

Gestures

NEWSLETTER OF THE



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Religious Extremism – Everyone’s Enemy

By Gary L. Krupp KC★SG, PTWF Founder

Religious extremism can exist within any of our faiths and is THE obstacle to International peace.

All around the world, peacemakers struggle to reduce or eliminate violence and terrorism. Many of these violent acts are committed by religious extremists who have been led to believe they will be rewarded for their destructive and murderous acts. Many of these people genuinely believe their acts are in accordance to their religious beliefs. Or they are operating off their own private and destructive agenda, secretly using religion and the power of the Almighty as their shield.

To do something effective about this situation, we must step back and analyze the tools used by those who impose their will on others with acts and threats of violence.

Are these acts truly religious in nature? When we speak to the



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genuine religious scholars from each faith, their answers do not support this idea. Each of these experts claims that their faith absolutely forbids these acts of violence. Yet this intentional manipulation of the masses continues. Why? Ignorance of the true holy text and prophetic language of the different religions leaves the faithful open to victimization by those who use the name of religion to forward their own agendas.

An extremist, then, can be someone who usurps the name of a religion to justify and encourage criminal acts of murder and violence. An extremist can also be someone who is following a supposed “religious” leader who is, in fact, leading in an entirely different direction.

There can be extremists in every faith. The Christian who blows up an abortion clinic, the Neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan members who victimize minorities in the name of Christianity, the Catholics and Protestants who turned Northern Ireland into a battle zone are all examples of religious extremists. Certainly there are Muslims who kill and commit suicide in the name of religion with the desire to become martyrs, and with the belief that will be blessed in the next existence. Islam is probably the greatest victim of religious extremism. We must also look at the Jews who commit acts of violence against others who do not keep the Sabbath in the manner that is acceptable to them or claim biblical rights to build illegal settlements in the Holy Land. All these actions and more are not validly a part of any religion but are simply the manifestation of those who are using the name of religion to pursue their own non-religious ends.

And how does this affect the relationships between religious groups? A Christian may hear only of Muslims in the context of terrorism. For that person, Islam may appear to be a violent religion. As a member of a completely different religion, he will not be able to separate genuine Muslims from the religious extremist claiming to be Muslim. Yet, a true Muslim would know the contents of the Qur’an and would know that the killing of innocents is forbidden. Thus, only the members of each religion can root out and do something about religious extremists in their own religion. In the interest of their own survival, they must do this; more Muslims have been killed by people claiming to be Muslims than by any outside group.

What is the answer to religious extremism? We must come to realize a number of facts. The first is that religious extremism can exist in every religion, not just whichever religion is getting all the media attention at the moment. Secondly, we must confront the role that the media plays in providing biased and false information and helping to perpetuate conflicts. When an intelligent person gets wrong, unbalanced or biased information, he naturally comes up with the wrong conclusions. This is the primary cause of nearly every conflict on earth. The media has not accepted any responsibility for their intentional omissions nor for their negative and unbalanced reporting of events.

The media’s only interest is selling newspapers or keeping you tuned to their station at whatever cost – even human lives. A perfect example of this is that there are literally thousands of Muslims trying to speak out against the defiling of their religion, yet the media simply doesn’t report these statements. Hence, the world asks, “How come the Muslims never speak out?”

Unless we can influence the media to cover the efforts of religions to debunk the supposed religiously-motivated events, we may find that Global Warming will be the least of our problems. A religiously-motivated war using weapons of mass destruction will be our unfortunate collective future.

At Pave the Way Foundation, we work to bring the truth of religious extremism to light by involving and informing both secular and religious persons. We encourage true religious persons to speak out against extremism within their own religion. In the near future, we will be sponsoring a Congress on Religious Extremism where members of the world’s major religions will define what constitutes extremism in their own group. We encourage the media to accurately report on world events, the good and the bad, and to give a voice to those who bravely speak out against extremism. – Gary L. Krupp

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What is Pave the Way Foundation?

Our Mission

Pave the Way Foundation is dedicated to achieving peace by bridging the gap in tolerance and understanding between religions through cultural, technological and intellectual exchanges. We strive to eliminate the use of religion as a tool which, historically, has been used by some to achieve personal agendas and to cause conflicts.

