

The Role of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence

In the framework of the joint cooperation between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, the two Councils held a symposium at Al-Azhar Al-Sharif in Cairo in the period between 22th and 23th of February 2107 titled: “The Role of Al-Azhar Al- Sharif and of the Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence”.

Representatives of Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue have participated in the symposium.

The symposium was started by a speech of Professor Abbas Shauman, Deputy Al-Azhar, and Professor Mahmoud Hamdi Zakzouk, Head of Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and a member of the Authority of Senior Scholars. Also, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tuaran delivered a speech.

The speeches of the symposium were delivered over two days. Participants presented six research papers in Arabic and English on the following points:

- Fanaticism, causes and ways to counter it
- Extremism, causes and ways to counter it
- Violence, causes and ways to counter it

The symposium has been concluded with the following recommendations:

1. The symposium recommends the significance of the dialogue between Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and activating the common human values to counter fanaticism, extremism and violence.
2. The symposium recommends the importance of respecting the religious diversity.
3. The symposium stresses the necessity of addressing causes of the phenomena of extremism, violence, poverty, ignorance, and the political abuse of religion and incorrect understanding of religious texts.
4. The symposium recommends the necessity of paying attention to the issues that concern young people, opening dialogue channels, explaining correct concepts ordained by religions, training and developing them.
5. The symposium reaffirms paying attention to schools curricula that establish the common human values, taking into consideration the issues of women, family, youth and children.
6. The symposium stresses the values of mercy, love and other moral values to counter extremism, violence and intolerance

7. The symposium stresses the necessity of handling disagreements and showing that difference doesn't mean negating peaceful coexistence.
8. The symposium stresses the importance of cooperation between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in terms of promoting coexistence and communication with the decision makers in fields of security and development.
9. The symposium confirms the position adopted by Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to consider dialogue as a basis for the relations between peoples, individuals, civilizations and religions in order to establish peace, security and stability. The symposium also rejects all forms of fanaticism, extremism and violence.
10. We recommend that such symposium and meetings between Al-Azhar Center for Dialogue and the Pontifical Center for interreligious dialogue for clearing any misconceptions and confirming the values of tolerance and easiness among the followers of all religions.
11. The symposium recommends all the international governments, organizations and authorities to co-operate with each other in countering extremist and violent groups. These groups have negatively impact stability and peaceful coexistence among people.
12. The symposium recommends assisting the call to alleviate violence and stress among the followers of religions in many countries of the world and eliminating the phenomenon of developing on spirit of hatred and animosity for religions and defaming religious symbols since these are some hostile actions.
13. The symposium recommends establishing serious cooperation to counter, in a realistic and applicable ways, terrorism and terrorist organizations; working on drying their resources, stop giving them supplies of money and weapons, closing the gates to the social communications before them in order to protect young people from its devastating ideologies.