

# **Bridges of Abrahamic Fraternity: Tolerance as a beacon of Humanity**

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## Introduction:

In a world that is increasingly complex and interconnected, tolerance among religions emerges as a fundamental pillar for peace and peaceful coexistence. From this perspective, the video you are about to view highlights the role of the Abrahamic Family House as a vivid and inspiring example in this context. By embodying coexistence and understanding among different religions, the Abrahamic Family House offers us a valuable moral in how to build bridges of communication and mutual respect.

The significance of this video lies in its ability to showcase the initiatives and activities of the Abrahamic Family House that work to enhance dialogue and tolerance between religions, thereby presenting a model to be emulated in embedding the values of peaceful coexistence. It invites us to reflect on the importance of mutual understanding and appreciation for religious and cultural diversity.

The objectives of the video extend beyond merely introducing the Abrahamic Family House, it aims to encourage audiences and readers to think about their personal role in supporting tolerance and coexistence among religions. Through this work, we hope to inspire individuals and communities to contribute to building a more understanding and tolerant world.

The manual guide of the video aims to deepen the viewer's understanding by providing additional information and resources for further research and enrichment.



**We invite you to join us on this exploratory journey to inspire and contribute to spreading the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.**

“A nation without a past is a nation without a present or a future. Thanks to God, our nation has a flourishing civilization, deep-rooted in this land for many centuries. These roots will always flourish and bloom in the glorious present of our nation in its anticipated future”.

**A famous quote by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may Allah rest his soul.**

## Chapter One: Introduction and Background

### **Definition of the Abrahamic Family House and its importance in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence**

The "Abrahamic Family House" in Abu Dhabi serves to emphasize the role of the United Arab Emirates throughout history in embracing religions within an environment of tolerance and mutual coexistence among humans. The "House" is considered a unique symbol representing harmonious coexistence and peace among followers of different religions and serves as an inspiring space for education and the acts of worship. It symbolizes the values of understanding and coexistence and embodies the cultural principles and commonalities of the three Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism). The Abrahamic Family House incorporates a mosque, a church, a synagogue, and an educational center.

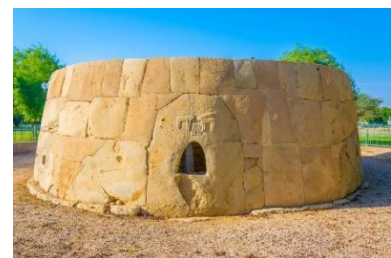
### **The Foundations of Human Fraternity in the United Arab Emirates:**

The principle of human fraternity among the races of humans in the United Arab Emirates emanates from the core values of its culture. The awareness of humanity, religious diversity and religious freedom are realistic facts and genuine experiences that extend more than 7,000 years in the historical heritage of the United Arab Emirates in general, and Abu Dhabi in particular. This is evident in Al Dhafra, Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, and its islands, due to the land's openness to religious, civilizational, and cultural richness and knowledge that the region has experienced since ancient times. The foundations of human fraternity in the UAE stems from the shared belief that all humanity is one family, and that humans are entrusted with the care and safety of the universe until God inherits the earth and all upon it. This is evidenced by the human and religious artifacts discovered on the islands of "Umm al-Nar," "Bani Yas," and "Marawah," and in the "Jebel Hafeet" tombs, the "Hili" civilization, and other sites that clearly demonstrate the authenticity of coexistence and brotherhood among all people in the Emirati society.

