



## DIWAN OF THE ISMAILI IMAMAT

### **His Highness the Aga Khan and Portugal**

#### **Overview**

There is a long history of cooperation between Portugal and the Ismaili Imam. These linkages are built upon shared values and a belief in the power of partnership to improve people's lives and positively impact institutions and societies in Portugal and around the world. Areas of mutual collaboration include health, education, science & research, as well as cultural and environmental conservation.

Building on a series of earlier accords, and at the invitation of the Government of Portugal, the Ismaili Imam established a Seat in Portugal in 2018 pursuant to a landmark agreement signed in 2015 by the Republic of Portugal and the Ismaili Imam to intensify cooperation.

The agreement ratifies the shared commitment and responsibility to uphold and enhance the supreme value of human dignity. It strives for a more fraternal society, co-operation and inter-religious dialogue, and a world less divided by conflicts; where living standards of the dispossessed improve and values of justice and peace prevail.

This is the first time in the Ismaili Imam's 1,400-year history that a Seat has been established following a treaty with a sovereign non-Muslim country.

The history of Ismaili engagement with Portugal stretches back many years, beginning when Ismailis settled in Portuguese Territories in India in the 17th century. Portugal offered a warm welcome half a century ago to Ismailis fleeing the Mozambican civil war.

Since that time, ties to Portugal have multiplied. The Aga Khan Foundation, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), has been active in Portugal since 1983. Its activities include ground-breaking research and innovative programming in early childhood education, social exclusion, and urban poverty. AKF's Urban Community Support Programme benefits over 20,000 vulnerable people in Alta de Lisboa, Mira Sintra and Ameixoeira in partnership with Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa.

In 1998 the Ismaili Centre Lisbon was created, one of six Ismaili Centres around the world.

Protocols of Cooperation between the Ismaili Imam and Portugal were signed in 2005, 2008, 2009, and 2016. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Aga Khan University and the Catholic University of Portugal was signed in 2008.



### **Key milestones between Portugal, the AKDN and the Ismaili Imam**

- August 2023 Prince Rahim Aga Khan met with His Holiness Pope Francis in Lisbon marking World Youth Day. They discussed areas of mutual interest, including international affairs and the potential for future collaboration. The institutions of the Ismaili Imam and the Catholic Church work closely in Portugal in areas of early childhood development and care for the elderly
- March 2019 the inaugural Aga Khan Music Awards was held in Lisbon bringing many leading musical talents from the Muslim world to Portugal.
- November 2019 inauguration of da Vinci Surgical System, donated by the Ismaili Imam to the Centro Hospitalar Universitario de Lisboa Central, in the presence of His Highness the Aga Khan and President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The da Vinci Surgical equipment introduces cutting-edge, robotics-assisted technology for performing advanced operations on patients. This was the first such robot to be installed in a public hospital in Portugal, ensuring wider accessibility and service provision.
- July 2018 as part of the conclusion of His Highness the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, over 40,000 Ismailis from 45+ countries gathered in Lisbon.
- July 2018 His Highness the Aga Khan officially designated the Henrique de Mendonça Palace in Lisbon as a Seat of the Ismaili Imam, to be known as the "Diwan of the Ismaili Imam."
- July 2018 His Highness the Aga Khan addressed the Portuguese Parliament recognizing Portugal as a "Country of Opportunity". His Highness pledged the Ismaili Imam's commitment to "go forward together, bound by our shared past, committed to our shared values, and inspired by our shared hopes for a constructive, purposeful future."
- May 2016 the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education and the Ismaili Imam signed an agreement to strengthen research capacity and improve quality of life in Portugal and in Portuguese-speaking countries. The agreement emphasises research in poverty alleviation, food security and biodiversity, early childhood development, sustainable energy systems and urban development, resettlement of migrants, civil society, and pluralism. The Ismaili Imam supported the agreement with a 10-year €10 million grant.
- June 2015 signing of Protocol Agreement between His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Portugal to establish the Seat of the Ismaili Imam in Portugal.
- September 2013 - President Aníbal Cavaco Silva and His Highness the Aga Khan presented the [Aga Khan Awards for Architecture](#) at the Castle of São Jorge in Lisbon.
- September 2013, His Highness the Aga Khan presides over a renewed Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic University of Portugal and the Aga Khan University. The agreement fosters knowledge creation and shared learning and human capacity in the areas of cultural studies, education and



research, early childhood development, comparative law and religion, nursing education and training.

