

Statement from Religious Leaders in the City of Haifa

We, representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Druze religious communities in Haifa, have convened in recent months under the initiative of Haifa Laboratory for Religious Studies at the University and the Department for Religious Communities at the Ministry of Interior Affairs in order to promote an active leadership that will work together to safeguard a shared civic society and prevent violence.

In this challenging and tense period, we have recognized the great importance of establishing a group of religious leaders from the various faiths, who study each other's religion and aspire to promote good neighborliness and uphold a dignified way of life in our city.

The dialogue among us, the tolerance, and mutual respect are rooted in the tradition and sacred scriptures of each and every one of us:

"Beloved is man who was created in the image" (Mishnah Avot 3:14). We believe that all human beings are creations of God, as stated in the Bible, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalms 24:1). Likewise in Islamic scriptures, it is said: "All creatures are the children of God, and the most beloved to Allah is the one who treats God's children kindly" (Ibn Abi Shaybah).

The various religions emphasize the value of respecting others, prohibiting harm to them, caring for others, responsibility towards your neighbors and relatives, and above all, the sanctity of life.

Trust among group members was built step by step, meeting after meeting, and can serve as a foundation and model for the religious communities we represent in the important process in which we have participated. Our personal security depends on our cooperation, our ability to reduce points of friction, and our ability to inspire respectful dialogue, striving for agreements and good neighborliness.

Haifa, our beloved city, is characterized by diverse groups and communities, and we all desire the prosperity of the city and its residents, out of a deep commitment to the State of Israel and its laws.

We commit to being active partners in promoting good neighborliness, mutual respect, and tolerance, and we call on the public to preserve the unique character of our city, Haifa.

Signed by:

Imam Rashad Abu al-Hijaa – imam of al-Jarina Mosque, Old Haifa

Father William Abu Shkara, priest of the Catholic Church, and Head of the Archbishop's bureau in Haifa

Rabbi Eliyahu Blum – rabbi of Rambam congregation, Newe Shanan

Ms. Rabi'a Bsis – Druze social and political activist

Rabbi Ne'ama Dafni-Keln – rabbi of Or Hadash congregation

Rabbi Ben-Zion Gagula – director of Chabad house, the German Colony

Sheikh Tawfik Halabi – Imam and member of the Druze religious committee, Dalyat al-Karmel

Mr. Muhammad Ijbaria – Mu'adhin (caller for prayer) – Haj Abdallah Mosque, Halisa

Ms. Christin Khazen – member of the Catholic Church in Haifa

Sheikh Jaber Mansur – Druze Imam, Isfiya

Amir Muhammad Sharif Odeh – Head of the Islamic Ahmadiyya Community, Kababir

Ms. Du'a Odeh – head of the women's council in the Islamic Ahmadiyya Community, Kababir

Ms. Avital Peleg – Principal of the Amit Ulpana

Father Demetrius Samra, priest of the Greek Orthodox Church in Haifa

Rabbi Shemuel Sasson – head of the Garin Torani (lit. Torah Nucleus), Hadar

Ms. Hiam Tannous – member of the Christian Forum and of the Catholic Church in Haifa