

Why do some Christians risk their freedom and their lives to talk about Jesus Christ in seemingly inhospitable environments, such as some Muslim countries? Is it right for them to do so? How do they go about it, even in countries that refuse to allow their citizens to exercise the internationally recognized right of religious freedom?

The undersigned leaders of 55 Christian organizations from 19 countries explain our motives and methods in the following statement. Our job is not to represent any government or civilization but to obey and follow Jesus.

Why do we share the good news about Jesus with all peoples, including Muslims?

First of all, it is important to realize that everyone has an internationally recognized right to discuss his or her faith with others, no matter where we live or visit. The international community agrees: 151 nations have ratified the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirms: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice."¹

There should be no double standards. Muslims who live in the West are free to respectfully express and share their faith. Followers of Jesus who live in the Muslim world should be equally free to respectfully express and share their faith.

But why and how do we share about Jesus with Muslims?

1. We are followers of Jesus, called Isa al-Masih by Muslims. This means that He holds supreme importance for us. We seek to center our lives on Jesus and the good news about Him.²
2. What is this good news? We have experienced peace with God, the forgiveness of our sins, and the hope of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.³
3. It is our delight to share this good news with others.⁴ It is also our duty to share the good news with all the peoples of the world, because Jesus instructed us to do so.⁵

¹ Source: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm . The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights uses even stronger language, asserting that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Source: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

² Philippians 1:21, Galatians 6:14.

³ Acts 10:43, Romans 5:1, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Romans 6:23.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:14, Ephesians 5:2.

⁵ Matthew 28:18-20.

4. Therefore, we seek to live in the world as peacemakers, inviting men and women everywhere to be reconciled to God and to one another.⁶
5. We, who come from many cultures, countries and backgrounds, offer this message of peace to all people in love, with respect and cultural sensitivity, without coercion or material inducement.⁷
6. We believe that only God can convert people. Christianity and Islam agree on this point.⁸ For many, the titles “Muslim” and “Christian” define an external, cultural identity. Instead of focusing on external labels, we invite all people, including Muslims, to an inward change through Jesus.⁹
7. We rejoice that when the gospel brings inward change to believers who embrace it, they then bring positive transformation to the communities where they live.¹⁰
8. As followers of Jesus, we are motivated to do good deeds. In this way we imitate Jesus, honor God, and seek to heal a hurting world.¹¹
9. For us, all of life is devoted to Jesus. Therefore, wherever we live and whatever our occupation, our work is witness and we witness at work.¹²
10. Jesus and the good news about him are so precious to us that we are willing to sacrifice and suffer in order to give people an opportunity to know the good news about him.¹³

March 2004

⁶ Matthew 5:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 16:14, 1 Peter 3:15, Romans 12:17-18, 2 Corinthians 8:21.

⁸ Jesus pointed out, “No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me makes them want to come” (John 6:44 Contemporary English Version). The Qur’an agrees, saying, “God converts whom he will” (al-Nur 24:46; Fatir 35:8). In fact, both are missionary religions with a message for all people (Qur’an 25:1; 38:87; 3:20; John 3:16). Both faiths claim the final messenger (Qur’an 33:45; Hebrews 1:1-2). Both groups are called to be witnesses (Qur’an 2:143; Matthew 28:19-20). Both scriptures make exclusive claims for their message (Qur’an 3:85; John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Yet both are called to witness in a gracious manner (Qur’an 16:125; 29:46; 1 Peter 3:15).

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, John 3:3-7, Ezekiel 36:26-27.

¹⁰ Historically, religious voluntary organizations have had a huge positive impact on international development in non-Western countries. It has been estimated that such organizations are responsible for roughly 70 percent of the work of international development, having founded, for example, more than half of the colleges and hospitals of Africa and Asia. (source: Dr RD Winter, William Carey International University).

¹¹ Matthew 5:16; Acts 10:38; Titus 2:7,14; 3:14.

¹² Colossians 3:17, 23; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

¹³ Philippians 1:29, Acts 5:41.

