

[For immediate release]

**World's Most Prominent Religious Leaders Make Historical Joint Appeal to Everyone:**

## **“Make Friends Across Religions”**

*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I – Grand Mufti Shawki Allam – Pope Francis – H.H. the Dalai Lama – Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks – Ayatollah Sayyid Fadhel Al-Milani – Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh – Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma) – Archbishop Justin Welby – Sri Sri Ravi Shankar – Archbishop Antje Jackelén – Ayatollah Sayyid Hassan Al-Qazwini – Rabbi Abraham Skorka – Ven. Khandro Rinpoche*

Wednesday, 14 June 2017, 9:00 ET, 13:00 UTC, 14:00 BST, 15:00 CET, 17:00 GST, 18:30 IST, 21:00 PHT, 23:00 AEST

The most prominent leaders of the world's major religions released a joint appeal today calling on the people of the world to unify and make friends across religions. The statement is intended to reduce social tension around the world by stimulating interpersonal contact between people of different faiths. It was made by Pope Francis, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, H.H. the Dalai Lama, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and many others.

Personal contact is believed to counter misperceptions, prejudices and distrust. The appeal was released as a 3-minute video on Twitter (#MakeFriends) in 16 languages during a press conference in London. The full video statement can be found on [Youtube.com/MakeFriends](https://www.youtube.com/MakeFriends).

Each of the leaders contributed a personal statement for the exclusive purpose of creating this joint appeal. Ayatollah Al-Milani advises people to make friends with followers of all religions. Patriarch Bartholomew calls on the world to “recognize the beauty of God in every living human being”. Pope Francis and Rabbi Abraham Skorka demonstrate how their religious experiences have been enriched by their interfaith friendship. Grand Mufti of Egypt Shawki Allam stresses not to focus on differences between religious groups. The Dalai Lama calls for a deepening of spiritual friendship. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says “One of the wonderful things about spending time with people completely unlike you is that you discover how much you have in common. The same fears, hopes and concerns.” Archbishop of the Church of Sweden Antje Jackelén stresses the importance for society: “This should start a process that will take prejudices away and where new insights and hope is born.” The Archbishop of Canterbury adds that “It's not complicated, start with sharing what we all share, which is the pleasure of conversation.”

The joint statement intends to counter a hazardous and widespread misperception that followers of religions other than our own view us with distrust and disdain. While, in reality, a new global study (n=56,000) led by the global research institute Motivaction has found that people of all faiths are generally open to people with other beliefs. Head researcher at Motivaction Martijn Lampert said, during the press conference today, that a message promoting friendship across religions is likely to resonate with the majority of religious people around the world, which according to a study by the American Pew

Research Center comprises 84% of the world population.

Prof. Gregory M. Reichberg of the Norwegian Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) explained at the press conference that the misunderstanding that people of other faiths harbor animosity toward us “sets us up for a bad dynamic and tends to produce what we fear.” That misunderstanding stems from the lack of contact between religious people of different faiths, fueling prejudices and social tension.

Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, director of the Elijah Interfaith Institute and the chief organizer of this joint statement, said during the press conference that this appeal is also a significant novelty from a theological perspective. “We cannot deny that in the books of many religions you can find texts that are not very open, even hostile, to people of other faiths. Therefore, when the world’s most important leaders call for friendship, they are in fact affirming a particular way of practicing religion and rejecting another.” Rabbi Goshen-Gottstein presented two downloadable toolkits—one for religious individuals and the second for local religious leaders interested in advancing and deepening interfaith friendships in their communities.

Rabbi Goshen-Gottstein expressed his gratitude toward the religious leaders for making this bold statement and toward Mark Woerde and his team from Havas Lemz & Letsheal.org who conceived the idea for this project and spent years making it happen.

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## **NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

### **Spokesperson**

If you can’t find the information you need in the Press section on <http://www.elijah-interfaith.org> or <http://www.youtube.com/MakeFriends>, Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein and the Press Team are ready to answer all your questions. Please send your interview request/questions to: [Press.MakeFriends@gmail.com](mailto:Press.MakeFriends@gmail.com)

We guarantee a swift response. Please do not forget to include your direct phone number.

