

# Joint Declaration on Mission and Da'wa



Participants of

UEM Think Tank on Mission and Da'wa

Witten, 13. October 2017

## Declaration

- I. In October 2017 we, a group of Muslims and Protestant Christians, women and men, met at Wuppertal and Witten, Germany, to discuss mission and da'wa. Our meeting was organized by the United Evangelical Mission. We come from different regions of the world: from Cameroon, Rwanda and Tanzania, from Indonesia and the Philippines, and from Turkey and Germany. In our countries, we all have experienced interfaith tensions and even violent conflicts. But all of us are dedicated to interfaith dialogue and to mission or da'wa.

The following is a summary of our discussions:

### II. Understanding da'wa

1. Da'wa literally means "invitation" or "call".
2. The understanding of da'wa has been changing throughout history. Today, the word has a different meaning in different contexts.
3. We see two main concepts of da'wa:
  - a. Towards Muslims: coaching, giving advice inside the Muslim community.
  - b. Towards non-Muslims: Expressing one's own faith by words, by being a good example and showing Islam as attractive.
4. Da'wa needs to be done in the best/most beautiful way and with (universal) wisdom. (Sura An-Nahl, 16:125)
5. As Mohammed was sent by God as messenger to submit (*tabligh*) the words and message of God, da'wa implies the collective duty of submitting the Islamic faith to others. The responsibility is only to submit, while the recipients are free to accept the message or not.

### III. Understanding mission

1. Mission literally means "sending".
2. The understanding of mission has been changing throughout history. Today, the word has a different meaning in different contexts.
3. The subject of mission is God himself: God's love incarnated in Jesus Christ. Jesus was sent to proclaim the kingdom of God which is justice, freedom, peace and love. (cf. Romans 14:17)
4. All Christians are participants in God's mission. In this, they follow the example of Jesus Christ who lived and taught humility and respect for others, who suffered rather than using force, and who did not judge others.
5. Christian mission is witness to God's love in words and deeds.
6. Participating in Christian mission, we hope for conversion and transformation of the world, but know that only God can bring those about. A metaphor might express that: Christian mission keeps sowing the seeds, but leaves the harvest to God.
7. Mission is open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit which may run counter to any of our plans.

### IV. Da'wa and mission

1. Unanimously, we reject any form of da'wa or mission which use force or manipulative means to convert someone.

2. In contrast to our understanding, we see that there are forms of da'wa and mission which use unacceptable means. Therefore, we need to develop ways to promote our understanding and to prevent unacceptable practices of da'wa and mission.
3. In this, we need to consider the role of majority and minority religions. Each religion – when in the majority – is tempted to misuse their position and dominate the others. There might be also blindness about the situation and therefore we need the view from the outside.
4. The concept of da'wa includes the idea that religions compete in good deeds (Sura Al-Ma'ida, 5:48). This idea can also be included in the concept of Christian mission.
5. When talking about da'wa and mission we have to talk about freedom: Freedom to share one's faith, to witness, to choose one's religion, to change one's faith, and to not adhere to any religion at all. It is painful when someone leaves our religion, but we need to accept this decision.
6. Both da'wa and mission call for holistic and contextual practice.
7. Our understanding of both da'wa and mission includes the protection of minorities. Da'wa protects the right of mission, and mission protects the right of da'wa.

#### **v. Interfaith dialogue**

1. Both as Christians and Muslims who faithfully trust in God, we are convinced of the truth of our respective faith. But because it is God who leads us to this conviction, we mutually respect the sincerity of the other's faith.
2. Interfaith dialogue is not an alternative to da'wa and mission as we understand it. Rather: Da'wa and mission lead us into interfaith dialogue.
3. Interfaith dialogue is about building bridges, mutual understanding, trust, solidarity, and cooperation, not only for one's own benefit, but for the benefit of humankind and the whole world.
4. Interfaith dialogue should not be limited to religious elites, but be open to all religious believers and should include policy makers.

'We, the participants of the Think Tank "Mission and Da'wa" commit ourselves to the following:

1. To overcome our mistrust of and prejudices against the believers of the other faith.
2. To self-critically reflect on our mistakes committed in mission and da'wa and to abandon those wrong practices.
3. To reject and fight aggressive and manipulative ways of mission and da'wa.
4. To defend the right to da'wa and mission in our specific areas of living and working.
5. To accept the freedom of any human being to choose one's religious adherence.
6. To regularly meet people of the other faith in order to build bridges of mutual understanding, trust, solidarity, and cooperation.
7. To work together with people of the other faith in transparency and mutual respect.
8. When planning any action, to seek the cooperation with people from the other faith, or at least to consider what this action might mean to them.
9. To take action to spread our understanding of da'wa and mission to the grassroots level and to include it in our interfaith dialogue.

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