On the same context, the earliest recorded appearance of humans in the Emirates dates back to 5500 BCE, or 7500 years ago, although recent evidence suggests that the country's first human inhabitants were present much earlier, during the Paleolithic era, as indicated by the existence of ancient civilizational markers, human artifacts, and fossil sites in "Sir Bani Yas," Jebel "Al-Mumayaz," "Baynunah," "Bida al-Ghanniyah," "Al-Shahriyah," and "Hili."<sup>1</sup> The diverse archaeological discoveries at many sites revealed ancient civilizations that thrived in the region for a long time, including constructed places of worship and sacred

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi, Part One: Culture, Archaeological Sites Axis, Annual Report 2017 (pp. 25-37)



sites that cater to the spiritual side, belonging to pre-Islamic religions, especially Christianity<sup>2</sup>; affirming that the early Emirati were striving towards one goal. The tranquility and peace people seek in their temples, shrines, and monasteries are not confined to one place. The correct teachings of religions call for adherence to the values of peace, promoting mutual acquaintance and human fraternity.

The historical legacy of the land and people of the Emirates in the realm of belief in religious diversity and human unity is inseparably linked to its principles of Islam. Its view of humanity, and the consideration of all people as brothers and peers in creation and humanity, has contributed to enriching the Emirati societal culture through cultural communication with the people of the world since the dawn of time. Maritime trade and trade caravans that traversed the world east and west; emphasized that the relations between different religions are based on coexistence and mutual respect, according to the verse from the Holy Quran (**There is no compulsion in religion...**)<sup>3</sup> and within the scope: (**To you, is your religion, and to me is my religion**)<sup>4</sup>, and on this basis, a dignified life for all of humanity is built, and common gains in society are realized.

Various experts and academics affirm the role of Human Fraternity document<sup>5</sup> in enhancing the values of coexistence and dialogue, allowing the world to enjoy security and stability away from extremist ideas and hatred. This reflects what the UAE is experiencing today in terms of unity and human brotherhood as the best practice, representing an extension of a past embodied by the state through its laws, morals, customs, traditions, arts, projects, and pioneering initiatives that have played a pivotal role in positively influencing the level of religious diversity in society.<sup>6</sup>

### **Places of Worship of the Abrahamic Faiths in the United Arab Emirates as a Prime Example of Interfaith Dialogue**

Places of worship hold a central function in the lives of individuals and communities, providing a conducive space for spiritual elevation, moral refinement, and promoting the impulse to do good indiscriminately among humans. The United Arab Emirates, especially Abu Dhabi, has many Abrahamic faith places of worship.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Abu Tur, A call to Love, publisher (E-Kutub), Britain, London, 1st edition, April 2017, page: 125.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Baqarah chapter, verse 256

<sup>4</sup> Al-Kafiroun chapter, verse 6

<sup>5</sup> The Human Fraternity Document for Global Peace and Coexistence was issued on February 4, 2019, by the World Conference of Human Fraternity organized by the Muslim Council of Elders. It was signed by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the Pope of the Catholic Church. The document emphasizes in its provisions the promotion of human relations and the establishment of new foundations among people of different religions and beliefs.

<sup>6</sup> Al Nahyan, Shama bint Mohammed, Cultural Development and National Identity, A Field Study on the Citizens of the United Arab Emirates, 2013, Dar Al Ain Publishing - United Arab Emirates, Pages: 26-27.



Researchers specialized in the history of Abu Dhabi and the Trucial Coast agree that the presence of Abrahamic and other religions in the region extends throughout history. A prominent testament to this is the presence of Christianity in the region, dating back to the first century AD, when Christians, fleeing Byzantine persecution, flocked to the area, and settled there; they continued to arrive until Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the third century. Christianity in the Emirates is an extension of Christianity in "Oman," where Nestorian churches were established, and the bishops in "Sohar" and "Muscat" were concerned with Christians along the entire coast.

