

**“Strengthening the Strategy Development of Dar al-Fatwa Institutions to Enhance  
Stability and Religious Tolerance in Lebanon”**

**Beirut, 28 October 2015**

Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, Grand Mufti of Lebanon,  
Sheikh Dr Mohammad Anis al-Arwadi,  
Your Excellency Christina Lassen, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of  
Lebanon,  
Your Excellency Martin Huth, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in  
Lebanon,  
Excellencies, Eminencies, Honourables,  
Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, and Friends,

Thank you very much, Sheikh Mohammad Anis al-Arwadi, for your kind words of  
welcome and appreciation.

The Berghof Foundation, which I have the pleasure to represent at this important  
event, is fully in agreement with Dar al-Fatwa’s vision to enhance peace and tolerance  
through implementing a culture of dialogue, cooperation and joint learning. I am  
happy to see how our relations have improved after Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian’s visit to  
Berlin in April 2015. Today’s ceremonial signing of a joint memorandum about our  
future cooperation is indeed a remarkable next step.

Personally, I am deeply impressed by the energy and perseverance that you,  
eminencies and Dar al-Fatwa, spend in your efforts to strengthen pluralism and mutual  
understanding within the Lebanese society. Your focus on capacity-building, sharing of  
knowledge, on unconditional dialogue and cooperation with national and international  
stakeholders is sound and thoughtful.

We understand your conviction that a facilitating role for Dar al-Fatwa is crucial to  
address social and political concerns that exist within the Lebanese society – from  
frustration and fear of the future amongst youth to the spreading concerns about how  
to maintain social cohesion against the background of armed conflicts in the  
neighborhood and of increasing refugee numbers across the region. Even more crucial,  
however, is probably Dar al-Fatwa’s role as a moral authority. As a moral authority Dar  
al-Fatwa is in a position to inspire a renewed sense and spirit of community, to defend

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common values of justice and tolerance against creeping tendencies of social alienation and political fragmentation.

The Berghof Foundation is delighted to share with you the experience and expertise that we have accumulated in our decade-long engagement in the areas of dialogue, mediation and peace support. However, our role understanding remains as clear as it is limited.

It is limited – because we do fully acknowledge Dar al-Fatwa’s strategic responsibility and ownership. It is clear – because we shall provide our knowledge and skills according to the needs that you articulate and upon your request.

With the generous support from the German Federal Foreign Office and from the EU Instrument for Stability and Peace and in full compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding that we will solemnly sign today, the Berghof Foundation – as a non-governmental, non-profit and independent organisation – will provide technical and process support to Dar al-Fatwa’s efforts to foster a culture of dialogue, cooperation and joint learning throughout Lebanon. Allow me to thank Dar al-Fatwa as well as our donors for the trust into the skills and commitment of our team to provide such support effectively.

I am convinced that this unique project has the potential to contribute to trust- and peacebuilding in Lebanon. But this project has also the potential to generate a role-model and positive spill-overs beyond Lebanon’s boundaries because it is heralding eternal values of humanity – tolerance and peace.

Let me express my deepest gratitude to all of you for honouring this event with your presence.

I wish our joint project the best possible success. Thank you very much for your attention.