

Peaceful Coexistence between Muslims and Christians: The Case of Jerusalem

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Abstract

Peaceful coexistence between religions in this contemporary age is both an individual and social necessity. It is particularly important given the interconnectedness of today's world in various areas such as politics, economics, society and culture. Isolation is not conducive to progress and development. In this context, the importance of research in the field of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians is highlighted. In this article, the city of Jerusalem is selected as a case study of coexistence between Muslims and Christians due to it constituting a living city that exemplifies such coexistence. In addition, its inhabitants have managed, despite all kinds of division and discrimination, and in spite of the difficult political, economic, cultural and social conditions, to provide the finest images of peaceful coexistence, and by virtue of this deserve to live in this blessed city. The article demonstrates how religious coexistence is the means of communication between civilizations, cultural exchange, and the confluence of nations for the good of humanity. Furthermore, the article explores the historical and geographical importance of Jerusalem among the followers of the Abrahamic religions as a living model worthy of emulation.

Keywords: Peaceful Coexistence; Tolerance; Jerusalem; Muslims; Christians; Humanitarian Motivations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Importance of the Research

This article presents a living model of the purest and the most important shared religious cite, namely Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city in which its inhabitants have managed by virtue of their conscience, sense of brotherhood, and love, despite all kinds of division and discrimination, and in spite of the difficult political, economic, cultural and social conditions, to provide a shining example of peaceful coexistence and by virtue of this deserve to live in this blessed city.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To explain that the proper understanding of the provisions of the Lord of the Worlds is a key pillar for the correct understanding of religious coexistence and that misunderstanding this pillar will threaten to demolish this great humanitarian concept.
- To explain that religious coexistence is a way to promote civilizational and cultural exchanges, and the confluence of nations for the good of humanity.
- To explain the historical relationship between Muslims and Christians in the city of Jerusalem.
- To provide a practical model of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem as a virtuous human model worthy of emulation.

1.3. Methodology

This study is completed through two methods presented by the authors in order to obtain all objectives:

- Descriptive method which concentrates on the significance of subject and clarifies the key factors of this research related to the peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians, and crucial status of Jerusalem (*al-Quds*) among divine religions (i.e. monotheism).
- Comparative method which puts this article into a contemporary context and it presents some samples of peaceful co-existence of human beings in the 'city of Jerusalem' (*madina al-Quds*), and expresses its reasons as well.

1.4. Research Plan

This article encompasses six different sections as follows:

- Introduction in which the authors elaborate the significance of study, its objectives, and plan.
- Section one which expresses the religious principles required for a peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians.
- Section two which shows the religious importance of Jerusalem among the believers of divine religions (monotheism).
- Section three which re-presents the historical interactions between Muslims and Christians in the Jerusalem, and provides contemporary samples of peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance (*al-tasamuh al-dini*) in that city.
- Section four draws the attention of readers to the motivations of the people of Jerusalem for having a peaceful co-existence.
- Conclusions: Research Findings.

2. THE RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

By virtue of its divine origins, divine religions enjoin nothing but truth and goodness. It invites only to righteousness and love, compassion and charity, and recommends peace and security.

2.1. First: The Religious Origins of Peaceful Coexistence According to Muslims

The coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims is a legal obligation in Islam. Islam took the utmost care to consolidate a set of principles, foundations, and general rules in the hearts of Muslims, through a number of Qur'anic verses and Hadīths, to achieve peaceful coexistence, the acceptance of others, and constructive cooperation.

The Islamic texts that indicate the legal obligation of coexistence are as follows:

- Islam praised the divine religions, their divine books, and prophets. Allah said, "Children of Israel! Call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all other (for My Message)."¹ It also praised the Christians, "Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant."²

