

The Eugen Biser Award was conferred on the essential contributors to that thought-provoking Open Letter "A Common Word Between Us and You" to the Christian Churches, dated October 13, 2007

H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammed bin Talal, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Shaykh Al-Habib Ali Zain Al-Abidin Al-Jifri, United Arab Emirates

Reisu-l-Ulema Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina

in recognition of their extraordinary contribution to Muslim-Christian dialogue and their consequent and blessed endeavours towards peace among the nations. The Council of the Foundation unanimously agreed to grant the Award on those here named. The foundation is conscious of the honour and recognition reflected on it by their willingness to re-ceive the Eugen Biser Award.

CEREMONY OF EUGEN BISER AWARD 2008

Munich, Germany

November 22nd, 2008, 11.00 -12.30th

„A Common Word Between Us and You“: theological motives and expectations

By Grand Mufti of Bosnia

Mustafa Cerić

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Eminences and Excellencies,
Bothers and Sisters,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to receive the 2008 Eugen Biser Award together with H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammed bin Talal and H.E. Shaykh Al-Habib Ali Zain Al-Abidin Al-Jifri.

The presence of His Royal Highness from Jordan and His Eminence from United Arab Emirates makes me feel the host not only on behalf of Muslims in Europe, but also on behalf of my fellow Europeans of this historical city of Munich and this remarkable country of Germany. The society that has been built here following the desasters of the last century, its social, political and cultural achievements, are exemplary. Let there be no doubt that we as Muslims, like anyone else here, are and must be committed to the values upon which this society is founded. Pluralism, equality, and democracy, freedom and human rights, the principles of the "Grundgesetz" are our common guidelines – not because we would conform ourselves to values that were not our own, but because we share these values from our very understanding of the teachings of Islam.

Open and sincere dialogue is a gift that we can and will all benefit from. Let us continue to expand and deepen it, in Europe and in the world, so that we build together, in mutual respect and at eye level, our common future in our common house. Let us not impose a dividing, disintegrating function upon Muslims in European societies. We can and we should be seen in a bridge building function! My common faith with my brothers of the East and my common clay with my brothers of the West make my love and respect for both them all the greater. And my feeling that the city of Munich may be compared with the city of Sarajevo makes me feel that there is a better future for Islam and Muslims in Europe.

It is in the city of Sarajevo that you see the striking proximity of the Ghazi Husrevbay Mosque with the Old Synagogue, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Cathedral (lined up one by one like a rosary or a *tasbīh*). Likewise, it is in Munich that you see the new Synagogue and Jewish Community Centre which was inaugurated in 2006, in the very centre of town. This is perceived as a wonderful addition to the cultural and social fabric of Munich. It is now to be hoped that Muslims in Munich will earn their visible place in society and in the city. The Muslim presence of more than 6% of the population of Munich makes an initiative like the "Munich Centre for Islam in Europe", (Zentrum für Islam in Europa-München, ZIEM) a very promising and highly recommendable step toward a common understanding between all factors in society.

Today, Sarajevo is seen by many in the dark light of the 4 years of siege; but in reality it stands for more than 5 centuries of multi-religious living together. Munich might have the potential for becoming, in the good sense, a "German or Bavarian Sarajevo".

Thus, it is not by chance that this ceremony is held in Munich and it is not by chance that the distinguished people of the East and the West meet here to send the message to the world that the Christian-Muslim Common Word is alive - indeed.

Therefore, praise be to God Almighty who has gathered us here in the spirit of the common word which is the common memory of our past, the common concern of our present and the common hope for our future that fear shall be replaced by our love of God and that hate shall be replaced by our love of neighbor.

It is a common sense of rational men that a peaceful Muslim-Christian relationship is an essential factor for peace and security in the world.

Furthermore, it is a common will of responsible people that there shall be a good will between Muslims and Christians wherever they are.

Indeed, it is a common Muslim-Christian belief that the argument of the Might of big nations shall be replaced by the argument of the Right of small nations; that the argument of revenge shall be replaced by the argument of Jesus' love and compassion; and that the argument of violence shall be replaced by Muhammad's fairness and mercy. "You shall be mercy to the whole world" - said Allah Almighty to His last Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Eminences and Excellencies,
Bothers and Sisters,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Council of the Foundation for honoring me and my people with this Prize.

My special thanks go to the Eugen Biser Foundation and to Professor Dr. Dr. Dr. Eugen Biser himself, an outstanding theologian and fellow combatant in the peaceful struggle for a better world.

Vielen Dank und Gottes Segen für Sie alle!

May God bless you all with this prayer that I would like to read today:

May Almighty God be with us every step that we take!

May God guide us with each decision we make!

May God help us when life gets tough!

May God give us patience when we had enough!

May God hear us when we call!

May God lift us when we cannot stand!

May we always be in God's loving hand! Amin.