

UAE Names Abu Dhabi Mosque After Mary, Mother of Jesus

Authorities have renamed a mosque in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, after the mother of Jesus Christ.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and deputy commander of the Emirati military, said he ordered the change in a bid to build bridges with other religions.

The name change to “Mariam, Umm Eisa,” Arabic for “Mary, the mother of Jesus,” on Wednesday, would “consolidate bonds of humanity between followers of different religions,” he said, according to Gulf News.

In February 2016, the sheikhdom opened a Ministry of Tolerance, alongside a Ministry of Happiness, to “promote tolerance as a fundamental value in UAE society,” Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, said at the time.



Abu Dhabi Mosque

A boy jumps in the courtyard at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque on February 1, 2015 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Authorities have renamed the Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Mosque in Al Mushrif, a district in the capital Abu Dhabi, to ‘Mariam, Umm Eisa’—Arabic for ‘Mary, the mother of Jesus’. Dan Kitwood/Getty

Minister of Tolerance Sheikha Lubna al-Qasimi said the move reflected Sheikh Mohammed's “pure humanity and portrays a bright image of the real tolerance and coexistence in the UAE,” Emirati news site Khaleej Times reported.

The senior chaplain at nearby Anglican church St. Andrews said he was pleased with the renaming.

“We are delighted that we are celebrating something that we have in common between both our faiths,” Reverend Canon Andrew Thompson told Gulf News.

“Mary, as the mother of Jesus, is of course a holy, special figure in our communities. She is a woman who symbolizes obedience to God,” he said. “We look forward to growing in deeper understanding with our neighbors, and we celebrate with them the new name of the mosque.”

This year, the World Happiness Report put UAE above Brazil, France and Spain in terms of happiness. It was the highest-ranked Arab country, but the second in the Middle, behind Israel.

Jack Moore - Newsweek 15 June 2017