

**SPEECH BY  
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II  
PLENARY SESSION  
71ST UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
20 SEPTEMBER 2016**

*In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate,  
Praise be to God,  
Prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Mohammad,*

Mr President,

Allow me to express today my highest regard for Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and tireless efforts to advance the cause of peace and global harmony. I have deeply appreciated our work together in these last ten years.

Mr Secretary General,

Your Excellencies,

As I stand here today, elections to Jordan's national parliament are coming to a conclusion. It is one more step on our country's positive, evolutionary path – a path to which we have insistently conformed, despite regional turbulence and a massive refugee burden. It represents an achievement that is largely credited to our citizens – especially our young people – who have stubbornly held on to Jordan's heritage of unity, strength, and forward-looking spirit in spite of the odds. And it is these very odds that make these elections a true triumph of progress over regression.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather here today, there are forces at play, in my region and beyond, whose sole purpose is to stack the odds against the core values that bind our common humanity. I, of course, refer to the network of extremist terrorists who have dominated headlines lately and seek global dominance as well. They want to wipe out our achievements and those of our ancestors; to erase human civilisation, and drag us back to the dark ages.

The question we must ask ourselves as we face this, the battle of our generation, is: what will our legacy be? Will we pass on to our children a world

dominated by dread and division? Where safety and security will be at the forefront of their minds as they board a plane, attend a concert or football match, or stroll through a mall? Most important, are we doing what must be done to confront and decisively defeat this evil force, so that our children can live in a world where fear and suspicion are replaced by human camaraderie and hope, where they can reach their fullest potential and add to the stockpile of human achievement accrued over the ages?

As much as I wish it were otherwise, sadly, the answer to that question is no. How can we be effective in this fight when we haven't clearly defined who the enemy is? Who are we fighting with and who are we fighting against?

I am struck, today, after several years facing the global war on terror, with the lack of understanding of the true nature of Islam that I find among many Western officials, think tanks, media leaders and policymakers. I find myself stating the obvious again and again: False perceptions of Islam and of Muslims will fuel the terrorists' agenda of a global struggle, by polarising and factionalising societies, East and West – each side stigmatising the other; each driven deeper into mistrust and intolerance.

Muslims – a quarter of the world's population; citizens of every country – have a central role in the future of our planet. Muslim men and women bring to the world a rich heritage of civic responsibility, justice, generosity, family life, and faith in God. When others exclude Muslims from fulfilling their role, by prejudice or ignorance of what Islam is – or on the other hand, when the outlaws of Islam, the khawarej, attempt to mislead some Muslims, by deforming our religion through false teaching – our societies' future is put at risk.

My friends,

When the outlaws of Islam, the khawarej, murder; when they plunder; when they exploit children and reject the equality of women before God – they abuse Islam.

When the khawarej persecute minorities; when they deny freedom of religion – they abuse Islam.

Islam teaches that all humanity is equal in dignity. There is no distinction among different nations or regions or races. The Qur'an forbids coercion in religion. Every citizen is guaranteed the state's protection for their lives, families, properties, honour, privacy, and freedom of religion and thought.

Muslims believe in the divine origin of the Bible and the Torah. God says in the Qur'an:

Say, 'We believe in God, and that which has been revealed to us, and that which has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes; and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no division between any of them; and to Him we submit'.

[*Aal Imran, 3:84-85*]

Indeed, in the Qur'an, the prophet mentioned most is Moses – named 136 times. Jesus, whom we call 'Christ Messiah', is named 25 times. His mother Mary, called the 'best of all women in creation', is named 35 times. And there is a chapter in the Qur'an called 'Maryam'.

The khawarej deliberately hide these truths about Islam in order to drive Muslims and non-Muslims apart. We cannot allow this to happen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Understanding that this is a battle we must fight together – all religions, and all of us who believe in the dignity, freedom and well-being that is the birthright of every individual – then we can turn toward our common enemy and examine through a clearer lens the unique nature of our foe.

Let me state clearly that these radical outlaw groups do not exist on the fringes of Islam, they are altogether *outside* of it. Thus we refer to them as khawarej, outlaws of Islam. They declare the entire civilised world as the enemy, and all people, military or civilian, as 'fair game'. They aim to incubate satellite "caliphates" in every country in the world in order to extend their reach. They also expand fast and wide through their mastery and exploitation of modern technology and social media.

To confront this non-traditional enemy we need non-traditional means – a new mindset, new partnerships, and reformed methodologies.

For Muslims, first and foremost, this is a fight for our future. All elements of our community have a role: not only mosques and religious centres, but media, schools, and community leaders. Let no one be misled. Traditional Sunni Islam and all of its schools of jurisprudence, decisively reject the ideas and claims of *takfiri* jihadists. Muslims need to help identify and counter the outlaws of Islam who pick and choose, cut and paste religious texts, to twist and distort true Islamic teaching.

The international community, also, faces a fight for the future. The war will not be fought on the battlefield alone. Our adversary has put the fight in every place where humans live and interact: airports, cafes, city streets. Security cooperation is imperative – but equally important is a holistic approach. We need to open up new channels between continents and nations; within countries; and among people.

This means reforming the way we communicate, share information, and use our technologies. The very same modern communication tools used against us must be employed for us, and we can do this while respecting the important issue of privacy. Creative innovators in the private sector, especially in the technology sector, are vital to the future and must be brought on board.

Ours is a global fight. The focus must not stop with the Middle East, but reach far beyond – in West and East Africa, in South East Asia, and the Balkans.

In Syria, a military approach will leave no winners, only losers on every side, and further civilian suffering. An end to violence ultimately demands a political process, one shepherded by a unified global vision and led by all components of the Syrian people.

In Iraq, international support remains critical as the government and people continue to uproot the khawarej. However, key to achieving and sustaining any success is an inclusive approach engaging all components of the country in the political process and in state institutions.

My friends,

As we pursue these goals, our international community must also take responsibility towards those whose lives have been crushed – millions of refugees, victims, and impoverished.

And we cannot decisively defeat the scourge of terror and violence without decisively rooting out the injustices that provide its fertile ground. From the prisons of Abu Ghraib, to the streets of Kabul and schools in Aleppo, injustice and humiliation have left tremendous human suffering in their wake.

No injustice has spread more bitter fruit than the denial of a Palestinian state. I say: Peace is a conscious decision. Israel has to embrace peace or eventually be engulfed in a sea of hatred in a region of turmoil.

Safeguarding Jerusalem is a key concern ... the Holy City; a strategic linchpin not only for my region but for the world.

This is a priority for me personally, and for all Muslims. We utterly reject attacks on Muslim and Christian Holy Sites ... and any attempts to alter the historic Muslim, Christian and Arab identity of the Holy City. As the Custodian of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, I will continue my efforts to protect these places, and stand up against all violations of their sanctity, including attempts for temporal and spatial division of Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif.

My friends,

Perhaps the central and most vital battleground for this defining war of our generation is the mind. The despicable, damaging ideology of hate, murder and self-destruction, spread in crash courses online and elsewhere, must be confronted with a counter-narrative of hope, tolerance and peace.

Together in this General Assembly and in our regions, countries and communities across the world, we have the power to create that counter-narrative. Let us show we also have the will to act.

Thank you.