

“Lebanon: Strengthening the Capacities of Sunni Institutions to Enhance Stability and Religious Tolerance”

The Beirut Declaration For Enlightened Religious Media

A declaration was developed by the Mufti of the State of Lebanon, Sheikh Abdullatif Derian, and the Mufti of the State of Egypt, Sheikh Shawqi Allam, and the Mufti of the State of Jordan, Sheikh Abdulkarim Khasawna during their meeting at Dar Al Fatwa, which they called "The Beirut Declaration for Enlightened Religious Media". The Declaration was signed in the presence of the Mufti of the Lebanese Governorates and a number of scholars. Following is the text of the Declaration:

In view of the spread of extremism in Arab and Muslim societies, and the use of communication tools to incite killing, torture, and labeling others as disbelievers, which does great harm to religions and ethics and bases and norms of co-existence, and private and public freedoms, and to youth orientation, and to the world's view of Arabs and Islam,

And in view of the lack of control of provocative information passed on through different media outlets, especially during interviews, which conflict with religious, national, and social norms,

And in view of the notion that religious teaching bears a responsibility towards religions, societies, and the world at large, the convened Muftis (bearing religious responsibilities), present to the Arab and Islamic communities the following declaration:

First: To renew commitment towards reformed and moderate religious speech aimed at preserving the bases and foundations of religious norms, and spreading tolerance and moderation, and enhancing peace within communities, and restoring trust among generations and supporting co-existence and rectifying the relationship between Muslims and the rest of the world.

Second: To renew commitment towards spreading enlightened, professional, and appealing religious information and ideas, aimed at presenting text, speech, and virtues that are seen as responsible and which can reach all sectors of the community especially the youth, and which are centered around acceptance of members of other religions, sects, and nationalities, as well as showing commitment to peace, trust, and equality when faced with diversity.

Third: To cooperate between religious legislative bodies in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon on sharing information, expertise and to set up visits aimed at developing Islamic media and education, and cooperation on training of Imams and teachers on tools to counter religious, or other forms of, extremism that threaten the security, unity, and stability of Arab societies.

Fourth: To call on Islamic and Christian religious bodies to cooperate on setting up an "observatory" for coexistence to be based in Beirut, the function of which is to observe and monitor the state of religious affairs in the Arab World, and publish objective critiques on related matters on its website and in Arab and global media outlets.

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Fifth: To call on private and governmental Arab media outlets to address religious issues with knowledge and responsibility avoiding incitement, bias, and distortion, and to cooperate with religious bodies to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Lebanon has always been a haven for religious freedoms, equality, and responsible coexistence, and a beacon for enlightened and progressive media. And at times of revolutions engulfing regional media and communication tools, there are great hopes that Beirut, which is known for its plurality, peaceful coexistence, and popular and responsible media, will assume an enlightened and leading role in spreading notions of political moderation and social responsibility from a religious perspective, and taking part in helping to develop a more tolerant world view towards Arabs and Islam.