Among the Abrahamic places of worship in the United Arab Emirates is the "Bani Yas Church<sup>7</sup>," built in the early 1990s on the eastern side of Sir Bani Yas Island, where its site includes a church, a monastery, and a series of courtyard houses, making these buildings the oldest known evidence of Christianity in the UAE, dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries. Additionally, the artifacts found on "Marawah Island" also indicate the presence of Christianity of the Nestorian denomination in Abu Dhabi nearly a thousand years ago. The building was identified as a church through the presence of crosses and the architectural layout of the site, which resembles ancient churches known in other places in the Arabian Gulf. The senior Anglican priest, "Andy Thompson," believes that "St. Andrew's Evangelical Church"<sup>8</sup> in Abu Dhabi dates to the 4th or 5th century. Churches in Abu Dhabi vary to include all Christian denominations, distributed across different areas of the Emirate, among the most famous of which is "St. Joseph's Catholic Church."<sup>9</sup>

### **The Importance of the Abrahamic Family House in Establishing the Values of Tolerance and Human Fraternity:**

The Abrahamic Family House, with its leadership and uniqueness as the first edifice of its kind that brings together the three Abrahamic religions under one roof, forms for the first time a shared community where practices of dialogue and idea exchange among the followers of the Abrahamic faiths are enhanced. This aims to bolster the values of coexistence and acceptance among different beliefs, nationalities, and cultures, thus ensuring security, peace, and stability worldwide.



<sup>7</sup> After being hidden for centuries, the discovery of the church and monastery in the early 1990s on Sir Bani Yas Island provided the first known evidence of Christianity in the region. With the opening of the church to the public, this place is considered the most important archaeological Christian site in the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>8</sup> St. Andrew's Church is a Catholic church in Abu Dhabi, known for its diversity as it attracts a large number of different nationalities in the emirate. In 2018, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary, which made it one of the oldest and most famous churches in the capital. The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, granted the land on which St. Andrew's Church was built, which spans an area of one and a half hectares.

<sup>9</sup> St. Joseph's Church in Abu Dhabi is considered one of the most important and largest churches in Abu Dhabi. It is also the first church to be welcomed in the Emirates, as it was built in 1962 and opened in 1965 before being relocated to its current location in 1981. This church underwent renovation in 2013, with the construction of new halls, offices, and classrooms for religious lessons, as well as rooms for the priests and staff. Masses are held in several languages inside the church, such as Tamil and French. Pope Francis visited the church in 2019.



The foundation from which the Abrahamic Family House initiative launches emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and valuing our shared humanity and activating its role. All members of the Abrahamic family share a common values, virtue, and ethical foundations that pave the way for peace and coexistence among different people. The universal values shared and cared for by the Abrahamic family, unaffected by changes in time, place, or human inclinations, are the innate natural rights that every human inherits by virtue of their existence, "rights of divine origin granted to both believers and non-believers," according to the first chapter of the New Pact of Virtue signed in Abu Dhabi in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

**The importance of the Abrahamic Family House initiative includes:**

1. Enhancing the values and principles of dialogue and understanding among religions and spreading the culture of tolerance, embracing others, and coexistence, which contributes to addressing many of the social and political problems affecting the future of humanity.
2. Utilizing common space of meeting and sharing among the followers of the Abrahamic family to establish shared spiritual, human, and social values, and to spread the ethics and virtues that the Abrahamic message promotes.
3. Deepening the foundations of dialogue among people and avoiding futile disputes, reflecting compliance with the teachings of the Abrahamic religions, which emphasize the importance of empowering these values for their significant role in preserving humanity and cultivating the Earth.
4. Enabling the protection of human freedoms and rights: in belief, thought, expression, and practice, based on the reality of diversity and difference in religion, color, gender, race, and language, which represents the wisdom of the Creator's will upon which humanity is shaped, making it a fixed principle from which the rights of freedom of belief and freedom of difference branch out.<sup>11</sup>



## Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundation, Global and Local Indicators

Studies dedicated to understanding the level of religious tolerance in the UAE are generally scarce. However, global studies on social and religious conditions of countries around the world may briefly touch upon religious tolerance in the United Arab Emirates and other countries in the region. It was very clear that most global studies concerned with religious tolerance pointed to the higher levels of religious tolerance in the United Arab Emirates. The UAE's noticeable progress in promoting tolerance and religious freedoms is evident through advanced rankings in the "Pew," "Social Progress Imperative," and "Legatum Prosperity index", in addition to positive changes in Gulf societies towards tolerance and coexistence. The report highlights the efforts made to achieve continuous

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<sup>10</sup> The New Charter: Signed by a number of leaders and religious leaders, on the sidelines of the Muslim Society Peace Forum, in its sixth session held in Abu Dhabi in 2019, the charter received great welcome from more than a thousand personalities from officials and representatives of the Abrahamic family religions, as well as intellectuals and media figures.