¹Qur'an 2; 47

²Qur'an 5; 82

- Islam also gave a beautiful description of the Torah and Bible. Allah described the Bible as, “And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.”³
- Islam also set the condition for a correct and complete belief to believe in all the Messengers. Allah said, “The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles. “We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles.” And they say: “We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.”⁴ This condition aimed towards drawing Jews and Christians close to Islam and to distance them from quasi-conflicts. But they did not sufficiently consider the contents of the Qurʾān regarding earlier religions, their books and Messengers, and what pertained to the Children of Israel and the Christians.
- Islam did not generalise rulings onto others. Among the greatest means to draw close to people is that the Qurʾān did not circulate a general judgment on religions, but left much room for dialogue and coexistence with others “Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (For the right): They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration.”⁵ This verse creates an environment conducive to coexistence, dialogue and cooperation.
- Allah said, “Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loved those who are just.”⁶ This verse encourages Muslims to act on the basis of goodness and righteousness⁷ with those who have not waged war against the Muslims or conspired to fight them. The righteousness enjoined in the verse encourages kindness toward their weak, the preservation of their wealth, families, honour, and all their rights, in addition to cooperating towards their protection.
- To interact with non-Muslims with consideration far from compulsion and enmity. Allah said, “Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.”⁸ Allah said determining the role of the Messenger (PBUH), “Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou art not one to manage (men’s) affairs”⁹
- Allah said, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).”¹⁰ The verse invited to familiarisation, which requires coexistence, between peoples that is far removed from ethnic partisanship. It asserted that no differences are there among men except through piety.

³Qurʾān 5; 46

⁴Qurʾān 2; 285

⁵Qurʾān 3; 113

⁶Qurʾān 60; 8

⁷Al-Qarāfī, Abū al-Abbās Ahmad ibn Idrīs, *al-Fārūq* d. 684, Annotated by ‘Umar Hasan al-Qiyām, Mu’assasah al-Risālah, Ed. 1, Beirut, 2003.

⁸Qurʾān 2; 256

⁹Qurʾān 88; 21-22

¹⁰Qurʾān 49; 13

- Allah said, “This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,- when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).”¹¹ This verse permitted the consumption of the foods permitted to the People of the Book and the marriage of their women. Both these permissions require coexistence and a certain degree of harmony.
- Allah said regarding the treatment of non-Muslim parents by their Muslim child, “But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love): in the end the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did.”¹² Meaning, treat them just and kindly,¹³ and refrain from abusing them in word or deed, obey them, submit to their every demand, and prefer them over all things except the obedience of Allah and His Messenger, as they are preferred over all things.

2.2. Living in the Light of the Sunnah

The Islamic texts that indicate the legality of coexistence with non-Muslims as found in the Sunnah are highlighted below:

- The prohibition of injustice towards with whom there is a covenant and with the *dhimmis*. The Prophet (PBUH) said: Whosoever hurts a *dhimmi*, or burdens him with the which he cannot manage, or takes his property without his permission, I will dispute with him on the Day of Resurrection.¹⁴
- Dealing with non-Muslims on the basis of loans. Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said: the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) died and his shield was pledged to a Jew for thirty sacks of barley.¹⁵
- Honouring the dead whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Jābir ibn AbdAllāh, may Allah be pleased with them, reported: a funeral procession passed by us and the Prophet (PBUH) stood up so we followed suit. We said, O Messenger of God: it is the funeral of a Jew, he said: If you see a funeral then stand. Narrated by al-Bukhārī.¹⁶ AbdAllāhibn Abī Layla said: Sahl ibn anīf and Qaysibn Saad were sitting at al-Qādissiyah when a funeral procession passed them by so they stood up. It was said to them: It is from the people of the land, meaning the *dhimmis*, they said: A funeral passed by the Prophet (PBUH) so he stood up. He was informed that it was a Jewish funeral. He said: are they not human beings. Narrated by al-Bukhārī.¹⁷

In practical terms, the Madinah accord, which served as the constitution, governed the people of Madinah who were of different religions (Islam, polytheism and Judaism), and in terms of ethnicity from Qahtān, al-Adnān, and Jews, yet it gave equal public rights and duties to all

¹¹Qur'ān 5; 5

¹²Qur'ān 31; 15

¹³Al-Sa'dī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāsir, Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Manān, Jam'īyyah Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-Islāmī Kuwait, 2001, p. 908.

¹⁴AbūDāwūd, al-Sunan, Murāja'ah Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Maṭba'ah MuṣṭafāMuḥammad, Cairo, Ḥadīth No. 3052.

¹⁵Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī bi Sharḥ al-Faṭḥ, Ḥadīth No. 2916, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1996

¹⁶Al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth No. 1331.

