

Zoroastrian Contributions to the Millennium Development Goals: Past, Present, and Future



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*"I announce that I will respect the traditions, customs and religions of nations...
I never let anyone oppress any others...
I prevent unpaid, forced labor...
I prevent slavery..."*



Excerpt from the First Declaration of Human Rights by Cyrus The Great
Zoroastrian King of the Persian Empire, (590 BC-529 BC)
(Replica of the Cylinder is located in the lobby of UN Headquarters, New York, NY)

New York City – The teachings of Zoroastrianism, the world's first monotheistic religion, are still relevant in our world today. Throughout their long history, Zoroastrians have shown that they are a community dedicated to serving humanity. The devastating Tsunami of December 26, 2004 in Southeast Asia has reminded us that mankind must learn from the successes and failures of the past and work harder to end the world's problems of poverty and inequality.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration, affirming its commitment to addressing such issues and to advancing in the areas of human rights, good governance and democracy. The most striking points of the UN resolution are outlined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of quantifiable objectives that all 191 UN Member States have pledged to meet by the year 2015. The eight MDGs are as follows: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development.

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) will present a panel discussion entitled "Zoroastrian Contributions to the Millennium Development Goals: Past, Present and Future" at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York City, February 28th to March 11th, 2005.

This two hour interactive session will start with an introduction to the history and major tenets of Zoroastrianism, but will focus on the efforts that Zoroastrians have made – and continue to make – to meet the humanitarian objectives of the Millennium Declaration. The talk will be followed by an interactive session on how the Zoroastrian community can work with other communities and NGOs to create development networks around the world. The session will take place in March 2005 in New York City.

About FEZANA: FEZANA, the umbrella organization for North American Zoroastrian associations, has been a registered non-profit, religious and charitable organization since 1987. It is dedicated to the task of promoting the study, understanding and practice of the Zoroastrian faith and the welfare of its followers. It also coordinates programs promoting public awareness of Zoroastrianism. FEZANA, as an NGO (non-governmental organization), maintains consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism (also known as the *Zarathushti* religion or *Zarathushtrianism*) is acknowledged as one of the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religions. Once the state religion of the ancient Persian empires (including modern-day Iran), Zoroastrianism embraces the worship of one God (*Ahura Mazda*) and is based on the revelations and teachings of the prophet Zoroaster (*Zarathushtra*) (circa 1400 B.C.E). The Zoroastrian faith calls upon its followers to pursue an ethical life through a three-fold path of "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds." In the past half-century, Zoroastrians have emigrated around the world, but the largest concentrations of Zoroastrians remain in India, where they are known as the Parsis, and in Iran.

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