

# THE MWL JOURNAL

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## MWL and Scandinavian Council discuss national identity, human unity and trafficking





# Letter From the Editor

## Dialogues for the future

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has recently held talks and open dialogues with the senior political, religious, intellectual and media figures in both the United States and Europe. These dialogues were very constructive because they increase international cooperation and build on the common ground that all parties shared. These dialogues serve the civilizational communication for the future aimed at promoting ties among nations and peoples.

This was highlighted by several research institutions that praised the international initiatives of the Muslim World League with the aim of reinforcing peace and harmony among nations and peoples together with clarifying the true image of the Islamic religion and dispelling misconceptions.

Undoubtedly, such efforts were given more attention by these institutions including the US State Department's recent report praising the current role of the Muslim World League and the latest articles published by the US newspapers on the pivotal work in the light of the initiatives and programs that have been implemented globally by Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa. Rector of Utah University Professor Kevin Worthen lauded this important role. He said during the ceremony in honor of the Secretary General: "It is a great honor to have you here today at our university, especially you are now a global figure and your arduous efforts are evident in building bridges among the followers of religions and

cultures, and we are very grateful for that. We recognize that there are many positive common denominators that bring us together with the Muslims you represent".

Hence, the initiatives of the Muslim World League proved that the Islamic religion represents peace and the positive communication with all, and the adoption of positions that develop awareness of the issues of dialogue and tolerance among nations and peoples. In the same context, the serious discussions taking place in the cities of Oslo and Stockholm highlighted the issues of the human brotherhood and human trafficking with the purpose of establishing a sustainable action. This is made through initiatives and programs based on a common vision, and shows the role of religious institutions and civil society organizations in the fight against the phenomenon of human trafficking that afflicts the world today.

All these strenuous efforts go in line with Makkah Charter issued by the Muslim World League, which recognizes that Muslims are part of this world's civilizational interaction. They also seek to communicate with all peoples of the world to achieve the benefit of humankind, promote its noble values, and build bridges of love and human harmony. Another goal is to address the practices of injustice, clash of civilizations and disadvantages of hatred as well as achieve coexistence, which requires the cooperation among the global leaders and the international institutions.



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## MWL and Scandinavian Council discuss **national identity, human unity and trafficking**

### Scandinavia - MWL

*The Muslim World League (MWL) organized a raft of events, forums and dialogues with the participation of Scandinavian countries including Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Norway under the leadership of the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.*





*Dr. Al-Issa at the opening of the  
Copenhagen Symposium*

## **REJECTING THE USE OF RELIGION IN POLITICAL CONFLICTS BY EXTREM- IST FORCES AND EVIL OR- GANIZATIONS**

The issues of national identity, intellectual security, human unity and their human denominators were raised during the meetings which saw the participation of the Scandinavian Council and religious, UN, international, political, intellectual, and legal and media figures together with representatives of religious and civil organizations and the diplomatic corps in Scandinavia.

On behalf of the Muslim World League that includes a number of international bodies with more than 3220 scholars and intellectuals from 137 countries, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa welcomed the participants and attendees from Scandinavian countries. He made clear that the Muslim World League, through its new vision, has built bridges of cooperation

with all faiths and cultures via important and effective actions. It also paid more attention to building the proper personality of the youth.

During the seminar of the national identity and intellectual security in Copenhagen, the capital of the State of Denmark, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said, “We, at the Muslim World League, are keen to raise awareness inside and outside the Islamic world. We are aware that there are groups having a religious enthusiasm that contradicts the true image of Islam”.

He also added, “We have declared from Europe that Muslims living abroad should respect the laws and culture of the countries in which they live. They should not accept



any imported fatwas and ideas that contradict the nature of these communities because every state has its own conditions and nature. This enlightened principle clearly mentioned in the Charter of Makkah approved by more than 1,200 scholars and intellectuals representing all doctrines and Islamic sects of 27 Islamic components. This is considered an unprecedented historical consent in the Islamic world”.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa continued, “We are pleased to clarify from our point of view and in the name of the Islamic people under the umbrella of the Muslim World League that Muslims in Denmark and Scandinavian countries are national with distinction and respect the constitution of their country. Their laws and culture and their behaviors reflect the true meaning of the national brotherhood and the single social family”.

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League stressed the importance of taking into account the timing and location of each country. The legal rules and jurisprudence in Denmark are different from others because every country has its own legal, cultural and customary specificity. This is clear-cut in the Islamic Shari’ah.

Regarding the concept of human unity, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa delivered a speech in the seminar themed “Brotherhood Humanity Brings us Together” in the capital of Norway, Oslo. He said, “We are brothers and sisters from one father and mother. The current diversity classified as richness for humanity. The evil did best to turn this human richness into a curse. Despite these evil endeavors, the right is prevailing and always be victorious”.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed that man is in



*MWL Secretary General delivered his speech at the opening of the Copenhagen Symposium*

a dire need for living a decent life based on supreme values including the preservation of rights and freedoms and achieving peace and harmony among members of the one human family. He pointed out that achieving the human fraternity begins with the realization of the national fraternity that respects its religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. The one land brings hearts together and unifies goals and purposes.

Regarding the phenomenon of human trafficking, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, during the inauguration of the seminar themed “Phenomenon of Human Trafficking: Reality and Aspiration” held in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, pointed out that the intensive presence and interaction with MWL’s call to discuss the issue stresses the seriousness of influential elites in studying the dimensions of this global phenomenon that jeopardizes

An urgent call to take into account the timing and location of societies and rejecting fatwas and cross-border visions

humanity. He, on behalf of the League, denounced this crime in all its forms, which is a flagrant violation of human dignity in an era when human civilization came to a head, affirming that laws and rules of religions aim at creating a world in which values prevail.





*Dr. Al-Issa delivered his speech at the opening of the Oslo seminar*

## Establishing a global alliance base on spiritual and human denominators

These values aimed at respecting human dignity and living a decent life.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added, “Our time is still suffering from an ethical crisis that resulted in the commodification and consumption of people. This created the phenomenon of slavery and servitude in its new form by cross-bordered international gangs

backed by corruption and indifference”. He also confirmed that today’s world with all its countries, organizations and specialized bodies seeks to fight this crime as a disgrace to humanity. The world needs a stronger will and effective measures to combat this phenomenon. This heinous crime centered on women and children. It also took many other forms including the use of poverty suffered by refugees and the displaced.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa called for applying the international penalties against any country that is classified as origin or crossing of this crime that represents a challenge for the international will and a violation of human dignity together with threatening international security and peace. He made clear that the MWL, all scholars and bodies should exert arduous efforts to eradicate this heinous crime through many contributions and supporting the efforts

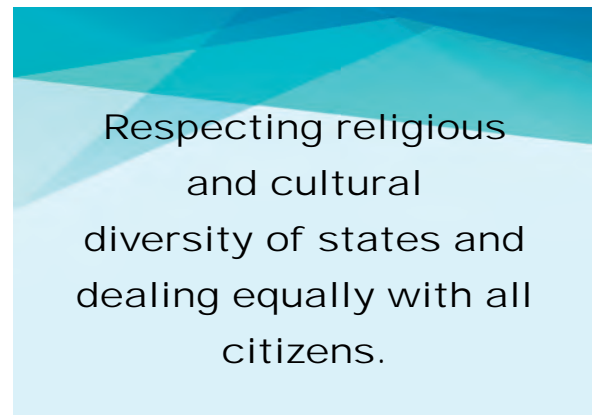


*The Participants at the opening of the Oslo seminar*

of combating the illegal migration that worries all countries.

Those taking part in the meetings of the Muslim World League in the Scandinavian states provided valuable recommendations that call for acquitting the religious texts from misunderstanding established by extremists who snatch religion away from its noble principles that reinforce the values of peace and harmony among all and call for justice, mercy and love.

The recommendations also stressed the rejection of using the religion by the extremist forces and evil organizations in the political conflicts to achieve personal goals and selfish purposes. They agreed to cooperate and coordinate in the face of these terrorist phenomena and extremist ideas. The participants called for overlooking conflicts of the past because our world needs harmony and



tolerance among followers of religions. They stressed the importance of taking into account the particularities of each community and rejecting the imported fatwas and ideas together with emphasizing the effectiveness of the values of human rights and freedom controlled by respecting laws and regulations.





*The participants at the opening of the Stockholm Symposium*

The recommendations called on the wise people around the world to establish a new global alliance of supreme human values and noble principles and ethics with the aim of creating a world prevailed by peace security, justice and harmony together with adopting the culture of dialogue to create a better future. The recommendations stressed the importance of highlighting the role of religion as a basis for establishing a culture of fraternity in various human communities with its different considerations and combating all forms of sedition and conflict recalled by the extremist forces that seek to provoke violence and counter-violence.

There were calls for activating societal rapprochement programs, removing obstacles to communication within the same country and rejecting the isolation policies in residential neighborhoods and schools that

prevent children from integrating into their society. The recommendations underscored the importance of having optional hours in the religious culture in the general education curricula, in addition to calling on states to respect religious, cultural and ethnic diversity together with reinforcing the role of law and constitution for each country. This will guarantee fair participation in the homeland and mutual trust among its members.

The conferees called for providing assistance to those in need including victims of wars, disasters and the poor without discrimination among religion, race and color together with supporting education plans and family care in poor countries. Regarding human trafficking, the participants affirmed that it is one of the most dangerous cross-bordered international crimes representing a new form of slavery. They also called for



*Dr. Al-Issa delivered his speech at the opening of the Stockholm Symposium*

creating a regional system in the relevant countries to eliminate smuggling and illegal immigration together with coordinating among relevant security bodies to put those charged on trial.

The participants thanked the competent authorities in the Kingdom of Sweden that contributed to the success of the forum. They extended gratitude for the initiative presented by Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa in this matter. Scandinavia's conferences and events endorsed the historic Makkah Charter, approved by 1,200 senior muftis, intellectuals and scholars, in establishing coexistence and civilizational coexistence among nations and peoples together with respecting the diversity and difference among humans and respecting rights and freedoms, empowerment of women and family support.

Calling for  
protecting victims of  
**human trafficking from**  
gangs and  
providing security for  
refugees and the  
displaced.





## Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa receives Al Hassan Bin Ali Award

### Abu Dhabi - MWL

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), received this year's Imam Al Hassan Bin Ali Award for Promoting Peace in recognition of his outstanding international efforts in promoting peace and tolerance around the world.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa was honored during one of the largest gatherings of religious and

intellectual leaders, and in the presence of a myriad of politicians around the world who are staunch supporters of peace and tolerance values.

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of State of Tolerance in UAE, gave out the award to Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa in the presence of Nigerian Vice President and Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Chairman of the Fatwa Council in UAE and President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim



*MWL SG receives the Award for Promoting Peace and Tolerance*

Societies, along with a large number of international Islamic intellectual and political figures.

This global award aims to recognize hardworking and tangible efforts towards promoting peace and tolerance. The award is named after a prominent Islamic figure, the renowned companion Imam Al Hassan Bin Ali, Allah be pleased with them, about whom our noble Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, “This son of mine is a chief, and perhaps Allah will use him to reconcile between two large factions of Muslims.”

The organizers of the Forum for Promoting Peace in UAE said that Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa is viewed as a global figure who works to promote the culture of peace and tolerance all over the world. They also described him as a globally-renowned scholar who enjoys prestigious academic standing and strong

and profound knowledge of Shari’ah, which well qualified him to lead fruitful dialogues with religious, political, intellectual, and human rights figures around the world.

In his speech, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa commended the forum for focusing on the role of religions in promoting peace, noting that this should send out a clear message to all religious leaders around the world reminding them of their responsibilities for promoting promote values and ethics.

He pointed out that tolerance is an inherent value of Islam and that tolerance means acceptance of persons with different views and religions, citing the hadith of Prophet, peace be upon him, “The best aspect of faith is patience and tolerance.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa explained that many religious texts are interpreted by some as if they were against the values of tolerance.





“It is important that religious texts should be interpreted correctly in order to understand their truth and real meaning. Interpretation requires a strong knowledge of this field because the interpretation of certain texts can be found in another text that is related to the same subject. It is wrong to select certain texts and interpret them the way you like. This is a grave mistake,” he stressed.

He continued, “It is important to understand the purposes of religious texts that promote mercy, tolerance, and consideration to achieve the interests of all people. The purpose of Shari’ah is not to impose restrictions or promote conflicts or clashes.”

Muslim scholars, he noted, said Shari’ah came to facilitate the interests of people. Fatwas and rulings differ according to times, places, conditions, customs, intentions, and people. The Makkah Declaration promotes

these lofty values and was endorsed by more than one thousand two hundred muftis and scholars from twenty-seven Islamic doctrines and sects representing all the Islamic components in an exceptional gathering under the umbrella of the Holy City of Makkah, and it is the first of its kind in the Islamic history”.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa concluded by saying: “There is no doubt that the presence of Muslim scholars and thought leaders alongside their counterparts from other religions in this forum is a positive thing, as scholars and thought leaders are primarily responsible for promoting peace and tolerance.”

He expressed his pride in the award which carries an important message: motivation for more work to serve the Islamic and humanitarian values related to peace and tolerance issues.

# MWL Chief talks to the Saudi Media Forum

## Riyadh - MWL

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, highlighted the important role played by the media, Islamic organizations and Muslims in reflecting the true image of Islam and dispelling distortion and misconception about Islam.

During a session themed “Islamophobia: Crisis of Thought or Crisis of Media”, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa pointed out that art carries a significant message but sometimes may strengthen dangerous concepts among youth in particular.

The Secretary General addressed the relationship between the message of the media and the phenomenon of Islamophobia and how the media is facing and handling this phenomenon. He underscored the importance of changing the stereotypes reflected by the counter-media, which uses the term “Islamophobia” for its own interests, as well as the risks of the term and the efforts needed to stop the spread of the Islamophobia and its uses.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said, “The Saudi Media Forum will tackle professionally and objectively the issue of the Islamophobia as well as the important issues that have remained unaddressed for a long time”. He stressed that Islamophobia is a term that needs to be tackled and explored thoroughly with more focus on its causes, analysis and solutions.



He noted that this term and its negative effects have increased because of extremist and terrorist organizations, which are falsely attributed to Islam and due to the increasing discourse of extremism and radicalization, as well as the widening of the religious, cultural and civilizational gap and absence of positive dialogue with the other. This has multiplied the negative effects of Islamophobia.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa drew attention to the prevailing belief claiming that the discourse of Islamophobia was founded on clear justifications. He also talked about the criticism levelled at the term from the Muslim World, highlighting the key and prominent role played by the media and thought in this regard.



## MWL praises security officers for thwarting a terrorist act

### Makkah - MWL

The Secretary-General of the Muslim World League (MWL) and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Organization for Muslim Scholars Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa commended the qualitative efforts of security officers in thwarting an imminent terrorist act, which was announced by the Presidency of State Security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said that these great efforts helped thwart terrorist plots and defeat the menace of terrorism. Allah the Almighty has protected the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and guided it to the Shari'ah, of which the Kingdom is proud. The Kingdom is blessed because it has defeated this evil, thanks to its vigilant security officers who carried out well-planned operations that quelled terrorism threats, which wanted to wreak havoc through desperate terrorist attempts. The vigilant security officers have put an end to these attempts.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added that the Muslim World League and the International Organization for Muslim Scholars highly value the great efforts

undertaken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to combat terrorism through intellectual figures, security officers and the media. The Kingdom employs efficient and intricate measures in order to root out the sources of evil and clamp down on all financing sources. The MWL Secretary General hailed the global intellectual platforms the Kingdom has launched to combat all forms and types of terrorist ideologies and extremist thoughts.

The Kingdom, he said, has become - by the grace of Allah - a global model for strong determination in fighting terrorism and dismantling its misguided ideology. It has shown the world the truth about Islam, which was sent to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by Allah Almighty as a mercy for the whole world to perfect their deeds and as a religion of justice, peace and love for everything that is good.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa prayed that Allah the Almighty will protect the Kingdom, its citizens and residents of all nationalities as well as the Arab and the Islamic World and the entire humanity. He also prayed that the evil and the enemy wherever they are be defeated like their predecessors and that their evil actions backfire at them.



## **Dr. Al-Issa meets Chairman of Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly**

### **Riyadh - MWL**

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa received at his office the Chairman of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (PCA), Mr. Bambang Susatyo.

Mr. Susatyo praised the strenuous efforts exerted by the Secretary General of the Muslim World League on dispelling misconceptions about Islam and Muslims all over the world

through highlighting the true image of Islam in the face of hostile media campaigns and extremism targeting Islam.

Mr. Susatyo extended an invitation to Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa to visit Jakarta and meet all spectra of the Indonesian people in fraternal meetings with the Muslim World League's officials, appreciating the Indonesian representation in the membership of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League through the Indonesian religious figures.





## MWL completes rehabilitation of irrigation canals in Mogadishu

### Mogadishu - MWL

*The Muslim World League (MWL) has completed a project to rehabilitate the irrigation canals along the Shabelle River, which feeds more than 300 hectares of reclaimed land in the Jowhar area, south of the Somali capital Mogadishu.*



*Dr. Al-Issa with a number of beneficiaries of the MWL's projects in the African continent*

MWL's Secretary-General, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, said that the MWL, through its International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (Welfare), undertakes ceaseless efforts in the depth of Africa and focuses, along with its relief work, on development. He stressed that the MWL does not differentiate between the beneficiaries, but provides its services to everyone as it is the mercy of Islam. He also stressed that the MWL, through its Welfare, has implemented various programs in the depth

of Africa, including villages in many countries, guardianship of orphans and widows and the distribution of houses.

Welfare's Secretary General, Mr. Abdul Rahman Matar, explained that Welfare, under the guidance and follow-up of His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, was keen on carrying out programs to enable the population to benefit from natural resources, and that these water channels covered by relief and urgent development programs serve as the backbone of agriculture in the





area of Jowhar, south of Mogadishu, and the disruption of water flow was the result of a large amount of soil sediment and waste accumulation over the past twenty years, which led to the cessation of farming work, which is the basis of development in Somalia.

Mr. Matar explained that the operation of these channels is very important for farmers. It creates a great economic development and activity through the production of agricultural crops that Somalia is famous for. He added that

the number of beneficiaries of the operation of these canals exceeds 650 families living in 46 different villages so that each family can reclaim 2.5 hectares on the banks of these canals which extend to a depth of four kilometers and a width and height of more than two meters. He pointed out that Welfare has completed the study of an integrated project for the development of local communities through an agricultural project in cooperation with the local authorities to rehabilitate a 6-kilometer irrigation canal in



Kismayo to enable more than 200 families to exploit 300 hectares of agricultural lands for the benefit of the locals; following international standards in the implementation of sustainable development programs and objectives, especially through the establishment of agricultural associations in line with official and legal procedures to educate farmers on the best ways to grow crops, as well as the distribution of large quantities of seeds and agricultural tools to farmers adjacent to these canals.

The MWL has been implementing mega developmental and agricultural projects in various regions of the African continent, such as reclamation of many agricultural lands, saving water, digging wells and establishing earthen dams. It will soon approve a project for storing and keeping water in Halaba Valley in northern Somalia, as well as reclaiming a vast area of agricultural lands in the south of Hargeisa to enable thousands of displaced people to earn and live through the official cooperative societies.





## Electronic Reader .. Technology in the service of Qur'an

*By Nizar Abdulbagi Ahmed*

*The centers of Qur'an memorization in most Arab and Islamic countries have played a great role during the past period in the preservation and teaching of the Noble Qur'an, especially for young people. This effort has had the greatest impact on the graduation of generations to continue memorizing the Noble Qur'an.*



In spite of this active role, the complexities that have emerged in our modern life may discourage young people from going to mosques. These complexities include the multitasking, the preoccupation of students and youth with their scientific lessons, that may take a major part of their day's hours, in addition to the rapid developments in the world, especially in the field of technology, and the distracting entertainment activities.

Many officials in the Quranic learning societies pointed to the emergence of negative phenomena, such as lack of enthusiasm, poor performance, and the failure of some teachers to perform their duties, the presence of other attractive offers, especially in this era when the material needs have increased. In this situation it was necessary to search for innovative solutions to continue memorizing

the Qur'an. The electronic readers use technology in memorizing the Qur'an and offer this service through telephone and online.

Electronic and telephone reading is a modern technology that contributes to the full opportunity to teach the Qur'an correctly for many Muslims in non-Muslim countries, who do not have qualified and sufficient teachers to meet the growing need, as many western people convert to Islam.