¹⁷Al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth No. 1312.

including being good and just to neighbours and the duty of protecting the city, in what can be termed in contemporary jargon as citizenship rights. The Islamic state maintained the rights of *dhimmis* and covenanters in their entirety. They were even appointed in certain senior positions within the government (dawlah) such as ministries and others.¹⁸ Will Durant asserted, “*Dhimmis* were treated with a degree of tolerance that cannot be found in the Christian countries of today. They were free to exercise their religious convictions and celebrated in their Churches and temples.”¹⁹

2.3. Second: The Religious Origins for Peaceful Coexistence According to Christians

Islam is not alone in incorporating the principles of tolerance Christianity, according to its gospels, “You have been told tooth for a tooth, and nose for a nose, and I tell you not to resist evil with evil, if someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them, and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain, and whosoever seeks forgiveness for those who wronged him, he has defeated Satan.”²⁰

Among the religious foundations for the importance of religious tolerance and coexistence according to Christians are as follows:

- Live among the people in such a way that when you are alive they praise you and when you die they weep for you.²¹
- For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.²²
- Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.²³
- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.²⁴
- And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.²⁵
- Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”²⁶
- Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.²⁷

These biblical texts form a good picture of the principles of tolerance. At times it presents a picture of tolerance that seems beyond human ability. This is yet further evidence that the divine religions share in this holy aspect of life. This comes as no surprise because the Lord is one who created the value of tolerance, despite differences in prophets and religions.

¹⁸AbūHalālah, Yūsuf, Ta’āmūl al-Muslimīnma’aGhayrihim, Dār al-Ḍiyā’, 2002, p. 55.

¹⁹Durant, Will, Qissah al-Ḥadārah, Vol. 13, 131.

²⁰Article by ‘AqīlYūsufĪdān, Researcher in Islamic philosophy and Arabic thought, Kuwait: ayemn@yahoo.com.

²¹Al-Kitāb al-Muqqaddas li al-Madrasah wa al-‘Ailahfī al-‘Aḥbayn al-Qadīmwa al-Jadīd (al-‘Ahd al-Qadīm) by Ināyah Father Xavier Seelos, p. 135.

²²Mathew 6: 14–15

²³Colossians 3: 13

²⁴Ephesians 4: 32

²⁵Mark 18: 21

²⁶Mathew 18: 21

²⁷Luke 23: 34

3. THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem has a special status in the world which its traces [all] available in every corner of the world. This city is the owner of more than 4000 years religious history. According to religious and historical studies, this city played an interreligious role as it is still a sacred place for all three religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Jerusalem was the first *qibla* for Muslims, it was the birthplace of Jesus and Jews were the main citizens of this city. In fact, Jerusalem is recognized with religion(s). Jerusalem also has a particular status among scholars as “the maps (*khara'it*) of antiquity presents Jerusalem as the center of the earth, the point where Europe, Asia, and Africa meet; scholars describes it as the *umbilicus mundi*; theologian used its name to indicate the kingdom of heaven (“celestial Jerusalem”); and, even today, men of culture throughout the world unite to speak of *Jérusalem, l'Unique et l'Universel*”.²⁸ Jesus is going to return back to Jerusalem to rule the world and it increases the level of its significance among the people of the world.

➤ Muslims' View towards Jerusalem's Status

Due to the special status of Jerusalem and the Prophet Muhammad's utterances regarding its virtues and features, Muslims have a close religious relation with Jerusalem.

- There is the place of *Isra'* and *mi'raj* where the Prophet also referred to for performing *salat* at the beginning of his calling (*da'wah*). Thus it became a part of Muslims' beliefs.
- Jerusalem was the land of the Prophets (*anbiya'*) and therefore, Muslims believe that there is the land of them as well. Because the Prophet Muhammad highlighted the importance of the other prophets for Muslims.
- Jerusalem was the first *qiblah* of Muslims
- Jerusalem is the land of 'gathering and raising (*hashrwanashr*) as the Prophet indicated himself.²⁹

Muslims' Main Contributions in Jerusalem

- *Aqsa* Mosque
- The Mosque of Dome of the Rock (*Qubbah al-Sakhrāh*)
- The Western Wall (*Ha'it al-Buraq*)

➤ Christians' View towards Christianity

- Jerusalem is a very important place for Christians because they visited there as pilgrimage. In fact, there was the birthplace of the Jesus Christ and where the Jesus was crucified by Roman governor of Pilate.³⁰

²⁸ Ferrari, Silvio. “Religious Significance of Jerusalem in the Middle East Peace Process: Some Legal Implications,.” *Cath. UL Rev.* 45 (1995): 733.