<sup>11</sup> Higher Committee of Human Fraternity.

progress in the field of religious tolerance, emphasizing the importance of having accurate indicators reflecting the actual situation of tolerance in the Emirati society.

**Based on research into global indices, we briefly review the UAE's ranking in each index and what that reflects.**



1. The PEW Index on restrictions and religious extremism one of the important indicators that deal with the global religious situation. In a study published by the Pew **Research** Center in 2015<sup>12</sup> to measure governmental and societal restrictions on religious freedoms globally, the United Arab Emirates recorded significant progress between 2012 and 2013.<sup>13</sup> The study shows in its aspect related to societal restrictions on religious freedoms (SHI - Social Hostility Index), the UAE society scored 1.50 out of 10 points, where a score of 0.00 represents the highest degrees of tolerance and acceptance of other religions, and the number ten (10.00) represents the highest level of strictness and hostility against other religions. Thus, the UAE advanced 0.2 points from its 2012 score, ranking the country among the moderate in terms of religious matters.



2. The Social Progress Imperative (SPI) Index for 2024 is a distinguished measure focusing on the social status independently from the growth of the GDP of the evaluated countries, making it different from many other studies. This index is built on three main pillars: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity, with the UAE achieving a score of 72.92 in 2024<sup>14</sup>. The country shows notable progress in providing social and environmental services, making it the most advanced among Arab and African countries. This evaluation indicates the significant efforts made by the country in community development and improving the quality of life for its residents.



3. The Legatum Prosperity Index for 2023 relies on eight sub-indices, which crystallize into the main index. The sub-indices are Economy, Business, Environment, Governance, Education, Health, and Personal Freedom. The Personal Freedom Index includes two fundamental factors: personal human freedoms in choice, and government support for the principle of tolerance and acceptance of the other. According to this index's evaluation for 2023, the United Arab Emirates ranked 44th out of 167 countries included in the study<sup>15</sup>.



4. Gallup's study titled "Progress and Tradition in the GCC States-2011" <sup>16</sup>explored economic conditions, education status, social values, and other characteristics of the region's peoples. One of the study's most important aspects was tolerance and coexistence

<sup>12</sup> A study entitled Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities 2015", PEW Research center.

<sup>13</sup> Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities, PEW Research center 2015, P12

<sup>14</sup> The report on the United Arab Emirates is available at the following link [2024 Social Progress Index | Social Progress Imperative](#)

<sup>15</sup> The 2023 Legatum Prosperity index available on <https://www.prosperity.com/globe/ united-arab-emirates>

<sup>16</sup> Study entitled Progress and Tradition in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries - Exploring Individual Roots and Challenges in a Rapidly Changing Region - May 2011, Gallup Center - Abu Dhabi.

between cultures and religions in the Arab Gulf states, focusing on the extent of Gulf societies' acceptance of coexistence between them and followers of other religions. The UAE ranked second among the Gulf societies in accepting the presence of foreigners from different religions in their local community, with an acceptance rate of 36%. Bahrain topped the list with 39%, followed by Kuwait with 31%, Qatar with 26%, and finally, Saudi Arabia with 16%. The study also showed that 96% of expatriates felt mutual respect during their life and work in the UAE, confirming the high acceptance and tolerance in Emirati society.

