

To Ayatollah Masoumi-Tehrani  
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Tehran, Iran

The Hague | International City of Peace and Justice | 29 July 2014

Your honour, dear co-worker for mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence among all peoples,

On July 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year we, 14 representatives of various religious communities in the Netherlands, gathered at the National Centre of the Dutch Bahá'í community in the Hague, to read together your recent statement in which you explained why you made an illuminated calligraphy of a verse from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas of Bahá'u'lláh. You have called this beautiful work of art “an enduring symbol of respect for the innate dignity of human beings, for fellow-feeling and peaceful coexistence regardless of religious affiliation, denomination or belief” and we accept it as such. In fact, it was your courageous act that brought us together to explore, in perfect harmony, the question of religious co-existence. Based on relevant quotations from the diverse traditions brought by the participants, we considered the work which has yet to be done in the Netherlands and asked ourselves how to rise up to eradicate notions of religious superiority. We reflected upon our personal influence within our own communities regarding peaceful religious co-existence.

We wish to wholeheartedly support your efforts, by working for the eradication of notions of religious intolerance in our country and to take practical initiatives to eliminate conflict from our society and foster instead love and fellowship, solidarity and altruism. We firmly believe that this is the mission called for by our respective religious scriptures and traditions, our prophets and saints.

In this, we were especially moved by your invitation to “let us be humans first before we are Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, Bahá'ís, Buddhists, irreligious, or atheists”, and we wish to respond affirmatively to your call to “contemplate our patterns of thoughts, wash away the dross that is the tendency to think in stereotypes about one another, and to extend the hand of love and assistance towards that which is human in each one of us”. We are aware that much patient and persistent work remains to be done, that we should especially accompany the youth of our communities and society at large in their endeavour to serve society, to overcome prejudice and not fall into the trap of self-superiority.

We stand ready to work together in this mighty and glorious enterprise – the building of a collective conscience – in which we feel united with you and the many other people of goodwill in Iran and beyond. We recognize that your letters were written as acts of great courage. May your work be a blessing for you and for all people who support this work of peace.

With respect, gratitude and our warmest greetings,

<i>Ds. Ineke Bakker</i>	<i>Director STEK (City &amp; Church)</i>
<i>Ms. Margriet Quarles</i>	<i>Secretary Christian Unity, The Hague</i>
<i>Mr. Jan Soullie</i>	<i>The Hague Community of Churches</i>
<i>Varamitra</i>	<i>Buddhist</i>
<i>Mr. Gursev Singh</i>	<i>Sikh Community</i>
<i>Mr. Baljit Singh</i>	<i>Sikh Community</i>
<i>Pandit Surindere Tewari</i>	<i>Sanathan Dharm</i>
<i>Dr. Martijn Rep</i>	<i>National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Netherlands</i>
<i>Rabbi Albert Ringer</i>	<i>Reform Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam</i>
<i>Ms. Mieke v.d. Besselaar</i>	<i>Sufi Movement</i>
<i>Ms. Urmilla Sewnath</i>	<i>Arya Samaj</i>
<i>Mr. Peter Verburg</i>	<i>The Hague Community of Churches</i>
<i>Mr. Jornt de Jong</i>	<i>Bahá'í Community Netherlands</i>
<i>Ms. Marga Martens</i>	<i>Bahá'í Community Netherlands</i>