



“Islam has great respect for other monotheistic religions, especially Christianity and Judaism...”

Dr. Radwan Masmoudi

It is an understatement to say that relations between the members of the three major Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, are very tense these days. But it is important to remember that this has not always been the case. It is important to put things in perspective. There is ample historical evidence that Islam, Christianity and Judaism can and have lived and prospered together in peace and harmony for many centuries.

The best example is of Muslim Spain, in the region of *Andalucía*. For a little over seven hundred years, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived and prospered together and developed one of the best civilizations that mankind has ever known. *Andalucía* also highlights the important fact that Islam has great respect for other monotheistic religions, especially Christianity and Judaism, whose followers are called “people of the book.”

The prophets Jesus and Moses are highly regarded in the Qur’an as two of the most important prophets or messengers of God, who deserve equal treatment and equal respect as Prophet Mohammed. As Muslims we are taught that all prophets are equal and have brought the same message from God.

You know about the crusades, a sad point in the history of humanity, when European Christians took over Jerusalem and there were rivers of blood flowing in the streets. But when Muslims took the city back this never happened; they did not kill innocent Christians or Jews in retaliation.

But if Islam had such a beautiful history and tradition of pluralism and tolerance, then why, you must ask, does it have such a terrible situation of intolerance, oppression and violence in the present. Why do we have Muslims killing innocent Jews, innocent Christians and even innocent Muslims in the name of Islam? The answers lie in politics and not in theology. The issue is not about religion, it is about policies and political disputes.

Muslims perceive themselves as being under siege not only by Israel and the United States, but by their own governments, that they see as corrupt, oppressive and imposed on them by the West and by colonial powers. In order to improve relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world, and between Muslims and followers of Jesus and followers of Prophet Moses, we must address these political and economic problems that lie at the root of the rising phenomena of extremism and violence. The only solution is to help establish democratic regimes that are accountable to – and representative of – their own people.

I urge all of you to support our efforts as Muslim Americans to build a better future for the Muslim world, a future where human life and human dignity are first and foremost above all other considerations. I urge you to support and defend the rights of Muslims in America, especially as they come under heavy scrutiny and criticism, to enable the US to remain a bastion of freedom and equality under the law. In these difficult times after 9/11 it is important that we maintain security, but without compromising our civil liberties or labeling all Muslims as terrorists or extremists.

The struggle in the Middle East between Jews and Palestinians is a political struggle, not a religious war. Let us work together to stop senseless violence so that Jews, Muslims and Christians can live together in peace, harmony and dignity. Without peace we have no future.

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