²⁹ . The prophet also informed his companions about this issue that: “Indeed, *beit al-muqaddasis* the land of gathering and dispersing (*mahshar* and *manshar*)”

³⁰ . Pontius Pilate was a famous Roman ruler of Judaea who was responsible for the execution of Jesus Nazareth. See <http://www.livius.org/pi-pm/pilate/pilate01.htm>

Michael Alexander in his book “Jerusalem and Bethlehem” talked about the historical background of Christians in Jerusalem. See, Michael Alexander (1995). *Dar Eliaa, Jerusalem and Bethlehem: “A geographical, historical and archaeological study”*: p67.

The Properties belonged to Christians in Jerusalem are as follows:

- Church of the Holy Sepulchre (*Kanisah al-Qiyama*)
- Deir El-Sultan: “The roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in a compound known as Deir as-Sultan, which is occupied by Ethiopian monks”.³¹
- Monastery of Saint Anthony (*Deir Anba Anthony*) in the north east of Church of the Holy Sepulchre and
- Saint George Monastery (*Deir Mar Jirjis*) near the Jaffa Gate (*bab al-khalil*)
- Khan Al-Aqbat
- Al-Azra Monastery (the Mount of Olives)
- Temple on the Mount of Olives
- Saint John Monastery (Deir Mar Youhanna) out of Church of the Holy Sepulchre domain
- The Archangel Michael next to the holy tomb

➤ Jews’ View towards Jerusalem

Jews mostly have two different views toward this city. The first group of Jewish people knows it as an ordinary city but the second groups of people are extremists (*ghulat*) who mostly refer to Psalm. In Psalm has been indicated that “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth-- If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy.” (Psalm 137:5-6)

There are many sacred things and places in Jerusalem which four tombs are among the famous places for them: Tombs of the Prophets Zachariah, Jacob, Absalom, Jehoshaphat.

4. THE PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

4.1. First: The Historical Relationship between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem

The historical stages of the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem and Palestine can be summed up in the following five key points:

- Peaceful coexistence since the reign of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattāb, may Allah be pleased with him, through to the reign of the Fatimids.
- Harassment of the Christians during the Fatimid era, especially by the Fatimid Caliph al-akim bi Amr Allāh, who was called ‘the crazy’. This Caliph persecuted Christians and Jews in Jerusalem and Egypt, and would then treat them kindly, then persecute them once more, and so on. The irony is that the mother of the Caliph was a Christian. The most severe act of this Caliph was the demolition of the Church of the Resurrection, which raised the ire of Christians around the world, but the Christians were allowed to then rebuild the church, and after eighty years popes and priests used these incidents as a pretext for the crusades.
- The era of the Crusader occupation and the war between Christians and Muslims. It is worth

³¹. See: <http://allaboutjerusalem.com/article/deir-sultan-holy-sepulcher>

mentioning that in this era the Eastern Christian Arabs (Orthodox Christians) were also persecuted by the Crusaders, except for the Maronites, who helped the Crusaders enter the Islamic lands. The most famous case of persecution that took place for the Christians of the East were looting the treasures of the Patriarch of Antioch and his torture at the hands of Reynold de Chatillon (Arnāt), prompting the Emperor Emmanuel to reproach the Emperor of Constantinople. The event strengthened relations between the just king Nūr al-Dīnal-Zankī and the Eastern Christians and united them against the Crusaders.

- Coexistence in Jerusalem during the Mamluk period, with a general sense of severity towards the Christians because of their role in the Crusades and especially regarding the issue of the construction and renovation of churches.
- Peaceful coexistence during the Ottoman era through to the current period. Coexistence in Jerusalem between Muslims and Christians is now considered a distinctive model and no major incidents can be recalled between Muslims and Christians under the brutal Zionist occupation, in spite of attempts by the occupation authorities to destroy this relationship through attempts to ignite sedition internationally, including the issue of the Basil Mosque in Jerusalem, and the issue of the Shahāb al-Dīn Shrine in Nazareth and others.³²

4.2. Second: Peaceful Coexistence between Muslims and Christians under Israeli Occupation

Since the major Palestinian Nakba in 1948, Muslims and Christians lived in Palestine in a special atmosphere of harmony and brotherhood, which has not been repeated in history. The followers of both religions joined in their struggle against the occupation of the Palestinian territories. They participated in the Palestinian suffering, and shared the same concerns and anguish and pain.

