



Abrahamic★
reality games★

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ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS: ARE THEY FOR PEACE OR FOR VIOLENCE?

ABSTRACT

Today the world is experiencing an increase of domestic rather than interstate violent confrontations resulting in high numbers of non-combat civilians' deaths. Religious antagonism is one of the main causes that trigger, and then fuel, these disputes. It is no wonder, then, that the vibrations of conflicts are reaching into American universities, often leaving current students, who are tomorrow's leaders, with insufficient skills for building unity within religious diversity. This project seeks to decrease biases and increase mutual understanding among Christian, Jewish and Muslim students through game stimulation. This will be achieved by helping students learn about each other's respective religions, recognize similarities, and to work together on taking a stand on the issue of violence against non-combative civilians across the world. It is expected that the new expressions of common ground will be accompanied by team-building among the participating students, and that this consensus will be expanded through a structured dialogue among their peers, both domestically and internationally.

BACKGROUND

Within the current violent conflicts, on the global level, the overwhelming numbers of victims are civilians. Intra-state wars have replaced nearly all of inter-state wars. While it is estimated that about 90% of the victims in WWI were military personnel, now the statistics are nearly reversed. Additionally, most of the current victimizers and victims are young. Those under the age of twenty five constitute the majority of the population in many of the protracted communal conflicts. The majority of such societal wars are not principally ideological conflicts, but identity driven conflicts. And religion is the more silent dimension among those ethno political conflicts. In the United States, universities have often become places with difficult dialogues over religions, and more often than not, the religious based groups from outside and inside campus have been more part of the problem than the solution.

The purpose of this project is to initially engage Muslim, Christian and Jewish students within the United States to learn through game simulation about "the other sides," and to recognize that all religions share in their formative stages common messages, problems and goals. The goal of the exercise is to facilitate student consensus building and to highlight the fact that, while all religions carry positive and negative messages, the contemporary universal values do not legitimate the killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants. This experimental stage in a selected number of campuses is to provide valuable feedback before marketing the Abrahamic Reality Games nationwide and globally. While starting at home, it is expected that when common ground is attained with students of the three mentioned religions, the process itself will empower the participants to engage in a dialogue and even face-to-face contact with their peers in other parts of the world (the Middle East in particular), with the purpose of incorporating them into the circle that endeavors to work towards the same goal.

This “game” is set to move from:

- 1) a classic board game into
- 2) an intellectual discussion
- 3) consensus building
- 4) an action plan to enlarge the basis of support of the shared goals domestically and internationally.

The first three stages are estimated to be played during 90-to-150 minutes modules, either in consecutive weeks or during a semester. The fourth stage is open ended and the action plan is to determine its individual or group-work nature and frequency of interaction, it may include face-to-face dialogue with peers in the Middle East, or virtually to interact in blogs and other ways with those who advocate or condone through the Internet violence against civilians legitimated in religious terms. What follows is a short description of the Abrahamic Religions “reality game”. This is still work in progress that is circulated with the purpose of enrichment and critical feedback.

The experimental stage is planned for Fall 2008 and Spring 2009, and will be offered to MIT, Wellesley College, Tufts , Brandeis and University of Maryland “core groups” of the interfaith Campus Dialogue project, and coordinated by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) at the University of Maryland. Universities participating in the “Difficult Dialogues” project sponsored by the Ford Foundation will also be invited to test the product. Costs are minimal, and the initial training of facilitators and coordination is to be conducted by the Center of International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) at the University of Maryland.

Time Schedule	Objective	Process	Outcome
Session 1	To educate students that all religions share in their holy texts sources that either encourage peace or violence, and that moving forward is reducing conflict	Play a game with a deck of cards that are made of positive and negative messages from all three religions	To generate awareness between the students about the contending voices and recognize a shared need for working together in overcoming obstacles being faced in their religions
Session 2	Through contemporary messages, texts and statements of spiritual leaders and religious organizations focusing on peace and violence encourage an introspect of the students and their peers into the internalization of the power of such messages	Have an open discussion on the subject of positive and negative messages made by various religious leaders from three religions and the problems they generate to their own communities	The intellectual discussion that can be followed informally outside the session framework is to encourage the decision to move on into the search for common ground for a shared vision of their religions and ways of action
Session 3	To reach consensus building among the students on willingness to become engaged in a dialogue within the United States and regions at risk virtually or directly communicating with peers towards an understanding of refraining from violence against innocent civilians	Training into creative thinking and brainstorming leading into critical thinking and an innovative consensus building strategy	A consensus document among the participants that could be used for dissemination within their own campuses, communities, and relevant partners elsewhere.

