



HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH

Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa

Biography

His Excellency Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa is widely recognized as a leading global voice on moderate Islam, committed to bringing global awareness to the religion's true message of empathy, understanding and cooperation among all people.

As Secretary General of the Muslim World League, a Makkah-based non-governmental organization that represents adherents of the Islamic faith around the world, Dr. Al-Issa has been a trailblazer in building new partnerships among different communities, faiths and nations. He also heads the Intellectual Warfare Center, a body affiliated with the Saudi Defense Ministry dedicated to combatting extremist and terrorist ideology.

Dr. Al-Issa's groundbreaking interfaith efforts include his trip to Auschwitz in January 2020 for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp. The Auschwitz Museum declared it the most senior Islamic delegation ever to visit. He has been recognized by the American Jewish Committee, the American Sephardi Federation and the Combat Anti-Semitism Movement for his leadership and initiatives to combat anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and hate speech around the world. In 2019, Dr. Al-Issa led representatives of the Abrahamic religions in France in signing an agreement for peace and solidarity, and held a conference on reconciliation in Sri Lanka to heal inter-religious divides created by the terrible Easter terrorist attacks. Dr. Al-Issa also met with His Holiness Pope Francis in 2017 to forge a first of its kind agreement between MWL and the Vatican.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) has described Dr. Al-Issa as "the most powerful voice in the Muslim world promoting moderate Islam." Cardinal Timothy Dolan has called Dr. Al-Issa "the most eloquent spokesman in the Islamic world for reconciliation and friendship among the religions." President Russell Nelson of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said, "You are a peacemaker. You are a bridge builder. And we need more leaders like you." President Ari Berman of Yeshiva University hailed Dr. Al-Issa's efforts to rebuild the historic relationship between Muslims and Jews through engaging and educating the next generation of leaders.

U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback has praised Dr. Al-Issa's partnership in bringing together the Abrahamic faiths and pushing back against forces of hate, calling him "a constituent of the future, of what the world needs, and will look like in the future. I applaud it." U.S. Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combatting anti-Semitism Elan Carr applauded Dr. Al-Issa's "remarkable vision and his

commitment to turning over a new chapter and building a new future for the sake of not only Jewish and Christian children, but for the sake of all the children of the world who deserve this better future of decency and justice and tolerance and love that we know we can build for them, thanks to his leadership.”

The 2020 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism recognized Dr. Al-Issa’s achievements in countering violent extremism: “The Muslim World League Secretary General, Dr. Mohammad al-Issa, pressed a message of interfaith dialogue, religious tolerance, and peaceful coexistence with global religious authorities, including Muslim imams outside the Arab world. He also conducted outreach with a variety of Jewish and Christian leaders, including prominent U.S. rabbis and Christian evangelicals.”

The 2019 U.S. State Department Report on Counterterrorism hailed Dr. Al-Issa’s leadership in promoting moderate Islam: “He continues to work hard to deliver the message of moderation and coexistence internationally, including efforts to reach out to Muslim minority communities, Jewish communities in the United States and Europe, and Christian churches in the Middle East. ”

LEADERSHIP OF THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

Dr. Al-Issa assumed his current role as Secretary-General of the Muslim World League in August 2016. In the same year, he became Chairman of the International Body of Muslim Scholars and a member of the Senior Scholars Organization in Saudi Arabia.

As Secretary-General, Dr. Al-Issa has travelled extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia, meeting with dignitaries and parliamentarians from the fields of justice, law and human rights, as well as major faith-based and community leaders.

He represented the Muslim world in commemorating the annual anniversary of the atomic bomb dropping on Hiroshima, Japan, in 2017, in the presence of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He established the Centre for Responsible Leadership, an initiative dedicated to assembling global thought leaders to find sustainable solutions to the societal challenges facing the world today.

To advance his vision of civilizational and cultural dialogue, Dr. Al-Issa visited the Vatican in September 2017 to meet Pope Francis and the late Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Those discussions led to an unprecedented partnership between the MWL and The Holy See, and paved the way for the most senior visit ever by a Vatican official to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April 2018.

In 2019, Dr. Al-Issa visited Sri Lanka to meet with Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders to promote healing and integration in the wake of the country’s deadly Easter attacks. He received the Order of Peace from Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena.

Under Dr. Al-Issa, the Muslim World League has expanded representation of various sects of Islam within the Muslim World League Supreme Council and other subsidiary bodies to ensure the inclusion of all Muslim communities around the world.

