



Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Progress Report

Peace Charter adopted at 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace
in Lindau, Germany, on 20 August 2019



1. The Peace Charter Text

Charter Preamble, Purpose and Principles

Preamble

The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.

Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.

Forgiveness is understood as an activity arising directly out of a compassionate consciousness, rooted in the awareness that we all belong to one human family. Compassion is an indispensable spiritual disposition in every faith, religion, dharam, or deen, as well as for our everyday human relations. Forgiveness is fostered by our experience of unconditional love and mercy, and an inner calling to live magnanimously and responsibly. It stems from our ability to see a larger context to our individual and collective existence, and from our impulse to lovingly seek and forge genuine and sincere bonds with one another as brothers and sisters.

To see forgiveness as a most profound expression and manifestation of our spiritual and human nature, and a catalyst for inward and outward change, is at the heart of the Charter. To love one's neighbour as oneself means that the efforts to seek forgiveness for oneself are related to endeavours to forgive and receive forgiveness from the other. Our human journey of forgiveness and reconciliation can only be navigated freely and voluntarily. Sharing forgiveness can therefore only be inspired, not demanded.

Existing, inspirational examples of forgiveness compel us to practical and effective actions, leading to reconciliation, conflict transformation and peace building. Forgiveness and reconciliation are an indispensable part of our journey to peace, in our interconnected and interdependent world and our quest for restorative justice.

Throughout history, acts of forgiveness have helped to de-escalate national and international conflicts, and to restore and sustain harmonious relationships in the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and societies. Insights from the lives of outstanding individuals and inspiring grassroots movements, combined with learning from a shared global heritage of sacred teachings, provide guidance to take forward the Charter's work.

By offering paradigms of forgiveness, the Charter inspires commitment and directs activities that contribute to a growing practice of forgiveness and reconciliation, both in public processes and in private settings, in order to foster healing, harmony and peace in a wounded and fractured world.

Purpose

We, people, mindful of our shared humanity, commit to practise and nurture forgiveness and reconciliation, to foster healing, harmony, justice and sustainable peace in our world.

Principles

1. The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is the founding document of a worldwide movement of people, seeking forgiveness, reconciliation, justice and sustainable peace, being aware of the oneness of our human family.
2. We seek forgiveness, reconciliation and peace between individuals, families, communities, public institutions, states and religious traditions.
3. We believe that forgiveness and reconciliation are needed for peace to be sustainable, and to end cycles of violence.
4. We co-create reconciliation and peace, by seeking and receiving forgiveness. Forgiveness is the first step towards a deeper reconciliation.
5. We believe to be forgiving and to let-go of past burdens is in the hand of each of us.
6. We believe that forgiveness cannot be demanded from others, can only be freely offered and is for the benefit, freedom and inner peace of the one who forgives.
7. We believe forgiveness finds completion in becoming unconditional.
8. We aim to express respect, compassion, mercy, kindness and love in all our interactions with others.
9. We believe that peace is more than the absence of violence, and that it includes inner peacefulness as well as peacefulness with others and with the environment.
10. We join hands and reach out to others to free ourselves of destructive pasts, to heal personal wounds, to overcome conflicts and wars, in order to create a better future for all.
11. We draw upon the wisdom of the world's traditions, which include religious, spiritual, indigenous, and philosophical worldviews, as well as on our intuitive sense of compassion.
12. We seek cooperation with all interested and like-minded people, organisations, public institutions and the UN System, bearing in mind the interdependence and unity of humanity.
13. We affirm the equal rights and responsibilities of all women and men, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the proposed Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.
14. We practise open inclusiveness of all, regardless of gender, traditions, affiliations, and ethnicity.
15. We are committed to non-violence and restorative justice, always seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts and wars, even if self-defence may be necessary in some circumstances.
16. We support all efforts and initiatives of healing, reconciliation and peacebuilding, and encourage intercultural, interreligious, and interethnic dialogue, understanding and cooperation.
17. We seek to foster harmony within our Earth community and unity amongst our human family, valuing the interconnectedness of all life.
18. We welcome as members and supporters all individuals, organisations and institutions who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose, and Principles. We will seek affiliation with institutions and networks that support the Vision, Purpose, Aims and Objectives of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation.



