

# FOR HUMANITY: Interfaith Solidarity & Joint Action

To Combat COVID-19



Wednesday  
April 22, 2020  
16:00-20:00  
ABU DHABI

## Organized by



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# Conference Mission

Entering the third decade of the third millennium, humanity is increasingly facing more and more new challenges, such as the current global pandemic of new coronavirus disease(COVID-19). More than ever, humanity now feels a common urgency to confront it and take part in a joint action. The global health crisis can only be mitigated and effectively solved through coordination and cooperation between religions, civilizations, nations and communities worldwide. Through promoting awareness, developing feasible solutions, and committing to action, intellectuals, faith leaders and public educators can play an important and reciprocal role in preserving our humanity and enhancing overall well-being. As the past crisis has witnessed, faith communities, along with all other institutions and individuals, have advanced and contributed to global effort to tackle catastrophes.

The World Muslims Communities Council, together with global faith communities, Non-governmental organizations, professional groups and universities, have come together to co-organize an online conference and call for global response and joint action to advance human well-being in such times of global crisis. The online conference would like to include religious leaders, spiritual experts, medical professionals, scholars and philanthropists, to discuss, deliberate and determine the current global problems and solutions facing humanity as a whole. Through both online discussions, the speakers and participants will call for mutual trust, provision of emergency response to those vulnerable, attention to existential health, and prevention of future human disaster, etc. This conference aims to communicate a message that elevates both faith and our response to COVID-19 by addressing the following topics through panel discussions online.



# Program Agenda:

Please take note the timings below for each panel are in Abu Dhabi time which is GMT+4, please adjust the time based on your specific location.

## 16:00-16:15 Opening Remarks and Introductions

Keynote Speech: **Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuami**- Chairman, The World Muslim Communities Council

MC: **Ms. Dina Ghaznavi**, Advocate Australian Muslim Advocate Network, Australia

## 16:15-17:15 Panel 1: Heroes & Inspiration In the Pandemic

In response to global challenges and achieving common good for all, many states, organizations, and individuals have taken all necessary and effective measures, actions and even sacrifice. In particular, we have witnessed heroic actions by many exceptional role models in many countries and communities in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in the last few months. These positive examples give others experience, hope, and role models to deal with their challenges at home. In this panel, we will hear the inspiring stories from medics, philanthropists, and volunteers across the faiths who have made great impact and contribution in their field of work.

Moderator: **Ms. Liu Lanjun**, Founder and CEO, Zephyr Int. Art & Culture Co., China

### Speakers:

**Dr. Ahmad Hafiz Bin Zulkifly**, Deputy Rector, International Islamic University, Malaysia

**Ms. Gao Chunhua**, Owner, Gaoyuan Halal Restaurant, Wuhan, China

**Ms. Wevyn Muganda**, Co-Founder Mutual Aid - Kenya

**Wali Khan**, Frontline ICU Nurse, New York, U.S.A

## 16:15-17:15 Panel 2: Preserving Humanity: Tolerance, Compassion and Solidarity

The recent pandemic crisis is a very strong example of “a common global body”: humanity could actually feel each other and get affected globally. How should humanity today understand and reflect on this crisis? How should we evaluate and respond to this pandemic from the position of common humanity? Because the virus is a common threat for all humanities, regardless of faith, sects, ethnicity, and nationality, faith leaders and religious adherents



# Program Agenda:

have been called for tolerance, compassion and solidarity to raise awareness and take action to protect those who are affected by the pandemic.

Moderator: **Ms. Nicole Queen**, American Muslim Advocate, Interfaith Speaker, Islamic Podcaster, USA

## Speakers:

**Dr. Robert Crane**, Advisor to the Late President of the United States Richard Nixon, USA  
**Prof. Wei Dedong**, Director- International Center for Buddhist Studies, Renmin University, China  
**Prof. Marco Ventura**, Faculty of Law, University of Siena, Italy  
**Prof. Craig Considine**, Department Sociology, Rice University, USA

## 17:15-18:15 Panel 3: Role of Faith Communities in Tackling COVID-19 Outbreaks

Faith-based communities play an increasingly effective and sustainable role in solving the issue of pandemics in their own communities. This panel will feature renowned leaders and frontline medical expert from global faith communities to address, propose and share their on how to solve our common problems, as well as the role their faith has played in capacity-building, charitable trust, health-care education and relief. In particular, it is paramount to recognize how faith can empower and commit their followers to take action against global pandemics in such urgent times.

