



R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities (ISORA):

Religion's Role in Addressing Middle East Violence and Threats to a Rules-based International Order

Analysis and Call to Action

1. Whereas on 27 November 2023 faith leaders from around the world gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia for the R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities (ISORA), to consider “Religion’s Role in Addressing Middle East Violence & Threats to a Rules-based International Order”;
2. Whereas His Excellency Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia, officially opened the ISORA Summit and delivered an address in which he thanked “all R20 ISORA delegates for actively working with Indonesia to help bridge differences and uphold international peace and security. For it is unconscionable that in today’s hyper-modern world, civilians, women, and children are openly massacred, and wars continue to rage unchecked”;
3. Whereas religion is not only about true and false gods or beliefs, but also moral and spiritual insights that drive us to realize a better future for all humanity;
4. Whereas in the past religions often functioned — or were made to function — as a basis for consolidating distinct identity groups within a context of violent “tribal” competition, which was once integral to the construct of human societies, and civilizations, worldwide;
5. Whereas accelerating globalization and developments in military technology have made violent competition between identity groups intolerable, due to the difficulty of containing such conflicts and limiting the carnage unleashed by weapons of mass destruction;
6. Whereas globalization renders it impossible for identity-based communities to isolate themselves from the rest of humanity;
7. Whereas religious teachings that affirm the necessity to defend certain identity groups (in-groups) while excluding others are no longer relevant, and may indeed threaten the security and wellbeing of global civilization as a whole;
8. Whereas the widespread tendency in modern societies for many to distance themselves from religion and regard it as no longer relevant is often linked to the rejection of religious teachings that encourage groups to consolidate on the basis of a shared, exclusive identity;

9. Whereas religious authorities are, therefore, morally obliged to “universalize” the ethical and humanitarian dimensions of their religious teachings, in order to ensure that religions remain relevant within the context of contemporary reality, and so that religious appeals may be universally accepted, or at least tolerated;
10. Whereas awareness of the urgent need to develop a world order capable of neutralizing conflict and ensuring international peace and security emerged among world leaders in the wake of the First World War; and was partially realized after WWII in the form of the international consensus represented by the UN Charter, the establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948;
11. Whereas this post-war international consensus embodies and reflects — and even provides a political structure for realizing — the most fundamental and noble values promoted by all religions, including *rahmah* (love and compassion), justice, and equality;
12. Whereas it is, therefore, eminently feasible for religions to acknowledge the principles of this international consensus and incorporate these principles within their respective teachings and worldviews;
13. Whereas there is an urgent need to universalize religions’ ethical and humanitarian teachings — especially those regarding the humane treatment of one’s fellow believers — and affirm that all human beings, without exception, are entitled to benefit from the application of these teachings, including love, compassion, equality, and justice;
14. Whereas accomplishing this will entail identifying shared values and establishing reciprocity among the world’s diverse peoples, cultures, and religions, by treating one another in accordance with the highest moral standards embraced by our respective traditions;
15. Whereas religious authorities have a moral and spiritual responsibility to ensure that their respective faiths serve as vehicles of mutual understanding and reconciliation rather than perpetuate the primordial cycle of identity-based hatred, tyranny, and violence;
16. Whereas the international consensus embodied within the UN Charter, United Nations Organization, and Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides the only currently existing and viable framework for resolving identity-based conflicts — including those that occur between religions, and violence perpetrated in the name of religion;
17. Whereas the failure of global actors to respect and uphold the post-WWII international consensus as embodied in the UN and UDHR framework is a primary cause of instability and conflict worldwide;
18. Whereas religious authorities — acting in service to God and humanity — should persistently and decisively work together to validate, preserve, and strengthen the post-war international consensus and demand consistency from all parties in its application;

19. Whereas it is not sufficient for these efforts to be confined to traditional religious appeals alone; they must be complemented by a deliberate, long-term strategy to mobilize the collective power of religion — including the support of people from all faiths — in a joint movement to attain this noble objective;
20. THEREFORE, we urge religious authorities of every faith and nation to marshal the power and influence of their respective communities to impact decision-making circles; halt armed conflicts raging in the Middle East, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions of the world; develop effective mechanisms for dialogue and negotiation that may lead towards the peaceful resolution of such conflicts; and join Nahdlatul Ulama as well as the G20 Religion Forum (R20) in expanding and strengthening the global Movement for Shared Civilizational Values.

Jakarta, 27 November 2023