Facebook: <https://facebook.com/PeaceCharter4>



Twitter: <https://twitter.com/charterforgive>



Web Site: <https://www.charterforforgiveness.org>



Email: office@charterforforgiveness.org

2. Introduction

The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is an international initiative to inspire, foster and strengthen forgiveness, reconciliation, restorative justice and peace worldwide.

The Preamble of the Charter opens with the following words:

‘The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.’

3. Progress, Outreach and Development Report (September 2019)

- In 2011, the question of developing a Charter for Forgiveness was first raised by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia OBE, KSG, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, in a series of conversations between Bhai Sahib and Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham). In these conversations the initial idea, vision, concept and project proposal for a Charter for Forgiveness were developed.
- After gaining the support of the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace (UK) (in 2011) and the Fetzer Institute (USA) (in 2012) for the initial project development phase, additional organisations were approached to seek their support, most prominently Religions for Peace International. In the early Charter development phase, Forgiveness and Reconciliation were identified as being closely related values and both being necessary to achieve sustainable peace between individuals, communities and states.
- Dr William F. Vendley, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace International, lovingly embraced the Charter idea, vision and project, and joined Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia as Co-convenor of the Charter project in Spring 2014. Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Dr William F. Vendley as Co-convenors, and Dr Josef Boehle as Director, have since formed the core leadership team.
- Rabbi David Rosen (International Director of Interreligious Affairs, AJC, Israel), Rev Kosho Niwano (President Designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan) and Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah (President of Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies), World Council and Executive Committee members of Religions for Peace International, agreed to be Co-chairs of the Charter
- A very successful International Symposium on Forgiveness and Reconciliation was held at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham on 2nd April 2014, bringing together 30 international experts, leaders and practitioners.
- A Statement of Vision and Purpose was developed by a working team and aided by contributions from the participants in the 2014 Symposium. This Statement summarised succinctly the core aims, principles, values and objectives of the proposed Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This Statement of Vision and Purpose then formed the basis on which the Preamble of the Charter was written.

- An Editorial Panel with 13 members was formed in 2016 to jointly develop the Charter text and to promote universal ownership, open inclusiveness and ensure a high-quality Charter from the beginning. The Editorial Panel consisted of the two Co-convenors, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Dr William F. Vendley, 10 Editorial Panel Members and the Director of the Editorial Panel, Dr Josef Boehle:

Editorial Panel Members:

- Prof Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor, University of South Pacific, Fiji.
- The Rt Rev Dr Bishop Christopher Cocksworth Bishop of Coventry, UK.
- Dr Marius Felderhof, Director, Museum of World's Religions (UK), UK.
- Dr Omnia Marzouk, President Emeritus, Initiatives of Change International, UK.
- Prof Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St Olaf College, USA.
- Prof Garrett Thomson, CEO, Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace, UK and USA.
- Maria Voce, President, Focolare Movement, Italy; Co-President of Religions for Peace International.
- Rev Kosho Niwano, President Designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan;
Co-Moderator and Executive Committee member of Religions for Peace International.
- Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, AJC, Israel;
Co-President and Executive Committee member of Religions for Peace International.
- H.E. Prof Dr Din Syamsuddin, Chairman of Advisory Council, Muhammadiyah;
Moderator of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, Indonesia.

After a two year period of revisions the Charter text was completed in early 2018 and consists of a Preamble, Purpose and Principles section. The Charter text has received very positive feedback and appreciative responses and has been welcomed by a wide diversity of audiences internationally.

- A Plan of Action and Development Stages were outlined in the Charter brochure, which included the now completed Charter drafting process, the outreach to relevant organisations and the wider public, the development of Charter related activities, as well as the planned engagement with public bodies, international institutions and the United Nations System which is progressing and expected to be accelerated after a global presentation in August 2019.
- On 4th February 2017 the Inaugural Annual Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation was held by the Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week. On 4th February 2018 the 2nd Annual Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation took place at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham.
- The finalised Charter text on a scroll and the Charter Project was presented to His Holiness Pope Francis and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on 2nd May 2018 in Rome. HH Pope Francis was delighted to learn about the Charter Text and Project and joyfully blessed the Charter scroll. During a second meeting on occasion of this Rome visit, the Charter Text and Project was presented to a group of senior leaders of the Focolare Movement who expressed their appreciation and support. Maria Voce, President of the Focolare, has been a member of the Editorial Panel.
- The Charter was presented to an Interreligious Peace Pilgrimage and Conference attended by approximately 90 leaders and activists during 26-29 June 2018 in Assisi, Italy.

