

Interfaith Code Of Conduct

NIGERIA





Background

Nigeria is a country where the population is almost evenly divided between the Christian and Muslim religions. Faith is therefore of crucial spiritual and cultural significance to millions of people across Nigeria.

Today, Nigeria is facing large-scale religious, ethnic, political, and economic challenges. Intense religious debates around these challenges can lead to negative rhetoric and hate speech, and manifest in escalating tensions and conflict. History has demonstrated again and again how easy it is for religious leaders and members of the interfaith community to become inextricably caught up in religious, political, and territorial disputes.

Harm to religious leaders and groups, as well as sacred places, has an impact on people's identities, reinforces community trauma, and adds a deep symbolic dimension to conflict. As a result, all too often, in the minds of many, religion becomes a synonym of violence, losing its potential to be a force for peace, justice and reconciliation.

To help mitigate interreligious conflict and, conversely, promote dialogue, interreligious peacebuilding and social cohesion in Nigeria, the Nigerian interfaith community developed the Interfaith Code of Conduct (ICoC). The ICoC is both necessary and timely. It is designed to apply to all faiths, and guide all religious leader and members of the interfaith community of Nigeria, to make sound ethical and values-based decisions.

The ICoC was developed conjointly by key members of the two religious bodies, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). This was facilitated by the Interfaith Dialogue for Peace (IDFP), one of the leading national interfaith and intercultural dialogue forums.

The ICoC is driven by the Core Values of Mutual love and respect, Values, Human rights and dignity, (fight against) Hate speech and blasphemy, Conflict resolution, Justice, Ethical standards, Truthfulness and sincerity, Legality, and Transparency and accountability.

Preamble

AIM

The aim of the Interfaith Code of Conduct is to serve as a basis of cooperation between religious leaders and members of the interfaith community in Nigeria to: dispel stereotypes, and ethnic and religious profiling; to prevent, mitigate and resolve violence and conflict; and to improve, interfaith relations, understanding, and enable unity and peaceful co-existence.

ACTORS

The Interfaith Code of Conduct is designed to guide and be used by all interfaith community members, that is, by Muslim and Christian leaders, and their followers.

The Interfaith Code of Conduct should particularly apply to religious leaders and members of the interfaith community who are focused on mitigating religious conflict, and seek to improve the social cohesion, understanding and peaceful coexistence nationally, and in local communities, between people of different religious beliefs and creeds in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

- To guide the conduct of religious leaders as they respond to local, state and national issues in their preaching, public utterances and media outings.

- To serve as a rallying point for religious leaders to uphold values and scriptural teachings that unite rather than divide adherents of both religions in their interventions.
- To create mutual respect and better understanding for peaceful coexistence.
- To provide mutually agreed boundaries, checks and balances to the utterances, activities and general witness of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

RELIGIOUS BASIS

The Core Values of the Interfaith Code of Conduct are supported by the key principles and teachings from Biblical and Quranic quotes.

COMMITMENT

All religious leaders and members of the interfaith community are urged to commit to be guided by the Interfaith Code of Conduct in their religious lives, practices, and daily interactions, both public and private, in order to enhance interfaith relations in their respective communities, and to promote interfaith dialogue, understanding and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria.

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community are also encouraged to promote the Interfaith Code of Conduct across Nigeria: including in their local communities, schools, worship centres, traditional institutions, media organizations, and relevant national, state and local government agencies.

Core Values



1.

MUTUAL LOVE AND RESPECT

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should work together to build a society rooted in mutually treasured values.

Society can only be built on a solid foundation of love, sincerity and mutual respect for each other's faiths and differences. This means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so as well.

Living and working together is not always easy. Religion harnesses deep emotions which adherents sometimes exploit negatively. When this happens, we must draw on our faith to bring about understanding and reconciliation. We have a great deal to learn from one another, which can enrich us without undermining our own identities. Together, listening and responding with openness and respect, we can move forward to work in ways that acknowledge and respect genuine differences, building on shared hopes and values.

Our different religious traditions offer many resources for this and teach us the importance of good relationships characterised by love, compassion and generosity of spirit. Love, that is, mutual respect and consideration for others are inherent in the moral teachings of each religion (Islam and Christianity). The word 'love' has many meanings but as it is clear from the readings of scriptures, the God of justice and mercy is also the God of love. What scriptures express as love is here rendered as mutual respect or reciprocal regard that exists between two individuals.

