

Peaceful Inclusive Society

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Overview

One of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDG 16](#)) laid by the United Nations is to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. With an ever-growing diverse population around the world it is becoming increasingly necessary to end violence, promote the rule of law, strengthen institutions that deliver justice and provide equal access to justice across the different sectors of people.

UAE has a tradition that is deep rooted in inclusion. Since the country’s founding in 1971, values of mutual respect and religious freedom have been ingrained in the communities of UAE.

Way back in 1951, a [delegation of Emirati leaders](#) including the Late H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who later became the Founder President of the UAE, had traveled to Europe to learn and experience the European culture and religion. This was highlighted by visits to the Vatican and prominent churches like Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

UAE has been welcoming the first communities of Christian oil and gas workers to the Arabian Gulf region in the late 1950s. A [grand welcome gesture](#) was made when the government donated land for the St. Andrew’s Anglican Church, that opened in 1968.

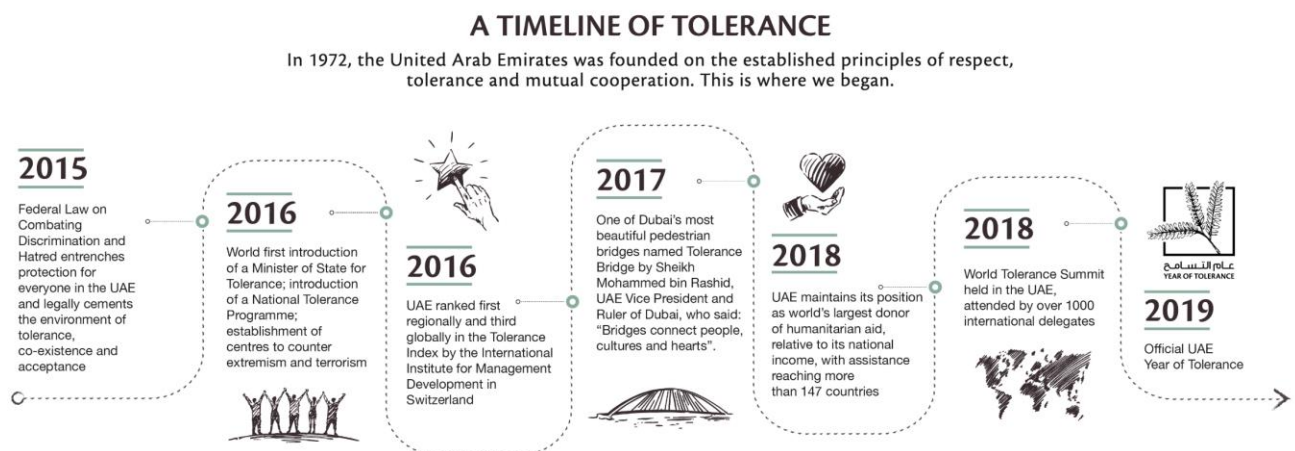
2019 has been declared as the Year of Tolerance in UAE with a vision to make the country a global capital for tolerance, co-existence and cooperation. A regulatory framework and various initiatives exist to further strengthen the UAE’s resolve to remain an inclusive peaceful country.

