

THROUGH THE BARRICADES

The Charter of New Alliance of Virtue

ANTONIO FUCCILLO
(Ed.)



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of Virtue**

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THE CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE

Introduction

On February 2018, over 200 individuals from the three Abrahamic faiths and other religious leaders and senior politicians gathered in Washington to relaunch the Alliance of Virtue between religions. The New Alliance of Virtue follows the model of the original one. It seeks to bring together those of good-will for the good of humanity. It is an effort across religions, despite their differences. The New Alliance of Virtue is founded upon the principles espoused in the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim Majority lands.

On this basis, in December 2019 was signed the New Alliance of Virtue Charter in Abu Dhabi. The promoter of this new deal was the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim societies, and especially his leader Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin Bayyah chairman of the United Arab Emirates Fatwa Council and President of the Forum. The Charter is built upon human dignity, freedom conscience and religion or belief, tolerance, justice, peace and solidarity.

This book explores the articles of the New Alliance of Virtue Charter and highlights the importance of the relationship between law and religion in a pluralistic society.

The book also includes the report presented by the Professor Antonio Fuccillo on the protection and promotion of religious sites during the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim society, in Abu Dhabi.

ANTONIO FUCCILLO

THE CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE:
AN IMPORTANT EFFORT
TO PRESERVE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

SUMMARY: 1. The challenge of the New Alliance of Virtue. – 2. The new borders of religious freedom, tolerance and respect. – 3. The new Alliance of Virtue in front of pandemic emergency: first important test. – 4. Conclusive remarks.

1. *The challenge of the New Alliance of Virtue*

Religious freedom belongs to the ontological status of the human being.

This statement is clear to the many scholars and religious leaders that have signed an important document in Abu Dhabi in December 2019 “The charter of the new alliance of virtue”¹.

Actually, this important declaration comes from a new deal, built by the Abrahamic faiths that suggest a new wide view on religious relations, and offers a helpful way to go through the barricades of intolerance.

The promoter of this new deal is the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim societies, and especially his leader HE Shaykh ‘Abdallah Bin Bayyah chairman of the United Arab Emirates Fatwa Council and President of the Forum.

The statement affirms that religions of the Abrahamic family have common and distinct theological and ethical traditions, each of which values human virtues, and each of which requires peace and mutual respect and tolerance in order to flourish. This is an important affirmation to confirm the necessity of religious cooper-

¹ The document is available on the website <https://www.allianceofvirtues.com/english/Charter.asp>.

ation to overcome differences and to aim towards tolerance and respect as mankind goals.

So the declaration includes this important affirmation that “another is rights that exist prior to the state and inhere in each human being by virtue of his or her existence. Such rights are typically understood as deriving from a greater-than-human source, such as God or nature, for the believer or non-believer. These rights must be acknowledged and protected by any just state. They should be understood as necessary to human dignity, as well as social flourishing. It is also mean that religious freedom occurs to the human race like a fundamental right”. This is directly linked to human dignity, and in this perspective, they affirm that “All people, irrespective of their diverse races, religions, languages, and ethnicities, by virtue of the divine soul breathed into them, are endowed with dignity by their Omnipotent Creator”.

The document – which is the product of the efforts of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies – is an important step towards the strengthening of interreligious dialogue and the realization of peace.

The Charter aims to renew the original Alliance of Virtue which was established in the 7th century in order to resolve a serious injustice occurred in Mecca and, more generally, to protect the weak and the innocent. In particular, the New Alliance of Virtue “calls for the elevation of virtues as understood by the three Abrahamic religions in the service of peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding between all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, or religion” (art. 1, al. 2).

Nowadays, religious cooperation is not only possible – religions have shared values (in particular, faith, kindness, prudence, and a belief in universal human dignity) which must be actualized (art. 3) – but also necessary. In fact, only through an active and collaborative intervention of religions is it possible to face the problems of today’s society, as for example “the increasing cases around the world regarding religious persecution and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief”, “the false accusation that religion qua religion is inherently violent and thus responsible for

the phenomenon of terrorism”, the hegemony of secularism, the potential for immoral applications of new technologies and the development of an unethical economy (art. 3).

Among the objectives of the Charter is particularly important the respect due to religions because the “respect for another’s religion is a primary virtue that supports both individual human flourishing and the common good. In practice, respect for other religions entails: 1. Protecting the sacred symbols and religious sensibilities of other faith traditions. 2. Respect for other religions does not preclude honest dialogue about what is perceived to be true or false in other religions, including one’s own. 3. Principled cooperation around shared values” (art. 7).

Moreover, the Charter pay special attention to the rights of minorities by stating “All ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities have the right to live without any persecution of any kind. Further, they have the right to live as full and equal citizens in their respective societies, drawing upon their most fundamental beliefs about virtue and morality to engage in the public life of those societies” (art. 8).

The New Alliance of Virtue identifies many domains in which to work to improve the human condition: the family which is defined “the true starting point for fostering virtue, justice, peace, civility, and tolerance” (art. 10); the field of education which would entail “1. Advocating that character development and education are inseparable, and that pedagogical methods should incorporate ethical frameworks. In this way, both individual and societal comportment will be refined. 2. Advocating that religious education be reformed and developed to keep pace with modern developments in other fields, including, for example, as discussed in the 2009 Abu Dhabi Guidelines on Teaching Interfaith Tolerance” (art. 11); the domain of humanitarian work (art. 12) and the sustainable development.

2. The new borders of religious freedom, tolerance and respect

All societies must preserve freedom of conscience and religion

or belief. It is the responsibility of the state to protect religious freedom, including diversity of religions, which guarantees justice and equality among all members of society². It is important to support the idea that there is no compulsion in religion. Tolerance is the central theme of the declaration. The beliefs of others must be legally protected and culturally respected; differences should be seen as a source of enrichment, not conflict. These are the new borders to be torn down in terms of religious freedom. The universe of believers has the right to exercise their worship individually and in a group, and they have also the right to participate in the rites of their religion, to manifest their faith. This freedom is guaranteed by the bills of right in many countries around the world, and by the large international charters of rights (e.g. art. 9 of the ECHR). The coronavirus pandemic that has hit humanity, has led to huge compressions of the rights of the faithful all over the world. These limits to religious freedom have a deep impact to all mankind.

People cannot participate in collective rites and attend to worship activities, because they are considered potential vehicles of contagion. At the same time, many limitations have been placed on access to religious buildings, and place of worship, partly substituted by the web.

This important new deal surges from the inspiration made by the Marrakesh Declaration. This document has been signed by many scholars, personalities, intellectuals and religious leaders from all over the world³.

The result obtained with the Marrakesh Declaration is not just a formal statement of principles, but instead it wants to give practical advice on actions to take in order to achieve social cohesion, starting from the bottom, without coercion of the “state religion” or “Government”, through the expanded concept of citizenship⁴.

² Fuccillo (2018).

³ The document is available on the website <http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/>.

⁴ Fuccillo (2016).

The teachings of the great religions and their rules of behaviour are decisive for this path. The method outlined in the Marrakech declaration proves valid, and on these principles the teachings of the New Alliance of Virtues are more concretely applicable and ready to overcome new challenge.

The impact of deprivation is very serious for the faithful of the great religions.

For Catholics the deprivation of religious activities was then particularly suffered given the concomitance with the “holy week” and the Easter rites. For muslims all over the world the pandemic limitations fall during the holy month of Ramadan. They also had to suffer many limitations in regard to the Friday’s prayer.

The religious authorities have shown an uncommon sensitivity in indicating alternative ritual paths to the faithful, accepting the limitations imposed by governments, well aware of the risks of spreading Covid-19. The principle of State-religions cooperation in defence of the health of citizens-faithful has been filled with new values. In that way, the Fatwa council of UAE clarifies that Al Fitr prayers should also be performed at home if mosques remain closed⁵.

This ecclesial conduct is even more appreciable, as the ordinances of the national and regional governments have irritated religious freedom, that is one of the primary rights to be protected. These hard measures also occupied decision-making spaces, usually reserved to the decisions of the religions involved.

⁵ UAE’s fatwa on fasting and prayers in Ramadan 1441, 19 April 2020, which rules that «the Taraweeh prayers will not be allowed in mosques during Ramadan. They could be performed individually at home, or the male family member who has the most responsibility for taking care of and making decisions about the household may lead the prayer for his family by either reciting the Quranic verses or reading from the Quran. The council warns against congregating to perform prayers, as this could endanger lives. It stresses that performing Friday prayer is not permissible during the suspension of mosque services. Instead, Muslims should perform their Dhuhr (noon) regular prayer at their homes; if the pandemic continues until the time of Eid Al Fitr, people may perform Eid Al Fitr prayer individually at their homes or in a group with their respective family members without a sermon».

In this field is really important to verify the correct balance of the constitutional values. Restrictions on stakeholders religious freedom are perhaps possible. In these prospective a light compression of liberty of worship is almost possible especially in relation to people's right to health and in defence of public safety. All of these prohibitions are allowed only if it is contained within a well-defined and certainly not excessively long space-time limit, and in strict compliance with the hierarchy of sources of law.

By the way, it is clear that the only way to attain that result is the success that comes from an effective cooperation of the states with the religious authorities.

The global pandemic indeed required an effort from society as a whole in order to prevent the transmission of the virus.

Despite the assumption of secularism of the public sphere, the relationship between religion and law is still present in the daily practice of interpreters of principal law systems. Religious rules apply sometimes directly through the activity of religious courts, sometimes indirectly through a religiously oriented application of legal rules⁶.

In this context, religions acted in a double way. From one side, in order to protect the individual and public health, religious denominations encouraged the faithful to practice autonomously and issued a worldwide suspension of all rites, observances and pilgrimages (ex. Holy Week rituals organised by the Catholic Church in the Vatican City were closed to public for the first time in history – <https://bit.ly/3bpNZ0l> -; Saudi Arabia suspended the entry of pilgrims for the Umrah – <https://bit.ly/3aw1GcR> -). At the same time, religious leaders have turned to online platforms and apps to ensure religious services to their communities (ex. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at Canada launched a virtual Ramadan campaign – <https://bit.ly/3bv7Ivr> -). The pandemic also strengthened inter-religious dialogue as demonstrated by joint statements of religious leaders and interfaith moments of prayer (ex. religious leaders

⁶ Fuccillo, Sorvillo, Decimo (2017).

from around the world held a virtual interfaith moment “for hope and solidarity,” organized by the NGO ‘Religions for Peace’ – <https://bit.ly/3eEA7S5> -⁷.

It is then more than clear that the sensitivity of religions is what has made this really possible; especially in regard to the preservation of the rights of the faithful from undue invasions caused by political power.

The sufferings of the faithful for the deprivations of their right to access worship activities, was felt by many important religious leaders. The problem is most evident as many laws prevent the use of places of worship and prayer, but maybe the faithful might still be able to access them in compliance with the security protocols. There is also a difficulty to approach their holy place also due to the limits of the allowed movements.

3. The new Alliance of Virtue in front of pandemic emergency: first important test

Religions are withstanding the exceptional difficulty of the moment and, at the same time, inviting the faithful to demonstrate their faith through concrete acts of solidarity.

In this context, what stands out are the activities of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. This organisation produced an important document called “a Statement of Solidarity of the New Alliance of Virtue”⁸ shared by eminent personalities belonging to various religious denominations. It contains essential references to the unity of mankind, the solidarity and harmony of the “Abrahamic” religions in the defence of each “soul”.

In the document context it is clarify and also affirmed that “In this extraordinary moment, we invite believers to reflect on a number

⁷ To learn more: <https://bit.ly/2VODq0f>.

⁸ The document is available on the website <https://www.allianceofvirtues.com/english/Solidarity.asp>.

of points: First, in the face of the blows of fate, we must contemplate human fragility and seek strength and mercy from God with the hope that God may grant us success and guidance in our efforts to overcome adversity and crisis". It also contains an important admonition to all mankind: "this virus, which does not recognise territorial boundaries or distinctions between races, or between the rich and the poor, is an opportunity for us to remind ourselves of human equality and to take to heart and remember the teaching of our Abrahamic religions that every soul – whoever that soul may be – represents all of humanity. Our religions oblige us to seek the safety, well-being, and protection of every soul from all forms of harm, whether they be epidemics, pandemics, oppression, or wars".

This document also includes the important results recently achieved on the front of inter-religious dialogue.

Faced with the pandemic emergency, the Churches responded with a great sense of responsibility in the core moment of their tradition. The recommendation to the faithful is placed in this perspective to follow up their rituals "as we are in the midst of Easter and Passover and approaching the holy month of Ramadan, we recommend following the instructions and guidance which best ensures the preservation of lives and the maintenance of the public good". The success of the fight against the disease it is up on them and their conduct.

It is necessary to use the prudence of the jurist however, to prevent that a "suspended faith" from being transformed into "forbidden faith".

The religious freedom of individuals and groups can shape and adapt in the balance with other fundamental human rights, but it can never completely move back or worse disappear.

In this regard, religious freedom also occurs, in the difficult context of the contemporary world.

4. Conclusive remarks

Overlooking on website www.allianceofvirtues.com you can

read that “the Alliance of Virtue seeks to bring together religious leaders of good-will for the benefit of humanity”. It is an important challenge to achieve the fundamental goal of religious tolerance and religious freedom all over the world. There is no global peace without enough quantity of religious freedom. The Alliance can make it possible. All the statement presented in Abu Dhabi is plenty of these meanings. They are well summarized and expressed in every part of the document. The spirit behind this initiative is worthy of consideration. All jurist who deal with law and religion must pay attention to all these matters.

It is very important for all scholars to understand the target of board of the Alliance of Virtue. That’s in order to support with their works this important challenge for all mankind. The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue is in the wake of Marrakech Declaration. Both documents share the positive spirit that animates the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Countries.

These documents show the importance of building a new relationship by law and religion, built upon international law and resolution of United Nations. In this way, all religious norms come down in legal system to be observed and protected also by state order. It is born, therefore, a new effective protection of religious freedom, that it is really based on tolerance and respect.

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MIRIAM ABU SALEM

THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE.
SEVEN REASONS WHY

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. Seven motivations for the New Alliance of Virtue.
– 3. Final remarks.

1. *Introduction*

Nowadays, religions play a significant role in the globalized society. From one side, faiths are called to face new issues (e.g.: the availability of natural resources or the evolution of technology), from another side, they are called to offer new solutions for well-known problems. The renewed discussion on the social and juridical status of women in all religions is a clear example of this.

In both cases, religions remain loyal to Tradition and assume changes as complementary principles.

Concurrently, faiths have an essential role in peacekeeping. This goal is achieved by confessions through the enhancement of a 'forgotten ethic', based on the common belonging to humanity.

The Muslim world faces the challenges posed to Islam by the modern world and tries to overcome the distorted reading of the divine message. These objectives are pursued on a twofold track: on the one hand, the Muslim community started an *intra*-religious discussion, aimed at recovering the original religious message, inspired by the criteria of equality, equity and justice¹; on the other hand, Muslims became promoters of *inter*-religious cooperation. The dialogue with other faiths, especially the Abrahamic ones, found its roots in the Qu'ran which states "And do not argue with the People of the Scripture [...] We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you" (29:46).

¹ See, for example, the Marrakech Declaration.

