

World Humanitarian Summit

May 23-25, 2016

Istanbul, Turkey

Arab Humanity Council

Promoting Humanity, Enhancing Protection

A Voice for Intolerant Times

Side Event - May 24, 2016

3:00-4:30 p.m.

Intervention by

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The MENA region WHS consultations came out with a consensus about the need to create an *Arab Humanity Council*.

The central issues we are here to discuss today and possibly decide upon are:

What should be this Council's mandate?

Who are the Council's members?

What are this Council's objectives?

How will this Council be funded?

These are important questions that need to be addressed whenever we are thinking of establishing a new structure or organization.

My response to the idea and conception of an Arab Humanity Council may be somewhat controversial:

On the one hand, I agree with much, if not all, of the ideas summarized in the document resulting from the MENA region consultations.

Yes, I believe that such a Council, whose overall mandate is to advocate for our common humanity to protect the human rights that unite and equalize us all, is very much needed in our region.

I am also convinced that there are people and organizations in this region that can form the base for a strong and active membership for an *Arab Humanity Council*.

On the other hand, I find myself wondering whether this is the time to establish such a structure when what is needed is immediate and direct response to the humanitarian crisis we are facing.

Therefore, I need to ask the following questions:

What are the operational and procedural mechanisms?

What is the Council's strategic plan, particularly in this time of crisis after crisis?
What are the Council's action plans for immediate response?

How will the Council be able to respond promptly and effectively to the tragedies of humanity we are encounter on a daily basis?

The purpose of my questions is not to be critical, but to look at the issues from every angle. We are all aware that we are at this time facing one of the most humanitarian crises in our modern history. Relief organizations are overwhelmed; they are also targeted; international aid organizations have sacrificed the lives of dozens of their workers...

In the past eight months, since September 2015, and according to UNHCR sources, an average of two children a day have drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean to safety. Also according to UNHCR sources, 1,360 people have died at sea escaping death by other means, between January and May of this year.

All of us here at this Summit are present because we know that this is unacceptable and this is a failure of our humanity towards humanity.

It is not in our power to stop wars, to end slaughter, to negotiate peace. But we should be more effective in aiding survivors and creating safe havens for refugees and providing them with basic needs and preserving their dignity.

Saying this raises questions for me:

Will an Arab Humanity Council be able to help us in providing more to the thousands who are destitute?

Will it provide an alternative to smugglers who make empty promises at exorbitant prices to fathers seeking safety and a future for their children?

Can an Arab Humanity Council provide practical and tangible solutions to these thousands of families who require them immediately?

How much time will establishing the Council require before it becomes functional and able to contribute to the immediate needs we are faced with?

I believe establishing an Arab Humanity Council is an exceptional idea. And I am whole heartedly committed to it. We have the academic, intellectual, business,

religious, media, cultural, athletic...personalities and celebrities who can be recruited as representatives.

We also have thousands of NGOs experienced at both the practical and theoretical levels and can provide an example and guidance.

Funding is certainly available from many countries in the Arab world to support such a Council.

But at this moment we need to look at what we have to do today to alleviate the suffering...now...this minute...every day...because the tragedy is growing.