

# FAITHS UNITE

**MANAMA: Leaders of different faiths yesterday called for tolerance and an end to violence in the name of religion.**

They also pledged to promote inter-faith dialogue, engage with young people from different communities, reject all forms of violence and work collectively to counter radicalisation.

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This came as Muslim clerics were joined by representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Hindu communities in signing the Manama Declaration for Preventing Violent Extremism issued by think tank International Peace Institute (IPI).

“We are shocked at the bloodshed and the loss of life that occurred during the recent events, and we have issued the declaration to counter terrorism that is spreading in the name of religion,” said IPI Mena director Nejb Friji during a meeting at the think tank’s office in Bahrain Financial Harbour.

The initiative follows deadly mosque bombings in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

## Manama Declaration to counter terrorism



■ Mr Friji, seventh from left, with leaders of different faiths who signed the key document to promote peace and reject violence

**By SANDEEP SINGH GREWAL**

LEADERS of different faiths in Bahrain have signed a key document that calls for religious tolerance and tackles extremism.

The Manama Declaration for Preventing Violent Extremism was issued by think tank International Peace Institute (IPI) yesterday and signed by Muslim clerics along with representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Hindu communities.

They all pledged to promote interfaith dialogue, engage with young people from different communities, reject all forms of violence and work collectively to counter radicalisation.

"We are shocked at the bloodshed and the loss of life that occurred during the recent events, and we have issued the Manama Declaration to counter terrorism that is spreading in the name of religion," said IPI Mena director Nejjib Friji.

"It is time we identified and understood the root cause of the spread of this extremism and collectively work towards defeating this phenomenon.

"We need to have a sensible narrative to neutralise this wave of radicalisation and part of it involves educating the youth in schools and communities."

Mr Friji said the document also calls on community leaders to take practical steps to foster religious tolerance, dialogue and a culture of peace.

"Our civilised modern society is under threat with the rise of this odd ideology behind the cover of religion," he said during a meeting at the IPI office in Bahrain Financial Harbour.

The initiative follows deadly mosque bombings in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which the Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility for.

Leading Sunni scholar Shaikh Salah Al

Jowder, who signed the document, said the terror organisation continued to attract and brainwash young men from around the world.

"We cannot win this war by military option alone, but need to use social media networks to counter radical narratives," he said.

"Social media is widely used by IS members and their sympathisers which has become their main tool to spread their agenda and even inspire young men to join them.

"For example, my weekly Friday sermon reaches around 3,000 people present in the mosque, but on social media it could reach the world.

"This is a long war we are facing which will not end soon."

Shura Council member Nancy Khedouri, who represented the Jewish community, condemned attacks in the name of religion.

"Nowhere in the holy books is it mentioned to kill in the name of God and to bomb buildings and destruct public and private properties," she said.

"We pray for security and stability nationwide and for international solidarity to uproot terrorism and promote peace."

Also present were religious leaders of different churches and the Hindu Temple, who signed the document condemning terror acts.

Reverend Hani Aziz of National Evangelical Church urged societies to take more proactive roles in dealing with extremist sympathisers.

"Each society should be a partner in this peace process and fight these bombs and bullets with love and mutual respect," he added.