Moderator- **Dr. Abbas Panakkal**, Researcher, The World Muslim Communities Council

## Speakers:

**Imam Khalid Latif**, University Chaplain NYU, Imam, USA  
**Dr. Zaher Sahloul**, MD. President and cofounder at MedGlobal, USA  
**Dr. Brian Grim**, Founder and President of Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, USA  
**Rabbi Alexander Goldberg**, Dean of the College of Chaplains, University of Surrey, UK.





# Program Agenda:

## 18:15-19:15 Panel 4: Religious Services and Worship During COVID-19

The spread of COVID-19, or the novel coronavirus disease, has created a global health crisis this year and brought the whole world to a stand still. Global issues, such as the coronavirus pandemic, have prompted multiple religious faiths to change or cancel services in places of worship in an effort to help contain the disease. How should faith leaders and congregants respond and also maintain government regulations placed in an effort to safeguard the public? How should religious congregations respect government health measures and regulations without losing routine acts of worship? In this panel, leaders and scholars, across multiple faiths, will share their perspective and practice of worship during the recent COVID-19.

Moderator- **Dr. Michael Kramer**, University of Graz & University of Vienna, Austria

### Speakers:

**Dr. Mohamed Bechari**, Secretary General, The World Muslim Communities Council

**Prof. Alfred Kavanagh**, Professor of International Relations, Comillas University of Madrid, Spain

**Dr. Deegalle Mahinda**, Buddhist Monk Sri Lanka, Professor, Bath Spa University, UK

**Dr. Walead Mosaad**, Director of Muslim Student Life, Lehigh University, U.S.A.

## 19:15-19:30 Concluding Remarks

**Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi**, Chairman, The World Muslim Communities Council

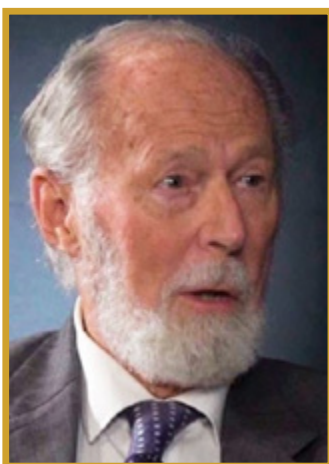
**MC: Ms. Naema Kout**, Wits University, South Africa

## Our Speakers:



**Dr. Craig Considine** is a scholar, professor, global speaker, media contributor, and public intellectual based at the Department of Sociology at Rice University. He is the author of many books and articles. Dr. Considine's opinions have been featured in the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, BBC, CBS News, Fox News, MSNBC, Newsweek, and Foreign Policy. He has been invited to speak at some of the leading international organizations and universities in the world. Dr. Considine is visible on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. He holds a PhD from Trinity College – University of Dublin, an MSc from Royal Holloway – University of London, and a BA from American University in Washington, DC. Dr. Considine is a U.S. Catholic of Irish and Italian descent.

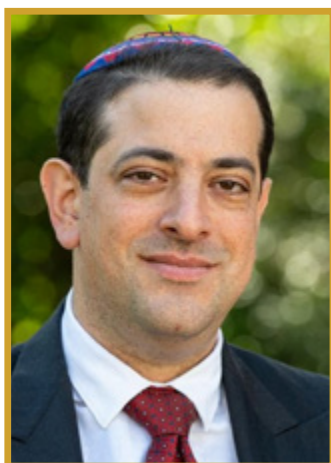
**Mrs. Gao Chunhua** is a Hui Muslim and an award winning entrepreneur and the owner of three well known Halal restaurants in Wuhan, China. She first founded Wuhan Plateau Style Catering Management Co., LTD in December 2013. Her restaurants have been designated as the communication place for ethnic minority personnel in Wuhan. In 2015 and 2017, her company was awarded as the model business owner of ethnic unity and progress, and in 2018, it was awarded as the star of independent entrepreneurship in Wuhan. She, along with her family and employees, have been serving hot meals to thousands of medical workers in the Wuhan district, helping to feed those who are on the front lines of Covid 19.