In the cooperation process, an important role is assumed by the Forum for Promoting Peace which aims to favour interconfessional coexistence and strengthen interreligious human values, such as peace, mercy and justice, by leaving aside ideological or politicized readings of Islam.

2. Seven motivations for the New Alliance of Virtue

A first and significant result of the cooperation process is the signing of *Declarations* by religious leaders. These shared documents serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, religious leaders fix in the mutual and respectful dialogue the only way to peace which must be followed by the faithful (and by the civil community too); on the other hand, each document represents the achievement of one or more objectives for the Common Good.

Certainly, The New Alliance of Virtue is the result of a long and fruitful interreligious dialogue and, at the same time, it represents an actualization of the historic Alliance of virtues stipulated in Mecca in the seventh century², in line with the needs of contemporary society. The New Alliance of Virtue “seeks to bring together religious leaders of good-will for the benefit of humanity. It is an effort across religions to enable their members to live side-by-side in peace and happiness. It does not seek to bridge theological differences, but rather to cooperate on the basis a theology of God-given human dignity, seeking virtue and the benefit for all” (The New Alliance of Virtue).

This contribution focuses on the reasons that led religions to renew the Alliance (article 3).

The first reason is “The increasing cases around the world regarding religious persecution and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, and attacks on places of worship”.

Actually, the intensification of religious intolerance and the fear that faith can endanger life are increasingly pushing individu-

² For further informations Cfr. Bin Bayyah, 2019.

als and entire groups of people to flee their country of origin to seek protection elsewhere. Unfortunately, religious hatred is increasing as the numerous attacks on religious sites demonstrate. Such attacks are condemned by all religions; indeed, all denominations recognize the right to attend places of worship, for instance, the Qu'ran 22:40 gives to churches, synagogues and mosques the same importance and forbid attacking places of worship of the Abrahamic religions.

A similar concern has recently been highlighted in the Message of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to Muslims for the month of Ramadan which is entirely dedicated to the protection of places of worship. In particular, the document hopes that “mutual esteem, respect and cooperation will help strengthen the bonds of sincere friendship, and enable our communities to safeguard the places of worship to assure for coming generations the fundamental freedom to profess one’s own beliefs”.

In an increasingly multi-religious society, a solution to this problem could be the creation of shared places of worship. This could ensure both the right to religious freedom (in an individual and collective perspective) and the enhancement of the interfaith dialogue. An effective application of this idea is given by The Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi. The structure – which is still under construction – will host a church, a mosque and a synagogue and a space where to dialogue and deepen mutual knowledge.

The second reason is “The false accusation that religion qua religion is inherently violent and thus responsible for the phenomenon of terrorism. Violent extremist and intolerant forms of religion threaten freely-embraced and freely-exercised religion”.

Religious leaders agree that no faith legitimizes the use of violence. In particular, “pluralism is the essence of Islam as revealed in the Holy Quran and practiced by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the early calipso” (Hassan). In fact, the Qur’anic Revelation does not repeal the earlier Revelations but rather confirm and refine them (Ventura). From the beginning, in the *dār al-islām*, Jewish and Christian communities were able to preserve their specific-

ity through the system of *dhimma*. The Qu'ran (3:64) also invites people of the Book to confront each other on the common ground of monotheism. Another example of the recognition of other faiths is given by the Qu'ran 2, 272 which allows Muslims to do charity to non-Muslims specifying that this act must not be carried out with the intention of converting them to Islam.

The clash of traditional religions with modernity contributed in some way to the birth of fundamentalism. As a product of the same modernity that it tries to fight, Islamic fundamentalism proposed itself as the answer to the globalization and westernization of Islam by diffusing an historical and distorted meaning of the original religious message.

Therefore, the spiral of violence generated, on the one hand, by the instrumental use of religion to justify criminal actions and, on the other hand, by the increase in racism and xenophobia made inter-faiths cooperation ever more necessary in order to clearly separate religion from violence.

The third motivation is "The conviction that we indeed have shared values - universals that transcend culture, era, or region - and that they must be actualized. The shared values of the Abrahamic religions include, in particular, faith, kindness, prudence, and a belief in universal human dignity".

Moving through these shared values, the dialogue must be based on three fundamental guidelines: "the duty of identity, the courage of otherness and the sincerity of intentions" (Pope Francis).

The 4th and 5th motivations can be analysed together. These reasons are: "Existential angst resulting from: the modern loss of transcendence, a development model whose materialist premises ignores the needs and moral well-being of the world's inhabitants, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" and "Globalization, with the resultant tension between a globalized reality dominated by standardization, the hegemony of secularism, and consumerism and the provincialism of customs and beliefs of many societies grappling with the new conditions".

In particular, these aspects can be read in connection with the

emergency situation caused by the Covid-19. The pandemic imposed to let aside unbridled materialism and individual interests and to rediscover humanity, brotherhood and solidarity. In this context, religions played an important role for many reasons. Firstly, religions helped the faithful to overcome this moment of distress. Secondly, faiths cooperated with civil authorities in order to ensure the protection of individual and collective health by ‘sacrificing’ or ‘remodelling’ a part of the worship activities (for example many communities organized worship services and moments of collective reflection online) (Fuccillo - Abu Salem - Decimo). Thirdly, this period is characterized by the strengthening of inter-religious cooperation. For example, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity³ invited people of all faiths to pray on 14 May for an end to the pandemic, hoping that when this period is over, “our world will become a better place for humanity and fraternity than ever before”⁴.

The sixth motivation is “A technocratic mentality that greatly influences technological advancements, some of which, rather than being applied for the betterment of humankind, have the potential for immoral applications that may violate human dignity and may disrupt the ecological balance”.

Religious leaders are worried about too much development of new technology. In particular, they are frightened by a technological development that does not take into account the protection of both human dignity and environment. In this sector is essential a joint action by all the involved stakeholders – religions, government, International Institutions, NGO and industries –. The document *Rome call for AI ethics* points in this direction. This statement promoted by the Catholic Church aims to support an ethical approach to Artificial Intelligence and ensure a future in which

³ The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity was established on September 11, 2019 to achieve the objectives of the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. For further information see: <https://www.forhumanfraternity.org/>.

⁴ See also *A Statement of Solidarity of The New Alliance of Virtue*, <https://www.allianceofvirtues.com/english/Solidarity.asp>.

technological progress is at the service of human genius by the implementation of an “algor-ethical”. The ethical use of Artificial Intelligence must be based on transparency, inclusion, responsibility, impartiality, reliability, security and privacy.

Finally, art. 3 states: “Economics divorced of a moral framework, as well as the uncoupling of *homo economicus* from *homo religiosus*, thereby replacing the human and spiritual with the corporeal and material”.

In a globalized and hyper-connected world where market logic prevailed over everything else, religions play a crucial role. First of all, religions act as opinion makers: they can influence consumers’ decisions and promote the creation of new markets. Clear examples are the religious certifications –halal and kosher among them – which guides the choices of the faithful-consumer. Moreover, they can facilitate the transition from an individual profit-oriented economy to an ethical one. In fact, religions have rules that affect the economic behaviour of the faithful, e.g. Islam proposes an economic vision based on equity and social justice. Consequently, it condemns the excessive accumulation of goods and imposes a redistribution of wealth with the most disadvantaged classes. A clear example of Islamic vision is represented by the *zakat* which is one of the five pillars of Islam and a religious duty that must be fulfilled by the faithful in order to both purify his wealth and promote social justice. The enhancement of *zakat* is accompanied by a ban on usury and any form of interest (Qu’ran 2, 275).

Therefore, the application of religious principles to economic transactions could lead to greater equity and social justice all over the world.

3. *Final remarks*

Interreligious cooperation plays a central role in maintaining peace. An emblematic date in this process was 27th October 1986, when thanks to the commitment of religions, took place a day of universal truce (Impagliazzo).

The Charter is a further step in the cooperation process. It assumes particular relevance for at least two reasons. First of all, it promotes interfaith dialogue by providing “the duty for religious leaders to work to spread and secure peace and tranquillity around the world” (art. 5). Secondly, it involves the faithful of each confession in the path towards human brotherhood (art. 7) and ensure “the right of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities to live in peace without any persecution” and above all “to live as full and equal citizens in their respective societies” (art. 8).

In addition, another important aspect is that the Charter is open to all confessions, not just to the Abrahamic ones, and this is an essential condition for the realization of global peace.

Beyond the positive elements, some critical issues remain. The Charter contains a general reference to the freedom of conscience. Indeed, it declares “There is no compulsion in religion or belief” (art. 4, al. 2). Certainly, this is an important element, but a full affirmation of the right to religious freedom would have perhaps been more appropriate to give a signal to both fundamentalists who deny this right on religious grounds and to those countries where this right is still denied. This step had also been advocated by the Washington Declaration which explicitly states that “All people, irrespective of faith, are entitled to religious liberty. There is no room for compulsion in religion, nor are there any legitimate grounds for barring the followers of any religion from full and fair participation in society”⁵. This desirable solution was adopted in the first version of the Charter too; in fact, while the Arabic formulation stated “There is no compulsion in faith”, the English version provided for a wider protection by affirming: “There is no com-

⁵ Also, the Document on Human Fraternity recognizes more clearly religious freedom. It states: “each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept”.

pulsion of religion or belief - people have the right to choose their beliefs and to practice their faith without fear of persecution” (Diez).

Furthermore, another critical point is the lack of reference to women’s rights that are instead recognized by both the Document on Human Fraternity and the Washington Declaration. This lack is particularly significant, especially because the debate on the legal and social position of women is still open today. Therefore, if a traditionalist and patriarchal reading justifies the position of subordination and marginalization of women, a modern reading which (by distinguishing between fixed precepts and social practices) aims to apply Quranic principles to contemporary society, would allow women to enjoy the same rights reserved to men (Abu Salem).

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GENNARO FUSCO

“PRINCIPLES”

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE

SUMMARY: 1. From the Fudūl alliance... the New Alliance of Virtue Charter. – 2. Elevate religious freedom. – 3. The principles of the New Alliance of Virtue and the Human Rights.

1. *From the Fudūl alliance... the New Alliance of Virtue Charter*

The Charter is part of the large number of declarations produced by the Muslim side in recent years: just to name two, the Declaration on Human Fraternity of February 2019 and the Marrakech Declaration of January 2016. It was conceived in the context of the American Peace Caravan and presented in its first formulation in Washington in February 2018. This new document deserves attention for the universal plan on which it intends to place itself and which goes beyond the borders of the Abrahamic religions (Diez, 2019). The Charter, in fact, refers, from the name, to a little-known episode in the life of Muhammad, which is reported below.

According to Islamic tradition, when Muhammad was about twenty years old, a serious injustice occurred in Mecca involving one of the leaders of the Quraysh, the dominant tribe of the city, to which Muhammad also belonged.

«A man from Zabīd – we leave the word to the medieval exegete Ibn Kathīr (1301-1373) – arrived in Mecca with his goods. (The notable Meccano) al-‘Ās Ibn Wā’il bought it, but didn’t pay the agreed price. The man from Zabīd asked for help from a faction of the Quraysh¹ [...], but they refused to help him [...] and indeed threatened him. Seeing that things were taking a bad turn,

¹ The term designates some clans of the Quraysh tribe who had joined together to take control of Ka’ba from the rival Mutayyabīn party, which also included Muhammad’s family. And more precisely, the Arab has al-Ahlāf, “*the federates*”.

the man went up to Mount Abu Qubays at sunrise, while the Quraysh were gathering around the Ka'ba, and shouted aloud: Oh people of Fihir², an oppressed there is in the valley of Mecca with its merchandise, which mourns the house and distant people, and a pilgrim who, disheveled his hair, did not make his pilgrimage. Oh men and you who are in the blessed enclosure, the sacredness is for the noble, but there is no sacredness for the defrauder's habit. Then al-Zubayr Ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib³ stood up and exclaimed: "*This is no longer tolerable!*". Hāshim, Zahra and Taym Ibn Murra met with him in the house of 'Abd Allāh Ibn Ğud'ān. After they prepared a meal for them, they made an alliance in the holy month of Dhū l-Qa'da, making this commitment before God: "*We will be one hand with the oppressed and against the oppressor until he receives what it belongs to him, as long as the sea lasts and as long as the Thabīr and Hirā' mountains are fixed in their place. And we will give mutual sustenance*".

The Quraysh called that covenant "*Fudūl alliance*" because they said "*they signed an additional covenant*" (*dakhalū fī fadl min al-amr*). Then they went to al-'Ās Ibn Wā'il, snatched the goods from him and returned it to the man of Zabīd» (Ibn Kathīr, 1990).

The Charter in the first two points of the "definitions" recalls the difference between the Alliance of Virtue and the New alliance of virtues:

«Alliance of Virtue refers, from the Islamic perspective, to the pre-Islamic pact that was founded on virtue, honorable character, and the noble values held in common among the human family regardless of tribal, ethnic, or religious affiliation»;

«New Alliance of Virtue refers to the covenant detailed in this Charter; it calls for the elevation of virtues as understood by the three Abrahamic religions in the service of peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding between all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, or religion».

² Fihir Ibn Mālik is the progenitor of the Quraysh.

³ He is a great-uncle of Muhammad. Hashim, Zahra and Taym Ibn Murra mentioned immediately afterwards are the leaders of some important Quraysh clans.

2. *Elevate religious freedom*

In a pre-event statement, the Forum said the charter aims to elevate religious freedom⁴, cooperation, and tolerance from more possibilities to necessary ethical commitments and legal obligations, especially in relation to the protection of places of worship whose attacks have threatened freedom of religion in many parts of the world.

In the principles section, at point 2, we read:

“Freedom of Conscience and Religion or Belief

- *There is no compulsion in religion.*
- *It is the responsibility of the state to protect religious freedom, including diversity of religions, which guarantees justice and equality among all members of society”.*

It should be noted that the Charter lacks the explicit declaration in favor of religious freedom. The Charter, distributed at the beginning of the Forum, had a difference between the English and Arabic versions. In article 4.2 the English version, in fact, declared: *“There is no compulsion of religion or belief – people have the right to choose their beliefs and to practice their faith”*. The Arabic version, on the other hand, limited itself to stating *“There is no compulsion in the faith”*⁵. Although even the English formulation didn’t completely solve the question of religious freedom – it could in fact be said that people are free to choose their own religion, but that a religion can foresee the impossibility of abandoning it among its clauses – it still represented an important step forward, as such also greeted by some of the non-Muslim signatories present at the Forum, such as the secretary of the World Evangelical

⁴ Already the Marrakech Declaration heads of state, and scholars, represents essential progress for the qualification of religious freedom in international law (Fuccillo, 2016).

⁵ A partial citation of the famous Koranic verse 2, 256. *“There is no compulsion in religion”*: no one can be forced to follow a religion and on the other hand no one can be prevented from practicing it. This is the general meaning of the verse. According to some exegetes the verse came down to protect the religious freedom of the people of Scripture (Nazarenes and Israelites).

Alliance. After some hesitation, however, the most prudent Arabic formulation prevailed, on which the final English version was also corrected. It therefore brings nothing new to the controversial issue of freedom of conscience in Islam (Diez, 2019).