Initiatives

The Year of Tolerance 2019

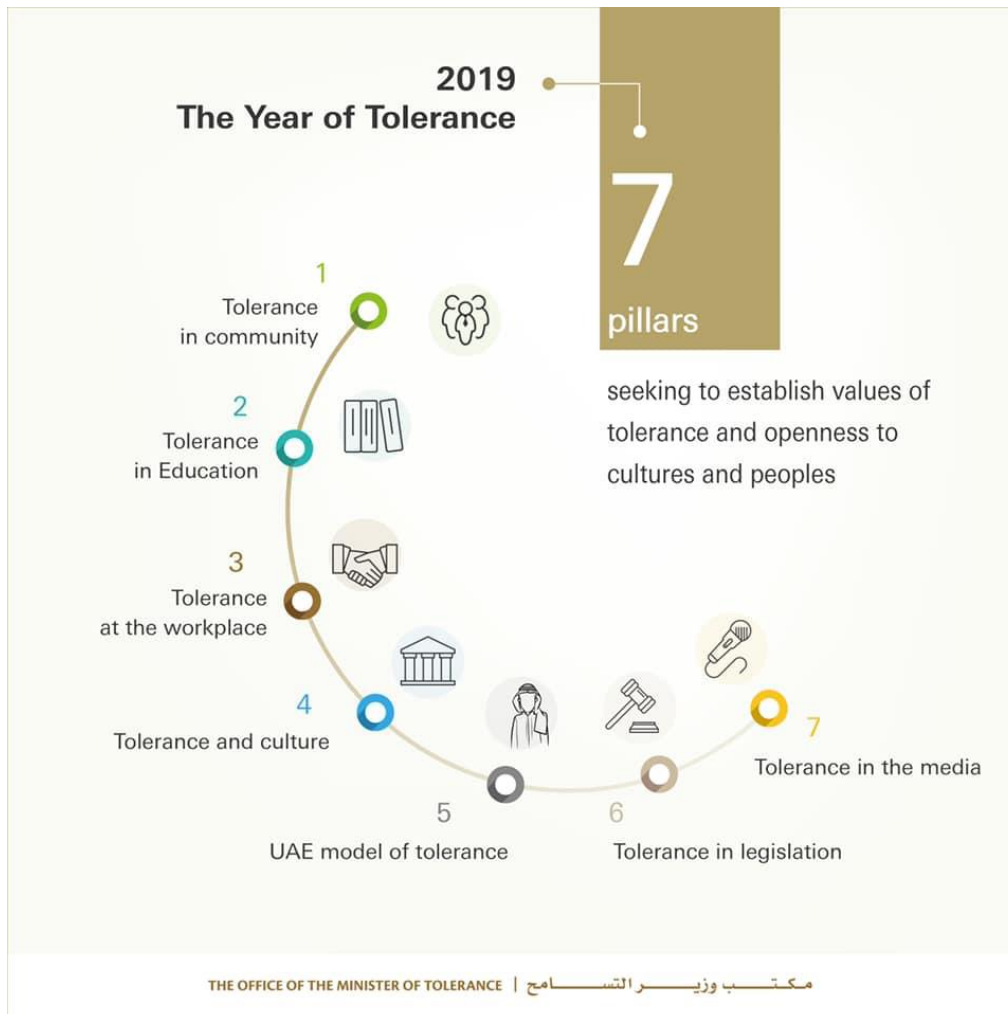
The UAE has announced the year 2019 as the [Year of Tolerance](#). The country celebrates the values of tolerance enabling the creation of an environment that nurtures diverse cultural backgrounds and ensures that they live and work peacefully. By announcing a year to celebrate tolerance, UAE's wise leadership has strengthened its role in the world as a model of harmony, respect and acceptance within a framework that formally supports and consolidates the progressive values.

UAE has established itself as an open, respectful community that rejects extremism and promotes religious and cultural tolerance.



Source: [Ministry of Finance](#)

The Supreme National Committee for Tolerance confirmed that the law on [the licensing of places of worship in the UAE](#) is in its final stages and it will include the required conditions and standards for licensing places of worship that will reflect the values of tolerance in the country. The committee also affirmed that the first half of the year witnessed the implementation of more than 1,400 initiatives and projects that serve the seven pillars of the 'Year of Tolerance', while noting that diplomatic missions carried out more than 45 initiatives during the year.



Source: [Minister of Tolerance Office](#)

H. H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid named the pedestrian bridge over the Dubai Canal as the Tolerance Bridge on 16 November 2017, which is International Tolerance Day. This naming strengthened tolerance as a fundamental value in the UAE community where people from over 200 nationalities live in harmony without racism, discrimination or intolerance.

Tolerance awareness activities

The Ministry of Education has shown initiative by creating awareness among the youth of the country about tolerance through its [various activities](#) such as:

- Communication of Civilizations

- Specialized Volunteerism
- Sanaa Competition
- Culture Masterpiece
- Sanaa Forums.

These initiatives targeted all students of the Emirati School inculcating in them the spirit of tolerance. The Emirati community was highlighted, and the Sanaa programs were implemented in many practical aspects including hospitality, Emirati heritage, morals of positive Emirati personality and respect for older people.

HE Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the Minister of Tolerance, and HE Hussain Al Hammadi, the Minister of Education have joined forces to launch a joint project titled ['In the Footsteps of Zayed'](#). This project aims to strengthen the values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, acceptance, respect and positive communication between students of all grades and levels across public and private schools by adopting plans and initiatives that ensure that students are taught the values and principles of tolerance to create culturally evolved peaceful future societies.

