



## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE A MUSLIM LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON ITS VALIDITY, CONCEPT AND PRACTICES

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### A B S T R A C T

The purpose and definitions of interfaith dialogue vary from person to person depending upon the areas from where they come and the nature of the encounter they are facing. Many Muslims participate in multi and inter faith dialogues for propagating Islam, providing clear understanding about its tenets and at times for the sake of securing their interests in the country they live in as a minority. It necessarily involves exchange of visits, holding common prayers or participation in coalitions and joint demonstrations. Such practices for some Muslims conflict with the basic tenets of Islam while for others, these endeavours provide a sizable opportunity to present Islam as a religion of tolerance that supports coexistence. This paper delves into the well-established rules of Islamic Jurisprudence, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the recognised exegeses (*tafāsīr*) of the Glorious Qur'ān to evaluate the concept and practices of multi or inter faith dialogue from an Islamic *sharʿī* perspective. The present paper, however, does not discuss the political motives and dimensions of interfaith dialogue.

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## Introduction

Many Muslims participate in multi and inter faith dialogues for purposes of propagating Islam, providing clear understanding about its tenets and sometimes for the sake of securing their interests in countries where they live in as minorities. Such participations necessitate exchange of visits, holding common prayers or even joint participation in demonstrations and forming coalitions. For some Muslims such practices conflict with the basic tenets of Islam<sup>1</sup> while for others such activities provide a sizable opportunity to present Islam as a religion of tolerance that supports coexistence and spreading peace around the world. We need to admit that those who participate in such activities are not as many as those Muslims who do not participate. So, we are faced with the jurisprudential adaptation of the concept, practices and mechanisms of multi-faith dialogue as being currently practiced in the West and other parts of the world. Therefore, the main question raised by this research paper is to evaluate the concept and the recurrent practices of multi or inter faith dialogue from an Islamic *sharʿī* perspective with reference to the well-established rules of Islamic Jurisprudence, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the Prophetic *Sunnah* and recognised exegeses (*tafāsīr*) of the Glorious Qurʾān. The present research, however, does not deal with nor discuss the political motives and dimensions of the interfaith dialogue pursued by the hegemonic powers.

## Multi-faith Dialogue: Concepts and Muslim Legal Perspective

The focus of this section will be to elaborate the most common concepts of multi-faith dialogue and based on that perception an

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1. See, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sulamī, “al-Ḥiwār bayn al-Adyān,” *Shabakat al-Qalam*, available online at: <<http://www.almoslim.net/documents/hewar.pdf>>; Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abū Zayd, *al-Ibtāl li Nazariyyah al-Khaṭṭ Bayn Dīn al-Islām wa Ghayriḥ min al-Adyān* (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āshimah, 1421 AH), p 11; Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Qaḥṭānī, *al-Walā’ wa ’l-Barā’ fi ’l-Islām* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1402 AH), pp. 346–351.