

Mohammed Dajani on Wasatia



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Center for Religious Tolerance

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Wasatia: A New Movement for Moderation among Palestinians

Professor Mohammed Dajani is founder and director of the American Studies Institute at al-Quds University in East Jerusalem. He has PhDs in both political science and government. In the past few years, he has done public education focusing on helping both sides of the Israel/Palestinian conflict to uncover their unconscious assumptions about the “other” and about what “peace” would look like, and then to develop a new perspectives. Professor

Professor Dajani’s newest initiative is a social movement called Wasatia - a term from the Quran which means *centrism, balance, moderation, or justice*. The concept is not new: The Talmud maintains that “The Torah may be likened to two paths, one of fire, the other of snow. Turn in one direction, and you will die of heat: turn to the other and you die of the cold. What should you do? Walk in the middle.” (Talmud: Hagigah, 2:1) “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” (Philippians 4:5) The Holy Quran states: “We have created you a mid-ground nation.” “Thus have We made of you an Ummatan justly balanced.” (Cow Surah: Verse 143) And one of the more famous quotes of Prophet Mohammed is: “The best way to run affairs is moderation.”

The founding gathering of Wasatia brought together moderates from Gaza and several West Bank towns, religious leaders, educators, former prisoners in Israeli jails, women, intellectuals and youth. They endorsed a platform that blends verses from the Quran, extolling the virtues of moderation and tolerance, with calls for a negotiated peace with Israel and solutions to the acute economic, social and political crises plaguing Palestinian society. Wasatia is the first Islamic religious party to advocate a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a tolerant, democratic society at home.

Wasatia is aimed at the moderate middle of Muslim politics as well as moderate Christians. It declares the virtue of wasatia (moderation) to be an integral part of its platform. This initiative comes as part of the historic dialogue that has started long time ago to bridge the gap between two civilizations - between the civilization based on the Bible and the Torah and the civilization based on the Quran.

The new initiative aims to foster a culture of moderation and attract Palestinian voters who are moderate in their religious beliefs. Palestinians are proud of their Muslim heritage and respect the religious identity of other religions like Judaism and Christianity. In fostering a culture of moderation Wasatia aspires that Palestinian children will not grow up with the literature of hate and violence, but would grow up in a culture where they can co-exist in peace, prosperity and harmony.

The Wasatia platform calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. But in contrast to all other major Palestinian parties, it does not endorse the return of the estimated 4 million Palestinian refugees to their homes in what is now Israel. It would say to the refugees: “Move on with your life. Do not let the past bury the future, even though it should always be remembered. Your rights are sacred but your return is to be negotiated”.

Wasatia will spend the next year building itself as a movement, undertaking voluntary work, creating new jobs and economic opportunities. Charity and voluntarism – this is Islam. Wasatia founder Professor Dajani firmly believes that in the next three years by the time the next general elections will take place by the end of 2009, the new movement will be able to run in the elections and attract enough votes to become the largest bloc in the political life of the Palestinian people. Already, Many Islamic scholars in the Arab World and other Islamic countries are advocating such course, to project the positive image of Islam globally.

For more information, see:

www.wasatia.info

www.bigdreamsmallhope.com