Religious freedom in Islam is strongly constrained in several respects:

- if on the one hand the adhesion to Islam is left free (just recite the shahada, “*I confess that there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah*”), the Muslims who choose to abandon Islam (apostasy)⁶ are punishable by death (PewResearchCenter, 2010);
- non-Muslim peoples (“book people”) who have been conquered by Islam with *jihad* are free to choose between conversion to Islam, death, slavery or the condition of *dhimmi*⁷ (Decimo, 2016). This is characterized by a long series of religious and social limitations (Omar Pact); provides protection from the Islamic state; requires proteges to pay a tax (*jizya*)⁸ which represents an economic deterrent to maintaining the non-Muslim faith;
- the protection that the Islamic state has the duty to guarantee to the *dhimmi*⁹ (Khaddouri, 1955);

⁶ Islamic tradition has understood apostasy as a capital offense, and so the laws of the countries that adopt sharia are officially foreseen: Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Comoros, Iran, Mauritania, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen. Even where specific sanctions do not exist, popular fundamentalist sentiment makes life difficult for those who choose to abandon Islam.

⁷ By *dhimmi* (plural, *abl al-dhimma*, “the people of *dhimma*”), literally “protected” or “insured”, we mean a non-Muslim (Ramadan, 1961) (especially Jewish or Christian) who lives in an Islamic country and subject to sharia (Islamic law) (Rahman, 1981), virtually free to profess their faith under state protection (*dhimma*) in exchange for paying a special tax (*jizya*). A justification from the *Qur’ab* is quoted as a justification for the statute of the gate: “*Fight those who do not believe in Allah and on the last day, who do not forbid what Allah and his messenger have forbidden, and those among the people of the book (Jews and Christians) who do not choose the religion of truth, until they humbly pay the tribute (jizya) and are subjugated*” (*Qur’ab* 9, 29).

⁸ As for *jizya*, Islamic doctrine provides that adult males of the people of the book are subject to it, while women and children are exempt from it.

⁹ The statute of the *dhimmi* finds its first implicit regulation in the so-called

- the expression of one’s own religious personal ideas is bound to the crime of blasphemy (or blasphemy)¹⁰, punishable also by capital punishment, whose definition and practical application is arbitrary for Islamic legislators.

3. *The principles of the New Alliance of Virtue and the Human Rights*

The New Alliance of Virtue, in addition to Freedom of Conscience and Religion or Belief, is based on the following principles:

- *Human Dignity*. All people, irrespective of their diverse races, religions, languages, and ethnicities, by virtue of the divine soul breathed into them, are endowed with dignity by their Omnipotent Creator;
- *Tolerance*. The beliefs of others must be legally protected and culturally respected. Differences should be seen as a source of enrichment, not conflict;
- *Justice*. Justice and equity are the foundation of all human interaction, while charity towards others remains the more virtuous and fitting path;
- *Peace*. Except for self defense or the defense of innocents, violence should be rejected, whether on the individual or state level (war), and an adherence to all peaceful means to resolve conflicts among individuals or groups maintained;

Constitution of Medina (or Pact or Charter of Medina). In this document, written by Muhammad shortly after the migration from Mecca to the city of Yathrib-Medina (ègira, 622), the life of the community (Umma) of the first believers in the city and the relations between Muslims, polytheists and Jews (Christians didn’t mention). The overall tenor appears to be decidedly equal, without particular mention of limitations and economic relief.

¹⁰ Blasphemy, that is, the factual or verbal insult to Islam, Allah or Muhammad, is a serious fault prescribed by Islamic law. Thus the Koranic passage that treats it: “*The reward of those who make war on Allah and his messenger and who sow corruption on earth is that they are killed or crucified, that their hand and leg are cut off from opposite sides or that they are exiled to the earth: here is the ignominy that will touch them in this life; in the other life they will have immense punishment*” (*Qur’ah* 5, 33).

- *Mercy*. Mercy is the central means to achieve the divine covenant of faith, truth, and charity: “Whoever shows no mercy to others deprives himself of God’s mercy to him.” “God shows mercy to those who are merciful”;
- *Kindness*. Such kindness toward others should make no distinction between kith, kin, or strangers, whether the deeds resulted from familial bonds or selfless concern for others;
- *Keeping Covenants*. The most consequential of duties is that of fulfilling contracts and
 - covenants, as it assures security and social harmony.
 - *Solidarity*. Solidarity expresses an existential identification with and commitment to the well-being of the other.

The principles of the New Alliance of Virtue can be traced back, even a little forcing, to Human Rights. The conception of Human Rights in Islam is influenced by the fact that the Islamic anthropology and morality underlying and derived from Sharia are different from those of the Western tradition. It is significant that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), which enshrines the natural equality and dignity of all men, is judged unacceptable by Islamic thinkers and nations.

In particular, on December 7, 1984, Rajaie-Khorassani, Iran’s representative to the UN general assembly, said: “*Man has a divine origin and human dignity cannot be reduced to a series of secular norms [...]. [Iran] recognizes no authority other than that of the almighty God, nor any legal tradition other than that of Islamic law [...]. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which represents a secularized version of the Judeo-Christian tradition, cannot be implemented by Muslims and is not in accordance with the value system recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran; this nation will not hesitate to violate these directives, since it must choose between violating divine law and violating secular conventions*”.

The root of Islamic law is thus described: “*Since the will of God is absolutely free, no lex aeterna is conceivable, even less a lex naturalis. They would constitute as many limits to divine omnipotence. Therefore, man cannot discover the nature of things: it does not exist. A right of human nature is an absurdity. Human acts are*

not beautiful or ugly except because God wanted them to be such. In his infinite power, he could have decided otherwise. Such is the orthodoxy that today's Islam presents and perpetuates. An orthodoxy in antithesis to the theory of human rights: man has no rights, no norm can be derived from his nature. A human rights theory is therefore impossible. If in the traditionalist perspective man makes use of protections, this is not because of his nature, but the fact of the expression of a divine will. Strictly speaking, man is not a subject of law. [...] Considering the rights registered as protections attributed by an absolutely free will, we are prevented from historicizing the rules and, therefore, from submitting them to the law of evolution. [...] As for traditionalist Islam, it does not consider man except as a servant of an absolutely free divine will. No theory of human rights can derive from this type of Islam, for the simple reason that man is absent from it” (Laghmani 1997).

The incompatibility in the Human Rights vision between *sharia* and the west has led to the elaboration of several Islamic statements. Starting from the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights promulgated in Paris by the Islamic Council of Europe on 19 September 1981 to the Arab Charter of Human Rights (2004) and building upon international law and the resolutions of the United Nations and the Amman Message (Nov 2004), the “Common Word” open letter (Oct 2007), the Marrakesh Declaration for the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority Lands (Jan 2016), the Washington Declaration of the Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good (Feb 2018), Human Fraternity Declaration (Feb 2019), Makkah Declaration (May 2019) and finally the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue (Dec 2019) the attention to Human Rights has grown ever more.

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FRANCESCO SORVILLO

THE CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE FOR VIRTUES.
A BRIEF COMMENT ON THE PREAMBLE AND THE FIRST
TWO ARTICLES

SUMMARY: 1. The Preamble: the security issues. – 2. The Preamble: from the Amman Message to the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues. – 3. The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues: Article 1 – Definitions. – 4. The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues: Article 2 – Scope.

1. *The Preamble: the security issues*

The conflicts in Islamic countries due to different ethnic-religious affiliations have made it impossible to postpone the reflection on the protection of religious minorities in Muslim majority lands (Bin Bayyah, 2019).

Started few years ago by the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies it is culminated in 2016 with the sign of the Marrakech Declaration on the Rights of Minorities in Predominantly Muslim-Majority Lands.

In the Marrakech Declaration the concerns connected to Islamist terrorism and the crimes perpetrated in the Islamic world are immediately evident when it states (on this specific issue, see the Hamza Yusuf Hanson's Foreword at the book “The Marrakech Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority Lands. A Legal Framework and a Call to Action”, 2016: 3-5):

«*WHEREAS, conditions in various parts of the Muslim World have deteriorated dangerously due to the use of violence and armed struggle as a tool for settling conflicts and imposing one's point of view;*

WHEREAS, this situation has also weakened the authority of

legitimate governments and enabled criminal groups to issue edicts attributed to Islam, but which, in fact, alarmingly distort its fundamental principles and goals in ways that have seriously harmed the population as a whole;».

These concerns are now also the background of the Charter of New Alliance for Virtue. About this issue, in fact, the Preamble states:

«that an alliance among people of all faiths, each drawing upon his or her respective tradition to elevate the virtues conducive to respect, tolerance, and peace, can help extinguish the flames of war and defeat the agents of terror and conflict;»

and furthermore

«that collaboration between people of all religious faiths or beliefs provides an effective vehicle to strengthen the foundations of peace in the world;».

These concerns, therefore, have prompted the Forum for promoting peace in Muslim societies to take the path of the dialogue in Islamic and western world and the interreligious dialogue that have led to the signing of the Marrakech Declaration first, and later the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue in december 2019.

As Shayhk Abdallah bin Bayyah chair of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies said, working to create a culture of tolerance is the most important goal for fighting against terrorism, and to do so the dialogue is the only way.

In that sense it is useful to note that the Arab word *ḥiwār* that means “Dialogue”, is derived from the verb *ḥawar*, “to have a dialogue with,” and refers to the act of conversation between two people with the aim of persuading each other, or of reaching common ground, or a point of understanding.

A culture of dialogue is an arena of intellectual and psychological preparedness by all different classes, cultures and religions of

society to listen to one another and share opinions without coercion or constraint, thus creating an environment that is conducive for understanding and facilitates communication with others. (Bin Bayyah, 2014: 40-57).

In this regard the Charter of New Alliance for Virtue affirming that

«the shared values of the Abrahamic faiths, as well as the rights with which all Human beings are naturally endowed;»

and noting

«that religions of the Abrahamic family have common and distinct theological and ethical traditions, each of which values human virtues, and each of which requires peace and mutual respect and tolerance in order to flourish;»

it shows that values and principles of *«collaboration between people of all religious faiths or beliefs»* are the only one way to realize *«an effective vehicle to strengthen the foundations of peace in the world»*.

2. The Preamble: from the Amman Message to the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues

The “Declarations Season” (Fuccillo, 2019: 361-368) started in the Muslim world in 2004 with the Amman Message, has recently been enriched with a new document: The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue.

Last December 19, 2019, the new Charter was signed at the Sixth Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies chaired by its leader Shayhk Abdallah bin Bayyah.

In the Preamble of the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues it is pointed out that:

«[...] in important instances the institution of accords and charters, historically, have had great impact upon international relations and the establishment of peace, justice, liberty, and tolerance;».

The adoption of documents designed to bring about more lasting peace, justice and progress in the world, plays a significant role also in the Muslim legal systems.

These initiatives are also positively evaluated in the sacred texts. In the Qur'an for example God says: *“There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) whatsoever enjoined charity and fairness and peace-making among the people and whoso doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward.”* (Al-Nisa, 4:114).

In this perspective, a brief commentary on the Preamble and the first two articles of the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue, cannot therefore ignore the importance of the stages that have led many scholars, religious and political leaders to engage in a dialogue that is still ongoing today (Consorti, 2007: 1-6).

The Preamble of the new Charter expressly reaffirms this when it states that it is

«Building upon the Amman Message (Nov 2004), the “Common Word” open letter (Oct 2007), the Marrakesh Declaration for the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority Lands (Jan 2016), the Washington Declaration of the Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good (Feb. 2018), Human Fraternity Declaration (Feb.2019), Makkah Declaration (May 2019)».

The first step to be referred to in terms of importance and legal implications is the Amman Message of 9 November 2004¹. In the Message king Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan asked to some of the most important Muslim scholars in the world to declare what Islam is and what it is not, and what actions represent it

¹ For The Amman Message and its “Three Points”, see the official website at <https://ammanmessage.com/>.

and what actions do not. Its goal was to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam.

On the basis of the Amman Message in 2005 the so called “Three Points of the Amman Message” were adopted by 200 of the world’s leading Islamic scholars from 50 countries.

They specifically recognized the validity of all 8 Mathhabs (legal schools) of Sunni, Shi’a and Ibadhi Islam; of traditional Islamic Theology (Ash’arism); of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism), and of true Salafi thought, and came to a precise definition of who is a Muslim. Based upon this definition they forbade the declarations of apostasy between Muslims, and based upon the Mathahib they set forth the subjective and objective preconditions for the issuing of fatwas, thereby excluding ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam.

The fact that these Three Points were unanimously adopted by the Islamic World’s political leaderships and from July 2005 to July 2006, also by other International Islamic scholarly assemblies, explains its great importance in terms of a legal perspective.

The Three Points, in fact, were considered as an example of an historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma’*) of the Ummah of Islam in our day, also in the light of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad that said: “*My Ummah will not agree upon an error*” (Ibn Majah, Sunan, Kitab al-Fitan, Hadith, no. 4085).

2004, therefore, is to be seen as the starting point of the process which, as mentioned, has continued to the present day.

Another step along this path is the 2007 “Common Word” open letter (for a brief comment about it, see Rizzardi, 2008). The letter is founded on the message of the sura *Âl ‘Imrân* in which the verse no. 64 reads: «Say, O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).».

The letter therefore invites to share with those who have a dif-

ferent faith from the Islamic one, to share what can be shared (for example, the faith in one God), to dialogue, to discuss in order to arrive at sharing points of encounter. Dialogue must be used by Muslims to find, also with non-believers, what can be shared such as principles of respect and the sacredness of human life, the value of peace, justice, freedom, and the condemnation for all forms of extremism and violence (In this perspective see Forte, 2014: 163-208). Doing so justice and freedom of religion will become another part of love of the neighbour² (Markiewicz, 2016: 36-55).

However, the real milestone in a legal perspective in this evolutionary process is the 2016 Marrakech Declaration.

In fact, as it was highlighted by scholars, the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Lands represent an essential progress on the way of the legal qualification of religious freedom in international law (Fuccillo, 2016; Sabbarese and Santoro, 2017).

In this perspective the Marrakesh Declaration can be considered a powerful response to a pressing global human rights concern and a model for how religious tradition and international human rights law can be mutually reinforcing.

This initiative can serve as a powerful resource for legitimizing and advocating for minority rights and equal citizenship more broadly within the Muslim world (Hayward, 2016). For this reason the Marrakech Declaration call Muslim States to accord the rights of equal citizenship to the religious minorities in their midst, the basis of the Prophetic model in the Charter of Medina, and the Islamic values of benevolence, solidarity, human dignity, peace, justice, mercy and the common weal (Bin Bayyah, 2019).

Last but not the least in the mentioned process on the way of dialogue and protection of freedom of religion there is “The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” signed by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi.

² In this regard, see The Letter “A Common Word between Us and You” at the website https://rissc.jo/docs/Common_word.pdf

The Document is a broad progress on the root of dialogue between believers that are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.

As is written in the Document this is a challenge to be realized «In the name of God who has created all Human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace;»³.

These are the same principles and values at the ground of the Charter of New Alliance for Virtue in which the Article 1, point 6, affirms that:

«Values have two dimensions: personal virtues, such as mercy and altruism, and civic virtues, such as hospitality, neighborliness, solidarity, and aid to those in need.». For these reasons «Societies should foster both dimensions and organize societies in accordance with such humanitarian values.».

This must be the lead goal for our modern societies, both in eastern and in the western world.

3. The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues: Article 1 – Definitions

The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue can be considered “another brick in the wall” for the international religious freedom recognition in Muslim world (Diez, 2020), and a tool to extend this fundamental right in policy and practice.

