



**His Royal Highness Prince El-Hassan Bin Talal**

**Four Freedoms Awards**

**Nieuwe Kerk, Middelburg, The Netherlands**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

After such an introduction there is really not much for me to say!

I hope you are not a credulous audience because James was too generous with his remarks and I thank you again.

Your Majesty, when your mother, then Princess Beatrix, came to Jordan a few years ago with your late father Prince Claus, she brought with her not a Philips radio, but a gift of a copperplate with the narrative of the journeys of the famed Dutch historian and traveler Hurgronje. The copperplate included images of Mecca and even of my late grandfather King Abdullah, aged six. It was a moving testimony to the fact that affinity between peoples is essential to inner peace.

We speak of peace, inner peace, peace with our neighbours, but I think the most important point that Franklin Delano Roosevelt did not mention, is that freedom brings responsibility. When the great republic of Athens sought not a better life, but freedom from responsibility, as Edward Gibbon reminds us, Athens ceased to be free. So it is with an enormous sense of responsibility that someone like me, trying to think out of the box, Prime Minister, if I may, looks at my sisters, to my right and my left, looks at what they represent and is reminded instantly of the fact that humankind, man and womanhood, live on one planet. We have no other earth to go to.

Yet when after Aung San Suu Kyi, my former colleague at Oxford University, was freed from house arrest, something many of us had called for, we ask whether it is possible for something to be done about the plight of the Rohingya Muslims, we are told that this is an internal Myanmar issue.

And today, representatives of 'Boko Haram', figuratively meaning, Western or modern education is a sin, are portrayed all over our television screens and newswires, carrying the holy book of Islam whilst claiming the right in the name of Islam to enslave young girls to prevent them from learning. The faith that started with one word 'read' is being destroyed by outlaws.

In the world of news, is it he who portrays the reality on the ground, as are my sisters at this gathering, who is given the greater credence? That we have in Afghanistan the creation of a radio station is extremely important, but who internationally is going to listen to that radio station? And listen to the reality of the authentic grassroots story? Who really cares about the humanity of Somalia for example? And as for Pakistan, I ask who is aware of the fact that Pakistan is **the** largest host country to refugees in the world?

Pope Francis is visiting the Holy Land almost as we speak. In that Holy Land, Jews, Christians and Muslims have a history of shared heritage for millennia. Some good, some not so good. But essentially the teachings of our faiths have nothing to do with the aberrations of human beings. Indeed, quite the contrary.

If you consider 2014, we are 100 years from 1914, what have we learned from 1914 and subsequent events? Two huge civil wars in Europe, referred to as World Wars, had profound consequences for the peoples of the world. And I think that it is time to bear in mind that until human dignity is put at the centre of the construct of an architecture for a new world order, it is impossible to think of stabilization of populations on our planet. As I said recently talking to my friend Henry Kissinger, globalisation, yes, but there must be equity, or some degree of equity between cultures. Is it the right of the role of the radio station or the role of media to disseminate the caricature of the Prophet and then to stand back as people kill each other from Nigeria to Bangladesh? Equally, has this abomination of a man, this representative of Boko Haram the right to hold the holy book and to terrorise innocent children of God. I said yesterday at dinner that the war in Afghanistan has cost 17 trillion US Dollars. What have we achieved? Extremism has simply moved to other parts of the world.

So I would like to go back to faith and say in the words of the Holy Qur'an *we vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works* (2:148). The road is long. But we cannot afford not to commit ourselves. Where there is faith, there is hope. And I would like to think of a patrimony or heritage for all of humanity. None better than Jerusalem which could become a centre, not for monologue about the need for dialogue, but for conversation incorporating a civilized framework for disagreement. I believe in the noble art of conversation.

When will we revisit our texts, our heritage and our history, and when will our neighbour revisit his or her texts, heritage or history so we can speak of developing a shared ethic of human solidarity? The humanitarian focus at the center of our drive to keep an eye on the traditions of enlightenment. The enlightenment is not about science and technology alone. It is about ethics and values. You speak of Islam and the West. Islam is heterogeneous. The West is heterogeneous. Neither are monoliths. And I think it is important to bear in mind that *Ishraq*, illumination came from the East - where the sun rises. The illumination of millennia, Confucian, Buddhist, Jains, Sikh, and so many others came from the East. The wisdom of the ancients. Is it not time today to consider that from the East came wisdom and compassion?

I pay tribute to my late mother-in-law, the Begum Shaista Ikramullah. There are no mother-in-law jokes in my family. When she, the first Muslim, Indian (as she then was) woman to gain a PhD from the University of London, working in 1948 with Eleanor Roosevelt on the Declaration of Human Rights and Convention Against Genocide, declared:

*It is imperative that there be an accepted code of civilized behaviour.*

And later she said:

*The ideas emphasized in the [Declaration] are far from being realized, but there is a goal to which those who believe in the freedom of the human spirit can try to reach.*<sup>1</sup>

Ladies and Gentlemen, to combat a world that represses the weak to support the strong, we need what President Roosevelt called:

*A greater conception, the moral order.*

---

1 *From Purdah to Parliament*, Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah; OUP Revised and Expanded Edition, 1998; (p.191-2)

I would invite all those concerned with the Roosevelt message, to give serious consideration this year to a call for justice in the United Nations' formulation of the sustainable development goals. Or is it the correlation between justice and human dignity and sustainability that is important? We can only be resilient in as much as we recognise the importance of promoting equities, both economic and social on the one side, and ethical on the other. There are a lot of people making money out of the black or grey economy. The criminal economy of drugs, weapons and money laundering, is more significant than the official economy of many countries and it is for this reason that we are suffering the way we do.

I would like to remind you of another 'great', Rabindranath Tagore, and I paraphrase when he says :

*We shall thank God that we were made to wait in silence through the night of despair, had to bear the insult of the proud and the strong man's burden, yet all through it, though our hearts quaked with doubt and fear, never could we blindly believe in the salvation which machinery offered to man, but we held fast to our trust in God and the truth of the human soul.<sup>2</sup>*

I cannot but conclude by inviting you all to remember that what we are doing here today is furthering the cause of humanity as followed by so many great men and women, long past, but revered and remembered in our time.

In the words of Isaac Newton "*If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.*

Peace be upon you!

---

2 *Nationalism*, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, 1918; (p. 46)