

# Religions for Peace

*Religions for Peace* International Youth Committee

## **Paris Statement**

Paris, France

November 26 -28, 2015

We, members of the *Religions for Peace* Global Interfaith Youth Network, representing national and regional networks and diverse religious traditions, have convened together in Paris, France, to discuss how we can take action, as multi-religious youth leaders from around the world, to address the most pressing challenges facing our generation, including violent religious extremism, the refugee crisis, and climate change.

### *Paris, France*

We wish to express our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the people of France and to the families and loved ones of those lost and injured in the 13 November, 2015 attacks. We strongly condemn each and every act of violent extremism worldwide, and we affirm the pioneering work of interfaith dialogue and solidarity carried out by our friends at *Coexister*, the French national youth interfaith organization.

### *The Challenge of Violent Religious Extremism*

Violent religious extremism causes immense suffering, the erosion of trust between ethnic and religious groups, and fuels social hostility. As global youth of faith, we emphasize that extremist religious ideologies perversely twist and distort the religious heritages they claim to represent. We further recognize the need for all of us to collectively act to counter violent religious extremism, which is not limited to one group, region, culture, religion or historical period.

We support the development of the *Religions for Peace* Guide to Action for countering violent religious extremism and we reiterate our commitment to working together across our respective regions, faiths, religions, and spiritual traditions to end the plague of violent religious extremism.

### *The Refugee Crisis*

Conflict and environmental degradation have caused an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees around the world. We were moved by the personal testimony of our fellow youth leader from Syria who described the suffering of millions of Syrians affected by conflict and forced to leave once flourishing homes, jobs and communities. The rising tide of racism, religious intolerance and xenophobia related to the global refugee crisis undermines shared values across all faith traditions such as respect for human dignity and the moral imperative to protect and honor the "other". We therefore commit to collaborating with various stakeholders to increase the culture of welcoming the other, particularly displaced populations and minorities.

### *Climate Change*

We as multireligious youth leaders, activists, and agents of change firmly advocate for urgent action on climate change including rapid global decarbonization and effective, significant support to developing countries to help them build decarbonized economies including finance, technology transfer, capacity building, and support for loss and damages related to climate change.

Climate change effects are occurring now. Sea level rise is causing the displacement of people in island nations and vulnerable coastal communities such as Bangladesh. Climate change increases the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and increases food insecurity. We call upon world leaders to address the root causes of climate change, differential historical responsibilities for it, and call upon all people to build the political will in their countries, states, territories, and communities to enable action and new laws and policies to effectively address climate change. We also recognize the scientific and technical underpinnings of climate change and encourage religious communities to engage and work together with scientists and educators so we can better learn how to be stewards of the earth and act upon our religious responsibilities to limit the impacts of climate change.

The road is long and the work is hard, but we will continue to draw strength and inspiration from the depths of our spiritual and religious traditions, each other, and all people of good will. We pledge to work for a world in which we live together in mutual respect, harmony, and peace.

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