

Muslims Advance Consensus for Citizenship for All through Marrakesh Declaration; Medley Represents ABC



VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 1/29/16)—At the invitation of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary emeritus of American Baptist Churches USA, and 250 of the world’s Islamic leaders, along with leaders representing various faith groups, convened in Morocco January 25-28 to discuss the rights of religious minorities and the obligation to protect them in Muslim majority states. The meeting ended with a Declaration.

The January 27 [Marrakesh Declaration](#) was issued at a time of heightened social hostility fueled by violent extremism, widespread Islamophobia and the denial of rights, sometimes justified by misrepresentations of Islamic teachings.

Reflecting on the conference, Dr. Medley made the following observations:

“This is a significant milestone in that for four years prior global Muslim Leaders were at work building the framework for this declaration from the Koran and the life of Mohammed.

The Marrakesh Declaration represents a serious commitment by the worldwide Muslim community to foster religious liberty for other religions in Muslim majority countries and to end terrorism in the name of Islam. As Christians and proponents of religious freedom, we can rejoice in this declaration as a major step forward in securing the blessings of religious liberty for all.

The Marrakesh Declaration is a commitment within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence and religion to the UN’s Declaration on Human Rights.

Together with the Common Word letter, the Marrakesh Declaration is a historic step forward in interfaith relations. American Baptists can rightfully note that our engagement for religious liberty and human rights was one element in the shaping of a culture of mutual respect which fostered the adoption of this declaration.”

The conference was organized by the Moroccan Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies based in Abu Dhabi. His Eminence Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, president of the Forum for Promoting Peace and Co-Moderator of *Religions for Peace (RfP)*, offered the keynote address that set the framework for deliberation among the Islamic leaders. Fifty senior leaders from the world’s diverse religious traditions other than Islam were invited as observers of the Islamic deliberations.

A summary of the Marrakesh Declaration includes:

- “The objectives of the Charter of Medina provide a suitable framework for national constitutions in countries with Muslim majorities, and are in harmony with the United Nations Charter and related documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”
- “Affirm[s] that it is impermissible to employ religion for the purpose of detracting from the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries.”
- “Call[s] upon representatives of the various religions, sects and denominations to confront all forms of religious bigotry, vilification and denigration of what people hold sacred, as well as all words that promote hatred and racism.”

General Secretary Emeritus Medley, one of the fifty religious leaders other than Muslims, joined with others who:

- Expressed their gratitude to the Islamic leaders for their unflinching courage and devotion to their tradition and for welcoming non-Muslims among them as observers;
- Affirmed values shared with the Islamic leaders;
- Asked forgiveness for past and current injuries for which their communities are complicit;
- Shared particular concerns over violence in the name of religion, limitations of citizenship, restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, and xenophobia, especially Islamophobia;
- Committed to follow-up work in solidarity with Muslim brothers and sisters to build a culture of peace; and,
- Respectfully expressed the hope that this convening of Islamic leaders will be continued by future regional conferences.

Medley said, “In the small group in which I participated, I was able to raise the issue of the great harm that the laws on apostasy and blasphemy create for the Christian community. Others spoke as well of the importance of full rights for all citizens in Muslim majority countries. The declaration has responded to these concerns when it states: (We) “AFFIRM HEREBY that such cooperation must be based on a “Common Word,” requiring that such cooperation must go beyond mutual tolerance and respect, to providing full protection for the rights and liberties to all religious groups in a civilized manner that eschews coercion, bias, and arrogance.”

Every attack, every hate crime, every insult, every humiliation is amplified in the media and sends out a polarizing wave, fueling the rise in hostility. Only religious communities cooperating — standing shoulder-to-shoulder in solidarity — can transform this vicious cycle into a virtuous one, in which the good deeds of each community call out to and reinforce the good deeds of the others. *RfP* is committed to supporting all religious communities in collaborative efforts to build a virtuous cycle for Peace.

American Baptist Churches USA is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.