



Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan)

PRESS RELEASE

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World-renowned scholar speaks on ‘Clash of Civilizations: Myth or Reality’

Islamabad, Pakistan, 31 January 2008 – World-renowned scholar and best-selling author Ms. Karen Armstrong delivered the first of five lectures in Pakistan on the pluralistic and intellectual traditions of Islam, at the Islamabad Serena Hotel here today.

The Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) organized this lecture as part of a series of events, conferences and seminars being held to mark the Golden Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. Predicated on the notion of fostering an inclusive and pluralistic understanding of Islam, the Golden Jubilee year will see a number of endeavors aimed at building bridges within and outside the Muslim Ummah. The Golden Jubilee will also catalyze new socio-economic, cultural and human development initiatives to realize the social conscience of Islam, and improve the quality of life of the less fortunate in society.

This Golden Jubilee year falls at a time of increasing global complexities, and when the search for mutual understanding amongst nations, faiths, and cultures remains essential to assuring global peace and stability. In the last fifty years, polarization amongst nations has resulted from mutual suspicion and ignorance, and the misappropriation of faith for political and ideological purposes. This then calls for values of acceptance and compassion amongst and between the peoples of the world.

Ms. Armstrong outlined the issues that lie at the core of the current debate on the conflict and the misunderstandings between Islamic and Western societies. She argued that, as opposed to the prevailing historical myth of a clash, in reality the various cultures share far more commonalities than differences.

Ms. Armstrong emphasized that the issue in part is the political imbalance, and is not religiously inspired. She cited how the Western world in the past blamed Islam for its progressiveness at a time when the West itself was mired in intellectual and spiritual poverty.

Ms. Armstrong said that amongst the major world beliefs, Islam is perhaps the only faith that places an emphasis on pluralism. She indicated that Muslims have a rich and an illustrious past from which to draw strength from when faced with adversity. She encouraged members of the audience to be positive saying that “the great test of our time is to build a global community that is tolerant and compassionate.” She concluded the lecture by proclaiming her hope that as more people in the West learn about Islam, its history and message, this clash would recede.

Guests in attendance included top-ranking Government Officials, Ambassadors and other members of the Diplomatic Corp, Eminent Citizens, Civil Society Organizations, Academia, Media and Corporate Leaders.



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Karen Armstrong speaking at the event



Vice Chairman, Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) presenting a bouquet to Ms. Armstrong. President, Council for Pakistan, Mr. Iqbal Walji is also seen in the





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Ms. Armstrong autographs books



CEO Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan), Mr. Al-Nashir Jamal addressing the audience

