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“Crossing Boundaries: Mobilizing Faith, Diversity and Dialogue”

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**ABSTRACT**

“Contemporary Islamic Activism and the  
Challenge of Peacebuilding”

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This paper argues that an Islamist perspective on conflict resolution could resuscitate peacebuilding in the Middle East. Islamic movements can play a pivotal role in changing the current dynamics of conflict and mistrust. The paper provides an assessment of the causes that led to the failure of the Middle East peace process, arguing that the realpolitik approach that dominated peacebuilding efforts has not been adequate, and that a new approach centered on the idea of an historical reconciliation is warranted. This paper employs an interpretative methodology, applying Islamic sources on peace to the growingly Islamized public discourse in the Muslim world. The analysis will also be informed by empirical information regarding the current political forces that have come to affect peacemaking in the Middle East, particularly the role of the opposition on both sides as spoilers of the peace process. It also addresses some popular misconceptions in the Arab world about peacemaking, including the notion that envisioning peace means surrendering one’s rights. This presentation discusses what an Islamic-movement peace vision could entail, and examines the Islamic sources that legitimize such a vision, and the motivations that can drive it. It also touches on the idea that historical reconciliation requires reciprocity and assumes enthusiastic engagement from the other side. Finally, the conditions (and difficulties) of developing the new approach into a practical peace initiative will be assessed.