The unique phenomenon of Muslim-Christian coexistence in Palestine was not a normal coexistence. It was mixed with the blood of the martyrs, the suffering of prisoners, and the sacrifices of freedom fighters who were in the frontlines of the Palestinian struggle. Muslims and Christians remained united against all forms of ethnic cleansing and attempts to circumvent the national rights of the Palestinian people.

During its occupation, Israel has attempted to sow discord between Muslims and Christians in Palestine. They attempted to circulate false rumours in an attempt to weaken this national and social fabric. However, the national will and the heroic attitudes of the followers of both religions were victorious; forging a partnership in blood and determination. The battle of Kansiyah al-Mahd is good testimony to the great sacrifice made by members of the Christian community in their plight against the Israeli blockade.

The following are some instances that testify to the highest degree of peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance between Muslims and Christians.

4.3. The First Model: The Jerusalem Sports and Socio-Cultural Association: A New Forum that Unites Between Muslims and Christians

This association is the first of its kind in Jerusalem. It established a football team which is sports oriented in thought with a cultural centre and social in significance and philosophy.

³²See Sharāb, Muḥammad Ḥasan, Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Masjid al-Aqsā Dirāsah Ta'rikiyyah Muwaththaqah, Ed. 1, Beirut, 1994, p. 241; Al-Ḥanbalī, Mujīr al-Dīn, al-Ins al-Jalīl fī Tā'rikh al-Quds al-Khalīl, Dār al-Fikr, 1995, Vol. 1, 211-256; Fārūq 'Umar wa Muḥsin Muḥammad Ḥusayn, Ta'rikh Falistīn fī al-'Aṣūr al-Islāmiyyah al-Wustā, Baghdād, 1987, pp. 45-111; Al-Khalīlī, Ja'far, Mawsū'ah al-'Atbāt al-Muqaddasah, Qism al-Quds, Ed. 2, Beirut, 1987, pp. 221-265.

Mr. NūrKarāmah introduced the idea of a sports centre with the name “The Federation of Jerusalem,” in the holiest region of Palestine, to the city of Jerusalem. This football team will be the greatest contribution to Palestinian football to date, and an exemplary model of relations among all spectrums of society with Jerusalem that reflects love between Palestinians.

This initiative may seem strange to some, but it is a practical reality. The Federation of Jerusalem football team has become a reality. The team’s goals and objectives are many. Perhaps most notable is the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the Holy City, which reflects the finest example of tolerance and love between the two religions.

The name, ‘The Federation of Jerusalem,’ for the football team is a platform for religious coexistence in Jerusalem between Christians and Muslims and the union of the followers of the two religions in a single frame. The logo of the team consists of the union of the cross and the crescent at the top below which is the dove symbolizing the peace and mutual love between the two religions, and an athletic man who symbolizes the spirit of the team.

Since the beginning, the vision of the football team was to excel in sporting achievements and elevate the name of Jerusalem in all sporting events and social development. It also envisioned its contribution towards developing the local community through sports and social development. Based on the confidence of the players and management, the current goal is to maintain the legacy of the team. The team is confident that it will be in competitive form in the near future. The management of the team consisting of Christians and Muslims are working towards forming well-rounded personalities in regards to sports, society and cultural through:

- Deepening the spirit of loyalty and national belonging among members and highlighting their different abilities.
- Promoting physical education through culture, society, and religion.
- Creating ways and facilitate the means to invest the leisure time of members in the practice of sports, and cultural, social and religious activities.
- Cooperation between sports and social bodies through meetings and exchange visits.³³

4.4. The Second Model: The Islamic-Christian Front for the Defence of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites

The Islamic-Christian Front was established to defend Jerusalem and the holy sites on 3 March, 2007, as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. The President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, issued a presidential decree for the establishment of the Islamic-Christian Organisation for the support of Jerusalem and holy sites on October 26, 2008, as an integral part of the PLO organization directly under the president.

On 5 March, 2009, the President issued another decree for the formation of the ruling council of the body, which included 36 members from among Muslim and Christian personalities, half Muslim and half Christian.

On 23 March, 2009, the first meeting of the ruling council was attended by the President of the Palestinian Authority in which Sheikh Taysir Tamīni was elected as the Muslim president and Dr. Bishop Attalla Hanna was elected as the Christian president. The authority continues their role in the defence of Jerusalem, and in exposing the Israeli practices against the Islamic and Christian holy sites, in the voice of Jerusalem to Muslims and Christians and to all free people

³³ For greater details see Forum.koooro.com

throughout the world.

