

PROGRAM



June 22-26, 2026 Skopje, North Macedonia
(Complex Macedonian Village)



22.06.2026

18.00

Opening of the Conference (Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Independence)

18.00 – 19.15

SPEECHES

Zoran Ljutkov, Minister in Ministry of culture and tourism of Republic of North Macedonia

Biljana Angelova, Rector of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Oliver Bakreski, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje

Ratko Duev, Head of the Center for Intercultural Studies and Research

Massimo Introvigne, Founder and managing director of the Center for Studies of New Religions in Torino, Italy

His Beatitude Stephen, Metropolitan of Skopje and Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia and of Justiniana Prima

H. Hfz. Shaqir Effendi Fetai, Head of Islamic Religious Community of the Republic of North Macedonia

19.15 – 19.45

INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

Zoran Matevski, President of the International Scientific Programme Board

20.00

WELCOME RECEPTION (MACEDONIAN EVENING)



■ 23.06.2026



08.00 – 09.00

Registration of participants of the Conference

09.00 – 09.45

Key note speaker

The Very Rev. Mark C. Lee / USA / Dean and President, Bexley Seabury Seminary
Religious Nationalism: the Weaponization of Religion

DISCUSSION

09.45 – 11.15

Working session I (Plenary)

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session.

Moderator: Alexander Hwang / USA / President, Two Cities Press

Matthew Drever / USA / University of Tulsa
Jesus the Warrior King? The Language of Nation and Incarnation

Danica Igrutinović / Serbia / Singidunum University
Religious Nationalism in the Balkans and Beyond: A Phenomenon Reshaped

James Kay / USA / Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary
Germany vs France: Mutual Protestant Excommunication

Daniel Bramer / USA / Holy Family University
One Nation Under God: A Critical Reexamination of Christian Nationalism





DISCUSSION

11.15 – 11.45

Coffee break

11.45 – 13.45

Working session II (Plenary)

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Moderator: Zoran Matevski / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Gerard Kester / The Netherlands / International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague
The Dove of Peace Becomes Impatient. Religion as a Weapon of Peace

Pablo Argárate / Austria / University of Graz. UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue for South-East Europe
Imagining the Other. Western Representations of Islam in the Second Half of the Fifteenth-Century

Naum Ilievski and Angelina Ilievska / North Macedonia / International Slavic University "G. R. Derzhavin," Sveti Nikole / Private Practice
Inner Struggle – Outer Peace: A Perspective on the Instrumentalization of Religion

Ratko Duev / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
Bellum Sacrum Revisited: Ritual Authority and the Language of Conflict

Vladan Stanković / Serbia / Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade
Religion and War: World Focuses

Zoran Milosavljević and Vladan Stanković / Serbia / Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade
Critical Points of Conflict between Religious Civilizations in the World



Aleksandar Matković / Serbia / Faculty of Law and Business Studies dr Lazar Vrkatić, Novi Sad; Union University, Belgrade

Order of Nine Angles: Between Legally Permissible Alternative Spirituality, Religious Fundamentalism and Political Extremism

DISCUSSION

13.45 – 14.45

Lunch

14.45 – 16.45

Working session III (Plenary)

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Moderator: Ratko Duev / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Satubaldy Burshakov, Ambassador of Kazakstan

Astana Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions: a platform for global interfaith harmony

Juyan Zhang, Sara DeTurk, Cassandra Luna and Lauren Hochman / USA / University of Texas at San Antonio

Grassroot Interfaith Dialogue as Lived Experiences: Using the case of Raindrop

Marija Todorovska / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Homo Religiosus as Homo Belligerans: Concepts and Mechanisms of Religious Violence

Balázs M. Mezei / Hungary / Collegium Professorum Hungarorum

The Centrality of Peace in Religions



Carmen Gabriela Lăzăreanu and Vlad Leontie / Romania / Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași

Religion, the cause of wars and the builder of peace in the past, present and future

