

Grand Imam of Al-Azhar,
Chair of the Muslim Council of Elders

Delivered on the International Day of Human Fraternity
(*A recorded speech broadcast via video conference*)

February 4, 2022 AC

(Rajab 3, 1443 AH)

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.
Dear fellow brothers and sisters all over the world!
May Allah's Peace, Mercy and Blessings be with you!

Today, the world's celebration of the International Day of Human Fraternity is in fact a commemoration of the humaneness of divine religion, its call for acquaintance and understanding among the followers of divine and man-made messages, and its reverence for the particularities of religions and beliefs. This celebration means a quest for a better world where the spirit of tolerance, fraternity, solidarity, and collaboration prevails. It also indicates a hope for providing effective tools to face the crises and challenges of contemporary humanity, especially distress of the orphans, the poor, the displaced, and the afflicted; those who suffer from both hard life and the hard hearts of wealthy people wielding riches, authority, and leverage. Such vulnerable people have fallen victims to modern materialism in all its concomitant excessive selfishness, cherishing of lusts and desires, and idolization of humans and their individualist inclinations.

Let me first extend a greeting of respect and reverence to my dear brother Francis, Pope of the Catholic Church, the incessantly courageous companion on the path of fraternity and peace!

On this occasion, too, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the honorable brother, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, who is following suit in the charitable footsteps of his father, for sponsoring this document, and for his genuine and sincere support of the initiatives to sustain, consolidate and disseminate the Human Fraternity Document throughout the world.

On the other hand, the Human Fraternity Document was drafted both at Al-Azhar Ash-Sharif and the Vatican, out of our common belief in mutual understanding among the followers of religions, not excluding the non-believers, in order to get rid of misjudgments and conflicts that often lead to bloodshed and warfare among people, notably among followers of the same religion and believers in a single faith. This document was born out of very tough crises, emerging like an unattainable dream coming true. It was beset with challenges that put at stake its fruition and the chance to be morphed into a reality. Yet, God willed that the dream come true, blessed with sincere intentions and efforts, together with a deep belief that "all humans are fellow brothers and sisters," as maintained by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his prayers, and depicted by all his fellow Prophets and Messengers (peace be upon them all).

Dear brothers and sisters!

The International Day of Human Fraternity this year comes in the wake of Corona pandemic and its variants of which the world has not recovered yet. Today, the omens of fear and panic hovering over the world are hoped to alert numbed consciences and arrogant souls, and wake people with private agendas from their slumber to stand in solidarity with the sincere leaders and sages to deliver humanity from these successive crises piling up in all corners of the globe. I am quite sure that the world, in all races and denominations, especially international decision-makers, religious figures, and leading intellectuals, will be able - God willing - to overcome these difficult crises and relieve their woes, only if they live up to their responsibilities.

Finally, I would like to salute my fellow brothers and sisters, members of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, who keep working day and night to implement the objectives of that noble document, launching numerous initiatives for that purpose. Such initiatives transcend differences, boundaries, and particularities, despite the Corona Pandemic and its restrictive consequences now sweeping the world. I thus applaud their efforts and encourage them to pursue these blessed efforts in collaboration with all partners to achieve this noble goal. I deeply hope that they - God willing - will always serve as a ray of hope and a source of constant inspiration for everyone treading on this thorny road.

Dear brothers and sisters!

We have embarked on this path in the hope for a new world that is free of wars and conflicts, where the fearful are reassured, the poor sustained, the vulnerable protected and justice administered. And though we are certain that our objectives are far from accessible in a world ridden by limitless conflicts, given that such objectives are unacceptable for warmongers. Yet, taking the road of peace is predestined for all the believers in God and His Messages, no matter how serious challenges and obstacles might be.

So, God willing, I will keep pursuing the commenced peace efforts, along with fellow religious leaders and lovers of goodness around the world, towards achieving peace and world fraternity and fellow feeling, and removing all the stimuli of hate, conflicts, and wars. We are really in bad need of amity, cooperation, and solidarity to encounter the genuine challenges threatening humanity and compromising its stability. In conclusion, I pray to Allah the Almighty to protect our world from evils and ordeals; to guard us against our inner evil; to rid us of this nefarious epidemic, and to shower us all with His Pardon and Care. I also pray to the Almighty to always unite us for good purposes, for He alone can do that.

May Allah's Peace, Mercy and Blessings be with you!

Ahmad At-Tayyeb
Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ash-Sharif

Written at Headquarters of Al-Azhar, Cairo
Jumada II, 1443 AH
January 22, 2022 AC