

(as prepared for delivery)

**Statement of Madeleine K. Albright
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington D.C.
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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee. I am pleased to be here along with my colleague, Admiral Fallon, to address the question of “Engaging with Muslim Communities around the World.”

I recently participated in a study on this subject which recommended the following:

- Vigorous use of diplomacy to resolve conflicts.
- Support for improved governance in Muslim-majority states.
- Efforts to enlarge economic opportunity.
- And steps, based on dialogue, to enhance mutual understanding.

Each of these approaches has value, and each should be explored during our session today, but I would like to use my time at the outset to make some additional observations.

First, as the subject of this hearing reflects, there are numerous Muslim communities around the world, including the United States. These communities are diverse and cannot be portrayed accurately with a broad brush.

Second, successful engagement between any two groups involves certain rules. Each side has a duty to scrutinize its own actions, state clearly its expectations of the other, and listen with an open mind to opposing views. These principles are easier to recite than to fulfill, which is why disputes so often arise around the question of double standards. For example, the United States is frequently accused of applying one set of standards to its own actions and another to that of Arabs and Iran. For our part, we fault Arab states for rationalizing violence, suppressing political rights, perpetuating harmful myths, and refusing to accept responsibility for bad decisions.

As a result, instead of dialogue, we tend to have opposing monologues. This creates a climate in which advocates of compromise are routinely accused of betrayal. The way out is through leaders brave enough to admit that each side has faults and smart enough to translate shared frustration into a motive for common action. Such leaders do not arise often, but they are needed now.

Third, the West’s interest in Muslim communities spiked after 9/11. That is understandable but awkward. A dialogue driven by such a traumatic event is sure to

evoke accusations on one side and defensiveness on the other. This means that if we are serious, we should separate our engagement as much as possible from the context of terrorism. The West has many more reasons than al Qaeda to improve relations with the Muslim world.

My fourth point is related. Western media are full of references to Islamic terrorism. But what does that mean? We do not portray the Oklahoma City bombing as Christian terrorism, even though Timothy MacVeigh thought of himself as a Christian. MacVeigh was guilty of mass murder – and there was nothing Christian about it. The same principle applies with Islam. When Muslims commit terrorist acts, they are not practicing their faith; they are betraying it.

Fifth, as any experienced diplomat can testify, engagement comes in many flavors, from tea to vitriol. Often, the stronger the brew, the more useful the encounter. Thus, American policy should be to talk to anyone if, by so doing, we can advance our interests.

An example of the kind of hard-headed engagement I have in mind is that between the U.S. military and Iraq's Anbar Awakening—which turned former enemies into tactical allies. As this precedent suggests, conversation is not the same as negotiation, and smart engagement is not appeasement. Looking ahead, our secretary of state and our special envoys should have all the flexibility they require.

Sixth, we need to repair our relationship with Pakistan. The world looks different from Islamabad than it does from Washington, and we cannot expect Pakistani leaders to place their interests beneath ours. At the same time, no country has suffered more from violent extremism.

Pakistan's primary challenge is governance. Nothing improves the climate for extremism more than the failure of official institutions to fill such basic needs as security, education, and health care.

In trying to help, we should bear in mind the distinction between the different and the dangerous. In Pakistan's northwest, people ordinarily worship, dress and think in ways unfamiliar to us. This does not make them a threat, for their political horizons tend to be local. That changes, however, when we hurt the wrong people. A family whose loved ones are accidentally killed by an American bomb will no longer have a local mindset. So we have a very difficult line to walk. Military operations against hard core elements are still essential; but we will never win if, through our actions, we inadvertently create more terrorists than we defeat.

Seventh, our engagement with Muslim communities should include explicit support for democracy. This preference need not be heavy-handed, but neither should it be so timid as to be inaudible. It is true that the democratic brand has been called into question, but for every question there is an answer. Armed groups, such as Hamas, have no place in an election. But democracy is why women have led governments in four of the five most

populous Muslim-majority states. Recent provincial balloting in Iraq has helped to unify the country, while parliamentary debate has been useful in channeling anger. Upcoming votes in Iran and Afghanistan will no doubt influence the course of those nations. Democracy's advantage is that it contains the means for its own correction through public accountability and discussion. It also offers a non-violent alternative for the forces of change, whether those forces are progressive or conservative.

Finally, religion matters. I know there are some who would like to engage with Muslim communities without bringing religion into the conversation, but to them, I say, good luck. As Archbishop Tutu has pointed out: religion is like a knife – it may be used to slice bread or to stab your neighbor in the back, but it cannot be ignored.

Both the Bible and Quran include enough rhetorical ammunition to start a war and enough moral uplift to engender permanent peace. The determining factor is less what the words say than the message we choose to hear.

Accordingly, I would like to close with a quotation:

“If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace. With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Christians and Muslims intertwined as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict...Thus our common future is at stake...So let our differences not cause hatred and strife... Let us vie with each other only in righteousness and good works.”

This quotation is from a document entitled, “A Common Word Between Us and You,” signed by a diverse group of more than 300 Muslim scholars. It is based on the shared commitment to monotheism and love of neighbor that is central to the Quran, Hebrew Bible, and New Testament.

Mr. Chairman, the bridges to be built through engagement with Muslim communities are not political, religious, intellectual, cultural, or economic; they are all of these at once. This means that we each have a responsibility and a role.

Our purpose cannot be to erase differences, but to manage them so that they enrich, rather than endanger, our lives.

Thank you.