Through our projects and our concrete gestures of good will, we hope to pave the way towards global education directed to the everyday "grass roots" person. We must now all recognize the dangers of apathy and silence.

Embrace our Similarities; Savor our Differences

The meaning of our slogan is simple. We must embody the messages of charity, love and responsibility for every human being, common to all of our faiths, our beliefs and to the code of human behavior. We focus on our similarities and savor our differences by learning, through the positive and practical appreciation of the World's diverse religions and beliefs. We must not allow the differences to poison us with bigotry, hatred and intolerance. Instead, we wish to learn, enhance our own beliefs and in turn savor our differences.



PAVING THE WAY – ON THE ROAD

By Meredith Krupp M.S., PTWF Co-Founder

During the production of the November 2007 newsletter, Gary and I will be literally “on the road” traveling through Rome, Macedonia and Serbia. Therefore, this month’s article is the story of an unforgettable and inspiring trip that we took in May of 2006 to a notorious concentration camp in Poland.



Auschwitz

On May 28, 2006, with a delegation of Pave the Way Foundation board members from the U.S., Italy and Israel, we entered the gates of Auschwitz. Though this place represents the most vivid testimony of man’s inhumanity to man, it truly was a most spiritual and, yes, a most positive experience. We were there to greet the His Holiness, Benedict XVI, and witness the return of a Pope to a sacred site of hatred and loss. There was to be a ceremony dedicated to the memory of the victims of the concentration camp.

From our delegation’s VIP seats facing the memorial dedicated to victims of the camp, we were able to view the crowd that was made up of Rabbis, Jewish officials and Christian leaders from around the world, holocaust survivors

Rainbow Over Auschwitz, Photo by Gary L. Krupp

(some wearing their original striped prison uniforms) and members of the media. As we waited for the Pope in the cold pouring rain, many of us sat and reflected on where we actually were, while others wandered on the grounds, walking

along the infamous railroad track that ran through the camp, looking up at the guard towers that still loom over the site. The weather reflected our somber mood.

Suddenly, there was a hush in the crowd, and from a distance we could see the top of a white umbrella bobbing up and down behind a wall of the memorial. Finally the His Holiness emerged, and thunderous applause broke the silence. I was struck by the irony (and perhaps a little bitterness) that such a holy man was actually standing on the grounds of a killing field.

However, we were soon to be witness to a phenomenon that I can only describe as a **gesture** from above. As the Pope approached the podium, the pouring rain subsided, and a rainbow, the largest and brightest that I have ever seen, spread across the sky, going through one of the guard towers and ending on the railroad tracks. The crowd was stunned, as was the media, who quickly turned their cameras away from the guest of honor, in order to capture this once-in-a-lifetime photograph. The Pope smiled and nodded as he began to speak.

During the entire program, I was struck by G-D's symbolic message: As the Pope recited his prayers for peace and the Rabbis chanted prayers in Hebrew, the rainbow, a symbol of hope, was bisecting the guard tower and tracks, two of the most heinous symbols of the camps. Was someone reminding us that, although we must never forget, we must forgive in order to save our world? Was He sanctioning the ceremony by producing the rainbow, a sign of approval in the Catholic Church? Whatever the answer, this was definitely a "happening", a Pave the Way Foundation moment, symbolizing our ongoing mission of peace, and one we will never forget.

Gary took the picture of the rainbow that appears in this newsletter. He also presented a copy of it to Pope Benedict XVI in January, 2007. Upon seeing the picture, the Pope appeared delighted and asked Gary, "Is this Auschwitz?" Gary responded, "Yes, your Holiness, this was Auschwitz. I took this picture with my own camera." The Pope was thrilled to receive the gift, a remembrance of this most historic day. Until next time... – Meredith Krupp M.S.



What Others Say About Us

"Mr. and Mrs. Krupp formed Pave the Way Foundation to effect his vision of the commonality that exists between the world's religions. They use the common message of the true benevolence of each faith, to affect the overall goal that the religions, universally, must act to remove incorrect use as a tool of religious dogma and the intentional misinterpretations of holy text, to justify acts of violence, hatred and bigotry, within each religion. This, Mr. Krupp believes, is the cause of every major conflict on earth. How can such a monumental task be accomplished? Well sometimes the easiest and the simplest way will accomplish great things. Gary has proven this and, if his methodology becomes a format for dealing with the world's problems, I'm convinced that solutions to some of the international problems would be achieved."

