

The speech by Mr. H. Bujar Spahiu,  
the leader of the Muslim Community of Albania<sup>1</sup>

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Religion and religious leaders have played a crucial role in society. Albanian Muslims among other religious leaders were the main actors in the formation of our national identity. In every important event like the League of Prizren, the Independence of Albania, and so on, they were the first supporters or in many cases the initiators of national awakening or state building movements.

Muslim Community of Albania (MCA) was founded by Renaissance and other elite people who signed the Declaration of Independence of Albania, and it was designed as a community which would represent the voice of Muslims in Albanian territories.

Since its foundation until today this institution has been promoting values of politeness, high morals, the pledge of honor, hospitality, generosity, harmony and peaceful coexistence among religions and ethnicities in the country.

The spirit of faith, teaches people to be more respectful with each other, to accept the differences and to collaborate with each other for the common causes of developing, emancipating, integrating and educating our society.

Muslim Community in its institutional activity has given an important role to the education. We strongly believe that educating the youth with scientific and religious knowledge will play a key role in stabilizing and developing our society. Having this in mind, MCA has founded education institutions (madrassa) in the main cities such as Tirana, Elbasan, Korça, Shkodër, Kavaja and Durres as well as the Bedër University, which was founded in 2011.

Today, the Muslim Community of Albania has an important institutional role in keeping peace and social stability, educating, and promoting interreligious relations among societies.

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<sup>1</sup> The original speech was held in Albanian. This is a translation by IDM.

The religious leaders in Albania are now proud of the legacy that we have inherited from our predecessors, and we feel responsible for preserving this legacy, by having determined commitment to pass it through generations.

The interactions of religious communities have always been based on values of peace, harmony, moral and love between people. For this reason, 11 year ago, all of us came together and founded the “Interreligious Council of Albania” through which we aim to promote our religious norms and values in building a more peaceful and just society and become a social, cultural and professional model for our people and to a wider extent. Moreover, we strongly believe that in cases of common concerns, the unified voice of religious communities is more powerful and relevant in solving problems related to individuals’ rights and other cases in Albania.

Muslim Community of Albania, beside the cooperation with the religious communities in the country, has a close collaboration with Islamic and other religious communities in the region and beyond. It is worth mentioning some of the concrete collaborations such as conferences, mutual publications, as well as different agreements among communities in promoting values and sharing experiences which not only strengthen our relations but also unify our commitment in preserving our common religious, moral and national values. Based on this, I know for sure that this collaboration will play an important part in the European integration of our region.

Even though MCA is still suffering from many problems inherited by the dark times of communism, such as the lack of our property restitution or its usurpation, we continue to insist on intensifying our cooperation not only with our institutions but beyond. We are conscious of our duties and responsibilities in the preservation of our religious, moral, and national values, as well as for the emancipation and integration of our nation.