



ISLAM & PEACE International CONFERENCE

CALL FOR PAPERS

Islam and World Peace:

*Perspectives from
African Muslim Nonviolence Traditions*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

11-13 September 2015

www.islampeaceconference.com

INSTITUTE OF
**AFRICAN
STUDIES**
Columbia University

Majalis

IRCPL
Institute for religion, culture, & public life

Nowadays Islam is clearly a growing source of suspicion and hostility in many societies. This situation is partly due to the numerous clichés and misunderstandings of the teachings of the faith in the media, and partly due to the various acts of terrorists who use the name of Islam in order to justify their ideology of violence and intolerance. Very often the media's problematic treatment of Islam in its global and political contexts at large and of the concept of "Jihad" in particular, does not address the pervasive misunderstanding of the faith, nor does it do justice to its fundamental teachings of peace, tolerance, and forgiveness. In order to shed light on the central social and spiritual teachings of Islam and to emphasize the dominant understanding of the meaning of Jihad as *self-improvement*, it is pivotal to examine the legacies of Muslim leaders around the world who have promoted enduring traditions of nonviolence, tolerance, diversity, and respect of all cultures and religions.

The conference seeks papers from scholars who study the teachings of Sufi leaders whose lifelong practices offer important lessons of nonviolence as both means of political and cultural resistance and as means of personal and collective social advancement. There are important African Muslim leaders who championed the philosophy of nonviolence prior to widely known icons such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. These leaders include Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927) of Senegal, West Africa, who emphasized in his writings that his mode of Jihad is centered on "knowledge and worship," and that he "forgave all his enemies" who subjected him to unjust suffering for over three decades. This is a perspective that contrasts drastically with the militant and violent interpretation of Jihad espoused nowadays by groups such as Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, ISIS, and others. Such kinds of nonviolent perspectives on Jihad championed by some Muslim leaders could help lay the foundations for peace and tolerance in our world today which is marked by deadly conflicts, injustice, and endless cycles of violence and retaliation in the name of religion.

In view of the growing violent extremism and the stigmatizations of millions of innocent Muslims, the need to understand and learn from the legacies and teachings of nonviolent Muslim leaders is urgent today, more than ever before. Thus, this conference invites students of religion and Islam around the world to engage in substantive ways the genesis, diffusion, and teachings of Islamic nonviolence traditions of Sufi leaders and their interpretation and operationalization of the concept of Jihad that unequivocally rejects extremism and intolerance in all their forms. The conference seeks to create a dynamic space for continuing scholarly exchanges and interactive debates, along with creative processes that foster multiculturalism. Therefore the conference will be open to the general public, the media, and community-based organizations. We hope that it will generate peer-reviewed scholarly papers to be published in edited volumes exclusively focused on *Muslim Nonviolence Traditions*. We envision these books to feature diverse Islamic nonviolent movements in order to lay the foundation for enduring mutual understanding,

peace, and tolerance among all the children of Adam, regardless of their geographical location or religious persuasion.

Proposed panels:

We seek papers that fall within the seven panels below. Presenters will be given 15-20 minutes to present their work.

1. Islam, Modernity and Globalization
2. Islam, Tolerance, Pluralism and Diversity
3. Jihad and Nonviolence
4. Lessons from African Muslim Leaders
5. Sufism, Political Stability and World Peace
6. Education, Justice and Radicalism
7. Conflict Resolution and Peace Rebuilding in the World

Abstract submissions and deadline:

We ask prospective presenters to submit (1) the title of their proposed paper along with 200-word abstract in English, (2) their name, e-mail address, and institutional affiliation, and (3) a 100-word bio addressing their central research interests and ongoing projects to **info@islampeaceconference.com** no later than **May 31, 2015**. Letters of acceptance will be issued in **July 2015**. Participants are asked to send their final papers by **August 1, 2015**. The conference program will be published online, and hardcopies will be made available to participants when the review of the abstracts is completed.

ORGANIZERS:

MAJALIS (African Muslim Heritage) - majalis@majalis.org

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