

Dr. Mohammed Dajani

[“**Moderation in all things.**” Cleobulus, Greek philosopher, 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC]

## **Wasatia**

The flames of religious radicalism continue to be fanned across much of the Moslem world in general, and the Palestinian Territories in particular. In Palestine, Islam as a religion remains a focal point in the lives of the Palestinians and in molding and shaping the content and vision of Palestinian society. However, one of the consequences of the Israeli continued occupation of Palestinian territories has resulted in radicalization of society. Palestinian youth are growing up believing that Palestinian Moslems, Christians and Jews are not meant to coexist, let alone thrive together. This trend contradicts with the Islamic concept of *wasatia*, which embodies centrism, moderation, justice, balance, and fairness. *Wasatia* comes from the Arabic word "*wasat*" which means "middle of the road" or "center of the circle" – a balance of extremes between rich and poor, high and low, empty and full, courage and cowardice. Its English equivalent is moderation, its use in the **Qur'an** is justice and goodness. The concept of al-*wasatia* emphasizes avoidance of extremes, the rejection of radicalism.

Islam calls on Muslims to be moderates and to take mid-ground in compliance with the verse in Baqarah Surah in the Holy Quran: “And so we have created you a midground nation.” (Verse number 143 which falls midst of the surah which contains 286 verses. The concept of *wasatia* is also reflected in other verses such as: “Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either earn reproach or be reduced to penury;” also in the Holy Quran’s description of a group of radicals: “Do not squander your substance wastefully, for the wasteful are Satan’s brothers.”

*Wasatia* reflects more the peaceful message of Islam. The gap is and has always been very wide between the song and the singer; Islam being a religious ideology that in dealing with faith, calls for peace, free choice, dialogue and coexistence as reflected in the following surahs:

- “Had your Lord pleased, He would have united all mankind. But only those whom He has shown mercy will cease to differ. For this end He has created them.” [Surah Houd verse 118].
- “Had your Lord pleased, all the people of the earth would have believed in Him. Would you then force faith upon men?” [Jonah Surah 99]
- “There shall be no compulsion in religion.” [The Cow Surah 256]
- “Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation. Reason with them in the most courteous exhortation.” [The Bee Surah 125]

The Holy Quran also confirms religious freedom in a number of suras such as:

- “Say: This is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will, believe in it, and him who will, deny it.” [The Cave Surah, verse 29]
- “You have your own religion, and I have mine.” [The Unbelievers Surah, verse 6]
- “Among His other signs are the creation of heaven and earth and the diversity of your tongues and colors. Surely there are signs in this for all mankind.” [The Greeks Surah, verse 22]

Mohammed Dajani, Director of American Studies Center at [Al Quds University](#), founded a new movement in Palestine – [Wasatia](#) – based on this concept of moderation. His vision is a mix of secular with religion, one which speaks to the issues of co-existence, tolerance, and individual rights from within the Islamic tradition

Dajani’s goal is to popularize the unpopular- moderation and peaceful co-existence and to get Palestinians become more acquainted with Wasatia and its vision. The focus of the movement is on 5 sectors in Palestinian society:

- Religious leaders
- Prisoners and ex-prisoners
- Women
- Youth
- University and high school students and teachers

Dajani wants interfaith dialogue focused exclusively on the concept of moderation in the three religions. He believes it is time for the concept of Wasatia to be recognized as part of the dialogue between our cultures as well.

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