- May 2012, renewal of the Partnership Agreement between AKF Portugal and the Patriarchate of Lisbon. The agreement focuses on helping those who face poverty as well as economic and social exclusion.
- July 2010 the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) and AKDN sign a Protocol of Cooperation to improve the quality of life of underprivileged populations in CPLP member countries.
- May 2009 International Agreement between the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imamat was signed enabling the Ismaili Community in Portugal to benefit from the legislation applicable to non-Catholic religious communities. This agreement was ratified by the Portuguese Parliament in July 2010.
- July 2008, MOU between AKU and the Catholic University of Portugal during the Golden Jubilee commemoration of His Highness the Aga Khan IV. The partnership addresses shared concerns, identifies common interests and fosters greater understanding by developing capacity to address issues of global concern such as poverty alleviation, environmental degradation, the building of civil society, democracy, social inclusion and human development.
- December 2005, Protocol of Cooperation between the Portuguese Government and the Aga Khan Development Network. The agreement signals joint approaches by the AKDN and the Government of Portugal to the European Union and the United Nations to promote dialogue and educational programming to support peace and stability in geopolitically sensitive regions of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- December 2005, The Patriarchate of Lisbon and AKF Portugal sign a Partnership Agreement for an innovative urban community support programme addressing problems of social exclusion and poverty alleviation.
- July 1998 opening of the Ismaili Centre Lisbon. *"Dedicated to the preservation of spiritual values, the promotion of social development, and the enhancement of intellectual discovery, the Centro Ismaili will seek to contribute to the enjoyment, by citizens of Lisbon and visitors alike, of spaces and buildings whose inspiration will aim to empathise as well as expand our cultural horizons."* -His Highness the Aga Khan
- December 1996 President Jorge Sampaio laid the foundation stone of the Ismaili Centre, Lisbon
- February 1983, Aga Khan Foundation was established in Portugal, now the fourth largest private foundation in the country. Portugal's Foreign Minister, Mr. Vasco Futscher Pereira, paid tribute saying: *"It is with satisfaction that today we see the activities of the Portuguese Ismailis and thus witness to their spiritual leader deep appreciation of the Portuguese Government for their qualities of hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and their capacity for integration, contributing in this manner to the development of the country which has received them as friends."*



### **Portuguese Distinctions and Honours**

- May 2019 His Highness the Aga Khan was presented with the Key of the City of Porto
- July 2017 His Highness received the Grand Cruz da Ordem de Liberdade, or Grand Cross of the Order of Liberty, one of Portugal's highest honours, in recognition of service to uplifting lives around the world
- July 2017 Universidade NOVA de Lisboa awarded His Highness Prince Aga Khan with the Honoris Causa Doctorate
- June 2014 His Highness the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Development Network awarded the 2013 North-South Prize for distinguished work in protection of human rights, defence of pluralist democracy, public awareness raising on issues of global interdependence and solidarity, and strengthening the North-South partnership
- May 2009 Investiture Ceremony of His Highness the Aga Khan as a Foreign Member of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences
- February 2006, His Highness the Aga Khan was bestowed with the "Honoris Causa" doctorate degree by the University of Evora in honour of "the extraordinary work of economic, social and cultural and educational assistance" through the Aga Khan Development Network
- December 2005 recipient of the Gra-Cruz de Cristo, or Military Order of Christ Award. awarded the Gra-Cruz da Militar de Cristo, or Military Order of Christ, one of Portugal's highest accolades for outstanding service to the country. The honour was bestowed by President Sampaio. Speaking of the work of the AKDN in Portugal, President Sampaio said, *"A distinguishing feature of all these activities is the fact that they follow a coherent, enlightened strategy of sustainable development, perfected in many years of field experience, based on a commitment to people- to their intelligence, to their will and to their enterprising spirit- and designed to make the beneficiaries of these activities their owners and leaders."*
- July 1998 invested with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit by President Jorge Sampaio for his "outstanding contribution to human understanding and to social and economic progress in different areas of the world."
- December 1996 recipient of Key to the City of Lisbon
- October 1960 His Highness the Aga Khan was conferred the honour of "Grand Cross of the Order of Prince Henry" by the Portuguese Government

### **The Ismaili Muslim community in Portugal**

- Ismailis first settled in Portuguese Territories in India in the 17th century and later in Portuguese territories in Africa. Portugal offered a warm welcome almost half a century ago to Ismailis fleeing the Mozambican civil war.
- Ismailis have settled successfully in Portugal and actively contribute to the civic, cultural, social, and economic lives of the communities in which they live.
- August 2023 the Ismaili Community supported the organisers of World Youth Day by welcoming volunteers and pilgrims to Lisbon ahead of their audience with His Holiness Pope Francis. This hand of friendship was extended to strengthen



bridges of understanding via civic, artistic, and environmental endeavours. A ceremonial tree planting ceremony was conducted featured six major religious families - Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

