

In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate

**Presentation by Architect Muhammad Yusuf Hallar on the occasion
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Islamic minorities in the Western World

Praise be to Allah, Creator of the Universe, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad , upon his family, his companions and followers.

Praise be to Him who made us noble through the Qur'an and illuminated our hearts with Faith.

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters,

I greet you with the universal Muslim greeting:

Assalamu' Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu

In my capacity as Secretary General for the Islamic Organization for Latin America (IOLA) and Representative of the Muslim World League – with Headquarters in the Holy City of Makkah – and as Representative for Latin America of the Organization for Education, Science and Technology (ISESCO) –with Headquarters in the city of Rabat-, it is a great honour for me to be with you all here today, attending this very important event for the Caribbean Islamic Communities, and to bring greetings on behalf of Dr. Abdel Muhsen Al Turkey and Dr. Abdel Azíz Othma Al Tuweijri.

Before I continue, I should like to recognize and pay tribute to the Government of Trinidad& Tobago, to all those who generously agreed to hold this First Caribbean Islamic Forum, and to all those who opened the door for us, who were responsible for the organization of this magnificent Forum 2005 led by brother Imtiaz Ali, Representative for the Caribbean Islamic Organizations before our Islamic Organization for Latin America, a tireless fighter in the cause of Islam, and a founding member of OIPAL.

The subject that I am presenting to you today: “Islamic minorities in Western Countries” is closely related to the different ways of cultural adaptation among different

religions and the possibility of living in harmony, cordiality and welfare through sincere and meaningful dialogue, with a special emphasis on mutual respect and understanding.

Muslims are connected to different religions, faiths and cultures through pre-established principles of which the most important could be the Doctrine of Faith, since the majority of people believe in God as the Lord of the Universe and Creator of everything.

Likewise, we are all connected through our belief in the Messengers of God, since every Muslim believes that God has sent Messengers to all humanity in every place and time in order to advise and warn, and to invite mankind to adore God and to obey Him.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

***“We have sent a Messenger to every community. Worship God and be apart from idols”
(Surah Al Nahl - 16:30)***

According to Islam, all the Prophets are brothers among themselves and their messages are similar because the source of all these messages comes from Almighty God.

And believers believe in them all, without much difference.

God says in the Holy Qur'an:

“The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him by his God. As do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in God, in His Angels His Books and in His Messengers. We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.” (Surah Al Baqarah – 2:285) 2

Similarly, the fraternity of Mankind is identified in the Holy Qur'an:

“O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord who created you from a single Person, created of like nature his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. ” (Surah Al Nisa- 4:1)

Human development and Western Civilization development have much to do with Islamic civilization. When the Western World - for many centuries - was going through a dark period with inhumane treatment, extremism, injustice and tyranny as a widespread custom and behaviour, Muslims – on the other hand - were going through a time of splendour in which they made great contribution in the fields of science, learning, culture and art.

Likewise, they spread codes of values and behaviour, love, understanding, peace, and brotherhood, and coexistence among people without any distinction because of race, class or religious persuasion. History is a witness to their peaceful coexistence and respect for the human being, and as a clear example we can mention the names of places like

Madinah, Baghdad, Andalusia, Cairo and many other cities where there was evidence of what God states in the Holy Qur'an:

“And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours.” (Surah Al Rum) 30:22

Brothers and Sisters:

Islamic minorities in the World are an important part of the Ummah or Muslim Nation, and nowadays they make up more than 1/3 of the Islamic World. The role of Islamic communities in Latin American and Caribbean countries stands out, and they are interrelated to the social life of those countries in which they live, being transmitters of the Islamic religion and culture as well as knowledge, education and art. It is also important to mention how they were able to develop their gifts of knowledge in freedom, setting up their own schools, Islamic and cultural centers and hospitals.