[Federal law against hatred and discrimination](#)

The UAE government has paved way to a peaceful and inclusive existence by passing a [Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on Combating Discrimination and Hatred](#) that criminalises any acts promoting religious hatred through any form of expression. It makes it illegal to discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of religion, caste, doctrine, race, color or ethnic origin. Violators will be exposed to penalties, which include jail terms and fines. The law asks anyone involved in any activity that violates the law to voluntarily submit themselves before the authorities and has provisions allowing the courts to waive penalties in such cases.

Tolerance and Peace Awards

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, in order to encourage tolerance, and honor champions of tolerance throughout the world, launched the [Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Award for Tolerance](#). Through this award, leaders in the Arab world will be developed and provided support to promote values of tolerance through media and cultural promotions.

[Maktoum Award for World Peace](#) aims to honor and recognize outstanding contributions to international peace. Valued at \$1.5 million, it is one of the most expensive awards in the world. It encourages dialog and initiatives taken to achieve world peace.

Centers for Countering Extremism

Preventing violence and curbing extremist activities has been a priority for the UAE government. This is further strengthened by establishing centers that monitor and focus on decreasing risk of radicalization leading to violent extremism.

Hedayah Center

[Hedayah](#) was created with an aim to combat radicalization of youth and provide them with an avenue for rehabilitation. In 2014, Hedayah launched the [STRIVE global program](#). This program aims to strengthen resilience to violent extremism program.

Funded by the European Union, this project will:

- Aid communities where there is a significant threat of individuals being most susceptible to get drawn into violence and radicalized and recruited to terrorism
- Increase understanding, locally and globally about the drivers of radicalization among vulnerable groups
- Increase engagement of government, security sectors and law enforcement authorities in countering violent extremism
- Applying effective non-coercive responses to terrorism.

The [Education Capacity Building Program](#) of Hedayah conducts workshops all over the world to create awareness about how education can help prevent spreading of violent extremism. The most [recent workshop](#) was hosted by Hedayah, UNESCO IICBA, UNESCO office in Kampala and the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Uganda in Kampala, Uganda from 23-25 January 2018. This workshop worked on building strengths of education stakeholders in Uganda and provided insights on understanding the drivers of extremism and how to utilize education as a means to combat it.

Sawab Center

The [Sawab Center](#) was launched by UAE and USA to act as the New Digital Communications Hub to Counter Extremist Propaganda based out of Abu Dhabi. This will help monitor and counter the online messaging, propaganda and recruitment by terrorist organizations.

Community Empowerment

Provision of a [cohesive society and preserved identity](#) is one of the six main pillars of the UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda. UAE has various programs via which it provides social assistance to:

Women

UAE ensures gender balance by providing equal education and employment opportunities to women. Special healthcare under [pregnancy and maternity care](#) and [cancer prevention](#) are provided to women to ensure no hindrance for them to pursue the opportunities presented to them. The UAE Government launched the [National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE for 2015-2021](#). Read more about women empowerment in UAE [here](#).

Children

UAE provides social assistance to orphans and children from unknown parents to ensure no one is left behind. Free compulsory education for citizens in public schools, colleges and universities and [Wadeema's Law](#) concerning safety and protection of children in the UAE help the UAE focus on children of the country and their well-being. Read more about how the UAE assists children in education and health [here](#).

People of Determination

Right from strongly supporting education and learning needs of students with special needs to making sure that they have enough opportunities to work, UAE ensures that people of determination are cohesively included in the society making them feel a part of it. Read more about how people of determination are empowered in the UAE [here](#).

Senior Emiratis

Leaving no one behind, UAE empowers Senior Emiratis in the country through services and initiatives that put emphasis on special facilities and care provided to them. The [Ministry of Community Development](#) (MOCD) handles provision of pension through the [Federal Law No. 7 of 1999 for Pension and Social Security](#) (as amended by Federal Law No. 7 of 2007) and provides other services such as the Masarra Card entitling them to special services, home care programmes in both public and private entities. Read more about services provided to Senior Emiratis [here](#).

Impact

The [2019 Global Peace Index](#) places the UAE at the 3rd position in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The [Human Fraternity Meeting](#) was organized in February 2019 by Muslim Council of Elders to tackle intellectual extremism and promote healthy dialogs about the various fraternities existing in the world. The meeting was held in Abu Dhabi in conjunction with the visit of Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and Pope Francis, Head of the Catholic Church.

Read more about this [here](#).

Conclusion

UAE acts as a true beacon of world peace and inclusion spearheading the targets of SDG 16 maintaining an environment that fosters a peaceful inclusive society.