rest of us more aware of our interconnectedness as a human family, and are hardening our resolve against those who would dare perpetrate such acts against ordinary civilians. The meaningful work of WCRP is testament, therefore, to this resolve, and we will continue, as partners not only in spirituality but also in humanity, to emphasize our commitment to a better future for all.

Terrorism is not islamocentric. It is islamophobic. Whoever is responsible for this crime against humanity must know that they cannot hide behind the religion of a fifth of humankind. Muslims have now to wake up to the enemy within and expose these evil fanatics for what they are. Those who commit such atrocities and claim to do so in the name of any religion shame us, and shame our heritage. Such people do nothing for religion. They have, on the contrary, taken up arms against true people of faith.

Indonesia's 220 million people are not only Muslim, they represent a unique ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity. Indonesian Islam has a history of tolerance, inclusiveness and liberality that cannot be wiped away by the actions of a few extremists. As a Muslim, I believe God does not order men to commit evil deeds. As a Muslim, I believe there is no compulsion in religion. As moderator of WCRP, I believe that what I share with people of all other faiths is more precious and meaningful than the narrow interpretations of extremists with a political agenda.

Terrorism is thus the maintenance of narrow, often political, ideologies that are increasingly bereft of their humanity. Rigid and puritanical interpretations of scripture that are merely dry, legalistic theories of a dogmatic ideal can only be imposed as they have no natural affinity with the fluid and progressive spiritual faith of ordinary believers. It may be that such ideologies are ONLY capable of finding expression in the actions of extremists, for where else can they be understood?

We cannot allow barbaric acts of terrorism to hinder our continuing search for commonality through a multilogue of universal values, establishing a code of ethical conduct, and achieving the security that safeguards human dignity and enables the fulfilment of human needs through solidarity, ridding society of its erroneous need for individuals who seek to terrorise us. Let Bali return to paradise, and let this be the last indignity.

Jordan Times, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2002.