

Archbishop Nikitas at the Henry Jackson Society event



Archbishop Nikitas meets His Excellency Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, at the Henry Jackson Society

On Monday, 16th June 2025, His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain participated in a Westminster meeting of the Henry Jackson Society which was addressed by His Excellency Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League. His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas exchanged warm greetings with His Excellency Sheikh al-Issa, who has worked closely with His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew over several years to promote peace and mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims.

His Eminence was accompanied at the event by Mr John Shinkwin, who will take up the post of Secretary for External Relations at the Archdiocese in September,

succeeding The Revd Presbyter Andreas Minic, who has been appointed Priest-in-charge of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, Shepherd's Bush.

His Excellency Sheikh al-Issa addressed the meeting in discussion with Dr. Alan Mendoza, the Henry Jackson Society's Executive Director, and explained the work of the Muslim World League, a Mecca-based non-governmental organisation considered one of the most influential Islamic organisations in the world. He highlighted the efforts of the Muslim World League to build bridges between different Muslim communities and between Muslim and non-Muslim communities globally. In particular, Sheikh al-Issa addressed the role of his organisation in countering extremism, a mentality which he considers alien to religious belief. "Extremism," he said, "has no one faith, occupies no one place."

Sheikh al-Issa's thought-provoking remarks included several points which are of interest to Orthodox Christians in the United Kingdom, and to many others besides. Praising this country for the warm welcome it has given to Muslim communities over the past decades, Sheikh al-Issa highlighted the ongoing fruitful intellectual engagement taking place here between Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other scholars and public figures. He drew attention to the distinctiveness of the British Muslims he encounters on pilgrimage to Mecca and highlighted an obligation for Muslims in the UK to follow the legal and moral rulings of muftis here, who apply Islamic principles in a British context, rather than seeking rulings of jurists serving in other countries.

Addressing the issue of religious disagreement, Sheikh al-Issa stressed the need to understand that differences and disagreements are unavoidable and normal, both in the world as a whole and within a society, and that human beings have the responsibility to respond to these differences in a positive, constructive way. There is no need to pretend that we agree when we disagree, he argued, nor is there a need to assume that disagreements must produce conflict. Where religious disagreements do become conflict, he pointed to people's ignorance of their own religious tradition as a common root cause.

Highlighting the role of religious communities across the world in promoting peace, Sheikh al-Issa struck a note consonant with that of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Forum for Promoting Common Values among the Followers of Religions in May 2022 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His All-Holiness said on that occasion, "The Orthodox Church considers it her duty to encourage all that genuinely serves the cause of peace and paves the way to justice, fraternity, true freedom, and mutual love among all peoples who make up the one human family." Sheikh al-Issa reaffirmed this as a duty for all religious believers, pointing out that,

however secularised the world may appear through a Western political lens, 80% of the world's population are actively involved in religious practice of some kind, meaning that religious communities have much greater ability to work for peace than they may themselves realise and, in a time of heightened conflict, this ability becomes an obligation.



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