

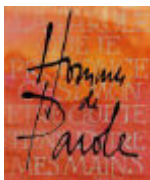
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**Questions to Alain Michel  
Founder of 'Hommes de Parole'**



**The Hommes de Parole Foundation has initiated this congress**

With fifteen years in the field with the NGO EquiLibre mitigating the consequences of conflict, Alain Michel decided to set up the Hommes de Parole Foundation to work on the causes of conflict. By publishing interviews and by putting into practice a robust spirit of encounter and dialogue, **the Foundation has for four years been striving to inform and unite.** Its neutrality, its reputation for integrity and its closeness to the people have enabled it to advocate actions and gather together figures of renown from every walk of life. Thus, at Caux in Switzerland in June 2003, it brought together some 40 eminent people involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to lay the foundations of an alliance for peace. Getting one hundred religious leaders, imams and rabbis, together is a further step towards consolidating this construction.



**"It is absurd to continue curing the diseases caused by polluted water without disinfecting the well water."**

## Questions to Alain Michel

### *In what ways would imams and rabbis truly be able to build peace?*

**"This is not governments, politicians or military who will bring peace: it is firstly the people"**

"A peace signed by the governments without the agreement of the populations is a peace of false safety, a cold, unstable peace and thus without true future. That's why it is not governments, politicians or the military who will alone bring peace, it is firstly the peoples. They have become exhausted with all the fighting and seek only security and serenity.

To this end and to stop the raging cycle of violence, we need to de-legitimise the aggression ceaselessly fed by the preaching of fundamentalists. Today it is mostly extremist "religious ministers" (because a lot among them self-proclaim themselves religious ministers) who are sustaining and developing hatred and violence, using God as pretext. That's why it is other religious ministers who, invoking the same God, can and must move towards peace.

In the media, mostly the extremist speak out, while they comprise only 10% of the clerics.

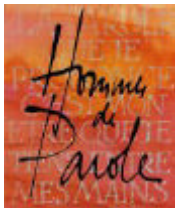
Why do not the others speak out? Perhaps simply because they are afraid. Terrorism has no other goal than to obtain submission... And as they do not meet in large numbers, they probably aren't sufficiently aware of their power, or rather they have not experienced their strength."

We expect that religious ministers publicly express their position against fundamentalism, terrorism and poverty. They should condemn vehemently all violation of human rights. It is their very duty, it seems to me. We expect something else than silence from their part, even though such silence can have the pressure those ministers experience from their community as justification.

Being many gathered for this Congress from all part of the world, religious ministers will be enabled to make decisions that will be supported by the power of quorum. Those decisions will thus legitimize all previously isolated positions often impossible to express

### *Is it a political meeting ?*

No. Strictly no. This meeting is exclusively set on the religious field. It would be out of the question to tackle the topical political conflicts as the one in the Middle East. It is not about discussing the consequences of division but its causes.




## Questions to Alain Michel



**"It is not only this encounter which is exceptional, it is also the impact of one hundred Jewish and Muslim religious ministers, united to demonstrate their will of a peaceful coexistence in front of TV cameras and through newspapers of the entire world"**

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### ***Is this not just yet another inter-religious gathering?***



"This is not an inter-religious gathering, but religious ministers that will meet each others. This aim is not to debate about concepts, dogma, interpretation of texts or about diverse ways of spirituality. It is a religious encounter in the word primary meaning, that is "tie together again" , "join", a meeting the objective of which to bridge the gap between men. God is too often considered as the source of division whereas He is instead the origin of harmonious relation. Those responsible and authorities of the Islamic and Jewish worlds who, finally will be given the opportunity of to discuss face to face and, once again, prove this will for a pacified coexistence living and working together during four whole days.

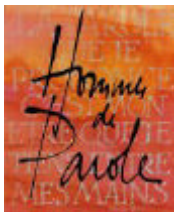
"It is not only this encounter which is exceptional, it is also the impact of one hundred Jewish and Muslim religious ministers, united to demonstrate their will of a peaceful coexistence in front of TV cameras and through newspapers of the entire world. They will be exposed to the the Jews of Jerusalem simultaneously to the Muslims of Indonesia and Iraq; they will be seen in Palestine, in the United States, in Pakistan. Everyone will see that such a peaceful coexistence is possible and hence draw the appropriate conclusions."

### ***Why are Christian authorities excluded from this Congress ?***

Christians are far from being excluded from this Congress. Around 15 Christians personalities will attend the encounter. Christian will be granted the privileged role of "mediators" since they perfectly know the different sensitiveness. They will be interpreter, experts and witnesses all at once.

Today, and even though Christian are specially concerned by the suffering in the Middle East , for example, they no longer are the cause of the strain. They live in relative good harmony with the others.

On the other hand, nowadays while a permanent dialogue between Islam and Christianity, Judaism and Christianity exists, there is nearly no formal dialogue between Islam and Judaism. Among others, one of the objectives of this Congress is to help re-establish such communication without which no peace is conceivable. "



## Questions to Alain Michel

**"It will certainly contribute to change the way Jews and Muslims look at the world but also how the world looks at the Jews and the Muslims.**

**The use of God to justify destructive violence will no longer be valid**

### ***Why religious leaders? Why not high ranked lay personalities as representatives of Islam and Judaism?***

Because the religious ministers, be them Ulemas, Imams or Rabbis, all are leaders and managers of communities in the entire world and enjoy a true power. They considerably influence people and represent them with politicians. As religious authorities, they can even influence governments, in some occasions, helping them or urging them in making decision in favour of peace and of the Human being.

This way, religious leaders enjoy a real "transformation" power still not made available to laymen. Good words as the conclusion of this Congress are not part of the objectives of the encounter, but it is expected to lead to effective decisions. This way too, religious ministers possess the necessary weight and power for significant and concrete actions be initiated together with all expected means and efficiency, as soon as the closing of the Congress

### ***What difference will it make ?***

"It will certainly contribute to change the Jews and Muslims look at the world but also how the world look at the Jews and the Muslims. The use of God to justify violence will no longer be valid. The Faithful will have the opportunity of being shown the convergences and the will to coexist that their spiritual mentors have expressed. They will be able to apply this pacified coexistence will be applicable at home, with their floor neighbours and between bordering countries. It is almost always because of misknowledge of the other therefore because of fear of the other that breeds fundamentalism.

Each of those Muslim or Jewish religious leaders will bring with him his will for peace and will expose his opinions on actions to undertake and listen to the others'. Upon closing this Congress, we might have among others projects concerning education and about the way communities look at each other at school. May be will projects be carried forward in European towns and cities fighting islamo-phobia and anti-Semitism. Other projects will be borne so that common actions between Jews and Muslims will raise. Rabbinic and Islamic school might be created channel the teaching of Rabbis and Imams, thus disapprove the fundamentalist statements in front of everybody. And, of course, may be shall we succeed in de-legitimizing once and for all any destructive violence perpetrated in the Name of God within the entire world