This statement is affirmed by:

Dr Paul McKaughan
President
Evangelical Fellowship of Mission
Agencies
USA

Dr K Rajendran
General Secretary
India Missions Association
India

Rev Marcos Amado
President
Pueblos Musulmanes Internacional
Spain

Dr Imad Shehadeh
President
Jordan Evangelical Theological
Seminary
Jordan

Rev Steve Cochrane
Director
YWAM Neighbours

Dr J Dudley Woodberry
Professor of Islamic Studies and Dean
Emeritus
School of Intercultural Studies
Fuller Theological Seminary
USA

Dr Rick Love
International Director
Frontiers
UK

Rev. John E. Fletcher
International Director
Pioneers
USA

Rev Johnson Asare
Director
Markaz Al Bishara
Ghana

Rev Dr David Lundy
International Director
Arab World Ministries
UK

Dr John H. Orme
Executive Director
Interdenominational Foreign Mission
Association
USA

Dr Patrick Cate
President
Christar
USA

Rev Nahor Samaila
Director
Evangelical Missionary Society
Nigeria

Dr William David Taylor
Executive Director
World Evangelical Alliance Missions
Commission
USA

Dr David Tai Woong Lee
Director
Global Missionary Training Center
Korea

Rev Paulo Carlos Noivo Pascoal
Missions Commission Director
Portuguese Evangelical Alliance
Portugal

Rev Canon 'Bayo Famonure
Executive Secretary
Evangelism and Missions
Commission of Association of
Evangelicals in Africa
Kenya

Dr Charles A. Davis
Executive Director
TEAM
USA

Dr A Scott Moreau
Professor and Chair, Missions and
Intercultural Studies, Wheaton
College
Editor, Evangelical Missions
Quarterly
USA

Mr David Harper
Director
Youth With A Mission Barbados
West Indies

Mr Younoussa Djao
Partnering Advisor
Interdev Partnership Associates
Cote d'Ivoire

Dr Miriam Adeny
Associate Professor of World
Christian Studies
Seattle Pacific University
USA

Mr Clive James Pritchard
International Director
People International
UK

Rev Gary Edmonds
Secretary General
World Evangelical Alliance
USA

Rev Geoff Tunicliffe
Director, Global Initiatives
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
Canada

Dr Warren F Larson
Director, Zwemer Center for Muslim
Studies
Columbia International University
USA

Mr Patrick Johnstone
Author, Operation World
WEC International
UK

Dr. Paul D. Kooistra
Coordinator
Mission to the World
USA

Dr Barbara Helen Burns
Educational Coordinator
Centro Nordestino de Missões
Brazil

Dr JB Crouse, Jr.
President
OMS International, Inc.
USA

Rev Dr Stuart Robinson
Senior Pastor
Crossway Baptist Church
Australia

Rev H Allan Graham, Jr
President
World Thrust North America
USA

Mr Lloyd A Cooke
Jamaica Co-ordinator
Ministries-In-Action
USA

Dr Daniel Sathiaraj
Founder
Prayer Fellowship International
India

Dr Steve Hoke
VP People Development
Church Resource Ministries
USA

Dr Hans Finzel
President
CBInternational
USA

Mrs Paula Wong
Executive Director
NEST (The Networking Equipping
Sending Team for World
Evangelization)
Jamaica

Dr Steve Strauss
Director
SIM
USA

Mr Marcel Durst
International Team Leader
Latin Link
Switzerland

Dr D Jim O'Neill
President
UFM International
USA

Rev Evan Davies
International Director
WEC International
UK

Mr Trev Gregory
International Director
TEMA-MISSION
Netherlands

Mr Min-Young Jung
International Coordinator, Asian
Diaspora Initiative
Wycliffe Bible Translators
International USA & Korea

Rev Tom Correll
Pastor, Wooddale Worldwide
Wooddale Church
USA

Dr Jon Ohlhauser
President
Prairie Bible Institute
Canada

Rev Jim Killgore
President/CEO
ACMC
USA

Rev William F Crew
International Director
World Mission Centre
South Africa

Rev Albert Ehmann
Executive Director
World Team (Global Ministries)
USA

Dr David Pollock
Executive Director
Interaction International Inc.
USA

Dr W Ward Gasque
President
Pacific Association for Theological
Studies
USA

Mr Drs Marco Vermin
Director
Gave -church work among refugees-
Netherlands

Dr David W Stoner
Lead Global Outreach Pastor
Mars Hill Church
USA

Rev Martin Voegelin
Executive Secretary
Association of Evangelical Missions
Switzerland

Mr Kenneth O Smith
TIE International Coordinator
TIE Tentmakers
USA

Mr Gregory E Fritz
President
Caleb Project
USA