In this light the Article 1 of the Charter clarifies:

«There are at least two ways to conceptualize human rights. One

³http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html

is rights created by governments, which are of most value when they apply to all and reflect norms of human dignity and justice. Another is rights that exist prior to the state and inhere in each human being by virtue of his or her existence. Such rights are typically understood as deriving from a greater-than-human source, such as God or nature, for the believer or non-believer. These rights must be acknowledged and protected by any just state. They should be understood as necessary to human dignity, as well as social flourishing.».

In this view, therefore, faith and rights are directly linked to human dignity and, for this reason, all societies must preserve freedom of conscience, religion or belief. In fact, it cannot be compulsion in religion (Fuccillo, 2020).

Believers must have the right to exercise their worship individually and collectively, and also the right to participate in the rites of their religion, and to manifest their faith. This freedom is guaranteed by the constitutions in many countries around the world, and by the most important international charters of rights as, for example, the article 9 of the ECHR.

In this light, tolerance is another important issue in the Abu Dhabi Chart.

The key topic of the Sixth Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies was “The role of Religions in promoting Tolerance: from possibility to necessity”.

As it was well highlighted by scholars, there is the need that “the believers of other faith as well as non-believers must be legally protected and culturally respected, and differences should be seen as a source of enrichment, not as a conflict. These are the new borders to be torn down in terms of religious freedom” (Fuccillo, 2020: 2).

In order to do that, The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue in its “Definitions” (no. 1), mentions the “Alliance for Virtue” in the Islamic perspective, that is a “pre-Islamic pact that was founded on virtue, honorable character, and the noble values held in common among the human family, regardless of tribal, ethnic, or religious affiliation.”.

The Charter also stresses the need for a “New Alliance for Virtues” (Definition no. 2) in which the virtues as understood by the three Abrahamic religions must be put in the service of peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding between all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, or religion.

In a Western perspective, however, the most important addition of the Charter is perhaps the express reference made in the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The latter, in fact, read in conjunction with the definitions of Article 1 of the Charter, can represent the lever to implement more progressive “rights visions” also in the Muslim world (Franceschi, 37/2017: 1-31).

4. *The Charter of the New Alliance for Virtues: Article 2 – Scope*

The Article no. 2 of the Charter reads:

«1. The signatories of this Charter, whether from the Abrahamic Family or other belief traditions, commit themselves to live by the values contained herein.

2. Nothing in this Charter violates the authority of nations, nor does it contravene their observed laws consistent with ARTICLE 29 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.».

Through the commitment cited above, all the signatories of the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue, from both the Abrahamic Family and other belief traditions may commit themselves to live observing and disseminating the values and principles embodied in the Charter.

This is very important because the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue calls for the implementation of all the values and principles shared by the Charter not only within religious systems, but also in the legal systems of the States and in the daily life of all mankind.

In this regard the Article 1, paragraph two, refers to the article

no. 29 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that states as follow: “Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.”.

In conclusion, to make sure that the words of the Charter of the New Alliance for Virtue does not to turn out as just barren rhetoric, it will ultimately depend on the willingness of the signatories and the religious and politic leaders and their supporters, which will have to ensure that its noble words could also become noble deeds and actions (for the same end see Hill, 2020).

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ANTONELLA ARCOPINTO

INCLUSION OF DIVERSITY AND PROTECTION
OF ETHNIC MINORITIES.
THE INTERFAITH VISION OF THE CHARTER
OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUES.

SUMMARY: 1. The problem of diversity in the perspective of The Charter of the New Covenant of Virtues. – 2. Articles 6 and 8 of New Charter: participatory citizenship and protection of minorities. – 3. The dialogue (with and) between religions as a possible solution for a peaceful social coexistence.

1. The problem of diversity in the perspective of The Charter of the New Covenant of Virtues

The “New Alliance of Virtue” aims to elevate religious freedom, cooperation, and tolerance from mere possibilities to necessary ethical commitments and legal obligations, especially in relation to the protection of places of worship, the attacks upon which have threatened religious freedoms in many parts of the world. This initiative draws direct inspiration from the early traditions of Islam and is also inspired by the other charters signed in recent years, among the most important of which is the Marrakech Declaration.

It is «not simply a formal statement of principles, as it aims to give practical advice on actions to achieve social cohesion using a bottom-up model, which implies an expanded concept of citizenship and not an application of the law by the state, such as a “state religion”» (Fuccillo, 2020).

The Charter of the New Covenant of Virtues is the result of mediation work between very different sensibilities. It requires the elevation of the virtues understood by the three Abrahamic religions in the service of peace, tolerance, inclusion and mutual understanding between all people regardless of race, ethnicity or religion.

In recent years, even in the so-called “stabilized realities”, the debate on the concrete exercise of religious freedom has accelerated due to the crisis of consolidated experiences of the legal “regulation” of the same. In other words, both “confessionalist” societies aimed at favouring one or some religious faiths and “separatist” societies that presuppose a clear distinction between the state and religious denominations have entered into a crisis. In contemporary societies the binomial, or in certain cases the dissociation between church and state and confessional religion and state, constitutes a *genus* of relationships to which different *species* respond and which can, in certain and extreme spheres, lead to offensive and restrictive conduct, cultural-religious conflicts and a blatant violation of human rights.

In a reality that incorporates new ethnic presences the “diversity” of religious and cultural options makes demands for recognition, based on the principles of equality, public stability and new forms of legitimation by the state. The failure to reconcile the various interests and the lack of protection of those that form part of the human rights of individuals and diverse communities could trigger strong social and legal conflicts.

2. Articles 6 and 8 of the New Charter: participatory citizenship and protection of minorities

Cultures, senses, customs, and displacement of people; all of these elements have posed the same challenging problem not only of how to regulate the modalities of social integration of minorities, but also “whether and to what extent” they are the holders of rights and duties. In a landing place that has a precise and prevalent social and denominational imprint and which also addresses the legal system, practices and the economy, the main problem to be confronted is that of the protection of ethnic diversity, or minorities. They have a constant difficulty in expressing and manifesting their being “different”, but, at the same time, they demand ever wider spaces for action and protection.

The “classical” definition of citizenship – what determines the set of reciprocal rights and duties of individuals within a given territory – seems insufficient today, since it mainly highlights the aspect of the relationship between the citizen and the state. In reality, today’s citizenship finds itself profoundly transformed, in a world where multi-ethnic pluralism derived from the coexistence of cultural and religious differences dominates. We need to go a step further than the classic concept of citizenship, we need to talk about a “substantial” citizenship, that is, a status that takes into account diversity, a condition of recognition and effective exercise of the fundamental rights of the “Other”, of the requests and instruments of protection concretely granted to minorities. It could be defined as “social citizenship” or “inclusive citizenship”.

This is what the Charter of Peace provides for in the systematic reading of Articles 6 and 8.

The fourth section of the Charter of the New Alliance identifies among its objectives precisely that of achieving “positive and responsible citizenship” (art. 6). Citizenship must be based on freedom, equality and cultural and religious pluralism, as well as respect between people.

Article 6 makes an important reference to Article 29¹ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The latter provides for the full and free development of the personality of every individual within the community in which he or she lives, with the same number of duties towards it. The same Article provides for possible limitations to the freedom and rights of the individual only by

¹ ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Article 29:***

1. *Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.*

2. *In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.*

3. *These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*

law and only to ensure respect for superior rights, principles and freedoms.

Citizenship must be identified as the common essence to overcome differences and forms of discrimination against religious minorities. In this respect, Article 8 of the Charter provides for the protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic minorities and the prohibition of persecution. Minorities have the right to live fully within society.

When we talk about “citizenship”, it is certainly necessary to cling to the roots of the Islamic tradition – think of the Charter of Medina – but, at the same time, take into account the global changes that contemporary societies are undergoing, that is, the modernization and the plurality of society – as provided for in both the Marrakech Declaration and the Charter of the New Alliance.

In addition to providing for the recognition of an inclusive, social citizenship, and therefore a set of rights and duties for minorities regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation, the Charter proclaims the recognition of freedoms that result in the effective inclusion of such groups in Islamic society.

Citizenship cannot be understood as a mere form of belonging to a territorial community. A concrete exercise of participatory citizenship is necessary, in which the subject is a citizen and member of the community in all its aspects: social, legal and economic.

3. The dialogue (with and) between religions as a possible solution for a peaceful social coexistence

The contact between different semantic, cultural and religious universes is certainly not a prelude to harmony and brotherhood, quite the opposite in fact, as it reinforces prejudices and lays bare the differences that are not used to enrich oneself and others, but as a shield and “weapon” to fight one’s own battle of values. In this context, dialogue is important, not only to achieve at least civil coexistence, but above all to ensure that people’s fundamental rights are respected.

Living together in a multicultural context involves the reworking of one's own identity, both subjective and communitarian; confronting and creating relationships with people who are bearers of different knowledge, beliefs, values and cultures; taking a step back, taking a step forward.

It is not important what the predominant religious confession in a society is; every person should enjoy the freedom to be able to express himself or herself including from a religious point of view, to have a fideistically-oriented personality or not and to see his or her rights protected, even if they come from the demands of a minority.

The Charter of a New Alliance of Virtue aims precisely to create an alliance between people of all faiths. Each religious confession must draw on its own tradition to elevate the virtues that teach respect, tolerance and peace, because only in this way can the conflict between different faiths and cultures be defeated and serious social unrest avoided.

This process presupposes a dialogue not only between confessions themselves, but also between confessions and civil societies, thereby generating a concrete desire for knowledge and sharing and the breaking down of stereotypes and prejudices. This is necessary in order to arrive at a profound awareness of differences and a convergence – albeit often laborious and conflictual – towards shared and common goals, essential for the progress of individuals and their rights. Different cultures and faiths should no longer be looked at as individual parts placed next to each other, as elements forming an uneven whole, separated from the fixities of their traditions. They must relate to each other starting from their own historical background, to know, to be understood, to arrive at shared or at least mutually respected projects and social objectives.

The Charter states that: “collaboration between people of all religious faiths or beliefs provides an effective vehicle to strengthen the foundations of peace in the world”.

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ANTONIO VENTRONE

RELIGIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ART. 13
OF THE CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE

SUMMARY: 1. The role of Religions in supporting Development. – 2 Religions and sustainability, the contribution of the Catholic church for Sustainability, Environment and Peace. – 3. The Custody of Creation for Jews and Muslims.

1. The role of religions in supporting sustainable development

The Charter for a New Alliance of Virtues, the interreligious document signed in Abu Dhabi at the end of the Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies, provides, among the domains in which it can make its contribution to improving the human condition, the framework of sustainable development.

In this regard, art. 13 of the Charter states that the Sustainable Development Framework should include: Helping the United Nations to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Objectives (Sustainable development Goals) of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (September 2015).

The Global Agenda for Sustainable Development approved in New York on September 25, 2015 sets out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Sdgs that subscribing countries must reach and implement by 2030. The 193 United Nations Member States, signatories to the project, with the aim of transforming the world are trying to provide a new framework for sustainable global development.

The 17 objectives set out in “Agenda 2030”, articulated in 169 targets, interconnected and indivisible, aim at economic growth, social inclusion and protection of the environment.

In recent decades progress has been based on the exploitation of goods, making it necessary to convert individuals into agents of

change towards sustainability. The universal achievement of the objectives is left to each individual signatory State through the adoption of national sustainable development strategies.

The achievement of this goal involves over 193 signatory countries, the entire international civil society and religious denominations.

The latter play a key role in supporting these processes, seeking to eliminate the most extreme forms of poverty in so many areas of the world which cannot be reached by state and international interventions, where they provide humanitarian services, as evidence that everyone must contribute to the paths of constructive development because «need a conversion which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.». (Francis, 2015, n. 13-14)

Religious confessions are ethical, moral and social reference points. They have always been involved in the major stages of the development of the planet, making a strong contribution to the promotion of fundamental rights, motivating people to achieve their objectives and providing many people with the right perspective for sustainable development.

Their involvement in this framework of development is fundamental because of their influence and ability to convey the choices of the world's population, given the great symbolic and motivational heritage of which they are the bearers «intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet». (Francis, 2015, n. 15)

Religious groups are currently taking action to promote development that is not limited to economic growth alone, but to the fullness of the human person, capable of creating social integration and ecological conversion. The Signatory States outline a new model of sustainable development, focusing on good governance, shared responsibility at all levels and with preparation, at national level, of favourable and coherent policies also giving a more prominent role to the private sector, which through investments can reach the concrete realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Religions and sustainability, the contribution of the Catholic Church for sustainability, environment and peace

The values shared by Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Eastern religions can contribute to an integral human development, a radical change in habits, practices and social policies providing new responses to the dramatic challenges of the present. Major religions have placed the environmental issue at the centre of their development of ethical standards, (Sorvillo, 2019) offering valuable proposals that can contribute to new paths of constructive development, also considered their common attitude of respect for the environment based on the co-responsibility of man, as well as solidarity between generations and intergenerational solidarity. (Piccinni, 2013)

Religions have always worked actively to ensure the preservation and prevention of creation, encouraging the faithful to fight the pollution of the planet for harmonious and just progress, developing a deep ethical reflection on socially and economically sustainable environmental protection. (Fuccillo-Sorvillo, 2013; Sorvillo, 2014; Sorvillo 2019). The Catholic Church, which from the collections of the first Christian communities to the large charitable organizations of today such as Caritas, for centuries at the forefront in the fight against poverty, trying to help those who still suffer hunger and malnutrition in the world today.

The Catholic Church, through its activities, intends to give a stable and juridical character to the cooperation between religious authority and civil authority, to the common advantage of “faithful” and citizens” (Second Vatican Ecumenic Council, 1965, n. 82), aiming at the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by virtue of the provisions laid down for the centrality of the human person. This commitment is fuelled by the awareness that new processes in environmental and human resource management cannot always be integrated into models established by the outside world but from the local culture itself (Francis, 2015, n. 144). This delicate theme, however, was addressed not only by Pope Francis, but has characterized the social magisterium of previous Popes.

Paul VI, speaking about ecological problem, said that it is a dramatic consequence of the uncontrolled activity of the human being that through a reckless exploitation of nature, risks destroying it and being in turn the victim of such degradation (Paul VI, 1971, n. 21) warning that development is not only economic and material growth (Paul VI, 1967, n. 13), but the growth of the entire human person.

John Paul II, dwelling on the dramatic change in the environmental situation, pointed out that man « to see no other meaning in his natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption.» (John Paul II, 1979, n. 15), also noting that there is a need for an environmental conversion to achieve a real transformation of the human environment and then the urgency of a global ecological conversion. (John Paul II, 1991, n. 32).

Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* highlighted the problems of development in their energy facets, biotechnological, economic and political specifying that progress must be closely connected with man's duty to safeguard his relationship with nature and his resources. (Benedict XVI, 2009, n. 48).