Márton Tamás Csanády / Hungary / Budapest Metropolitan University

Religion as a tool for gaining political influence today

Rui Lobo Correia / Portugal / Universidade da Beira Interior

Education in Silent Conflict: Non-Formal Education and Interfaith Dialogue against Religious Extremism in Lebanon

DISCUSSION

17.15

Visit to the Christian cultural and historical monuments in Skopje (Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Gorno Nerezi, Marko's Monastery in Markova Sušica; The Church of the Ascension of Jesus; Mother Teresa Memorial House)

20.00

Dinner in a traditional Macedonian restaurant



■ 24.06.2026



09.00 – 10.30

Working Session IV (Plenary)

The Christian Gospel Mission: History, Theology, and Social Dynamics

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Moderator: Massimo Introvigne / Italy / CESNUR, Torino

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The Christian Gospel Mission: A General Introduction

Márk Nemes / Hungary / Hungarian Academy of Arts, Budapest; Deputy Director of CESNUR

A Path to Interfaith Engagement: Understanding Christian Gospel Mission's Theology in Light of the "30 Lessons"

Rosita Šorytė / Lithuania / International Federation for Freedom of Belief, Turin and Rome

Deprogrammed Apostates and Atrocity Stories About Korean and Japanese "Cults": A Comparison Between Liz Cameron and Sayuri Ogawa

María Vardé / Argentina / University of Buenos Aires


Beyond the Leader: Guilt by Association and Stigma in Christian Gospel Mission

DISCUSSION

10.30 – 11.00

Coffee break





11.00 – 13.00

Working session V (Plenary)

Conflicts, Spirituality, and the Priority of Conscience: Taiwan's Tai Ji Men Case in Comparative Perspective

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Moderator: Rosita Šorytė / Lithuania / International Federation for Freedom of Belief, Turin and Rome

Rosita Šorytė / Lithuania / International Federation for Freedom of Belief (FOB), Turin and Rome

Introduction: Tai Ji Men, Conscience, and Resilience

María Vardé / Argentina / University of Buenos Aires

When a Menpai Meets the State: Categorical Misfit and Institutional Violence in the Tai Ji Men Case

Yang Ming-Sheng / Taiwan / Tai Ji Men Qigong Academy

*From Politicized Religious Identity to Conscience-Driven Reform: A Tai Ji Men **Perspective***

Wang Yu-Ran / Taiwan / Tai Ji Men Qigong Academy

When Law Loses Its Conscience: Rule of Law, Conflict, and the Tai Ji Men Case

Cheng Yun-Hao / Taiwan / Tai Ji Men Qigong Academy

Religion and Conflict: From Historical Scars to the Tai Ji Men Case in Taiwan

Massimo Introvigne / Italy / CESNUR, Torino

The Repression of the New Testament Church and the Tai Ji Men Case in Taiwan: Parallels and Differences

DISCUSSION

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch

14.00 – 15.30

Lunch

A decorative header image featuring a world map in shades of blue and yellow, overlaid with numerous small, stylized human figures in various colors, suggesting global unity and diversity.

Working session VI A

When Media Create Discrimination: Intolerance, Public Health, and Anti-Cult Campaigns

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Moderator: Eric Roux / Belgium / President of European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom, Brussels

Massimo Introvigne / Italy / CESNUR, Torino

The Media, Minorities, and Violence: From Rwanda's Genocide of the Tutsi to Anti-Cult Campaigns

Eric Roux / Belgium / President of European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom, Brussels

Media Accountability as a Public Health Imperative in Preventing Violence Against Religious Minorities

María Vardé / Argentina / University of Buenos Aires

Imposed Victimhood: Media, Anti-Cult Repertoires, and the Politics of Protection

Rosita Šorytė / Lithuania / International Federation for Freedom of Belief, Turin and Rome

