



# Bridge Builder Awards recognize Christian, Muslim and Jewish peacemakers who stand together to help the world

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**22 November 2021 - As the Bridge Builder Awards were presented in a ceremony in Oslo on 22 November, interreligious peacemakers stood together to be recognized for their vital work in raising the values of respect, love, and tolerance for each other.**

The award was presented by the Jury of the 14th August Committee Norway together with The Oslo Center.

In welcoming remarks, Aamir Javed Sheikh, president of the 14th of August Committee in Oslo, said that this is not and has never been a battle between the Jews and the Christians, Christians against the Muslims or Muslims against the Jews. “But this has been a struggle between us who want to stand together and build bridges, and those who want to create divisions and hatred between us,” said Sheikh. “It is our job to fight for a world that sees you for who you are and not just the God you worship.”

Sheikh said it is our job to fight for an everyday life where your faith should not be a reason to fear for your life. “It is simply our task to shape a world where respect, dialogue and tolerance are central.”

As World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca accepted a Bridge Builder Award, he shared the WCC’s approach to interreligious peacemaking.

“We are aware that almost all the world’s steepest challenges have an interreligious dimension,” said Sauca. “Whether we are addressing international affairs, the environment, global economic justice, the rights of women and children, racism, the needs of refugees, and not least the task of theological education within our churches, in all these and other aspects of our work we seek to keep today’s interreligious realities in mind.”

Sauca also expressed deep appreciation for His Excellency Dr Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-issa of the World Muslim League and His Excellency Chief Rabbi Michael Melchior of the Religious Peace Initiative, who also received the Bridge Builder Award.

“Wherever possible, we also seek to cooperate with our partners from other religious communities as well as with our many Christians partners, deepening the interreligious cooperation for the good of the wider world,” said Sauca. “In our globalized situation, our work in interreligious dialogue, cooperation and peacemaking holds the prospect of a genuine fraternity among religious communities to address conflicts but also to prevent them, to make and keep peace but also to root it in the hearts of people.”

Nonetheless, the challenges posed by interreligious encounter also push us to address many tough questions, Sauca added. “We cannot pretend that the path of interreligious dialogue, cooperation and peacemaking is an easy one,” he said. “But this is where God calls us to go,

trusting in God's accompaniment of us, and in God's good purposes for the whole of creation."

In closing remarks, H.E. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization, congratulated the winners of the Bridge Builder Award. "COVID-19 has highlighted just how important it is that the global community works to promote peace and understanding," he said. "The pandemic has exposed the fault lines in our world and deepened divisions," he said. "If there's one lesson we have learned, it's the lesson of interconnectedness."

As has been said many times, he added, no one is safe until everyone is safe. "As faith leaders you play a vital role in promoting the values in your own communities and around the world."

*The WCC receives the 2021 Bridge Builder Award together with His Excellency Dr Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-issa of the World Muslim League and His Excellency Chief Rabbi Michael Melchior of the Religious Peace Initiative.*

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