



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

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A Statement from the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in Response to the Proposed Burning of the Qur'an Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan September 10th, 2010

I strongly condemn the proposed burning of the Qur'an on the commemoration of the horrific attacks of September 11th, 2001. I consider this to be irresponsible behavior of a man who claims to be a Pastor. Rather, it is utterly counter to the beliefs of Christianity and suggests a deep-seated hatred and fear of the other. Christian principles teach us to accept the other, to dialogue with one another, and to recognize the image of God present in all humanity, which this man has forgotten. Perhaps it would be good for such an extremist Christian to spend time with us and experience the paradigm of living together and mutual respect, which we enjoy here in Jerusalem.

I understand the American value of freedom of expression, but this pastor's provocation is nothing less than a hate crime. When anyone goes to such extremes with blatant misrepresentation, to the point of referring to Islam as the "religion of the Devil", we must stand together in opposition. As a Christian I would be outraged to hear of someone burning my Holy Bible. I have experienced the same emotional reaction when I have heard of the Torah being burned. Heinrich Heine once said: "When books are burned in the end people will be burned too." Many extremists are implanting hatred and waging war against religion. If we remain silent, we are complicit with the burning of the Qur'an and will bear responsibility for the possibility of a spiral of violence aimed at our Muslim sisters and brothers.

We applaud the many Americans and others who have already spoken out on this issue. We, as Arab Christians, add our voices in asking this Pastor to stop the provocation, to recognize the damage he has already done, to revoke his callous and insensitive scheme, and to repent to the God who has created us all. We also encourage him to read the Qur'an with eyes to learn its true meaning. After all, when Martin Luther was asked by the citizens of Basel to condemn the Qur'an, he offered support to a local printer to publish it.

Let us not join together in burning holy books and destroying the relationships that have been built over time. Rather, let us stand together in opposing extremism and fanaticism that holds all of us hostage to fear and violence. Let us bind together to find the common values in the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – values that promote acceptance of the other, justice, tolerance, forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. Instead of burning the Qur'an, let us lift up to the world these values and return dignity to every human being.

+Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan
ELCJHL