Pope Francis with the encyclical *Laudato Si'* takes a clear position against the ecological danger that threatens the common home. Francis, dwelling on the current dangerous world crisis, places a strong emphasis on the need for an integral ecology, principle «inseparable from the notion of the common good», (Francis, 2015, n. 156) analyzing each side of the prism: environment, social, economy, energy, culture and daily life. Francis makes a strong complaint against the ecological degradation in which today creation pours, supporting with a firm hand the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals also through a partnership between religion and development which is able to concretely implement the objectives with them the 5 P in order to generate ethical objectives, which guarantee true integral development, as a specter of a new peace. (Francis, 2019)

3. The custody of Creation for Jews and Muslims

The Jewish and Islamic religious precepts in this matter are very similar to those elaborated by the Catholic Church, considering that all three great monotheistic religions firmly intend to safeguard a good quality of life on the planet, exhorting a greater responsibility of man. In Judaism the link between man and nature is very close and their precepts invite the faithful to respect the environment and creation.

The Hebrew sacred texts report the first example of urban planning or the prohibition to install particular productive activities in inhabited areas in order to protect the health of the environment and man. (Piccinni, 2013) The Letter of the Rabbis on the climate crisis of 2015 referring to the Torah, chapter 26 of Leviticus, recalls that if the behavior of man is careless towards Earth, it will be for nature to rest to our detriment, with drought, famine and exile that turns everyone into refugees. The Jewish teachings deny the prohibition of the cutting of the trees imposing the conservation of the natural state of the environment and its resources if such conducts are dissipatory and not strictly necessary. Most recently, on 22 October, Rabbi Michale Melchior at the conference held in Jerusalem said that Faith and Ecology, a carelessness for ecology and Creation is a crime against the Jewish religion itself. He said. In this struggle for a healthy change, the Islamic world also takes a strong stand for the care of the fragile balance of the Earth. At the meeting of the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium in Istanbul in 2015, the Islamic religious authorities denounced the need for urgent interventions for the care of Creation against climate change. At the meeting, the Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change noted that the teachings of Islam, in a vision of the human being as guardian of the Earth, serves as a guide for climate change.

In the Islamic tradition, man is considered a simple administrator (Khalifa) of creation, at the head of which is placed an obligation of surveillance and care of the environment. In the Islamic tradition, man is considered a simple administrator (Khalifa) of creation, at the head of which is placed an obliga-

tion of surveillance and care of the environment. They, in fact, subjugated by responsibility in the perspective of universal reunion (Fuccillo, 2019) reject the premise that human nature is guided only by profit and selfish carelessness to the detriment of the environment.

That is why with their Judaism and Islam precepts they can provide a new ecological approach that can give an inclusive social perspective of fundamental rights with more effective tools for achieving the objectives set for the 2030 Agenda, promoted by art. 13 of the Charter for a new covenant of virtues.

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LUDOVICA DECIMO

SACRED PLACES:
THE HERITAGE OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

SUMMARY: 1. International protection of place of worship. – 2. Religions and institutions: the perfect “alliance”. – 3. Another break in the wall: sharing place of worship.

1. *International protection of place of worship*

The free access to place of worship is one of the main manifestations of religious freedom. The limitation of the availability of sacred place or buildings for the faithful entails a compression of exercise of religious freedom. The sacred places are also part of the heritage of religious group.

Many international Charters and religious declaration protect and promote the places of worship from discrimination, abuse and violence. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 establishes the freedom to manifest, in isolation or in common, and both in public and in private, alone or in community with others and in public or private, his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The right to create, open and manage places or buildings for worship is also protected by art. 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Council of European Union has established that “*All persons have the right to manifest their religion or belief either individually or in community with others and in public or private in worship, observance, practice and teaching, without fear of intimidation, discrimination, violence or attack*”¹. Therefore, the

¹ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief*, 24 June 2013, p. 1. The document is

right to religious freedom includes also the right to establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship. The EU will encourage States to ensure the protection of religious heritage sites and places of worship, especially when groups of people gathered in these places face threats. In cases of acts of vandalism and desecration or destruction of religious sites, the EU and Member States missions shall endeavor to visit the sites and to bring public attention to the destruction and its consequences.

No aspect of freedom of religion is more central than freedom of worship. The OSCE indeed affirms that “*The freedom to worship includes, but is not limited to, the freedom to assemble in connection with a religion or belief and the freedom of communities to perform ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to their religion or belief, as well as various practices integral to these freedoms, including the building and maintenance of freely accessible places of worship, the use of ritual formulae and objects and the display of symbols*”².

The necessity to protect and promote sacred place has also been felt by the United Nations. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, in Article 18, states that “*1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.*

3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others”. The General Assembly of UN, in

available on website https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf.

² OSCE, *Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities*, 2014, available on website <https://www.osce.org/odihr/139046?download=true>.

1981, adopted a Declaration on religious tolerance³. In Article 6 (a), the document states the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief also includes the right «*to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes*». The United Nations has intervened several times in order to concretely protect freedom of worship and the right to a place for religious practices. In resolution no. 73/285 of 14 January 2019⁴, the General Assembly clarified that «*legal procedures pertaining to religious or belief-based groups and places of worship are not a prerequisite for the exercise of the right to manifest one's religion or belief and that such procedures, when legally required at the national or local level, should be non-discriminatory in order to contribute to the effective protection of the right of all*

³ The “*Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*” has been adopted by General Assembly of United Nations, resolution n. 36/55, 25 November 1981 (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ReligionOrBelief.aspx>).

⁴ A/RES/73/176, available on web site <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/176>. With regard to the protection of places of worship, the following documents are also noted:

- A/RES/55/254, 11 June 2011, relating the protection of sacred places, available on website <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/55/254>;
- A/RES/66/167, 27 March 2012, against the intolerance and religious discriminations, available on website <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/66/167>;
- A/RES/72/17, 7 December 2017, relating terrorist attacks against religious sites, available on website <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/17>;
- A/RES/73/285, 8 April 2019, relating acts of violence against religions, available on website <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/285>;
- A/RES/73/296, 3 June 2019, adopted on the day of the commemoration of the victims of religious violence, available on website <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/296>.

The Human Rights Council also intervened on this point with Resolution A/HRC/37/L.30 of 19 March 2018 (available on the website <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G18/066/61/PDF/G1806661.pdf?OpenElement>). In this document, the Council has encouraged states to take the necessary measures to prevent the destruction of religious buildings as they are part of people's cultural and spiritual heritage.

persons to practice their religion or belief, either individually or in community with others and in public or private». The governments must «guarantee minorities the right to establish and maintain their own places of worship and should allow them to build such facilities in places where new communities have taken root. Any limitations in this respect, for example urban development regulations, should be consistent with international jurisprudences»⁵.

Violations of religious freedom occur through obstructing acts of free availability of religious places and violent and destructive behavior in sacred sites. Religious places, in fact, constitute the first concrete expression in the social reality of the presence of religions. They therefore constitute the primary objective for damage the religious freedom of individuals.

The UN, on 12 September 2019, published a plan of action to safeguard religious sites⁶. The sacred places represent the history and traditions people. They must be respect and protect as place of peace and harmony where the faithful can practice their worship activities.

The UN's plan addresses not only governmental authorities and civil society but also religious leaders. They must work to promote respect and protection for religious pluralism. *“Religious leaders play a crucial role in building trust, fostering dialogue, stressing unity, solidarity, and mutual understanding, and in offering positive and moderate narratives in response to hatred and division. The active and sustained engagement of religious leaders to build and effectively communicate through all available channels a counternarrative to hatred and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism is crucial.*

⁵ A/RES/55/280/Add.1, par. 160, available on website <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5106055.1404953.html>.

⁶ UNITED NATION ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATION, *The United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites: In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship. “Rings of Peace”*, 12 September 2019, available on website <https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/12-09-2019-UNAOC-PoA-Religious-Sites.pdf>.

*Moreover, sustained collaboration among different religions through interreligious dialogue will contribute to reinforcing synergies and strengthening a consistent compelling narrative to respond to violent extremism and terrorist narratives*⁷.

2. Religions and institutions: the perfect “alliance” to protect sacred places

The religions are increasingly committed to promoting religious freedom and protecting place of worship. The “*Abu Dhabi Declaration*”, signed in Abu Dhabi on February 4, 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, affirms that the protection of religious buildings (synagogues, mosques and churches) “*is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, by international laws and conventions. Any attempt to attack places of worship or to threaten them through attacks or explosions or demolitions is a deviation from the teachings of religions, as well as a clear violation of international law*”.

In New York, on April 29, 2019, Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa of the *Muslim World League* and Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the *Appeal of Conscience Foundation* signed an interreligious cooperation agreement to promote peace, diversity and harmony⁸. The document has as its primary objective that of “raising the level” of protection of places of worship of any religious faith, so that the faithful have a safe and suitable space for exercising worship activities.

In recent years, the religious and governmental authorities of Muslim-majority countries have often intervened in order to encour-

⁷ UNITED NATION ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATION, *The United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites: In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship*. “*Rings of Peace*”, p. 9.

⁸ The document is available on web site
<http://www.appealofconscience.org/images/db/674-AgreementRASandDrAlIssaMuslimWorldLeague4.29.19.pdf>

age the concrete exercise of rights related to religious freedom. On May 31, 2019, Islamic law scholars gathered in Mecca to sign “*The Charter of Makkah*” to promote dialogue and religious pluralism.

On December 10, 2019 in Abu Dhabi was signed the document “*The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue*”⁹. In this document, Abrahamic religions commit themselves to countering attacks on sacred sites and any form of discrimination based on religious affiliation. The document aims to “*protect religious freedom, including diversity of religions, which guarantees justice and equality among all members of society*” and states that “*All ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities have the right to live without any persecution of any kind. Further, they have the right to live as full and equal citizens in their respective societies, drawing upon their most fundamental beliefs about virtue and morality to engage in the public life of those societies*”. The Charter highlights the necessity to respect different religions protecting the sacred symbols (art. 7).

In this perspective, “*The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue*” clearly aims to protect place of worship from terrorist attacks and to promote the construction of churches and synagogues. The denial of “free access” to places of worship, in fact, involves an indirect limitation of religious freedom. Each faithful has the right to live according to the rules of their religion and to have sacred places for the exercise of worship activities.

The religious Declarations have an immediate perceptiveness in religious systems. Furthermore, they are immediately understandable by institutions and societies. In this way, religions become precious allies of institutions and governments for the safeguard not only of freedom of worship, but for all human rights.

A virtuous example of collaboration between religions, governments and international institutions occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) asked reli-

⁹ The document is available on web site <https://www.allianceofvirtues.com/english/Charter.asp>.

religious organization for help in containing the spread of the virus¹⁰. “*They are a primary source of support, comfort, guidance, and direct health care and social service, for the communities they serve. Religious leaders of faith-based organizations and communities of faith can share health information to protect their own members and wider communities, which may be more likely to be accepted than from other sources. They can provide pastoral and spiritual support during public health emergencies and other health challenges and can advocate for the needs of vulnerable populations*”. The WHO invited religious leaders to adopt security measures in the places of worship (distancing, sanitation) during religious functions and to use IT tools for the exercise of freedom of worship.

All religions, in a spirit of collaboration, have responded to this appeal and have decided to close places of worship even during some important religious holidays. The Alliance of Virtue, in the document “*A Statement of Solidarity from the New Alliance of Virtue*”, has recommended “*following the instructions and guidance which best ensures the preservation of lives and the maintenance of the public good*” especially during Easter and Passover and the holy month of Ramadan.

The UAE’s fatwa on fasting and prayers in Ramadan 1441, 19 April 2020, rules that «*the Taraweeh prayers will not be allowed in mosques during Ramadan. [...] It stresses that performing Friday prayer is not permissible during the suspension of mosque services. Instead, Muslims should perform their Dhubr (noon) regular prayer at their homes*». The fatwa on Eid Al Fitr Prayers, 21 May 2020, states that Mosques will continue to remain closed during Eid Al Fitr and prayers should be performed at home, but the public will hear the call for Eid prayers to mark the religious fest while staying at home healthy and safe.

¹⁰ The document “*Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19. Interim guidance*”, 7 April 2020, is available on the web site <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19>.

The United Synagogue, on 17 March 2020, closed all its synagogues because of the Coronavirus. The Chief Rabbi pointed out that “*our Torah obligation to protect the sanctity of life transcends all other considerations*”. The closure of sacred place and suspension of religious rites by religious authorities was an important support for governments to face the COVID-19’s epidemic. The action of religions was also fundamental in guiding the faithful towards responsible behavior.

3. Another break in the wall: sharing place of worship

The intervention of religions for the protection of places of worship is a fundamental step to promote religious freedom. The precepts of religious Declaration can easily be translated into concrete instruments for protecting freedom of worship.

In juridical systems with a strong religious characterization, the support of religion law is necessary for the production of binding juridical norms. This may be the “right way” to follow to guarantee adequate protection of religious freedom in Islamic countries.

The reflections of these cooperation between religions could also occur in western legal systems, which are not immune from forms of religious discrimination and from injuries to freedom of worship. The positive values emphasized in the Declarations, induce the faithful to put in place conduct that conforms to them. Religions are alongside national and international institutions for the protection of fundamental human rights. All religion respect and protect the place of worship of other religions. Islam, for example, guarantees the protection of the houses of worship of Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims living in the Muslim state and their right to worship according to their faith. Holy Qur’an says: “*if God had not driven some people back by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where God’s name is mentioned much, would have been pulled down and destroyed*” (22: 40). ‘In fact, the name “Allah” has been used for God by Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians since the beginning of Islam until to-

day as the Jews and Christians worship the same God, however flawed their understanding may or may not be, is very significant and thus their worship deserves the protection of law. Even if we assume that the name of Allah is not invoked in the houses of worship of non-Muslims, they would still be entitled to the protection granted by Islam' (Gouda & Gutmann, 2019).

It is important promoting the place of worship not only with statement of principle but also through concrete rule. All religious groups, without any form of discrimination, have the right to established, maintained, and used sacred place (building or open space). This right cannot be subjected to discriminatory and excessively restrictive authorizing procedures or any form of abuse by civil institutions.

The construction and opening of place of worship of different religious tradition is an important instrument of integration and it supports the religious pluralism. Allowing religion to be visible in the public space is a means to encourages the intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

In this perspective, the sharing of place of worship is an extraordinary tool for promoting religious freedom. These practices are also an expression of other values such as solidarity, environmental protection and the enhancement of cultural and religious heritage.

The "worship's place sharing" is not only a measure of rationalization of economic and material resources; it favors the meeting in the same physical space of different religions and cultures. The sharing is a precious vehicle for religions to establish fruitful forms of dialogue and cooperation.

On September 21, 2019, the great monotheistic religions launched one of the projects of the "*Document on the Human Fraternity for Global Peace and Coexistence*": the construction in Abu Dhabi of the *Abrahamic Family House*. It is a complex consisting of a church, a mosque and a synagogue, which will share a single

space. The document¹¹, signed on February 4, 2019 by Pope Francis and Ahmad el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al Sharif, in Abu Dhabi, has as main objectives the dialogue between believers and the protection of places of worship, as a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, international laws and conventions. The *Abrahamic Family House*¹² has the aim of promoting interreligious dialogue and exchange between religious communities and promoting the principles of freedom of worship and peaceful coexistence between different faiths¹³.

The commitment of religions to the establishment an intercultural dialogue and the protection of fundamental freedoms is an important “example” for the faithful of any religion. Religious organizations therefore take on a decisive role in building a civil society based on respect for the inviolable values of the person.

