

*ACTA PRO DIALOGO*



# Religious Radicalism

Christian and Muslim Understanding and Responses

(Vatican City, 26-27 January 2021)

# Radicalisme religieux

Compréhensions et réponses chrétiennes et musulmanes

(Cité du Vatican, 26-27 janvier 2021)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT / AVANT-PROPOS

On January 26 and 27, 2021, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue organized a virtual meeting to discuss and assess the various aspects of religious radicalism as well as the insights that Christians and Muslims can bring to it today. The initiative was intended to contribute to a wider reflection that the Roman Curia is carrying out on this phenomenon.

Religious radicalism is not only made up of doctrines or norms, it is just as much forged in the daily life of human societies, made up of women and men, of different historical and societal contexts, of knowledge, of debates and of ideas of errors endlessly repeated.

The contributions gathered here, we hope, are a step towards understanding this phenomenon. The reader will find three moments in the reflection: geographical approaches that attempt to analyze the global scope of the phenomenon; critical insights into the roots and the mechanisms that nourish it; testimonies which, if they do not provide definitive solutions, at least offer a path of hope where human fraternity emerges as the remedy to the wounds of religious radicalism.



Les 26 et 27 janvier 2021, le Conseil Pontifical pour le Dialogue Interreligieux a organisé une rencontre virtuelle afin de discuter et d'évaluer les divers aspects du radicalisme religieux ainsi que les éclairages que chrétiens et musulmans peuvent, aujourd'hui, y apporter. L'initiative entendait contribuer à une réflexion plus ample que mène la Curie Romaine sur ce phénomène.

Le radicalisme religieux n'est pas seulement constitué de doctrines ou de normes, il se forge tout autant dans le quotidien des sociétés humaines, faites de femmes et d'hommes, de contextes historiques et sociétaux souvent différents, de connaissances, de débats et d'erreurs sans cesse renouvelés.

Les contributions ici réunies, nous l'espérons, sont un pas vers la compré-

hension de ce phénomène. Le lecteur trouvera trois moments de réflexion : des approches géographiques qui tentent d'analyser l'ampleur globale du phénomène ; des approfondissements critiques sur les racines et les mécanismes qui le nourrissent ; des témoignages qui, s'ils n'apportent pas de solutions définitives, offrent pour le moins un chemin d'esérance où, seule, la fraternité humaine permettra de guérir les plaies du radicalisme religieux.

## WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDY CONFERENCE

Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, Cardinal President  
of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City

Your Eminences, Excellences, Distinguished Professors, Religious Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, it is a special joy for me to welcome each one of you to this webinar study conference on “Religious Radicalism: Christian and Muslim Understandings and Responses.” I also greet colleagues from other Pontifical offices, who are joining us in this reflection and study for the first time. Let us hope that our harvest might be bountiful and enable us to formulate those needed responses to the challenges of religious radicalism.

This study conference is part of an-going reflection on religious radicalism, a phenomenon expanding across the globe, creating havoc, suffering and even the death of innocents in many societies. As Pope Francis says, “*violence has no basis in our fundamental religious convictions, but only in their distortion.*” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, #282). We are called, therefore, to reflect how certain perceptions of religions have led to the present critical situation. Let me mention some earlier related initiatives taken by this Pontifical Council:

- Joint Reflection on *The Phenomenon of Islamic Radicalism in the Democratic Republic of Congo* in collaboration with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) on 9th June 2020, and a
- Brainstorming meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020 under the theme *The Phenomenon of Islamic Radicalism in the World and the Mission of the Church* with the participation of the representatives of the Secretariat of State, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI).

Feedback from these inter-Dicasteral meetings revealed the need for concerted, comprehensive, adequate and multi-sectorial responses. To facilitate this, peoples



and institutions involved need to pursue an expanded and deeper understanding of the phenomenon, to confront the questions that despite all efforts done thus far, remains: Why is this radicalism still gaining followers? What are its roots? How is it sustained? Which initiatives have been efficacious in containing its spread and impact?

With this study, we hope to point to specific solutions to contextualized situations and help identify potential collaborators. Surely local religious leaders prompted to fulfil their authentic call as mediators for peace can be found in every religion. For as Pope Francis says, *“As religious leaders, we are called to be true ‘people of dialogue’, to cooperate in building peace not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators. Intermediaries seek to give everyone a discount, ultimately in order to gain something for themselves. The mediator, on the other hand, is one who retains nothing for himself, but rather spends himself generously until he is consumed, knowing that the only gain is peace.”* (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, # 284).

Having heard those words of the Holy Father, let me welcome all speakers and contributors whose expertise and insights will enrich this study conference. It is our hope that your participation will enlighten our search and help us shift our attitudes, from observers of the consequences of religious radicalism to protagonists of needed solutions, men and women of dialogue and authentic mediators of peace.

The presentations in these two days are setup in a manner to take us through a process towards not only greater understanding, but also an invitation to action:

- crises and wounds caused by Religious Radicalism around the world (**SEE**)
- insidious reasons supporting Religious Radicalism (**JUDGE**)
- efforts aimed at countering religious radicalism and remedies to eradicate it (**ACT**)

Let us listen attentively as we each make our contribution.

## Gratitude

I would be remiss in welcoming you all if I did not acknowledge the spirit of inter-Dicasteral collaboration that has been animating the initiatives leading to this study conference. In addition, I thank in a particular way their Eminences and collaborators, all contributors – officials of the Secretary of State, professors

and experts, researchers and peace advocates, for your outstanding support and resourceful contribution to this event. I also thank all those who will benefit and make good use of the outcome of this endeavour.

### **Limits and constraints of webinar**

Unfortunately, the Pandemic places a difficult constraint on this important event. While a webinar can connect us across continents, it cannot offer the warmth of physical presence, and the interpersonal interactions, not to mention the Q&A exchange of each session. Nonetheless, we will strive for the best outcome of the present arrangements, ensuring that the presentation in streaming follows the dynamics and the schedule of the program. Speakers unable to present in streaming due to time restraints or other technical reasons, will have their pre-recorded videos played at their allotted time.

Let us begin the first session of the conference recalling the declaration of commitment shared by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb:

*“...we resolutely [declare] that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women... God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want his name to be used to terrorize people.”* (Pope Francis and Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living together*, 04 February 2019).

I wish this webinar great success, and to all participants fruitful sharing, bounty insights today and tomorrow!