The Media Construction of Victims: Apple TV's "Twisted Yoga" Documentary

DISCUSSION

14.00 – 16.30

Working session VI B (ONLINE)

Each presentation during the online session is scheduled to last a maximum of 10 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of the session

Moderator: Balázs M. Mezei / Hungary / Collegium Professorum Hungarorum

Rita Santillán / Canada / University of British Columbia

The Three Great Principles: Tolerance, Truth & Peace. The Perspective for the Age of Knowledge



Anna Mateo Roca / Spain / Ramon Llull University

The Rise of Christian Nationalism as a Political Communication Tool in the United States of America

Iva Mršić Felbar / Croatia / University of Zagreb

Political Instrumentalisation of the „Kingdom of God“ Concept

Marko Taborsky / Israel / Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology, Jerusalem

Between the Weapon of Aššur and the Yoke of Aššur: Some Aspects of Selected Ideological Mechanisms as Religious Incentives of the Neo-Assyrian Imperial Domination

Anna Vostruhová and Jiří Buriánek / Czech Republic / Charles university, Prague

Rethinking Secularization: Lived Spirituality in Czech Society

Patience Otitoju Olawumi / Canada / University of Ottawa

War, Religion, and Secularization: Epistemic Rupture and Cycles of Religious Reorientation

Aliasghar Ahmadi / Iran / Pooyafekr Research Institute, Tehran

The Evolution of the Early AIFārābī into the Later AIFārābī's View on the Religion as a War's Weapon

Yahya Sabbaghchi and Mahdiyeh Pakravan / Iran / Sharif University of Technology, Tehran; Pooyafekr Research Institute, Tehran

A New Analytical Reading of “Ašhiddā’ alā al-Kuffār” : From Interpretive Violence to Doctrinal Firmness

Haimo Schulz Meinen / Germany / University of Hannover

Civilization as a religious combat unit (30 years later)

Michaela Bozadzhiyna / Bulgaria / South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad

The Role of Social Media in Orthodox Society in Bulgaria

DISCUSSION

15.30 – 16.30

Working session VII (Plenary)

Moderator: Juyan Zhang / USA / University of Texas at San Antonio

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session



Marcin Składanowski / Poland / The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; Centre for International Security and Economic Strategy, London

The Aggressive Rhetoric of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service Towards the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Context of the Russian Orthodox Church's Subordination to the Aims of Russian Foreign Policy

Ekaterina Ivlieva / Belgium / Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven

Sacred Alliance or Biopolitical Alignment? The Entanglement of Anti-Abortion Discourses of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian State after 2022

Aarón Rodríguez Sandoval / Ecuador / University of Groningen; University of Córdoba

De-eschatologizing War: Narrative, Transcendence, and the Geopolitics of End-Time Interpretation in the 2026 Iran-Israel-United States Conflict

DISCUSSION

17.00

Visit to the Islamic cultural and historical monuments in Skopje (Mustafa Pasha Mosque; Yahya Pasha Mosque; Murat Pasha Mosque; Kursumli An; Old Skopje Bazaar)

20.00

Dinner in a traditional Macedonian restaurant



25.06.2026

09.00 – 11.00

Working session VIII A

Moderator: James Kay / USA / Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Iqbal Akhtar / USA / Florida International University

The Miami Interfaith Model for Jewish-Muslim Dialogue Post-October 7th: Reimagining American Interfaith Relations in Times of Crisis

Daniel Bramer / USA / Holy Family University

God Knows His Own: The Logic of Violence in the Western Christian Context

Farinaz Basmechi / Canada / Ottawa Faculty of Social Sciences

Subverting Religion: Digital Resistance and Symbolic Acts in Iranian Activism

Maite Hes / The Netherlands / Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

The "Amsterdam Neighbors Contact": Dutch Female Volunteers Supporting Isolated Women with a Migration Background through Language Empowerment

Torsten Woll / Germany / Chair of Medieval and Modern Church History JMU Würzburg