In case this e-mail address doesn’t work, please send a direct message to @ElijahInt on Twitter. Or see new contact details to be publicized at <http://www.youtube.com/MakeFriends>.

### **Press information (press releases in 16 languages, visuals, reports, videos and more)**

For press information please visit the Press section on <http://www.elijah-interfaith.org> or <http://www.youtube.com/MakeFriends> or directly via Google Drive (<https://tinyurl.com/y8hrf7lw>).

Here you will find:

- Main video statement (without subtitles and with subtitles in 16 languages)
- Press releases (16 languages)

- Overview and biographies religious leaders (English)
- FAQs (English)
- Videos
  - Motivaction | Research Director Glocalities Martijn Lampert on the ‘Potential for friendship across religions’ | video explanation (without subtitles and with English subtitles)
  - Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) | Research Professor Gregory M. Reichberg on ‘Prejudice and ignorance about the beliefs and practices of the religious “other”’ | video explanation (without subtitles and with English subtitles)
  - Cross section of views of citizens around the world ‘Prejudice and ignorance about the religious other’ | video (without subtitles and with English subtitles)

And hours after the press conference:

- Speech of Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein (without subtitles and with English subtitles)
  - Video compilation of the press conference (without subtitles and with English subtitles)
- Research: full Glocalities research report Motivaction (English): ‘Potential for friendship across religions’ (n=56,000)
- Visuals
  - Key visual opening screen
  - Key visual end screen
  - Photo Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein
- Toolkits
  - Toolkit on Making Friends (5 languages)
  - Toolkit for Religious Leaders on Making Friends and Sharing Wisdom (5 languages)
  - Additional study materials for Religious Leaders (English)

### **About The Elijah Interfaith Institute**

The Elijah Interfaith Institute deepens understanding across religions to foster unity in diversity, creating a harmonious world. Elijah’s message: The world’s great religions radiate wisdom that can heal the world. For two decades, Elijah has been holding gatherings of top level World Religious Leaders, convening high level scholars and reaching out to students and religious communities, increasing knowledge and understanding. Its unique approach of “integrated study” and spiritual and scholarly engagement, develops friendship and trust, transforming present and future leaders and allowing them to face the world together. Please join us in Jerusalem, in our multiple international activities or on the worldwide platform <http://www.elijah-interfaith.org>.

### **About Motivaction & Glocalities**

The Glocalities research program is created and managed by Motivaction International; an established, independent research and consultancy bureau based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Since 1984 Motivaction International has created ideas, fuelled innovation plans, tested products and assessed policies with a view on improving the quality of life and increasing short and longer term success for their clients. Glocalities is the values-based research programme of Motivaction International. The research

insights are used to deeply understand the drivers, motives and lifestyles of people from across cultures and all walks of life. The programme is used by a wide variety of charities, governments, NGOs and commercial brands. The Glocalities study represents 80% of the world economy and 62% of the world population and is regularly quoted in the international media. For more information and the full research report see <http://www.motivaction.nl> and <http://www.glocalities.com/friendship>.

#### **About Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)**

Founded in 1959, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) is an independent research institution known for its effective synergy of basic and policy-relevant research. In addition to such research, PRIO conducts graduate training and is engaged in the promotion of peace through conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation, public information and policymaking activities. For more information see <http://www.prio.org>.

#### **About Havas Lemz**

The Amsterdam-based creative agency Lemz was founded in 2000 on the core belief that brands have a huge opportunity to engage with society in an honest and meaningful way. The agency recently became part of the Havas Group that employs 20,000 people in over 100 countries. The Havas Group is committed to being the world's best company at creating meaningful connections between people and brands through creativity, media and innovation. The agency with its team of 70 digital natives was recognized at the Cannes Festival of Creativity as the 2nd best independent agency in the world, in particular for its globally acclaimed Sweetie campaign, against online child abuse. Further information about Havas Lemz is available on the company's website: <http://www.havaslemz.com>

#### **About Letsheal.org**

Founded in 2010, Letsheal.org is an Amsterdam based independent non-profit organization aimed at providing insights to the creative industry on how to use creativity to make this world a better place and how to transform brands into Meaningful Prosocial Brands. For more <http://www.letsheal.org>.