**Mandating Reports on Tolerance and Human Dignity**

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Grand Mufti Shawki Allam calls on Muslim religious leaders to renew appreciation of the tremendous intellectual diversity in Islamic thought as well as to recognize the development and dissemination of Islamic thought has suffered a troubled history as a consequence of global political developments. He notes the ‘ultimate defeat of violent extremists and terrorists cannot happen without revival and renewal, not only within Islam, but within the other major religious traditions of the world as they seek to be more faithful to their core teachings of peace and justice in a world suffering from the ills of materialism, militarism, poverty, and disease. This exchange of understanding Islam needs all of us to rededicate ourselves to creating a better world: in mosques, churches, synagogues, in politics, in schools, media, companies, sports and all walks of life. We will not reach this goal of understanding by excluding anyone.’

His call comes at a time when Henry Kissinger warns that the international order established after the Second World War is in crisis. The liberal international order has underpinned the modern era for generations and maintaining it will require a strategy that celebrates universal principles and recognizes the reality of other regions’ histories, cultures and views of their security.[[1]](#endnote-1) “It is this international order that has underwritten unparalleled advances in human liberty and prosperity,” President Obama declared at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

We need to work together in accordance with international norms, principles and law that offer legitimacy to our efforts to defeat the ideas that drive different communities in a country like Iraq into conflict.

The United Nations, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, ‘deplores and condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist acts of ISIL and its violent extremist ideology, and its continued gross, systematic and widespread abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.’[[2]](#endnote-2) Next, a United Nations action plan to prevent violent extremism is needed to defend the international order.

While recognizing military power is necessary in the fight against extremist terrorism, the United States acknowledges any order that militaries can impose will be temporary without international efforts. “A continued rejection by Muslims of those who distort Islam to preach intolerance and promote violence, and it must also a rejection by non-Muslims of the ignorance that equates Islam with terror.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

The media has a special responsibility to ensure its own standards to follow the international community’s UN call to take “measures as may be necessary and appropriate and in accordance with their obligations under international law to counter incitement of terrorist acts motivated by extremism and intolerance perpetrated by individuals or entities associated with ISIL, ANF and Al-Qaida and to prevent the subversion of educational, cultural, and religious institutions by terrorists and their supporters…”

The academic community is well-placed to research, report and inform parliamentarians of progress on the principles of respect for human dignity, tolerance and reconciliation in accordance with the UN Charter and such a report, mandated by parliaments, could help lead to preventive politics of tolerance.

At the same time the Grand Mufti’s call is not to turn a blind eye on the need for international norms and law that still need to be achieved in Egypt and within the Muslim countries, but in respect for this very fact, that somebody from his part of the world reminds us all of the need to abide by universal standards. Extremists need perpetual war to survive and gain adherents because of a poisonous ideology and Albert Einstein reminds us that ‘Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.’ The international community should endorse and embrace Grand Mufti Allam’s call.

1. Kissinger, Henry, “The Assembly of A New Global Order”, The Wall Street Journal, August 30-31, 2014, p. C3. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Security Council Resolution 2170 (2014) Condemning Gross, Widespread Abuse of Human Rights by Extremist Groups in Iraq, Syria, SC/11520, 15 AUGUST 2014. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11520.doc.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Obama, Barack, UN General Assembly Speech, September 28, 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/28/remarks-president-obama-united-nations-general-assembly> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)