#### **Easy and smooth**

For the telephone service, specialized and certified teachers listen to the reader and correct his error. This allows everyone to learn the Qur'an at the comfort of their homes and offices in an easy way, simply by calling a specific number that is available through several telephone lines anytime of the day.





Each teacher has a certain number of hours. The telephone readership is a qualitative leap in addition to the various services provided by memorization societies, and can help all segments of society who are unable to attend mosques, especially women, and those who do not have access to the Internet, or do not have full knowledge of modern technologies. It is also easier and less expensive, and requires no more than a fixed or mobile phone, so it is playing a major role in memorizing the Qur'an.

### Modern technology

The electronic reading system is based on the Internet, where certain dates are set during the hours of the day, taking into account the

return of students from school. The teacher enters on the system through the Internet browser then starts the lesson. By using a screen, he can broadcast his lesson in audio and video to the learners. He can listen to his students, correct them, and write notes. The benefits are not limited to students who recite only, but all attendees listening to the observations made by the teacher, and overcoming the mistakes mentioned. The teacher explains the lesson using an electronic blackboard to write on for further explanation, supported by teaching aids and presentations. As the benefits are general, anyone can call the teacher and make a private call after the lesson. Students can also record the entire lecture to listen to it later.

### Social Responsibility

Despite the importance of adopting the technical means of spreading the Holy Qur'an, some believe that this is a great responsibility that requires a lot of effort and money. Associations may not be able to do it alone, due to the increasing demand for the use of this technology by students and scholars, which requires hiring many teachers and technicians and using the latest computers. They pointed the need to activate the role of private sector, especially in the presence of many national companies that contribute to charity work. Therefore, the contribution of these companies should be increased in the localization of the means of technology, and training of human competencies, to provide an opportunity to teach the Holy Qur'an to all segments of society, and to allow young people to benefit from the positive uses of technology, because it will keep them away from harmful applications.

### Growing attention

The First International Conference on Teaching the Holy Qur'an paid special attention to the use of technology, stressing that this would make the transition from regional and limited use, in terms of numbers and categories of beneficiaries, to expansion globally. It will also facilitate the application of distance learning, get benefit from them in teaching the Noble Qur'an, and provide education for those wishing to learn the Qur'an anytime anywhere. It can build bridges to communicate with the Muslim communities living abroad, through charities to memorize the Qur'an.

The conference mentioned several recommendations, including development and enhancement of electronic reader sites, using multimedia, and the design



of a distinctive Islamic site for electronic reading, and exchange of experiences between institutions within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world, to create electronic Quranic schools teaching the Qur'an and Sunnah through the Internet. The conference called for the use of mobile







phone technology and the development of a technical system, which helps to use it as a new educational means.

### **Paperless work**

The director of the Charity for Memorizing

the Holy Qur'an in Jeddah, Eng. Abdulaziz Hanafi, says that the society is the pioneer in this regard, "Our society is the first that raised the slogan "paperless work" to use computers in all branches of the society, and for the entire administrative work."

He added, "All the work is done through the computer, as well as the electronic reading project implemented by the Institute of Imam Shatby, to provide Quranic courses to improve the recitation, and lessons of intonation through Paltalk program, in addition to other programs such as Inspik , Yahoo Messenger and Hotmail Messenger."

He stressed that there is a huge interaction between the teacher and those wishing to participate through the Internet. The electronic reader was established in Rajab 1424 AH and offered its service for two hours a day, and there was a high demand and turnout from all over the world, he said.



### Extended programs

Hanafi explained that this turnout encouraged the Institute's management to adopt the idea to be permanently, to serve the Muslim community by raising awareness of the importance of the Holy Qur'an and its sciences, and extending the activities of the Institute geographically to all parts of the world by utilizing modern means of technology.

The project comes within several programs offered by the Institute of Imam Shatby, including the Diploma of Teacher Preparation, and Diploma of Reading Science and comprehensive rehabilitation program. All these efforts are exerted to qualify teachers of the Holy Qur'an and prepare them well as well qualify and train employees. They aim to publish Quranic research and studies, facilitate access to specialized information in

the Qur'an and its sciences, develop curricula and methods of learning and teaching the Holy Qur'an and adapt modern technology, and graduate readers, and teach the rules of intonation and recitation rules for all segments of society.

### Technical harness

The director of the charity for memorizing the Holy Qur'an in Al-Qassim, Sheikh Suleiman bin Abdul Rahman Al-Rubai, explained the importance of using modern means for spreading the Qur'an, and attracting young people to memorization workshops through this technology, stressing that many associations, including Al-Qassim Association, have taken good steps in employing these methods to carry out the great message towards the Qur'an, as well as in administrative aspects



and to follow-up supervision of associations.

He added, “We use electronic readers in morning and evening lessons in distance education. We have qualified staff who know how to deal with these modern means and employ it in line with the requirements of the age. Associations should also establish courses for students to show them the technical developments and how to deal with them”.

Sheikh Salama Kamel Qenawi, a member of Al-Azhar Qur’an Review Committee, believes that an electronic reader is a method of learning using modern communication mechanisms, whether it is abroad or in a classroom. He said in a press interview, “Such technology is used to deliver information to the learner in the shortest time, the least effort, and the most useful way. It is an innovation of the modern age. There was no difference between distance

and virtual education, the most important aspect is hearing. The teacher listens to the student and does not need to see him.”

#### **Various benefits**

Qenawi says the electronic readers facilitate communication between the student and the teacher, the process of learning as it allows students to get in touch with qualified teachers from different parts of the world. A woman can learn at home and does not need to attend classes of Qur’an memorization. The electronic readers makes women get rid of the embarrassment associated with memorizing the Holy Qur’an as some believe that memorization is only for children not adults. The schedule is more flexible while lessons are less expensive. Qenawi also said the electronic reader is beneficial for countries that do not have sufficient specialized centers and scholars.



## TECHNOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE QUR'AN

Due to the technological revolution in the contemporary world, many problems have arisen facing the workshops and associations of Qur'an memorization, because of the demand of most young people and children for these technologies. With the additional problems of increasing the operating expenses of associations, electronic readers emerged and attracted young people to the memorization and study of the Qur'an. They offered solutions to many problems, such as finding a suitable time, during which the student can communicate with his sheikh and continue to memorize the Qur'an.

### ADVANTAGES OF ELECTRONIC READER

- Easy communication between student and teacher
- Helping women get rid of embarrassment
- Ranking between study and memorization
- Overcoming geographical differences
- Reducing study expenses
- Saving mobility times
- Solving the problem of shortage of scholars



### PROBLEMS FACING ASSOCIATIONS

- Absence of students
- Poor performance
- Teachers' failure to perform duty
- Spread of entertainment
- Lack of ongoing support
- Students' preoccupation with their schools
- Increasing administrative expenses

### DIFFICULTIES AND OBSTACLES

- High operating cost
- Shortage of qualified staff
- Difficult access to the Internet
- Low knowledge between students and scholars
- The large number of students
- Outbreak of technical illiteracy
- Lack of financial support

# The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility in Islamic culture

Tasnuva Jahan

*The perception of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been widely accepted all over the world during the last few decades. It is considered a suitable structure between a business/ an organization and society. Corporate social responsibility indicates that the business or organization has far more responsibilities that overcome its basic economic responsibility.*





CSR is vital for modern business activities and one of the essentials for achieving a reasonable advantage. Top multinationals in the world involve in CSR notion in some formula. Besides, there is almost no company that has not taken up the challenges of CSR theory. The purpose of this article is to explore the CSR activities under an Islamic perspective. This research is based on the religious values and beliefs that have been central to the Islamic culture for 1400 years may serve as a similar concept of modern CSR.

#### **Introduction:**

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has grown enormously over the past few decades. Most of the businesses and organizations seek to cherish it. Recent corporate scandals within modern businesses such as Enron, Tyco, and WorldCom in the United States have raised important concerns regarding the company's role and environment. CSR is an important part of international business. Business firms confront pressure to act ethically and to improve strategies that determine their relationship to stakeholder issues. According to the European Commission (2001), CSR as a notion allows companies to integrate social and environmental concerns in their business transactions as well as strengthen interaction

with their stakeholders. However, there is no consensus formula about the social responsibility criteria for organizations (Griffin, 2000). CSR has been considered as the responsibility of companies with regard to their environment and stakeholders (Gosling and Vocht, 2007). In other words, CSR is based on an organization's operation that operated for the advantage of society. Therefore, the social responsibility of business includes the financial, ethical, legal, and discretionary potentials that society has of organizations at a given point in time (Carroll, 1979). Though, CSR definitions are not clear. It may be a general perception or overlapping with other perceptions, depending on the geographical locations or the environs in which they are used (Gherhes and others, 2010). Consequently, CSR notions differ across the nations and the company's calculations with respect to social and cultural issues and outlooks. The contemporary concept of CSR is mostly based on western theories. Even some of the basic worldwide viewpoints in CSR has been developed in Europe and America (Welford, 2005). This paper seeks to explore the concept of CSR in Islamic culture.

#### **The Concept of CSR in Islamic Culture:**

Islam is a complete code of life. The



teaching of Islam includes the development of Muslims at all stages of life. The notion of corporate social responsibility was accepted in Islamic principles and cultures. In comparison with Western concepts, Islam adopts a relatively holistic concept to CSR. This concept included a spiritual vision of Shari'ah, based on the Qur'an and Hadith. It aims to provide an alternate philosophical outline for people's dealings with nature and with other people (Ahmad, 2002). In the Islamic standard, Shari'ah is a tie that is believed to be more essential than the social contract. Shari'ah is a structure of ethics and values that covers all spheres of human life, such as personal, financial, social, political, and intellectual, with unchanging norms as well as essential features for adjusting to change (Sardar, 2003). Thus, it is impossible to isolate Shari'ah from the basic principles and purposes of Islam (Kamali, 1989).

