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**HUFFINGTON POST: TOLERANCE IN AZERBAIJAN SIGNIFICANT**

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Trend

The Huffington Post published an article entitled Finding a Multifaith Model in a Secular Muslim Society by Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean at the US Simon Wiesenthal Center.

In his article, the author writes about the bans on religious rites and beliefs in the Soviet Union, and relevant problems related to violence and terrorism.

Forty-four years ago, I spent the Jewish High Holy Days in what was then the Soviet Union, Cooper said. The majority of synagogues, churches, and mosques had been shuttered or destroyed.

During his visit to Baku Cooper met a cross-section of Jews ranging from Polish Jews who fled the Nazis to Jews who traced their ancestry back to the destruction of Solomons Temple, some 2,500 years ago.

2016 presents us a dramatically changed world, he said. In 2016, more often than not, religion is seen, not as source of light and hope but as a legitimizer of conflict, of division and violence and terrorism.

My global travels in search of moderates and partners have led me back to Baku, the capital of now independent Republic of Azerbaijan, he said. This majority-Muslim nation stands out for its embrace of multiculturalism and citizens are able to go to the House of Worship. How interesting that Azerbaijan declared 2016 as the Year of Multiculturalism.

Cooper said that Azerbaijan has steadfastly stood by Israel as well in a time of great upheaval.

He added that Azerbaijan has historically been a safe haven for Jews and Christians.

For decades since its independence, Azerbaijan is one of Israel's and the United States' most loyal and risk-taking friends, he said.

In a region where people have been ethnically-cleansed, where the Islamic State (aka IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) proudly broadcasts its Medieval brutalities, we can learn a great deal from every leader who has the courage to safeguard and respect religious minorities, he said.

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Kaynak/Source: