

Why do some Christians risk their freedom and their lives to talk about Jesus Christ in seemingly inhospitable environments, such as some Muslim countries? Is it right for them to do so? How do they do it, even in countries that refuse to allow their citizens to exercise the internationally recognized right of religious freedom?

The undersigned leaders of 55 Christian organizations from 19 countries explain our motives and methods in the following statement. Our job is not to represent any government or civilization but to obey and follow Jesus.

## **Why do we share the good news about Jesus with all peoples, including Muslims?**

*First of all, it is important to realize that everyone has an internationally recognized right to discuss his or her faith with others, no matter where we live or visit. The international community agrees: 151 nations have ratified the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirms: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice."<sup>1</sup>*

*There should be no double standards. Muslims who live in the West are free to respectfully express and share their faith. Followers of Jesus who live in the Muslim world should be equally free to respectfully express and share their faith.*

But why and how do we share about Jesus with Muslims?

1. We are followers of Jesus, called Isa al-Masih by Muslims. This means that He holds supreme importance for us. We seek to center our lives on Jesus and the good news about Him.<sup>2</sup>
2. What is this good news? We have experienced peace with God, the forgiveness of our sins, and the hope of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>
3. It is our delight to share this good news with others.<sup>4</sup> It is also our duty to share the good news with all the peoples of the world, because Jesus instructed us to do so.<sup>5</sup>
4. Therefore, we seek to live in the world as peacemakers, inviting men and women everywhere to be reconciled to God and to one another.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm) . The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights uses even stronger language, asserting that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Source: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

<sup>2</sup> Phil 1:21, Gal 6:14.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 10:43, Rom 5:1, 1 Cor 15:1-4, Rom 6:23.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor 5:14, Eph 5:2.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 28:18-20.

<sup>6</sup> Mt 5:9; 2 Cor 5:18.

5. We, who come from many cultures, countries and backgrounds, offer this message of peace to all people in love, with respect and cultural sensitivity, without coercion or material inducement.<sup>7</sup>
6. We believe that only God can convert people. Christianity and Islam agree on this point.<sup>8</sup> For many, the titles “Muslim” and “Christian” define an external, cultural identity. Instead of focusing on external labels, we invite all people, including Muslims, to an inward change through Jesus.<sup>9</sup>
7. We rejoice that when the gospel brings inward change to believers who embrace it, they then bring positive transformation to the communities where they live.<sup>10</sup>
8. As followers of Jesus, we are motivated to do good deeds. In this way we imitate Jesus, honor God, and seek to heal a hurting world.<sup>11</sup>
9. For us, all of life is devoted to Jesus. Therefore, wherever we live and whatever our occupation, our work is witness and we witness at work.<sup>12</sup>
10. Jesus and the good news about him are so precious to us that we are willing to sacrifice and suffer in order to give people an opportunity to know the good news about him.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1Cor. 16:14, Pet 3:15, Rom 12:17-18, 2 Cor 8:21.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus pointed out, “No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me makes them want to come” (John 6:44 Contemporary English Version). The Qur’an agrees, saying, “God converts whom he will” (al-Nur 24:46; Fatir 35:8). In fact, both are missionary religions with a message for all people (Qur’an 25:1; 38:87; 3:20; Jn 3:16). Both faiths claim the final messenger (Qur’an 33:45; Heb. 1:1-2). Both groups are called to be witnesses (Qur’an 2:143; Mt 28:19-20). Both scriptures make exclusive claims for their message (Qur’an 3:85; Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). Yet both are called to witness in a gracious manner (Qur’an 16:125; 29:46; 1 Pet 3:15).

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 5:17-20, Jn 3:3-7, Eze 36:26-27.

<sup>10</sup> Historically, religious voluntary organizations have had a huge positive impact on international development in non-Western countries. It has been estimated that such organizations are responsible for roughly 70 percent of the work of international development, having founded, for example, more than half of the colleges and hospitals of Africa and Asia. (source: Dr RD Winter, William Carey International University).

<sup>11</sup> Mt 5:16; Acts 10:38; Titus 2:7,14; 3:14.

<sup>12</sup> Col 3:17, 23; 1Cor 10:31.

<sup>13</sup> Phil 1:29, Acts 5:41.