



The first plenary session at the 13th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue discussed Human Rights in Religions (Vision and Concept). Speakers from Croatia, Qatar, Morocco, United States, Malaysia and Canada took part in the session.

Headed by Dr Hassan Abdul Rahim al-Sayed from Qatar, the session focused on practicing freedom of belief, religious practice and expression, human rights and dignity as well as the role of religious leaders in dialogue, establishment of peace, importance of fulfilment and insurance of human rights.

Professor Dr Ivo Josipovic of Croatia reaffirmed the need to promote continuous dialogue between religions, establishment of democracy, concept of reconciliation and the promotion of an atmosphere of tolerance, equality, freedom of belief and expression. This will in turn frame and ensure safe coexistence between societies regardless of religion, color and gender, he said.

Dr Ali al-Qura'adaghi of Qatar spoke about human rights in light of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's teachings (Sunnah). He added that conferences such as this are an encouragement to achieve just peace and alleviate injustice from humanity, at a time where humans are threatened by their existence and rights, as is happening now in Yemen, Palestine, Syria and the Rohingya minority in Myanmar. He stressed that Islam provided freedom of thought, religion, economy, policy, science and culture to humans. He added that Islam also ensures rights for humans and other creatures such as animals, quoting verses from the Qur'an on this matter. These facts were also highlighted in the Constitution of Madinah which includes 27 articles on non-Muslim rights in Madinah, he added.

Dr Mariam Ait Ahmed of Morocco spoke about the principles of religions in light of violation of human rights, adding that religious leaders play an important role in dialogue and conflict resolution. She added that there are many violations that are not spoken of in many areas around the world, such as the displacement of people because of war and their abuse, as they appeal in vain. She also called on all religions to unite in order to defend human rights. She said that religious freedom is linked to responsibility, highlighting the need to face the destruction that trouble societies and enhance the principles of peace, tolerance, compliance with commitment as well as carrying out practices that achieve these ends without political and civilizational prejudice. She fielded several questions about the religious aspect in the culture of humanitarian peace and the decent living of societies. She reaffirmed that human dignity cannot be jeopardized and religious values are constant while political interests differ.

Rabbi Robert Kaplan of the United States touched on human rights in religions and reiterated the importance of acknowledging that human rights are based on human dignity. He warned that the violation of human dignity fuels violence, extremism, hatred and undermines the self-worth of the other.

Ambassador Sri Razali Ismail of Malaysia, chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), highlighted the need to promote diversity, establish a balance among communities of all religions and the freedom of opinion and expression as well as the importance of religion to be a strong advocate of human rights with governments and governance that further strengthens it and protects it away from any racial discrimination and exclusion.

Dr Jamal Badawi of Canada spoke freedom of belief and practice of worship and stressed human dignity. He called for openness among religions and taking into account common values accepted by all human beings and respect for the specificities of each religion and the rights of religious and ethnic minorities.