Muslims in Latin America have occupied, and still occupy, top positions: there have been Muslim Presidents, Prime Ministers, Presidents of the Senate and of the Supreme Court of Justice and Governors; Muslims also occupy top military positions, etc. in many Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras, Salvador, Colombia, Chile as well as a number of Caribbean Countries. And the reason for this is because we, Latin American and Caribbean Muslims are always willing and open to meaningful dialogue based on mutual respect, civilized methods and fair terms that might be of benefit to humanity, that is the promotion of cultural and intellectual understanding in the world. All religions and cultures in the world are seeking for love, fraternity, peace, understanding and tolerance among all human beings. Only dialogue that is based upon these principles will lead us to the methods for eradicating racism and intolerance among human beings, and for generating respect among the different cultures and identities of all people. Islam recognizes the existence of other religions, civilizations and cultures as a gift from Almighty God, and such a gift cannot, and should not, be changed or distorted.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

“If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind One People; but they will not cease to dispute, except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy.” (Surah Hud - 11: 118)

That is the Divine Will of God who always shows His Omnipotence and His Wisdom through His creation of many different languages, races and colours.

Brothers and Sisters:

Dialogue and cultural interchange are stronger than any other form of exchange, that is why we should work upon the correct dialogue, rejecting all extremism until peace and justice reign among human beings. We should strengthen our methods of communication, our contacts and our exchange of ideas through our Continental

Organization: OIPAL. We have to contact the true representatives of the Islamic entities from countries that are not members of this Organization. Today, I can see several of them attending this Forum, and on behalf of OIPAL I invite them to join our organization and to participate in its activities in order to achieve a common benefit through a framework of coordination and collaboration in all those issues that are good and beneficial to our Muslim community and Islamic culture.

With a united effort, we can achieve these goals. We can actively participate in the matters of importance of the countries we inhabit and achieve benefit for everyone through harmonious coexistence and through the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

As citizens of those countries in which we live, and where our children are growing up, it is a must for us to respect their laws and their other cultures so that we all may live in peace and freedom.

In order to do so, we must reject and condemn all those who want to impose the concept of "civilizations shock", "holy wars" or "civilizations wars" as they are no more and no less than a hypocritical way to cover false ideologies; and this is why we make a call for positive and meaningful dialogue in order that we may eradicate our problems and correct our mistakes.

At the conclusion of this Forum- we should be able to set up a Committee for Cultural Dialogue. Such a Committee should fall under the supervision of writers, intellectuals, men of Faith, Muslims and non-Muslims. Its main purpose should be the enlightenment and understanding of both civilizations (the Western one and the Islamic one) and their influence upon people of today in order that we may achieve better understanding for the future, and for the welfare of the next generation. This can only be achieved by avoiding distortions that are based on misinformation and an awareness of those more positive and uplifting subjects that every human being should seek to know.

We must coordinate our role as "agents of change" so as to correct the distorted image of Islam that is often shown, for it is by eradicating that image that the virtues and goodness of Islam will stand out.

We have to get to know our community and its human resources, as well as to formulate a plan to unite us in what is required to transform the distorted image of Islam and Muslims.

We must create an intellectual force to spread Islamic Culture through common activities and good relations with our neighbours. We must consider ourselves as a "bridges" of cooperation between cultures, dignitaries, and intellectuals by inviting them to our meetings, forums and festivals, by presenting joint exhibitions on Islam and its history, by signing agreements with universities and schools for higher studies, especially those that are interested in the learning about Islam.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

“O mankind! We created you from a single pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things.” (Surah Al Hujurat- 49:13)

And we have to spread Islamic thought and concepts on great current problems as clonation, miscarriage (revealed by God through the Holy Qur’an 1426 years ago), the environment, human rights and even terrorism.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of this Caribbean Muslim Forum 2005, organized by Central Zakah - the Director, Brother Imtiaz Ali, and all those who collaborated in the organization of this Event.

I pray Almighty God, may He illuminate our hearts and guide us in the right path, the path of all good men and women who long for a world of peace, harmony and happiness for ourselves, for our children and for future generations. And finally, to God the Exalted, my eternal thanks to Him.

Wassalamu ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullah

Architect Muhammad Yusuf Hallar

Secretary General of the Islamic Organization for Latin America

Official Representative for Latin America of the Muslim World League