The fundamental principles of Islam, such as aqidah (belief), ibadah (worship) and akhlaq (morality and ethics), are not a matter of change. But their implementation in worldly actions, may require flexibility and improvement depending on the situation (Kamali, 1989). The roots of aqidah and ibadah originated in the Noble Qur'an, as the sacred basis of Islam. They are also found in the Prophet Muhammad's life and activities in particular circumstances. Values and principles that have been central to the Muslim religion since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) may serve as a basis for the CSR concept similar to the Western concept. Even the conduct of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a clear indicator concerning their focus on social responsibilities. Every Muslim needs

to perform an active role in his/her situation to develop spirituality and social justice. Abdullah bin Omar reported that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his/her flock. The leader of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband's home and his children and is responsible for them. The slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Certainly, every one of you is a shepherd and responsible for his/her flock' (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1829). It clearly specifies that everyone is responsible to others irrespective of his/her position. A person cannot change his/her responsibility to another person. Each person bears the final responsibility for own actions. The Noble Qur'an noticeably declares this fact, 'Every soul is bound to pay for its deeds' (Surat Al-Mudaththir, verse 38).

However, it is important to ensure the justice and social responsibility under the Qur'anic law. The Holy Qur'an particularly points out the virtue of justice. According to Surat Al-Hadeed, verse 165, 'We sent aforetime Our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice...' Surat An-Nisa, verse 58 specified this fact, 'Allah commands you to deliver trusts to those worthy of them; and when you judge between people, to judge with justice.' According to Surat Al-Kahf, verse 46, 'Wealth and children are adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for one's hope.'

It is apparent that the primary objective of Islam is to establish justice. Without social



justice, no one can live in peace and freedom. The practices of CSR can be seen in the multifaceted practices in Islamic society. The following section attempts to capture different dimensions of CSR from the Islamic standard.

#### **Business Transactions:**

Muslim religion prescribes certain guidelines for business transactions based on halal (permitted) and haram (prohibited) activities. Islam also deals with the general and moral code of economic activities. According to Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 275, ‘...Allah has permitted trading and prohibited riba (usury)...’ Importantly, a company or business organization cannot operate alone. It has to deal with different types of participants. Islam provided comprehensive directions for business dealing and its relationship with different stakeholders. Nevertheless, Islamic Financial Institutions (IFI) are similar to any other conventional financial institution that

acts as an intermediary between fund providers and fund users. An IFI earns profit as any other business organization makes profits. The only difference is that the IFI transactions and contracts need to conform with Shari’ah (Hussein, 2015). The CSR outlook of Islam requires both individuals and establishments to be conducted in the development of a moral nature that differentiates between right and wrong.

Some opines that the Islamic point of view limits the activities of the modern economy. Islamic CSR system stimulates managers and civilians to adopt an ethical outlook towards business, with insufficient reference to economic efficacy (Tulder and Zwart, 2006). However, economic activities have been highly appreciated in the Islamic standard. Islam fully recognizes and encourages Muslims to do all sorts of business actions. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a merchant and engaged in international business transactions prior to his



divine duty. The first three Caliphs also ran businesses. Notably, Islam has its own distinguishing value-based ethical system for business dealings, which can be compared to the modern CSR notion. Many Qur'anic verses and traditions specifically reflected on it.

Muslims are prohibited to snare customers away from their competitors after completion of a trade deal. But free competition is different and a business can make better offers than another. Customers are free to select to do business with the one that makes the top offers. Muslim traders are not allowed to overturn the deals settled by their competitors as to claim the trade and profits for themselves. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'Do not urge somebody to return what he has already bought from another seller as to sell him your own goods instead' (Sahih Al-Bukhari 2139).

The illegal and unethical behaviors are outlawed in any economic transactions. In this regard, Surat An-Nisa, verse 29 states that 'O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent.' Surat Al-Araf,



verse 85, instructed ‘to give full measure and weight, and not to diminish (weigh less) to the people in their things, and make no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. That is good for you, if you are believers.’ According to Surat Al-Isra, verse 35, ‘And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. That is the best [way] and best in result.’ The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further highlighted that ‘[A] sale is a sale only if made through mutual consent’ (Ibn Majah).

Islam demands credibility and sincerity in workplace. Hence, trustworthiness is one of the main principles of ethical discipline in trade transactions. A true Muslim trader should avoid deception and other fraudulent activities in commercial transactions. Surat Al-Anfal, verse 27, stated in this concern, ‘O you who believe, do not betray the trust of Allah and the Messenger, and do not betray your mutual trusts, while you know.’ In the same way, truthfulness in business transactions is vital in the Islamic rule. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, ‘truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. Falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the Hellfire’ (Sahih Al-Bukhari 6094). Islam attaches particular importance to the fulfillment of contracts and promises. According to Surat Al-Ma’idah, verse 1, ‘O you who believe, fulfill your contracts.’ Therefore, the fulfillment of one’s obligations is one of the important Qur’anic principles. A Muslim merchant is bound to fulfill his/her obligations to employees, customers, and other participants in all respects.

These are the Islamic principles of doing business with responsibility to another.



#### **Fair Treatment of Workers:**

Islam sets certain rules and restrictions to avoid the most probable bitterness between the employer and employees. It is a divine responsibility of the employer to take care of the general welfare and benefit of the employee. Islamic ideology is based on the spirit of brotherhood between them. In this concern, the Holy Qur’an specified that ‘the believers are brothers so make peace between your brothers and remain mindful of God that you may receive mercy’ (Surat Al-Hujurat, verse 10). Generally, the concept of employee’s welfare is emphasized in the Islamic principle. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, ‘Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries up’ (Ibn Majah). Other Prophetic texts in this concern include: ‘I will be foe to three persons on the day of judgment, one of them being the one who does not give him his due when he



employs a person who has accomplished his duty' (Sahih Al-Bukhari 2109). It is further mentioned that, 'Your workers or servants are your brothers. Allah has placed them in your care. It is essential to feed them, clothe (properly) and not burden with work, which is beyond their power. If you burden them beyond their capacities, then help them' (Sahih Al-Bukhari 2359).

On the other hand, employees are required to

do their duty in the best possible manner for the welfare of employers. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'Allah likes a worker to be perfect in his work'. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also mentioned 'the employee who performs his duty to his employer and the Allah in the right manner, Allah will give him double reward' (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 4710).

Therefore, all of these examples highlight the

conduct of employees that is the main part of social responsibility and justice in Islam.

### **Corporate Relationship with Society:**

Nowadays societal benefit is a crucial issue. The responsibility of securing the societal benefit is another important dimension of corporate social responsibility. In Islam, commercial organizations are generally responsible to the society, the environment, and eventually to the Allah. Islam has provided clear guidelines for such issues.

Qur'anic texts and Prophetic traditions have emphasized on taking part in the well-being of the society. The concept of zakat (obligatory charity) and sadaqa (optional charity) has huge implications in this regard. It is mentioned in several verses in the Noble Qur'an. According to Surat Al-Taubah, verse 71, 'the Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, pay their Zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His Mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.' Surat Al-Araf, verse 156, stated that, 'My Mercy extends to all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who have God-consciousness and give their Zakat and those who believe in Our Signs.' Further, to help another in his/her difficulty is a Quranic duty. According to Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 280, 'And if someone is in hardship, then [let there be] postponement until [a time of] ease. But if you give [from your right as] charity, then it is better for you, if you only knew.' Islam considers moral aspects of the social order is relevant to the CSR. Sherif (1975) pointed out that 'nobility, patience, self-discipline, good appearance, abstinence, resolve, sincerity, truthfulness, servitude, and trust' are main Islamic values. Undoubtedly,

these could have an impact on both the organization and efficiency of employees.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, we can say that the notion of social responsibility is deeply rooted in Islam, which is reflected in the modern view of CSR. There is a consensus in different cultures about particular essential ethical ideals. The Islamic ethical system differs from others due to divine sources. It has its individual perspective of CSR from the western ideological and theoretical perspectives. Lewis (2001) explains that the implications for businesses and organizations is that, both managers and capital providers are accountable for their activities both inside and outside their firms. Accountability in this perspective means accountability to the community to establish socio-economic justice in their own capability. In Islamic philosophy, organizations are similarly accountable to society as are persons. It aims to keep balance between personal profit and societal benefit. Muslim religion goes beyond the common theory of modern CSR. Muslims also need to conform to the Islamic code on the social responsibility and justice to be sustained in all circumstances. Additionally, Islam provides moral and mandatory behaviors towards different business stakeholders. It has a complete roadmap to the Muslim traders about their dealings with different stakeholders ranging from employees and consumers to society and the environment. As a result, a company that operates its functions under the Shari'ah guidelines will unquestionably practice the modern concept of CSR. However, there is a lack of knowledge and general guidelines on the Islamic CSR notion. It is significant to boost the Islamic notion of CSR throughout the world due to our accountability to Allah as true Muslims.



## Role of Tarim (Yemen) scholars in spreading moderate Islam

By Qais Bajaifer

*Tarim City has been described since the 10th century as a powerhouse of traditional Islamic teaching and an important center for theological and juridical studies. Students from all over the world travel thousands of miles seeking Islamic knowledge in the city and attending the classes of its prominent scholars, who have played a pivotal role in spreading moderate Islam in different parts of the world, particularly in South and East Asia, India and Africa.*



From this small historic city situated in the Hadhramaut Valley in the southern part of Yemen, the Hadhrami scholars set off few hundred years ago on a journey to call people to Islam using a preaching method that is based on moderation, tolerance, profound knowledge of the Shari'ah and the Quranic verse of Surat Al-Nahl, "Invite (humankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur'an) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better." Moderation and knowledge constituted two important elements of the Dawah principle, which according to many religious researchers and scholars, contributed to the success of the preaching method adopted by Tarim scholars and helped them invite millions of people to Islam without threats or intimidation.



### Role of scholars

The Hadhrami scholars from Tarim set a great example when they embarked on the Dawah journey a few centuries ago to spread moderate Islam across South and East Asia, India and Africa. Although they did not have enough finance resources and encountered great difficulties during their mission, as it was extremely hard to travel to remote places like Asia and Africa, they still managed to get there and promulgate moderate and tolerant Islam, an Islam that wants peace and love for the entire humanity. The language of love for all humankind was their only weapon for inviting people to Islam. When they explained to people the truth about Islam and its lofty values of justice, freedom and equality among all human beings and showed them how Islam rejects all forms of violence and extremism and upholds noble values including truth, honesty, sincerity and

above all morals, the inhabitants embraced Islam without question.

These journeys to South and East Asia, India and Africa were the reason why 40 percent of Muslims around the world became Muslims. Tarim is known for producing numerous renowned Islamic scholars through history such as Imam Abdullah bin Alawi Al-Haddad (1634-1720), who was a major source of reference and authored a number of books, especially about Dawah, that continue to benefit generation after generation such as Al-Dawah Al-Tammah (The Complete Call). Another scholar was Al-Habeeb Aydroos bin Abdullah, a prominent scholar and the imam of Tarim-based Al-Muhdar Mosque, who was killed at the age of over 80 years old by extremists in 2018 while he was performing prayer inside his house.





