



[Test] The UAE Continues to Lead in Promoting Acceptance and Diversity

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Good morning Colleagues,

With the holidays around the corner, and at a time when acceptance, respect and a celebration of diversity is much needed, I am happy to share with you that the UAE has officially named 2019 the 'Year of Tolerance'.

The word 'Tolerance' may not immediately translate in the way it was intended, but for the UAE and its leaders, it has long been a cornerstone of a society that strives to be a global model for the values of acceptance, religious freedom, and building bridges of understanding. In continuing to honor the great late founder, HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, stated "The world today needs universal human values to be promoted for the sake of future generations."

This inspiring initiative goes hand-in-hand with Pope Francis' upcoming visit to the UAE in February 2019 and the kickoff of the Special Olympics World Games hosted by Abu Dhabi in March 2019.

Please see the articles below for more details on the Year of Tolerance and the UAE's commitment to promoting religious freedom, inclusion, and diversity.

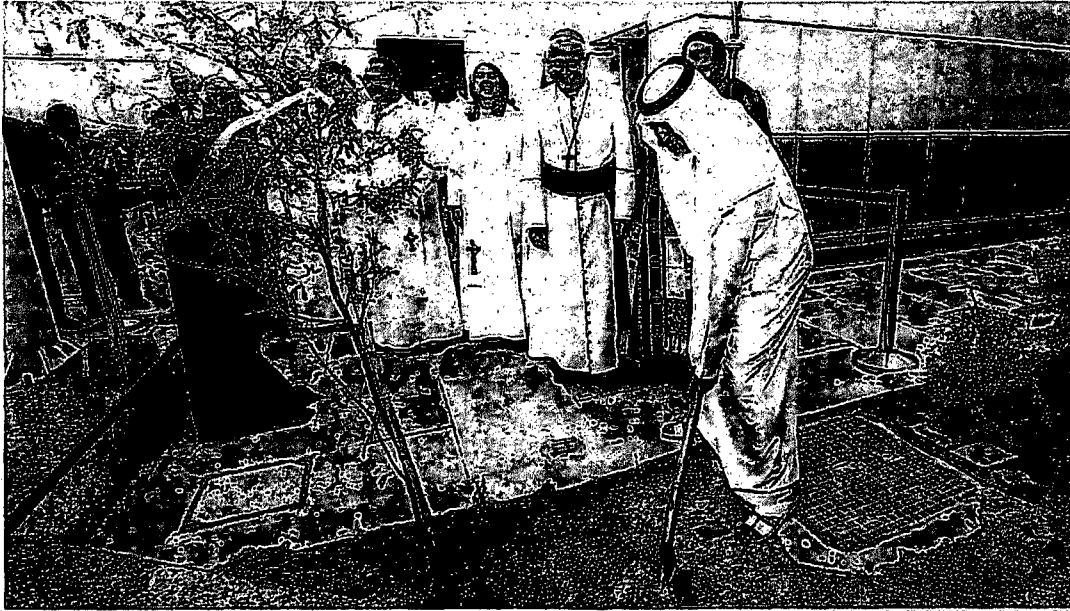
As always, please reach out if you have questions or would like to further discuss.

~Hagir

From Sikh to Christian, religious leaders gear up for UAE's Year of Tolerance

The National

December 16, 2018



Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak, Minister of Tolerance, plants a ghaf tree with leaders of several Christian denominations at the 50th anniversary of St Andrew's Church in Abu Dhabi in October 2018. Pawan Singh/
The National

The Year of Tolerance will bring good news from a region so often associated with conflict and strife, religious leaders across the UAE have said.

Roman Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Anglican, Sikh and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints religious groups said it would show the UAE's leadership in the Arab world and underlined that the troubling global rise of intolerance can be confronted.

But they also urged everyone to promote tolerance and said that it was not just an Emirati issue.

Rev Andy Thompson, Anglican chaplain at St Andrew's Church in Abu Dhabi, said the designation would build bridges and not walls.

"Who would have thought that a Muslim country would be calling the world's attention back to pluralism. It is a wonderful surprise and unexpected," said Rev Thompson.

"Many westerners only get bad news from the region but here is some good news," he said.

UAE leaders announced the Year of Tolerance on Saturday. It followed news that Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, will visit the UAE in February and conduct a public Mass in Abu Dhabi.

Paul Hinder, Catholic bishop of Southern Arabia, said the Year of Tolerance would help people of different faiths to live in harmony.

"We, the Catholic Church here in the UAE, are elated by the news of Pope Francis's visit in February 2019 and are thankful to the UAE government and its leaders," said Mr Hinder.

"This UAE Year of Tolerance has helped to build further understanding of human values."

Surender Singh Kandhari, chairman of the GuruNanak Darbar Sikh temple in Dubai, said the UAE was the only country promoting tolerance in this way. Mr Kandhari said the anti-discrimination law – criminalising all forms of prejudice on the grounds of religion, caste, creed, doctrine, race, colour or ethnic origin – that came into force in 2015 had also helped.