STAGE 1: THE BOARD GAME

Rules of the game can be explained by the facilitator or self-explanatory if the participants are reading the instructions.

Physical components of the game:

- A board divided in approximately 40 steps, 11 steps will be contain questions marks ?, the frequency of such steps will increase as the players are getting closer to the end
- A single dice
- 3 sets of cards, totaling 60 cards, containing negative and positive religious quotes (equal numbers of both as reproduced from holy texts such as the Q'oran, Jewish Bible and New Testament (See APPENDIX 1 – Stage 1- SEPARATE FILE).
- The twenty quotes for each will be in different colors: Blue for Judaism, Green for Islam, and White for Christianity
- 3 pawns

Dynamics of the game

Selection of players:

1. Divide participants according to three religious groups
2. Assign colors to the participants within the groups (minimum three), ensuring diverse teams made of all religious groups

Rules of the game:

- Initially players roll a dice (highest number goes first) , and move their pawns forward
- If players find themselves at question mark, they have to pick a card
- Players will have a choice to pick a card from one of the three religions
- Player have to read the quote out loud for everyone
- Player assess if quote is positive or negative, and other players need to agree. If disagreement, majority prevails. If even, player has double casting vote.
- If a card contains a positive quote, the players move forward according to the number they rolled.
- If a card contains a negative quote, the players move backward according to the number they rolled
- The winner is the first to reach the end step. The game is to be followed by a de-briefing which should be conducted with all participants together (any number smaller than thirty)

Debriefing during Stage 1

Debrief after the game through addressing three questions/topics either through facilitation or the participants themselves:

1. Can participants see the positive and negative aspects of their own individual religions, and recognize that other religions struggle with the same positive/negative duality as well?
2. Can participants recognize and agree that all three religions face common problems?
3. Are we facing a more serious problem that needs to be further explored and not remain as a fortune game only?
4. Do participants recognize the need to work at these issues together as one?
5. Other comments (at this stage feedback for improvement of the game is welcome).

Once the first stage is over, prepare for the second stage: Provide participants with readings on negative and positive opinions currently expressed by known spiritual leaders from all three religions

- Material: (See APPENDIX 2 – Stage 2 SEPARATE FILE).
- The readings have to be completed before the second part of the workshop

STAGE 2: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

This stage is a full day discussion workshop that is conducted with all participants together. Open the discussion by having the participants to answer following questions:

1. Are the readers requiring an additional explanation or comments?
2. In your own judgment how did you feel about reading messages of violence made by the religious leaders from your religious community? How did you feel about reading messages of peace made by the religious leaders from other faiths addressing your own community?
3. What weight do you think these messages carry for the members of your religion?
4. Looking at the violence speeches made by the religious leaders, do you think these messages carry more weight in USA or in the Middle East?
5. How did you feel about reading violent messages against you made by other religious leaders? How did you feel about reading peace messages made by other religious leaders?

Debriefing during Stage 2

Debrief after the game through addressing following questions/topics:

1. Are the participants motivated to admit that there are burning issues in their respective religions?
2. Connect and process the religious messages through personalizing them via participant's individual identity
3. Work on facing the issues together, specifically recognize the value of working together
4. Lead to getting participants to brainstorm on how to reach out to others to convince them of the need of having to work together

STAGE 3: CONSENSUS BUILDING

This stage is focusing on the search for common ground. The end product is a joint statement that can be as short as a sentence, for example: "We are firmly convinced that our three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not legitimate the killing of innocent civilians. We join our voices to the spiritual leaders in our faith who have been bringing such message to our communities and the world". Or, a more elaborated document that can be the outcome of four steps process:

1. The generation of innovative ideas, and the shaping of consensus on those ideas acceptable to the group as a whole
2. Moving from quantity to quality ensures that the final product is a doable proposition
3. Once agreed upon it should encourage implementation
4. On going support

Step 1: Brainstorming

The brainstorming lasts from thirty to sixty minutes, depending upon the number of participants and the level of previous knowledge of the issues. Ideas should be stated briefly, without justification: one minute per idea. Two participants or facilitators should write down the ideas with proponents calling on the recorders alternatively, so that no the writing down of an idea will not slow the flow of ideas. If it seems as though the group is running out of ideas, and the facilitators would like to encourage more, they may announce how many minutes remain in the session, so that an extra effort can be made to generate more.