- July 2023, 25 years of the Centro Ismaili, Lisboa was celebrated in the presence of Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The Centre has contributed to civic life in Portugal for over two decades, hosting multilateral conferences, diplomatic receptions, interfaith congregations, healthcare congresses, art exhibitions, and musical concerts.
- May 2022, The Ismaili Centre Lisbon hosted Africa Day, an event organized by the Group of Ambassadors of African countries in Portugal and the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam; embodying the vision behind the establishment of the Ismaili Centre in Lisbon- to be of service to Portuguese society and beyond, through the creation of bridges between people and cultures, the promotion of knowledge, dialogue, and pluralism, in a spirit of tolerance and respect
- April 2022, The AKDN hosted an Iftar Dinner at the Ismaili Centre Lisbon uniting attendees from the Muslim community, the Hindu community, the Buddhist Union, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Religious Freedom Commission, alongside diplomats from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and the European Union. Promoting values of harmony and empathy through reverence, generosity, self-reflection; ultimately improving the dignity of human life
- June 2019 UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed delivered the seventh Global Centre for Pluralism's Annual Pluralism Lecture in the presence of His Highness the Aga Khan
- November 2018, The Ismaili Centre Lisbon hosted the World Leadership Alliance - Club of Madrid which is composed of 95 former presidents and prime ministers from 65 countries and is the largest forum of former heads of state and government. Its aim is to strengthen democratic leadership and governance, and address crisis and post-crisis situations.
- April 2012 Ismaili community in Portugal observes World Interfaith Harmony Week, an initiative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Promoting interfaith cooperation, the Ismaili community, the Patriarchate of Lisbon and the Aga Khan Foundation Portugal – an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network – have established a number of social welfare and education initiatives that target the most vulnerable members of Portuguese society.
- December 2009 the Ismaili Centre hosts the 2009 Lisbon Forum, an annual event of the North-South Centre focused on the “creation of a culture of human rights through education.” The gathering was organized in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Aga Khan Development Network



## Pull Quotes

*“So let us, then, go forward together, bound by our shared past, committed to our shared values, and inspired by our shared hopes for a constructive, purposeful future.”*

*“The AKDN includes a variety of agencies working in the fields of economic development, education, health care, and cultural enrichment. Our fundamental objective is to do whatever we can to help to improve the quality of human life. And that is the spirit that will continue to inspire our partnership with the people and the Government of Portugal.”*

His Highness the Aga Khan address to Portugal's Members of Parliament in the Senate Chamber of the Portuguese Parliament Building

<https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/whats-new/news-release/aga-khan-praises-portugal-country-opportunity-and-partner-pluralism>

*“I am grateful for the government of Portugal for inviting me to establish the Seat within its territory. Over the years, the Portuguese have shown friendship, understanding, and a warm welcome to the Jamat as well as to the Imamah,” he said. “Ours is a relationship grounded in the shared values of religious freedom, tolerance, and pluralism. I believe, alongside strengthening the Imamah’s capacities, this will also enable our institutions to make a constructive and beneficial contribution to areas of mutual interest.”*

His Highness the Aga Khan addresses leaders of the Jamat on the occasion of the designation of the Seat of the Ismaili Imamah on 11 July 2018

*“We are brothers of the same path,” he said. “I am here to thank you — for this path we travel along, together.”*

*“Thank you for your strength, your unity, the ability to project into the future, the education, the upbringing of these girls, these boys, these young people, for the same principles, the same love for humanity, for others, the same openness, the same tolerance, the same acceptance of difference,” said the President.*

*“But also, for the same love for Portugal,” he said. “This touches my heart so deeply, and that is why I consider myself your brother, and feel you as my brothers and my sisters.”*

*“With you, Portugal has become richer, more open, more tolerant, more understanding, more plural, more universal,”*

*“Thank you. Thank you, in the name of Portugal.”*

His Excellency Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic (address to the Portuguese Jamat) Ismaili Centre, Lisbon on 29 April 2017

<https://the.ismaili/portuguese-president-visits-jamat-expresses-nation’s-gratitude>

*“Our Excellency, please convey to His Highness Prince Aga Khan what I will convey directly to the Ismaili community present here. The pride I have as President of the*



*Portuguese Republic for your support, all of your support, in building a common homeland.”*

[Translated from Portuguese] His Excellency Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, Ismaili Centre Lisbon 20th anniversary celebration, January 2019  
<https://the.ismaili/news/video-president-portugal-visits-lisbon>

*“Not only you have been, since 1957, Prince Aga Khan IV, the 49th Imam of the Ismailis, and thus the religious leader of a community, the Ismaili Community, that the Portuguese Nation learned to regard with such a high esteem, but - in the exercise of your exalted office -, you have displayed an outstanding talent as a statesman, a diplomat and an organizer, besides being a man of faith and culture.”*

[Translated into English] Remarks by the President of the Academy of Sciences, Professor Arantes e Oliveira at the Investiture Ceremony of His Highness as a Foreign Member of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon  
<https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/resources/speeches/investiture-ceremony-his-highness-foreign-member-academy-sciences-prof-arantes-e-oliveira>