

*This document accompanies an email message of 18 February 2015 from the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK to its member bodies.*

## EXTRACTS FROM SOME RECENT MESSAGES FROM IFN CO-CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS TO MEMBER BODIES AND A STATEMENT BY THEM

*Note: The full messages and statements can be found at:*

<http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/statements-and-messages>

“The work of most of your organisations, like that of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, focuses on this country. There are, however, times when events in other countries with which we have links or about which we have concern have an impact on our relationships here.

These may be events, past or present, about which a community or communities have strong feelings: particular attacks or periods of persecution or even genocide; ‘one off’ but deeply disturbing episodes; or ongoing actions – military or civilian – affecting the lives of many, within and across borders. The roll call of such actions in recent times is long and the impact reverberates.....

Such situations give rise to strong differences of view about what is just and right and they bring with them anxiety, pain – and anger. At these times, our bonds of friendship and trust – long in the making – are tested. It is hard to keep communication open and to continue to be willing to be in dialogue but it is vital to do so and to continue to support each other’s right to differ in opinion and to be willing to make our case with courtesy and respect for the other.”

*Extract from Message from the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of IFN to member bodies, 4 August 2014*

“Extreme actions taken by groupings overseas, such as ISIL, claiming to be in the name of a religion, can sometimes be taken to represent the true face of that religion, fanning flames of prejudice here as well as elsewhere. There is evidence that this is happening. Images of brutal deaths become fused in the minds of some not just with the perpetrators but with the religion in whose name they claim to operate. The work of continued explanation and correction of misrepresentation and misunderstanding through the media and in personal encounter is critically important.

It is hard but vital to keep communication open and to continue to be willing to be in dialogue. It is likewise vital to stand up for the safety and security of each other’s faith communities; to offer, side by side, humanitarian succour to the vulnerable and needy; and to seek ways, whenever this is possible, to find a common voice on human rights and on issues of justice and compassion....”

*Extract from Message from Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of IFN to member bodies, 12 August 2014*

*This document accompanies an email message of 18 February 2015 from the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK to its member bodies.*

“In the UK, we are fortunate to have a generally strong record of community relations and inter faith engagement but this can never be taken for granted and echoes – from near as well as far – of destructive responses to dealing with difference are always of concern.

IFN’s vision is of a society where there is understanding of the diversity and richness of the faith communities in the UK and the contribution that they make; and where we live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good. With our member bodies, we work to that end, like many others here, elsewhere in Europe and around the world.”

*Extract from Co-Chairs’ New Year message to member bodies, 8 January 2015*

“The recent murders in Paris, as well as reported rises in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim comments and attacks in the UK and more widely in Europe, have brought in their wake increased anxieties about the safety of Jewish and Muslim communities. In the case of manifestations of violent extremism and terrorism they have brought anxiety about the safety and wellbeing of all communities and of our society overall.

There is, and will be, debate about best ways to respond to these disturbing developments, as well as to the implications of others around the globe. At an immediate practical level, however, where communities feel their very safety is under threat, mutual support is vital. Inter faith initiatives are fundamental to achieving this and play a crucial role alongside that of the emergency services and other secular agencies working to ensure public safety. The attached principles, drawn from the IFN and partners document ‘Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities’ remain very relevant....

The Inter Faith Network for the UK works to increase understanding about and between faith communities and to encourage and support good inter faith relations. As part of this it has always underlined the enormous importance of the contribution which faith communities make to British society – and also of their engaging and being engaged with well by wider society.

“...Britain would also not be Britain without our continuing commitment as people of different faiths, within its four nations, to finding ways to live together well – including with those of non-religious beliefs - and continuing to work together to shape our society in the light of our shared values while retaining the integrity of our religious beliefs and appreciating the positive dimensions of diversity. “

*Extract from Statement by the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of IFN, 21 January 2015*