### **Cultural significance**

Tarim was named the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2010 by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), which annually selects three cities to be named as such. The city has numerous religious schools and centers, historic buildings, castles and ancient mosques as well as antique manuscripts that have been preserved for centuries.

Tarim is best known for its 360 mosques, many of which make visitors stand in awe. The reason behind the large number of mosques can be found in the fact that Tarim has been described as a center of Shari'ah learning and knowledge for ages, besides, the city is home to a center of Quranic memorization that has been running for hundreds of years, and also because of the Islam schools and institutes teaching different Islamic programs.

The people of Tarim themselves attribute the reason for having so many mosques and scholars to Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq's prayers for Tarim that Allah would increase the number of its scholars as well as its water because the people of Tarim, who embraced Islam during the time of the Prophet in 631, stood by Abu Bakr and supported him during what was called the Wars of Apostasy, launched against rebellious Arabian tribes during 632 and 633, shortly after the Prophet's death. Today, Tarim boasts a large number of scholars and abundant tree farms and beautiful gardens.

### **Mosques**

The ancient mosque in Tarim is called Al-Wa'al Mosque dating back to 663, and built by Ahmed bin Abbad bin Bishr, whose father Abbad bin Bishr was a companion of



Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. The mosque was renovated several times. However, the most famous is Al Muhdar Mosque with its 50-meter-high minaret towers, built in the 15th century. Another famous one is Ba'alawi Mosque, built in 1135. What distinguishes Tarim mosques and makes them stand out from other mosques around the world is that they were entirely made from mud; no cement or steel was used. Moreover, most of the mosques and the houses are covered in white, the color of tolerance and peace.

### **Islamic institutions**

Tarim is home to numerous Islamic schools and institutes, notably Dar-ul-Mustafa School, a renowned educational institute founded in 1993 for the study of traditional Islamic sciences. The school follows a unique methodology of teaching that is based on peace, tolerance and moderation. Students, who come from all walks of life and different parts of the world, have to study eight courses: Islamic Studies, Islamic Jurisprudence, Arabic Grammar, Islamic Theology, Quranic Memorization, Quranic Exegesis, Prophetic Traditions, and Sciences of the Heart. They usually study for four years then go back home to spread the knowledge they have acquired here. Dar-ul-Zahra School is the branch of Dar-ul-Mustafa School but teaches women only.

### **Abu Murayyem Institute**

Founded in the 14th century by a prominent scholar called Muhammad bin Omar bin Al-Fakeih, Abu Murayyem Institute for Qur'an Memorization has been running for over 600 years. Its founder, a pious man, taught 800 students, from Tarim and outside the city, and helped them memorize the Noble



Qur'an. After his death, his students took over his place and worked as Qur'an teachers and even established branches of the institute all over Tarim. That is why Tarim used to be called at the time the City of Qur'an Memorizers. Today, thousands of students from all over the world attend the institute to memorize the Noble Qur'an and learn its different recitation forms.

### **Al-Ahqaf Library for Manuscripts**

The name of the library was taken from the Quranic verse in Surat Al-Ahqaf, which mentions this name, "And remember (Hud) the brother of 'Ad, when he warned his people in Al-Ahqaf (the curved sand-hills in the southern part of Arabian Peninsula). And surely, there have passed away warners before him and after him (saying): "Worship none but Allah; truly, I fear for you the torment of a mighty Day." founded in 1972, the library houses around 6,200 manuscripts and some 14,000 printed books of different subjects including Quranic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, hadith, history, biographies, literature, Arabic, medicine, to mention but a few. Most of the manuscripts belonged to a number of well-known families in Tarim such as Al-Aydarous, Al-Haddad and Al-Kaf, who handed over the manuscripts to the library officials to preserve them and put them on display.



## Demonstrably effective steps needed to contain climate change in GCC

Aftab Husain Kola

*What strategies can Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries pursue to align their social objectives and energy needs with the commitments made under the UN pact – now that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is set to become operational in 2020?*



The climate summit in Madrid

Climate change is undoubtedly the most serious global environmental crisis that we face today. The effects of global warming are visible everywhere. The consequences of this phenomenon are now knocking on our doors in the form of unprecedented floods, intense hurricanes, rising sea levels, extreme heatwaves, wildfires, and diminishing air quality. Only a collective global effort will be able to counter this challenge that humanity is facing today. What has Islam got to say about this very important topic, and what measures are the GCC states taking in this direction now that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is set to become operational in 2020?

Before we actually touch the topic intended let me throw light on the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Paris Agreement central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity-building framework will be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives.

The United Nations on Climate Change and the Climate Action Summit held in September 2019 served a dress rehearsal for the implementation of Paris Agreement – a visionary, practical, forward-looking policy framework that sets out exactly what needs to be done to contain climate disruption and reverse its impact. In other words, it is an attempt to kick-start the global campaign against climate change.

Global emissions are reaching record levels. The last four years were the four hottest on record, and winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990. Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying, and we are starting to see the life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heatwaves and risks to food security. Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming five above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C. Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and





2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate. The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere and are having very real consequences on people's lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, costing us dearly today and even more tomorrow. But there is a growing recognition that affordable, scalable solutions are available now that will enable us all to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies. The latest analysis shows that if we act now, we can reduce carbon emissions within 12 years and hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and even, as asked by the latest science, to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In order to ensure that the transformative actions in the real economy are as impactful as possible, the Secretary-General has prioritized the action portfolios, which are recognized as having high potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions and increased global action on adaptation and resilience. They

include Finance, Energy Transition, Industry transition, Nature-Based Solution, Cities and Local Action and Resilience and Adaptation.

#### **Islam on climate change**

Islam lays great emphasis on protecting the environment. The Noble Qur'an shows the inherent value of creatures and of life, and how each creature in nature must be respected and cherished by human beings as their fellow beings. This natural world was created by Him, for His purpose and that in itself confers upon the natural environment a sacredness which must be recognized by all Believers. This, then, means that all believers must have the utmost care and respect towards nature. Islam has attached much importance to the protection of environment asking its followers not to cut trees, pollute rivers or contaminate the atmosphere.

From the Islamic history we learn that soon after Muslims established themselves in what is now the holy city of Madinah

(formerly Yathrib) in the first part of the Seventh century AD, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) surveyed the natural resources in the region — the wadis (riverbeds); the rich, black volcanic soil; the high rangelands —and decreed that they be preserved and set aside as a ‘hima’, an Arabic term meaning “protected place.” “Verily Abraham declared Makkah a sanctuary and I declare Al-Madinah, that which lies between its two lava flows, to be a sanctuary; its trees shall not be cut and its game shall not be hunted,” he told his followers.

The Noble Qur’an says, ‘And He has set within it mountains standing firm, and blessed it, and ordained in it its diverse sustenance in four days, alike for all that seek.’ (Surat Fussilat, Verse:10). It also says, ‘O children of Adam!... eat and drink- but waste not by excess for Allah loves not the wasters.’ (Qur’an Al-Araf, Verse:31). Several hadiths also talk about environment and how we should take care of it. “The Earth is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you his stewards over it.” (Muslim). “Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.” (Bukhari).

#### **The GCC scenario**

Though the GCC block was initially slow in addressing the Climate Change issue, a new awakening has dawned on them and they have seriously begun to work towards creating a better life for world’s future citizens. What strategies can GCC pursue to align its social objectives and energy needs with the commitments made under the UN pact? As we move forward, actions will have to be taken that are demonstrably effective in containing carbon emission. The World Bank in its report in 2016 said that the Middle East and North Africa region is among the most vulnerable places on earth



to rising sea levels. Forecasting a 0.5-meter rise by 2099, its report warned that “low-lying coastal areas in Tunisia, Qatar, Libya, UAE, Kuwait and particularly Egypt are at particular risk.”

With temperatures continuing to rise at their current pace, GCC countries have started to feel the pinch. Last Summer, the





temperature in Al Majmaah, a city in central Saudi Arabia, reached 55 degrees Celsius while Kuwait recorded 52.2 degrees Celsius. GCC, the heartland of the global oil industry, have suffered heatwaves beyond the limit of human survival. Reports about mercury levels touching 50 degrees Celsius and beyond have come in from Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE as well.

Aware of the potential threats posed by climate change, Saudi Arabia has expressed its intention to engage in remedial action and planning in accordance with the Kingdom's efforts toward economic diversification.

Saudi Aramco, the most profitable corporation in the world, which was once accused of releasing great amount of greenhouse gases between 1992 and 2017, is now launching a rebranding effort that positions the firm as an environmental leader.

Taking the lead, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman said at the recently held

G20 summit in Osaka, Japan that Saudi Arabia is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the negative effects of climate change. He said that the Kingdom is working to develop a comprehensive and integrated energy-saving system through energy efficiency programs. It may be recalled that the Kingdom has recently launched several projects aimed at increasing the production of renewable energy, and that integrating and exploiting all energy sources is a necessity. In Saudi Arabia, while at the national policy level — especially with Vision 2030 — there is keenness on preserving natural resources and putting great attention on environmental issues, at the individual and community level we need more awareness and practical programs and regulations on recycling, saving water and food, and using alternative energy

The United Arab Emirates is always upping its ante to initiate measures to combat to



reducing its ecological footprint, transitioning to a climate-resilient green economy, and the importance of sustainable green finance. Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment, on the UAE's commitment talking to the media said, "The UAE has emerged as a regional leader in developing and deploying clean energy solutions and technology. An excellent example is Masdar, which sends a strong message to the whole world that the country is making waves in the renewable energy sector.

Furthermore, the UAE's commitment to promoting renewable energy received global acknowledgement when the country was chosen to host the permanent headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency, which plays a leading role in the energy transformation as a centre of excellence for knowledge and innovation, a global voice for renewables, is based in Abu Dhabi.

Locally, we have mega projects such as Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai, the largest single-site solar park in the world with a planned capacity of 1GW by 2020 and 5GW by 2030. Several other projects of around 400MW have already been connected to the grid, and we have positive expectations for further additions coming up in near future.. The UAE is one of the top 10 countries globally in terms of cumulative LEED-certified gross sqm outside the US, according to a list revealed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC) in 2017."

