



**M Riaz Khan, Ph.D.**  
*Professor Emeritus*

**Manning School of Business**

Office: SO 201  
tel: 978.934.2761  
fax: 978.934.4034  
e-mail: Riaz\_Khan@uml.edu

To: The Judges of United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week

Date: March 3, 2018

Ref: 3rd Community Interfaith Discussion (2384)

Organizer: Shaheen Akhtar

Honorable Judges:

I am writing this letter to provide a reference for Ms. Shaheen Akhtar, the organizer of the 3rd Community Interfaith Discussion (2384) on March 4, 2018.

First kindly allow me to briefly introduce myself. Outside my professional responsibilities, as Professor of Operation Research at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, I have committed significant amount of my time and energies, over the last several decades, to the community work and the inter-religion relations. Since past 25 years, I continue to serve as a Justice of the Peace, commissioned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I have also served as President of the Islamic Council of New England, an umbrella organization of Islamic Centers in the New England region, and have been conducting its Interfaith Program for last 30 years with the Jewish and Christian partners.

I thus feel reasonably confident to offer an assessment of Ms. Akhtar, who I have known for nearly two decades through her involvement in the interfaith activities and who has demonstrated over the years her commitment to advancing such initiatives. She has been an active member of the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the Islamic Council of New England Interfaith Discussion Group. As past president of the Council and currently organizer of the interfaith dialogues, I have found Ms. Akhtar to be proactive. She possesses passion and leadership qualities to mobilize the faith communities around their shared values for collaborative efforts and joint projects. She is among the pioneers of interfaith work in Massachusetts.

The March 4th Community Interfaith Discussion is just a culmination of her dedicated networking over the past 25 years in a multi-faith society and her drive to build bridges across groups of all denominations. Her commitment to such deliberations is inspired by her conviction that a peaceful co-existence in a diverse society can be promoted by fostering a deeper understanding among its faith constituencies. She is a founder of many interfaith book clubs and discussion groups. She organizes community interfaith

discussions and workshops to bring people of different faiths together. She motivates them to work for the common good and build inclusive communities, emphasizing that shared values are stronger than the differences. She mentors and supports groups who want to initiate interfaith activities in their communities. The Islamic Council of New England, at its annual program in December 2016, recognized Ms. Akhtar for her exceptional service contributions to the community.

Ms. Akhtar holds the view that the interfaith outreach can be extended to promote global peace and intends to put the prize money, if awarded, to this cause.

I enthusiastically recommend Ms. Akhtar for the award and sincerely thank the Judges for their consideration. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincere,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Riaz Khan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

M Riaz Khan