Quantity is no guarantee of quality, but a larger harvest may include more powerful and creative suggestions. It is difficult for many of the participants to refrain from offering comments or body language, either positive or negative, about another's ideas. For this reason, it is critical that the facilitators have the necessary skills to keep this activity on track and not allow any editorializing, including their own. It is easy to reassure the participants that there will be an opportunity for this at the appropriate time. If we sense that the Participants are not still in a brainstorming mood, we may be reminded that this exercise is designed to generate win-win situations, so that neither side will feel as though it has lost something while the other has gained. It is also important to remind the participants that unconventional ideas can generate solutions through the cross-fertilization of ideas:

Principles for Brainstorming:

- All ideas are encouraged
- Record them for display
- No criticisms, justifications or discussion of the merits
- Avoid passing judgment either orally or through body language
- All is confidential
- Ideas are depersonalized by not attributing them to the proponent;
- Do not focus on substantive differences
- Keep the flow going
- OK to associate new ideas, adding a "footnote" or "hitchhike" idea
- Combine related propositions or expand propositions with improved options
- OK to change the flow to new lines of ideas
- "Think big," "the sky is the limit" — encourage daring ideas, freewheeling imagination;
- Use techniques for creative thinking ("lateral thinking," "back casting," "expanding the pie," "compensation," "logrolling," "bridging," etc.)

Step 2: Levels of Consensus

This ladder illustrates what different degrees of consensus may sound like, when we proceed to evaluating and deciding on the ideas to emerge from brainstorming. It moves from the clearest level of consensus to that showing most concern. #4 represents a minimum level for consensus; #5 and #6 may lead to majority vote, but no consensus.

1. "I agree wholeheartedly with the decision. I am satisfied that this decision was accepted by the group".
2. "I find the decision to be acceptable".
3. "I can live with the decision".
4. "I do not totally agree, but I will not block the decision, I will support it".
5. "I do not agree with the decision and wish to block the decision being accepted" (a reasoned and paramount objection, but ready to explore alternatives).
6. "I believe there is no unity in this group. We have not reached consensus".

Step 3: Implementation

If the participants decide to work together, there could be many alternatives for doing so either on their own campus, domestically in the United States or globally. For instance, they could decide to publish the consensus document in the local student newspaper; they could engage in a dialogue through the Internet with young people elsewhere, within and across communities. There are websites that are inciting towards the use of indiscriminate violence or justify specifically the targeting of innocent civilians. The participants can decide to develop a project that includes inviting student leaders from universities in regions/countries where such violence occurs, to meet together. Such project could be complex, requires fundraising and visas, and overcoming other foreseeable obstacles. Testing the limits of the possible or impossible is part of a successful process to advance new ideas. An Action Plan should be drafted dealing with the questions of WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and most importantly WHO? Undertaking personal responsibility for some of the follow up activities is often seen as a burden, and yet is a major component of team-building.

Stage 4: On-going network support and dissemination

It is important to realize that such commitment may need to be sustained, once the three stages are completed. Such re-entry process within the larger group of those who did not participate in the project has been described as a “culture shock” for the exposure to a sort of inquisition from others in a still hostile environment. Participants who wish to share new and moderate ideas from the brainstorming session may be regarded by some as fools, naive, or (even worse), as traitors and victims of brainwashing. Within one’s family, tensions can be quite high when discussing how helpful the workshop was and how it has influenced their thinking. To avoid being perceived as proselytizing or preaching, the new “Participants” need to offer detailed pictures of their lessons learned, and to actively seek and receive feedback on these new perspectives.