- A conference for the development of a teaching module on forgiveness, to be incorporated into the school curriculum, was hosted by the group of Nishkam Schools with over 150 teaching staff. After the morning plenary session which included presentations and discussions on forgiveness, staff started to work on developing a syllabus for pupils aged 4 to 18. This work will lead to a key area of impact for the Charter in the education field and it is planned to share the developed modules as fully resourced modules with all interested schools.
- The Charter text was presented to the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group (BFLG) and blessed by them on 11 September 2018. The BFLG was supportive of the Charter from the beginning.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation web site was redesigned and relaunched in November 2018, to be easily readable on computers and on mobile phones.
Please visit: <http://www.charterforforgiveness.org>
- A very successful Seminar on Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Perspectives from the World's Religions was held with 140 participants on 2 November 2018 at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, Canada.
- Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh gave a keynote address at the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, Canada, and highlighted the Charter's contribution to seeking a more peaceful world.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation scroll and project was presented to UN Under- Secretary-General Adama Dieng on 8 November 2018 at UN Headquarters, New York.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation scroll and project was presented to Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, a Co-chair of the Charter, on 8 December 2018 in Abu Dhabi.
- The Charter name was decided to be Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation in May 2019, to highlight the interconnected 3 core values (Peace, Forgiveness and Reconciliation) of the Charter together.
- The Peace Charter was presented to Maria Voce, President of Focolare Movement, during a visit of Focolare members to GNNSJ, at the Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, on 30 June 2019.
- The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation was adopted and globally launched at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace on 20 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany, completing 8 years of organisational development which included a year of preparation for this global event. Please read the Press Release on the next page.
- A workshop on Sustainable Peacebuilding: Understanding and Supporting Processes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation was convened by the Peace Charter at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace on 22 August 2019.

[Photo]

The Peace Charter was presented to the 10th World Assembly by the co-convenors of the Peace Charter, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia KSG, OBE (Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, UK, and Co-President of Religions for Peace) and Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace), and by the Peace Charter's Director Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham, UK).

Lindau, Germany 20 Aug, 2019



Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation adopted by 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace

Lindau, Germany 20 Aug, 2019 | Press Release



[Photo] The Peace Charter's Director Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham, UK).

The peace charter for forgiveness and reconciliation was adopted by the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace (RfP) which convened from 20-23 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany. The World Assembly, opened by the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 20 August 2019, was attended by some 900 global religious leaders and delegates. Religions for Peace International is the world's largest and most representative coalition of religious and indigenous communities and operates in over 90 countries.

The concluding declaration of the World Assembly stated, "We are grateful for 49 years of determined focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need. We are an alliance of care, of compassion, of love. ... We adopt The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation, convinced that transforming violent conflicts requires the healing of historical wounds and painful memories, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We commit to integrating efforts for healing into all our conflict resolution work."

The Peace Charter was presented to the 10th World Assembly by the co-convenors of the Peace Charter, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia KSG, OBE (Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha,

UK, and Co-President of Religions for Peace) and Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace), and by the Peace Charter's Director Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham, UK). The Peace Charter's organisational development began in 2011 and has received support from a wide range of religious, political, academic and civil society leaders.

The Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace (UK), the Fetzer Institute (USA), Religions for Peace International, the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ), UK, and the Nishkam Centre, Birmingham (UK) were amongst the early core group of supporting organisations.

The Preamble of the Peace Charter begins with the following introduction:

'The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace. Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.'