The authority shall exercise the following functions and powers:

- Defending the Holy City of Jerusalem and its holy places.
- Implement Muslim-Christian relations in a common framework for the city of Jerusalem and the Islamic and Christian shrines. It will form a united resistance against occupation efforts in Jerusalem and its holy sites.
- Coordination and communication with all Arab institutions and international organizations to unite efforts in order to support of Jerusalem and protect Islamic and Christian shrines.
- Document and verify the news on Jerusalem and witnessed events, including the schemes and attacks of the Israeli occupation against Jerusalem, its holy places, and its citizens, and submit it to international Arab public opinion.
- Contribute towards forming and directing Arab and international activities and events related to Jerusalem, and to coordinate with international and local offices. In this regard, the authority evaluates the activities, organizes conferences and meetings, and publishes data.³⁴

4.5. The Third Model: Bishop Dr. Attalla Hanna Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, Jerusalem

During a meeting in the Council of Muslim-Christian relations in Kuwait, Bishop Dr. Attalla Hanna the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, Jerusalem appealed to the Arab-Islamic-Christian nations for support for the Palestinian people and the city of Jerusalem to stand against the Zionist occupation and the suffering of Palestinians from the oppression, persecution and violation of human rights.

The Archbishop added that the city of Jerusalem is the first Qiblah and the third holiest site in Islam. He stressed that there is nothing in Christianity that is holier than Jerusalem, wherein Jesus Christ was born, lived his life, performed his incredible exploits, and contributed to the betterment of humanity and exemplified the best human values. He added that Palestine is at the heart of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish presence. He further added that we as Christians respect all religions even Judaism, but we disagree with Zionism and Zionists who are opposed to human values, freely commit murder, looting and abuse, and all forms of injustice to achieve their aim of forever transforming Jerusalem into a Jewish.

The Archbishop called for unity in the ranks and called for one heart for the sake of Jerusalem and the Arab nations. He called for the Arab nation to be a formidable opposition against all forms of racism targeted against institutions, holy sites, and the Palestinian people. This can be achieved through the establishment of housing projects and hospitals, mosques and churches, and support for orphaned children and their families, in order that Jerusalem remains a symbol of love and peace.³⁵

4.6. The Fourth Model: A Study By Dr. Ilyāsīḏon: Palestinian Christians are Partners in the Nation and Not Just A Minority

Dr. Ilyāsīḏ, head of the Orthodox Charitable Society in Beit Sahour, and secretary of the Council of Orthodox Institutions in Palestine, published a study entitled "Palestinian Christians, Facts,

³⁴www.elquds.org

³⁵alwatan.kuwait.tt/ArticleDetails.aspx/articlecommententry.aspx?id=217607&yq=0

Figures and Trends.” This research is of great importance in a time when there is discussion on “the harassment of Christians in the Middle East.”³⁶

The advantage of this study is its scientific nature science as it supports its arguments with facts and statistics that are beyond debate to reveal the depth of the interdependence of the Palestinian people of all religions and sects, and to demonstrate the full integration of the Christians in the social fabric of the local communities at all levels. The most important findings of the study are:

➤ **Remaining Steadfast to the Palestinian Identity**

Unlike the notions promoted by some circles, the research stresses that “the harassment of the Palestinian Christians arises from the occupation, not the Palestinian institutions. Dr. Isidproudly added, “Palestinian Christians are part of the society and the authority, they are sons of the nation, their roots are rooted deeply in the soil, they do not see themselves as foreigners, and refuse to be described as the minority, even though they represent one and a half percent of the Palestinian people.”

Addressing those who seek equity and justice for Christians in the Middle East, Dr. IlyāsIsidsaid, “We reject your intervention in our affairs, or subjecting our case to dubious purposes. We draw our strength from the Arab street, and from our Muslim brothers, and from our Arab culture and language; the language of the Qur’an.”

Instead, the international community “demanded that Israel demolish the apartheid wall, and lift barriers that prevent Christians and Muslims from performing their religious rituals in Jerusalem.”The research explained that an opinion poll conducted by the researcher found that 60% of Palestinian Christians identify themselves as Palestinian Arabs, and only 30% preferred their religious affiliation over their national affiliation.

