

European Council of Religious Leaders



Statement of the European Council of Religious Leaders – May 2025

The Importance of Sustaining Interfaith Relations in Europe Today

The European Council of Religious Leaders met on the 26th of May 2025 to discuss the current challenges we all face across Europe today. As a Council we have regularly discussed, and engaged with initiatives and partnerships, on vital topics such as migration, social cohesion, hate speech, the environment, freedom of religion, as well as other common challenges, and have released statements and declarations accordingly. Sometimes the impact of these deliberations maybe be modest, but even in the act of meeting the Council sends a positive message of interfaith peacebuilding and cooperation to the world.

Council members noted the negative impacts conflicts across the world, and political populism and leadership, have had on interfaith relations within Europe. Interfaith relations are currently complex, and the suppression of different perspectives on the conflict in Gaza undoubtedly increases the frustration of some individuals, and in fact can enhance the likelihood of hate speech and violence. It is undeniable the conflict has put a significant strain on some Jewish and Muslim interfaith relations, and increased enmity and violence towards our Jewish and Muslim brethren and communities, which we universally and unequivocally condemn.

The Council noted there is a fine line between preventing hate speech, and the suppression of freedom of speech supporting human rights and dignity; the latter of which has the potential to undermine our indelible democratic models and values. Despite significant challenges, the Council recognised that there continues to be many initiatives and bodies where Muslim and Jewish leaders, along with leaders of all religious traditions, remain steadfast together in their commitment to peace. Greater support for interfaith dialogue and work is more important now than ever, and the Council calls upon the governments of Europe to do more to recognise the significant achievements of interfaith groups and increase support for work in this vital area.

As a Council of senior religious leaders, it is our divine responsibility to maintain our historic relationships despite external challenges and divisions, and model peace and harmony no matter what circumstances we are confronted with. Therefore, irrespective of our own differences, distress, and difficulties, the ECRL remains:

- A Council where all power imbalances are set aside, and religious minorities and majorities come together as equals and treat each other with respect, consideration, and care.
- A Council where religious leadership is understood broadly, so that we can be inclusive of gender and faith traditions, recognising the importance of inclusivity for just and sustainable peace.

- A Council where all members can speak about difference in a safe space, and whilst we do not always agree, remain steadfast in our commitment to maintaining respectful, constructive and non-violent dialogue.
- A Council which believes that whilst facts and evidence are hugely important, the transcendental power of religion, the divine, spirituality, and prayer remains one of the most powerful ways in which we can prevent injustice, exploitation, hate and conflict across all nations.
- A Council where we believe that despite pressures from outside and within our communities to sometimes speak up for our own religion and people, we are significantly stronger working and speaking in union for the benefit of all.
- A Council where we believe that the increasing propensity for militarisation and weaponisation can only be harmful for everyone, and that only dialogue, respect, and love, can solve the problems we face in Europe and the world today.

As events and tensions increase internationally, and conflicts proliferate, it is more important than ever to sustain interfaith work and groups such as ECRL. Groups that model respect, compassion, reconciliation, and forgiveness, and reiterate the importance of complying with international law. As a membership of religious leaders from all the world's great religions, we will never lose our hope for a more just, equal, inclusive, and peaceful world.

ECRL President - Bishop Kari Mangrud Alvsvåg,
 ECRL Vice President - Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Dayan
 ECRL Vice President - H.E. Mufti Dr. Nedzad Grabus
 ECRL Vice President - Mr Ron Eichhorn.

On behalf of:

The European Council of Religious Leaders

26th May 2025.

The European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) was established in 2002 in Norway as a platform to enhance open and trust-building dialogue between senior religious leaders of different faiths across Europe. The Council draws on the spiritual, ethical and moral wisdom and resources of the world's great religious traditions and leaders to support the building of peace, social harmony and security throughout Europe and the wider world. It is one of the most representative and respected pan-European collaboration of senior religious leaders in Europe.

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