“You will not enter paradise until you believe and you will not believe until you love each other”.

– Riyad as-Salihin 378

“When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it or (at least) return it equally, certainly, Allah is ever a careful account taker of all things”.

– Surah An-Nisa 4:86

“Jesus replied, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. Love God above all else. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

– Matthew 22:37–40

“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen”.

– John 4:20

“Love your neighbor as yourself”.

– Mark 12:31



2.

VALUES

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community have a responsibility to act and make decisions based on their values. Values are intrinsic concepts and can be defined as the basis by which an individual or group of people select the criterion of right or wrong. Taking into account the exalted position of religious leaders, professional/religious values are determined by qualified (religious) institutions. The values both Islam and Christianity, respect sacred places (including churches and mosques), signs, symbols. In the values of both Christianity and Islam, human life and dignity is sacred. In Christianity, for instance, human beings are created in the image of God.

“Thou shalt not kill”.

– Exodus 20:13

“And he said to them, ‘it is written: ‘my house shall be a house of prayer’ but you are making it a den of thieves”.

– Matthew 21: 13

“It is not righteousness that you turn faces to east or west; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the last Day, and the Angels, and the book, and the messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and give Zakat, to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing”.

– Ayah al-Baqarah 2:177

“On that account: We ordained for the children of Israel that if anyone slew a person- unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land- it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people”.

– Ayah al Ma'idah 5:32



3.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should be sensitive to the moral values, religions, customs, traditions and cultures of others, especially as there is more than one religious group. The family is the fundamental natural group unit of society promoting human rights and human dignity and, as such, every member of the interfaith community should see all people as equals. Thus, every person should be entitled to freedom of thought, including freedom to their religion or belief, and to change their religion or belief. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”.

“O Mankind we created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)”.

– Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13

“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy”.

– Psalm 82:3



4.

HATE SPEECH AND BLASPHEMY

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community shall, collectively and individually, restrain themselves and their members from using any form of hate speech and blasphemous comments, utterances, and insinuations against people of other faiths.

“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean”.

– Acts 10:15

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone”.

– Colossians 4:5-6

“Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance”.

– Ayah al-An’am 6:108



5.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Religious leaders should be equipped with conflict resolution skills to address and prevent the factors that influence violent interreligious tensions in their communities. They should deliberate and harmonise the best, most viable and appropriate conflict resolution practices for conflict prevention and mitigation. They should also be familiarised

with early warning signs and early response systems when it comes to a potentially violent conflict.

“And obey Allah and His messenger; and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart, and be patient and persevering: for Allah is with those who are patiently persevering”.

– Surah Al-Anfal 8:46

“If two parties among the Believers fall into a fight, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah, but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just)”.

– Ayah al-Hujurat 49:9

“Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate”.

– Surah Fussilat Ayat 34

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and may be thrown into prison”.

– Mathew 5:25

“If your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector”.

– Matthew 18:15



6.

JUSTICE

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should at all time work for justice and in equity, for without these there can be no peace.

“Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow”.

– Deuteronomy 27:19

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.

– Micah 6:8

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool”.

– Isaiah 1:18

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do”.

– Ayah an-Nisa 4:135

“O ye who believe stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just that is next to piety. And fear Allah for Allah is well acquainted with all ye do”.

– Ayah al-Ma'idah 5:8



7.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should at all times act with honesty and uphold the highest ethical standards, whether in public or in private affairs, so that the ethics of and public confidence in the interfaith community are preserved, and enhanced.

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witness to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to the wrong and depart from justice. Be just that is next to piety”.

– Ayah al-Ma'idah 5:8

“Allah’s curse is on the giver and taker of bribe”.

– Sunan at Tirmidhi Hadith 1336

“A false balance is abomination to the Lord but a just weight is his delight”.

– Proverb 11:1

“Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless”.

– Proverb 23:10

“Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another”.

– Leviticus 19:11



8.

