

Conference on Islamic Traditions of Peace and Nonviolence, Dialogue, and Pluralism

Salam Institute for Peace and Justice is developing a three-day conference entitled “Islamic Traditions of Peace and Nonviolence, Dialogue, and Pluralism” to be held in Istanbul Turkey on January 3-6 2009. The main objective of the conference is to emphasize that Muslims share a common calling to working for peace, and dialogue has been an integral aspect of Islamic tradition since the time of the Prophet Mohammed. Given the current challenges faced by the Muslim world there is a dire need for Muslims to come together to find constructive ways to address the problems they are facing today. Especially important is Shia/Sunni relations and Muslims relationship with Western societies. Despite the fact that Islamic traditions of peace and nonviolence are deep rooted and there are sizable groups of Muslim scholars, activists, and practitioners of nonviolence, who have been working for peace and justice in their communities little attention has been paid to developing spaces for these Muslims to meet and dialogue.

This three-day conference on **Islamic Traditions of Peace and Nonviolence** is aimed at promoting intra-faith understanding and a civilized dialogue between Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as, non-Muslims. The conference will focus on linking theological and religious interpretations of peace, conflict resolution, dialogue and nonviolence with tangible practices at both the community and policy making levels. More specifically, the conference will be designed to offer reflections on the following questions:

- What are the theological and theoretical roots of peace and nonviolence in Islam?
- What are some of the conflict resolution mechanisms available for Muslims and how can they be utilized to address conflicts faced by Muslims constructively?
- What are the conditions to facilitate and support existing practices of peace and nonviolence among Muslims activists?
- What are some of the Islamic sources of Human Rights being adopted in each country?
- What are the strategies to link these ideals with actions towards creating policy change?

With these questions and concepts in mind, this conference will provide an opportunity to initiate a genuine dialogue on the topics of peace and nonviolence between Sunni and Shia Muslims coming from Turkey, Iran, and the United States. It is our hope that this conference will become a catalyst for a continuing dialogue and exchange on peace, dialogue, and nonviolence among Shia and Sunni Muslim scholars, community leaders, religious authorities, non-governmental organizations, and policy-makers.

Background

As a part of its peace building intervention and capacity building endeavors in the Muslim world, Salam Institute, resolution to visit Iran in 2007. The 8-day trip, from October 21st to 28th 2007, together with United States Institute of Peace, organized a 7-member delegation of American Muslim scholars of Islam and peace and conflict

comprised of visits to three major cities in Iran, namely Teheran, Qum, and Isfahan. The objective of the delegation was to engage with Iranian experts on the subject of Islamic sources of peace-building, conflict resolution, nonviolence, and dialogue. This initiative was followed by organizing an exchange visit program for young Iranian scholars in these fields to visit the United States and attend a week long intensive summer program on Conflict Resolution at the American University in Washington DC.

Outputs

The envisioned output of the conference will include:

- Providing an environment for discussion and exchange on Islam, peace, human rights, dialogue and nonviolence among scholars, activists and policy makers.
- Publishing an edited volume of essays and articles that focuses on the link between theological and religious interpretations of peace, nonviolence and dialogue, and highlights tangible practices both at the community and policy making levels.
- Building a network of Sunni and Shia Muslim practitioners of nonviolence.
- Encouraging, assisting, and empowering scholars and practitioners to convene regional and local conferences and training workshops on these themes.