Mr Kandhari has contacted other religious leaders to work on a project to mark the year.

"People can talk about it but the important thing is to make a project to help promote it and understand it," he said.

Many of the religious leaders said it was crucial to begin the work of promoting tolerance at school level, and classes in the subject should be explored.

"It starts with education, it starts with the young and comes from pulpit, universities and media. Intolerance is something we do naturally. Tolerance we need to learn," said Rev Thompson. "But tolerance needs to be owned by everyone. Not just Emiratis."

The theme for 2019 is also planned to be an extension of the Year of Zayed, a year dedicated to the Founding Father. Freedom to worship is not a new development for the UAE and Sheikh Zayed granted land for churches throughout his reign.

Leaders of the Coptic Orthodox Church also welcomed the news. From a small congregation 40 years ago, there are 30,000 Coptic Orthodox Christians and eight churches across the UAE. "We enjoy a lot of freedom," said Ashaia Haroun, deacon at St Antony Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abu Dhabi.

"Everything was laid out by Sheikh Zayed, so it is a proper sequence to move to tolerance after Zayed," said Mr Haroun. Mr Haroun said the word tolerance in Arabic meant more than its English translation. In Arabic, it is broader just tolerating someone, he said. "It is a good opportunity to show gratitude and thanks."

Jeffrey Singer, a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Abu Dhabi, previously known as Mormon, said the Year of Tolerance is a demonstration of the UAE's commitment to the principles of dignity and religious pluralism

"It is one more way that the UAE shows leadership in the Arab world," said Mr Singer. "Every government should have a ministry of tolerance or some procedure to enable tolerance to be a pillar of society," he said.

UAE names 2019 the Year of Tolerance to reflect Zayed's vision

Leaders say the year will honour Sheikh Zayed's belief that the UAE should welcome all nationalities and religions

The National

December 15, 2018



Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed is accompanied by hundreds of people on the Walk of Tolerance in Umm Al Emarat Park, Abu Dhabi, in October. Warn

The UAE government announced that 2019 will be officially proclaimed the Year of Tolerance to strengthen the nation's role of encouraging stability and prosperity in the region.

Leaders took to social media to announce the move, following on from the Year of Zayed in 2018 and the Year of Giving in 2017.

The announcement came days after it was revealed Pope Francis will visit Abu Dhabi in February, a sign that the UAE is welcoming and tolerant of all religions.

In November, a World Tolerance Summit in Dubai attracted regional leaders and national figures.

The President, Sheikh Khalifa, declared 2019 the Year of Tolerance, highlighting the UAE as a global capital for acceptance through its legislative and policy goals.

"Instilling values of tolerance carries on Sheikh Zayed's legacy and teachings," Sheikh Khalifa said on Saturday.

"It is one of the most important attributes that we can impact on our people and the global community to ensure the safety, stability and happiness of peoples across the world."

Those thoughts were echoed on social media, with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, tweeting: "Dear brothers and sisters, the President... has issued a directive to announce 2019 as the Year of Tolerance in the UAE, with the aim of solidifying the international role that the country plays as the capital of co-existence and meeting of civilisations.

"Tolerance is the cornerstone of advanced societies, intellectually and humanely, and is one of the tools of empowering civilisations and ensuring stability and flourishing of nations.

"In 2019, we will endeavour to establish this value and lead the intellectual, media and research production movements to reaffirm this value in our region, which has suffered a lot because of extreme allegiance to ideologies or factions or parties."

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, said the "world today needs universal human values to be promoted for the sake of future generations".

It was announced the theme will be an extension of the Year of Zayed, as it upholds the values of tolerance and co-existence that the Founding Father, Sheikh Zayed, established among the people of the UAE.

This year, the UAE announced it will be a global co-ordinator for co-operation within a new Global Tolerance Alliance to promote acceptance around the world.

An agreement on tolerance was signed by dignitaries from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and the US – as well as the Emirates Human Rights Association, Higher Colleges of Technology and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation.

The papal visit will be marked with a Mass at Zayed Sports City on February 5, where more than 100,000 people are expected to attend.

Pope Francis will also visit Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Founder's Memorial.

The Special Olympic World Games, to be held in Abu Dhabi from March 14-21 in 2019, are also expected to feature heavily in a year-long series of events promoting tolerance.

It will be the first time that the Games will be held in the Mena region, and are

expected to attract more than 7,500 athletes from around the world and an estimated 500,000 spectators.

Athletes will compete in a variety of events at 11 venues in Abu Dhabi. These include Zayed Sports City, the National Exhibition Centre, the Yas Marina Circuit and the Abu Dhabi Yacht and Sailing Club.

Other venues are the New York University Abu Dhabi, Khalifa International Bowling Centre and the Armed Forces Officers Club.

Tolerance-themed events and publications will continue throughout 2019.

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