

***Citation by James Roosevelt jr.***

*...The Freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world*

On this, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2014, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Freedom of Worship Medal is awarded to

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

In an age increasing torn by ethnic, religious, and political strife, yours has been a voice of reason and tolerance; a voice of peace, a voice of understanding.

Born in your beloved Amman the youngest son of His Majesty King Talal I, you have spent a lifetime serving the Jordanian people: as Crown Prince, brother and stalwart advisor to the late King Hussein, and as uncle and valued senior counselor to King Abdullah II.

Educated in Jordan and England, and holding a BA and MA in Oriental Studies from Oxford University, you would go on to establish a number of critically important Jordanian institutions, including the Royal Scientific Society in 1970, the Arab Thought Forum in 1981; and the Higher Council for Science and Technology in 1987.

Your passionate interest in young people, led you to establish the Arab Youth Forum in 1982, and you have been deeply involved in Jordan's economic and educational development through a host of activities and organizations.

You have also been an active player on the world stage. In 1981, while addressing the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations, you suggested the establishment of a new international humanitarian order, which led the Secretary General to ask you to found and co-chair the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues. In 2002, you co-founded the International Cultures Foundation, leading to the creation of the Parliament of Cultures in 2004, and you have served on a number UNESCO commissions and committees, all dedicated to improving the lives of ordinary people the world over.

The author of nine books and an astute observer of both East and West, your recent reflections on the impact of the rise of global inequality have served to remind us that if we want to understand Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring we must acknowledge that “the human dignity deficit is more important than the budget deficit.”

But it is concerning the religious and cultural divide between Muslims, Christians, Jews and the many other faiths that make up our diverse—and too often troubled—world where you have perhaps left your greatest mark. Here, your efforts to foster an ongoing, systematic interfaith dialogue stand as a shining example of how “the noble art of conversation” can build bridges between peoples. In 1994, this belief

manifested itself in your founding The Royal Institute for Inter-faith Studies, a non-governmental organization based in Amman that seeks to eliminate misconceptions by finding the common human and ethical values that strengthen interfaith relations. You are also a charter member of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue. Centered at the University of Geneva, the FIIRD seeks to advance a greater understanding of Christianity, Islam and Judaism out of the belief that cooperation among these three faiths represents perhaps the greatest chance for the achievement of world peace. Between 1999 and 2006 you served as Moderator for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and continue to serve as this body's Chair Emeritus. In 2003, you launched the Partners in Humanity initiative to enhance understanding between the Muslim and the Western World in the wake of the 9-11 attacks, and in 2009 you established the West Asia – North Africa Forum to bring together decision-makers, civil society organizations, religious leaders and others to promote social cohesion and consensus in this vital region.

Throughout all of these efforts you have remained steadfast to your belief that we must enter into a dialogue between ourselves and the other, “for we have to comprehend before we move to understanding.” You have also said that the road to understanding is sometimes long and difficult, but we should not let this discourage us, for “alongside the silk route, and the spice route, and the oil route,” lies “the road of ideas,” a road you have been urging us to travel for more than four decades. The Holy Quran says “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” Your dedication to religious tolerance and the fundamental right of each person to worship God in his own way has helped advance FDR's Four Freedoms and for this we thank and honor you today. [751 words]