



**Religions, Creeds and Value Systems:
Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights**

25 June 2018, United Nations, Geneva Switzerland

Under the Patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

HE Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Geneva, 16 November 2018

Excellency,

We are deeply grateful for your support to the World Conference on "*Religions, Creeds and Value Systems: Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights*" of 25 June 2018 as expressed in your video message to the conference. The Declaration issued by this conference entitled "*Moving Towards Greater Spiritual Convergence Worldwide in Support of Equal Citizenship Rights*" has now been signed by more than 50 Eminent religious and lay leaders from across the world and endorsed by international conferences.

We would like to bring to your attention that in the preamble of the Declaration, the co-signatories commit themselves to upholding the view that the concept of equal citizenship rights is a "*direct consequence of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' proclamation of religious freedom in belief and practice in the public as well as in the private sphere.*" The Declaration likewise appeals to decision-makers to initiate a global effort to ensure that our equally shared humanity is reflected in equal citizenship rights.

These noble goals remain at the very heart of our daily efforts to promote a more tolerant and peaceful world society.

We therefore celebrate the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan of 31 October 2018 to acquit and release Assia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian lady convicted and sentenced to death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws in 2010. However, we remain disturbed by calls from extremist and radical groups to overturn the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and to reinstate the death penalty following her acquittal.

It is in this context that we seek your support to our appeal to the international community, as well as to the authorities and people of Pakistan to comply with article 3 of the UDHR ("*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person*"). The Old Testament says that "*All life is sacred*" while the Holy Qur'an asserts that "*whoever kills a soul (unless for a soul) or for corruption (done) in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely*". The Quran, addressing the Christians and the Jews also says: "*Our God and your God is one and the same*" (29:46).

Finally we should all be mindful of item 9 of the above Declaration which commits us:

"To respect within and between all countries, whether there is a separation between State and faiths or not, the right to freedom of religion and ensure that public laws and policies are applied equally through an inclusive approach to religious diversity and not through exclusion of their public and private expression; so as to comply with article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights."

We would therefore welcome an affirmation from Your Excellency of Assia Bibi's right to life, liberty, dignity and security; and a denunciation of any attempt to abuse religion to curtail these rights for religious minorities across the world.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest considerations,

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal
of the Hashemite Kingdom of
Jordan

Patron of the World Conference

Reverend Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit

General Secretary
World Council of Churches
Co-sponsor

Ambassador Idriss Jazairy

Executive Director
Geneva Centre for Human Rights
Advancement and Global Dialogue
Executive Secretary