➤ **Political Participation**

This study rejects claims that Palestinian Christians are persecuted in the occupied territories. Dr. IlyāsIsid said, “We enjoy full freedom, and criticize the policies of the authority when we consider them wrong. No one restricts or abuses us, but I can say that our rights and privileges are far beyond what is available to our Muslim brothers in spite of our limited numbers.”

It appears that the opinions of Dr. IlyāsIsidare not far from the truth as there is a strong Christian presence in Palestinian political institutions, and the PLO itself.In the occupied territories there are 10 mayors and 10 senior staff in the Office of the President of the Palestinian Authority, 7 ambassadors of the Palestinian authority, and two ministers in the government in Ramallah. 7 Christians one seats in the Palestinian parliament, which malfunctioned due to the conflict between Fatah and Hamas.

Suffice to note that more than 20% of the total number of Palestinian Christians belong to one of the existing parties. An even larger proportion operates within Palestinian civil societies as there are 575 Christian non-governmental organisationsin the occupied territories.

Dr. IlyāsIsidclaimed that Christians are located in all national parties, and among them are a number of martyrs.Most of the founders of the Palestinian revolutionary movements represented within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) are of Christian origin such asKnivHawatmeh, and George Habash, Salim Nassar, and HananAshrawi.This is in addition to dozens of writers and poets who have promoted the Palestinian consciousness, and effectively

³⁶Sa’id Ilyās, *al-Masīhiyūn wa al-Muslimīn Ḥaqā’iq wa Tawajuhāt wa Arqām*, Mu’assasah Ilyiyā, Ed. 1, 2009, p. 2.

contributed in maintaining the national memory, and mental criticism of Zionism such as the late Historian Edward Said, and the poet Samih al-Qasim.³⁷

➤ **Religious and human itarian motives when the people of Jerusalem to achieve peaceful coexistence**

The question here, and during the previous models, what religious and human itarian motives when the people of Jerusalem for peaceful coexistence?

A motivated and several requirements over the chronicity contributed when the people of Jerusalem, in the elaboration of the need for the concepts and values and cultures have contributed to the increased frequency of understanding between Muslims and Christians, and performed to establish a peaceful relationship rather than options rupture and confrontation and war, and through the trials experienced by the people of the Holy City in their history crystallized ideas of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and led to the acceptance of the other as an integral part of the self and existence, and that the values and concepts of humanity and moral formed trend societal strong over come differences important common humanity and that solid meeting humanitarian, and from here the responsibility in general and accommodate all segments and categories as it seeks every segment of its location and its relationship with the root level of understanding and mutual understanding between the sons of the same society and establish the facts of tolerance as a community and civilized.

The most important Motives and religious and humanitarian principles when the people of Jerusalem to achieve peaceful coexistence, it can be summarized as follows:

First: Recognizing differences in nationality, colour, thought, and religions: Among the laws of God is that people differ in religious beliefs, ideas, ideologies, and perceptions. There are dozens, nay hundreds, nay thousands of ideas, religions, perceptions, schools of thought, and orientations in all aspects of life. This diversity was willed by Allah, the Lord of all divine religions, and his ancient laws.

Second: Unity of religions in its origins, and their single source: All divine religions derive from a single origin, namely divine revelation. The laws of God have emerged from a single divine light, and therefore all followers of the divine religions must believe in all the prophets and a postles and all the divine books.

Third: Tolerance is necessary in itself: It should be highlighted that religious tolerance is necessary in itself. Existence has deemed it necessary that mankind form different human clusters. Although these clusters are united by their single origin, their mutual need to group together, ensure their survival, their desire to meet their basic needs, their desire to establish urban centres and year to develop, they nevertheless vary in the unique attributes of each group such as ethnicity, religious convictions, environments and culture.

These typical differences exist in order that every individual and every community is free to live as they please. We note that the purpose of the diversity between peoples, tribes, cultures, and civilizations is to constitute a reason for getting to know each other and not to remain ignorant of each other, to coexist, not to conflict with each other, to cooperate, not to fight one another, and to integrate and complement each other, not oppose and conflict. In light of this, it is clear that religious tolerance is necessary for maintaining existence.

