



---

*In the Name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful*

# **Declaration Against Extremism**

**BY DR. MAHER HATHOUT**

Let it be known that,

*Islam is from God, an expression of love to all of humanity;*

*In Islam, all human beings are entitled to dignity, regardless of who they are and the beliefs they hold;*

*The Quran declares that justice is divine and should not be subject to prejudices, tribal biases, or subjective desires;*

*In Islam, true faith is incompatible with compulsion;*

*Islam has no mediator between God and humanity; hence, there is no divine clergy or hierarchy with any authority to act on behalf of God.*

*Islam confirms and upholds the teachings of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and all the other Abrahamic prophets;*

*In Islam, no one has the right to claim they represent God or hold the absolute interpretation of His word or His intent,*

Therefore, we believe that our mandate is to clarify Islam's message, revealing its truth in the face of ongoing exploitation, misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

A major obstacle preventing the true message of Islam worldwide is extremism. In this, we are not alone. Sadly, extremists contaminate all religions. Thus, with this document, together we passionately reaffirm our opposition to extremists of all stripes, particularly all Muslim extremists who betray Islam's true message. Furthermore, we pledge to collectively condemn and act to prevent extremism in all forms.

## The Nature of the Problem

Extremists are defining the public face of Islam. The mainstream has been left on the defensive, vehemently wanting to share the true message of Islam. The voices of extremism are very loud; their voices garner false but almost instantaneous authority because they are cloaked in religious garb and theological jargon. These dangerous voices have misled people with false claims of religious superiority and authority. These voices exploit the uneducated and politically and socially disgruntled leading them to intolerance, oppression and violence. These voices distort Islam and disfigure the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

## Cardinal Features of Extremism

1. Authority is monopolized by one person or group that claims authority from God, and opposition to that authority is equated with opposition to God.<sup>1</sup>
2. The “will” of God is dictated to the people, who are not permitted to think for themselves and arrive at their own conclusions.<sup>2</sup>
3. Coercion or imposing lifestyle decisions on others is viewed as sometimes necessary.<sup>3</sup>
4. Blind commitment to tradition is paramount. Innovation and progress are condemned.<sup>4</sup>
5. Conformity to cultural customs supersedes personal convictions.<sup>5</sup>
6. Outward appearance is prized over personal character and spiritual integrity.<sup>6</sup>
7. They hold insular attitudes, which reject other civilizations and their value to humanity.<sup>7</sup>
8. Power is derived from culturally-based systems of patriarchy, subjecting women to inferior status and sanctioning physical harm.
9. The mercy and forgiveness of God is exclusive to only one group.
10. Unjust and immoral acts are deemed permissible for self-serving ends.

Today, we live in a world where the discourse around Islam is dominated by extremes, from both within and outside the religion. Extremism has negatively impacted how the world views Islam and provides fuel for anti-Muslim forces focused on marginalizing Muslim voices. Extremism is the main source of harm to Islam and Muslims worldwide. Extremism and its violent manifestations have shed the blood of countless people, the majority of whom are other Muslims. Anti-Muslim bigots have exploited scores of isolated incidents of theological and violent extremism to further their fear-inducing propaganda about the purported “global threat of Islam”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quran 3:128, 42:38

<sup>2</sup> Quran 19:95

<sup>3</sup> Quran 2:56, 88:21

<sup>4</sup> Quran 5:104, 43:23

<sup>5</sup> Quran 17:30. Hadith Tirmidhi: “Let one of you not be (blindly conforming), follow the masses in whatever they whether be it right or wrong, yet a person should follow people in goodness but not in wrong-doing.”

<sup>6</sup> Quran 2:204. Hadith: “God does not look unto your shape or appearance, but He looks into your hearts and deeds.”

<sup>7</sup> Quran 49:13

Extremism continues to rob our youth of pride in, and connection with their own faith thus making people feel their faith is irrelevant and incompatible with contemporary life. This then has the ability to create a barrier between the hearts and minds of Muslim citizens and their neighbors.

## **A Clarion Call for Action**

Let's stand together and declare a unified and unequivocal condemnation of extremism by:

- Rejecting any religious interpretation or ruling that contradicts the core Islamic principles of justice, mercy, wisdom and compassion.
- Upholding women's God-given equal opportunity in society, rejecting the subjugation of women under any circumstances and refusing to accept the notion that women are inferior to men in reason, wisdom and their ability to lead.
- Objecting to outward symbols of piety being used as a measure of an individual's righteousness and adherence to Islam.
- Embracing the positive contributions of all cultures and civilizations and respecting their cultural origins.
- Fostering an environment where young Muslims feel proud and connected to their faith, and not alienated from Islam or the Muslim community.

We must respect all forms of religious practice and expression, as long as they follow Islam's mandate for coexistence with others, and uphold mercy, justice, equality, and human dignity. We offer a strong and clear message of the truth about Islam as a:

1. Spiritual path to inner peace and happiness.
2. Guidance for constructive solutions rather than destructive behavior.
3. Call to serve all of humanity, not just one group or one people.
4. Celebration of the sanctity of life.

Islam is to be enjoyed, not endured. We call on Muslims, the majority of whom are outraged by harsh voices of intolerance from within their own faith; we call on scholars from all schools of thought; we call on women and youth who have been marginalized as second-class citizens in their own communities; we call on youth who are committed to building a better future for themselves; we call on you to join us in raising our voices in unison for the truth. We have nothing to lose, except the disfigured image of Islam painted by extremists.