The Peace Charter was introduced to the World Assembly with the following explanation:

There is an urgent and profound need for reconciliation in communities in conflict and coming out of conflict. Experience shows that conflict settlements and peace accords tend to be short-lived; and that conflicts resume in the absence of reconciliation, which includes addressing deep wounds, injustices, distrust, fear and hatred. Without reconciliation, painful memories remain under the surface and are not brought out into the open to be slowly healed. In conflict situations, very often urgent efforts to end the physical violence do not address the important process of reconciliation, which needs to be advanced through truth telling, accepting responsibility, embracing repentance

and transacting forms of restitution. This absence of reconciliation compromises peace settlements and thwarts true positive Peace. Religions for Peace (RfP) has repeatedly experienced the absence of reconciliation among people and communities struggling to come out of situations of destructive violence and oppression. In these situations, RfP has long recognized that a deeper process of forgiveness and reconciliation is profoundly needed to achieve positive Peace. Moreover, RfP knows well that religions have profound and unique resources that can - if mobilized and creatively adapted - contribute to reconciliation.

Adopting the Peace Charter will help to equip the RfP global family of affiliated multi-religious bodies for the important work of reconciliation by raising awareness, deepening understanding, and increasing reflection on the crucial role of forgiveness and reconciliation in sustainable positive peacebuilding. The Peace Charter is a tool that can lovingly inspire, educate and provide guidance in processes of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace building amongst persons, communities of all types and nations. Importantly, it can also be a resource for healing painful historical memories within religions' various histories. It will also make a vital contribution



[Photo] Co-convenor of the Peace Charter, Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace).

to value-led peace education in formal and informal settings, thereby strengthening ever more the foundation for more just and peaceful persons, communities and nations.





RING FOR PEACE Religions for Peace

10TH WORLD ASSEMBLY

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Federal Foreign Office
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10TH WORLD ASSEMBLY
Caring for Our Common Future
Ring for Peace



#ringforpeace

4. Peace Charter Development Highlights



Symposium on Forgiveness and Reconciliation
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham UK, 2 April 2014)



1st Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 4 Feb 2017)



2nd Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 4 Feb 2018)



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres discussing the Charter
(London UK, 10 May 2017)



His Holiness Pope Francis blessing the Charter scroll
(Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018)



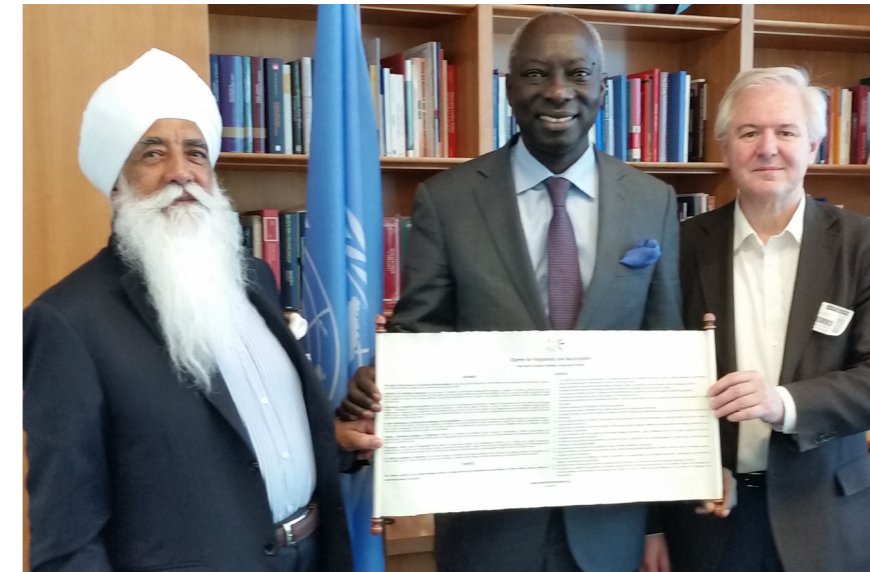
Charter Meeting with Members of Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
(Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018)

[L to R]
Father Santiago,
William Ozanne,
Dr Marius Felderhof,
Bhai Sahib Ji,
Bishop Ayuso,
Dr Josef Boehle,
Brigitte van Baren,
& Dr Gopinder Kaur



Charter Meeting with Focolare Members
Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018

Dr Josef Boehle,
 Dr Francisco Canzani,
 Gloria Duarte,
 Tim King,
 Nicoletta Bernasconi,
 & Bhai Sahib Ji.



