

## PREFACE

Justice is a core value not only in the fields of theology, law and political philosophy, but also in politics, social life and economics. It is a value that generates other values. For Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it has always been a guiding principle in the realm of theological thinking as well as in daily life; therefore it suggests itself to be the focus of Christian-Muslim dialogue, as it did in the course of the symposium held in Cadenabbia in October 2009 at the invitation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). The title of this book: "We have Justice in Common" emerged clearly at the end of three days of discussion prompted by the *A Common Word* Open Letter as Christian Troll explains in his introduction.

Being a political foundation, the international dialogue-programmes of the KAS primarily focus on foreign, economic and security problems. At the same time, we are fully aware that these cannot be separated from their religious contexts. In a globalised world, there is an obvious need for inter-religious dialogue based around values. Our aim is to understand these ideals and values and explore their plurality, which is as great amongst Muslims as amongst Christians or members of other religions.

In recent years, the debate about questions concerning Islam has widened considerably in German development cooperation as well as in most Muslim countries. At the same time, the range of bridge-building functions which the KAS can and must assume has broadened accordingly. Outstanding issues in this context include those relating to the development of democratic societies and the rule of law.

There is an increasing tendency amongst Muslims as well as Christians to accept that more and more problems need to be solved jointly and democratically. Addressing these grave problems, including terrorism or territorial conflicts, is difficult because of the effects of globalisation and the profound changes triggered by it in the political, economic, and social structures of all societies. In addition there are powerful reactionary forces confronting movements towards developing structures to tackle these issues together. Islam and Muslims cannot be left out of this discussion; the importance of religion – and particularly that of Islam – has been growing swiftly world-

wide, changing the character of constitutional developments, the opportunities of conflict settlement, and even the perception of a so-called global 'clash of civilisations'.

Europeans have had centuries of experimentation in developing different forms of democracy, while the vast majority of Muslim-majority countries in the world are only decades away from European colonial rule. We see an authoritarian character to various countries, limitations on political liberty and a general "democratic deficit". The problems facing developing countries are well-known: disparities in income levels, institutionalised corruption, unemployment, poor education and the disadvantaged status of women. All these socio-political-economic issues were discussed in a "pastoral spirit" by the scholars and leaders at Cadenabbia. There was an awareness that, with growing concerns over resources (not least of which is water), global climate change, ethnic tensions within and economic, political and religious pressures exerted from without, these issues will become even more pressing in the immediate future. The spirit of this meeting was not to see "two opposing sides" but rather a common humanity seeking to establish and enhance common human values. The KAS wants to focus on and strengthen those elements that hold us together. Everywhere, it is our intention to promote democracy, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law with the aid of partners who are committed to the same. We are aware that partners in this endeavour are to be found in various groupings within Muslim societies and wish to avoid the simplistic labelling of groups as though monolithic and able to be categorised as "good, bad, fundamentalist, moderate, liberal" and so on.

Disputes about substantive political issues are most likely to lead to the identification of common interests from which opportunities for long-term cooperation may arise. In Muslim countries as well as elsewhere, the international work of the KAS revolves around factual issues of current and political relevance. Most of these relate to the legal sphere, ranging from fundamental and human rights, democracy, and constitutionality to matters of private law and subjects relating to the social order, the global economy, and the international community of states. The general theme of our work embodies our core concerns – liberal democracy, freedom under the rule of law, freedom for the media, human rights and dialogue on values. In our view, discussing such factual issues is itself a means to promote democracy.

Within this range of issues, there are two subjects on which the KAS concentrates with particular emphasis. To us, human rights and their constitutional codification come first everywhere. The starting point in this context should be a shared concept of human dignity from which a variety of common political and other value concepts may be derived. The Islamic ideal of humanity emphasises the importance of the community alongside that of the individual. In the absence of securely and comprehensively codified civil and human rights, the available freedom of political design does not allow the development of innovative solutions for social, political, and economic problems. While human rights and the independence of the judiciary do exist in theory in many Muslim-majority states, they are frequently restricted in practice in a variety of ways, substantiated by invoking a particular interpretation of the Shari'a, regional traditions and national interests.

The second field that plays a key role comprises religious freedom and secularism. KAS would want to see Muslim-majority countries grant the adherents of other faiths the right to practise their religion freely. This can only happen if everyone accepts the coexistence of cultures as a fact to which there is no alternative in our globalised world. Humane coexistence comes only to those who recognise that every individual should have the right to practise his or her religion freely, and contribute towards peace.

We are aware that there is a range of views on these questions being debated amongst Muslims all around the world. There is no shortage of opinion and various dialogue partners. KAS seeks to work with those who work towards the same ideals that we espouse: ideals of democracy, plurality and human rights in a modern secular state. We are well used to the situation in European democracies that people of the same faith take different views on political matters and exist in a healthy debate about the way that their religion impacts on shared political life; the same is true amongst Muslims also and we would want to encourage that spirit of open debate, whether Muslims are in the majority or minority. For such a climate of debate, there has to be a prior acceptance that we share our commitment to good governance, human rights and the rule of law. For these reasons, the KAS was pleased to sponsor the meeting of Muslim and Christian scholars from Africa and Asia, and thus to contribute to the spirit of healthy and productive debate.

The present book reflects a worldwide process of dialogue and the contributions were written with the idea to promote and carry forward the spirit of dialogue. All opinions and judgements expressed herein are those of the individual authors. We therefore have to express our great thanks to all contributors who, months ahead of the workshop, sent us their papers, discussed it with an open mind and revised it in the light of these discussions. For the conceptualisation of the workshop, for their numerous recommendations and their tremendous efforts to finalise this publication the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has to express her sincere gratitude in particular to Prof. Dr. Christian Troll SJ and Dr. Chris Hewer. Without their help, this book would never have come out so quickly.

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