¹¹ The Document is available on website http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

¹² The architect Sir David Adjaye OBE presented the designs of the Abrahamic Family House in New York. Each cult building has its own structural autonomy, but a large garden has been identified as a connection between them, which has an important image in all religious traditions. The three spaces of worship have the same dimensions but are oriented in the direction and contain structural elements inherited from the different traditions of faith. At the meeting in New York, the architect said that «architecture should work to enshrine the kind of world we want to live in, a world of tolerance, openness, and constant advancement... Our hope is that through these buildings people of all faiths and from across society can learn and engage in a mission of peaceful coexistence for generations to come». Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/09/26/middleeast/uae-abu-dhabi-the-abrahamic-family-house-ctw-intl/index.html>; <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2019-09/abrahamic-family-house-document-human-fraternity.html>

¹³ The construction of this complex in the United Arab Emirates highlights the willingness of political and religious leaders to open up to other religious faiths, protecting and promoting religious freedom. In June 2019, Abu Dhabi International Airport inaugurated the first multi-faith prayer room for passengers of all religions. Source: <https://www.abudhabiairport.ae/en/services-and-facilities/general/prayer-rooms>.

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ANGELA VALLETTA

FAMILY AND EDUCATION
IN MODERN ISLAMIC SOCIETY
THE NECESSITY OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

SUMMARY: 1. Cultural identity and multicultural society: the role of religions in promoting tolerance. – 2. The role of family in pluralist society. – 3. Intercultural education as a vehicle for understanding each other.

1. Cultural identity and multicultural society: the role of religions in promoting tolerance

One of the fundamental aspects contained in the Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue is the theme of family and education as necessary foundations to overcome differences and forms of discrimination against religious minorities. Confirming the fundamental principles of the Medina Charter and continuing along the lines of the Marrakech Declaration, the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue invites Muslim scholars to focus on these aspects in order to build societies based on affection, coexistence, communication, security and stability.

The Medina Charter recognised rights and freedoms towards religious minorities, the Marrakech Declaration requires that the recognition of rights and freedoms be followed by the effective inclusion of such religious groups in Islamic society. The Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue takes a step forward. It sets as its objective the search for a dialogue aimed at the peaceful coexistence of everyone, strongly supported by religions.

It is an alliance of virtue and values that must be shared by individuals in order to guarantee the freedom.

How is it possible to promote the principles of tolerance that are so necessary for the modern world? What is the role of religions? What is the role of institutions and family?

A pluralist society is not a society “tolerant” of diversity, but a society that is active in understanding cultural and religious differences. One of the negative consequences of “mere tolerance” is the marginalisation of certain cultural and religious communities from social life. Through the understanding of other cultures and inter-religious dialogue it is possible to create a society that is truly inclusive of cultural and religious differences. The model of a pluralist society does not necessarily imply the cancellation or alteration of traditions that characterize the identity of a country. The interactions between different societies and cultures are becoming increasingly dense and intricate.

A multicultural condition of human coexistence is nowadays emerging, wherein the fundamental coordinates in which the man conceives his existence, those of space and time, are shared and coexisted through ways of interpretation and intervention from different social and cultural horizons. The whole world is going to be proposed as a global multicultural society, characterized by the intensity of exchanges at all levels and the interdependence of economies due to scientific-technological progress, the speed of transportations and the immediacy of the long distance mass media communication. This notwithstanding, recent episodes of intolerance and violence in some countries demonstrate the persistence of racist instincts, attitudes and ideologies based on disinformation, prejudice and rejection of diversity, which inevitably feed selfish and particularistic closures.

It is therefore necessary to begin a process of search for new ways of thinking and living for the slow and laborious construction of a pathway that does not exclude anyone and requires the ability to re-read the concepts of cultural identity, ethnic identity, assimilation, integration, identity-alterity. It concerns overcoming a univocal, autarkic and self-referential view of world towards the direction of the development of a multicultural condition of human existence.

The cultural identity of a people is not something that is safeguarded, expressed and communicated within closed ethnic and territorial boundaries, rather something that is fed and developed in a constant comparison among different coexistent identities.

The solicitations coming from the need for balance between national identity and multicultural dimension, in view of a common enrichment based on respect, exchange, dialogue and reciprocity, also propose the urgency of the promotional, guiding and formative role both of the family and school. This can be instrumental in designing future scenarios in which different cultures open themselves to meeting and confrontation, in which cultural, social and genetic hybridization is accepted, giving rise to a society that seeks for ever increasing new spaces of communication, ready to overcome limits and conditioning of unilateral interpretations of reality.

2. The role of family in pluralist society

One of the objectives proposed by the Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue is to restore the importance of family as the true starting point for the promotion of virtue, justice, peace, civilization and tolerance¹.

The institute of family nowadays has become even more subject of study and socio-cultural analysis, as well as of research and political and religious insights. When we speak of Muslim world we do not speak of a monolithic cultural and religious block, but of a large and dynamic reality, of a very extensive cultural pluralism. Throughout history, Islam has been linked to very different peoples, languages and cultures, giving rise to particular and singular syntheses within heterogeneous social realities.

The family has been engaged, perhaps more than any other institution, by the wide, deep and rapid transformations of society and culture. It is the place where the first human relationships are born and formed: those between men and women and between parents and children. Relationships then developed with the processes of socialization of the individual through his or her insertion into society.

¹ Article 10 of the Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue.

Actually, the post-modern culture marked by relativism, for its features of functionality and complexity of relationships and exaltation of individual, hides and makes weak human relationships and interpersonal relations at every level.

Nowadays society is mainly interested in the functional and almost bureaucratic organization of social relations and individual rights, while it is not concerned with the anthropological and ethical aspects which are at the basis of habit and family institution.

This separation between public and private spheres, besides weakening the individual and his moral experience, makes difficult for institutions to rule legally many aspects of the individual's life on which they are called to decide without being able to rely on shared ethics and culture.

Because of the cultural, social and political changes that are still taking place, the family is called to perform rather arduous and complex tasks. Social changes are followed by changes in technology, its applications and introduction of new tools (information technology, telecommunications, internet) that force to re-define working lifestyles, free time, consumptions and relationships. Almost certainly, this shift of paradigm has its roots in the same process of globalization. It is a revolution that invests all fields of the society, from the economics, perhaps the most evident, to the reception of citizens coming from poor countries, to politics, work, rights, ecology, peace.

In these transformations and changes, family is called to play a fundamental role: forming and educating the citizens of tomorrow. The family in this difficult task must be assisted by school, by stata and religious institutions and by all actors of culture and sociality which must cooperate in synergy. It is therefore necessary learning to educate to diversity, to respect the other without losing sight about own cultural identity.

3. Intercultural education as a vehicle for understanding each other

In the last years, intercultural and interreligious competence

has become an indispensable element in some contexts ever more marked by significant linguistic and cultural pluralism, particularly in education.

Cultural diversity must be seen as a positive resource for the complex growth processes of society and people. It is certainly a daily challenge that can represent an important opportunity to re-discover own cultural identity, increasing the value of specificities of each one, as well as those common elements that lead to promote meetings and dialogues and, last but not least, to prevent and contrast forms of closure and “radicalism” by new generations.

Obviously, with respect to the spaces of everyday life, the school system, in particular, represents a public space where the practices of managing differences are reflected in the wider social scenario and, as educational space, it stands as place of experimentation and change, with a precise task: to educate living together through the enhancement of the different identities and cultural roots of each student. The aim is the realization of a cohesive citizenship bound to the values of national tradition, but also fed by a variety of expressions and personal experiences much richer than in the past.

Intercultural education involves a school project that aims to in the profound social transformations caused by the coexistence of different cultures, promoting the formation of knowledge and attitudes oriented towards the possibility of a dynamic relationship between cultures. Although the school educational attendance can not manage the change alone, it nevertheless represents an indispensable contribution in the perspective of overcoming ethnocentrism and preventing its ideological degeneration:

- the schooling of students from other cultures;
- the intercultural education of students even in the absence of foreign students in the classroom;
- the prevention of racism and anti-Semitism;
- the protection of minorities and their cultural and linguistic heritage.

It is well known that each one of us, identifying ourselves with our own group, consciously or unconsciously, refers to it as a privi-

leged or exclusive reference. The child in particular starts from the attitude according to which his or her own culture is obvious and natural, the only possible one, the undisputed foundation of his or her own hierarchies of values, the source of every possible criterion of judgement. Even if social changes bring him/her into contact with different mentalities, the culture of belonging is integral part of his/her personality, a reference framework of knowledge, behaviour, values. Intercultural education aims to reach a constructive dialectic between identity and otherness, removing the concept of diversity understood as inferiority, social danger, synthesis of the negative.

The path is not only cognitive and intellectual, but invests the construction of the oneself. The question assumes, therefore, especially for childhood and adolescence, a general relevance that affects the overall development of personality.

The importance of the dialectic identity/alterity has become visible in recent times, when intense change and increasing levels of contradiction and conflict have made the formative processes more complex, requiring each person to have a firm self-perception and, at the same time, a plasticity appropriate to the rhythms of change.

In this framework, the action of the school should embrace:

- promotion of attitudes inspired by mutual understanding, tolerance, critical judgement, respect for traditions and solidarity;
- rejection of all xenophobic and racist manifestations;
- creation of moments of linguistic help for the most disadvantaged and the mastery of communication skills in Italian;
- support for immigrant families to understand how the school system works and functions;
- inclusion in the curricula of topics relating to foreign cultures present in the regions of the schools;
- search for interdisciplinary connections aimed at enhancing the culture and traditions of others;
- opening to representatives of foreign communities, so that they can carry out collaborative and supporting functions, also as witnesses called to tell about the ways of life, habits, conceptions

of their culture and what it means, as an ethnic minority, to live in a given country;

- comparison with all the multicultural moments other than school, in which the different institutes can participate with their students (music, theatre, exhibitions, demonstrations, etc.).

Finally, intercultural education in schools has the aim of promoting, supporting and strengthening training in understanding, cooperation, overcoming prejudices and stereotypes, acquiring conceptual elements on the anthropological nature of human cultures, availability towards other peoples and their cultures, and the correct construction and mastery of the principle of identity.

While not fully equating Muslim and non-Muslim citizens, it is not excluded that the objective proposed by the Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue can still be achieved: to educate to “inclusive” citizenship².

Only through an education of society is it possible to imagine an inclusive citizenship. Only through the ability to understand different cultures and religions is it possible to achieve an effectively pluralistic society.

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² Article 11 of the Charter of the new Alliance of Virtue: “*The field of Education. It should include: 1. A defence of the inseparability between development of character and education, and the fact that pedagogical methods should contain ethical references. In this way, behaviour would be refined both at individual and social level. 2. Action to reform and develop religious education in order to keep pace with modern developments in other fields, including, for example, what is contained in the 2009 Abu Dhabi Interreligious Tolerance Teaching Guidelines*”.

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FEDERICO GRAVINO

THE ACTION OF CHARTER OF NEW ALLIANCE
OF VIRTUE IN THE DOMAIN OF HUMANITARIAN WORK

SUMMARY: 1. Migrations and humanitarian crises: the approach of religious laws – 2. Religious precepts and hospitality: what protection for immigrants and refugees? – 3. Perspectives for implementing art. 12 of Charter of new Alliance of Virtue: humanitarian corridors.

1. Migrations and humanitarian crises: the approach of religious laws

Poverty, social violence, conflicts and persecutions are among the factors of considerable growth in migrations.

Voluntary and involuntary exodus of thousands of men and women exposes these to critical life situations.

Migratory flows therefore cause “monumental” humanitarian crises (Ki-moon, 2016). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes a situation of constant increase in humanitarian needs¹, caused by the absence of security conditions in countries where hundreds of people are displaced.

Continuously national and international institutions are concerned about identifying possible strategies to deal problems posed by these dynamics (Botti, 2017). For this way, in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, OCHA promotes coordination mechanisms and processes that are open for participation to all relevant local and global humanitarian actors.

In fact in 2018 member States of United Nations General Assembly have signed the Global Compact on Refugees to respond

¹ The *Global Report on Internal Displacement* (GRID), published by Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, estimated that in 2019 45,7 million people lived in internal displacement as a result of conflicts and violence in 61 countries (Syria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen and Afghanistan); 33,4 million of new displacements, some 8,5 million in Syria, Ethiopia, Sudan and Burkina Faso.

to exodus and crises of refugees, for the benefit of both the refugees themselves and the communities that host them. The Pact is based on the principles of humanity and international solidarity and it is an instrument to guarantee the division of States' responsibilities in favor of the protection and assistance of refugees. Its structure is characterized by three domains: admission and hospitality of refugees in host States; address the specific needs of refugees and support host communities; prospecting of medium and long-term solutions in the States of origin by taking on commitments from international community.

The essential elements in the cooperation between States of origin, transit and arrival ones are protection of human life and reduction of vulnerability profiles of migratory movements, prohibition of discrimination, attention to gender issues and to the child's interest, improvement of reception conditions and enhancement of factors leading to integration in host States.

The attention for migratory flows pushes to look also at States of origin to favor their development conditions (Ferri, 2019).

However migrant or who is forced to migrate is also a synthesis of a specific social, cultural, religious and legal context (Anzieu, 2017). In this perspective subject's migration doesn't only translate into a physical movement but it involves its "historically determined" being (Ponzio, 2013). It consists of rules, values and institutions that determine man's uniqueness within a tradition (Hali, 2016).

In this area of references, religious laws have an important place, as they orient direct faithful's choices and actions and can influence economic-juridical systems (Fuccillo, 2016). They are also called to answer to the challenges posed by migrations (Nordquist, 2013). In fact religions are considered "social actors" (Naso, 2018), because they are able to guarantee services that often civil systems aren't able to offer. It creates spaces of integration to protect migrants.

Protection of human dignity is common to Abrahamic faiths and generally to all faiths. Indeed each man was created in God's image and likeness. It allows to affirm the universal dignity of all

people (Wiener, 2020). There isn't distinction between people who matter and not ones, but God "created mankind to form one family" (Francis, 2016).

This perspective favors religions' intervention in the humanitarian domain. Therefore the principle of solidarity and State-religions cooperation are filled with new values in defence of citizens-faithful's rights (Fuccillo, 2020).

Migrant-human being is the common element of religions and States. Therefore belonging to a community leaves space for the duty to guarantee a minimum content of legal assets, that have their own protection in civil and confessional systems (Corsi, 2015). So these are inspired by a purpose of integration and reception, which enhance the human potential offered by migrants to integrate them within society.

The aim is to guarantee each individual the protection of dignity, that is independent of belonging to a social and political community (Ronchetti, 2012) and identifies the uniqueness of subject, enhancing its diversity compared to any other living being.

2. Religious precepts and hospitality: what protection for immigrants and refugees?

The article 12.1 of Charter of new Alliance of Virtue invites Abrahamic religions to "*promoting and propagating the virtues of hospitality, good Samaritanism, sheltering refugees and immigrants ...*".

The promotion of hospitality had already been affirmed by the Alliance of Virtue, convened in 7th century in Mecca: "*We'll be one hand with oppressed and against the oppressor until he'll receives what belongs to him, as long as the sea lasts and the mountains Thabīr e Hirā' are fixed in their place. We'll give mutual sustenance*" (Kathīr, 1990).

Migrations represent a common element to Abrahamic religious traditions (Bovati, 2019). Therefore they favor the action of religious laws to promote tools effectively implementing the principle of hospitality.

Sacred Scripture tell of fleeing people from persecution². They are forced to migrate to a promised land to seek well-being, peace and future. On the other hand, the *hijrah*, Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, represents the event from which Muslims mark their time.

