

The Archbishop of Canterbury has welcomed the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Professor Dr Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, to Lambeth Palace at the start of a two-day visit.

Archbishop Justin Welby met with Shaykh Dr Ahmad al-Tayyeb this morning to discuss the existing commitment established by their predecessors and consider how they want to move this forward.

The formal relationship between the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar was officially established in 2002 after the events of 9/11 in 2001. Archbishop Carey and His Eminence Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawy believed it was important to encourage learning and dialogue between the Christian and Muslim faiths.

It was agreed that there would be an annual meeting for the principals, alternating between London and Cairo, followed by a meeting of a delegation from the Anglican Communion and from Al-Azhar to discuss a topic of common interest and concern.

It is within this context that this meeting in London has been arranged. This is the first time that Archbishop Justin and Shaykh Dr Ahmad al-Tayyeb have met under this commitment.Â



Speaking at a press conference at Lambeth Palace this morning the Archbishop and the Grand Imam issued this joint statement:

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Joint statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Lambeth Palace, 19 June 2015:

"A significant dialogue session has been convened and was attended by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace on 10 June 2015 in accordance with a dialogue agreement signed by Al-Azhar and the Anglican Communion in 2001, when George Carey was the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"The session was attended by members of both dialogue committees, including Archbishop Mouneer, who is the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The Grand Imam and the Archbishop of Canterbury stressed the importance of the continuation of the dialogue in the midst of the very difficult circumstances that the world is facing. They have witnessed much violence and terrorism committed in the name of religion.

"The Grand Imam and the Archbishop of Canterbury both expressed their determination to build bridges of peace amongst human communities, following both their faiths, through four particular things in the short term:

â€” Demonstrating that their faiths teach the importance of brotherhood and the importance of love, mercy, justice and peace amongst all peoples in order to deepen mutual understanding. Both their faiths seek to bring an end to the ignorance and fear that undermine such understanding.

â€” A mutual endeavour to counter the narrative of extremism and terrorism.

â€” A shared commitment to promote social justice and development in order to eliminate poverty, ignorance and disease.

â€” Work towards promoting mutual values to address the challenges of materialism and the exploitation of interests to the detriment of their peoples.

"Both parties committed themselves to maintain this dialogue and a delegation will be going from the Anglican Communion for a session in Cairo in December 2015."

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