Bhai Sahib Ji, **Adama Dieng - UN Under-Secretary-General** & Dr. Josef Boehle
UN Headquarters, New York, USA, 8 Nov, 2018



Birmingham Faith Leaders Group
Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 12 Sept, 2018

Rabbi Yossi Jacobs,
 Archbishop Bernard Longley,
 Amrick Singh Ubhi,
 Rabbi Margaret Jacobi,
 John Beard,
 & Bhai Sahib Ji.



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Canon Sarah Snyder - Archbishop's Advisor for Reconciliation,**
 & Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia
Lambeth Palace, London, UK, 25 Oct 2018

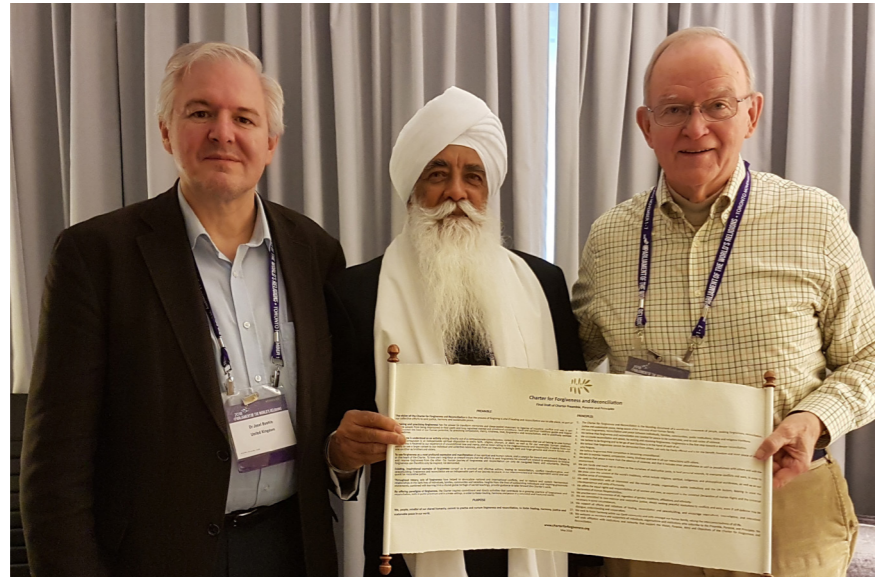


Presenting and praying for The Peace Charter at **Peace Pledge Pilgrimage and Conference in Assisi,**
Basilica Santa Maria degli Angeli and Portiuncula, Assisi, Italy, 28 June 2018



Seminar on Forgiveness and Reconciliation
7th Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada, 2 Nov 2018

Prof Mohammed Abu-Nimer,
 Bhai Samrath Singh,
 Rabbi David Rosen,
 Dr Josef Boehle,
 Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati,
 Bhai Sahib Ji,
 Delegate of Parliament,
 Dharma Master Hsin Tao,
 & Jathedar Singh Sahib,
 Giani Iqbal Singh Ji



Dr. Josef Boehle, Bhai Sahib Ji and **Bishop Bill Swing**
 - **President and Founder of the United Religions Initiative (URI)**
 Toronto, Canada, 2 Nov 2018



Bhai Sahib Ji, **Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta - Kenyan President**
 & **Hon. Raila Odinga - Opposition Leader**
 Kisumu State House, Kenya, Africa, 18 Jan, 2019



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Dr. William F. Vendley**
 - **Secretary General of Religions for Peace International** & Bhai Sahib Ji
 Abu Dhabi, UAE, 8 Dec 2018



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Prof Robin Mason**
 - **Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), University of Birmingham UK** & Bhai Sahib Ji
 Nishkam Centre, B'ham, UK, 23 Jan, 2019



Dr. Josef Boehle, Bhai Sahib Ji & **Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah**
 - **President of the forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies**
 Abu Dhabi, UAE, 8 Dec, 2018



Delegation of Chief Rabbinate Council (Israel)
 Visits Gurudwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha
 GNSJ Head-Quarters, Birmingham, UK, 25 March 2019