5. The ACN organization's study titled "Religious Freedom in The World - report 2021" refers to the progress made by the United Arab Emirates in the field of religious freedoms for minorities residing in its territory. The organization categorized countries into four groups: religiously strict countries, moderate countries, countries of concern, and countries low in strictness. The UAE was classified among the moderate countries. The ACN report indicates that the UAE has made positive progress in the level of religious freedoms.<sup>17</sup>

6. The Global Peace Index (GPI) cares about the internal and external policies of countries, which in turn affect the general level of security enjoyed by society members. In 2023, the UAE was ranked among the top 50 safest countries worldwide, achieving a score of 1.979 out of 5, reflecting a high level of safety and stability. This ranking indicates the UAE's esteemed level in religious tolerance and social and political security on both a global and local scale.<sup>18</sup>

**The advanced ranking of the UAE in global religious tolerance indices highlights its significance as a model of interfaith tolerance for the following reasons:**

1. This advanced ranking reflects the wise policies of the UAE's leadership in promoting tolerance values and rejecting extremism.
2. It demonstrates that the UAE is a safe, stable, and attractive environment for residents of all religions and cultures, contributing to its demographic diversity and progress.
3. It confirms that the country's policies and legislations ensure religious freedoms for all, in line with international human rights charters.
4. It presents the UAE as a leading regional and global hub that combines authentic Islamic identity with an open and diverse embracing society.
5. This contributes to spreading the reputation, culture, and civilizational role of the UAE as a haven for peaceful coexistence among different people and cultures.

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<sup>17</sup> Religious Freedom in the world Report by ACN International,2021 published on <http://www.religion-freedom-report.org>.

<sup>18</sup> Global Peace Index Report 2023 by Institute for Economics and peace,,p16



## Chapter Three: Implementation and Activities

### **Detailed Description of the Video Production Plan:**

#### **Preparation and Coordination Process:**

- The Teams first meeting was a brainstorming session to select the appropriate idea for the video production, unanimously agreeing on creating a video reflecting the local and global role played by the United Arab Emirates in enhancing tolerance, and global coexistence for which the team chose to highlight the Abrahamic Family House for its role in demonstrating this mission and its reflection in showcasing religious tolerance, human coexistence, acceptance of cultural diversity, and dialogue with others.
- The team's second meeting focused on choosing the filming location and developing a shooting plan, featuring scenes, interviews, and tours reflecting the topic's objective. Key scenes included filming the Abrahamic Family House in all its exterior and interior details, to **highlight the places of worship for the three Abrahamic religions:** (Saint Francis Church, Maimonides Synagogue and Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb Mosque).
- The third meeting was held to develop an execution plan and task distribution for video shooting.
- The fourth meeting was convened to present the overall idea and execution plan to the project supervisors for review, comments, and approval.
- The team requested the Corporate Communication Office to provide the necessary facilities and permits for filming at the Abrahamic Family House and coordinating with the Student Council to invite students to participate in the video shooting.
- Filming dates were determined based on the available permits from the management of the Abrahamic Family House.
- Interview questions were prepared and approved by the supervisors.
- Seven students were chosen for the interview after taking their consent.

#### **Execution and Filming Process:**

- The team filmed the video scenes at the Abrahamic Family House and took photographic shots for writing the report.
- The team, along with supervisors and participating students, underwent interviews and guided tours in the Abrahamic Family House for filming.

#### **Production and Approval Process:**

- The team convened to begin the editing process based on the scenes and interviews filmed previously.
- The team presented the video to the supervisors and staffs from the Corporate Communication Office, to ensure the video aligns with the university's corporate identity, and to gather improvement feedback for the video production.
- The final version was submitted to the supervisors and the Corporate Communication Office for approval and presentation.

"We will continue raising the banner of human fraternity, and we pledge to continue supporting efforts aimed at making the region and the world a safer and more tolerant place".