Dr. Al-Issa continues to meet with senior leaders of politics, religion, science, thought and culture to explore ways to advance constructive cooperation and counteract extremism. He has advocated holistic strategies that focus on dialogue and education to immunize communities of different religions against the threat of extremism. He has introduced policy initiatives to address hate speech and racism that incites violent extremism.

Over the past two years, Dr. Al-Issa has signed several cooperation agreements with some of the largest Jewish institutions operating in the United States and globally. The agreements included the largest synagogue in the U.S. and the AJC, and focus on promoting common values, protecting religious sites of worship and building greater interfaith understanding. In September 2019, he orchestrated the first agreement between leaders of the Abrahamic religions in Paris, joining Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christian leaders in an agreement committing to harmony and solidarity. In 2020, Dr. Al-Issa finalized a cooperation agreement with the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, in another interreligious initiative without precedent.

In January 2020, Dr. Al-Issa became the most senior Islamic leader to visit the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp as part of a joint MWL-AJC visit to Jewish historical and cultural sites in Poland. As part of this trip, he lit candles before the Death Wall at Auschwitz and the International Monument at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Dr. Al-Issa also visited the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Nozyk Synagogue, the only surviving prewar Jewish house of prayer in Warsaw.

Dr. Al-Issa joined German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the AJC Virtual Global Forum opening plenary in June 2020, joining in their call for dialogue and cooperation to create a better, more equal world free of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and any other form of prejudice.

Later that month, he joined Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg in a virtual symposium focused on fighting hate and discrimination. "Knowledge and dialogue are vital in the fight against hate and discrimination," she said, recognizing the groundbreaking work by the Muslim World League on this front.

Throughout 2020, Dr. Al-Issa oversaw a comprehensive research project in partnership with the United Nations University for Peace, which culminated in a launch of the book "Promote Peace, Human Rights and Civilized Dialogue," in November 2020. The research project and book included input from 32 prominent religious, political, academic and civil society leaders representing the vast cultural diversity on display around the world. The book outlines a model for achieving stronger international cooperation and uniting the global visions to address some of the world's greatest problems.

Most recently, in June 2021, Dr. Al-Issa brokered a groundbreaking agreement between government ministers and senior scholars from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The "Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan" creates a roadmap for reconciliation in the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan.

THE CHARTER OF MAKKAH

Widely considered one of the most important documents in modern Islamic history, the Charter of Makkah calls for combatting hate speech, violence, extremism and terrorism around the world, while advancing the principles of moderate Islam and interfaith partnership.

The historic charter was unanimously endorsed by more than 1,200 notable Muslim scholars at the culmination of the Makkah Conference, held by the MWL in May 2019. Dr. Al-Issa led the four-day conference, which include participants representing every sect of Islam.

The charter follows the precedent of the Charter of Medina, drafted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) nearly fourteen centuries ago to preserve the diversity of the Islamic Ummah and form the basis of interreligious cooperation. The Charter of Makkah stresses that religious and cultural diversity in the modern world does not justify conflict, but rather reinforces the need for dialogue, understanding and cooperation to fight injustice, oppression and the obstacles to peaceful coexistence. The Charter includes provisions for protecting the environment, cultural traditions and national sovereignty.

EDUCATION AND EARLY CAREER

Born and raised in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Al-Issa completed his studies at the University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, where he earned a master's degree and a PhD in Comparative Judicial Studies (Constitutional Law).

Thereafter, Dr. Al-Issa held many prestigious public offices in Saudi Arabia. He worked as a judge in the Ministry of Justice, rising to the highest rank of Chief Appellate Judge. In April 2007, he was appointed Vice President of the Court of Grievances. And in February 2009, Dr. Al-Issa was appointed Minister of Justice and an Advisor at the Royal Court.

As Minister of Justice, Dr. Al-Issa was credited both in Saudi Arabia and abroad for ushering in several key reforms, including legislative reforms in family matters, humanitarian cases, and for the rights of women.

In November of 2012, the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice selected him as its honorary president. He joined the teaching staff at the College of Law and Political Science at King Saud University, and the Higher Judicial Institute of Al-Imam Mohammad Bin Saud Islamic University.

As a leader in combatting violent extremism in all its forms, Dr. Al-Issa was appointed General Supervisor at the Ideological Warfare Center in December 2015, where he has led efforts to combat the proliferation of extremist ideology on social media and elsewhere.

Since 2017, he has served as General Supervisor of the King Salman Center for International Peace (KSIPC) in Malaysia. The Kingdom of Malaysia awarded Dr. Al-Issa its highest award, the "Dato Seri" at a ceremony convened by the Sultan Muhammad V. The Republic of Singapore also has honored Dr. Al-Issa for his international efforts in promoting tolerance, coexistence and peace.