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh
 Mr Oded Wiener
 Rabbi David Rosen
 Rabbi Prof. Avraham Steinberg
 Rabbi Rasson Arousi
 Rabbi Moshe Dagan
 Dr Brinder Mahon
 Rabbi Yossi Jacobs
 Dr Josef Boehle &
 Rabbi Eliezer Weiss



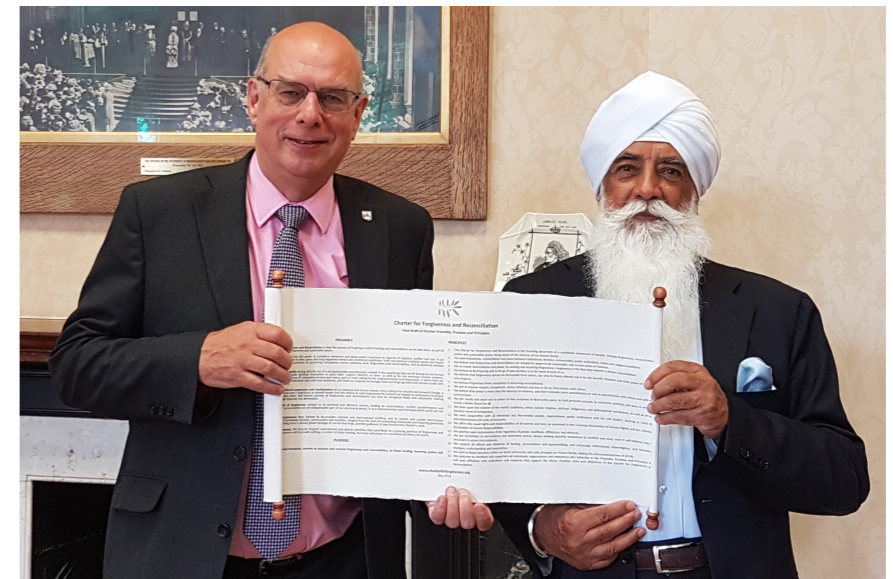
Phaldip Singh, Bhai Sahib Ji & Rt Hon. Theresa May,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party (2016-2019)
10 Downing Street, Westminster, London, UK, 8 May 2019



Dr. Josef Boehle, Mrs Diana Crabtree,
Mr John Crabtree OBE - West Midlands Lord-Lieutenant & Bhai Sahib Ji
The Great Hall, University of Birmingham, 10 August 2019



Presenting the Peace Charter to
Maria Voce, President of Focolare Movement
Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 30 June 2019



David Eastwood - Vice Chancellor University of Birmingham UK
& Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston Campus, August 2019



Presenting the Peace Charter to
Audrey Kitagawa - Chair, Parliament of the World's Religions
10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, Lindau, Germany 20 August 2019



Participants of the Peace building workshop
with the Peace Charter scroll
10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, Lindau, Germany 22 August 2019

DECLARATION OF THE 10TH WORLD ASSEMBLY OF
RELIGIONS FOR PEACE
(23 August 2019 | Lindau, Germany)

PREAMBLE

We – 900 women, men, and youth – have gathered in Lindau, Germany, coming from 125 countries for the 10th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*. We are grateful for 49 years of determined focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need. We are an alliance of care, of compassion, of love. We represent a far greater, ever growing, and ever-radiating alliance of “common action” that *Religions for Peace* gladly serves. In that light we acknowledge with sorrow the ways – subtle and gross – that we and our religious communities have fallen-short. Our hearts grieve over the misuse of our faiths, especially the ways they have been twisted to fuel violence and hate. Our alliance honors our religious differences, even as it serves the peace for which the human heart hungers. We gather in hope, convinced that the sacred calls all humanity into shared responsibility for our common good, care for one another, the earth, and its entire web of life.

The burdens of the human family are well-known to us. We know too well war, how it kills, maims, and destroys the lives of the innocent. We know the crushing weight of extreme poverty, how it stunts, humiliates, and plunders. Ten percent of our human family is desperately poor. We know that more than 70 million of us no longer find shelter in the sanctuary of their homes. They are refugees, internally displaced, and persons forced to be on the move. We know we have entered a terrifying new arms race, one that includes modernizing nuclear arms, weaponizing space and artificial intelligence, and new energy weapons. These burdens are profoundly exacerbated by the cataclysmic heating of the earth, decimation of the rainforests, poisoning of the seas, and choking of the web of life.

