

IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE CANNOT BE OVERSTATED

The following is a translation of SGI President Ikeda's comments on terrorism excerpted from the Sept. 16 issue of the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

- Ignorance is a dangerous thing. Without factual knowledge, stereotypes and the imagery they spawn invariably assume a momentum of their own, proliferating out of control.
- Just because the perpetrators of the appalling terrorist attacks are believed to be of Arab descent, I pray that people will not immediately jump to the conclusion that all Arabs are dangerous and that Islam encourages violence. It is in no way true that all 1.2 billion Muslims in the world are violent. Even the recent revival of Islam, which is sometimes confused with Islamic fundamentalism, is not a monolithic mass movement. The extremists constitute a very small minority; the vast majority are moderates.
- Obviously, every act of terrorism is reprehensible and wrong, regardless of its motive. Yet we absolutely must not treat terrorism as an inevitable consequence of faith in the tenets of Islam.
- The Middle East issue is one in which the Palestinian issue, the Gulf War and vested interests in the oil industry and military-industrial complexes have become entangled with other factors in a massive and complicated snarl. To view this as a conflict between good and evil is simplistic and dangerous.
- Humankind will never see the light of peace as long as one party seeks to subjugate the other by force, both sides caught in a vicious cycle of reprisals that exacts an eye for an eye, a life for a life.
- It is because we cherish and admire the values and ideals of Western civilization that we urge humanity to resolutely pursue the path of nonviolence, which is truly worthy of the civilized world. We insist that a just and equitable international tribunal be established to try those responsible for acts of war and terrorism. We insist that every effort be rendered so as to transform distrust into trust. I believe this is the most effective and fundamental antidote against terrorism and its repugnant worship of violence.
- The importance of dialogue cannot be overstated. Nothing must be allowed to impinge upon its free exchange. For unless we put an end to an era dictated by sheer force of arms, the 21st century will be no different from the 20th, and we will regress once more into a century of war.
- There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable and fundamental long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change. What we must strive to bring about is a century upholding the dignity of life, a century predicated upon humanistic education.