**Response of *Islamic Studies Association* and *Vidyajyoti Institute of Islamic Studies*to the Marrakesh Declaration**

More than one hundred Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, recently gathered in Marrakesh, Morocco to mark the 1400thAnniversary of the Charter of Medina, a *constitutional contract* which Muslims believe Muhammad had made with the people of Medina to guarantee religious liberty of all people of that city.

In this conference, held under the auspices of King Mohammed VI of Morocco and jointly organized by Morocco’s Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, based in the United Arab Emirates, the participants of the conference maintained that the objectives of the *Charter of Medina* are in harmony with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Hence, they called upon Muslims around the world "to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of "citizenship" which is inclusive of diverse groups”. They firmly believe that “such jurisprudence shall be rooted in Islamic tradition and principles and mindful of global changes".

The religious and scholars gathered at Marrakesh strongly affirmed the importance of uprooting any aggression that seeks to destroy the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and people of other faiths in Muslim-majority countries. In order to protect such harmonious coexistence they appealed to "politicians and decision makers to take the political and legal steps necessary to establish a constitutional contractual relationship among its citizens and to support all formulations and initiatives that aim to fortify relations and understanding among the various religious groups in the Muslim World."  Moreover, they recognized the importance of "just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim countries” and the need “to raise awareness as to their rights, and to work together to ensure the success of these efforts."They encouraged all Muslims to make efforts to “rebuild the past by reviving this tradition of conviviality and restoring our shared trust that has been eroded by extremists using acts of terror and aggression” and to “confront all forms of religious bigotry, vilification, and denigration of what people hold sacred, as well as all speech that promote hatred and bigotry.”

The **Islamic Studies Association (Delhi, India)**and **Vidyajyoti Institute of Islamic Studies (Delhi, India)** gladly welcome this new and groundbreaking initiative from the members of our joint Abrahamic family. We appreciate the organizers for launching this bold declaration that proposes a new vision for the human family. We value this Declaration greatly since it emphasizes Citizenship and Human Rights. Along with the signatories, we too affirm firmly the idea of citizenship that respects the rights of every citizen and instills in them a sense of justice for all especially for the minorities and marginalized.

Along with those who endorse the Declaration, we highlight the importance of religious freedom of every citizen, especially of those minorities whose religious freedom is violated. We stress that religious freedom is a basic human right and, therefore, no one should be coerced to give up or change his/her religious tradition. It is also our firm belief that religious freedom is the corollary of human dignity with which every individual is endowed with, a dignity that we all recognize through the revealed Word of God and reason.

 We also affirm that every human person has the right and duty to seek truth and to follow his or her conscience, and, in a similar vein, assert that seeking truth is something inherent to human dignity. It is important to firmly stress that change of one’s religion resulting from following of one’s conscience is also an integral part of the exercise of the right to religious freedom.

We strongly believe that public and private acts of worship direct the human person towards God, who is the Master of his or her conscience. Hence, any act by civil authorities that curtails such human freedom remains an act of infringement.

We firmly uphold that the recognition of human rights is a firm foundation on which both Christians and Muslims can work together and thereby bring about peace and harmony, and justice and reconciliation in society.

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