

16 March 2019

To my Muslim sisters and brothers in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and around the world,

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته - *as-salām<sup>u</sup> alay-kum w<sup>a</sup> rahmat<sup>u</sup>-llāh<sup>i</sup> w<sup>a</sup> barakāt<sup>u</sup>-h<sup>u</sup>*

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

I am shocked and appalled at yesterday's terrorist attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, where 49 worshippers performing Friday prayers were callously murdered, many more injured, and the survivors, respondents, and indeed the entire nation and peoples around the world were traumatised. I stand in solidarity with you in your horror, grief and distress. I offer my prayers for the victims and extend my condolences to their families. I send my thoughts and my prayers to the injured and to all the individuals and communities who have been affected by this senseless violence.

I condemn Islamophobic, racist and extremist violence in all its forms. It is an offence to God, to believers of all faiths, to all people of good will, and to our common humanity. I condemn also those who spread mis-information, suspicion and fear for their own purposes and create the toxic climate in which extremist violence takes root.

To Muslims I say, you are not "invaders" or "aliens". You are not "other". You are my sister and brother. You are family. You are citizens. You belong. You are an integral part of the fabric of our multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious societies. We are one. The trauma you are now experiencing is not just 'yours' alone. It is "ours", as it affects all of us together.

I join with Pope Francis who was "deeply saddened by such senseless acts of violence and assured all New Zealanders, and in particular the Muslim community, of his heartfelt solidarity."

I join with the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand who wrote to the nation's Muslim community, "We hold you in prayer .... we wish you to be aware of our solidarity with you in the face of such violence".

The Columban interfaith plan of action states, "we commit ourselves to work with people of other faiths and none to build up a fairer, better and peaceful world."

May Muslims and Christians everywhere respond to the joint invitation by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, to "all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity, to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters." ([Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together](#), Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019).

In these troubled times, when evil forces seek to divide us on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity or religion, may Muslims, Christians, people of all faiths, and all people of good will remain united in heart and mind and resolve. May faith bind us in human solidarity, hope drive out fear, and love overcome hatred.

السلام عليكم - *as-salām<sup>u</sup> alay-kum* - *Pax vobiscum* - *Peace be with you.*

*Patrick McNerney*

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