

## Faith Leaders Call for 'Jubilee for Justice'

Following the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, we recall the ancient custom of the Jubilee Year, in which debts would be cancelled.

The Hebrew scriptures speak of a Jubilee Year in which unpayable debts should be cancelled. The Gospel writer, Luke, records that Jesus began his public ministry with a call to restore the just economy of Jubilee where all have enough. Jesus also tells those who have assets, to lend without expecting a return. The Holy Qur'an condemns usury and requires zakah (almsgiving) as an essential duty to prevent wealth being accumulated only among the rich.

The Dharmic faiths from the Indian sub-continent also teach the same principle. In the Anguttara Nikaya, Buddhists read, 'One holds wealth not for oneself but for all beings.' Sikhs believe in earning ethically, being benevolent and they pray for the common good of all. Mahatma Gandhi, from his Hindu roots, famously said, 'Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed.'

In recent times, the idea of Jubilee has been applied to the need to cancel the unfair debts of many 'Third World' countries. This does not represent charity towards the impoverished but a call for justice: to reform the basis of the global economy and renew relationships between high and low income countries. This call for Jubilee since the 1990's has led to the cancellation of \$120 billion of debt (£80 billion), bringing education and healthcare to many millions of people.

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Bishop of Bath and Wells

**Rabbi Sybil Sheridan,** Vice-Chair of Rabbinic Assembly, Movement for Reform Judaism

**Rt Rev Bernard Longley,** Archbishop of Birmingham

**Rowan Williams,** Master, Magdalene College, Cambridge

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**Malcolm Deboo,** President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

**Bishop Angaelos,** General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK



Despite these achievements, over the last thirty years there has been a series of debt crises culminating in the present one in Europe. A self-serving financial system has brought the global economy to its knees and we are now seeing the poorest people in our own society and around the world paying the price for this excess.

That is why we ask people everywhere to join in calling for a renewed Jubilee. Finance must be put back in its place as a means to human well being. We need far reaching changes in the global economy to build a society based on justice, mutual support and community. We need economic and political as well as spiritual renewal in our society. We applaud the efforts of citizens across Europe and the world to engage in democratic audits of their national debts as a first step towards reclaiming public control of national finances. We call on people in the UK to unite in support of this vision of Jubilee, and to make this cause a lasting legacy of 2012.

A Jubilee for Justice today would mean:

- Cancelling the unjust debts of the most indebted nations
- Promoting just and progressive taxation rather than excessive borrowing
- Stopping harmful lending which forces countries into debt

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And 412 more, continued overleaf

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