**His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai**

### **Summary of Key Points and Messages Presented in the Video:**

- The documentary idea for the Abrahamic Family House, aimed at highlighting ideological diversity and the common humanity to achieve a civil human dialogue that enhances global tolerance values and sustainable human coexistence.
- The video focused on shooting the three Abrahamic religions' places of worship from inside and outside, showcasing the architectural beauty and reflecting the religious heritage of each faith.
- Filming the arcade of the Abrahamic Family House and its aesthetic values, reflecting the harmony of religions despite their differences.
- The video emphasized cultural diversity by shooting the Abrahamic House visitors and worshippers practicing their religious rituals.
- Interviews focused on selecting students from various nationalities who were taken on a guided tour around the Abrahamic Family House in advance.
- The video shooting took place on Friday, and the team recorded the Muslim Friday prayer rituals at the Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb Mosque. It is worth mentioning that the team was unable to film the religious rituals at the synagogue and the church to respect their privacy since they expressed their refusal and apology to the team.

## **Chapter Four: Expected Impact and Outcomes**

### **Evaluating How the Project Can Enhance Awareness of the Importance of Tolerance and Fraternity Among Different Religions:**

The "Abrahamic Family House" project represents a fundamental pillar for enhancing awareness of the importance of tolerance and fraternity among different religions. By presenting it as a platform that brings together the three Abrahamic religions under one roof, the Abrahamic Family House demonstrates leadership and uniqueness in establishing the values of human fraternity and promoting the values of coexistence and acceptance among different beliefs, nationalities, and cultures. This harmonious gathering embodies the principles of coexistence and ensures security, peace, and stability worldwide. It also constitutes enabling the protection of human rights and freedoms, based on the reality of diversity and difference in religion, color, gender, race, and language.

### **Challenges that hinder Religious Tolerance and How the Abrahamic Family House Addresses Them:**

The Abrahamic Family House represents a unique model for promoting the values of dialogue and understanding among religions, confronting the social and political challenges that hinder tolerance. It deepens the foundations of dialogue, avoiding unnecessary disputes, and showing compliance with the teachings of the Abrahamic religions that emphasize the importance of empowering these values to preserve humanity and cultivate the Earth.

### **Guidelines for the Public on How to Contribute to Enhancing Tolerance Among Religions:**

To enhance tolerance among religions, the public can engage in initiatives and activities that promote dialogue and mutual understanding, such as participating in meetings and workshops held under the auspices of the Abrahamic Family House and other platforms aimed at enhancing human brotherhood. Embracing and spreading universal human values and cultural commonalities among the Abrahamic religions and contributing to the culture of understanding and coexistence through education, culture, and arts, affirming the fundamental role of correct religious teachings in renewing the great universal values in the hearts.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Summary of the Video and Guide's Core Message:**

The core message of the video highpoints the significant role played by the "Abrahamic Family House" in enhancing human fraternity and the values of tolerance and coexistence among different religions. This project embodies the United Arab Emirates' commitment to constructive dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures and religions, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing our shared humanity. The Abrahamic Family House demonstrates that differences in religion and culture should not cause division but can be the basis for mutual understanding and cooperation.

### **Recommendations to Enhance Coexistence and Tolerance in the Future:**

1. Enhancing Dialogue and Understanding Among Religions by encouraging more initiatives like the "Abrahamic Family House" that provide platforms for dialogue and understanding among different religions and cultures.
2. Focusing on Education and Awareness by incorporating the values of human fraternity and tolerance into educational curricula and community awareness programs to build a sentient and tolerant generation.
3. Supporting Cultural and Artistic Initiatives by encouraging cultural projects that reflect religious diversity and promote mutual understanding and respect among religions.
4. Boosting International Cooperation by enhancing cooperation between countries and international organizations in the field of religious tolerance and human rights protection, focusing on exchanging experiences and best practices.
5. Highlighting the Role of Places of Worship as Examples of Human Fraternity by taking the Abrahamic places of worship in the UAE as an example of coexistence and tolerance and encourage the construction and support of such places in other communities.

**By adopting these recommendations, communities can enhance tolerance and peaceful coexistence, building bridges of understanding and brotherhood among different religions and cultures for a more peaceful and fraternal future.**

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