Investment in personal transformation alone, when dealing with participants in ongoing conflicts, is not fully justified. Not only in terms of cost/benefit, but let’s also bear in mind that the internalization of the experiential learning without the added phase of empowerment can result in frustration- inconclusiveness rather than sensing the fulfillment of growth. Hence, it is for the benefit of the individual as well that effective means for contributing to community transformation should also be planned. It is relatively simple to conceive of some follow-up activities, if participants put their heads together and time is allocated for that purpose.

This is an unstructured part of the project, and will largely depend on the outcome of stage three. The facilitator should assist in the implementation of the action plan, including the effective use of the Internet, if needed. For consultation or more generic ideas, See APPENDIX 4 and please contact ekaufman@cidcm.umd.edu

APPENDIX 4: GUIDELINES FOR RE-ENTRY STAGE FOUR

One of the main priorities is to be able to share with your peers locally and globally the experience of working together across the religious lines. And the challenge is even bigger one wants to dialogue through the Internet (and perhaps even personally) with students from other regions with a high level of violence, often legitimating the killing of civilians. Here are cues:

- 1.** The more intense the experience has been for you the greater your “high” is and therefore the greater the chance for distress or dissatisfaction with any questioning about the “new you” when you communicate with peers of your own faith.. Allow more time than you think will be necessary before judging success or failure. While you are trying to connect with those who have views confronted with yours, seek colleagues and friends who do share your concerns and values. It is with these people that you will find the support necessary to implement change.
- 2.** Because of the closeness established with other participants in a relatively short period of time, there may be an additional sense of loss if the relationship is not being kept, as well a sense of jealousy from those close to you. Don't set expectations which neither one can achieve. Also keep contact if possible with someone from your new network. They will probably be experiencing some of the same things. Although you have had time to process what you've learned, remember how you felt when you first arrived and how skeptical you were? Allow the same period of skepticism for colleagues and friends at home. It's a classical case of lag time between learning something in a cognitive way and experiencing it as reality.
- 3.** As you describe what you've learned be aware of oversimplifying or under-simplifying things because you've “been there”. Descriptions of past happenings bring visions to you that are impossible for those that were not there. Set a scene and then fill in the activity only to the level that you think is of common interest. Monitor how others receive your information and modify your descriptions accordingly. If you want to successfully incorporate what you've learned, you don't want to bore people or set unrealistic expectations with any proposed changes.
- 4.** The understandings that you are bringing back home will be questioned. Avoid defending them, or defending the whole experience as the “right way of life.” Sometimes it helps to share some of the negative aspects of your experience as well as the positive ones. It keeps your eye on reality and puts the whole experience in a more acceptable light.
- 5.** Before moving into the consensus built on the issue of not killing innocent civilians, feedback is valuable. People will be more comfortable with you if they can tell you how your stories about your experience sound to them. It also provides an excellent way to modify any ideas that aren't accurately reflected.
- 6.** Much learning takes place long after presentation of material. When certain things occur, you'll find yourself saying oh, now I understand more clearly what that's all about. This kind of realization is particularly true after laboratory or experiential learning. It's refreshing to know that learning of this kind is continuous and may be triggered at any time. Just appreciate it when it happens.
- 7.** The culture of experiential learning is not accepted or understood globally. Be prepared to explain things in a very concrete sense. Avoid buzzwords or phrases and remember some of the more insignificant things about the experience for you might be quite powerful for others.

APPENDIX 2

Quotes from Contemporary Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Personalities and Scholars on Peace and Violence

Jewish Religious Leaders and Scholars on Peace:

1. Rabbis Albert Vorspan and David Saperstein, leaders of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: The Apocrypha, the Midrash, and the Talmud place a high priority on the ideal of peace. Indeed, no subject of morality is accorded such depth of feeling and passion of conviction as the value of world peace. Jews are taught not merely to love peace but to “pursue it”. A. Vorspan and D. Saperstein “Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice,(UAHC, New York NY, 1998)
2. Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld: The answer is that the ultimate goal is truth, but the path that leads to it is one of peace. The scholar must know when to speak and when to remain silent. He cannot force the entire truth upon others, not all at once... Peace is the ultimate goal we want truth to bring about. A world of peace is not one in which we ignore truth, looking away from evil so as to avoid friction. And a world of truth is not one in which we force infidels to behave at the point of a sword. Truth and peace together imply that man not only acts with truth but appreciates that truth and Torah are the only meaningful ways to live. Scripture refers to the Torah's teachings as “ways of pleasantness” (Proverbs 3:17). The Torah is not only “truth”. It is truth which is pleasant and beloved, and ultimately it is peace as well. <http://www.torah.org/learning/pirkei-avos/chapter6-639-40.html>
3. Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger: Certainly, Judaism educates all Jews on the important value of peace. ... Our foes teach the opposite, and as long as their educative material does not change to include teachings of brotherliness and good neighboring, it is doubtful that there will be peace in our area. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?apage=3&cid=1167467746241&pagename=JPo>
4. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism: “To all those who desecrate God's name by using religion to justify killing and terror, let us say together: Enough. No cause in the world, and surely no religious cause, can ever justify murdering the innocent or targeting the uninvolved ... You cannot honor God if you do not honor the image of God in every human being...” <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3444406,00.html>

Jewish Religious Leaders and Scholars on Violence:

1. Rabbi Yosef, Former Chief Rabbi of Israel: “It is forbidden to be merciful to [Arabs]. You must send missiles to them and annihilate them. They are evil and damnable... The Lord shall return the Arabs' deeds on their own heads, waste their seed and exterminate them, devastate them and vanish them from this world.” (Sermon delivered on April 9, 2001) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1270038.stm
2. Rabbi Yousef Falay, leader of of Yitzhar settlement in West Bank: “We have to make sure that no Palestinian individual remains under our occupation. If they (Palestinians) escape then it is good; but if anyone of them remains, then he should be exterminated.” <http://www.imemc.org/article/21527>
3. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: The difference between the Israelite soul... and the souls of all non-Jews, no matter what their level, is bigger and deeper than the difference between the human soul and the animal soul. <http://www.revisionisthistory.org/essay6.html>
4. Rabbi Meir Kahane: 1) There are no meaningful Arab moderates who will permanently accept any Jewish state, of any size. The ultimate Arab goal is the elimination of any Jewish state. 2) There is no “Palestine people” or “Palestine” entity. 3) All of the Land of Israel belongs exclusively to the Jewish people.... There is no “Palestine” people and there is no “Palestine.” We are not dismayed by the Arabs, we are not shocked, we are not confused. Above all, we are not fooled by them. Not by their vague and tantalizing hints of “recognition” not by their aura of “moderation” and not by their ingenious effort to create a camp of “extremists” versus “moderates.” <http://www.kahanetzadak.com/palestine.html>

Christian Religious Leaders and Scholars on Peace:

1. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury: It is rather that Jew and Christian share a conviction that they have one calling- to be the place where wisdom and justice make their home in history, on earth; in the light of that, they have the freedom to call each other to account, despite their differences. Something of this enters in also to the relation of Jew and Muslim, to the extent that they too partially share some common history of covenant and prophecy; but I cannot do anything like justice to this matter in a short reflection here. http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/2004/040414.html

2. Pope John Paul II: My words are addressed to you, the Leaders of the nations, who have the duty of promoting peace! To you, Jurists, committed to tracing paths to peaceful agreement, preparing conventions and treaties which strengthen international legality! To you, Teachers of the young, who on all continents work tirelessly to form consciences in the ways of understanding and dialogue! And to you too, men and women tempted to turn to the unacceptable means of terrorism and thus compromise at its root the very cause for which you are fighting! All of you, hear the humble appeal of the Successor of Peter who cries out: today too, at the beginning of the New Year 2004, peace remains possible. And if peace is possible, it is also a duty! http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20031216_xxxvii-world-day-for-peace_en.html

3. Pope Paul VI: The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of Judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

4. Martin Luther King, Jr: Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies - or else? The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation..." "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/martinluth115062.html>

Christian Religious Leaders and Scholars on Violence

1. Pastor Mark Downey: The point of this message, however, is that if people knew the truth about Jews, they would hate them just as I do, and would be committing 'hate speech' by rejecting the idea that Jews are God's Chosen People. God has chosen Jews to fulfill a role, but it is the complete opposite of what they purportedly represent. What they represent is the evil and wickedness of an antichrist nature in the world. They are perpetually engaged in damage control from generation to generation, if they are not being purged en masse from an entire country. Through their efforts, darkness covers the earth. Jews are a dead end for this planet. <http://www.kinsmanredeemer.com/>