Dr. Farouque Khan – Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Islamic Center of Long Island

"The efforts of tonight's honorees are a tribute to the Pave the Way Foundation's mission to unify people of all religions and improve the quality of life in communities throughout the world"

Michael R. Bloomberg – Mayor, City of New York

"It is my pleasure to send you this letter congratulating you on the important initiative to produce a documentary program on the Alexandria Summit and its Declaration, as well as the ongoing effort to ensure that religion is a force for peace in the Middle East and in our world, rather than a tool for violence and destruction. This message and this initiative are of urgent and crucial importance and I am grateful to you and for your commitment to bring them to as wide an audience as possible."

Rabbi David Rosen – Signatory to the Alexandria Declaration and International Director and Chief Rabbi of the American Jewish Committee

"Please keep up the good work of Pave the Way Foundation in your quest to end the use of religion for justifying acts of violence"

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin- Chief Rabbi of Efrat, Israel

A New Hope for Peace in Palestine – The Wasatia Forum

By Linda Simpson, PTWF Director of Volunteer Services

In support of peace in the Palestinian areas, Pave the Way Foundation has pledged to support the creation of a new Islamic party aimed at the moderate middle of Muslim politics. Wasatia, which means “balance” or “centrism” in Arabic, is the name of the new political organization that will advocate peaceful, negotiated settlements, particularly of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, rather than the radical, more fundamentalist approaches that have led to the ongoing strife and bloodshed.

Not yet a full political party, the Wasatia Forum was founded by two brothers, Dr. Mohammed Dajani and Dr. Munther Dajani. They recently published a book of centrist (wasatia) principles based on positive quotes from the Qur’an, seeking to demonstrate that the true religion of Islam is one of harmony and tolerance. Pave the Way Foundation recently provided the funds to translate this manual into Hebrew in an effort to make its positive message more readily accessible to the everyday Israeli.



Dr. Mohammed Dajani with Gary Krupp



The Holy Bible, the Talmud, and the Qur'an at the Wasatia Forum

Arabic to mean also ‘balance’ and ‘moderation’. In the Holy Qur’an, it is used to mean ‘goodness’, ‘righteousness’, ‘justice’, and ‘straightforwardness’. Wasat is said to be that which is in the midst of extremes such as hot and cold, rich and poor, empty and full, generosity and stinginess, courage and cowardice.”

The party will be a voice for the large number of Palestinian voters who are moderate in both their politics and their religious beliefs and practices. Wasatia, is an alternative to the existing hard-line parties (the dominant Hamas and Fatah) which, after years of violence, armed resistance, and extreme militarism, have alienated the so-called silent majority. The Dajani brothers hope to give the Palestinians a clear choice for change by building an infrastructure in a future Palestine based on peace with Israel, using the positive values of the Islamic faith as a cornerstone.

The words of Dr. Munther Dajani explain the essence of the movement: “Wasatia is a concept extracted from the Arabic word ‘wasat’ which means ‘middle of the road’, and ‘center of the circle’. It is used in

“It is time for Wasatia creed to emerge and rise in the Muslim world that it may draw the best and the brightest from among the Muslim community. The new initiative adopts the Wasatiah Islamic tradition and the Shura Islamic concept as its main pillars. Al-Wasatiah calls for Muslims to take mid-ground that stands between those who sanctify strict tradition and those who opt for rational thinking in reading and explaining the Holy Qur’an in compliance with the Surah in the Holy Qur’an: {And so we have created you a midway nation.}”

“The Wasatia concept is reflected also in many other verses in the Qur’an such as: {Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either earn reproach or be reduced to penury.} Al-Shurah Islamic tradition advocates collective and consultative decision-making.”

“The goal will remain to seek peace and move to the center away from radicalism. The wasatia road taken in conflict resolution is negotiation, not confrontation. It is not win-lose situation but the win-win situation”

The challenges are many, including a history of failure for centrist parties in the region, and the fact that Wasatia is not yet fully aligned with the kind of “powerful elites” in society that are necessary to help build the movement. For the moment, the Dajanis are focused on creating new jobs and economic opportunities not related to arms and violence. – Linda Simpson



What Can I Do?

