



Faith Leaders Agree to Forge a Multi-Religious Path Towards Middle East Peace



NAZARETH, Israel and JAKARTA, Indonesia — On April 16, 2026, hours before a temporary ceasefire was declared in Lebanon, leaders of the world's largest Muslim organization and the largest international network of evangelical Christians met to discuss conflicts roiling the Middle East and their global impact.



In the course of an 80-minute video conference, Nahdlatul Ulama Chairman KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf and Reverend Botrus Mansour, Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance

(photo above), agreed to pursue specific lines of cooperation to address a variety of urgent challenges facing their religious communities and the world at large.

Reverend Mansour, an Arab Christian citizen of Israel born in Nazareth, was appointed Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance in October 2025. His organization represents 650 million evangelical Protestants worldwide. Through the Humanitarian Islam/WEA Joint Working Group, established in 2020, Nahdlatul Ulama and the World Evangelical Alliance have pursued a number of successful initiatives in regions as diverse as Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, North America, and Asia.

Also joining the conversation were C. Holland Taylor (H. Muhammad Kholil) and Reverend Thomas K. Johnson, who co-chair the Humanitarian Islam/WEA Joint Working Group. Mr. Taylor is CEO of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values and serves as Special Advisor for International Affairs to Mr. Staquf, while Reverend Johnson is the WEA's Special Envoy to the Vatican and for Engaging Humanitarian Islam.

During a warm, wide-ranging conversation, Mr. Staquf and Reverend Mansour shared their heartfelt concern about the complex and often problematic interplay of religion, nationalism, and war, as well as their concern for the future of their religious communities and for humanity at large. Both men are deeply rooted in their respective faiths and enjoy the trust of an enormous number of religious followers.

They agreed that one of the pressing needs of our time is for the emergence of new lines of cooperation among religious leaders and their communities, in order to foster mutual understanding and peace in a rapidly changing global environment. Mr. Staquf described NU efforts to forge a binding consensus among the world's diverse faith communities and nations, to ensure mutual security and facilitate the recontextualization of obsolete and problematic tenets of religious orthodoxy often used to legitimize conflict.

The WEA Secretary General expressed his profound concern and sorrow with the accelerating decline of the Middle East's indigenous Christian population, including the migration abroad of many Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Galilee.

Reverend Mansour shared his story of growing up in a multi-denominational Christian family and coming to personal faith as a teenager. His father was the first Palestinian to work as a journalist with an Israeli newspaper, beginning in 1954. The Secretary General spoke movingly about having Muslim and Jewish friends and neighbors as a child and living closely among them.

Mr. Staquf described how for generations Nahdlatul Ulama has deliberately cultivated a harmonious and constructive relationship with Protestant communities in Indonesia, where Christians and other religious minorities enjoy the constitutional right to equal citizenship and freedom of religion.

Christians living in the West might be surprised to learn that Muslims generally regard Jesus and his mother with great reverence, because the Qur'an portrays Jesus as a prophet born of the Virgin Mary.

Mr. Staquf and Reverend Mansour concluded their conversation with a firm agreement to deepen and expand existing lines of cooperation between Nahdlatul Ulama and the World

Evangelical Alliance, through the Humanitarian Islam/WEA Joint Working Group and the G20 Religion Forum (R20).

Major joint initiatives include the upcoming R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities (ISORA), which will convene in Washington, D.C. in the Fall of 2026 and *The Road Not Yet Taken Initiative: A Multi-Religious Path Towards Middle East Peace*. The latter effort mobilizes religious leaders and their communities to foster compassion, reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace — rather than hatred, violence, and revenge — in the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

###