2. Silas, Maranatha: We've examined the historical and scholarly Islamic documents related to 9:5 and jihad and there is only one conclusion that can be drawn: 9:5 was meant to be both offensive and defensive and was meant for worldwide application. The theology of jihad is composed in part of verse 9:5 and in particular this verse applies to "polytheists". Corresponding to 9:5, 9:29 issues a similar edict of war upon Jews and Christians, forcing them to bow the knee to Islam in humility, pay extortion, or die. True Islam, real Islam, Muhammad' Islam, is a poison in humanity's soul. In this case it subjects man to a satanic brutality, "believe or die", where son will turn against family, friends against friends, and blood spills if one challenges the belief of Muhammad's dominance. <http://answeringislam.org/Silas/swordverse.htm>

3. Dr. David R. Reagan, Minister: All of those who survived Muhammad took up the sword, as directed by the Koran, and devoted themselves to advancing Islam through military might. The resulting spread of the religion was phenomenal. Within a century, Islamic forces had conquered Saudi Arabia, the entire Middle East, Central Asia, and large parts of India. The armies raged through Egypt and across North Africa, destroying corrupt Byzantine Christianity in their path. Westerners tend to view religion as something intensely personal and private, and not as a cultural phenomenon. For example, Christianity is "supra-cultural" in that it allows people to live, dress and eat in accordance with the culture in which they exist. This is not so with Islam. In Islam there is no "secular realm" that is free of religion. Islam regulates every aspect of life to the point that religion, politics, and culture are inseparable. Islam is thus fueled by a subtle form of racism in which 7th Century Arab culture is to be imposed upon all other cultures. " <http://www.lamblion.com/New08.php>

4. Jerry Falwell "The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way -- all of them who have tried to secularize America -- I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen.'" --on the 9/11 attacks --<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/stupidquotes/a/falwellquotes.htm>

Muslim Religious Leaders and Scholars on Peace:

1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr: "In conclusion it must be emphasized that since Islam embraces the whole of life and does not distinguish between the sacred and the secular, it concerns itself with force and power which characterize this world as such. But Islam, in controlling the use of force in the direction of creating equilibrium and harmony, limits it and opposes violence as aggression to the rights of both God and His creatures as defined by the divine Law. The goal of Islam is the attainment of peace but this peace can only be experienced through that exertion (jihad) and the use of force which begins with the disciplining of ourselves and leads to living in the world in accordance with the dicta of the shar'ia. Islam seeks to enable man to live according to his theomorphic nature and not to violate that nature. Islam condones the use of force only to the extent of opposing that centripetal tendency which turns man against what he is in his inner reality. The use of force can only be condoned in the sense of undoing the violation of our own nature and the chaos which has resulted from the loss of equilibrium. But such a use of force is not in reality violence as usually understood. It is the exertion of human will and effort in the direction of conforming to the Will of God and in surrendering the human will to the divine Will. From this surrender (taslim) comes peace (salam), hence islam, and only through this islam can the violence inbred within the nature of fallen man be controlled and the beast within subdued so that man lives at peace with himself and the world because he lives at peace with God." Al-Serat, "Islam and the Question of Violence" Vol. XIII, No. 2 <http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/IslamAndViolence.htm>

2. The Fiqh Council of North America: Fatwa Against Terrorism

In the light of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah we clearly and strongly state: 1. All acts of terrorism targeting the civilians are Haram (forbidden) in Islam. 2. It is Haram for a Muslim to cooperate or associate with any individual or group that is involved in any act of terrorism or violence. 3. It is the duty of Muslims to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities to protect the lives of all civilians. <http://www.fiqhcouncil.org/FatwaBank/tabid/79/Default.aspx>

3. Sheikh Al-Qaradawi: "Then all of the affairs are shared between us since we are the sons of a single land, our destination is the same and our Ummah is one. I say about them, 'Our Christian brothers' and some people reject this from me and say how can I say that they are our Christian brothers? [Allaah says] "Verily the Believers are but a single brotherhood". Yes, we are believers and they are believers from another angle". <http://islamicweb.com/?folder=beliefs>