Benedict XV's Peace Note: A Blueprint for the Catholic Peace Movement

Saad Twaissi / UAE / United Arab Emirates University

Christians and Muslims Coexistence in the Early Islamic Period: The Archaeological Evidence from Jordan and the Levant

DISCUSSION

09.00 – 11.00

Working session VIII B

Moderator: Matthew Drever / USA / University of Tulsa

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session



A world map in shades of yellow and orange, centered on the Atlantic Ocean. The map is surrounded by a circular arrangement of small, stylized human figures in various colors (yellow, orange, blue, green) holding hands, symbolizing global unity and collaboration.

Sahar Abu Ganim and Rachel Erhard / Israel / Tel Aviv University

A Safe Space for Collaboration in a Context of Religious-Political Cleavage

Azizat Omotoyosi Amoloye-Adebayo / Nigeria / University of Ilorin

Making a case for non-denominational religious literacy components in African constitutions: an African union agenda 2063-based approach

Ayman Abu-Shomar / UAE / United Arab Emirates University

From Weaponised Religion to Healing Dialogism: Anglophone Fiction and the “Not Yet Told” Third Narrative of Islam–West Conflict

Yana Fileva / Bulgaria / South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad

Social Expression of Bulgarian New Ageism: Visions for Social Change

Tehila Gado and Rachel Erhard / Israel / The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Tel Aviv University

From Intra-Religious Intractable Conflict to an Academic Collaboration

Idan Edut / Israel / University of Haifa

The Curious Case of the Jewish-“Indian” Tribe in Israel: Religious-Spiritual Alternatives as an Answer to Conflict


Angelche Kocev / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

The Policy of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Macedonia toward Religious Communities in Macedonia (1943–1946): From Wartime Mobilization to Postwar Control

DISCUSSION

11.00 – 11.30

Coffee break

A world map in shades of yellow and orange, centered on the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by numerous small human figures in various colors (yellow, orange, blue, green) scattered across the background.

11.30 – 14.30

Working session IX (Plenary)

Moderator: Pablo Argarate / Austria / University of Graz. UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue for South-East Europe

Each presentation is scheduled to last a maximum of 15 minutes. A 30-minute discussion is scheduled at the end of each session

Ivica Kelam / Croatia / Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek

Eschatology of Silicon Valley: TESCREAL Ideology as a New Form of 'Holy War' for the Future of Humanity

Boban Mitevski / North Macedonia / Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid

Security Planning and Risk Assessment in Religious Communities in the R. N. Macedonia: A Review of the MOC-OA

Efimiya Zajkovska / North Macedonia / Iustinianus Primus Faculty of Law, Skopje

From Individual Freedom to State Weapon: International Legal Standards and the Instrumentalization of the Christian Ethos in Armed Conflicts

Aleksandar Ivanov / North Macedonia / University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola

Geopolitics of Identity: Religion as a Hybrid Weapon and Tool of Legitimacy in a Multipolar World

Abdulkerim Iseni / North Macedonia / Islamic Religious Community of the Republic of North Macedonia

The Role of the Islamic Religious Community in Fostering Peace and Tolerance in North Macedonia.

Fatmir Zaimi / North Macedonia / Mother Teresa University in Skopje

Globalization and the Islamic Religion: A Clash or interaction

Sofija Georgievska and Natasa Stanojkovska Trajkovska / North Macedonia / Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Religion, Faith and Sport: Religious Beliefs and Practices Among Young Football Players Aged 9-12



DISCUSSION

14.30

Closing of the Conference

15.00 – 16.00

Lunch

16.00

Visit to the cultural and historical monuments in Tetovo (Painted Mosque Sarena Dzamija; Arabati Baba Tekke; Leshok Monastery; Isa Beg Hammam; St. Nikolas Church)

20.00

Gala dinner (Macedonian evening)



26.06.2026

Departure of the participants of the Conference