We are also experiencing what we call a “meta-crisis” of our modern order, which lies behind the United Nations and the agreements our states have made on human rights, the rule of law, and international trade. Freedoms of all kinds, the protections of minorities, and the fabric of our connection have come under attack around the world. On the economic front, a meager handful of the richest persons have more wealth than four billion persons. Adding to the political and economic dimensions of this meta-crisis of modern order, there is today a “meta-crisis” of truth, which challenges the notion of “truth,” while “fake news” is tailored for political or commercial gain. Today, we are buffeted between inconvenient truths and convenient fabrications. The hour is late: we are called to urgent action.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE: ADVANCING *SHARED WELL-BEING*

Our heart’s inner-most experiences of the sacred and our outer-most social lives cry out to be connected in a state of *positive* peace that *Religions for Peace* calls, “*Shared Well-Being*.” Our different experiences

of the sacred make clear that we are, at root, relational: radically related to the sacred and to all that is caused or embraced by the sacred. As fundamentally relational, our well-being is intrinsically shared. Helping the other, we are helped; injuring the other, we wound ourselves. We fully acknowledge the invaluable roles of women and youth among us and will continually mainstream their irreplaceable contributions. Our different traditions make clear that the sacred establishes us as both responsible for and dependent upon each other and the earth that sustains us. *Shared Well-Being* calls us to commit to all the ways the modern order supports our human dignity. It also calls us to offer in a constructive spirit any complementary contributions from our religions. We affirm the modern order’s recognition of the foundational importance of freedom. At the same time, we are called to show by example the sacred grounding of freedom. It leads through the despair of nihilism, rejects the narcissism of mindless consumerism, and expresses itself as radical care for all.

To our commitment to the importance of human rights, we add our foundational concern for the cultivation of virtues, those habitual orientations to value that sculpt our human potentials. These include our potentials for the most elevated states of mercy, compassion, and love. For us, the labor to become virtuous is not a solitary act; rather, it is an act of “solidarity;” one that can only be achieved by generosity and mutual love. The cultivation of virtue tackles the ignorance, individual egoism, and group egoism that mutilate authentic community.

Shared Well-Being also calls for a robust notion of the “common good” that can serve all of us in our efforts to virtuously unfold our rights-protected human dignity. The supreme good for us is the sacred, even as we understand it differently. The common good includes the earth with its air, water, soil, and web of life. The common good also includes just institutions that help each to develop her or his human dignity. These call all of us to a shared and grateful responsibility. Each person is to draw from the common good; each is to help build it up.

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* is concrete. We commit to advancing *Shared Well-Being* by preventing and transforming violent conflicts, promoting just and harmonious societies, nurturing sustainable and integral human development, and protecting the earth.

Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts

We commit to preventing violent conflicts by advancing peace education – from early childhood to adults across our religious communities – focusing on shared values, religious literacy, and narratives of peace. We will build skills in conflict management that address the drivers of conflicts non-violently. Our commitments to transforming violent conflicts are actualized in our Assembly by the religious leaders from Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and South Sudan. Our commitment is also expressed in the religious women represented by those from the Middle East and North African Region in the Assembly plenary. Here, also, religious persons from North and South Korea have worked to construct conditions for peace on the Korean Peninsula. These religious leaders have convened privately in the Assembly to strengthen one another as partners, peacemakers, and healers. We commit to supporting their efforts in their respective countries and regions. We adopt *The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, convinced that transforming violent conflicts requires the healing of historical wounds and painful memories, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We commit to integrating efforts for healing into all our conflict resolution work.

To renew our commitment to nuclear disarmament, we pledge to be a full partner of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. We condemn the existence of nuclear weapons, affirm our support for the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, and will educate, mobilize, and engage religious communities toward these ends. We also call for immediate steps toward general disarmament including all weapons of destruction – conventional, nuclear, chemical, biological, and those newly emerging.

Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies

We take heart that multi-religious actors and institutions are working to build just and harmonious societies with a vibrant spirit of care and commitment to justice. We commit to continued common action to tackle injustices, including the large-scale displacement of persons, and resulting challenges from the migration crises – both for refugees and migrants and the societies where they settle. We will make the global forced migration crisis a priority for action. We will lead by example in “welcoming the other.” We commit to instilling the respect, mutuality, and solidarity that are essential to promote, build, and sustain just, harmonious, and diverse communities. A cross-cutting commitment can be education, including religious literacy, from early childhood to adults, that focuses on shared civic virtues and appreciation for social diversity. We will develop an *Alliance of Virtue* based on a declaration of virtues widely shared across religious traditions and other virtue heritages.

We pledge to protect children, vulnerable individuals and communities and advocate for their human rights and well-being in the face of grave suffering. We will speak up forcefully and take action against corruption and for good governance. We commit ourselves to caring and determined effort to address the causes and reality of widespread abuses and violence, especially against women and children. We also commit to common efforts within our communities, with civil society partners and governments to ensure principled freedom of religion worldwide. We, persons of faith, yearn to protect holy sites and feel safe within them. We will preserve and protect holy sites against violence and desecration, partnering with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to form living rings for peace around them.

Sustainable and Integral Human Development and Protecting the Earth

We commit to human development as set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will foster sustainable and integral human development by promoting the justice, inclusive citizenship, and equal opportunities interwoven through the SDGs. We will champion personal accountability for sustainable consumption, the dignity of labor, and equitable distribution of wealth. We will honor the insights of science and steward progress in digital technology toward the good of all. We will advance universal access to education. We will continue to promote the role of women and youth in society and their leadership in institutions at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

We commit to urgent action against the climate crisis. We will mobilize religious communities to protect the earth – including the promotion of “green congregations.” Leaders and partners in the fight against environmental degradation, our Indigenous brothers and sisters remind us, “when Mother Earth suffers, human beings suffer; when human beings suffer, Mother Earth suffers.” We, guardians and caretakers of earth, endorse the *Faiths for Forests Declaration*. We commit to raise awareness about tropical deforestation and to educate our religious communities about the dire spiritual and sustainability crisis. We will take action to live ecologically balanced and sustainable lifestyles and advocate for government

policies to protect rainforests, defend the rights of Indigenous peoples, and fulfill their pledges to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

CALL-TO-COMMON-ACTION

Guided by the principles of our own religious traditions, and respectful of religious differences, we personally commit to fostering *positive peace* as *Shared Well-Being*. We will be partners with sincere believers of other religions and all women and men of good will to:

- produce *positive peace* materials and workshops for multi-religious contexts with the Institute for Economics and Peace;
- develop tools and training on the positive roles of women in preventing and transforming conflicts, and on the issue of violence against them;
- acknowledge past hurts – including across religious traditions – and foster public acts of forgiveness and reconciliation;
- work for the well-being of refugees and migrants and develop programs of accompaniment and support;
- urge religious communities to invest their resources in alignment with achieving the SDGs;
- raise public awareness about deforestation with the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative* and through the acceptance and promotion of the *Faith for Forests Declaration*, take action against climate change in general, and advocate for policies that protect the earth;
- advance reconciliation as a vital dimension of *positive Peace* within persons and among communities and nations as per *The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*;
- commit to being a full-partner to support the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons;
- forge an *Alliance of Virtue* based on a declaration of virtues widely shared across religious traditions and other virtue heritages.

We speak with humility, asking for support and blessings.



Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Preamble

The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.

Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.

Forgiveness is understood as an activity arising directly out of a compassionate consciousness, rooted in the awareness that we all belong to one human family. Compassion is an indispensable spiritual disposition in every faith, religion, dharam, or deen, as well as for our everyday human relations. Forgiveness is fostered by our experience of unconditional love and mercy, and an inner calling to live magnanimously and responsibly. It stems from our ability to see a larger context to our individual and collective existence, and from our impulse to lovingly seek and forge genuine and sincere bonds with one another as brothers and sisters.

[First three paragraphs of the Preamble]

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