He said that as part of its 2020 NDCs, the UAE will seek to achieve a target of 50 percent clean energy in its total energy mix by 2050, generated from renewable and nuclear power sources. This will more than double the existing target of 24 percent by 2021, as reflected in the country's first NDCs.

Dr. Al Zeyoudi averred that for the first time, the UAE's 2020 NDCs will also include a National Climate Change Plan as well as a National Climate Change Adaptation Program. The program comprises a comprehensive governance framework to address adaptation across the energy, health, infrastructure, and environment sectors, assesses the existing and projected risks these sectors face as a result of climate change, and devises relevant resilience measures.

The secretary-general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen, has said that the challenges of environmental degradation, climate change, water, food and energy security require a coordinated national, regional and international response.

Al-Othaimeen made the comment during his opening remarks at the 8th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers (ICEM) at the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) headquarters in Rabat, Morocco, on Oct. 2-3.

He said that historically the contribution of OIC countries to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming had been negligible but these nations were among the most vulnerable to climate change.

Al-Othaimeen underscored the importance that OIC attaches to issues of environmental protection and energy security, given the challenges facing OIC countries due to population growth, depletion of resources, environmental degradation and climate change.

He reiterated the OIC's commitment to continue working with member states to identify and mobilize expertise and practical mechanisms, which are consistent with the political, economic and cultural objectives of these countries.



## Wheaton University gathered its students to counter terrorism

Alwaleed Jaafer Elias

*Newsweek magazine referred to the Wheaton University student conference, which gathered Muslim students with their evangelical Christian counterparts to explore what they can do to improve relations between religious groups, a goal that the event's organizers emphasized as (the greatest challenge of our time).*

The magazine said that the conference, which took place from 1-2 November, was organized by a Neighborly Faith, an organization that describes itself as a “national movement that brings together Christians and Muslims”. The organization stresses that, during the current data and efforts to confront extremists who fabricate tensions, there is a great opportunity to improve relations between Muslims and Christians.

According to a survey conducted by the Ethnic Understanding Foundation and the PSB Research Foundation published in March, many evangelical Christians are not interested in reaching out to Muslims. The survey, which included equal numbers of evangelicals and Muslims, found that only 22% of evangelical respondents said they had regular contact with Muslims, and a smaller percentage believed that such communication helps groups better understand each other.

In contrast, 53% of Muslims are keen to communicate with Christians on a regular basis.

According to the final statement of the conference, the coordinators of the Neighborly Faith, Kevin Singer and Chris Stakarok, called on students to ask all questions that are on their minds to the speakers of the conference, most of these questions centered on the feasibility of building friendship between Muslims and evangelicals, or the responsibility of Christians to build friendships with followers of other religions. Other questions were raised on how to achieve social justice in both religions and the role of gender in Islam.

The conference’s keynote speaker, Shadi Hamid, a senior member of the Brookings Institution, pointed to his friendship with many evangelicals, pointing out that one of

them, theologian Matthew Kaimingk, had spoken to him about the idea of pluralism in Christianity. He pointed out that when he returned to the teachings of Islam found that there is a similar ideal commitment to the same idea.

(Evangelicals, in their engagement with Muslims, should feel comfortable being open and unapologetic about their commitment to Christ, and Muslims shouldn’t need to temper any of their convictions either), he told Newsweek. (The idea that you have to dilute in order to understand and engage has it backwards).

(If you really know who you are, it allows for mutual respect, and friendship with people who are different from you can only be achieved if we free ourselves from fear of difference). The results of a quick survey conducted after the conference indicated that continued communication leads to greater understanding between followers of both religions. It emphasized an improvement in Christian students’ perception of Islam.

Among conservative evangelical students, an anonymous post-conference survey showed that while 49% had neutral or somewhat negative attitudes toward Muslims coming into the conference, only 6% remained neutral while 0% maintained a negative attitude. Similarly, 44% of conservative evangelical students were either neutral or disinterested in building friendships with Muslims before the conference. Afterwards, only 4% remained neutral, while 0% remained disinterested.

Saad Hazari, a student at Benedictine University, spoke after the conference, stressing that his best friends are evangelicals, and that most of his interactions with them were fun and interesting. He was





saddened by their ignorance of vital issues of interest to Muslims in the United States, such as Islamophobia, and their indifference to the issues of the Muslim world. Hazari praised the idea of organizing the conference, stressing its importance in fostering positive dialogue between students of different religions, because it encourage people to emerge from the narrow circle they have confined themselves in. (This conference helps us to identify the facts and makes people more open to learning in this way. Many here unfortunately do not know the true religion of Islam), he said.

On the other hand, some non-Muslim students pointed to the positive impact of the conference on them. Anna Cole,

a Christian student at Wheaton College, said that the conference gave her renewed inspiration for working to build relationships between Wheaton students and Muslims in the are". Cole said that her favorite part of the conference was not actually at the conference at all. Rather, it was when she drove two of the speakers, a Christian and a Muslim, to the airport after the event concluded. She listened intently to their conversation about applied theology and how they interpret the holy books of their respective faiths. (It was a really wonderful and open conversation where all involved were very honest about their beliefs and very interested in learning from the others), she said.

## 4,500 Muslim children in care in Britain

Sariya Cheruvallil- *The Muslim News*

*New research by Coventry University and CoramBAAF show that there are approximately 4,500 Muslim-heritage children in care in Britain. The majority of these children are fostered with the hope that one day they can go back to their families.*



Around five per cent of these children are adopted. Our research provides unprecedented insights into these children's lives. The research calls for collective action from policymakers, social workers, carers and for the Muslim community, aimed at prioritizing each child's welfare, security and happiness.

### **Who are the Muslim children in care?**

Children of Muslim heritage come into public care due to abuse, neglect, family breakdown, a parent or child's illness or disability and lack of family support, substance misuse and/or extreme poverty. These are British-born children, generally over the age of two. A small proportion of these children are 'given up' by their parents.

The vast majority are removed by social services on account of harm or profound risk of harm. The decision to remove a child is never easy, and the preference is always for it to live within its biological family, with grandparents or uncles and aunts. When this is not possible, some children will need a new family, either through adoption or fostering.

There are also several

unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who require stable, safe homes.

According to Government figures, there are 4,560 UASC in the British Care system, and although it is not possible to say exactly how many, given current socio-political situations a significant proportion of these children are of Muslim heritage. For example, data provided by a local authority indicate that 19 out of 25 UASCs or 76 per cent of UASCs are of Muslim heritage, they are mostly male and are older teenagers.

### **Removal of Ethnicity from Children and Families Act 2014**

Children of Muslim heritage are likely to experience a significant delay in finding a fostering or adoptive placement, and some may never find a permanent home. Delays cause lasting harm for children. Policymakers' response has been to emphasize trans-racial placements by removing ethnicity from Adoption Law and Guidance in England. Social workers are no longer required by law to match religion and ethnicity when finding families for children.

Yet our research demonstrates

that social workers continue to look for 'best' possible matches. Social work practice insists this is in the best interest of the child and helps maintain their biological heritage.

But with a shortage of Muslim foster carers and adopters, social workers will have to place children with whoever is willing to take them, although this may be detrimental for this child as demonstrated in Hussain's (not his real name) story.

Hussain was 11 when he came into care after his widowed Pakistani mother remarried and his stepfather abused him. He was found by social services in a malnourished state and was placed in foster care. In foster care, Hussain was rude and troublesome. Having been bought up in a traditional Pakistani home, he struggled with Western traditions like eating at a table, with non-halal food being in the home and once ran away because his foster carers had a pet dog.

After running away from multiple foster homes, he was placed with Iqbal (not his real name). Unlike Hussain's previous foster carers, who although they tried their best, struggled to meet his cultural and religious needs,





Iqbal is a British-Pakistani Muslim foster carer.

In Iqbal's care, Hussain gradually settled down, he was respectful and even went to college. He stayed with Iqbal until he was 18 and continues to visit him. Hussain and Iqbal consider each other family. For some Muslim children, it may not be appropriate to place them in Muslim homes, especially if they have experienced abuse or harm from 'Muslims'.

But for the majority of Muslim children in care, Islam is integral to their identity and gives them a sense of continuity which makes

it imperative that they are placed in Muslim homes. Fatima (18) told us how she knew Allah "was there for her" when she and her brothers found themselves in care.

#### **What can we do, as a community?**

There is a national shortage of foster carers. Black and Minority Ethnic carers are even fewer. Recent trends suggest that there are sufficient numbers of Muslims applying to adopt. However, they do not take on the older children in care as their preference is for a baby, so these children, who need homes,

continue to wait.

Another barrier to Muslim children in care finding a home is a long-standing misapprehension of religious or cultural prohibitions around adoption and fostering in Muslim communities.

However, recently over two hundred Muslim scholars came together to state that this is theologically incorrect as the Qur'an insists that orphan and vulnerable children are to be cared for by whoever can do so as an act of faith and charity.

Applying to adopt or foster is not easy. Muslim foster carers and adopters told us about the issues they experienced, including concerns around Islamophobia. It is important to note the process of vetting prospective adopters and foster carers is rigorous and intrusive but arguably it has to be so, as social workers need to find people who can be trusted with society's most vulnerable children. Yet as Iqbal and so many other foster carers and adopters show us, it is possible.

The circumstances that bring children into care will always be traumatic and they will need to be nurtured, loved and understood. If you can do this the reward is immense for you and the children.



## A Muslim engineer saved the lives of 1,500 American officers

Nizar Abdul Baqi

*The Washington Post published a lengthy report on a Pentagon Muslim engineer who contributed to the true image of Muslims after the events of September 11, 2001, and worked to remove the negative impression of Muslims that some suspicious circles tried to establish, by overseeing the Conducting many engineering modifications on the ministry building and establishing a church at the site of the attack.*

The newspaper said that the engineer Manal Ezzat was inside the Pentagon building at the moment of the attack, and managed to escape with others to survive their lives, so as not to reach the flames of fire that devoured everything stands. However, she returned the morning after the accident, and immediately after the fire was put out, she began as an engineer and project manager in the US Army Corps of Engineers to reconstruct the damaged parts of the building.

Before the attacks, Manal worked on a very important project, completely restoring the exterior of the Pentagon building, which helped the building survive for 20 minutes before the collapse, according to the Washington Post, which confirmed that 1,500 people survived the incident, due to the pillars that the team fixed in the building before the attacks.