4. Columnist Omar Dahbi for Moroccan daily Aujourd'hui Le Maroc: To be against terrorism means to denounce any harm to human life as such, and to condemn the ambiguity of the discourse of hatred and intolerance. Glorifying acts of carnage elsewhere and denouncing them in one's own home is an act of hypocrisy that should no longer be tolerated. <http://memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD153407>

Muslim Religious Leaders and Scholars on Violence:

1. Alqaida Training Manual: "In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate. To those champions who avowed the truth day and night... And wrote with their blood and sufferings these phrases... The confrontation we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates..., Platonic ideals..., nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun. ... Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they [always] have been... by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/network/alqaeda/manual.html>

2. Dr. Yusuf al Qaradawi has said of Jews and Christians: "Oh God, destroy the usurper Jews, the vile crusaders (Christians) and infidels". "There is no dialogue between us and the Jews except by the sword and the rifle" <http://www.aina.org/news/20060918162544.htm>

3. From the paper read in international congress of human rights and the dialog of civilizations in Tehran, May 6, 2001. Translated from Persian to English by Arash Khalatbari: The non-Moslem whether he is a Christian, Jew or a Zoroastrian... and the other heathen are considered infidels deserving to be fought against. It is indispensable that they would be presented with Islam. If they accept then there is no problem but if they don't accept then the holy war against them would be indispensable. Their wives and children would be slaves and all of their property and land would be confiscated as plunder. Even though the well known view point of the Shiite scholars impermissibility of the preliminary holy war is for the time of absence but today the permission of the preliminary holy war for the time of absence is also one of the important opinions. Therefore the non-Moslem not paying tribute who does not accept Islam does not basically have the right to live, and it is needless to say that he would be deprived of other rights as well, therefore the judgment for the infidels is completely in contrast with freedom of religion and belief. http://www.nawaat.org/portail/article_imprimante.php3?id_article=214

4. London Arabic-language daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi published bin Laden's declaration of Jihad (EXCERPTS): " Prayers and blessings of peace upon our Prophet Muhammad, who said: I was sent with a sword in preparation for the Day of Judgment when God alone will be worshipped with none beside him. He assigned me a livelihood under the shadow of my spear and he assigned humiliation and lowliness to those who disobey my command... "Killing the Americans and their allies – both civilians and military personnel – is a commandment for every individual Muslim who can do this, in any country in which he can do this, in order to free the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Al-Haram Mosque from their grasp, and so that their armies will leave all the lands of Islam defeated and no longer a threat to any Muslim." ... "Similarly, we also call on the Muslim ulama, leaders, youths, and soldiers to carry out a raid on the American soldiers of Satan and on Satan's aides, who have become their allies... "Allah also says, 'O ye who believe, what ails you that, when it is said to you: Go forth, all together, to fight in the cause of Allah; you are held down by your worldly interests? Is it that you prefer the hither life to the Hereafter? If so, you must remember that all this life has to offer is of little value in comparison with the Hereafter... [Qur'an 9:38]"

Muslim/Christian/Jewish interfaith Interaction: Positive Joint Declarations

1. Declaration of Congress of Imams and Rabbis: We, leaders, representatives, Rabbis and Imams of Muslim and Jewish religious communities who have assembled from all over the world for the first world congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace affirm our commitment to strive to end all bloodshed and attacks against innocent human beings that offend the right to life and dignity given by the Almighty to all human beings. We call upon all people to combat hate, ignorance and their causes and to build together a world of peace, rich in diversity, in which all faiths and their practices are respected and protected. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Congress_of_Imams_and_Rabbis_for_Peace

2. Christian/Muslim/Jewish leaders signers of of "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope": As religious leaders we commit ourselves to working with the Administration and the Congress to support active, fair and firm U.S. leadership to help Israelis, Palestinians and Arab states achieve a just peace. We will pray for God's blessing to sustain all those who seek to build a just peace and will work within and across our respective faith communities to build bridges of understanding and a shared commitment to a just peace for all of the peoples of the Middle East. We commit ourselves to building public support for peace with justice for all in the region. With the blessing of God, we are confident that this urgent moment of crisis can give way to genuine hope for all God's children in the Middle East. <http://shire.symonds.net/pipermail/discuss/2006-December/000596.html>