In August 2017, Dr. Al-Issa delivered a keynote speech on behalf of Muslims at the International Summit on Religion at Mount Hiei in Kyoto, Japan, presided over by the chief priest of the Tendai Buddhist sect. A year later, Dr. Al-Issa delivered an address on behalf of Muslims around the world at the 39th Meeting for Friendship Among People in the Italian city of Rimini.

AWARDS

Dr. Al-Issa is the recipient of numerous domestic and international awards for his leadership in promoting interreligious dialogue and moderation and fighting extremism and hateful rhetoric.

In November 2021, Dr. Al-Issa received the Norwegian Bridge Builder Award for his contributions to building bridges between individuals, nations and societies. The Award Committee commended Dr. Al-Issa as a leading force in promoting moderation, peace and cooperation among all communities, faiths and beliefs.

In August 2021, Malaysia bestowed on Dr. Al-Issa the Prophet's Hijra Award in recognition of his efforts in highlighting the true, moderate principles of Islam, promoting harmony among different faiths, religions and cultures, and spreading world peace.

In July 2021, Dr. Al-Issa was awarded an honorary doctorate by the U.N.'s University of Peace for "outstanding efforts in supporting international diplomacy, promoting friendship and cooperation among people, and effective endeavors in combating hate."

In May 2021, Dr. Al-Issa was awarded the Golden Shield Award by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) for his efforts in providing joint Islamic action and promoting the universal values of peace and harmony.

In 2020, Dr. Al-Issa was the recipient of the inaugural Combat Anti-Semitism Award for his contributions toward fighting anti-Semitism and forces of hatred and violence around the world. Dr. Al-Issa was the first recipient of the prestigious award given by the Combat Anti-Semitism Movement and the American Sephardi Federation.

In 2019, Dr. Al-Issa received an honorary doctorate from the Institute of Orientalism in the Federal Republic of Russia. In Sri Lanka, President Maithripala Sirisena awarded Dr. Al-Issa the Supreme Republic Medal for his global efforts in promoting peace among different faith and religious groups. And in Senegal, President Macky Sall conferred on Dr. Al-Issa the Grand Order of the State in recognition of his global efforts in promoting religious moderation, intercultural harmony, and humanitarian programs around the world.

At the 40th annual Rimini Meeting hosted by the Florence School of Advanced Studies for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Dr. Al-Issa was awarded the "Children of Abraham" award alongside the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding's Rabbi Marc Schneider.

Dr. Al-Issa also received the Peace Prize from the Arab-American Relations Council in Washington, D.C. in 2019.

In 2018, Dr. Al-Issa was awarded the Galileo International Award of 2018, awarded by the Galileo Foundation in Florence, Italy, for his international achievements and pioneering leadership in promoting religious and cultural peace and harmony.

Dr. Al-Issa also received the Moderation Prize of 2018 from the Governor of Makkah Region for his distinguished and outstanding efforts in promoting moderation.

IN THE MEDIA

In the past year, Dr. Al-Issa has been published in leading international publications, spreading his vision of moderation and mutual understanding.

- [Islamic scholars can turn the Taliban towards moderation](#) (*The Times of London*)
- [To save Muslim lives, let Muslims tell their own stories](#) (*The Washington Post*)
- [Religion's Role in Climate Conversations](#) (*Newsweek*)
- [Ramadan a chance to dispel vaccinations myths across Islamic world](#) (*The Sydney Morning Herald*)
- [Social media brings out the hate in individuals](#) (*Washington Times*)
- [Mohammad Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League: "The error? Importing those radical imams"](#) (*Translated from Italian Daily Corriere Della Sera*)
- [Rejecting hatred and embracing tolerance is the true heart of Islam](#) (*Arab News*)
- [Tolerance for Judaism and Christianity at the heart of Islam, MWL chief says](#) (*Arab News*)
- [Saudi leader of Muslim World League: Interfaith Partnerships during pandemic 'religious, moral duty'](#) (*Al-Monitor*)
- [How Auschwitz has united Muslims and Jews](#) (*Chicago Tribune*)
- [Why Muslims from around the world should remember the Holocaust](#) (*The Washington Post*)
- [I Lead the Muslim World League. Here is Why I Broke Taboos To Acknowledge the Holocaust](#) (*Newsweek*)
- [My advice to Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib](#) (*Fox News*)
- [A Ramadan for the World](#) (*The Washington Times*)
- [As Head of the Muslim World League, I See Islamic Leaders Calling for Tolerance More than Ever](#) (*Newsweek*)
- [Opinion for All: Muslims and Latter-day Saints can be leaders in building tolerance](#) (*Deseret News*)