Eighteen years after the attack that killed 184 people at the Pentagon, US military personnel of all faiths gather daily to pray.

### **Painful memories**

Manal says that the biggest difficulty she faced during her job was to persuade employees to return to their offices after the restoration and maintenance. Most of them refused to stay in a place that was associated with painful memories in their minds, so she says, "I started thinking about changing the function of those offices besides another that could help them erase the memory of the tragedy."

The Muslim engineer found no better option than turning those offices into a place of worship, where relatives of US military personnel of different faiths frequented them for their religious rituals. On Sunday, Christian prayers were held, and on Friday, some Pentagon Muslim staff frequented it for sermons and Friday prayers. Adherents of other faiths



also use this place for worship, each according to their religious identity.

### **Impressionist judgments**

"The place of worship we made at the Ministry of Defense embodies the values of tolerance among all religions," she said. "It is also an attempt to keep away the specter of painful memory. On a personal level, I have been hurt a lot. I listened to some people talking negatively about Muslims in general. I thought for a moment to respond to them, and to convince them that those who did so were terrorists but did not represent the Islamic religion, but I swallowed my grief, and decided to continue my silence, and to draw my anger and grief into a positive energy that could provide a better picture of Islam. We are all one nation, we all worship God. Now when I see everyone in this place dedicated to worship, everyone respects all faiths and religions I feel overjoyed, and it is enough





that the American Muslim who devotes his life to the protection and security of America and works here in the Department of Defense can pray in the same place that was attacked by extremists. “

### **Positive energy**

The Muslim engineer points to a great irony, although it helped many to get out of the specter of painful memories associated with the attacks of September 11, but she was unable to erase those events from her memory, so after participating in the construction and restoration of the ministry building asked to leave the place because of the feeling of permanent sadness. Her request has been met and she is currently the director of the Department of Defense’s Schools Program, educating children of military personnel around the world. She points out that she cannot imagine a job she wants more than supporting service personnel defending American ideals.

After nearly 25 years at the Pentagon, she says she is thinking of retiring, confirming

her pride in her accomplishment by turning rubble into a spiritual sanctuary. “This is part of the healing process,” she said.

### **Freedom of belief**

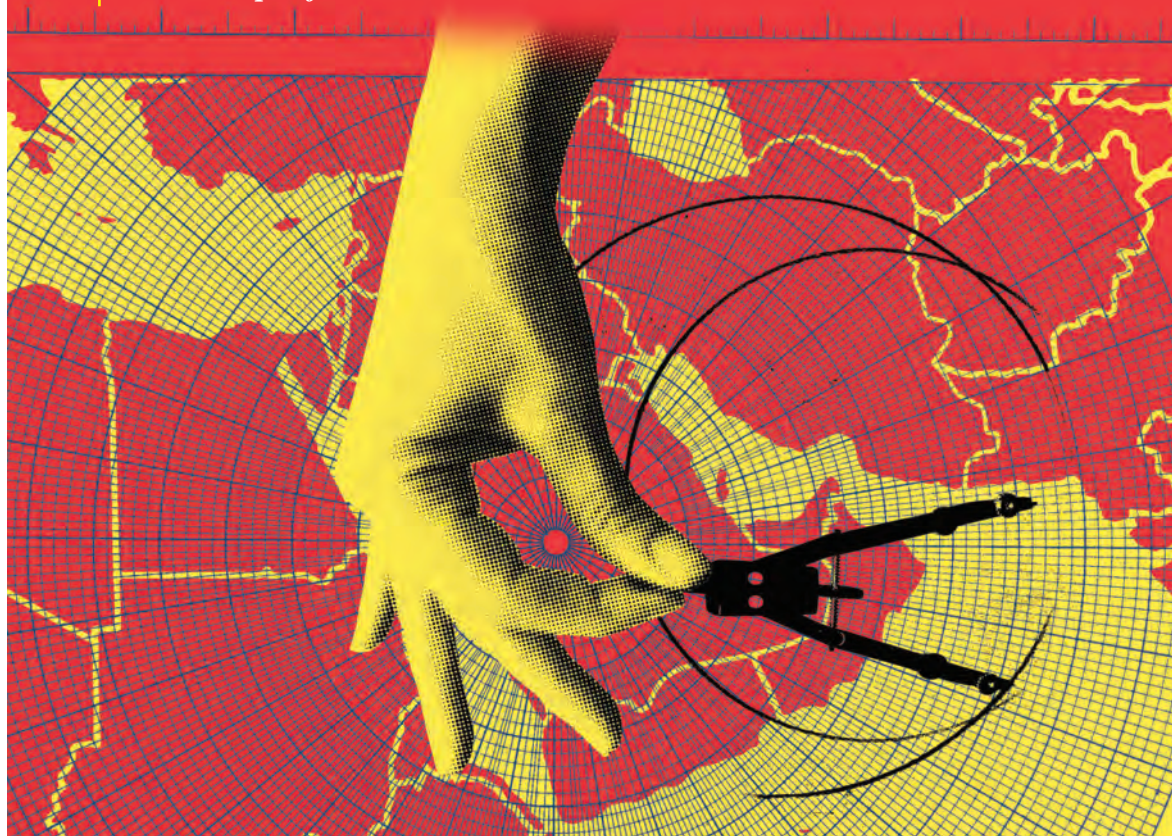
Gawi Abdullah Sabri, a cyber-security expert who was a Pentagon civil employee, says he used to go to the place of worship created by ManalEzzat inside the building, where he regularly performed Friday prayers with many of his colleagues. He adds “sometimes I find Christians reading from their religious books, as well as Jews practicing their rituals at the same time”. Sabri points out that the scene is very reassuring and the followers of the three religions practice their worship in an atmosphere of complete freedom.

Sabri concludes by saying, “Praying in that place makes me feel energetic and get rid of boredom and daily routine. The place here is just to think about the belief and reflect on the life that the Creator has given us. It is an honor to have a place to pray in my workplace”.

# Islamic Cartography and its Cartographers

Dr. Fatima Taneem Ruknuddeen

*Cartography, the art and science of making maps, has a long history of thousands of years evolving from primitive simple diagrams sketched on dirt, skin, bones, rocks, etc. to the traditional maps on paper and thenceforth to the sophisticated modern digitalized maps of the present times. The history of cartography witnessed remarkable progress from between the 8th to 17th centuries when hundreds of Muslim geographers and cartographers revolutionized the map-making techniques and produced astonishingly accurate maps of their times.*







During this period, the Muslim geographers and cartographers conceived and created highly advanced terrestrial maps and sea charts, which occupy a prominent place in the history of cartography. These esteemed Muslim scholars' immense contributions in the field of cartography and related sciences not only opened much of the world to the Muslims; but also paved the way for European navigation in later centuries.

### HISTORY OF ISLAMIC CARTOGRAPHY

Since Pre-Islamic times, cartography in Arabia has been rooted mainly in its oral traditions and lacked science or philosophy. However, the advent of Islam in the 7th cen-

tury and its subsequent rise and early expansion across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond provided the impetus for cartography to develop.

With the introduction of paper in the 8th century, the scholars began recording their accumulated geographical activities and experiences in textual forms, illustrated with cartographical images, drawing on ancient traditions of Greek, Babylonian and Indian cultures for their advancement and refinement to Islamic Cartography.

By the 9th century, the Muslim traders, sailors and explorers were in India, Sri Lanka, Malay and Java in the East and up to Madagascar on the east coast of Africa in the West, with a few also reaching China, Japan



and Korea. Their detailed and accurate information about the African continent, the Indian Ocean and the Far East greatly aided the geographers of their times to develop and refine their cartographical skills.

From the 10th century onwards, hundreds of cartographic images of the world and its regions began surfacing in various geographical literature including travel guides, illustrated geographical treatises, navigation charts, and other historical texts all over the Islamic World from North Africa, Europe, Middle East, Central Asia and India.

From the 13th century onwards, many 'copy manuscripts' with their 'original maps' proliferated across the Islamic World and this popular cartographical trend helped establish the first geographical Islamic Atlas Series where different cartographers drew several maps. The Islamic libraries (Darul Kutub) sprawled across the Islamic World helped disseminate the Islamic view of the world between the 8th and 14th centuries.

The later development in Islamic Cartography took place under the Turks, particularly under the Ottomans and these Turkish influences dominated the later half of its history, particularly in the Turkish nautical charts which were way ahead of their times.

As the European interests had expanded beyond its borders from the 14th and 16th centuries, the increasing demands of translated medieval Muslim geographical texts resulted in these highly accurate maps eventually reaching Europe and influencing and inspiring the Europeans for further explorations and discoveries of newer parts of the world.

## **ISLAMIC CARTOGRAPHICAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

The major cartographical achievements of

the Muslim scholars are showcased primarily in their geographical treatises, fascinating terrestrial maps and detailed sea charts and Portolan charts.

### **Geographical treatises**

Since the early days of Islam, diaries and travel guides were abundantly written in addition to the general geographical descriptions of the Islamic World and other societies inhabiting the world.

Initial mapping evolved only as an adjunct to geographical literature and many geographical treatises were written by the Muslim geographers. Some of these are mentioned below:

- 'Kitab Surat al-Ardh' (Book of the Picture of the Earth) was written by the ninth-century famed Persian scholar Al-Khwarizmi. This book lists latitudes and longitudes for 545 cities and describes seas, rivers, mountains, Islands and geographical regions and is illustrated with four regional maps and laid the foundation of Arab geographical sciences.

- 'Kutub al-Masalik-wal-Mamalik' (Book on Routes and Kingdoms) was termed as 'Route Books'. These were primarily written to cater to the needs of administration and extension of postal services within the expanded Islamic Empire, but they developed into geographical treatises, which mainly dealt with the descriptive, economic and political geography of the Islamic World and also described the non-Islamic world of Europe, Africa and Asia.

In the early 10th century, Ibn Khurradadbih, a famous geographer and director of governmental postal services in Baghdad, pioneered this class of literature with his famous book 'Kitab al-Masalik-wal-Mamalik'



(Book of Routes and Kingdoms) wherein he provided summary of the main trade routes of the Arab world and also described China, Korea and Japan. Later other Muslim scholars used the same title for their geographical works and include Al-Bakri and Al-Istakhri.

