

LETTER ABOUT INTERNATIONAL DAY OF TOLERANCE

On November 16th, the International Day of Tolerance is celebrated, a date established since 1995 by UNESCO, which proclaimed its “Declaration of principles on tolerance”.

With this important date in mind, the Comissão de Defesa da Liberdade de Expressão and the Comissão Especial de Direito dos Servidores Públicos da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil Region Minas Gerais bring their simple contribution to a important topic.

How difficult and delicate it is to talk about tolerance nowadays. After facing a global war against an invisible enemy, a virus that for years collapsed the earthly community, highers entities hoped that humanity would learn an important lesson: that regardless of beliefs, regardless of culture, nations, and different people, different ideologies....we are one humanity, living on this single globe called Planet Earth.

However, as soon as life resumed its march of “normality” (the so-called new normal), we were overwhelmed by new conflicts between nations: first, the clash between Russia and Ukraine. Now, we are mourning the new escalation of war between Israelis and Palestinians.

We have no intention of discussing the complex reasons that lead to the conflict, the geopolitical issues, or the speeches, attitudes and leadership that culminate this reality.

This is a letter about tolerance. And tolerance presupposes coexistence between people. Tolerance presupposes peace.

“No war can be holy. This is a contradiction in terms” said Renato Russo, the lead singer of the band Legião Urbana, 30 years ago. A sente-se that, even today, expresses enormous wisdom.

After all, Jesus Christ was a pacifist. The man who preached “turning the other cheek” in the face of aggression, rather than returning it with the same coin. Who, at the moment of his unjust arrest, asked his disciple Simon Peter to put away his sword. Who gave his life for the sake of humanity.

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Comissão Especial de
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¹ https://www.bibliaon.com/versiculo/lucas_6_29/

² <https://www.bibliaonline.com.br/ol/jo/18>

In Judaism, peace is also a supreme value to be sought. In the Babylonian Talmud it is said that Hillel says: “be of the disciples of Aaron, love peace and seek peace, love creatures and bring them closer to the Torah.” Also Rambam (Maimonides) teaches that “You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 18. 4) – live and not die by them, because the statutes of the Torah are not about revenge, but rather of compassion, love and peace in the world.⁴”

Islam, too, has the theme of peace at its core. In its very etymology, “islam” in Arabic is related to “salam”, which means peace⁵. Along these lines, the Prophet Muhammad states: “You will not be able to enter paradise if you do not have faith, and you will not have faith perfectly if you do not love one another. Do you want me to tell you something that will make you love each other? Spread peace – as-salám – among yourselves.⁶”

Of course, there are different interpretations of texts and scriptures. Of course, some will distort its meaning to justify the most diverse atrocities. There will also be unbelievers, who will say that such words mean nothing. But, on the other hand, the fact is that such doctrines and teachings that guide the lives of billions of people, have the defense of peace, love, and, therefore, tolerance, at their foundations.

In the philosophical field, Voltaire is one of the greatest defenders of tolerance. He is credited with saying: “I may not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

Over time, we have even tolerated the fact that this is not Voltaire’s phrase. It comes from Evelyn Beatrice Hall, a biographer who wrote about the philosopher’s life. Here, it’s more about the content. Not who says it.

However, in our daily lives, how many times are we surprised by statements like “I’m in charge, you obey”; “Do you know what you’re talking about?” “So-and-so doesn’t know anything.”

Intolerance flares up in global conflicts, but its genesis lies in the small things of everyday life.

In the certainty that you know better, that you are better, that the other person has nothing to teach you or add.

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³ <https://www.pazagora.org/2010/12/a-paz-e-um-valor-judaico/>

⁴ <https://bodisatva.com.br/islam-religiao-da-paz/>

That is a mistake.

They forget a simple fact: what is fair to you is unfair to others. Your concept of what is good may be bad for someone else. What is right for you will be a fatal mistake for someone else.

Not any more. The important thing is that we have multiple reasons, different perspectives. That we understand that we are plural beings. That we are tolerant when we respect dissent and not when we try to create a single consensus.

And that this planet of more than 500 million square kilometers has room for all those who disagree to coexist. As long as they are based on a culture of peace, respect for others and diversity. As long as they are based on tolerance.

Let us fight for the global promotion of freedom and pluralism of the press to allow the public to differentiate facts from opinions and narratives.

Dialogue is necessary. Respect is necessary. In the twenty-third year of the third millennium, we urgently need to respect those who are different in a spirit of fraternity. May we coexist with diversity, without hate, prejudice and discrimination.

These are the votes of the Comissão de Defesa da Liberdade de Expressão da OAB/MG and Comissão Especial de Direito do Servidor Público da OAB/MG.

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⁵ <https://bodisatva.com.br/islam-religiao-da-paz/>

⁶ <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/blogs/dialogos-da-fe/divulgar-e-motivar-a-paz-aos-que-a-perderam/>