TRUTHFULNESS AND SINCERITY

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should be honest and truthful in their dealings with donors, project beneficiaries, staff, partner organizations, government agencies, and the public in general, and should respect the laws of any jurisdiction in which they are found. Leadership requires commitment to the well-being of every member of a group or organization, keeping promises and responding sensitively and appropriately to their requests and needs.

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another”.

– Ephesians 4:25

“All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one”.

– Matthew 5:37

“Verily, truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to paradise. A man continues to be truthful and encourages honesty until he is recorded with Allah as truthful. And beware of falsehood. Verily, falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the Hellfire. A man continues to tell lies and encourages falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar”.

– Sahih al-Bukhari 6094

“Speak (always) the truth”

– Surah Al-Ahzab 33:70

“Do not cover the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know (what it is)”.

– Surah Al-Baqarah 2:42



Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should not engage in activities that are unlawful under the laws of the nation in which they organise or work, and must be strongly opposed to, and not be a partner to, any form of illegality. In Islam and Christianity, obedience to the law of the land is a religious duty.

“O ye who believe obey Allah and obey His Messenger and those charged with authority among you”.

– Ayah an-Nisa 59

“By Allah if Fatima the daughter of Muhammad (S.A.W) were to steal I would cut off her hand”.

– Bukhari vol. 4 No 681

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. God has established the authorities that exist. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves”.

– Romans 13:1

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer”.

– Romans 13:3



10.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Religious leaders and members of the interfaith community should strive for openness and honesty. They should be transparent in all of their dealings, be prudent in the management of assets and resources and be open and accountable in their actions.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”.

– Matthew 5:16

“Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weights of good, see it and anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil, shall see it”.

– Surah Az-Zalzalah 99:7

Commitment

We, the Christian and Muslim members of IDFP, in collaboration with the Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria, hereby append our signatures to this Interfaith Code of Conduct to guide our religious lives, practices and daily interactions in order to promote interfaith dialogue, understanding and peaceful coexistence among us.

Christian Signatories

Muslim Signatories

Bishop David Bakare

Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace

Prof. Isa M. Maishanu

Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace

Bishop Sunday Onuoha

Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace

Alhaji Ishaq Kunle Sanni

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Apostle Biodun Sanyaolu

*Organization of African
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Alhaji Rasaki Oladejo

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Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace

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<p>Bishop Mike Akpami Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria</p>	<p>Imam Zakaria Aliyu Council of Ulama'u Nigeria</p>
<p>Rev. Fr. Joseph Nomhwange, SMA Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria</p>	<p>Imam Abdurrahman Ahmad Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace</p>
<p>Rev. Dr. Evans Onyemara Christian Council of Nigeria</p>	<p>Prof. Ishaq Akintola Muslim Rights Concern</p>
<p>Pastor Benjamin Akanmu Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria</p>	<p>Prof. Siraj Barau Abdulkarim Islamic Trust of Nigeria</p>
<p>Bro. Victor Ivoke Organization of African Instituted Churches</p>	<p>Asunogie Nurudeen Da'wah Coordination Council of Nigeria</p>
<p>Pastor Simon Julius Arabo Evangelical Church Winning All / Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria</p>	<p>Azeez Adebayo Mumin Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria</p>
<p>Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Unamba Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria</p>	<p>Alhaja Nurat Joju Olayiwola Oyo State Muslim Community</p>
<p>Barrister Chukwuemeka Ugwuanyi Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace</p>	<p>Dr. Auwal Faruk Abdulsalam Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace</p>

Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP)

The Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP) is a national interfaith and intercultural dialogue forum recognised by all religions and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The IDFP focuses on interfaith activities and inter-religious awareness, dialogue and understanding for the two prominent faiths in Nigeria – Christianity and Islam. It is a forum based on discussions and dialogue, asking questions and arriving at mutual understandings about the beliefs and practices of the two faiths.

The main intention of the IDFP is to achieve peace in Nigeria. The purpose of dialogue is to dispel stereotypes, ethnic and religious profiling, mitigate violence, create understanding and enable cooperation and peaceful coexistence, whilst maintaining mutual respect. Sincerity is therefore at the heart of their activities.

The IDFP was established in February 2016, funded and facilitated by the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), in partnership and collaboration with the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Kukah Centre (TKC).

