

His Highness Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum's Vision for Multiculturalism

Vision

My vision is based on 'Umar's Assurance of Safety and the central principle of IslamicJerusalem as a key model for multiculturalism, civilisational dialogue, and mutual understanding and respect. This vision encompasses my passion for the twin pillars of multiculturalism and education, which are both essential building blocks for global harmony and mutual understanding in the twenty-first century.

IslamicJerusalem gives us a model of a common space in which people from different backgrounds can live together. IslamicJerusalem is described in the Holy Qur'an as 'surrounded with *barakah*': a place which radiates goodness and blessings. This understanding of IslamicJerusalem, so central to Islam and Muslims, and for a place which is so important to three great faiths, has become clear as region in which diversity and pluralism thrive. It has been through my passion for IslamicJerusalem that our understanding of this place of hope, safety, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence has been nurtured and developed.

My priority is to work to achieve the implementation of practical models, to build bridges between peoples, nations, cultures, and religions. Working through education, mutual engagement, and promoting better communication and understanding, my vision is to find ways of breaking down the barriers that separate and divide the contemporary world. My actions aim to establish strong foundations for the building and the realisation of this vision.

A first step in this process was the establishment of the new field of inquiry of IslamicJerusalem Studies, which I have supported and encouraged with great passion. The pioneering and development of the discipline of IslamicJerusalem Studies took a major step through the establishment of Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Scotland, for which I designated the leading scholar Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi as Principal and Vice-Chancellor. It is through Professor Abd al-Fattah's academic research that this role of IslamicJerusalem as a model of multiculturalism has now been understood and established.

Implementation

Al-Maktoum Institute in Dundee is a unique academic and cultural establishment in the west, which is a new stage for understandings of Islam and Muslims in the west and a key bridge between the peoples of today's world. Al-Maktoum Institute is a practical step through which I am working to pursue better understanding and communication across the world and a living and tangible model of inclusiveness which reflects and demonstrates this vision of IslamicJerusalem.

Radiating from this is my model of co-operation that is bridging Scotland and Dubai, particularly through a series of further practical steps. The establishment of Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, which I have

authorised to implement my vision, is the starting point for this. At the *academic* level, the Institute is a research-led centre of excellence in research and teaching, with its new agenda for the study of Islam and Muslims. The Institute is also forging an international academic network, and is working to educate the next generation of scholars in the study of Islam and Muslims, to enable them to face the challenges and opportunities of a diverse and multicultural world in the twenty-first century. The Institute is also actively working to serve the local, national, and international *communities*.

From this starting point, the Institute has led to a number of important achievements in a short space of time, including:

- the linking of Dundee and Dubai in a Sister Cities agreement
- the creation of Al-Maktoum Cultural Centre in Dundee – as a facility for all the communities of the City and of Scotland, and as a model for multiculturalism in Scotland
- a new model for the future study of Islam and Muslims, set out in the Dundee Declaration at the Al-Maktoum Institute in March 2004, establishing the new agenda for the discipline which is post-orientalist, post-traditionalist, multicultural, and both inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary.
- the direct Emirates daily flight from Dubai to Scotland
- a number of higher education links between Scotland and Dubai, including the establishment of the British University in Dubai, the linking of University of Aberdeen with Zayed University, and Summer Schools at the Al-Maktoum Institute in Dundee for female students from the UAE.
- my commitment to multiculturalism has been shown in particular by the launch of the Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Awards for Multicultural Scotland, which will be awarded for the first time in August 2005.
- and Al-Maktoum Institute is continually striving to implement my vision to further facilitate the creation of mutually beneficial relationships by establishing practical models for global cross-cultural understanding, with cooperation between the UAE and UK in general, and between Dubai and Scotland in particular as an example.

All of these steps come directly from my vision to follow and implement the model of multicultural Islamic Jerusalem. Through Al-Maktoum Institute – together with Al-Maktoum Foundation, in Scotland – I am actively working to encourage dialogue across cultures and peoples, which will enhance greater understanding and appreciation between communities and peoples at all levels across the world in general, and between the Arab and Muslim worlds and the west in particular.

My passion for Islamic Jerusalem and vision for the implementation of this model into practical steps has created the foundations for co-operation and the encouragement of a multicultural ethos of mutual respect and common understanding for this globe.

Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum
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