**Dr. Robert Crane**, is the former adviser to the U.S. President Richard Nixon, and is former Deputy Director (for Planning) of the United States National Security Council. In September 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed Crane to be U.S. ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In the beginning of 2012, he was appointed as full professor in Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies and Director of Center for the Study of Islamic Thought and Muslim Societies, charged with studying the origins, state of the art, and future scenarios for the so-called Arab Spring. He has authored or co-authored more than a dozen books and over 50 professional articles on comparative legal systems, global strategy, and information management.

## Our Speakers:

**Prof. Wei Dedong** was Visiting Scholar of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Confucius Institute, Columbia University, New York. He is also Associate Professor of School of Philosophy, and Director of International Center for Buddhist Studies at Renmin University of China. He was a visiting scholar until mid-May 2008 at the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion and a specialist in Buddhism. He earned his BA in Philosophy from Nankai University, his MA and Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at Renmin University. He has published numerous articles in scholarly journals on Buddhism, sociology of religion, and philosophy of religion. He is the editor of the Chinese Journal of the Social Scientific Study of Religion.



**Rabbi Alexander Goldberg** is a barrister, chaplain, and human rights activist. He is currently the Dean of the College of Chaplains and Coordinating Chaplain at the University of Surrey. He is the only rabbi within this role in Europe. He continues to be Chief Executive of the Carob Tree Project, working on a number of international and UK-based community relations and community development projects and is the Jewish chaplain to the University of Surrey. Alex regularly co-hosts a BBC radio show, a contributor to BBC Radio 2's Pause For Thought and was a member of the BBC's Religion and Ethics Conference.

**Brian J. Grim, Ph. D.,** is president of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF) and a leading expert on how faith and business build a better world. He is also the Global Chairman of the Biannual Business & Interfaith Peace Awards and Symposium. Brian recently served as chair of the World Economic Forum's global agenda council on the role of faith (2015-16) and was a speaker at the Forum's 2018 annual meeting in Davos as well as being a TEDx speaker.





## Our Speakers:



**Alfred Gutiérrez-Kavanagh** is a doctor from the Complutense University and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia. Lawyer. MBA. Law Degree (1984-89), MFA from the Instituto de Empresa (1990), Extraordinary Degree Award from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Madrid (2000). Professor of Specialized Legal Translation and International Relations (Middle East) at the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (UPC). Professor of corporate law, comparative law, EU law and ADR systems in the Master of Legal-Economic Translation at the UPC.

**Imam Khalid Latif** is Executive Director and Chaplain (Imam) for the Islamic Center at New York University (NYU). In 2005, Imam Latif was appointed the first Muslim chaplain at NYU. At NYU, Khalid initiated his vision for a pluralistic American Muslim community, rooted on campus and reaching out to the city. In 2006, Imam Latif was appointed the first Muslim chaplain at Princeton University. In 2007, Imam Latif's position was fully institutionalized at New York University, and so he committed himself to that institution and the building of a Muslim life institution..



**Wali Khan** RN BSN, ICU and Trauma Nurse working on the front lines of NY hospitals during the corona pandemic. Public speaker and social media influencer for medical professionals.

## Our Speakers:

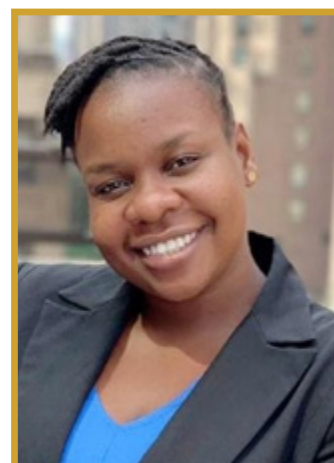
**Dr. Deegalle Mahinda** is a Professor in the Study of Religions, Philosophies and Ethics at the College of Liberal Arts at Bath Spa University in the United Kingdom. Dr. Deegalle is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago and has held professorships at McGill University, Canada, and Colgate University, USA, and conducted post-doctoral research at Kyoto University, Japan.

