

# Muslim World League's Chief Honored for Fighting Anti-Semitism, Calls for Unity Against Hatred



**Award from CAM Director Sacha Roytman-Dratwa, Courtesy CAM: Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa.**

At a special online event, Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa was honored with an inaugural award for his contribution towards fighting anti-Semitism. He is the first recipient of the prestigious annual award given by the Combat Anti-Semitism Movement and American Sephardi Federation, to Muslim leaders engaged in the fight against Anti-Semitism.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa was recognized for uniting people of all faiths, publicly condemning Holocaust denial and for inspiring the next generation to tackle hate and promote peace.

In a special address at the event, titled "How Muslims and Jews Can Combat Anti-Semitism Together," Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa spoke passionately about the need for unity in order to overcome anti-Semitism and hatred. Additional speakers at Tuesday's event included Elan Carr (US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism), Sam Brownback (US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom) and Ahmed Shaheed (UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Belief and Religion).

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa has consistently provided a powerful voice against extremist ideology and is considered the leading global voice for moderate Islam across the Sunni world. He has frequently condemned Holocaust denial, acts of anti-Semitism and the extremist distortion of religion. In January, he led the Muslim World League on a historic visit of senior Muslim leaders to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp.

Speaking from Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa encouraged communities to work together, saying, "Whereas Jews and Muslims lived centuries together, in these last decades we have sadly grown apart.

Now, we must rebuild the bridges of dialogue and the bonds of partnership between our communities... Since taking over the Muslim World League, it has been my mission to fight the forces of hatred and violence.

"Earlier this year, our efforts in particular to shatter the ideology of anti-Semitism culminated in a visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, where I stood united alongside my Jewish brothers and said: Never again. Not for Jews, not for Muslims, not for Christians, not for Hindus, not for Sikhs. Not for any of God's Children. History's greatest horror, the Holocaust, must never be repeated."

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa reiterated his firm condemnation of Holocaust denial, saying, "There are those who still try to falsify history. Who claim the Holocaust, the most despicable crime in human history, is fiction. We stand against these liars, no matter who they are or where they come from... True Islam deems any attempt to deny or underplay the brutal horrors of the Holocaust as the ultimate insult to the dignity of all those who perished."

He also condemned those using the current Coronavirus pandemic to leverage hate, saying, "Today, we all face a common enemy in the form of the Coronavirus. It has spread to every corner of the globe, showing us that it does not care if a person is Muslim or non-Muslim, Jew or non-Jew, rich or poor, educated or non-educated... Especially during times of economic challenge and social isolation, the danger of communities turning inward and rejecting the other is even greater. And we know that extremists of all type are seeking to exploit the current uncertainty to push an ideology of hatred and division."

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa condemned hate crimes across the world, including anti-Semitic attacks, saying, "Your community

has tragically been the target of several terrorist attacks - in Pittsburgh; in San Diego; in Munsey, New York; in Halle, Germany. I condemned each and every one of these horrible assaults upon humanity. As if they were attacks on Muslims."

He concluded by saying that the Muslim World League is "ready for the fight" against "the scourge of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and all hatred," adding, "We in the Muslim World League are proud to shoulder with our Jewish brothers and sisters to build understanding, respect, love and interreligious harmony."

Sacha Roytman-Dratwa, Combat Anti-Semitism Movement director, commented, "Anti-Semitism can only be defeated by working together. Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa is a unique and important voice in this struggle. I hope that his strong commitment to the issue will encourage more and more Muslim voices to be heard against the hatred of Jews. At a time when Iran's spiritual leader calls for the destruction of the Jewish state, the Sheikh's statements condemning the hatred of Jews are of particular importance, especially given the scrutiny he often faces."

Jason Guberman, executive director at American Sephardi Federation commented, "We are proud to honor our friend, the Muslim World League's Secretary General, Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa, for his commitment, courage, and creativity countering Anti-Semitism as well as fighting against all forms of hate, bigotry, and fanaticism. His moral courage is matched by his boundless intellectual curiosity and willingness to confront controversies directly."

US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback said, "If we can get the three Abrahamic faiths to work together not just

in tolerance, but in love, respect and care for each other, we would reduce so much hatred and violence. This would ripple throughout out the world in such a positive way. We have to overcome the forces of evil, but we can only do it if we work together."

US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Elan Carr said, "The only question for leaders today, is what kind of Middle East are we going to choose? A Middle East of terror and exclusion, or a Middle East of inclusion? Sheikh Al-Issa has chosen a future of tolerance and affection, where Jews and Christians can be embraced by their Muslim brethren."

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Dr. Ahmed Shaheed commented on the urgency of tackling anti-Semitism, especially in the Muslim world. He commented, "We have Muslim leaders, like former Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia or the Supreme Leader Khamenei of Iran who have promoted or are actively promoting anti-Semitism... Muslims and Jews have much in common, in religion, in history, and in culture. It is politics, feeding off ignorance, that divides us."

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*The Combat Anti-Semitism Movement (CAM) is a non-partisan, global grassroots movement of individuals and organizations, across all religions and faiths, united around the goal of ending anti-Semitism in all its forms. Since its launching in February 2019, 245 organizations and 245,000 individuals have joined CAM by signing the campaign's pledge. The CAM Pledge draws upon the IHRA international definition of anti-Semitism and its list of specific behaviors used to discriminate against the Jewish people and Israel.*