- A tenth-century popular geographical treatise was Al-Muqaddasi's 'Ahsan al-taqasim fi Ma'rifat al-aqalim' (Best Divisions for Knowledge of Regions) which created the systematic foundation of Muslim Geography. In this book, Al-Muqaddasi introduced geographical terminology, the various methods of division of Earth and the value of empirical observations.

- The famous anonymous eleventh-century manuscript titled 'Kitab Gharaibal-fununwa-mulah-al-uyun' (Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes) popularized under the title 'The Book of Curiosities' gives a unique insight into the Islamic concepts of the world dealing with Islamic geography along with cosmography

and map-making.

- The famed geographical treatise by the universally acclaimed 12-century Muslim geographer and cartographer Al-Idrisi titled 'Kitabnuzhat al-mushtaqfikhtiraaq al-afaq' (A Recreation for the Person who longs to Traverse the Horizons) was also called 'Roger's Book' as it was commissioned by the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II. This was an atlas giving descriptions of the Earth as a globe, the hemispheres, climate and seas. It was accompanied by a circular world map and 70 sectional maps.

### Islamic Maps

Islamic Maps contributed significantly to the evolution of cartography. The early Islamic maps were drawn with the South facing upwards and the North downwards. These maps provided valuable insight into how the Muslim cartographers and their patrons perceived their world and chose to represent and disseminate this perception across the world.

The primary focus of these maps was to show the position of Makkah with respect to other parts of the world. In addition, these maps also depicted coastlines, trade routes and other geographical phenomena. Below are mentioned a few famous Islamic Maps:

- The earliest extant maps from the Islamic world are found in the manuscript copy of Al-Khwarizmi's 'Kitab Surat al-Ardh' (Book of Pictures of the Earth) – a geographical treatise illustrated by 4 regional maps. Al-Khwarizmi's map of the River Nile became a model for depicting the river in nearly every cartographic manuscript thereafter for centuries.

- Caliph Al-Mamun's Map showed large parts of Eurasia and African continent with recognizable coastlines and major seas. The map depicted the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean not as "inland seas" and also gave a much better shape of the Earth.

- The 'Balkhi School' of Terrestrial maps represents the map-making traditions of mainly 4 different Muslim geographers of the 10th century. It takes its title from its founder's name, Abu Zayd Ahmad ibn Sahal Al-Balkhi and includes his followers: Al-Ishtakhri, Ibn Hawqal and Al-Muqaddasi. These scholars produced World Atlases, each one featuring a world map and 21 regional maps.

Al-Balkhi's text 'Suwar al-aqalim' (Illustration of Climates) included maps of Arabia, the Indian Ocean, Egypt, Syria, the Mediterranean Sea and several other parts of the Islamic World. Unfortunately, this treatise has been lost and only copied material by his followers has been handed down to posterity.

Al-Biruni's text titled 'Kitab al-Tafhim li-awailsinaat al-tanjim' (Book of Instructions on the Principles of the Art of Astrology) contained a round map of the world wherein

he had reduced the eastward extensions of Africa; that the Indian Ocean appeared to cover the whole Southern hemisphere. This sketch map was occasionally used directly by later authors. For instance, Al-Qazwini used it in his cosmographical work 'Ajaib Al-Mukhluaat.'

- The earliest surviving rectangular coordinate map is dated to the 13th century and is attributed to Hamdallah Al Mustawfi Qazwini, who based it on the work of Suhrah, a late tenth-century geographer.

- The 11th-century Arabic-Turkish Dictionary titled 'Diwanlughat al-Turki (Compendium of the Turkish Dialects) by Turkish scholar, Mahmud Al-Kashgharli is illustrated with an unusual circular, linguistic based 'Turko-centric' world map showcasing Turkic tribes of different regions.

- Al-Idrisi's famed 'Tabula Rogeriana' is not just a map of the world, rather an exclusively researched geographically illustrated masterpiece. The maps describe the world as 'sphere' and divide it into 70 different rectangular sections, each of which is discussed in exacting detail in the remainder of the 'Tabula Rogeriana.' Al-Idrisi's maps are amongst the most mimetic world map and gave a better representation of the Western World of Islam than that of Eastern World.

### **Arab Sea Charts and Portolan Maps**

Arab Cartography began with early charts for navigation and with the early expansion of Islamic territories on either side of the Arabian Peninsula, their sailings became extensive, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic and from the Red Sea, Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. All this necessitated the use of sea charts, coastline formation and knowledge



of wind and weather; thus one class of map-making was devoted to these objectives. The use of sea charts and maps by the Arabs has been mentioned by the tenth-century geographer Al-Muqaddasi and also by the 13th-century famed Italian explorer Marco Polo in their works.

From the end of 13th century onwards, the sea charts came to be known as 'Portolan Charts' by the seamen and sailors in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, although these sea charts were already being used by Arab navigators since centuries.

In the 16th century, many Sea Atlases including comprehensive maps of the world were produced by several Ottoman map-makers. Some of them are mentioned below:

- The legendary 1513 dated portolan chart map fragment of the Ottoman naval admiral Piri Reis (1470-1554) showed astonishingly accurate coastlines for the Central and South Americas (their Eastern regions) along with the Western coast of Africa and the adjacent coasts of Spain and Portugal with the Atlantic Ocean and various islands. This map is the oldest surviving detailed map of the 'Americas'; having been compiled within 21 years of Columbus reaching the New World.

Another Piri Reis's world map made in 1528, of which only 1/6th has survived.

- The anonymous *Deniz Atlas*, tentatively dated to 1560, contained a series of portolan charts of the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, a detailed chart of the Indian Ocean, as well as the map of the world.

- The *Ali Macar Reis Atlas*, dated 1567, contained six portolan charts and a world map.

The Muslim geographers and cartographers, both the famous and not-so-famous, left lasting legacies for the successive generations to draw upon and improve their carto-



graphic works. Many of these esteemed personalities were polymaths, being well-versed in several disciplines and their integrated scientific approach resulted in gigantic leaps in the history of cartography.

From among the hundreds of Muslim cartographers who contributed immensely in the field of Islamic cartography, only a handful of them are mentioned below-

#### •AL-KHWARIZMI (780-850CE)

One of the greatest mathematicians famed for his terms 'algebra' and 'algorithm'; also well-versed in geography, history and astronomy. Abu Jafer Muhammad Ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi was born in Khwarizm, Uzbekistan.

He was at the court of Caliph Al-Mamun among the scientists commissioned to draw the scientific map of the world.

Contributions to Geography and Cartography:

He wrote '*Kitabsurat al-Ardh*' (Book of

the Picture of the Earth) devoted to geography and cartography. This geographical treatise is preserved in a single but complete manuscript copy made in 1037.

This book inspired a generation of writers in Baghdad and Muslim Spain to unearth, analyze and record geographical data.

#### **AL-BIRUNI (973-1050 AD)**

One of the greatest minds of all times, a multi-linguistic scholar who wrote on various disciplines; sometimes referred to as 'Leonardo da Vinci' of his times.

Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni was born in Khwarizm, Uzbekistan. He wrote about 150 books with the majority being written on astronomy; along with history, mathematics, geography, geology, physics, medicine, sociology, pharmacy, mineralogy, etc. of which very few have survived.

Contributions to Geography and Cartography:

In the geographical field, the mathematical and astronomical aspects interested Al-Biruni. He stated that the Earth rotated around its own axis, calculated the circumference of the Earth and fixed scientifically the direction of Makkah from any point of the globe.

He constructed a round map of the world in his book titled 'Kitab al-tafhim li-awail-sina'at al-tanjim' (Book on instructions on the principles of the Art of Astrology) to illustrate the position of lands and water. In another book 'Athar al baqiya..' (Chronology of Ancient Nations) he discussed methods of celestial and territorial projections.

Al-Biruni's cartographical influence has been prominent in practically all future Islamic maps of the world.

#### **AL-IDRISI (1100-1166 CE)**

One of the most universally recognized

Muslim geographers and cartographers of all times.

Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah Ibn Idris Al-hammudi-Al-hasani-Al-Idrisi was born in Sabtah in Morocco. He studied at the University of Cordoba in Andalusia and traveled widely in Asia Minor, Africa and Europe including Spain, Portugal, France and England.

He was commissioned by the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II, in 1139 CE at Palermo to create an accurate map of the world known then.

Contributions to Geography and Cartography:

He constructed a silver celestial sphere and designed a silver disk-planisphere on which was depicted map of the world with all its features. Furthermore, he wrote an illustrated geographical treatise titled 'Kitab Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq' (A Recreation for the Person who Longs to Traverse the Horizons). This text was intended as a key to the planisphere and was accompanied by 70 sectional maps and a circular world map. This book deals with descriptive and astronomical geography.

He also wrote another book titled 'Little Idrisi' for King Roger's successor, William I; but only extracts have been preserved.

Al-Idrisi's work is a milestone in the history of cartography and has continued to inspire European and Muslim scholars for centuries.

On the whole, for almost a millennium from 9th to 17th century, Muslim geographers and cartographers brought Islamic cartography to new levels of sophistication and precision and left a notable mark on their societies, as well as other foreign societies, wherever these maps were taken inspiring and influencing many generations of scientists and explorers over a long time.

## UN commemorates International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

### UN Web TV

The United Nations has underlined its unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people in their ongoing struggle to achieve self-determination, independence and sovereignty.

Senior UN officials joined ambassadors and other representatives from the international community in New York recently to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, officially observed each year on 29 November.

Established in 1977, it marks the day in 1947 when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish State.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most intractable challenges facing the international community, UN Secretary-General António Guterres observed in his message for the day.

As there is no viable alternative to the two-state solution, he called on both sides, and their supporters, to work to-

wards restoring faith in the process.

“Only constructive negotiations between the parties, in good faith, with support from the international community and adhering to long-standing United Nations resolutions and long-agreed parameters, will bring about a just and durable solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states,” the UN chief said.

“What is needed, first and foremost, are leadership and political will. The efforts of civil society and those on all sides who seek to bridge the gap between Israelis and Palestinians also need to be supported,” he added.

President Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinian people have endured more than 70 years of tragedies and crises, yet remain steadfast.

“Despite decades of disappointment and setbacks, we remain committed to a multilateral order that respects and ensures respect for international law,” Abbas said in a message read by Palestinian Permanent Observer to the UN Riyad Mansour.



*Diriyah in Riyadh*

