

# Saudi King Abdullah's Interfaith Center in Italy to Unify the World's Religions?

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**Note from Pastor Kevin Lea:** *As stated below, King Abdullah began advancing the concept of an Interfaith Center after his 2007 meeting with the Pope. Observing the political and religious leaders who flow through the Vatican, it is clear the Pope is prominent in the efforts to establish a global government and a global religion. As we see these efforts mature, we draw ever closer to the prophesied, short-lived kingdom of the Antichrist, which will be followed by the visible return of Jesus at His Second Coming when He will establish an eternal kingdom for those who love His appearing. ([2 Timothy 4:8](#))*

Revelation 11:15. Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (NKJV)

**King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia has been planning for years to find a way to unite the world's major religions in an effort to help foster [peace](#), and believes a new international organization to be housed in Vienna, Austria will help make that dream a reality. As the institution was officially founded Thursday, some Christians are likely to start pointing to interpretations of biblical prophecy about the emergence of a one-world religion many believe precedes the return of Jesus Christ.**



Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal (photo, left), Austria's Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger (center) and Spain's Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez (right) attend a ceremony in Vienna, October 13, 2011. The ministers signed an agreement for the Establishment of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.

According to media reports, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, Austrian Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger and Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez Garcia-Herrera oversaw the

signing of a contract between the three nations Thursday, in which they will cooperate in the building and organization of an [interfaith](#) center in Vienna. Other high level officials from the three nations were also reportedly in attendance at the treaty signing.

The building, to be called the "King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue," was conceived of by its namesake and mostly financed by the Saudi government. According to media reports the center will be composed of a governing body of 12 representatives, among that number will be representatives from [Islam](#) (one each Sunni and Shiite), Christians (one each Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox), a Buddhist, a Hindu and a Jewish representative.

There will also be a consulting body with 100 representatives from various faiths, as well as "academics and members of civil society," Deutsche Welle news agency reports. "The thesis is valid that world peace cannot exist without peace between the world's major religions," Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said during the signing ceremony in Vienna, according to Deutsche Welle.

The news agency also reports that Spindelegger said the organization's structure has been designed to make sure no single faith has the upper hand and that [politics](#) would have no part in the center's government. Garcia-Herrera also noted that membership would be made available to other nations.

The religious center will be located at Schottenring in Vienna, according to the Austrian Independent. Dutch news paper Die Presse reports that the project will cost millions of dollars. "(Our) paying for the operation is to create a

fund that makes the center independent from any sort of political interference,” the Saudi prime minister said during the news conference.

The Deutsche Well report reveals that King Abdullah conceived the idea after meeting with [Pope Benedict XVI](#) at the Vatican in 2007. It was after emerging from that meeting that King Abdullah called on Christians and Muslims to find common ground for world peace.

The Saudi king held three **interfaith** meetings between 2008 and 2009, in which he held discussions with religious leaders in Mecca, Madrid and Hofburg in Vienna, which is reportedly where the final plans for the center's governing body was decided upon. The ratification of the agreement on the interreligious center has upset politicians, local media and moderate Muslims, who wonder if the Saudi government does not have some ulterior motive, the Austrian Independent reports.

Some critics also found the Saudi initiative ironic, as Saudi Arabia is ruled by Shariah law. The CIA World Factbook describes the country's population as “100 percent” Muslim. The U.S. State Department's 2010 International Religious Freedom Report found that “freedom of religion is neither recognized nor protected under the law and is severely restricted in practice.” The 2010 [Religious Freedom](#) Report also noted that there were no public non-Muslim houses of worship, and that Christians gathered in secret to [worship](#). Those who leave Islam risk being executed for apostasy.

When asked by reporters during Thursday's press conference about his country's lack of religious freedom, Prime Minister Saud al-Faisal reportedly insinuated that the religious center might influence Saudi Arabia to become more tolerant of other faiths within its own borders.

As for the interreligious governing body's ability to operate autonomously, Saud al-Faisal warned against “extremist minorities within every religious and cultural community ... seeking ... to propagate notions of intolerance, exclusion, racism and hatred,” the Associated Press (AP) report. He added, “These tiny minorities,” he said, “are trying to hijack and disrupt the legitimate identities and aspirations of people of all [cultures](#) and faiths.”

According to the AP, the religious center's “founding document cites principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights, ‘in particular, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.’ It emphasizes [human rights](#) and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.” “

The Sun Daily reports that Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, head of the Vatican's department for interfaith dialogue, while critical of Saudi Arabia's lack of religious freedom, supports King Abdullah's interreligious plan. He reportedly noted that the Holy See might seek observer status.

During one of his 2008 meetings, Abdullah said the purpose of the interreligious center was “to come up with ways to safeguard humanity.” As some observers have noted, this is not the first time an attempt has been made to somehow unify or find commonality among the world's leading religions. Also, as with previous cases, the official founding of King Abdullah's interreligious center will likely be perceived by some Christians as another “sign of the times” in light of purported biblical prophecies about a one-world religion preceding Christ's return to Earth.

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, authors of the popular Christian **end times** *Left Behind* book series, claim that a world government, a single global currency and a one-world religion were “three signs of the end,” pointing to Revelation 13, 17 and 18 for support.

A 2003 United-Nations sponsored summit of the world's religions was cast in a Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) report as a step toward the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The report by CBN News' Wendy Griffith featured comments from Robert Maginnis, a former director of the Family Research Council. Maginnis described the 2003 U.N. meeting as having a hidden agenda to unite the world's citizens under one “religious umbrella.”

“You're taking the Muslim community, the Christian community, the Hindus, the Confucians and all the many hundreds of religious groups, trying to identify key leaders, and you are basically trying to co-opt them into cooperating with you,” he said at the time.

Now that the “King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue” has officially been founded, it is likely the world will be watching to see which representatives of which faith will emerge to take a place in the 12-member governing body. Christians, no doubt, will also be taking special note of who in the evangelical community will be willing to participate.