



† Ο ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΚΥΠΡΟΥ
ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΣ

A reply to the open letter of 138 Muslim leaders

Honorable sirs,

By the 13th of October we received and studied carefully your open invitation letter and we sincerely congratulate you for this initiative.

We surely agree that peace between Christians and Muslims contributes to the prevalence of peace all over the World. Of course, our wish is that peace and cooperation among religious communities prevails universally among followers of all religions.

We also agree that the common fundamental values of Christianity and Islam such as monotheism and love to others impose common work, to face the big social problems such as violence, war, destruction of the environment, starvation and the violation of the human rights. This effort obligates us to develop into the mutual respect for all sides when theological differences arise but it does not necessarily compose the beginning or part of a theological dialogue.

It is the main teaching of Christianity that every human is made in the mirror of God and indiscriminately of tribe or religion is the subject of love. Consequently religious experiences of the others, language, cultural and religious pluralism are self-evidently respectable during the 13 centuries of coexistence of especially Eastern Christianity with Islam, in a common geographical place.

The long, for centuries, coexistence of Eastern Christianity with Islam has created among others, a common cultural ground and the study and rise of it is possible to lead to a common effort for peace. We mention indicatively the fields of architecture, music, adoration and monasticism.

We absolutely agree with the necessity of respect of religious differences and of course we disapprove every effort of limitation of religious freedom of Muslims or

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anyone else who lives in a nation with majority in Christian population. Of course, the same respect is demanded for Christian minorities in Muslim countries and especially local Churches, which exist in majority Muslim nations.

Particularly we feel the necessity to emphasize that the Turkish invasion in Cyprus has wounded rudely the mutual respect of religion traditions and freedoms.

Lastly, the Turkish side attempts to use religious differences between the members of the two communities in Cyprus, something, which is surely opposite with the meaning of your letter and your initiative.

It is historically proven that relationships between Christians and Muslims in Cyprus, according to 450 years of coexistence, were absolutely harmonious in both levels of people and religious leadership. It is also known that the Republic of Cyprus and Cypriots kept and still keep friendly connections with all the nations and the people of Middle East, which are mainly Muslims. Unfortunately, the same can not be said for Turkey, who invaded Cyprus in 1974 and created between others the conditions for deprivation of main religious rights to the members of our Church, spoliation of churches, destruction of religious artifacts, offense of religious symbols etc. We are hopeful that your initiative will contribute positively to change this unacceptable situation.

We greet again your effort and we are waiting for its materialization with concrete steps and we assure you that we are ready to contribute to its realization.

His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus
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