

Risk to inter-faith harmony 'single most important threat' to the world now: Jordan king



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SINGAPORE: The attack on inter-faith harmony and mutual trust, especially in light of recent attacks [in Christchurch](#) and [Sri Lanka](#), is the world's "single most important threat", King Abdullah II of Jordan said on Thursday (Jun 20).

Delivering the keynote speech at the inaugural International Conference of Cohesive Societies (ICCS) in Singapore, the king said there is an urgent need to tackle "the attack on inter-faith harmony, mutual respect and trust".

"I say 'single most' (threat), because every global challenge in this 21st century demands we resist hatred and exclusion," he said.

"Economic growth, peacemaking, protecting the environment, global security, inclusive opportunity – all these critical goals require that we cooperate, and combine our strengths to our common benefit."

AREAS FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION

To defend social cohesion across the globe, the king suggested that special attention be paid in three areas. The first is to hold positive exchanges among the "billions of people ... who seek peace and harmony".

The second is to harness technology and connectivity to reclaim the online space and fight misinformation. The king said that he attended a high-level meeting on the Christchurch Call to Action last month, which focused on safeguarding the online environment from abuse.

A follow-up meeting was held in Jordan a few days ago to further identify practical steps that can be taken.

But he added that while governments and companies can lead the way, ordinary people also have a role to play in speaking up online.

“In a very real way, the Internet belongs to its users. Moderate, positive voices need to reclaim this space and redirect the dialogue away from misinformation, insults and fear, and towards understanding and respect,” he said.

“Young men and women have a vital role in speaking up on social media and social networking sites, and using their talent for innovation to promote mutual understanding and hope.”

Finally, the king said that investing in inclusive, sustainable development would help address social problems that extremists exploit. This commitment to the long term would create a foundation where all people can share in opportunities and combat divisive ideology.

The king also raised issues such as the “unprecedented refugee crisis” as well as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as challenges the world faces.

King Abdullah II, who is in Singapore for a state visit, was invited to the conference as he is a global leader in inter-faith harmony. He has championed initiatives such as the Amman Message, the Common Word Initiative, as well as the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

As part of his royal duties, the king is also Hashemite Custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Rejecting all acts of hate and violence, he said: “In His compassion and mercy, God requires that we, in turn, show mercy and compassion, respect others, and live in peace. These core Muslim teachings and values are at the heart of my work for mutual understanding.”

For Singapore, a call to action was unveiled on Wednesday, laying out specific ways that people can build bonds with each other.

The Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony was presented to President Halimah Yacob during the opening ceremony of the ICCS.

Speaking to reporters, Mdm Halimah said its use was not confined to religious settings, despite its name.

“This is a commitment that can also be used in different settings. Community settings; it can be to reinforce the values of cohesion, the need to preserve peace, harmony in schools, in workplace. So I think there is a multiplier effect and that is something that we want to see,” she said.

KING MAKES FIRST VISIT TO NTU CAMPUS, PRESENTED WITH FLOWER

On Thursday, King Abdullah II also made his first visit to the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) campus to learn more about the university's research and programmes, particularly in the areas of education, 3D printing and air traffic management.



Professor Subra Suresh (left) presents King Abdullah II of Jordan with NTU's university flower.
(Photo: Nanyang Technological University)



King Abdullah II of Jordan was briefed on 3D printing breakthroughs during his visit to NTU.
(Photo: Nanyang Technological University)

The king also signed the university guestbook and was presented with the university flower, Dendrobium Nanyang, plated in rhodium and gold.

HONOURED WITH STATE BANQUET

As part of his state visit, the king also attended a welcome ceremony at the Istana on Thursday evening and paid a courtesy call to Mdm Halimah, who hosted a state banquet in his honour.

The president reaffirmed the warm ties between Singapore and Jordan, and agreed on the importance of inter-faith dialogue and tolerance, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in a statement. The two also discussed regional developments and counter-radicalisation.

The king also met Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and the two discussed developments in the Middle East.

They also reaffirmed the strong bilateral cooperation in areas including religious education and efforts to fight radicalisation. The two leaders also exchanged views on ways to strengthen economic ties between Singapore and Jordan.

Source: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/jordan-king-abdullah-singapore-keynote-religion-conference-11645750>