

King of Jordan wins Templeton Prize for fostering Muslim, interfaith cooperation

The Templeton foundation praised Abdullah II for building on "the power of principled pluralism."

by [Chris Herlinger](#) in the [August 1, 2018](#) issue



King Abdullah II of Jordan addresses the European Parliament in 2015. Photo by Pietro Naj-Oleari/© European Union 2015 - European Parliament/Creative Commons.

King Abdullah II of Jordan has won the 2018 Templeton Prize for promoting dialogue and cooperation between Muslims of differing traditions.

The Templeton Prize is one of the largest individual prizes in the world, valued at 1.1 million British pounds, or about \$1.4 million. The annual prize honors “a person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works,” the foundation said in a statement.

Abdullah, king of Jordan since 1999, “has led a reclamation of Islam’s moderate theological narrative from the distortions of radicalism,” the John Templeton Foundation said. His efforts have “come with great personal cost including condemnation and death threats from radical terrorist groups.”

Among Abdullah’s contributions to religious understanding is his 2004 “Amman Message,” which “articulated a clear understanding of the central elements of Islam,

and affirmed that terrorism and violence have no place in the religion," said the foundation.

That message, developed when the Iraq War worsened relations between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, was expanded the next year when the king invited 200 Islamic scholars from 50 countries to Jordan. From those consultations emerged "[Three Points of the Amman Message](#)," which recognized the validity of all eight of Islam's legal schools and explicitly forbade declarations of apostasy, the foundation said.

In 2007, the king advocated for and funded an initiative called "A Common Word Between Us and You," in which Muslim leaders addressed their Christian counterparts, calling for cooperation between the two religions based on the shared traditions of love of God and love of neighbor.

Abdullah is the second Muslim to win the Templeton Prize. Inamullah Khan, founder of the Modern World Muslim Congress, was the first, in 1988.

The world "needs to confront challenges to our shared humanity and values," Abdullah said in a statement. "They are the very ground of the coexistence and harmony our future depends on. And this is why I feel it is so urgent to promote tolerance and mutual respect, support inclusion and hope, speak out against Islamophobia and other wrongs, and make our values a real force in the daily life of the modern world."

The foundation also praised Abdullah for welcoming refugees in Jordan and for taking a lead role in Jordan's protection of Christian and Muslim holy sites.

Heather Templeton Dill, the foundation president and the granddaughter of John Templeton, the global investor and philanthropist who founded the prize in 1972, called Abdullah's work "inspiring."

"He has underscored the importance of Islam's diversity rather than seeking to invent or enforce uniformity where none exists," Dill said in a statement. "He has built upon the power of principled pluralism to extend religious harmony among the 1.8 billion followers of Islam, the world's second largest religion, so that each can recognize one another as Muslims."

Dill noted that her grandfather "often used the phrase 'spiritual entrepreneur' to describe Templeton Prize laureates."

“King Abdullah offers the world the true definition of a spiritual entrepreneur, a person shaped by temporal and political responsibilities, yet who holds both the belief and free expression of religion as among humankind’s most important calling,” she said.

Previous Templeton laureates include Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Billy Graham, and Desmond Tutu.

Abdullah will formally receive the prize in a public ceremony in November in Washington, D.C. —Religion News Service

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