Therefore migrants and refugees constitute an observatory of particular attention for religious denominations. In this perspective, religious precepts have always supported the principle of hospitality, asking the faithful to be open to migrants.

The duty of hospitality that guides Catholics' behaviors and decisions relative to migrants (Campese, 2017) is expressed through Christ's word "*I was a foreigner and you hosted me*" (Mt. 25,35). The action of Catholic Church is therefore oriented to improve the global management of human mobility and to fight against the exploitation of migrants and refugees: hospitality becomes "*locus theologicus*" of meeting between God and faithful (Campese, 2018).

Torah precept "*Do not give back to his master a servant who has gone in flight from his master and come to you. Let him go on living among you in whatever place is most pleasing to him: do not be hard on him*" (Dt. 23,15-16), invites Jews, mindful of past experiences (Moske Somekh, 2014) to "*do not be hard on the man from a strange country who is living among you; for you have had experience of the feelings of one who is far from the land of his birth, because you yourselves were living in Egypt, in a strange land*" (Ex. 23,9).

Islam emphasizes the sacredness of the guest and the duty of hospitality, stating that "*Righteousness ... gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask, and for freeing slaves; establishes prayer and gives zakah; fulfill their promise when they promise; and are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous*" (sura 2, verse 177). Who welcome be-

² Old Testament references about immigrant's condition of Jewish people are different: Gn. 17,8; Gn. 23,4; Lv. 19,33-34; Lv. 25,23; Sal. 38,13.

come virtuous and who are welcomed benefit not only from men's protection but also God's one (Monge, 2017).

Therefore the close relationship between religions and migrations places the first ones among the institutions called to answer to challenges posed by the second ones. In fact they represent a factor of social stabilization (Marchetto, 2011).

Human rights, which migrants are owners of, have an universal nature. In this perspective, setting up suitable tools to protect dignity of each person is (also) up to religious denominations. Hospitality principle, promoted by the Charter of new Alliance of Virtue, has therefore its goal in protecting the dignity of mankind.

3. Perspectives for implementing art. 12 of Charter of new Alliance of Virtue: humanitarian corridors

“... lifting up the poor, alleviating hunger and suffering, protecting the vulnerable, providing necessary care and helping anyone in need wherever and whoever they may be”.

The article 12.1 of Charter of new Alliance of Virtue opens the field of action of Abrahamic religions also to humanitarian interventions and to *“an escalation of humanitarian efforts, such as alleviating hunger”* (art. 12.2).

However, the recipients of Charter aren't only religious denominations expressly stated within it. In fact the Charter has an universal value, *“asserting that collaboration between people of all religious faiths or beliefs provides an effective vehicle to strengthen the foundations of peace in the world”.*

In particular, they have an important role in refugees' reception phase, through forms of protection that offer to migrants a double guarantee, civil one (as man), religious one (as faithful). There are several religious institutions operating at Italian and international level for this purpose.

In this perspective, Waldensian Church offers a real implementation of the commitment required of Abrahamic religions (Maselli, 2007). Its effort in the protection of migrants translates into a media-

tion between them, arrival companies and original ones in terms of reception, protection, respectability and resources (Hirschman, 2004).

Migrants and refugees represent for Waldensian Church a constant: “our history, the history of our little community of faithful, the history of latin protestants is a history of exiles and persecuted” (Waldensian Diaconia, 2017).

The action of the Waldensian Church has resulted in humanitarian corridors. The projects are “Emergenza Nord Africa”, borned in Italy in 2011 to give hospitality to five Tunisians and the inclusion in SPRAR. It allowed in 2018 the adoption of an operating manual for activation and management of reception and integration services for applicants and holders of international protection. In this way, it had defined reception as the set of interventions that include the most organizational and management aspects (food, accomodation, pocket money).

The exemple offered by Waldensian Church allows to extend to other religious communities the principle of “responsibility to protect”, which already weighs on States. These have the task of protecting their own population from any crime or action that deprive man of his fundamental rights (Hollenbach, 2019).

It is necessary to respond to the “monumental crisis” caused by migration with a “monumental solidarity” (Ki-moon, 2016): certainly it is favored by the contribution that Abrahamic religious traditions gave to human rights movement.

For this reason, eminent personalities belonging to various religious denominations produced the important document “A Statement of Solidarity of the New Alliance of Virtue” on April 15th, 2020.

The spread of pandemic Covid-19 has indeed prompted Abrahamic religions’ action for “the unity of mankind, solidarity and harmony in the defence of each soul”, because “each soul represents mankind”.

The humanitarian action of religions assumes that religious leaders have a constructive role in promoting ethical rules and principles for the faithful. Their respect, in addition to promoting religiously oriented actions, also allows the recognition of human

rights that “*exist prior to the State and inhere human being by virtue of his or her existence*” (art. 1.5).

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RAFFAELE SANTORO

THE CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE
AND THE PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL
AGREEMENTS AND CONCORDATS

SUMMARY: 1. International agreements and global security in Article 9 of the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue. – 2. The bilateral agreements signed between the Holy See and Islamic States. – 3. The Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue and the possible opening of new frontiers of the concordat dynamics between the Holy See and Islamic States.

1. International agreements and global security in Article 9 of the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue

International relations have always been the privileged place for establishing world peace (Girasoli).

In international agreements, the signatory states develop a common platform of converging intent in many areas that are then the basis for the development of a more just, equitable and solidarity-based society, at the centre of which is the person with his or her fundamental rights.

The promotion of human rights in the international arena, including the so-called third generation (solidarity rights), is a structural element of human dignity (Rodotà), a factor that knows no national boundaries.

For this reason, the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue*, signed in Abu Dhabi on the occasion of the Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies, held in Abu Dhabi on 7-10 December 2019, in article 9, establishes that the signatories support international agreements and concordats whose aim is to elevate human dignity and virtues because:

1) they are a source of international law and norms. They can contribute to global security;

2) they constitute an important means to promote peaceful cooperation between nations with their varying political, social, and economic systems;

3) they embody the concept of “contractual” citizenship that is central to this Charter.

This norm assumes great importance in the current global context because international agreements have a central function for the protection of human rights.

Such protection must be a strong commitment of all States because they are also linked to the social growth and economic development of a country (Fuccillo).

The reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights present in *the Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue* is an expression of their nature as linked, not to a concession, but to a recognition of that which already belongs to the ontological status of the human person (Girasoli). Promoting the development of international relations, through agreements and concordats, is therefore a duty, and not merely an option, of States.

Support for the signing of international agreements and concordats aimed at elevating human dignity and virtues is also directly related to the dynamics of modernization of multiple state systems in different areas of the world.

For this reason, the concrete implementation of the provisions of Article 9 of the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue* is an important opportunity to harmonize the systems of multiple Islamic States with the standards defined in the international ambit for the protection of human rights.

Among the UN international conventions, for example, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are of central importance.

In the current global context, the numerous agreements pro-

moting environmental protection and sustainable development are also very important, in the wake of what has also been formulated by the major religions (Sorvillo).

For this reason, the commitment to the New Alliance of Virtue enshrined in Article 9 of the *Charter* is of absolute importance, in the full awareness that cooperation between States in the international arena is one of the main instruments for strengthening world peace.

2. The bilateral agreements signed between the Holy See and Islamic States

Among the international agreements supported by Article 9 of the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue*, the concordats signed by the Holy See are of significant importance, constituting a very effective instrument for the protection of the religious freedom of Christians present in different parts of the world.

With particular reference to the dynamics of concordats with Islamic countries, the Holy See, with respect to its international activity, inaugurated a series of concordats with Islamic States on 27 June 1964, by signing a “Convention with annexes” with Tunisia.

After the signing of the *modus vivendi* with Tunisia, in 1983, there was the exchange of Letters between the King of Morocco Hassan II and John Paul II, on the legal position of the Catholic Church in Morocco (Astorri).

This important act is based on John Paul II’s desire to expand the reach of diplomatic relations with new realities (Cantori). In this case, the bilateral activity of the Holy See was standard operating procedure, at that time, for a country whose constitution declared Islam to be the State religion, together with the guarantee for the free exercise of religion (art. 6).

On the other hand, the concordat was the instrument used to regulate relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In this Agreement, signed on 24 September 1998, a significant step forward was made with respect to the provisions for relations with Tunisia and Morocco, since the principle of independence and autonomy, even if not expressly mentioned, is underlying the entire regulatory framework, in whose preamble the Parties refer to the principle of respect and non-interference in their respective internal affairs (Ferrari, Santoro).

Subsequently, the *Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the Palestine Liberation Organization* of 25 February 2000 was signed, followed by the *Comprehensive Agreement with the State of Palestine* of 26 June 2015 (Carobene, Martin De Agar).

This was followed by the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the legal status of the Catholic Church, signed on 29 April 2011. This Agreement represents one of the structural building blocks of State-Church relations within a country that, by reason of its being a gateway between East and West.

These bilateral agreements were followed by the *Memorandum of Understanding* between the Secretariat of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait on the conduct of bilateral consultations, signed on 10 October 2015, and the *Memorandum of Understanding* between the Secretariat of State and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the mutual exemption of entry visas for holders of diplomatic passports and special (official and special service) passports, dated 15 September 2016.

In the wake of the *Marrakech Declaration*, the declaration signed by the participants in the Conference on “Freedom, Citizenship, Diversity and Integration”, which took place in Al-Azhar from 28 February to 1 March 2017, is also of significant importance for the Catholic faithful living in Muslim majority states.

The Declarations of Al-Azhar and that of Marrakech represent a bridge between two different civilizations, having taken an important step towards the construction of an effective protection of religious minorities in Islamic States (Fuccillo).

These two Declarations are directly related to the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue* in a broader framework of fundamental rights protection that underpins global security.

3. *The Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue and the possible opening of new frontiers of the concordat dynamics between the Holy See and Islamic States*

The signing of agreements between the Holy See and Islamic States is fully in line with the post-conciliar approach to concordat dynamics, aimed at promoting the constant expansion of relations with new countries (Regoli).

Also in the present global context, the broadening of concordat activity is directly connected with the expansion of the diplomatic relations of the Holy See (Dalla Torre).

In regulating matters of common interest strictly connected to the exercise of religious freedom, the concordat instrument has proved its own plasticity positively, evidenced by its compatibility even with Islamic States that have not experienced a process of separation between religion and institutional public space.

The great religions have always assumed an important historical and cultural role, from which their growing influence in people's lives and on the public level has been achieved (Ferry). They are entrusted, especially in contemporary society, with the task of promoting an ethic of solidarity and respect for the "neighbour", as a necessary condition for peace building and consolidation.

The emphases present in art. 9 of the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue* are directly connected with the possible development of concordats between the Holy See and Islamic countries, as proof of the positive and constructive role that religion in general has in the building of society.

This can represent one of the ways to strengthen peace among peoples (Buonomo), since society and the law produced by it must be inspired by the values of which the human person is the bearer, considered integrally, in its material and spiritual components (Martino).

In this particular context, the concordat is able to change its systematic nature, becoming an instrument of protection of the Catholic Church in those States where it exists as a religious minority.

The development of the bilateral activity of the Holy See in these territories adds a new chapter to the science of the concordat (Catalano), since it can certainly constitute a fundamental element for the construction of an inclusive citizenship (Decimo) able to place the person and his inviolable dignity at the center of legal systems in which, since Islam is the State religion (Parolin), it is not admitted between religion and politics.

The action of the Catholic Church in the world also translates into a fruitful encounter with other cultures (De Paolis). For this reason, in the concordat activity of the Holy See one of the structural elements of its mission can be found, contributing also to building solid foundations for security and peace in the world, as also promoted by the *Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue*.

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ANTONIO FUCCILLO, MIRIAM ABU SALEM, LUDOVICA DECIMO

PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF RELIGIOUS SITES
A WAY TO SAFEGUARD RELIGIOUS FREEDOM¹

The right to attend places of worship represents a manifestation of religious freedom. Therefore, the possibility to attend holy sites and places of worship has an impact on the effective exercise of the right to manifest religious belief. Nowadays, it is necessary to find new and more effective tools to protect religious sites in order to both ensure an effective protection of religious freedom and the right to worship safely and the preservation of cultural heritage. In fact, the last years, the increasing of xenophobia and the instrumental use of religion to justify terrorist attacks in places of worship has put a strain on the effectiveness of the right to religious freedom. Therefore, it is necessary to act on several key aspects: it is necessary to free the religious message from historical conditionings and instrumental readings, promote interfaith dialogue and take the appropriate legal measures to ensure the right of faithfuls to attend to holy sites and places of worship.

The right to attend place of worship is internationally recognized. In this sense, art. 18 of the UDHR affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion which includes freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The same right is recognized by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights when states that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching” and by the European Conven-

¹ This report was presented by Professor Antonio Fuccillo during the 6th Annual Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies in Abu Dhabi, 10th of December 2019, elaborated with the collaboration of PhD Miriam Abu Salem and PhD Ludovica Decimo.

tion on Human Rights which protects among other things the right to found and maintain places of worship (art. 9).

In 2010, UNESCO - moving by the consideration that religious sites constitute a relevant part of the World Heritage properties - organized a seminar on the role of religious communities in the management of religious sites inscribed in the World Heritage List. The participant adopted unanimously a Statement on the protection of religious properties within the framework of the World Heritage Convention. The document recognized the role played by religious communities in the “creation, maintenance, and continuous shaping of sacred places, and the custodial role played by them in caring for these as living heritage” (point 4) and suggested the improvement of the dialogue and the mutual cooperation between the religious communities and all other stakeholders (States authorities, professionals and experts in relevant fields...) “who must work together to preserve the significance of cultural, mixed and natural heritage sites associated with the sacred” (point 8).

After the attacks to Muslim community in Christchurch, the United Nations Secretary-General – Antonio Gutierrez – asked the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) to develop a Plan of Action for safeguarding religious sites. The UN on the basis of article 18 of UDUR and resolution A/RES/73/285 which strongly deplores all acts of violence against people on the basis of their religion or belief and such acts directed against places of worship, as well as all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines that are in violation of international law; and of resolution A/RES/72/17, which urges all Member States to take all appropriate measures to combat hatred, intolerance and to encourage tolerance, adopted the Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites.

The Plan provides some recommendations to support stakeholders in the prevention of possible attacks against religious sites (prevention, education, dialogue/interfaith activities and communication strategies focused on the prevention of violent extremism).

In the last decades, the right to religious freedom and the protection and promotion of religious sites become central also in the

Muslim world as demonstrated by a great number of Declarations adopted by Muslim Countries.

The Marrakesh Declaration, adopted in January 2016, reaffirms the framework of the Charter of Medina, which recognizes diversity and freedom of religion for all, regardless of faith and establishes the principle of equality in rights and responsibilities of all citizens. Moreover, the Declaration identifies the cooperation among religions as the key instrument to overcome mutual tolerance and respect and to providing protection for the rights and liberties of all religious groups.

Another important achievement in the protection of religious freedom is the Bahrain Declaration (2017) which states that “religious faith and expression are basic inalienable rights” because God gave “the divine gift of freedom of choice”. Therefore, compelled observance is forbidden, and people have the freedom to practice their religion. This freedom includes “the right to congregate to worship, educate, celebrate, and practice the requirements of their respective faiths. It is the responsibility of governments to respect and protect equally, both religious minorities and majorities. Neither should be subjected to threats, shame or incitement nor should they be discriminated against as a result of their faith. Those in positions of authority must ensure that individuals who leave their homes for their houses of worship can do so without fear of intimidation, violence, or worse” (point IV).

