

**M E S S A G E**

by

**PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT**

to the Islamic World Festival in London

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I send you my best greetings which express my feelings and those of the Egyptian people towards the Government of Her Majesty, and the friendly British people, and also reflect our profound appreciation for the renowned British scholars who exerted tremendous efforts in the careful planning of this Festival, thus ensuring its success.

In this respect, I would like to mention the efforts of scholars from the Islamic world whose scientific participation in the Festival helped to strengthen it as a beacon, drawing millions of spectators to it.

Egypt anticipated the importance of this Festival, and dispatched a team of its scholars to submit their original research and various examples of the magnificent Islamic heritage of the different ages; they were sent to participate with their brothers, the Moslem scholars, in elaborating the diversities of Islamic civilization.

In fact, it is a very significant event to organise a big Islamic Festival in London for the first time in history; a Festival that

was organised and sponsored by an elite of British Christian men of religion and scholars in collaboration and consultation with the Islamic world.

What adds more brilliance and magnificence to this significant event is the fact that the Festival is organised under the auspices of the British Government, and that millions of visitors come to it from every part of the world in order to be familiarised with the Islamic monuments and treasures and listen to the studies and researches submitted about the wealth of Islamic civilisation, thus revealing its inventions in the scientific and practical fields, demonstrating its features in the various branches of knowledge such as sciences, arts and literature, proving its authenticity and sublime objectives, and showing its deep and positive effort on the whole world, and particularly on Europe in the Middle Ages.

Many fair-minded orientalists have already shown various aspects of the great Islamic civilisation, demonstrating its excellence and superiority, and praising its effective effects on Europe's renaissance and civilisation; the Arab and Moslem scholars greatly appreciate this and praise and admire these researches, yet they open new vistas as yet untrodden by orientalists in their writings over the past three centuries.

I would only be doing justice to those who convened and supervised over this Festival when I allude to the good spirit animated their hearts and their tolerance. I wish to praise their good efforts in bringing Moslems and Christians together. I do not forget that this tolerance is the natural counterpart of the tolerance which characterised Islam in its treatment of and dealings with non-Moslems throughout the ages, since the dawn of the Islamic call and up to the present; the tolerance of Islam will always remain one of its basic principles until the day of judgement.

It is easy for those who follow up and are interested in the history of Islam to see its tolerance manifested in many aspects such as the belief in the soundness of earlier heavenly missions, its being based on exhortation to wisdom and morality.. Islam does not force anyone to adopt it, nor is it biased against those who have not embraced it; it does not conspire against those who have not adopted it as a faith, nor does it seize opportunities to discriminate against followers of other religions, because they all are, from the standpoint of Islam, people with legitimate rights, guaranteed freedoms and safeguarded beliefs, free to worship, to practise their rites and observances.

Consequently, no discrimination has ever taken place in an Islamic country between its Moslem and non-Moslem citizens with regard to public duties and rights, nor has dissension or fanaticism ever occurred in any Islamic country according to history proper as witnessed by many orientalists in their just and valuable studies.

It is not a coincidence that there should be an extraordinary closeness and similarity between the two words Islam and salam (peace), nor is it a coincidence that the customary greeting among Moslems whenever they meet or depart is « peace (Salam) be upon you », nor that Moslems repeat the word « peace » in their prayers several times daily.

It is no wonder, then, if Islam is described as being a source of welfare and good to mankind, for it is the religion of tolerance and not of fanaticism; it unites and does not disperse, rules and does not divide, its flexibility allowing it to cope with all events and times, never allowing it to lag behind nor come to a standstill.. Therefore, much was expected of this Festival, such as hope that Christians and Moslems will unite their successful efforts in

resisting the deviating currents, and opposing the trend of belittling the sanctity of religions, or making light of the sublime spiritual values which these religions call for.

I also hope that practical and scientific bonds between Christian and Islamic organizations will be strengthened through joint periodical conferences to study and discuss general problems with a view to reaching humane solutions for them, so that youth may be guided by their faith in God, and adhere to spiritual values which are indispensable to human beings since there is no happiness without them.

I seize this opportunity to appeal to the entire Christian World to uphold truth, good and justice, and support us in resisting the Zionist aggression which makes light of the feelings of the Arab and of the rights of the Moslems as well as of their sanctities and deep-rooted civilisation which deserve every appreciation and care. In so doing, Zionism is not heeding a very obvious and certain fact, namely, that the peace we and all our friends in the whole world, are cherishing will never be achieved as long as Israel continues to occupy one inch of the Arab homeland, and as long as the Palestinian people remain dispersed homeless and deprived of their identity as a nation.

The whole world fully realises that we have been patient, long, and more than tolerant. The whole world is well aware that we have long been armed with patience, tolerance and pacifism, but when we became sick and tired of patience, we hastened to safeguard our rights and protect our dignity with the best and most precious of our possessions with our lives and souls. Hence the October 1973 War by which we broke all the chains that fettered us for long, broke all the barriers and obstacles and away forever with the myth of invincible Israel.

The whole world stood by our side, and we felt the peoples' feelings of support and admiration because we were advocates of right and upholders of justice. The whole world knows that we still cherish a true and just peace which preserves our dignity, and our prestige and which would be worthy of our glorious and noble past. If the rights we demand are not restored to us, we shall have to resort to war, without hesitation or apprehension, in order to recover our legitimate rights.