He is the author of *Popularizing Buddhism: Preaching as Performance in Sri Lanka* and editor of several volumes including *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*. His current research concentrates on minority issues, ethics of war and violence and religious extremism.



**Dr. Walead Mosaad** is an internationally recognized scholar in Islamic studies. His academic and traditional training has accorded him the opportunity to work with Muslim communities worldwide as a teacher and project driver. He is currently the Chair and Scholar-in-Residence of Sabeel Community, a community-oriented service organization focused on cultivating and nurturing Muslim communities worldwide. Additionally, he is the director of Muslim student life at Lehigh University. He has also worked for the Tabah Foundation, where he managed educational projects in Belgium, Denmark, and Kenya. He has completed degrees from Rutgers University, Fath Islamic Seminary in Damascus, Al- Azhar University in Cairo, the University of Liverpool, and a PhD in Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter in the UK.

**Ms. Wevyn Muganda** is a human rights and justice advocate, Deputy Secretary General - UN Youth Association of Kenya. She is a “She Can Award” Honoree 2019 and UNDP’s 16x16 initiative. When the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in Kenya, Wevyn began engaging in digital advocacy, making sure that her fellow Kenyans were well informed of the potential risks and solutions. When it became more apparent that several members of the population were ill-prepared and ill-supported, she and her partner Suhayl knew they had to do more, and the two began working together, leading to the creation of Mutual Aid Kenya.



## Our Speakers:



**Dr Zaher Sahloul** is senior advisor and past president of the Syrian American Medical Society, SAMS. He is the founder of American Relief Coalition for Syria, a coalition of 14 humanitarian US based organizations working in Syria. He led SAMS to be one of the most important medical relief and advocacy organizations providing medical relief to Syrians and Syrian refugees. Currently, he leads SAMS Global Response to address the refugee crisis in Europe and provide medical relief in disaster areas. Dr Sahloul also is a leading advocate in the Syrian humanitarian and refugee crisis. He wrote several influential articles on the impact of the Syrian crisis on patients, healthcare workers and public health. He was awarded Chicagoan of the year for 2016 for his humanitarian work in Aleppo and received Dr Robert Kirschner Award for Global Activism by Heartland Alliance Kovler Center 2017. He is an Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Illinois in Chicago. He is a practicing physician in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine.

**Prof. Marco Ventura** is a full professor (professore ordinario) with tenure at the Department of Law of the University of Siena. After a PhD at the University of Strasbourg he has visited the universities of London (UCL), Oxford, Strasbourg, Brussels (ULB), the Centro de Formação Jurídica e Judiciária of Macau, the Indian Law Institute in Delhi, the University of Cape Town, Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University. He was a professor (hoogleraar) at the Faculty of Canon Law of Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from October 2012 to September 2015. From 2013 to 2015 he visited Vietnam as an expert in the dialogue between the European Union and the Vietnamese Committee on Religious Affairs. He is a member of the European Consortium for Church and State Research and of the Centre for Droit, Religion, Entreprise et Société at the University of Strasbourg and CNRS. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Ecclesiastical Law Journal (Cambridge University Press).



**Dr. Ahmad Hafiz Bin Zulkifly** is the deputy rector responsible for research and innovation for International Islamic University Malaysia Kuantan Campus. He is a master of surgery in orthopedics and a medical doctor. Dr. Zulkifly is also a professor of orthopedics and intensive care and traumatology at the Department of Orthopaedics, Traumatology and Rehabilitation, Kulliyah of Medicine.

He has published dozens of articles as an expert of orthopedics and Islamic studies. Currently, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Hafiz and the IIUM Medical Team are developing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to face the Covid-19 pandemic. He and his team are among the front-liners in the Covid-19 fight in Malaysia as medical providers..