An important step in this way is also represented by the Islamabad Declaration (2019), signed during a meeting organized by the Pakistan Ulema Council. This document affirms that Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, and notes that “it is the responsibility of the government to ensure the protection of the life of non-Muslim citizens in Pakistan”. This could represent a turning point towards religious minorities because the document recognizes that all citizens “have the constitutional right to live in the country following their cultural and religious principles” which includes the right for religious groups to ask civil authorities to ban “any material (books, pamphlets, audio) that incites religious hatred” and to punish anyone that threatens “the sacred places of non-Muslims”.

The Mecca Document, adopted in May 2019, emphasizes the values of tolerance and equality and denounce all forms of discrimination against the other. The document encourages the adoption of laws against preachers who sow the seeds of violence and hatred.

The right to attend religious sites, which is a manifestation of religious freedom, can be read in connection with the Qu'ran (22:40). This verse plays an important role regarding the places of worship of the Religion of the Book at least for two reasons. First of all, Islam respects other religions as demonstrated by giving to churches, synagogues and mosques the same dignity/importance. Secondly, Islam prohibits attacking the places of worship of Christianity and Judaism. Starting from this verse, all madhab agree that *dhimmis* have the right to repair their temples because forbidding them from doing so would lead to the destruction of these places.

A Maliki jurist, Shehab Ad-Deen Al-Qarafi stated that: "The covenant of protecting *dhimmis* imposes upon Muslims certain obligations towards them. They are our neighbors, under our shelter and protection upon the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), and the religion of Islam. Whoever transgresses against them, even with a mere word of injustice or insult against any non-Muslim, has breached the Covenant of Allah, His Messenger, and his or her conduct would be considered counter to the teachings of Islam."

Moreover, in the hadith reported by Al-Bayhaqi, Abu Bakr gives orders to his governors, saying, "Do not drown or burn date palm trees; do not kill an animal or a fruit tree; do not destroy markets; do not kill children, old men, or women. You will find some people who have retired in places of worship, so leave them there to practice in peace."

The Washington Declaration (2018) states that "All people, regardless of faith, are entitled to religious liberty. There is no room for compulsion in religion, just as there are no legitimate grounds for excluding the followers of any religion from full and fair participation in society". People from all sectors of the society

share a responsibility to promote inter-cultural understanding and at the same time to impede the propagation of false or defamatory information toward the members of any ethnic, racial, or religious group.

The importance of the interfaith dialogue is also confirmed by the Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living together signed by Pope Francis and the Imam of Al-Azhar which with reference to religious sites states that “The protection of places of worship - synagogues, churches and mosques - is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings or destruction, is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law”

The Agreement To Unite Efforts For Protection Of Religious Sites Worldwide signed by Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the Founder and President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in April 2019 is another important initiative, which contains a call upon all people, nations and leaders to ensure the sanctity of religious sites as essential to our common humanity, under the guiding principle of the safety of everyone to pray, gather for worship, or remember the death people.

Recently, in line with the interfaith cooperation, the new trend is the creation of shared worship places in order to ensure both the right to religious freedom and the interfaith dialogue. In this sense, for example The Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi will serve as a place of individual worship and also for inter-religious dialogue. The structure incorporates worship spaces for each religion as well as a shared space for collaboration and peaceful coexistence. In the same way goes The House of One in Berlin which consists of three separate sections (a Church, a Mosque and a Synagogue) linked by a communal room in the center of the building.

In order to guarantee religious freedom and promote peace and tolerance some airport have a prayer and meditation room.

As mentioned above, to better protect holy sites is necessary

the cooperation between leaders of different religions and between religious communities and State authorities. In this sense, in 2009, The Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, One World in Dialogue, Religions for Peace and Search for Common Ground proposed to establish a *Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites*. The project has involved religious leaders from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe and the Middle East, politicians and representatives of civil society and it ended in 2011 with the adoption of the *Universal Code*. The Code offers practical guidelines for safeguarding holy sites and for promoting peace and reconciliation between people from different ethnic and religious communities. The aim of the Code is to protect Holy Sites from all kind of violence and desecration. The implementation of the Universal Code is based on interreligious cooperation and collaboration with authorities leading to the implementation of activities for the protection of sacred places.

The viability of the *Universal Code* is tested by some field projects. These projects can include educational activities, monitoring, research, joint visits, involvement of local leaders and liaising with the police and the judiciary system to ensure the enforcement of laws. Till now field projects are being carried out in Bosnia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Holy Land.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of involving religions in the protection and promotion of religious sites. The interfaith dialogue and cooperation between different religions could ensure from one side the protection of religious freedom, from another can guarantee that sacred places won't be desecrated or damaged. In fact, only by a mutual dialogue we can combat hatred and intolerance and stop violent attacks to religious places.

In order to do so our wish is the adoption of an Universal Legal Status on the Protection of Religious Sites which clearly defines sacred places and sacred spaces, ensure to the faithfuls the right to use both of them and predisposes some guarantees, including for example the consideration of religious sites as "free zone" or tax benefit for the construction and maintenance of holy places.

Appendix

CHARTER OF THE NEW ALLIANCE OF VIRTUE

PREAMBLE

The signatories of this Alliance,

AFFIRMING the shared values of the Abrahamic faiths, as well as the rights with which all human beings are naturally endowed;

ASSERTING that religions of the Abrahamic family have common and distinct theological and ethical traditions, each of which values human virtues, and each of which requires peace and mutual respect and tolerance in order to flourish;

ASSERTING that collaboration between people of all religious faiths or beliefs provides an effective vehicle to strengthen the foundations of peace in the world;

ASSERTING that an alliance among people of all faiths, each drawing upon his or her respective tradition to elevate the virtues conducive to respect, tolerance, and peace, can help extinguish the flames of war and defeat the agents of terror and conflict;

RECALLING that in important instances the institution of accords and charters, historically, have had great impact upon international relations and the establishment of peace, justice, liberty, and tolerance;

RECALLING that among such accords historically was the Alliance of Virtue, which was convened in 7th century Mecca; Recalling that another such accord was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was promulgated in 1948;

CONSIDERING the current state of global affairs, and recalling that religion continues to play a vital role in global governance and cultural diplomacy, there is a dire need for a 21st Century Alliance of Virtue;

BUILDING UPON international law and the resolutions of the United Nations;

BUILDING UPON the Amman Message (Nov 2004), the “Common Word” open letter (Oct 2007), the Marrakesh Declaration for the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority Lands (Jan. 2016), the Washington Declaration of the Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good (Feb. 218), Human Fraternity Declaration (Feb. 2019), Makkah Declaration (May 2019), and;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Roman Catholic Church’s Declaration of Religious Freedom which laid the foundation for the Roman Catholic Church to recognize religious freedom for other people based on human dignity;

ACKNOWLEDGING also other declarations affirming the values expressed in this Charter and their importance in various religious traditions and denominations;

INSPIRED BY the American Peace Caravan in Abu Dhabi (May 2017), Rabat (Oct 2017), and the numerous conferences in which the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim societies has participated;

CONSIDERING the recommendations from the five annual assemblies of the Forum for Promoting Peace (2014-2018), which inspired the New Alliance of Virtue;

Hereby endorse The Charter of a New Alliance of Virtue

SECTION ONE DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

Article 1 – Definitions

Definitions This Charter includes the following terms:

1. **Alliance of Virtue** refers, from the Islamic perspective, to the pre-Islamic pact that was founded on virtue, honorable character, and the noble values held in common among the human family regardless of tribal, ethnic, or religious affiliation.

2. **New Alliance of Virtue** refers to the covenant detailed in this Charter; it calls for the elevation of virtues as understood by the three Abrahamic religions in the service of peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding between all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, or religion.

3. **Abrahamic Family** refers to the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths, but lifts up values shared by so many of the world's faith traditions.

4. **Strands of virtue** refers to those people who hold on to the shared values of humanity, and who love peace, justice, tolerance, and respect for all people.

5. **Rights:** There are at least two ways to conceptualize human rights. One is rights created by governments, which are of most value when they apply to all and reflect norms of human dignity and justice. Another is rights that exist prior to the state and inhere in each human being by virtue of his or her existence. Such rights are typically understood as deriving from a greater-than-human source, such as God or nature, for the believer or non-believer. These rights must be acknowledged and protected by any just state. They should be understood as necessary to human dignity, as well as social flourishing.

6. **Values:** Values have two dimensions: personal virtues, such as mercy and altruism, and civic virtues, such as hospitality, neighborliness, solidarity, and aid to those in need. Societies should foster both dimensions and organize societies in accordance with such humanitarian values.

Note: The definitions above are not necessarily the significations of the terms as they are used in other contexts.

Article 2 – Scope

1. The signatories of this Charter, whether from the Abrahamic Family or other belief traditions, commit themselves to live by the values contained herein.

2. Nothing in this Charter violates the authority of nations, nor does it contravene their observed laws consistent with Article 29 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

SECTION TWO MOTIVATIONS

Article 3

The motivations for the New Alliance of Virtue include:

1. The increasing cases around the world regarding religious persecution and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, and attacks on places of worship, as noted in the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief,” (A/HRC/RES/16/18, 2011).

2. The false accusation that religion qua religion is inherently violent and thus responsible for the phenomenon of terrorism. Violent extremist and intolerant forms of religion threaten freely-embraced and freely-exercised religion.

3. The conviction that we indeed have shared values -- universals that transcend culture, era, or region -- and that they must be actualized. The shared values of the Abrahamic religions include, in particular, faith, kindness, prudence, and a belief in universal human dignity.

4. Existential angst resulting from: the modern loss of transcendence, a development model whose materialist premises ignores the needs and moral well-being of the world’s inhabitants, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

5. Globalization, with the resultant tension between a globalized reality dominated by standardization, the hegemony of secularism, and consumerism and the provincialism of customs and beliefs of many societies grappling with the new conditions.

6. A technocratic mentality that greatly influences technological advancements, some of which, rather than being applied for the betterment of humankind, have the potential for immoral applications that may violate human dignity and may disrupt the ecological balance.

7. Economics divorced of a moral framework, as well as the uncoupling of *homo economicus* from *homo religiosus*, thereby replacing the human and spiritual with the corporeal and material.

SECTION THREE
PRINCIPLES

Article 4

The New Alliance of Virtue is built upon the following principles:

1. **Human Dignity**

- All people, irrespective of their diverse races, religions, languages, and ethnicities, by virtue of the divine soul breathed into them, are endowed with dignity by their Omnipotent Creator.

2. **Freedom of Conscience and Religion or Belief**

- There is no compulsion in religion.
- It is the responsibility of the state to protect religious freedom, including diversity of religions, which guarantees justice and equality among all members of society.

3. **Tolerance**

- The beliefs of others must be legally protected and culturally respected; differences should be seen as a source of enrichment, not conflict.

4. **Justice**

- Justice and equity are the foundation of all human interaction, while charity towards others remains the more virtuous and fitting path.

5. **Peace**

- Except for self-defense or the defense of innocents, violence should be rejected, whether on the individual or state level (war), and an adherence to all peaceful means to resolve conflicts among individuals or groups maintained.

6. **Mercy**

- Mercy is the central means to achieve the divine covenant of faith, truth, and charity: “Whoever shows no mercy to others deprives himself of God’s mercy to him.” “God shows mercy to those who are merciful.”

7. **Kindness**

- Such kindness toward others should make no distinction

between kith, kin, or strangers, whether the deeds resulted from familial bonds or selfless concern for others.

8. Keeping Covenants

- The most consequential of duties is that of fulfilling contracts and covenants, as it assures security and social harmony.

9. Solidarity

- Solidarity expresses an existential identification with and commitment to the well-being of the other.

SECTION FOUR

OBJECTIVES

Article 5 – Enlisting Religious Leaders in Promoting Peace and Sakinah

In light of the principles above, it is a duty for religious leaders to work to spread and secure peace and Sakinah (tranquility) through the following:

1. Cooperation between the adherents of the Abrahamic Family and people of other faith backgrounds and beliefs from our extended human family.

2. Standing against extremism, violence, and any discourse of incitement and bigotry.

3. Promoting a conciliatory approach in every faith community so that mutual respect may be strengthened in all of its various dimensions.

Article 6 – Positive and Accountable Citizenship

Citizenship is both beneficial and a civic duty when:

1. It is predicated upon liberty, equality, pluralism, and mutual respect.

2. The exercise of rights is consistent with the protection of social harmony and the preservation of public order in accordance with Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3. It promotes non-violence and a culture of social solidarity in confronting societal challenges that arise.

Article 7 – Encouraging People of All Faiths to Respect Each Other

At its base, respect for another's religion is respect for human dignity. As such respect for another's religion is a primary virtue that supports both individual flourishing and the common good.

In practice, respect for other religions entails:

1. Protecting the sacred symbols and religious sensibilities of other faith traditions.
2. Respect for other religions does not preclude honest dialogue about what is perceived to be true or false in religions, including one's own.
3. Principled cooperation around shared values.

Article 8 – Protecting the Rights of Minorities

All ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities have the right to live without any persecution of any kind. Further, they have the right to live as full and equal citizens in their respective societies, drawing upon their most fundamental beliefs about virtue and morality to engage in the public life of those societies.

Article 9 – Support of International Accords

We support those international agreements and accords that elevate human dignity and virtue because:

1. They are a source of international law and norms. They can contribute to global security.
2. They constitute an important means to promote peaceful cooperation between nations with their varying political, social, and economic systems.
3. They embody the concept of “contractual” citizenship that is central to this Charter.

SECTION FIVE
DOMAINS & MEANS

With respect to working to improve the human condition,

there are many domains in which the New Alliance of Virtue can contribute. This can be done by utilizing some of the means listed below.

Article 10 – The Domain of The Family

By restoring the importance of the family as the true starting point for fostering virtue, justice, peace, civility, and tolerance.
Article 11 The Domain of Education This would entail:

1. Advocating that character development and education are inseparable, and that pedagogical methods should incorporate ethical frameworks. In this way, both individual and societal comportment will be refined.

2. Advocating that religious education be reformed and developed to keep pace with modern developments in other fields, including, for example, as discussed in the 2009 Abu Dhabi Guidelines on Teaching Interfaith Tolerance.

Article 12 – The Domain of Humanitarian Work

This would entail:

1. Promoting and propagating the virtues of hospitality, good Samaritanism, sheltering refugees and immigrants, lifting up the poor, alleviating hunger and suffering, protecting the vulnerable, providing necessary care, and helping anyone in need wherever and whoever they may be.

2. Advocating for an escalation of humanitarian efforts, such as alleviating hunger.

Article 13 – The Domain of Sustainable Development

This would entail: Helping the United Nations attain its “17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (Sept 2015).

SECTION SIX
CLOSING REMARKS

Article 14 – Signatories

All who affirm the above articles are hereby called to sign onto and join the New Alliance of Virtue.

Article 15 – Clauses & Amendments

All signatories of this Charter are granted the right to submit reservations to any of its articles.

Article 16 – Official Languages

This Charter was ratified in the Arabic and English languages. All other languages must rely on these versions.

Article 17 – Execution

This Charter will be executed.

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