

24th December 2023

Re: Christmas Message 2023

Dear Fellow Citizens of Ireland,

On this joyous occasion of Christmas, I extend my heartfelt greetings to our Christian faith community. Today, they celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and the profound messages of love and peace that echo through the centuries.

In the spirit of the season, let us reflect on the shared values that bind us together, transcending religious boundaries. It's heartening to recognise the similarities between Islam and Christianity, two major world religions. Both traditions hold dear the Virgin Mary, a symbol of purity, and Jesus, whose miracles and message of peace resonate across diverse cultures and beliefs.

However, as we bask in the joy of Christmas, our hearts are heavy with the awareness of the ongoing war in Palestine, the very land where Jesus was born. This conflict serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by those living in the region and calls us to reflect on our shared responsibility to advocate for peace and justice, irrespective of religious affiliations.

In a world marred by division and discord, it is crucial that we, as a nation, prioritise learning about each other. We must resist the temptation to fall into the traps of division and hatred, recognising that understanding and empathy are powerful antidotes to prejudice. By embracing our shared humanity, we can foster unity and solidarity within our diverse society.

As we confront the issues that affect us on a national scale, it is important to remember that blaming migrants for challenges like the housing crisis is counterproductive. Rather than succumbing to divisive narratives, let us address these issues collectively, focusing on solutions that benefit all members of our society.

We must dispel false propaganda such as the plantation doctrine, which can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and sow seeds of division. Our strength lies in our ability to discern truth from fiction and to foster an inclusive society that values diversity and rejects baseless prejudices.

In the spirit of unity, let this Christmas be a call to action for us to unite as a nation. By setting aside differences, embracing understanding, and standing in solidarity, we can collectively find solutions to the challenges we face. The power of unity is profound, and it is only through a shared commitment to progress that we can build a brighter future for all.

May this Christmas be a time of reflection, compassion, and unity. Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with hope and collective resolve, Nollaig Shona Daoibh.

Warm regards,

Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri
Chairperson Irish Muslim Peace & Integration Council