

Karen Armstrong delivers the 2018 Global Centre for Pluralism Annual Lecture at the Aga Khan Centre

LONDON, October 4, 2018 – Karen Armstrong, the British author, delivered the annual 2018 Global Centre for Pluralism Lecture today at the new Aga Khan Centre. The title of Ms. Armstrong’s lecture was “Compassion or Toleration? Two Approaches to Pluralism”.

Each person invited to give the Annual Pluralism Lecture is asked to reflect on how to build and strengthen pluralist societies. The Lecture is hosted by the Global Centre for Pluralism, an independent, charitable organization founded by His Highness the Aga Khan in partnership with the Government of Canada. It is based in Ottawa, Canada.

In her lecture, Ms. Armstrong spoke about the value of religion during what could be the “last gasp” of nationalism: “What the religions all tell us... [is] that enlightenment insists on overcoming the ego, letting the ego go. Nationalism is about ego, it's about swelling the ego, and often that means excluding the other, as Lord Acton pointed out.”

Citing her current work on the scriptures of three of the world’s great religions, she went on to say that “the scriptures -- all, in every tradition -- say you have to work for the good of others, all others, not just those in your own camp, practically and creatively. That is the route to enlightenment.”

During his introduction, His Highness the Aga Khan remarked that “I think that one of the greatest challenges for the entire world will be finding ways in which we can all achieve a deeper understanding of the other, and what makes each of us distinct, as human beings and as communities. To achieve this vital goal, reflective, creative and empathetic thinkers and writers will be critically important.”

Over the last 20 years, Karen Armstrong has written more than 20 books on faith and the major religions, including Islam, Judaism and Christianity. She is the author of *Islam: A Short History*, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* and *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. She is also the author of two memoirs, *Through the Narrow Gate* and *The Spiral Staircase*. Her work has been translated into 45 languages. She is also a former Trustee of the British Museum and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Literature. Ms. Armstrong was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2015.

Inspired by Canada’s experience as a diverse and inclusive country, the [Global Centre for Pluralism](#) was created to advance global understanding of pluralism and positive responses to the challenge of living peacefully and productively together in diverse societies.

The Centre’s flagship event, the [Annual Pluralism Lecture](#), provides an opportunity to learn from individuals whose work has made a practical difference in the world.

For more information, please contact:

Vanessa Herrick

Manager, Communications and Public Affairs

Global Centre for Pluralism

Tel/Tél: +1 613 688 0137

vanessa.herrick@pluralism.ca