Fourth: Religious tolerance requires mutual respect: The value of religious tolerance manifests

³⁷Sa'īd Ilyās, al-Masīḥiyūn wa al-Muslimīn Ḥaqā'iq wa Tawajūhāt wa Arqām, Mu'assasah Ilyiyā, Ed. 1, 2009, p. 2.

in its acknowledgement of differences, acceptance of diversity, and recognition of changes. It respects that which distinguishes individuals psychologically, emotionally, and mentally. It values the unique attributes of each community in regards to its culture which is a mix of the old, the present, and its vision for the future, and is the *raison d'être* for its survival and identity, in addition to being the source of its pride.

Fifth: Religious tolerance is reflected in its absolute acceptance of the rights of others: People have the right to determine their own beliefs, behaviours, and practices. If one community is allowed to exist, then the other is allowed to exist. If the sanctity of the religion of one people is preserved, then the sanctity of the religious beliefs of the other must be preserved. If one community's unique culture cannot be violated, then the unique culture of the other cannot be violated.

Sixth: Religious tolerance is reflected in its support for the establishment of a civil society: It is clear that religious tolerance is essential to building a civil society and the establishment of rules, pluralism, democracy, freedom of belief, acceptance of differences in opinion, thought, and human culture, the appreciation of national charters, respect for the rule of law, strategic decisions, and human values. In these matters it does not renege in its commitment, accept any form of alienation or bargain. Tolerance is an active factor in building a civil society and encourages the enforcement of its rules.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Research Findings

- The meaning of coexistence is to accept earthly reconciliation and agree on a set of human virtues, which provide opportunities for the exchange of dialogue. It rejects tyranny, misplaced pride and the domination of others. Coexistence between religions must be for God alone, and for a free and gracious human life based on faith, goodness and virtue. As for how coexistence between Muslims and other religions is achieved, it starts with mutual trust and respect, and the desire to cooperate for the good of humanity in the areas of common interest, which will lead to the establishment of advanced knowledge-based civil societies that put the higher interests above all else.
- Islam has resisted and continues to resist every direction that tends to extremism, intolerance and fanaticism. The wise and fair-minded recognise Islam through its rules, provisions and methodology, and focus on the true Muslims who apply these provisions in truth and sincerity and behave in a moderate Islamic manner. Islam came with all the provisions which regulate all relations, elevate human morality, refine their behaviour, and categorically rejects the assault on peaceful others. Who so ever opposes this is far removed from Islam. Islam is naturally innocent. It is therefore a manifest injustice if it judged through the negligence of its followers.
- The teachings of Christianity as represented in the Bible are filled with traditions which oblige Christians to deal with others from different religions with love and tolerance. Christians are not permitted to renounce the differences of others in creed, colour and form. Love is the dominant theme of the Christian faith, and the origin of life is differences in the exchange of views and understanding, co-existence, and the removal of risks surrounding them without any discrimination or distinction.
- Jerusalem has unique characteristics derived from its exclusive historical and geographic spiritual dimensions. It was the forum for contact and communication between the continents

of the ancient world, was the cradle of religions and successive civilizations and is home to a diverse group of human beings. It consists of a large variety of historical remnants, manuscripts, archaeological sites of civilization, which all testify to its greatness and holiness.

- The coexistence and brotherhood between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem is a living example to the entire world, and to all who work towards deepening sectarian hatred between the sons of one people. Despite the efforts of those who work towards deepening sectarian differences among the Palestinian people, the Palestinian people will continue their religious and blood partnership, share equal rights, and national duties towards the Palestinian issue in achieving national independence; a nation for which many have sacrificed their lives and thousands remain in prison, and millions are homeless refugees in numerous countries.
- Origin of life is a difference, and that pluralism and diversity, both in doctrine or thought or capacity or potential and even color and shape, is normal, and laws of God Almighty innate, and that the difference does not mean discrimination, and if we are convinced that the difference in all its forms enriches human life intellectually and scientifically and socially, economically and politically, and if we agree that human social being is difficult to live in isolation from other different about him, and that there are necessities of life that call for this mixing, and if we know that the difference phenomenon of universal human, we must live with and accept their presence among us, and therefore we must accept the other, and respect the disagreement and express desire for fraternal honest intolerance and cooperate with him for the benefit of humanity all, without being influenced by interconnected vindictive, which ignites the fire of sedition, and fueling methods to distinguish between siblings in particular, and among the general public, taking religions and sects as vital to his plans in human, but his personal interests.

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