Volunteer

The first and best way to support any endeavor is to look within yourself and provide that gift that only you can give – time. Each of you reading this has special talents that you can bring in support of PTWF’s mission. Please contact us and donate your time and talent in support of peace.

Matching Gifts

Many companies offer matching gift programs that compound employee charitable contributions. Check the directory of matching gift companies to find out if your company will match your Pave the Way gift. If they do match, remember to follow your organization’s matching gift process.

Donate

PTWF is a public charity under IRS Code 501C3. Your donations are tax deductible. Pay by credit card through PayPal by clicking on www.ptwf.org/Contribute or send a check to 253 West 35th Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001-1907.

Do You Have Frequent Flyer Miles?

Through the generosity of several major airlines, PTWF can receive donations of frequent flyer miles. Call the individual airlines to find out how to donate your unused frequent flyer miles to PTWF in support of our mission.

Start a Local Chapter

Gestures of good will can also be done in a local area. Is it your passion to bring together the diverse groups in your community to achieve peace and harmony? Go to www.ptwf.com/chapters to find out how you can help pave the way to peace in your own area.



Who Are We?

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HRH Princess Elizabeth of
Yugoslavia
Aleksandar Simic

India:

Sunil Thomas

Athens, Greece:

Gloria Clementoni

Director of Volunteer Service

Linda Simpson



Special Note of Remembrance

Sadly, two members of our PTWF family have recently passed from this Earth – Dennis Dubin and Alice Ofria. Dennis Dubin, a valued member of our Board of Advisors and a Scientologist, was instrumental in getting us connected with important funding sources.

Alice Ofria, along with her husband Charles, donated the design work and hosting of our website. They came into PTWF when we needed them most and helped to educate the world to our most important mission.

Alice's family has set up a memorial fund on the Pave the Way Foundation website, www.ptwf.org/Alice. It was her wish that donations to a worthy charity be given in lieu of flowers or cards. The money collected is funding Project Baby which provides basic necessities such as baby food, diapers and toys to welfare mothers in Jerusalem. Since the Ofrias are Christian, the Project Baby gifts will be distributed to Jewish and Muslim mothers.

Our prayers and our thoughts are with their families. They will be sorely missed. We take solace in the fact that the work of Pave the Way Foundation, which they both supported greatly, will go on. In that way, and in our loving memory of them, they will live on.

-Gary and Merry Krupp



Pave the Way Foundation's Gestures of Good Will:

Completed Projects:

- Took 148 Rabbis, Cantors and Jewish leaders to meet Pope John Paul II and say “thank you” on behalf of the Jewish people
- Concerts in Venice and Rockville Centre NY
- Arranged for the Vatican Museum to loan priceless Maimonides (13-century Jewish scholar) manuscripts to Israel Museum in Jerusalem
- Sponsored museum exhibit, “A Blessing to One Another-Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People”
- Helped with the acquisition of sophisticated medical equipment for Casa Sollievo Della Sofferenza in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy in order to improve the medical care for the poor in Europe and to carry on the benevolent work of St. Padre Pio.
- Trained Israeli airport security on how to recognize and properly treat religious officials
- Helped with acquisition and donation to the Vatican Library of the Bodmer Papyrus, the oldest written version of the Gospels of St. John and St. Luke including the oldest written version of the Lord's Prayer, dating back to 175-225 A.D.
- Arranged for translation of Wasatia manual to promote peace in the Palestinian areas

See more completed projects at www.ptwf.org/projects

Ongoing Projects:

- Digitizing the Vatican Library and the manuscripts of the Franciscans in Israel
- Finalizing the fundamental agreements between the state of Israel and The Holy See
- Moving to get the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem affirmed
- First International Congress on Religious Extremism
- Project Baby
- Peace and Prosperity Plan for the Palestinian areas
- Placing twin life-size monuments of Pope John Paul II in Krakow and Jerusalem to be created by renowned artist and Pave the Way Foundation Advisor, Sam Philipe

See more ongoing projects at www.ptwf.org/projects

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